

# Lancaster Medical Practice

## University Health Centre

GP Services Enter and View Report

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022

12:00pm – 2:00pm



### DISCLAIMER

This report relates only to the service viewed at the time of the visit and is only representative of the views of the staff, patients and relatives who met members of the Enter and View team on that date

### Contact Details:

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### Staff met during our visit:

Amy Williams – Managing Partner  
Lesley Cassar – Head of Quality and Regulation  
Sandy Pearson – Head of Patient Services  
Kayleigh Harrison – Head of Performance  
Charlotte Robinson – Head of Corporate Services

### Date and time of our visit:

14<sup>th</sup> November 2022  
12:00pm – 2:00pm

### Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Steven Walmsley – Senior Engagement Officer  
Lesley Miller – Administrator

## Introduction

Our role at Healthwatch Lancashire is to gather people's views and experiences, especially those that are seldom heard, to give them the opportunity to express how they feel about a service. This was an announced Enter and View visit undertaken by authorised representatives from Healthwatch Lancashire (HWL) who have the authority to enter health and social care premises, announced or unannounced. The aim is to obtain the views and experiences of patients, relatives and staff and observe and assess the quality of services.

The team compile a report reflecting observations and feedback. Healthwatch Lancashire is an independent organisation, therefore we do not make judgements or express personal opinions. The report identifies aspects of good practice as well as possible areas of improvement. This is sent to the manager for their opportunity to respond. Where appropriate, Healthwatch Lancashire may arrange a revisit to check the progress of improvements. The report is then published on the Healthwatch Lancashire website at [www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk) and sent to the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations

## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Lancashire would like to thank the management team, staff and relatives for making us feel welcome and taking part in the visit.

## Methodology

The Enter and View representatives made an announced visit on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November and spoke to 9 patients and 11 staff members.

Healthwatch Lancashire obtain the views and experiences of patients, relatives and staff. Conversations with each are adapted to capture individual experiences to help assess the quality of services. People using the services were asked about their general feelings about the GP Surgery including their experience of making an appointment, communications and the surgery environment. Conversations with staff included their thoughts about provision, appointment management, communication, staffing levels and support, including training. Relatives were asked to speak about their thoughts including how they felt about the experience their family member has had. The team also recorded their own observations on the environment and staff-service user interactions.

To retain confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, names, pronouns and any identifiable details have been removed from quotes; 'they/their' has been used throughout the report to refer to members of staff and patients.

## General Information

Lancaster Medical Practice serves 8 locations across the city borough of Lancaster. "The practice, as a whole, serves a very diverse demographic with a mixture of deprived and affluent areas across the city."

Lancaster Medical Practice manage patient appointments from a central hub where a team plans and manages appointments with professionals at sites across the whole geographic area. Lancaster Medical Practice have split their whole geographic boundary into four areas where care is provided. A dedicated central team provide an initial triage of patients' needs and then follow a flowchart to give appointments based on a planned and unplanned model. Appointments are triaged by the team and patients are directed according to their needs and allocated an appointment. Healthwatch representatives were presented with evidence showing how the practice have developed their own systems to make sure that it is fair and caters appropriately to the needs of patients in a sensitive and responsive manner.

A brief explanation of the appointment types is given below.

### Unplanned Appointments:

Unplanned appointments are for those who require medical attention within a maximum of 72 hours. Clinicians triage these patients' conditions and determine in what timeframe they should be treated.

### Planned Appointments:

Planned appointments are booked with a clinician in advance. The wait times can vary, in order to maintain continuity of care. They are intended for non-urgent, follow-up or review purposes. These are planned in advance and are allocated on a case-by-case basis.

There are three methods that patients can use to make an appointment

- Walk-in to book
- Telephone
- Online

Appointments can be face-to-face, via telephone, through an online consultation or home visits for severely ill or house bound patients.

## Summary:

### Appointment making.

Healthwatch Staff observed patients walking in to make appointments and observed how staff managed the process. The phone system monitoring was demonstrated and showed that wait times in the morning were around three minutes. At the time of the visit, the wait time on the phones was around one minute. There had been over 600 calls handled on the day of the visit which was noted as being normal for the time of day by the staff team. There is access to online appointment making through Patient Access which is a pop-up on the home page of the website.

### Staffing

The surgery was open with 4 GPs running clinics alongside other professionals servicing planned appointments for other areas. The reception area was manned at all times by two members of staff. The urgent care room was manned with a clinically trained member of staff on hand to support phone call enquiries. SLT were present on site and were monitoring appointments and enquiries

### Appointments

There was availability for unplanned appointments at the time of the visit with calls being answered whilst we were in attendance. Planned appointments were scheduled for patients throughout the day.

# Enter and View observations

## Location and external environment

The University Health Centre is located on Southwest drive on Campus. It was noted that there were patients travelling in from the local area to the site. There is a large car park at the front of the surgery with three disabled parking spaces near the entrance to the surgery. There is step-free access from the car park to the entrance of the Surgery. There are links to local bus services with bus stops nearby with a regular service being provided to the centre of Lancaster.

## Internal environment and reception

The surgery is split into two halves with GPs on one side and other practitioners on the other. The Reception area comprises a main desk and two waiting rooms. Chairs were set out to be Covid compliant with space between them. It was noted that there were no clocks in the waiting rooms. There were notices informing patients of the procedure if they had an excessive wait for their appointment.



There is a third waiting room where patients can wait in privacy for more sensitive appointments. Toilets were provided on both floors of the building with accessible toilets being provided. Disabled access includes automatic doors and lift access to the upper floor.



## Patient interactions

Healthwatch observed 9 interactions with patients in the reception area. All staff were respectful and patients were given clear and concise information in response to their enquiries. We observed an interaction with students from other countries and the staff made sure that patients knew about the different ways that contact could be made either through the online consult system or over the phone. Three patients were visiting to register with the surgery. They were given all relevant documentation and were informed if there was any information missing such as phone numbers or alternate methods of making contact and appointments. One staff member made sure that new patients had sufficient means to make contact such as an email address and an English phone number if they had recently entered the country.

Staff members call patients from the waiting room and walk with them to the clinical area. Due to confidentiality Healthwatch were unable to observe a full appointment with patients but we asked about their experiences after they had been seen.





## Patient Involvement

Information boards were displayed information about the structure of the staff team and patient participation groups. There was facility for information to be displayed on a TV screen. At the time of the visit this was not in use but staff did mention that it had been used prior to the visit.



# Feedback from patients

Healthwatch spoke to 9 patients who attended the surgery. Three were visiting to register with the practice.

## How did you make your appointment?

One patient visited for a scheduled review which they said was very simple to organise with the reception team. Four patients arranged appointments by walking in. The main reason for walking in to arrange appointments was that they felt it was quicker to call in to the surgery whilst they were on campus as they said "It is quicker to call in when I am on campus." One patient had made an appointment via telephone and they had not reported any issues with arranging it over the phone.

## What would you change about the process?

One patient reported that "There was a queue of ten people in front of them." when they phoned to make their initial appointment. When they were asked how long the wait was they said it was about five minutes.

Another patient commented that it can sometimes take a while to make an appointment when they phone for one. When asked about how long the average wait was they said about 5 minutes.

One patient was not happy that they had to wait to hear back from the surgery whilst they allocated them an appointment. They felt that there was no reason as to why they could not be given one at the time of the visit. They commented that they "just wanted an appointment."

### Have you seen an improvement in the wait times on the phone?

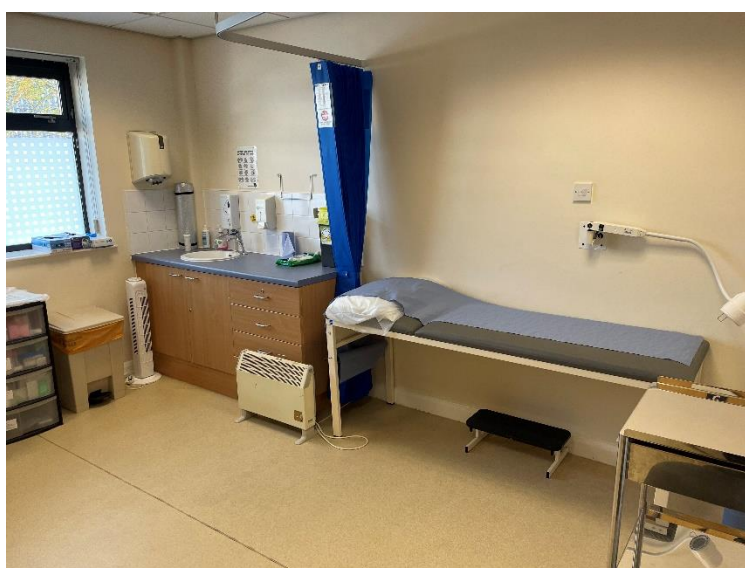
One patient had made their appointment over the phone and commented that they did not feel that the wait time was unnecessarily long.

### Would you be open to other methods of appointment making?

One patient commented that they felt the website was difficult to navigate and that it was not clear where to find Patient Access information.

### Do you feel that you receive care and treatment that meets your needs?

Out of the 9 patients Healthwatch talked to, 6 were positive about the care and treatment that they received from professionals. They felt that their needs were listened to and that the staff were knowledgeable about how to give them the best possible care. One patient stated that "I am happy with the care I receive." Three people were attending the surgery to register as patients.



## How do you rate the communication between yourself and the surgery?

Eight of the nine patients were positive about the members of staff they interacted with. They felt that staff answered questions and listened to them. One patient commented that staff were not very clear with their when they were explaining the appointments system as they did not understand why they needed to wait to hear when they would be allocated an appointment.

## Do you think the premises are well maintained, accessible and clean?

Most of the patients that were asked were positive about the environment. They felt that it was clear where they needed to go when they entered the building. They liked the fact that staff were friendly and kept them informed about where they needed to wait. One patient liked that staff came to the waiting room to collect them for their appointment saying “it feels welcoming.”



Do you know who to speak to if you are not happy with the service or want to complain about something?

Three out of the six patients knew where to find information about making a complaint. Two had only recently registered and felt that they had not had any cause to make a complaint. The sixth patient said that they would raise any issues with staff members if they needed to. They commented that "I always raise issues with the Reception team and they get dealt with."

General feedback (What do you like best about this GP Surgery? What keeps you coming back? Is there anything you don't like about this GP Surgery? What would make this GP Surgery better?)

Patients commented on how convenient it was to call in to the surgery, as it is located on the Southwest Road of the University. Three patients had not visited the surgery before but wanted to register as they lived on campus and the health centre had been recommended to them.

## Staff views

We spoke to 11 members of staff and members of the Senior Leadership team. The questions are designed to gauge staff opinion on patients' experiences.

### Do you have enough staff when on duty?

All members of staff commented that they felt there were enough staff in the surgery when it was open. One member of staff commented that they felt they needed more GP's because of growing patient demand. One member of staff said that "We are recruiting more new staff."

### Do you feel supported to deliver a person-centred experience?

Everyone agreed that the training and support provided by the surgery was good and allowed them to deliver a good level of care. One commented that "managers are very supportive when we feel that we need additional training." Management were particularly praised for being available to support and assist members of the team with any training needs. Several staff members complimented the different methods that are employed to promote staff development, such as shadowing, training afternoons, internal and external training courses.

## What is your experience of working here?

Staff expressed positive experiences whilst working at the surgery. They talked about how they had progressed in their role with some being a part of Lancaster Medical Practice for long time. They said that “I really enjoy it – the people are what keeps me here.”

## Are there any changes that can be made to improve the patient experience?

Three members of staff were concerned about the impact that higher demand could have on the patient experience. Members of staff commented that they felt more GP staff would make a difference in the response to patient demand across the practice. One member of staff commented “We could work together if we had 3 purpose-built buildings across the north, south and central of the river.”

One member of staff stated that the way the surgery works “it is a lot better than the practice that I go to.”

The senior leadership team explained the work they had conducted on improving wait times had yielded a positive impact. This involved creating the central hub and triage system which has led to the number of complaints falling over the last 12 months. They recognised what such a large geographic footprint presented, in terms of patient needs and expectations, and have conducted work to meet this “significant challenge”.

## Any other comments?

These are a selection of other comments that have been made by members of staff.

“This is a great site, I would be happy for my family to attend this practice.”

“The patients seem happy with our three sections of planned care.”

“Patients do get a good service and are assigned the correct clinician.”

## Recommendations for Improvement

The following areas for improvement have been highlighted from patient, relative and staff feedback. These are not Healthwatch Lancashire recommendations but rather, areas for improvement suggested by service users, relatives and staff.

1. Make the Waiting room more dementia friendly with a suitable clock that displays the date and time.
2. Continue to promote information regarding appointment making procedure for patients.
3. Continue to monitor phone waiting times and referrals for planned and unplanned appointments.



## Provider Response

Areas identified for improvement	Action from provider	When by	Comments
Making the waiting room more dementia friendly with a suitable clock that displays the time and date	Purchase and install dementia friendly clocks in the waiting room.	31.12.22	Thank you for identifying this opportunity to improve the environment of our waiting rooms. We will look to improve our waiting rooms in this way at the next opportunity.
Continue to promote information regarding appointment making procedure for patients	Continue to ensure reception teams provide suitable information to patients regarding the appoint making procedure. Provide ongoing social media communications to explain appointment making procedure to patients. Ensure website and patient waiting rooms communication continues to remain up to date on patient appointment making procedures	Ongoing	As a practice we have a large multi-disciplinary team, with a wide scope of professional practice and as such need to develop systems to ensure our patients can see the right health care professional at the right time and in the right place. This requires our teams to support patients through a variety of pathways within the practice to ensure the best possible care. By using our learning from the management of the pandemic and beyond we have successfully implemented a clinically led patient navigation system which enables this. We recognise that this may sometimes feel confusing to patients and endeavour to communicate our systems and processes with them at every opportunity, Our teams are trained in the practice appointment making procedure for patients and encouraged to explain this well to patients during their interactions with the practice. We welcome this feedback and will continue to ensure this aspect of our practice is included in staff training and will take an opportunity at upcoming staff training to reiterate the importance of informing patients of our systems. We will also take this opportunity to undertake a social media campaign to improve this communication and review the information present on our practice website and in our waiting rooms.

Continue to monitor phone waiting times and referrals for planned and unplanned appointments	Continue to monitor waiting phone waiting times for planned and unplanned appointments.	Ongoing	<p>Our receptionists and telephone call handlers have access to information which is made visible in offices throughout the practice. This provides information relating to current telephone wait time, average wait time for the day and longest wait time for the day which helps us to understand our performance in this area and identify any required improvements in real time. We have established robust monitoring procedures to ensure we maintain our improved telephone access for patients. Our telephone system allows for web-based monitoring dashboard to be available to the practice. This is monitored in a variety of ways at a number of management levels throughout the organisation on a live basis and overall performance is reviewed regularly by our Quality Team.</p> <p>We welcome the feedback provided by the Healthwatch Team and will continue to monitor our wait times to identify improvement opportunities.</p>
Completed by	Amy Williams Managing Partner	Date	23.11.22

## Questions

**Is the report factually accurate? If not please state what.**

The majority of this report is factually accurate. There is an opportunity to amend a small number of minor factual inaccuracies which will be shared with the Healthwatch team via an update telephone call.

**Did you learn anything new about residents' views and experiences, or anything else, as a result of the Enter and View undertaken by Healthwatch Lancashire?**

The Enter and View visit undertaken by Healthwatch Lancashire has been a welcome opportunity to reflect on our practice and share our work. We are grateful to the team at Healthwatch Lancashire for their professional and courteous approach to the Enter and View visit, in particular for ensuring this visit did not negatively impact on the practice or patient care at such a busy time. The report provided following the visit has provided useful insight and information relating to our current performance and will be used to further improve our practice.

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