



Enter and View Report

GP Access at The Quays, Grappenhall Surgery

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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 Jane Peers (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 The Quays, Grappenhall Surgery, Thelwall New Road, Warrington, WA4 2XT.

Date/Time

The visit took place on Tuesday 12th October 2016, from 1:30pm - 4:00pm, during a busy flu jab clinic to maximise patient feedback opportunities.

Authorised Representatives (Visiting Team)

Esstta Hayes - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

Jonathon Woodruff - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

GP Practice Staff

Jane Peers, Practice Manager

Description of the Surgery

The Quays, Grappenhall Surgery, which belongs to the South GP cluster is a branch surgery of The Lakeside Surgery, Lymm. The branch surgery building is located on Thelwall New Road and just opposite Latchford Locks (Manchester Ship Canal).

Currently, the surgery has around 10,500 registered patients and offers a range of additional services to local people, including; learning disability health checks, follow up reviews for patients diagnosed with depression, diabetes clinics, stroke clinics, heart failure clinics, rheumatoid arthritis clinics, mental health tests, dementia reviews (which can be completed at a patient's home), hypertension clinics and flu jab clinics, amongst others.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected both surgery sites in May 2016 and awarded an 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

The surgery building is situated alongside a well-maintained road and foot path. There is some signage which displays the surgery's name (at the far end of the car park and front entrance). However, this is difficult to see when approaching by car and could benefit from being larger and closer to the car park entrance.

The surgery has an accessible and relatively large car park, which is kept in good condition. However, the disabled parking bays do not appear to have been clearly marked with the International Symbol of Access. For patients using public transport, there are two nearby bus stops; one beside the car park entrance and another across the road.

The outside environment was clean, tidy and surrounded by pleasant greenery. The paving leading up to the front entrance is on a single-level. There is a sign adjacent to the front door that displays the surgery's opening times. The visiting team did not see an automatic opening button at the front door, which could ease access for visitors with mobility issues or buggies.

Reception Area

Upon opening the front door, a very loud buzzer is activated that alerts reception to visitor flow. Whilst this may be useful for carrying sound when staff are away from the reception desk, it may help to improve the general ambience if a lower volume or alternative system were introduced.

There is a small entrance space that adjoins the reception area and waiting room, which are in the same space. The reception desk is housed behind a glass panel, but this did not seem to impede discussions between reception staff and visitors. There were a number of patient information notices on the walls and an eye-level hand sanitiser dispenser near reception.

Waiting Room / Seating Area

The waiting area was spacious, bright and clean. Potted plants were placed in the room to improve its appearance. Chairs were available throughout the seating area, placed around the edge of the space. These chairs were upholstered; some with arm rests, some without. Most chairs were at the same height and of one type. The introduction of adjustable chairs, with arm rests, could help patients with mobility issues.

There was no formal call system, or electronic board on display. Patients were called into appointments by nurses and members of staff coming into the waiting room entrance.

The waiting area was busy due to the flu clinic taking place. However, maintaining privacy during conversations was difficult due to the spaciousness of the room and the way that sound carried. The installation of a partitioned area and ambient background music (e.g. from a radio or TV), could help to improve this situation.

The waiting room wall does have a clock, but it is small and could benefit from being larger for visual accessibility. There were plenty of magazines and other reading materials available for visitors. In addition, there was a small entertainment corner for children at the far end of the room - decorated with a colourful mural and equipped with toys.

Additional Facilities

The Practice Manager told the visiting team that the surgery offered the following adaptations for patients with additional access needs; a hearing loop; British Sign Language support; disabled toilet facilities (which the team observed); disabled parking spaces; translation services (Language Line) and foreign language leaflets & information.

The Practice Manager also advised that the surgery would be willing to offer further adaptations, if requested by patients.

‘Let’s Check’ initiative files are promoted within the surgery, as well as ‘Autism Cards’; these displays further suggest an awareness of additional needs.

Dementia Friendly Approach

The flooring in the surgery is on a single-level and the carpet is in a single colour (not patterned). Staff were also present in the building to help patients find their way and a chaperone service available (clearly advertised by a notice on the wall).

Navigation around building

Staff were on hand throughout the afternoon visit to help patients find appointment rooms and asked if they needed support. Signage was also clear in the communal areas.

Cleanliness and Maintenance of Communal Areas

Spaces appeared clear, well maintained and clean throughout the surgery. The visiting team only accessed the communal areas where patients were waiting, but viewed both hand sanitiser dispensers and a bin for waste.

Wall displays in the waiting area were well ordered and placed underneath header banners; arranged according to areas of interest, such as 'eyes and ears' and 'over 65s'. This makes it easier for patients, families or carers to identify information of interest to them and learn more about support services.

Patient Voice and Feedback

Both patient satisfaction information and instructions for patients on providing feedback to the surgery are advertised next to the main reception point.

However, both Patient Participation Group (PPG) and Healthwatch Warrington literature were not on display in the waiting area. Posters and information leaflets will be supplied by Healthwatch Warrington for display and distribution.

The Practice Manager advised that the practice did not have an active PPG at present; the PPG had not met during the previous 12 month period. The Practice Manager was open to hearing about best practice from other PPG groups in order to initiate a new recruitment drive and explore innovative ways to develop the PPG (such as the introduction of an online forum).

The visiting team also took the opportunity to speak with patients in the waiting room and received very positive feedback; which was very supportive of both the staff and the surgery (The Quays and Lakeside). Generally speaking, these patients felt well cared for and liked both sites.

Safety

The visiting team observed a fire exit sign near the front entrance and above all corridor entrance within the surgery itself. Public spaces appeared to be clear from clutter and obvious obstructions. The visiting team did not note any evident hazards.

Staffing, Leadership and Promoting Positive & Respectful Attitudes

The Practice Manager stated that the surgery currently employs five GPs (three partners and two salaried), two nurses (one full-time equivalent), 9 receptionists (all part-time) and one administration worker (part-time).

The visiting team observed friendly, respectful and positive interactions between members of staff and patients.

Appointments

Patients are able to book appointments by telephone, in-person, online and can sign up for an SMS notification system (sending prompts to remind them in advance of the upcoming appointment).

Patients can pre-book a GP appointment three days in advance and up to twelve weeks in advance to see a nurse. Same day appointments are also available, as well as phone triage.

The surgery's opening times are Monday 8:30am - 4:30pm, Tuesday 8:30am - 4:30pm, Wednesday 8:30am - 1:00pm, Thursday 8:30am - 1:00pm and Friday 8:30am - 4:15pm; which are advertised on-site and on the surgery's website.

The branch surgery does not offer weekend or evening appointments, but actively informs patients as to the availability of the Out of Hours service.

The Practice Manager is particularly focused on reducing patient non-attendance of appointments; with those patients repeatedly missing appointments without prior notification risking being removed from the practice list.

Generally, the Practice Manager felt that the appointments system was working well; due in large part to proactive planning and the dedication of surgery staff (especially GPs). When difficulties did arise, this was usually due to an unplanned event (such as staff sickness), but problems were normally resolved efficiently.

The Practice Manager said that access could be improved if patients were more aware of the option to ‘unbook’ appointments made online if they were no longer able to attend them - freeing up these slots for other patients.

For visiting patients, there are also eye-level signs in the waiting area that display useful information about appointment procedures; such as the fact that patients can ask to see a named GP of their choice.

Patient Survey Responses

The visiting team collated a total of 10 survey responses from patients during the visit (focusing on GP access).

Respondents were generally aware of the multiple methods available for booking appointments at the surgery; with a relatively high proportion (40%) knowing that this could be done online.

For respondents calling to book appointments, 40% said they usually spent less than 5 minutes waiting to get through to the surgery, with 20% waiting between 5-10 minutes and a further 30% waiting for 10+ minutes. Considering the number of patients that the surgery caters for and staff ratio, these figures appear indicative of a generally efficient telephone system (especially when phone triaging is in place). Call waiting times could be further reduced with additional telephone lines, or an even greater move toward online bookings.

Encouragingly, 90% of respondents stated that they were either ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with the surgery’s booking system; with the remaining 10% perceiving it in a ‘neutral’ manner. 90% of respondents told the visiting team that they could ‘sometimes’ get the date and time of appointment they wanted.

Furthermore, 60% of respondents indicated that they could ‘always’ or ‘often’ get to see the named GP of their choice, with the remainder stating that they could ‘sometimes’.

Many of the respondents added further positive comments at the end of the survey, such as “35 years with this practice - fantastic practice” and “very good care”. In particular, patients were happy with the choice of GPs at the surgery, commenting: “never a problem getting a female doctor, if needed” and “you always get to see a doctor, rather than a trainee”.

One patient was unhappy at being redirected from Lakeside to the branch surgery for receiving a flu jab; as coming to Grappenhall as travel was inconvenient. However, this patient was generally satisfied with the care received.

In terms of patient suggestions for improving access, one respondent thought that promoting the online booking system was a good idea for improving access. Some respondents also wanted the facility to select specific appointment slots for seeing nurses, when booking online.

The Practice Manager explained that this could be difficult to introduce, as nurse appointment times were not allotted a uniform length (unlike GP appointments, which are assigned ten minute slots). However, this is a feature that the website developers could consider at rolling out in the future.

Two respondents also indicated that they had experienced difficulties getting appointments at peak times, during weekday mornings and in the Christmas period. However, most were happy with access arrangements at the surgery.

Summary

The visiting team's overall impression of the branch surgery was positive; taking into consideration feedback from both staff and patients, as well as their own observations.

Generally, the surgery appears to be well-managed, kept in good condition and is accessible for patients. Having considered this, there were also some adjustments that could be made to improve access at the surgery, which are detailed in the recommendations section of this report.

Recommendations

- 1. *Promote and Develop a Patient Participation Group:*** the surgery should encourage patients to join the surgery's PPG and promote it is an active forum of patient-staff discussion. In part, this could be achieved by displaying information about the role of PPGs within the surgery and taking on board good practice from other surgery's PPGs.
- 2. *Improve Privacy in Waiting Area:*** this could be achieved in a number of ways, such as creating a screened off area, playing background music at an appropriate level or having a TV set in the main waiting area (as sound carries in this room and conversations can be easily overheard).
- 3. *Improve Exterior Signage:*** the signage outside of the surgery could be made larger and moved to face the road at the front of the car park entrance (at present, it is difficult to see via Thelwall New Road).

Distribution List

This report has been distributed to the following:

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

Appendix A

Response from Provider

Thank you for the report there are just a few issues. The branch surgery was visited by the CQC in May 2015 on the same day as Lakeside Surgery the report (which incorporates both surgeries) is on our practice website.

Patients have access to the Thursday evening clinic at Lakeside. We are unable to add more telephone lines as there is only one receptionist working at one time. We do have flu clinics at Lakeside after the clinics are finished at Grappenhall for patients who have difficulty with transport.

We have arranged a PPG meeting for December we feel that we have sufficient members at this time hence why there is no longer any signage in the waiting area. I will discuss your recommendations with the GPs at the next practice meeting.

Regards

Jane Peers
Practice Manager

