

Garstang Medical Practice Enter and View Report

Friday 1st December 2023, 10:00am-12:30pm



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.

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Date and Time of our Visit:

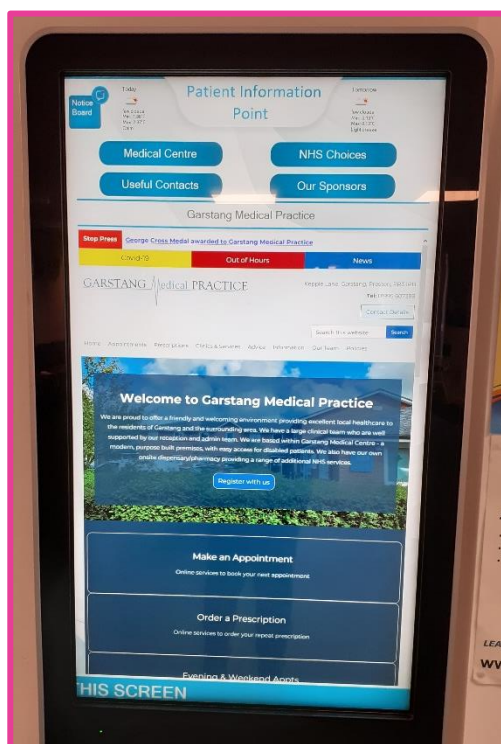
Friday 1st December 2023

10:00am-12:30pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Sue Edwards (Senior Engagement Officer)

Seraphine Dike (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

Garstang Medical Practice has approximately 20400 registered patients including patients in nursing/care homes, those who may be housebound and residential students at nearby Myerscough College; as well as the rural and farming community. Patient registrations are increasing rapidly due to extensive housing development currently being undertaken in the Garstang area.

Services include GPs, Advanced Clinical Practitioners, Specialist Practitioners, Practice Nurses, a Paramedic, Clinical Pharmacist Prescribers, health visitors, Social Prescribers, a mental health team, Physiotherapists, Audiologists 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 Friday 1st December and received feedback from eight Patients and six 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

Garstang Medical Practice has approximately twenty thousand four hundred registered patients and covers the Garstang area. Patient registrations are currently increasing due to on-going housing development in Garstang and surrounding areas. The practice is part of The Wyre Rural Extended Neighbourhood (WREN) Primary Care Network which includes medical practices in Garstang, Great Eccleston, Kirkham and Poulton-Le-Fylde.

The medical practice has a wide demographic of patients including those from rural and farming communities, static caravan parks, students from nearby Myerscough College and a growing population of young working families.

Appointment Management

Appointments can be made by telephone or in person at reception; appointments for some services such as blood tests and vaccinations can be made online. Patients are triaged and signposted to the most appropriate healthcare professional at the practice, although they are still able to see a GP if preferred. In order to improve patient experience when phoning to make appointments the practice has a higher number of staff answering the phone during peak call times as well as a staff supervisor to support, several other members of staff are trained on telephone appointment booking and can step in if/when required.

All patients have a named GP and are able to see their preferred GP if appointments are made sufficiently in advance. Garstang Medical Practice also has a Care at Home team for those who may be housebound and are unable to physically access the Practice; as well as providing medical care for patients in local care and nursing homes. There are out of hours appointments available with access to alternative medical practices registered with The Wyre Rural Extended Neighbourhood (WREN) Primary Care Network when Garstang Medical Practice is closed.

For those needing interpretation services these can be provided via the telephone or video link (as appropriate) and this includes British Sign Language (BSL).

Visit Summary

The practice team were welcoming to Healthwatch Lancashire representatives and gave in-depth information about their services.

Services provided at the practice were extensive and included GPs, Clinical Practitioners, a Paramedic, Practice Nurses, a Mental Health Team, Clinical Pharmacist Prescribers, Social Prescribers and many others.

Garstang Medical Practice has an active Patient Participation Group (PPG) and both the practice and PPG were seen to work together in order to continually improve the patient experience. Healthwatch Lancashire representatives were

greeted by the PPG Chair during the visit who was warm and welcoming and happy to provide information from the patient perspective.

Overall patients were satisfied with Garstang Medical Practice and the care and treatment that they receive. Methods of making appointments varied with some preferring online and others preferring to telephone or call in; some patients found making appointments challenging at times whereas others had no issues. Parking was the main issue raised by patients during the visit.

Staff were generally positive of their work environment and felt that they were able to provide person-centred care. Staff spoken with felt that training at the practice was good and that if they requested training which they felt would be beneficial to their role it would be provided. There were some issues raised around team division and communication, and some staff felt undervalued. There were also comments around how working on reception can be challenging.



Enter and View observations

Location and External Environment

Garstang Medical Practice is located on Kepple Lane, Garstang, to the south of Garstang town centre. The practice is in close proximity to the A6 Preston Lancaster New Lane which links Preston and Lancaster City Centres; and Kepple Lane runs between the A6 and Garstang town centre.

Myerscough College is located approximately five miles from the practice and has over eight hundred residential students meaning that the practice has a high number of student patients registered. Due to the rural aspect of Garstang there is also a high number of patients from the farming and rural communities including those from several nearby static caravan parks. As a result of large-scale housing development being carried out in the Garstang area there is currently a transition in population demographics occurring from a high number of retired and farming communities to younger working families; and this is driving a re-evaluation of services and how these are being provided at Garstang Medical Practice to ensure all community needs continue to be met.

There is public transport to the area although the nearest bus stop is located on Moss Lane which is approximately half a mile away from the medical practice. There is good road access with on-site parking including disabled parking spaces, and some street parking was also available. Disabled and emergency vehicle parking spaces in the carpark were clearly defined.

Garstang Medical Practice is based in a modern purpose built two-storey building with Kepple Lane Pharmacy also located within the building. The building appeared in good repair, and established planting was seen throughout the outdoor space giving a pleasant green feel to the site. Access into the building is level from the footpath with good accessibility for wheelchair users and those with poor mobility.

On arrival at the medical centre it was a little unclear as to where the main entrance was; there were signs stating blue/red entrance but if new to the practice then it wouldn't be clear what either of these signified unless specified by practice staff beforehand.

Internal Environment and Waiting Area

The practice building was divided into two halves known as the Red and blue areas; this is due to two medical practices merging and the building becoming one medical centre. Both sides of the building mirror each other and services are

provided across all areas with patients being told to check in to the red or blue receptions at the time of making appointments.

Reception desks were located immediate upon entry into the building and these were easily identifiable. Both reception desks led directly into large waiting rooms; further waiting rooms were located on the second floor. All waiting rooms and reception areas were seen to be clean, well-lit and free from obstructions.

Waiting rooms were large and spacious with seating of varied heights and types accounting for individual needs. There was sufficient room for those in wheelchairs, using mobility aids etcetera to move around freely. Two lifts were located centrally for access to the second floor and these were large in size allowing for easy access. Stairs were also situated centrally and a fire evacuation chair was located next to the stairs on the second level for in the event of an emergency.

Consultation rooms and offices were located leading off from the reception and waiting room areas on both floors and these were clearly marked and easily identifiable; although it was felt that further dementia friendly signage would be of benefit around the corridor areas for those who have limited capacity or may become easily confused. Quiet rooms were available for anyone requiring space for confidential, sensitive conversations and for those who may have dementia/Alzheimer's, autism or other long-term conditions and who may benefit from a less stimulating environment whilst waiting for appointments.

Toilets and a baby changing area were located centrally within the practice and these were clearly identifiable, clean, well presented and with appropriate adaptations and equipment for accessibility.

Large free-standing touchscreen systems were located in the first floor waiting rooms which had app versions of the website allowing for patients to access health advice and information, look at services etcetera and if/when available make online appointments. There were also large screen monitors in the waiting rooms showing health advice and information as well as calling patients into their appointments. It was noted that when announcing appointments on the monitors there was an announcement notification but no other audio to enable those with visual impairments to be aware that they had been called in to their appointment. Nurses were observed meeting patients in the waiting room and accompanying them in to their appointment although this did not appear consistent across differing GPs/clinicians. Garstang Medical Staff informed Healthwatch Lancashire representatives that they have patients individual needs recorded on their patient records and should someone require extra support to attend their appointment this will be provided on an individual basis.

Practice and health information was displayed throughout the communal spaces including information about the Patient Participation Group (PPG). There was also a featured display of information around cardiac risks for young people. The Healthwatch Lancashire poster announcing the visit was displayed clearly.

It was felt during the visit that space in the waiting rooms was underused and there was scope to display more information and/or increase patient feedback such as the Friends and Family Test, Compliments, Comments and Complaints etcetera. There is also the possibility of introducing features such as a blood pressure monitor enabling patients to take their own blood pressure and provide

results to reception or clinical staff which would help work towards preventative medicine.

Accessibility was observed to have been considered throughout the practice, although it was felt during the visit that more dementia friendly signs could be added in some of the corridors for consultation rooms etcetera, and that larger more dementia friendly clocks could be used. Overall though the practice was seen to be dementia friendly with contrasting colours, plain carpets and good lighting.

Hearing loop signs were evident, and during discussion with practice staff it was explained that there is a British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation service available via Facetime/Microsoft Teams. There were also interpreter services available by telephone for patients whose English is not their first language.

During the visit Lancashire Fire and Rescue Services were carrying out fire safety checks, and practice staff were observed being accommodating and working with the fire and rescue services to ensure that they had good fire safety measures in place.



Patient Interactions

On contacting the practice to arrange the visit the manager was found to be welcoming and provided detailed information regarding the medical practice.

Staff were observed to be professional, friendly and efficient. Reception staff were seen to be knowledgeable and helpful and had an approachable manner.

Patients were called into appointments quickly and whilst there was a steady flow of people coming in and out there was a calm atmosphere; and staff demonstrated good understanding of individual needs and requirements.

Patients were notified of their appointment on a large monitor which gave a notification sound and stated patient name, who they were seeing and which room to go to. Notifications on the screens were clear and easy to read, although

there was no accompanying audio. Some patients were collected by a member of staff and taken to the relevant consultation room. Staff were observed knowing their patients well and being welcoming and friendly.

Patient Involvement

The website for Garstang Medical Practice is easy to use with lots of information around services, the practice team and their roles, health advice and making appointments; although it should be noted that online booking for GPs and Nurse Practitioners was not available at the time of this report with the statement *Due to the current high demand on our services, we are unable to provide online bookable GP/NP appointments at this time*. Appointments can be made in person at reception or by telephone, and some appointments such as blood clinics can still be booked online. Garstang Medical Practice uses the iPlato platform as well as Patient Access and MyGP apps.

The practice is currently reviewing their appointment booking and triage system in order to determine an accessible and most appropriate method for not only making an appointment but ensuring that the patient will see the most appropriate clinical or non-clinical team in order to suit patients of all demographics.

Garstang Medical Practice offers weekend appointments in order to allow for access by those who may not be able to visit during usual surgery hours. As part of the Wyre Rural Extended Neighbourhood (WREN) Primary Care Network group patients are able to attend appointments in Great Eccleston, Kirkham and Poulton-Le-Fylde for out of hours appointments when Garstang Medical Practice is closed.

Healthwatch Lancashire representatives were warmly met by the Chair of the Patient Participation Group (PPG) who had specifically attended in order to speak about the practice from the Patient Participation Group (PPG) perspective. It was clear that the group was very active at Garstang Medical Practice, and that the two had a good working relationship where patient feedback is actively sought and listened to.

Patient feedback

Healthwatch representatives spoke with eight 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 have in-depth conversations and patients preferred to leave the practice immediately after their appointment.

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.

How did you make your appointment?

Out of the eight patients spoken with one stated that they had made an appointment by calling in and speaking with reception staff and that this was their preferred way of booking appointments; one patient had received a telephone call from the practice to arrange the appointment and stated that they usually phone to arrange appointments; four patients stated that they had phoned to make appointments and two said that the nurse or midwife had helped them make appointments.

One patient stated that it's *"Very effective to book online or call"*, whilst two patients said that they don't use the app *"Tried to use the app but I got confused"* and *"I've got the app but I've never used it"*. One patient who provided feedback queried why the app can't be used to book appointments for children.

Other comments included *"It can be a bit awkward to book appointments"*, *"I was on the phone over half an hour before I got through"* [when making an appointment] and *"Easy"* [making an appointment].

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

All eight of the patients who provided feedback were positive overall regarding the care and treatment that they receive *"The best it's ever been"*, *"Yes one hundred percent"*, *"Very good at attending to children"*, *I'm very happy with the way things are"* and *"It meets my needs"*; although one patient stated that they don't always feel believed by the GP until test results confirm what they are saying.

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

Out of the eight patients who fed back on communication seven stated that they were satisfied and one stated that there was room for improvement, comments included *"Very good, helpful"*, *"Very good, never had any problems whatsoever"*, *"I get information every time I ask a question"* and *"Room to improve communication of [test] results back to patients"*.

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

Seven patients provided feedback around the premises; one patient was called in to their appointment at this point so was unable to continue with the conversation. All seven patients were positive about the building *"Very good, very smart"*, and *"Good"*. Several patients commented on the carpark *"The surgery is good aside*

from the access to carpark”, “Needs a bigger carpark” and “Carpark not accessible”.

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?

Out of the eight patients spoken with six provided feedback to this question as two patients had been called into their appointments so conversations had ended. Four stated that they would know who to speak to if they were not happy with the service or wished to make a complaint, although two of these said that they would speak to reception staff as they did not know a specific person; two patients stated that they would not know who to speak to or how to make a complaint. One patient stated that they would be reticent in speaking to reception staff as “everyone can hear”. One patient spoken with told Healthwatch Lancashire representatives that a suggestion or feedback form is needed, which indicates that whilst feedback forms such as the Friends and Family Test (FFT) are available patients are not aware of the this and feedback forms need displaying more prominently.



“The best it’s ever been”



Staff feedback

Healthwatch spoke to six 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?

Out of the six members of staff spoken with one preferred not to answer as was in a senior role, three stated that they felt sufficiently staffed *"Have enough staff for a day duty"*, and two staff members felt that staffing levels needed increasing *"Not always, needs attention"* and *"Need more staff to work effectively"*.

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

All staff spoken with felt that overall they were supported to carry out a person-centred experience *"...always looking out for their [staff] mental health"*. Several staff fed back that it is difficult for patients to have same day appointments with a specific GP *"Getting continuity [of care] with same GP is difficult if same day care"* and *"It is always difficult to get a particular GP on the day"*. Two members of staff spoke about GPs retaining appointment slots at the end of the day for those in need of last minute appointments *"There are protected slots for people who wish to see a particular GP"* and *"GPs protect slots for last minute appointments"*. One member of staff commented on the internal communication system via text and stated that this worked well for them. There were also positive comments around having work-based champions and a Freedom to Speak up guardian.

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, and that interpreters are available for British Sign Language (BSL) through Facetime or Microsoft Teams, although some of the deaf community will bring their own interpreters to their appointments. Interpreters are also available by telephone for those whose English is a second language. Practice staff also explained that they provide extra support based on individual needs for those with visual/hearing impairments, autism, dementia etcetera. 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. Observations showed that there is ample space within the waiting rooms to allow for easy access of wheelchairs and other mobility aids.

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 really good, we can add our own CPD [continuous personal development]”, “Yes a lot of training”* and *“Yes, I asked to do a course and they delivered, and they give you time to do...”*

What is your experience of working here?

Out of the six members of staff spoken with four were satisfied working at Garstang Medical Practice *“I love it”, “I like coming to work”, “Nice, good experience working with the team”, “The manager listens to the complaints of the staff”, “open to change”, “the ability we have to communicate”, “Really nice team”* and *“I’m massively proud of what we have achieved”*. The Nursing staff team were less satisfied stating that they felt improvements were required *“not overly valued... the teams are so separated, it needs attention... poor communication between the management and the teams”, “Sometimes feel undervalued... keep us separate, don’t know the rest of the team”* and *“The nurses are not supported with their needs and they don’t ask for their [nursing team] opinions”*. Several members of staff spoke about how working on reception can be challenging.

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

Better communication between the practice, staff and teams was raised by several members of staff *“Yes better communications, regular meetings, being informed about changes”* and *“More communication so we know what’s happening in the day-to-day running”*. One staff member suggested a team building day to build better interdepartmental staff relationships. One member of staff commented that a larger carpark is needed, and another suggested a larger building may be required in the future as the practice continues to expand as the patient register grows.



Recommendations

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

1. Continue to review current booking systems in order to help improve patient experience around making appointments; especially considering patient numbers are increasing rapidly which will create added pressure. This could be achieved by various methods, and patient involvement by the Patient Participation Group (PPG) could support in ascertaining patient needs and preferences. There is the potential for discussion with other practices around sharing good practice to determine systems that work well. This would also help alleviate some of the challenges faced by reception staff.
2. Consider communication methods around test results to ensure patients are fully informed.
3. Consider further dementia friendly signage around consultation room areas and larger clocks in waiting rooms.
4. Utilise waiting room spaces more, for example by displaying information around staff and their roles which will help patients have better understanding around triaging and signposting. Make the Friends and Family Test (FFT) and complaints, compliments and comments forms more prominent in order to gather more feedback from patients.
5. Look at the carpark and see if/how this can be improved to provide better access.
6. Look at staff communication and how this can be improved so that all staff feel fully informed, included and aware of any changes; possibly by more interdepartmental team meetings which will help ensure that all teams feel valued and heard.
7. Continue to develop the Patient Participant Group (PPG) and continue striving towards a more diversified group especially as the patient demographics are currently undergoing change. A more diverse patient group will ensure that all patient communities are represented and have a voice.

Provider response

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe	Comments
Continue to review current booking systems in order to help improve patient experience around making appointments	We do regularly review our appointment system to ensure we are providing the most accessible service.	Ongoing	In line with national guidance, we will be looking at more online booking options for patients in the future.
Consider communication methods around test results to ensure patients are fully informed.	We encourage patients to sign up for online access so that they can see their results. Clinicians communicate results that require action via text or letter. Results that require no action are not routinely communicated and patients are informed of this when bloods are taken.	Ongoing	Difficult to comment on one individual patient's experience. It isn't a problem that has been highlighted previously.
Consider further dementia friendly signage around consultation room areas and larger clocks in waiting rooms.	Will review	Within 3 months	Appropriate signage to be ordered and advice noted re larger clocks which will also be looked in to.
Utilise waiting room spaces more. Make the Friends and Family Test (FFT) and complaints, compliments and comments forms more prominent in order to gather more feedback from patients.	Will review	By 31/3/24	Will ensure forms are readily available for patients.
Look at the carpark and see if/how this can be improved to provide better access.	Under review	12-24 months	This is a landlord issue with limited options to improve. We hope to work with the landlord to ensure the car park is only utilised by patients and staff and not by the general public using as a

			public car park and then walking into the town.
Look at staff communication and how this can be improved so that all staff feel fully informed, included and aware of any changes.	We hold monthly staff meetings to ensure staff are kept up to date and informed. We also have a suggestion box. We will review having a monthly staff newsletter.	ongoing	<p>We are disappointed that the report only included some negative comments from the nursing team and did not include more of the positive comments we know were made. We have held nurse meetings to discuss the comments and none of the team raised concerns either in the meeting or individually outside of the meeting, having been invited/encouraged to do so. Feedback from the meetings was only positive and there was no desire to move or mix up teams following the comments apparently made about being 'separated'.</p> <p>We continue to hold regular meetings and to encourage staff to speak up outside of the meetings to their manager or to our Freedom to speak up guardian if they have any concerns.</p>
Continue to develop the Patient Participant Group (PPG) and continue striving towards a more diversified group represented and have a voice.	We are currently working with our PPG to set up some 'talking tables' to encourage more membership.	Ongoing	We have a very good relationship with our PPG and continue to support them and value the support they provide to the practice.



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