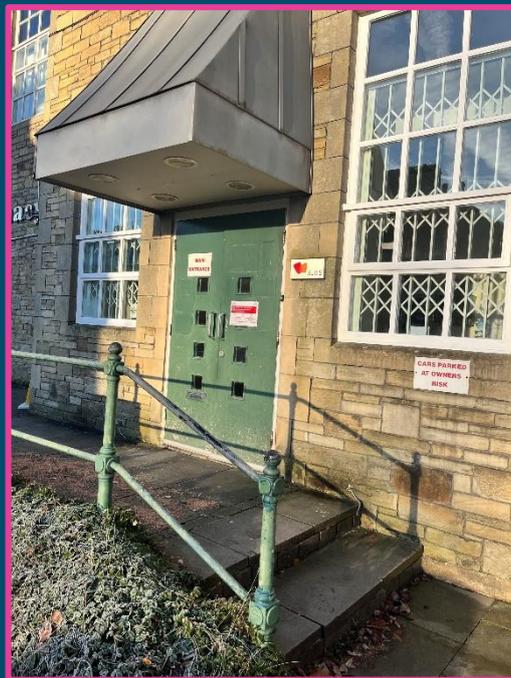


# St James Medical Centre

## Enter and View Report

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023

10:00am – 12:00pm



**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

St James Medical Centre

Burnley Road

Rawtenstall

01706 213060

<https://www.stjamesmedical.co.uk/>

## Registered Manager:

Sue Cadd

## Date and Time of our Visit:

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023

10:00am-12:00pm

## Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Steven Walmsley (Engagement Team Leader)

Lindsay Graham (Director of Healthwatch & Advocacy at Peoplefirst)

# Introduction

Healthwatch Lancashire is the independent public voice for health and social care in Lancashire and exists to make services work for the people who use them. We believe that the best way to do this is by providing the people of Lancashire with opportunities to share their views and experiences.

Healthwatch Lancashire has statutory powers to listen, act, challenge and gather feedback to improve Local Services and promote excellence throughout the NHS and social care services.

To help achieve this, Healthwatch have a statutory power to 'Enter and View' health and social care services that are publicly funded. The purpose of and enter and view is to listen to people who access those services and observe service delivery.

Following the Enter and View visit, a report is compiled highlighting areas of good practice and provide recommendations for any areas of improvement.

As an independent organisation, 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 service provider providing an opportunity to respond to any recommendations and comments before being published on the Healthwatch Lancashire website at:

[www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk)

The report is available to members of the public along with the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations. Where appropriate, Healthwatch Lancashire may arrange a revisit to monitor the progress of improvements and celebrate any further successes.

## General Information

St James Medical Centre is located in Rawtenstall and serves just over 9,000 patients.

The practice shares a building with a pharmacy. 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.

# What did we do?

Healthwatch Lancashire Enter and View Representatives made an announced visit to St James Medical Centre on Wednesday 6th December and received feedback from:



## Pre-visit practice survey

Healthwatch Lancashire emailed a pre-visit questionnaire to the Practice Manager. The aim of this questionnaire is to gather information about the patient population, services offered and how the practice manage appointments for patients. The pre-visit questionnaire was returned to Healthwatch Lancashire prior to the visit. Some Information from this questionnaire is included in the summary below.

## Introductory meeting with Practice manager

At the beginning of the enter and view visit, Healthwatch Lancashire met with the Practice Manager to discuss the medical centre and to view the facilities. We discussed the options that patients have to arrange their appointments and make enquiries to the surgery using the phone and online 'Patches' system.

## One to one discussions with patients and their relatives

Healthwatch spoke with patients and their relatives about their experiences including appointment booking, how they felt about the service and the care and treatment delivered by the staff at the practice.

## Discussions with members of staff

Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives spoke with members of staff about their experiences of delivering services to patients. Questions centred around support for patients and any improvements staff felt could be made at the medical centre.

## Observations

Observations were made throughout the visit. This included patient and staff interactions, accessibility measures in place throughout the medical centre and the condition and cleanliness of the facilities.

# Summary

## Surgery Population



Rawtenstall is the largest town in the borough of Rossendale with a population of approximately 23,000 people, (Information taken from Rossendale Council website 2024<sup>(1)</sup>). There are over 9,000 patients registered at the centre with over 50% of patients aged over 50 years of age. A number of patients registered at the medical centre attend from outside of the centre's catchment area, this is following a change in boundaries which meant patients already registered at the medical centre could remain.

According to Public Health data- The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, in 2023 64.7% of the patient population at the surgery have a long-standing health condition<sup>2</sup>, which is above England's average of 54.6%.

## Appointment Management

Appointments can be made online, over the phone or in person at the reception desk. Appointments are triaged with a member of the care navigation team and patients are then invited into the practice for a face-to-face consultation. The medical centre provides an option for patients to have a video consultation with a clinician where appropriate.

When phoning the medical centre the automated message informs patients about alternate options for making contact with the staff at the practice through online methods like Patchs or the website. There is signposting information about the dedicated prescriptions phone line and additional information about the roles that staff carry out at the surgery, such as Physician associates and Nurse Associates. The initial call to arrange the Enter and Visit was answered within five minutes. Callers are informed about their position in the queue throughout the duration of the waiting time.



It was explained that the online Patchs system can also be used by patients to make enquiries to the surgery. This is an online app which provides that facility for patients to communicate with the medical centre, however currently there isn't an option to use this app to book all clinical appointments online. However, routine tests such as smears, blood tests and vaccinations can be arranged online. The Practice manager explained that the option to book consultations had been limited to prevent incidences of incorrect bookings and missed appointments.

The phone lines are manned by three members of the administration team and the medical centre tailor the number of staff answering the phone line to meet those demands if the phone lines become busier.

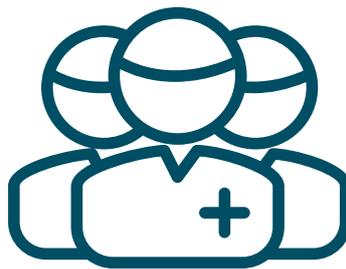
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/regeneration-1/town-centres-rossendale/2>

<sup>2</sup> [National General Practice Profiles - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](https://www.phe.org.uk/national-general-practice-profiles-data)

The Practice Manager commented that there was a balance between people making appointments through the telephone system and people attending the surgery to make appointments.

It was explained, upon booking an appointment, patients are provided an explanation about the clinician they have been booked in and reasons why. At the medical centre, along with General Practitioners, there is a team of Trainee Doctors, Physician Associates, Practice nurses along with a Musculoskeletal (MSK) Specialist and Health and Wellbeing coach, which means patients can be seen by the most suitable professional to deal with a patients concerns. Services such as Social Prescribers were available at other sites within the Primary Care Network (PCN).



## Visit Summary

Healthwatch Representatives viewed facilities that were available. This included the waiting areas, reception office and clinical rooms.

At the time of the visit, the following staff were present; One Practice Manager, a Physician Associate, three GPs, one Trainee GP, nine Care Navigators and one Nurse Associate.

Overall, the feedback received from patients was positive with several patient responses describing satisfaction with the quality of care and the attitude of staff. Some areas that patients expressed concern about included long waits on the phone in the morning and some misunderstandings about why staff members ask care navigation questions when patients speak with them.

# Enter and View observations

## Location and External Environment

The Medical Centre is located on Burnley Road in Rawtenstall and was accessible via buses with a bus stop less than 200 metres away from the practice. There is a large car park to the rear of the practice building with two disabled parking spaces.

A pharmacy is attached to the practice which is used by some patients to collect their prescriptions which was accessible via a separate door. The practice and pharmacy could be accessed by ramps on the exterior of the building and handrail.

## Internal Environment and Waiting Area

St James Medical Centre is split across two floors. Appointments with GPs are held on the lower floor and appointments with other professionals take place on the upper floor. There was level access throughout the lower floor of the building and a lift available for patients. Ample seating was available in the waiting area and there appeared to be enough space for patients using wheelchairs or walking aid to navigate around the area, at the time of the visit we witnessed a person who used a wheel chair and their carer. It was noted that all seating was of the same type which may not be suitable for all users as it was all the same size and height. (see recommendation 2)



The reception desk is located at the front of the practice and was visible as patients entered the building. There was a self-check in facility which was out of use at the time of our visit, it was explained that the system was out of date and that the decision had been taken to not upgrade it, due to the lower number of patients that attended the surgery due to changes in attendance habits with more patients accessing telephone consultations instead of face-to-face

appointments. During the visit, Healthwatch representatives did not see any long delays or queue at the reception desk.

There was a private room available for patients to use if they needed to raise a confidential issue, but this was not observed to be used or offered during the visit. A sign was advertised via a poster on the Reception desk.



The waiting room had several displays containing information about self-care, period poverty, diet, health conditions and local services that were available to patients such as Beacon Dementia, Rossendale Community hub and a local foodbank. A TV display was in operation with general health information, a code of conduct for patients and other information for patients to read whilst they waited for their appointments.

Patients were called to their appointments using a television screen mounted on the wall facing the seating area, this called patients with an audio alert, displayed the patient's name and the area of the surgery they needed to go to. One patient was observed heading towards the GP consultation rooms and realised that they needed to go upstairs. They commented "I do get muddled" and turned round to head upstairs. There was no signage to the rear of the waiting area to remind patients that they needed to go upstairs to see particular clinicians. (see recommendation 3).

Laminated signage could be seen past the waiting room and within the front entrance of the medical centre. However, within the waiting room, signage wasn't clear and consistent. (see recommendation 4).



Hand hygiene dispensers were available on the reception desk for patients to use, toilets and communal areas were all clean and free of clutter. An accessible toilet was available for patients to use however it was accessed through a heavy sliding bi-fold door with a limited range of movement which was hard to open and close when used. This could be challenging for someone with physical disabilities to utilise independently (see recommendation 4).

## Patient Interactions

Healthwatch Representatives observed four interactions between staff and patients at the reception desk; patients booking in and others who had general enquiries including prescription and testing samples. It was observed that staff were polite and courteous, taking time to give patients the opportunity to speak and raise their queries.

One patient was observed to the main waiting area and were called to the upstairs clinical rooms. The patient was unsure where to go but they were assisted by a member of staff who had noticed their uncertainty.



Another patient attended the surgery who was visibly unwell with respiratory issues, they were coughing and the Healthwatch representative requested a drink of water for them. Staff at the surgery assisted promptly with a glass of water and checked up on them to make sure that they were ok (See recommendation 1 & 11).

A carer who was supporting a person who uses a wheelchair to their appointment, raised a concern at the reception desk that although the car park had been gritted, the accessible parking spaces had not been. The carer had described the challenge of supporting the person and their wheelchair out of the car and into the surgery. The reception staff noted the concern, apologised and agreed to have the area gritted. On leaving the medical centre, the Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives checked the car park and noted the accessible parking spaces were well gritted therefore the concern had been addressed promptly within twenty minutes. (See recommendation 1)

## Patient Involvement

St James Medical Centre has a Facebook page that is regularly updated with information about health conditions and wellbeing. The surgery works with the local Primary Care Network to run community health screening events in the community and advertises local services that patients can access.

 Displayed at the medical centre, there was information on staff roles displayed upstairs but no other staff role information could be seen in the downstairs waiting area. It was explained that the surgery refers patients to social prescribers within the Primary Care Network who are based at other practices, however no information about this service could be seen within the medical centre. (See recommendation 6)

The Practice Manager explained that most recent friends and family test from November showed positive satisfaction with the services provided, the medical centre use the results to make improvements to services. There was limited information available on notice boards for patients to access regarding patient experience, and results of the friends and family test.

We were informed that the medical centre does not currently run a Patient Participation Group (PPG) due to low uptake from patients. However, it was noted that opportunities to get involved in the PPG was displayed on a poster in the reception area and advertised on their Facebook page (17/11/23).

# Patient feedback

Healthwatch Representatives spoke with seventeen patients at the visit.

## How did you make your appointment today?

Six patients commented that it was difficult to make an appointment over the phone. Patients explained “It takes forever when I wait in the queue” and often patients were avoiding calling in the morning as they felt they were more likely to get through to a member of staff if they called in the afternoon.

***“The biggest bugbear is trying to make an appointment. It’s ok to say ring at 8am but I am always position 20 or 25 in the queue. It is a lot of work to get an appointment.”***

One patient described instances where they had contacted the medical centre to book an appointment with a clinician and had been advised there wasn't any availability.

***“50/50 whether I get an appointment.”***

Some patients spoken with explained that the medical centre had booked their appointment for them as a result of a follow up or test result, this was a convenient process for these patients.

Another patient explained how they hadn't booked an appointment at the time of the visit, they had made an enquiry about their medication and following that invited in for an appointment to discuss their medication.

***“I only rang up for some advice and they suggested that I come in for a consultation which I liked.”***

There was a concern raised by a person who cared for another patient, they had tried to make an appointment later in the day to accommodate their care routine and were unable to get anything later due to a lack of availability. They said that the staff had tried their best, but they felt that someone who was being cared for should have reasonable adjustments made to give them access to appointments that fitted in with their routines. It transpired that they were late for their appointment on the day of our visit due to transport challenges, however the staff been accommodating and arranged for another consultation time.

One patient mentioned that they were interested in using apps to make appointments. They said that they understood it was not currently an option, but they thought it would help make things easier for future appointments. (See Recommendation 6)

## How long have you been waiting for your appointment?

One patient explained that they had made an appointment for 10:50am and that they were still waiting for an appointment at 11:10 which they said was a “regular occurrence” they mentioned that they did not feel the need to raise this with members of staff as they knew how busy they were.

## What works well at this surgery?

The attitude of staff and care provided was complimented by six patients. Feedback highlighted how patients felt listened to by members of staff and how staff ensured that they received the care needed.

**“They are always helpful when I have questions.”**

Three patients explained that they thought the communication between the surgery and themselves worked well. One patient explained how they had contacted the surgery for what they thought was a trivial matter and they had an appointment arranged due to the information that they provided. They felt that it was good practice that the staff had listened to what they said and made the appointment for them. They explained how they were happy with the outcome and that a more serious condition had been ruled out as a result of staff listening to them.



One patient made mention of how the online services (Patches) helped them get issues looked at more efficiently.

**“I can send pictures to the surgery before I book an appointment.”**

They explained how they had done this previously and had been invited in for an appointment with a clinician after they had used the online process. They mentioned that they came in regularly for repeat appointments linked to the issues they had been triaged for online and that this system was much more convenient than ringing for an appointment where they knew there would potentially be a delay.

## Is there anything that can be changed to meet your needs?

Eight patients raised concerns about the long waiting times when they called to arrange an appointment and felt that this was an important issue that needed to be addressed.

One patient raised a question about how the medical centre flagged if someone has a carer. They wanted to ensure that they were able to act on the behalf of their relative and that staff were aware of the needs of carers as they had recently become a full-time carer and were unsure of the support that was available for them. (See recommendation 7)

Three patients mentioned that they were unsure about why Reception staff asked questions about their condition when they phoned to make an appointment.

**“When you ring they ask you all these questions and it’s for a doctor to do, not them.”**

They explained that this felt intrusive and that they did not understand why someone on reception should know their private issues. (See Recommendation 8)

## **Do you receive information from the surgery that is easy to understand?**

Five patients explained that they felt the methods used by the surgery were easy to understand and helpful.

**“I got a letter to say I need an appointment with a doctor all fine.”**

One relative of a patient explained that they had some difficulties in communicating with the surgery in the past due to the nature of their relative's condition. They acted as the patient's carer and had to act as an intermediary with the medical centre due to communication problems their relative was experiencing due to their condition. They explained how there was miscommunications in the past around arrangements due to transport issues, which had been worked with by the staff at the surgery.



## **Do you know how to make a complaint if needed?**

Three patients were unsure about how to raise a complaint. One patient did comment that they had not needed to in the past.

**“Well I suppose I would ring reception and ask about the process.”**

They mentioned that they hadn't really thought about raising a complaint as they had no reason to do so. Two patients who said that they were aware of the process also explained that they had no cause to raise concerns with the practice. (see recommendation 9)

## **Do you know what a Patient participation group is?**

One patient stated that they were aware of the role of a patient participation group (PPG), could see the benefits, and explained that they would be interested in joining the PPG in the future.

One patient mentioned that they had seen something about a PPG in the newsletter, but they were not interested in joining in with meetings due to their other commitments.

# Staff feedback

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

## Do you have enough staff when on duty?

All six staff members felt that regularly there was enough staff to meet the needs of patients. It was explained that the team step in to assist, particularly at busier times or when staff are not in work, to make sure that patients don't experience any undue delays,

**“Everyone chips in” in order to make sure patients’ needs are met.”**

One member of staff explained how all administration staff are care navigation trained to assist patients when they make enquiries. It meant that the practice could be flexible when deploying staff to assist with enquiries.

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

The option for patients to pre-book an advanced appointment was highlighted as a positive aspect of the appointment making process as it allows patients to plan ahead with their care.



One member of staff explained how triaging patients over the phone and then invite them into the surgery, as needed, was helpful in managing the needs and expectations of patients, particularly if they wanted an appointment and there was a more suitable option available to them.

**“If you ring up you will be guided to the right person.”**

One member of staff explained how the care-navigation training staff received meant that they mentioned that the staff ask questions to make sure that the patient was seen by an appropriate clinician. Healthwatch Lancashire explored this further to find out how the staff would communicate this to a patient who wanted to see a doctor in lieu of another member of staff and it was explained that, they will accommodate a patient's request if it was in their best interests.

**“It does depend on the issue but we always try to offer an appointment with an appropriate member of staff first.”**

It was explained that there was a doctor available to assist with more complex enquiries, particularly if a patient was not happy with where they were being care-navigated to.

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

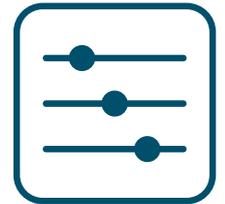
All six staff members said that they felt they had enough training to meet the medical needs of their patients.

**“We have regular training on Safeguarding and clinical updates.”**

Particular mention was made about care navigation training as it had been helpful in making sure that patients were directed to the right clinician. “It helps us explain options to patients.”

## What measures are in place for people with additional communication needs?

One member of staff said “we do as well as possible” to assist patients with disabilities. All staff spoken with were aware of services that were available to assist patients who were Deaf or who spoke additional languages. One member of staff made mention of Language line, Video Relay services and Cosign interpretation agency who they could contact to provide support and assistance to patients. They explained that staff make arrangements for the patients to try and meet their needs.



## What is your experience of working here?

All six staff members complimented the ethos and atmosphere that was present at the centre with “supervisors always supporting” staff when working with patients especially when dealing with complex enquiries. One member of staff explained how the surgery was

**“The longest place I have worked at.”**

They made mention of how the staff support each other and help out when they need to.

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

All six staff mentioned how they had put work in to make sure that the care navigation process was the best that it could be. One member of staff mentioned how “We can only offer what we can, but we are trying to communicate this better” and that sometimes patients could be better informed about the appointment making process and how different clinicians could assist them as it was something that they were historically unsatisfied with when making appointments. (See recommendation 5)

One member of staff mentioned how the practice offers extended services for patients to have appointments in the evening and on Saturdays. They mentioned how patients are “only aware of extended services when they ask for it.” They felt that more information about this service would be helpful to patients as it would help the surgery cope with demand for appointments and would ease the pressure off patients who were in full time employment. (See recommendation 10)

# Recommendations

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

1. Celebrate the positive feedback and best practice highlighted in findings regarding care and attention from staff towards patients
2. Review seating in the waiting area and ensure it is suitable for all patients through a patient consultation
3. Review signage around the practice to ensure it is accurate, clear and easy to follow
4. Ensure that doors are appropriately labelled and easy for people to use particularly if they have limited mobility
5. Add information about staff and their roles to the noticeboards in the waiting area so patients are informed about how staff at the centre and within the Primary Care Network can assist them
6. Consult patients about adding the function to make appointments to the Patches online system
7. Ensure that patients who are carers are given priority for times they request particularly if there is a care need to be met
8. Ensure that patients are informed about why they are being asked care navigation questions and how it will benefit them
9. Review how information on the complaints procedure is made available to ensure patients are aware of ways to give feedback
10. Make information about out-of-hours appointments and extended services clearer in the practice and on the website
11. Consider installing a water machine or drinks facility for patients to use

# Provider response

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe	Comments
Celebrate the positive feedback and best practice highlighted in findings regarding care and attention from staff towards patients	Plan to share the feedback with staff and possibly create a display for reception if space allows. We do feedback any compliments received and comments from friends and family tests.	End of March 2024	
Review seating in the waiting area and ensure it is suitable for all patients through a patient consultation	If this can be funded, we will consult with patients to ask if they consider the current seating height could be amended to better suit them	End October 2024	
Review signage around the practice to ensure it is accurate, clear and easy to follow	We will review signage and ensure that it is clearer.	End Jun 2024	
Ensure that doors are appropriately labelled and easy for people to use particularly if they have limited mobility	We have applied for funding for the front and inner door to be automated and will review the operation of the bathroom door.	End March 25	
Add information about staff and their roles to the noticeboards in the waiting area so patients are informed about how staff at the centre and within the Primary Care Network can assist them	Space is limited. We will schedule a rolling programme for the notice board and also include a link to the web page where all the information regarding additional roles is already available.	Ongoing	

Consult patients about adding the ability to make appointments to the Patches system	The PPG have been consulted regarding this and responses have started to arrive.	Jun24	
Ensure that patients who are carers are given priority for times they request particularly if there is a care need to be met	Where time allows we will prioritise patients and when time doesn't allow we will offer as much flexibility as is possible. But we do have resource limitations.	Ongoing	
Ensure that patients are informed about why they are being asked care navigation questions and how it will benefit them	This system has been in place since 2018. Over that time there has been an auto attendant message that explained the need for care navigation, along with information in practice and on the website. We will change the auto attendant message to explain care navigation again, and display a poster at reception, there is already information on the ground floor notice board.	End May 24	
Review information about complaints procedure to ensure patients are aware of ways to give feedback	There is information displayed in practice and the website regarding feedback and complaints but we will review this to make it more prominent.	End April 24	
Make sure that information about out-of-hours appointments and extended services is clear in the practice and on the website	There is some information displayed in practice and on the website but we will review this and make it more prominent	End April 24	

Consider installing a water machine or drinks facility for patients to use	A water machine would not be cost effective. However, we will consider alternatives and risk assess the same in order to find a solution.	End Jun 24	
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**Any other comments**



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