



Enter and View Report

GP Access at Springfields Medical Centre

Visit: 11th October 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 Lorraine Stratulis (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 Springfields Medical Centre, Legh Street, Warrington, WA1 1UG.

Date/Time

The visit took place on Tuesday 11th October 2016, from 10:30am - 12:00pm.

Authorised Representatives (Visiting Team)

Clare Screeton - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

Jim Sinnott - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

Jonathon Woodruff - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

GP Practice Staff

Lorraine Stratulis, Practice Manager

Description of the Surgery

Springfields Medical Centre belongs to the Central West GP cluster and is situated opposite the Golden Square Shopping Centre (with nearby access to Warrington town centre's public transport links). At present, the surgery has approximately 6500 registered patients - a figure which is still growing as the practice is currently open to taking new patients.

The surgery offers a range of additional clinics and services, including; a diabetes clinic, an asthma clinic, access to a midwife, a COPD clinic, a hypertension services, a travel clinic, a yellow fever centre, childhood vaccinations and immunisations, smoking cessation sessions, a family planning service, cervical smears, six week baby checks, health visitors, general dressings and NHS checks.

In March 2016, the Care Quality Commission rated the surgery as 'outstanding'.

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

The surgery is situated in a central location, which is well served by bus routes and opposite a multi-story commercial car park. The surgery also offers free parking, which is well maintained and has a nice flat surface.

However, public spaces are relatively limited (as they are shared between multiple services). Furthermore, parking at the surgery can be difficult due to the barrier entrance and the need to obtain a token from reception to exit via this barrier. The Practice Manager drew attention to the wasteland behind the building's car park, as this could be potentially used to expand car parking space (although this would likely involve third party agreement).

The surgery is housed in a purpose built, modern NHS building and is based on the 1st floor. A range of other services are also operating in the building, including a Well Pharmacy. The exterior wall is smart in appearance and the windows are clean. However, some grass was growing through the pavement and the visiting team noticed some litter.

Perhaps, this area would benefit from a waste bin to help keep it tidy. The front doors are wide and automated for wheelchair access.

There are two lifts available near the front entrance to take patients up to the surgery. These are clearly visible upon entry to the building. However, one lift (equipped with a stretcher) was out of service due to an emergency telephone being inoperative. The Practice Manager advised that the lift has been out of action for several months and despite her efforts, this delay is due to a third party.

Reception Area

The surgery shares the 1st floor with the Warrington Centre for Sexual Health. There is partition screening in place for privacy purposes; separating the waiting areas of these services from each other.

The surgery's reception area, which is very bright and welcoming, can be reached by walking along a short corridor (made up of the partition panels). The colour scheme in this room is really vibrant.

There is an optional touch screen, self-check in machine that can be accessed before reaching the main reception desk. This system displays foreign language options and is user-friendly.

On approach to the reception desk, patients reach a boundary line drawn on the floor. At this point, a sign asks patients to queue behind the boundary line until they are called to reception; ensuring privacy for those already at the reception desk. The reception desk is also separate from the seating area, which is good for confidentiality purposes. The main reception desk is well lit, with a warm and calming ambience. Two receptionists were on duty during the visit. During the visit, receptionists cheerfully attended to patients in an efficient manner.

Notice boards (placed in the main corridor and waiting area) are uncluttered and kept up-to-date. For example, an eye-catching pink notice board provides information about cancer. There is also a Patient Participation Group (PPG) notice board, which shows photos of the PPG members, descriptions of their roles and has tear off strips with information about PPG recruitment. Most of these notices appeared to be in large print, which is helpful for visitors with visual impairments.

There were also notices showing the number of appointments missed by patients in August 2016 (a total of 92), which helps to make visitors aware of the impact this has on the surgery's capacity.

Waiting Room / Seating Area

Overall, the surgery's seating area is in good condition. There are plenty of seats available, including some soft chairs with back support. Although the surgery was busy during the visit, the visiting team did not observe any visitors having to stand. However, the visiting team did not see any chairs with an adjustable height.

In this area, there is a large screen with a "next patient" callout feature, which is clearly audible. This screen also displays additional information about flu jabs, antibiotics and other health information.

There is plenty of reading material and information leaflets for visitors to read whilst they are waiting. There is also a small children's area equipped with books, colouring pencils and toys.

Additional Facilities

Two disabled access toilets are located close to the reception area and the visiting team noted that these were very clean.

The Practice Manager told the visiting team that the surgery offers a number of adaptations to help improve access to those patients with additional needs, including; a hearing loop, British Sign Language support, disabled toilet and parking facilities, translation services and foreign language information leaflets.

The surgery has one dirty utility room (with an adjoining toilet for providing urine samples - based far away from reception for privacy). The surgery also has one clean utility room. Both of these rooms were clean, tidy and well maintained.

There are seven treatment rooms that are used by three doctors and one nurse practitioner, with their entrance doors being clearly labelled. The visiting team were invited to look inside one of these rooms and saw that it was bright and welcoming.

Dementia Friendly Approach

The surgery has a flat, single level floor with a non-patterned carpet. Signage in the surgery was large with good colouring and doors were clearly demarcated.

Navigation around building

Signage in the surgery was excellent and corridors were free from clutter. There was a well-positioned notice entitled 'Self Care'; providing patients with tips on how to manage their conditions. The surgery is relatively small and well signposted and the visiting team found it easy to navigate.

Cleanliness and Maintenance of Communal Areas

All areas visited were cleaned to a very high standard, although the visiting team did not see any hand sanitisers. The surgery had a neutral smell, with no unpleasant odours. The visiting team did not observe any spills, or trip hazards.

The building itself is relatively new, with excellent standards of cleanliness, maintenance (aside from one lift) and decoration.

Patient Voice and Feedback

The Practice Manager highlighted the strength of the surgery's PPG, which has played an active role in improving access.

The PPG is very active, with members meeting with surgery staff once per month. The Practice Manager commented that meetings are constructive; with PPG members helping out when the Dr First system was first introduced and with subsequent adjustments.

The PPG has an excellent social media presence, with its own website. The PPG is also organising a public engagement event on 26th October 2016 called "Life is a Rollercoaster" - with local partners due to be in attendance.

The Practice Manager is hoping to recruit a number of young people to join the PPG (especially those who hope to establish a career in the medical field). This campaign will include attending local colleges and universities.

In addition to the dedicated PPG notice board, there were plenty of well-organised, relevant and up-to-date health related pamphlets on display for patients to access.

The surgery did not have any Healthwatch literature (such as feedback cards and posters) on display. The visiting team would recommend that this be supplied to the surgery for the future benefit of patients.

Although a digital link to the Friends and Family Test (FFT) is available on the surgery's website, FFT test cards could also be displayed more prominently in the surgery to generate more patient feedback.

Safety

The visiting team noted that there were no obvious hazards in the surgery and exits were clearly marked. There were also fire extinguishers in place.

Staffing, Leadership and Promoting Positive & Respectful Attitudes

The visiting team were greeted by reception staff in a polite manner and then welcomed by Lorraine Stratulis, the Practice Manager. The Practice Manager accompanied the visiting team on a guided tour of the surgery and answered their questions with a high level of professionalism and courtesy.

The surgery currently employs three full time GPs, two nurses (with one on maternity leave) and a nurse practitioner, two Health Care Assistants and ten other staff (including the Practice Manager).

There appeared to be adequate numbers of staff to keep the surgery operating at full capacity. There are two receptionists based on the main desk; taking calls as part of the surgery's 'Dr First' appointment system.

Behind the reception area is an administration office, with an additional area for document scanning; which takes up a significant amount of staff time. However, the Practice Manager advised that eventually this process would be digitised.

Opposite, there is another administration office where referral documents and letters are processed. There is also a small office where patient records are summarized before being entered on to the system. The Practice Manager has a separate office. Staff members also have access to a small, on-site kitchen.

The visiting team observed that members of staff were calm, approachable and well organised; warmly acknowledging visitors at reception. The staff members that the visiting team spoke with were all very happy to work at the surgery and it was obvious that they take pride in their jobs.

Appointments

The surgery's opening times are available on its website and on its answering machine facility. The surgery is open Monday - Friday from 8:15am to 6:30pm. The surgery also offers Saturday appointments from 8:30am to 11:30am (pre-booked only). The surgery also advertises its admission procedures, the Extended Hours and Out of Hours Access services on its website; which is easy to navigate.

Patients are able to book appointments by phone (the surgery operates the 'Dr First' phone triage system), by visiting the surgery in person and online via its website. The Practice Managers remarked that that Dr First has helped to reduce non-attendance at the surgery and generally works very well; with the surgery regularly exceeding its appointment targets.

The Practice Manager explained that this is due to a focus on a proactive approach to appointments and planning staff cover. Non-attendance of appointments is taken

particularly seriously at the surgery and there are numerous signs showing the latest statistics around how much surgery time is lost due to patients missing appointments without giving prior notice.

Patients can also sign up to receive SMS appointment reminders, a service which the Practice Manager would like to encourage to help reduce non-attendance figures even further.

The Practice Manager told the visiting team that patients can book on the day, with the first 10 appointment slots being pre-booked. Patients can book an appointment with a doctor up to one week in advance and a nurse appointment by up to one month in ahead.

Patient Survey Responses

The visiting team took the opportunity to speak with patients in the waiting area and collected a total of 6 survey responses from them, which focused on GP access. The patients offered mostly positive comments about access at the surgery and praised staff members for their hard work.

This is reflected in the survey results. 100% of patients questioned were either very satisfied or satisfied with the surgery's booking system and none of the respondents had any suggestions for improving access. Patients told us that they could generally get to see GP of their choice, which is also a positive trend.

However, one patient commented that they found it difficult to get through on the phone, even after waiting for 20 minutes, and had to call back later in the day to speak with reception staff (although he commented that this was not an important issue for him, as he was retired). Furthermore, 40% of respondents had to wait more than 10 minutes (on average) to get through to reception.

Interestingly, none of the patients surveyed mentioned being able to book appointments online, which is perhaps an area that the PPG could focus on to improve phone waiting times.

Summary

To sum, all staff encountered during the visit were confident, polite, knowledgeable and open to working with patients in a constructive manner. The building is modern, well-maintained and is easily accessible; with only a few minor adjustments required, as outlined in this report.

Overall, the patients that the visiting team spoke with held a very positive impression of the surgery. Members of the visiting team noted that they would be very happy to be a patient at this surgery themselves. The Practice Manager is open to the idea of sharing good practice with other GP surgeries in the area and across the PPG network.

Recommendations

- 1. *Share the Best Practice Identified:*** the visiting team would recommend that the surgery would be willing to share practice with other GP practices and across the PPG network. More specifically, this would include providing advice about how to use the Dr First system more effectively and building the capacity of the PPG to act as an effective patient-surgery forum. This could include attending an event hosted by Healthwatch Warrington, or visiting another surgery to provide this advice.
- 2. *Healthwatch Warrington & Other Patient Feedback Literature:*** the visiting team would also recommend that the surgery be supplied with posters, feedback cards (along with a comment box) and information leaflets to encourage patients to engage with Healthwatch Warrington and provide more feedback about the surgery. In addition, the surgery could display FFT cards in a more prominent position in the surgery waiting area.
- 3. *Promote Patient Use of the Online Booking System and SMS Notifications:*** the surgery should focus on increasing patient awareness of these facilities, in order to ease pressure on the phone system and reduce non-attendance figures even further.
- 4. *Lift Repair:*** the surgery should liaise with the appropriate third parties and work towards having the out of service lift repaired as soon as possible.

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

Thank you for the draft report. I have just a couple of comments:-

1. Pg 9 - mentioned not seeing any hand sanitisers, they are fitted to the wall next to the touch screen and next to the toilets in the waiting room.
2. With reference to online access we have 1,364 signed up to online access, being 21% of our population and are actively encouraging patients to sign up.

Kinds regards

Lorraine Stratulis

Practice Manager

