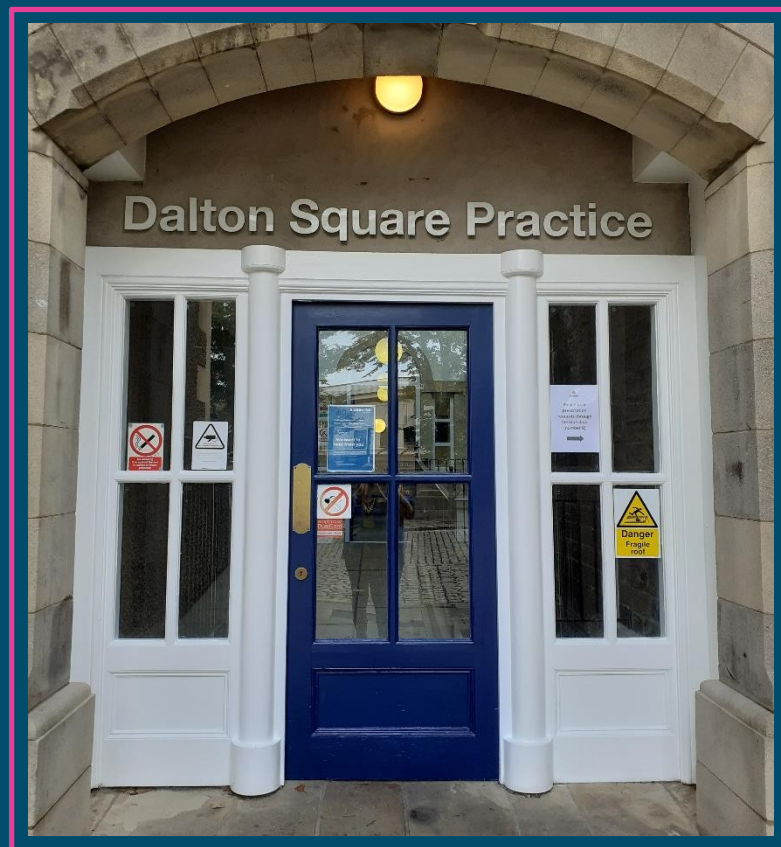


Dalton Square Practice (Lancaster Medical Practice)

Enter and View Report

Tuesday 26th September 2023, 1:00-3:00pm



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:

Dalton Square Practice
8 Dalton Square
Lancaster
LA1 1PN

Tel: 01524 551551

Registered Manager:

Amy Williams – Managing Partner

Date and Time of our Visit:

Tuesday 26th September
1:00-3:00pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Sue Edwards (Senior Engagement Officer)
Austin Staunton (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

Dalton Square Practice is part of the Lancaster Medical Practice group, which has eight medical practices across the Lancaster and district area and is part of the Lancaster Primary Care Network.

Lancaster Medical Practice has approximately sixty-eight thousand registered patients who can attend any practice dependant on individual choice, although all patients have a named GP at one of the practices.

Services include GPs, Advance Clinical Practitioners, Specialist Practitioners, Practice Nurses, Paramedics, Clinical Pharmacists, Social Prescribers, Health Coaches and administrative staff.

Acknowledgements

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

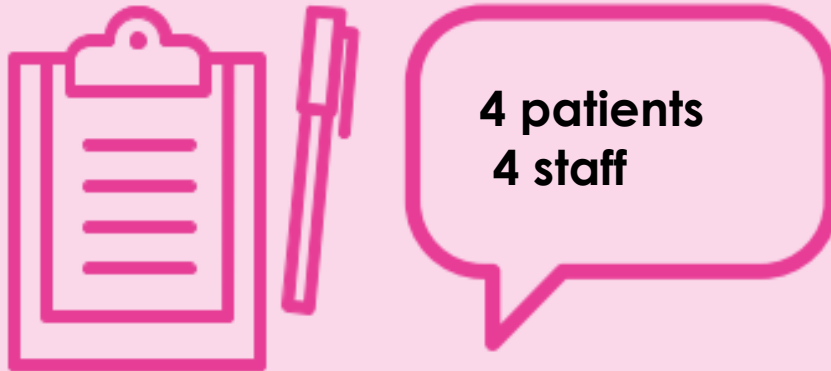
Methodology

The Enter and View representatives made an announced visit on Tuesday 26th September and received feedback from four Patients and four members of staff.

Healthwatch Lancashire obtain the views and experiences of patients and 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-member interactions.

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



Summary

Surgery Demographic

Dalton Square Practice is part of the Lancaster Medical Practice group. Lancaster Medical Practice has approximately sixty-eight thousand registered patients and covers the Lancaster district. The Medical Practice group includes Lancaster University Medical Practice, Galgate Medical Practice and several others; and has linked with Queens Square Medical Practice to form Lancaster Primary Care Network.

Lancaster Medical Practice has a wide demographic of patients covering both affluent and deprived areas of Lancaster, a large refugee population, university students and those with long-term conditions amongst many other seldom heard communities. Patients are able to access any of the practices dependant on personal choice and circumstance. All patients have a named GP at one of the practices and are able to see their preferred GP if appointments are made sufficiently in advance.

In order to reach communities who may not have easy access to healthcare Dalton Square Practice have regular themed health days such as autism, refugees, mother and baby etcetera. This allows for health checks, information and advice with relevant healthcare professionals and supporting charities and organisations in a more suitable and welcoming environment for those who may find a busy practice overwhelming.

Appointment Management

Appointments can be made via the online system Patches, over the telephone or in person at reception. Patients are triaged and will see the most appropriate healthcare professional. Lancaster Medical Practice has easy access to booking appointments on their website, which also offers health advice and information. Patients are able to request a video or phone consultation rather than a face to face if they find it preferable. Lancaster Medical Practice also has a Care at Home team for those who may be housebound and are unable to physically access the Practice.

On arrival patients can check-in themselves using an electronic system and patients were also observed checking-in with reception staff.

For those needing interpretation services these can be provided face to face if booked in advance or via the telephone, and this includes British Sign Language (BSL).

Visit Summary

The Dalton Square Practice team were welcoming to Healthwatch Lancashire representatives and gave in-depth information about their services. As the practice is part of the Lancaster Medical Practice it was explained that there is continual development based on feedback from all the Medical Practices in the group and that good practice is shared between teams.

There was a lot of information for patients available within the practice with further advice and support available through the website which was very informative and easy to use.

Services provided at Dalton Square were extensive and included GPs, Clinical Practitioners, Paramedics, Practice Nurses, Clinical Pharmacists, a Mental Health Team, Social Prescribers and many others; as well as a research team who work in partnership with Lancaster University, and who engage with patients that have lived experience of current research programs.

Lancaster Medical Practice has an active Patient Participation Group (PPG) and are actively seeking to diversify the group and gain more young people and student members.

Overall patients were satisfied with the Dalton Square Practice. Patients were observed to be seen quickly, and two patients were seen to walk in and be able to see a GP within a short timescale.

Staff were praising of their work environment and stated that they felt heard, well supported and able to provide person-centred care.



Enter and View observations

Location and External Environment

Dalton Square Practice is located in Dalton Square, Lancaster, and is situated within the city centre as well as being in close proximity to Lancaster Town Hall. The Royal Lancaster Infirmary is also less than a mile away.

The practice is based in a three storey building which forms part of the historic setting of the area, and there are small public gardens opposite the practice. The entrance to the practice is set back from the footpath and not easily identifiable on first visit, however, due to the nature of the buildings in the area this is unavoidable and the practice has put up clear signage to help address this.

The building is English Heritage Grade II listed which means that restrictions are in place around any development, alterations or changes to the building. The building dates back to 1800 and has been altered and adapted over time for different uses so there was no clear layout but space has been utilised well within the constraints of the building.

There is good public transport to the area, and road access allows for drop off/pick up, but local car parks need to be used for anyone driving to the practice.

Access into the building is level from the footpath and with good accessibility for wheelchair users and those with poor mobility.

Internal Environment and Waiting Area

On entering the building a corridor leads into the main waiting room, access to the reception is off to one side in a separate space but is clearly identifiable. Space around the reception desk was a bit restrictive but queues could overspill into the waiting room where there was ample space. There were two small consultation rooms leading off from the reception space, and it was explained to Healthwatch Lancashire representatives that these spaces are used for multiple purposes from private consultations to small staff meetings. For security both rooms were kept locked and a key was acquired from reception staff.

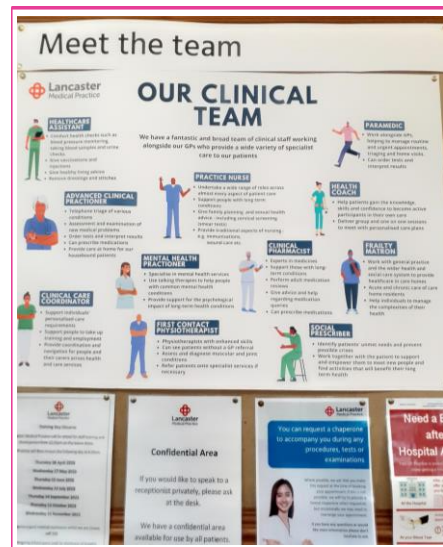
Various rooms led off from the central waiting area to GPs and other clinical and non-clinical teams, there were also stairs leading to the other floors and services, some of which had their own small waiting rooms. A quiet room was available for anyone with autism, dementia or any other needs such as shielding. There was a visitors toilet located on the ground floor which was easily accessible, clean and with some equipment for those with disabilities.

An electronic check-in point was available for patients arriving for appointments, although one patient commented that it hasn't been working for several weeks so hadn't realised it was working again. There was also a display screen in the main reception area which was being used to provide general information such as the role of the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

There was a lot of information on display around the waiting room with posters showing job roles of both the clinical and non-clinical teams, information about the Patient Participation Group (PPG) and the Friends and Family Test (FFT). Patients also had the option to take and record their own blood pressure with a free-standing blood pressure monitor available to one side of the main waiting area; results from this could be handed into reception staff who will then pass on to the relevant clinician.

There was no lift to other floors within the practice, however those with poor mobility were observed to have staff come to them and ground floor consultation rooms being used. Due to the fact that the building is listed and has building restrictions a lift can't be installed, however the practice team have made reasonable adjustments to account for this.

Hearing loop signs were evident, and during discussion with staff it was explained that there is a British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation service if booked in advance.



Patient Interactions

When phoning the practice to arrange the visit there was some difficulty identifying the relevant practice manager to speak to and it was explained that some staff are flexible between practices meaning differing staff are available at any given time.

Staff were seen to be professional, friendly and efficient. Reception staff were seen to be knowledgeable and helpful and had an approachable manner. There was a calm atmosphere and staff demonstrated good understanding of individual needs and requirements.

Patients were called into appointments verbally by a member of staff and taken to the relevant consultation room. Staff were seen to support those with mobility needs and were reassuring to those who were unable to move quickly to take their time and be safe. Staff were observed knowing their patients well and being very welcoming and friendly.

Discussion with Lancaster Medical Practice management determined that the practice holds regular health days, when the main practice is closed, to carry out health checks and give advice and information for specific groups such as those with autism, refugees, mother and baby etcetera; this allows for those with special needs or who may struggle to access weekday services to have a better experience of visiting the practice, as well as meeting the needs of those who may find regular visits overwhelming and/or stressful.

Practice staff talked about their research programmes that are undertaken at Lancaster Medical Practice in partnership with Lancaster University, and how they involve patients as much as possible by working with those of lived experience; as well as keeping patients informed of any findings. This was also evidenced by information available within the main waiting room.

During the visit a member of the public came into the practice saying they suddenly felt quite unwell; staff immediately acted and quickly arranged for a GP to see them despite not having an appointment. On speaking with the member of the public once they had started to feel better they stated that they had been treated exceptionally well and even offered a taxi to take them home; they felt that this was above and beyond and described the team as “wonderful”.

Patient Involvement

Lancaster Medical Practice uses the online system Patches for making appointments, contacting the practice and for health advice. This was identifiable and accessed easily on the Homepage of the practice website. On discussion with staff it was determined that patients can make appointments through Patches, by telephone or in person at reception, and they can choose which local practice they wish to attend.

The website covers all the practices managed by Lancaster Medical Practice and is informative, clearly set out and easy to use; finding practice contact numbers is straightforward and there is an explanation of options for services when phoning.

Dalton Square Practice has an active Patient Participant Group (PPG) with approximately fifty members registered, however, it was explained to Healthwatch Lancashire representatives that some of these are currently inactive and staff are in the process of contacting individuals to confirm if they wish to continue in the group. It was also explained that despite having a practice at Lancaster University they are struggling to recruit young people and students to the group so they are currently considering how they can attract more patients from different demographics. Leaflets for the PPG were clearly displayed in the practice and there is information on the website with the ability to sign up online.

Patient feedback

Healthwatch representatives spoke with four patients during the visit. The practice called patients into their appointments quickly upon arrival so several patients were called in before Healthwatch Lancashire representatives had the opportunity to talk to them and patients preferred to leave the practice immediately after their appointment. Three patients declined to share their experiences with Healthwatch Lancashire representatives with one stating that they are new to the practice so have not had time to form an opinion, another stated that they preferred to sit quietly whilst waiting to see the GP and one did not give a reason.

Those that engaged with the Healthwatch team were at the practice for various reasons including seeing a GP or other healthcare professional, making an appointment and general queries.

Due to the fact that patients were called into their appointments quickly conversations were short and those that engaged preferred not to carry on with conversation following their appointment.

How did you make your appointment?

Out of the four patients spoken with one had made an appointment over the telephone, one had been invited in by the practice to discuss their long-term condition, and two had made an appointment by walking in, both of whom were able to see a GP within half an hour.

One patient stated that they do not use online booking and that they always phone to make an appointment stating *"I always ring, it can be a long wait but you always get through"*. Another patient stated *"I just walked in, they were wonderful"*.

Another of the patients spoken with stated *"it's quite easy"* [to make an appointment].



"I can't praise them enough"



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

One of the patients spoken with was called into their appointment so ended the conversation at this point, one stated “yes”, one stated “I’ve not been before so I don’t know” and another stated “absolutely wonderful” and “I can’t praise them enough”. One patient stated “I like coming to see the doctor”. Another patient stated that the fact that they are in a wheelchair is accounted for and that their needs around this are met.

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

Out of the three patients who fed back on communication one stated that they are a new patient so were unable to comment and two said communication was good “very good, no complaints”.

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

Two patients provided feedback about the premises “it’s alright” and “very busy, but nice”; the third patient was new to the practice and didn’t feel able to comment until they had seen more of the premises.

Observations showed the premises to be clean, well maintained and with good accessibility.

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

Of the three patients who provided feedback two stated that they would know who to speak to if they were not happy with the service or wished to make a complaint; one patient stated that they would not know who to speak to or how to make a complaint.



Staff feedback

Healthwatch spoke to four members of the staff team during the visit. Staff spoken with were in various roles including clinical and non-clinical. Staff were observed interacting with patients and appeared to be confident in their roles. The team was observed to be working well together and communicating appropriately with each other.

Do you have enough staff when on duty?

Overall staff felt that there was sufficient staff on duty, although one staff member commented *“more staff would be wonderful if funding allowed”*. Other comments included *“with the staff we have we deliver well and are safe, caring and compassionate”*. One staff member stated *“not every day due to things like staff sickness in which case it means fitting in extra appointments”* although it was acknowledged that if an issue was raised with management around feeling the pressure this would be listened to and resolved.

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

All staff spoken with felt that they were able to carry out a person-centred experience. Comments included *“yes, although we always strive to go further and do better”*, *“I feel I’m allowed to develop more than in other roles I’ve had elsewhere”*, *“I have felt supported through all the COVID changes and the changes we’ve made post COVID”* and *“yes, even though things can be difficult I love coming to work”*.

Staff spoken with also stated that they felt supported through their regular supervisions and annual appraisals.

What measures are there in place for people with disabilities such as people with physical impairments or who are Deaf?

Discussion with practice staff determined that there is a hearing loop system in place, interpreters are available, including British Sign Language (BSL), and if booked sufficiently in advance these can be face to face. Space within the waiting room allowed for easy access of wheelchairs and other mobility aids. Practice staff also explained that they provide extra support based on individual needs for those with visual/hearing impairments, autism, dementia and the such. Quiet rooms were available for those who may find the general waiting areas overwhelming, and consultations were being carried out in the most appropriate space for the individual.

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

All staff spoken with felt that they have sufficient training in order to be able to carry out their duties with comments including “yes we have lots of training opportunities” and “yes I’ve had plenty of training and if I’ve identified training needs it’s provided”.

What is your experience of working here?

All four staff members spoken with were positive about their experience of working at the practice, comments included “great, thoroughly enjoy working here”, “a great place to work”, “always well supported and heard”, “fantastic hard working team, patient centred, well supported”, “enjoy working for the practice, it’s the people who work here, we have good staff morale”, “really good, we all share and muck in”, “compliments and good practice are shared” and “Lancaster Medical Practice is a great place to work and gives great services to patients”.

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

Staff members spoken with stated that there has been a lot of positive changes since the pandemic as this had given the team the opportunity to review the patient experience and identify ways of improvement “we’ve made a lot of positive changes post COVID” and “we have a voice in how things are done”. One staff member stated “when things come up I feel that we are quite responsive, I definitely have a voice”. One staff member felt that a “new purpose built building” would help towards improving the patient experience.

Recommendations

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

1. Include varied seating types in waiting rooms including differing heights and types to account for individual needs and requirements
2. Have a clear point of contact for a named Practice Manager (Dalton Square Practice) for patients who may wish to speak with them direct; possibly by displaying staff structure with staff photographs to work alongside clinical/non-clinical roles posters and enable patients to have quick reference as to who they may be seeing
3. Have clear information around the complaints procedure so that all patients are aware on how to raise a concern or issue; this could be achieved by promoting the Compliments, Comments and Complaints area more.
4. Continue to develop the Patient Participant Group (PPG) and continue striving towards a more diversified group

Provider response

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe	Comments
1. Include chairs of varying heights/types in waiting rooms	See comments	ongoing	<p>All chairs at Dalton Square are NHS compliant, fluid impervious, infection control standard items.</p> <p>We are sourcing chairs with different heights/types including investigating the use of chair risers.</p> <p>We do provide chairs with and without arm rests in order to assist mobility (as seen on photo of waiting area).</p>
2. Clearer information of staff structure on display for patients to be able to identify/contact practice manager	See comments	ongoing	<p>We will explore our admin staff structure and photographs. Each of our sites has its own admin manager and we agree that it would be clearer for patients to publicise this alongside our clinical team posters.</p>
3. Have clear information around the complaints procedure	See comments		<p>There is a dedicated compliments/comments and complaints area which contains all our complaints leaflets and procedures and also encourages patients to give positive feedback (which we always share with our staff).</p> <p>We will continue to ensure that the posters in each waiting area regarding the complaints procedures are prominently displayed and clearly direct patients to the compliments/comments/complaints area.</p>
4. Continue to develop and diversify the Patient Participant Group (PPG)	See comments	ongoing	<p>We will continue to work hard to encourage this.</p>



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