



Enter and View Report

GP Access at Holes Lane Surgery

Visit: 15th November 2016

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Background

What is Healthwatch Warrington?

Healthwatch Warrington helps the residents and communities of Warrington to get the best out of local health and social care services. We gather the views of local people and make sure they are heard and listened to by the organisations that provide, fund and monitor these services.

What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out *Enter and View* (E&V) visits. Local Healthwatch representatives, who are trained volunteers, carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The Health and Social Care Act (2012) allows local Healthwatch representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, care homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. *Enter and View* visits can happen if people identify a problem but equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation. This enables lessons to be learned and good practice shared.

Healthwatch *Enter and View* visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. If safeguarding issues are raised during a visit Healthwatch Warrington has safeguarding policies in place which identify the correct procedure to be taken.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to the findings observed on the specific dates set out below. This report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Warrington would like to thank the staff, in particular Kim Witkiss (Practice Manager), for taking the time to show the visiting team round and for answering their questions. We would also like to thank our trained volunteers for their contributions.

Background and Purpose of the visits

Healthwatch Warrington made the decision to visit GP practices within the borough; with a focus on access and the general environment of surgeries. This is because access to primary care services (mainly GPs) has been identified as a recurrent theme within the public feedback data collected by Healthwatch Warrington.

GP access is often highlighted as a problematic aspect of patient experience, with common issues including; difficulties encountered when booking appointments, a lack of appointment availability and communication problems. However, public service reviews also hint at areas of good practice that could be highlighted and shared. Therefore, our authorised representatives visit GP practices in different clusters to gather feedback directly from patients and conduct specialist Enter & View visits.

Healthwatch Warrington engages with local Patient Participation Groups, GP practices and partner organisations to share our findings and help make improvements through recommendations.

Details of the Visit

Location

The visit took place at Holes Lane Surgery, 28 Holes Lane, Warrington, WA1 4NE.

Date/Time

The visit took place on Tuesday 15th November 2016, from 10:30am - 12:00pm.

Authorised Representatives (Visiting Team)

Esstta Hayes - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

Jim Sinnott - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

Jonathon Woodruff - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

GP Practice Staff

Kim Witkiss, Practice Manager

Description of the Surgery

Holes Lane Surgery belongs to the Central East GP cluster and also operates a branch surgery on Manchester Road.

At present, the surgery has approximately 10,700 registered patients. As well as general consultations, the surgery provides a range of additional clinics and services, including; well baby and immunisation clinics, 6 week checks, antenatal clinics, post-natal checks, chronic disease clinics (respiratory disease - asthma, COPD - spirometry, diabetes, IHD, hypertension, smoking cessation, stroke, atrial fibrillation), travel vaccinations, well person checks, smears, new patient medicals, ECG's - 24 hour heart monitor, blood pressure checks, ear syringe, healthy lifestyle and dietary advice, phlebotomy, family planning and a number of non-NHS services.

In May 2016, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) rated the surgery as overall 'good' in its inspection report.

Results of the Visit

Wherever possible the reports below are in the words of the E&V team members who were present at the time of the visit. The reports have been collated by the Healthwatch Warrington E&V Consultant and some text has been formatted to allow for easy reading; however the essential facts of the visiting team's reports have not been altered.

Observations from the Visit

External Access and Appearance

External signage at the surgery is very limited and difficult to see when approaching from the road. The surgery building is marked with a small, wooden wall-mounted sign which reads: 'The Surgery'. This sign is not located above the front door and is partially obscured by ivy. For new patients or those with sight impairments, the building could be difficult to identify.

This could be improved if the signage could be updated to include the surgery's full name, enlarged lettering and moved to a more prominent position. The surgery could also consider installing additional signage nearer to the roadside (such as near the bollards at the front of the car park).

Traffic entering the surgery car park, off the main road, came in at quite a speed during the visit. The route in/out of the car park is also one car width wide, with limited paving. Therefore, a sign to request drivers to slow down and be mindful of other vehicles and pedestrians might be advisable.

The surgery's car park is free for visitors to use and is kept in good condition. There are two accessible disabled parking bays located near the front entrance, with most of the parking spaces located at the side and rear of the building.

Dropped kerbs and TacTiles are provided outside the surgery; on the main road and other roads surrounding the surgery (Austral Ave and Hillock Lane). The surgery is also accessible by public transport; with a bus stop located approximately 100 yards away, which is served by the 4A Network Warrington bus.

The paving and grass verges surrounding the surgery building are well maintained. There is some chain link fencing near the front of the surgery, some of which is damaged and bent and needs replacing. The front of the building is tidy and the pathway is all on one level. The exterior front door displays notices relating to booking procedures. However, the visiting team could not find the surgery's opening times at this location and displays on the glass were small and a little difficult to read - larger print would benefit patients, especially with those sight impairments. The exterior front and inner doors are a little heavy, but they are well mounted, double width and open both inwards and outwards for ease of access (especially for visitors with buggies/wheelchairs). There is no automatic opening push button in place, which could help to make the front entrance more accessible.

Reception Area

Staff information is visible upon arrival at the surgery, positioned directly outside the entrance door. To reach the reception area, visitors pass through a small area between the two front doors. A prescription box and suggestion box are located in this entrance area. The reception desk itself is located in the same room as the waiting area (off to one side, near the entrance door). A retractable cordon is set up at reception, to ensure that patients queue in front of the desk and do not compromise patient flow through the waiting area. The receptionist on duty greeted the visiting team on arrival and was very polite to all visitors during the visit. The reception area was brightly lit and had a positive atmosphere. Despite a busy flu vaccination clinic operating during the visit, the team noticed that patients were being seen quickly by reception and did not have to wait in line for long. However, the introduction of a white noise machine or low-level radio music could help to improve privacy near the reception desk; as potentially sensitive conversations could be overhead due to the reception desk being so close to the waiting area.

Waiting Room / Seating Area

An electronic check-in system is in place near the reception desk; which offers foreign language options. There is also an electronic display board sited opposite the seating area with text and verbal announcements for patients to visit the appropriate appointments/rooms. This board also displayed NHS bulletins, other information and played some ambient noise. The visiting team noted that the text on the board was quite small and could be difficult to read.

There appeared to be plenty of upholstered seats in the waiting area, which were positioned at a relatively low height. These chairs were uniformly laid out in rows and most had arm rests.

There was a long display board adjacent to the main seating area, in addition to a number of smaller notice boards and a leaflet rack. The boards contained a substantial amount of information posters and notices. However, some of these were outdated and needed to be refreshed (e.g. the patient 'Did not Arrive' information on show related to April 2016 and one poster promoted an event that took place in July 2016). It may be helpful to arrange notice board displays by subject category; with each section denoted by a small banner heading. This would make it easier for patients to find relevant information.

It was unclear as to whether any space was allocated to accommodate wheelchair users (especially if they wished to sit alongside someone else, such as a carer). Furthermore, the visiting team noted that there is no children's area available and there is no entertainment reading material (e.g. magazines and newspapers) available for visitors.

Additional Facilities

In addition to the disabled parking bays, there is a disabled toilet available immediately upon entry to the surgery (accessible via the space between the two front doors). This toilet had both washing and drying facilities, as well as a support arm for the toilet, and was very clean.

However, there did not appear to be an emergency cord in place. As the toilet is not directly in the reception desk's line of sight, the toilet and any users could be difficult to see if patients are going in or out of the surgery. Therefore, the installation of a safety chord is advisable.

The reception desk's height is staggered, which means that it is more accessible for people in wheelchairs.

The surgery has a hearing loop in place (a blue badge sticker has been placed on front door to display this feature). British Sign Language Support and a translation service (Language Line) are also available to patients. Foreign language leaflets and information are also available.

The Practice Manager also advised that a wheelchair ramp was installed at the branch surgery due to patient requesting this facility. In addition, the surgery is looking to develop accessible information leaflets.

The visiting team also observed 'Autism Card' and 'Let's Check' files being promoted within the waiting area.

Dementia Friendly Approach

The flooring inside the waiting area has a uniform pattern, with a vinyl / rubber texture and is easy to clean. The surgery's front entrance and main areas all appear to be on one level. An accurate clock is also visible on the side wall near the reception desk. There is also an Alzheimer's Society poster displayed on the waiting area's wall.

Navigation around building

The surgery building follows a straightforward layout and the areas open to patients are on the ground floor level. Staff names and directional arrows are sited at eye level on the wall facing the waiting area; helping patients to identify and locate practice rooms. Furthermore, staff names are displayed on the practice room doors.

Cleanliness and Maintenance of Communal Areas

The surgery building was clean, well maintained and orderly. Leaflets and information booklets were well stocked, but some were in need of a quick tidy. In addition, a hand sanitiser dispenser was provided for patients and staff to use to reduce the risk of infection.

Patient Voice and Feedback

The surgery has an active Patient Participation Group (PPG), which meets quarterly and engages with the wider Warrington PPG network.

One of the smaller notice boards in the waiting area has a PPG information poster; it explains more about the purpose of a PPG, shows contact details and the date of its next meeting for interested patients. However, this was placed in the far corner of the waiting area and above eye level, which means it could be difficult for patients to see. As such, the PPG could be better promoted if this display was positioned at eye level, in a more prominent spot in the waiting area.

In terms of patient feedback, Friends and Family Test (FFT) cards and a comment box were placed on top of a small table near the main entrance. The benefit of this location is that it is not in the line of site of reception, which affords more privacy to patients leaving feedback. However, as the leaflets are not at eye-height level, this could be easy to miss.

Safety

Upon arrival, the team were asked to sign in as visitors and were provided with 'visitor' badges - evidence of an effective monitoring of visitor flow. Reception staff also asked the visiting team to sign a Confidentiality Agreement, to protect patient privacy and data.

Floors in the surgery building were clear of obstructions and trip hazards. In addition, there was a fire extinguisher placed in the waiting area and fire exit signs visible within the surgery.

Staffing, Leadership and Promoting Positive & Respectful Attitudes

At present, the surgery employs 6 doctors, 4 nurses and 20 administration staff. The visiting team observed polite, friendly and helpful interactions between staff and patients at all times.

Appointments

The surgery's opening hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30am - 6:30pm. The surgery does not offer any evening or weekend appointments. However, the Practice Manager explained that staff members are proactive in making patients aware of the Extended Hours Service (available at Bath Street).

Patients are able to book appointments via phone, SMS / text message, online or in-person (by visiting reception). Emergency and same day appointments are available each day, with approximately 16 appointments in the morning and 16 in the afternoon. Admissions procedure information is available on the surgery's website and building.

The Practice Manager also told the visiting team that there is very little use of emergency services by the surgery's patients, due to good admission rates and easy access for patients.

Patient Survey Responses

Healthwatch Warrington collected a total of 13 patient survey responses during the visit. The survey questions focused on patient's access experiences at the surgery.

Two thirds of respondents indicated that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' overall with the surgery's booking system, with around 1/3 answering that they were 'not satisfied' or 'very unsatisfied'.

The areas of relative dissatisfaction appear to be related to phone access. 85% of respondents indicated that they used phone lines to book appointments. Only one respondent stated that they waited less than 5 minutes on average to get through to reception. Around 30% stated that they had to wait more than 10 minutes to get through and one respondent said they normally cannot get through at all when lines are busy.

When asked to provide other comments, suggestions or feedback, the majority of respondents told us that they were generally happy with the surgery, its opening times and in particular with the care they receive, with comments such as: "Care is very good - all round." A number of respondents also mentioned that they had been accessing the Extended Hours Service and had been referred to other GPs within the local area to receive specialist services. This is evidence that the surgery is working cooperatively and proactively within the cluster model to help patients access appropriate care.

However, some respondents again told the visiting team that they had experienced difficulties when trying to reach the surgery by phone to book appointments, with some waiting up to 1.5 hours to get through to reception at peak times (around 8:30am). As such, they would like to see an investment in providing more phone lines and additional doctors.

These sentiments are reflected in the results of the talk that the visiting team had with the Practice Manager. The Practice Manager was asked to share her thoughts

about how access could be improved at the surgery. The Practice Manager explained that this surgery practice takes a proactive approach to working within the local GP cluster model and partnership working.

The Practice Manager would like to see increased investment in primary care, as well as more services moving out of the acute Trust and into local practices (in accordance with the GP cluster model). This is because the Practice Manager believes that local GP practices are better positioned than hospitals to provide these types of services due to the expertise that they have at their disposal.

The Practice Manager stated that this would require a change in funding to address the imbalance in the current healthcare system, which does not favour primary care and is a barrier to GPs taking a lead-role. Therefore, she would like to see more GPs in the 'driving seat' of service commissioning - rather than a top-down approach to planning.

Summary

The overall impression formed by the visiting team was positive; this is reflected in the patient survey responses and the Practice Manager's comments on the day. The surgery's staff members are clearly committed to improving patient experience and this is evident by the pleasant and structured environment that the visiting team observed within the surgery. Furthermore, the Practice Manager is enthusiastic about taking a proactive approach toward achieving greater co-operation within the GP cluster model and being involved in the commissioning process.

With this being considered, the visiting team noted some suggestions that could help to further improve access and experiences at the surgery (from a patient perspective) and these are detailed in the recommendations below.

Recommendations

- 1. *Improve Exterior Signage:*** this would include replacing the current main sign at the front of building for one displaying the surgery's full name, with larger lettering and in a more prominent position. The surgery could also consider installing an additional sign, closer to the road.
- 2. *Repair Link Fencing:*** there is some minor damage to the link fencing at the front of the surgery's premises. Repairing this link fence could help to improve the appearance of the surgery for visitors.
- 3. *Update Noticeboards:*** some of the notices in the waiting room require updating. The surgery could also consider arranging notices by category and placing banners above each section to help patients navigate the notices. In particular, the PGG section on the corner noticeboard should be moved to a more prominent position and be positioned at eye-level.
- 4. *Fit an Emergency Cord in Disabled Toilet:*** the absence of a cord was noticed in the disabled toilet near the entrance. Having a cord would help to improve patient safety.

Distribution List

This report has been distributed to the following:

- *Warrington Borough Council*
- *Warrington CCG*
- *Care Quality Commission*
- *Healthwatch England*

Appendices

Appendix A

Response from Provider

Just some feedback you failed to highlight the Practice was a pilot for Cardiology services with our cluster with other patients from other practices accessing a service close to home without the need to go to hospital. Patients from the other surgeries love the service.

Secondly we are in the process of building an extension and all the work required will be a part of the project.

Thirdly we are not allowed to have a childrens play area as it is an infection control risk as with the newspapers and magazines.

Overall a positive report

Regards

Kim Witkiss

Practice Manager

