

Great Harwood Medical Group

Enter and View Report

Friday 8th September 2023

11:00am – 13:00pm



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, visitors and patients who met members of the Enter and View team on that date.

Contact Details

Contact details:

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Registered Manager:

Sarah Lord

Date and Time of our Visit:

Friday 8th September 2023
11:00am-13:00pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Steven Walmsley (Engagement Team Leader)
John Moore (Volunteer)

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. The aim of an Enter and View visit is to gather views and experiences of patients and staff of a service and observe the environment to assess the quality of the service.

This was an announced Enter and View visit undertaken by authorised representatives who have the authority to enter health and social care premises, announced or unannounced.

The team collate feedback gathered and observations made to compile a report. The report identifies aspects of good practice as well as possible areas of improvement. Healthwatch Lancashire is an independent organisation, therefore we do not make judgements or express personal opinions, but rely on feedback received and objective observations of the environment. The report is sent to the manager for their opportunity to respond before being published on the Healthwatch Lancashire website at www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk.

Where appropriate, Healthwatch Lancashire may arrange a revisit to check the progress of improvements. The report is available to the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations.

General Information

Great Harwood Medical Group is located in the town of Great Harwood. The practice shares a building with two other practices and other community services. They provide general practice care and other services such as minor-surgery, well-person checkups and routine appointments.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Lancashire would like to thank patients, staff and management, for making us feel welcome and for taking the time to speak to us during the visit.

Methodology

Healthwatch Lancashire Enter and View representatives made an announced visit on Friday 8th September and received feedback from three patients and seven members of staff.

Conversations with patients and staff are adapted to capture individual experiences to help assess the quality of services. Patients 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.

Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives also recorded their own observations on the environment and staff interactions.

To retain confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, names, pronouns, and any identifiable details have been removed from quotes.



Summary

Healthwatch Lancashire representatives made an announced visit to Great Harwood Medical Group on the 8th of September. A pre-visit questionnaire was sent to the Practice Manager on the 10th August to find out more about the services offered by the practice and how they manage appointments for patients.

Surgery Demographic

There are 8,484 patients registered at the practice which serves residents of the town of Great Harwood and serves as a medical hub for the Hyndburn area. The building is shared with two other practices and different community service teams. The practice serves a diverse community with a wide array of ages being served. It was mentioned that due to the size and demographics of the area, often people may only be registered at the surgery for a short space of time before moving on to a different place.

Appointment Management

Appointments can be made over the phone and online using different apps, the practice is able to offer appointments to patients who use the MyGP app, the NHS app or Patient Access. The practice currently offers a combination of face-to-face and telephone appointments. It was explained that they offer appointments on different platforms to make the process available to a wide range of people who may wish to use a specific app and prevent the need for people to learn new apps and thus mitigates the potential for digital exclusion.

The Practice Manager explained that when patients book an appointment over the telephone, it is explained which practice member the appointment is with and the reasons why, especially when the patient hasn't been booked in with their named GP so that they are aware of the options that are available to them. This is intended to help patients understand that they are being directed to appropriate care and is part of an ongoing aim to fully educate patients about the care pathways that are available to them. There is a callback service available, where patients will receive a callback when they reach the front of the queue.

The phone line is operated by two dedicated members of staff and other members of the administration team can assist with calls during busy periods. Online appointments were available at the time of the visit and three members of staff were observed facilitating the appointments on the phonenumber. The surgery offers general practice appointments and offers minor surgeries and other clinical appointments such as blood tests and well-person checks.

Visit Summary

During the visit, Healthwatch representatives viewed facilities that were available. This included the self-check in system, the waiting areas, reception office and clinical rooms.

At the time of the visit, the following clinical staff were present, two full time GPs, and two advanced nurse practitioners. The surgery is open from 8am until 6:30pm five days a week.

Overall, the feedback from patients was positive with all patient responses being positive about the quality of care and the attitude of staff.

Enter and View observations

Location and External Environment

The practice is located on in the Great Harwood Medical Centre on Water Street in Great Harwood. There are two large car parks for patients to use, although only one was signposted as being a designated car park for the centre. There were several marked disabled parking bays near the entrance with level, step-free access leading up to the building. The entrance is clearly marked with a large sign visible from the car park.

Local bus services can be found less than half a mile away. A pharmacy is also available nearby for patients to collect their prescriptions.

Internal Environment and Waiting Area

Great Harwood Medical Group share the building with two other providers. The practice is located on the top floor of the medical centre which has two floors. All GP practices are located on the same floor and community services are located on the lower floor. They are accessible via stairway or lifts. The signage in and around the practice was clear, consistent and wherever possible at eye-level. The waiting room is shared between the three practices that occupy the building. Patients were free to sit wherever they wished on a range of different style chairs with and without arms for different mobility needs. They were also in a range of colours to aid with visual impairments. Clocks were behind desks and the floors were a matt wood-effect surface which helped support the practice to be a dementia friendly environment.

The self-check-in system was available directly next to the reception desk, opposite to the entrance. A number of patients were seen using this. Patients were called to their appointments using a display which called patients with an audio alert and displayed the name and room where patients needed to go. It was explained that some clinicians also travel to the waiting room to collect patients, particularly if they feel that the patient would benefit from some extra support or guidance around the practice.



The waiting room had different displays containing information about the patient participation group (PPG), diet and different services that were available to patients.

The reception desk is protected by a plastic screen, however there were several information posters attached to this which was seen to obstruct the view for patients speaking to reception staff. There were several information posters on the screen which made it difficult to see through the gaps that were there. It was noted that these were all printed in black and white and were not easy to read, especially when sat at a distance from the screen. Patients were observed moving from side-to-side or to the edge of the screen to find a gap that they could use to speak with a member of staff.

One notice mentioned that patients who needed to wait for a prolonged period of time would have any delays communicated with them by staff.

Toilets and communal areas were all clean and tidy. There were hand hygiene dispensers on the reception desk.

Patient Interactions

Healthwatch Representatives observed several interactions between staff and patients in the waiting room, on phone calls and at the end of consultations. Different enquiries were being handled by members of staff, who were observed to be courteous and polite with patients, often addressing them by name.

Staff were observed helping six patients who attended the surgery to make an enquiry. Each patient was helped in a calm and professional manner with staff providing advice on issues such as medication, appointments and general information although one patient did struggle to see and hear the staff through the screen as they moved around to see who they were speaking to. There was one patient who was waiting for some time in the waiting room who waited around 20 minutes for their appointment. Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives did not observe them seeking advice about the status of their appointment or a member of staff explaining the wait to them. They made their own way to their appointment when called.



Patient Involvement

The surgery has an active Patient Participation Group which meets regularly. Two representatives came to the surgery to speak with Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives about the work that they were doing in collaboration with the surgery. They also shared their thoughts on the patient experience. There was an advertisement on a noticeboard in the waiting room showing what activities they were involved with and some of the impact that they had.

The website is comprehensive and is kept regularly up to date with events, updates on vaccinations and the different appointment making options that are available to use. There are videos that explain how to use the online apps and a wide range of information about the services on offer. The practice has a Facebook page which used to inform patients about health conditions, vaccinations and events that are happening in the local area.



Patient feedback

Healthwatch representatives spoke with three patients at the visit. Observations were also made to look at the service that is provided by the surgery.

How did you make your appointment?

One patient that Healthwatch Lancashire representatives spoke with explained that they had phoned to make their appointment, "I phone in the morning, it didn't take too long." One patient commented that they felt the new callback system had had a positive impact but that it was only just being noticed by patients. "the callback service is a good improvement that people are starting to get used to." Two patients were observed making an enquiry about appointments at the reception desk and were allocated an appointment. One patient commented that they felt that things had improved since the practice had made provision for patients to make appointments online as it simplified the process. One patient commented that they felt there was a balance that needed to be struck with the appointment system as they knew about some patients who were in danger of becoming digitally isolated due to them not having access to the online resources. They thought it would be helpful to know where support was available to help people in this situation.

One patient commented that they felt there were issues with the Patches app, "this sometimes works well but not always." They explained that they felt the NHS app and MyGP app were much more reliable. One patient commented on the use of out of hours appointments saying that they felt that "sometimes out of hours appointments are used as a general appointment and not for an urgent issue." Which they saw as a wasted opportunity as patients who had more need to see a clinician weren't able to book one when it was needed. They felt that the information was not clear enough about out of hours appointments.



The call back service is a good improvement that people are starting to get used to.



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

One patient commented that they felt the care and treatment they received met their needs. They felt the surgery offered them a professional service, "I am given plenty of time and consideration." Which shows that they have been given the opportunity to properly explain their situation and were heard by members of staff that they spoke with.

Two patients were observed being greeted by a clinician and taken to their appointment. They appeared happy that they were greeted by their clinician and could be seen engaging with the member of staff as they left the waiting room. Two patients complimented the care offered by staff members "they are human with patients and understand what they are going through." They also gave examples of how they had been supported by a member of staff in a compassionate manner.

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

One patient said that they felt "they give the right information" to patients about their appointments and referrals. They explained that the PPG group had worked with the surgery to make sure that staff give appropriate advice to patients which they felt was having a positive impact on the patient experience.

One patient commented that they had witnessed patients being "awful to staff" but that the staff always responded to these issues in a professional manner with particular mention being made of a recent incident that they bore witness to where the staff "handled things very well" and the issue was quickly dealt with.

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

All three patients, that Healthwatch Lancashire spoke with, felt that the facilities were suitable and much better than the previous site that the practice occupied. Two patients made mention of how warm the centre could get and felt that it made them uncomfortable when they visited, particularly on a hot day.

Do you know who to speak to if you are not happy with the service or wish to make a complaint?

Two of the three patients that Healthwatch Lancashire spoke with were familiar with the complaints procedure in use at the practice. One patient commented, "I don't know, I guess I'd go on the website to look." They expanded on this by explaining how they felt that they did not know who would be best to approach if something had gone wrong.



Staff feedback

Healthwatch spoke to eight members of the staff team during the visit.

Do you have enough staff when on duty?

All eight members of staff felt that there were enough staff available during the day. One member of staff explained how the staff who respond to calls was handled. They mentioned that other members of the administration staff were able to assist with busy periods. "All staff are care-navigation trained." It was explained that a member of the clinical team assisted in the busy periods with call-handling to help the team navigate people to the most appropriate appointments. "They give advice and help us with the tricky enquiries." One member of staff explained how they thought it would be beneficial to have people's hours match the busier times but they understood that it was not always possible.

Do you feel supported to carry out a person-centred experience?

All members of the team felt that they were able to deliver a person-centred service to patients. One explained that they "try to give people the right appointments with the right people." They talked about how they try to explain to patients why they have been allocated an appointment with a particular member of staff to try and educate patients about their options which they felt was having a positive impact on the patient experience.

One member of staff explained how they try to give patients the time they need "I make the time, when I can, but it does mean I can be late with my next appointments." They explained how giving patients the time they needed benefited them because it allowed them to explain their issues properly. Staff members were observed throughout the visit asking questions of patients and giving them time to respond.

Do you feel you have enough training to carry out your duties well?

All staff spoken with were positive about the training. Particular mention was given to the way that mandatory training was managed where staff felt reassured that they were always up to date with their training. In a discussion with the Practice Manager it was explained that there are regular meetings that take place to clinically review patients with complex ailments to discuss treatments and ensure that they are being given the best care. The team get together to discuss clinical reviews and talk about how they can work together to deliver treatments and care. The practice is a teaching practice and hosts medical students on placement.

What is your experience of working here?

All eight members of the staff team complimented the atmosphere and explained how the team supported each other with their work. Particular mention was made about how members of the team help each other at busy times and how they could seek advice from line managers with issues and questions. They praised the “open door policy” and said that they always felt supported with their work.

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

Two members of staff explained about how they felt that the practice needed to do more work to educate patients about when they needed to see a particular clinician. “ I know it is a national thing but we need to keep looking at telling patients what they should do when they have a particular problem.” They pointed out that they were already taking steps to keep patients informed about their choices and were looking at how to continue this work as a practice.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated based on observations of the environment and feedback gathered from patients and staff.

1. Present information in an accessible format in the waiting areas using colour documents and a clutter free display
2. Continue to educate patients about different methods that are available to make appointments such as the online app or telephone system
3. Make sure that any updates that you provide on the website are also presented in an accessible format at the practice
4. Make sure that information about out of hours appointments and extended services is clear in the practice and on the website
5. Signpost patients to local organisations who can provide support to people who are at risk of being digitally excluded

Provider response

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe	Comments
1. Present information in an accessible format in the waiting areas using colour documents and a clutter free display	Rearrange posters so patients have a clear line of sight to Reception staff.	October 2023	
2. Continue to educate patients about different methods that are available to make appointments such as the online app or telephone system	PPG Patient Survey Review results and include educational information in the action plan.	March 2024	
3. Make sure that any updates that you provide on the website are also presented in an accessible format at the practice	Leaflets, handouts and posters to be displayed in the Reception area.	October 2023	

<p>4. Make sure that information about out of hours appointments and extended services is clear in the practice and on the website</p>	<p>Poster to be displayed in the Reception area.</p>	<p>October 2023</p>	
<p>5. Signpost patients to local organisations who can provide support to people who are at risk of being digitally excluded</p>	<p>All partners and staff to refer patients to Social Prescribers as required.</p>	<p>October 2023</p>	

Any other comments

“The visit was light touch and supportive. It was useful to receive independent feedback from staff and patients.”



healthwatch
Lancashire

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