

# Tarleton Group Practice

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024

9:30am-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

## Address

Tarleton Group Practice,  
Tarleton Health Centre,  
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Telephone number: 01772 540083

## Surgery Contact:

Judie Rowlands (Practice Manager)

## Date and Time of our Visit:

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024  
9:30am-12:00pm

## Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Emmy Walmsley (Senior Engagement Officer)  
Austin Staunton (Healthwatch Lancashire Volunteer)

# 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 an 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 identifying aspects of good surgery within the service visited along with any recommendations for any possible areas of improvement.

As we are 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 (CQC), 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.

## 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 Tarleton Group Practice on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and received feedback from:



## Pre-visit surgery survey

Healthwatch Lancashire emailed a pre-visit questionnaire to the Practice Manager to learn about the patient population, services offered and how the surgery manage appointments for patients. 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 manager to discuss the service provided at the practice and to view the facilities. The manager explained the process that patients follow to make appointments and discussed some of the systems that were in place to support patients.

## One to one discussions with patients and their relatives

Healthwatch Lancashire 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 Practice.

## Observations

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

# Summary

Healthwatch Representatives viewed facilities that were available at the Group Practice. This included the waiting area, reception office and clinical rooms.

Overall, the feedback received from patients was positive. Several described satisfaction with the friendliness of staff and how they feel listened to. Patients were happy with the ease of getting appointments on the same day and access to prebooking a week in advance.

Areas where patients expressed concern included lack of clarity over which clinician they are seeing and why, waiting times to see doctors after checking in, and the need for more information within the waiting area for patients to view and take away with them.

Throughout the visit staff members were observed to be kind, courteous and considerate towards the needs of patients. Staff were observed on reception tending to queries and questions from patients and helping support them to check in for their appointment.

Staff feedback was also positive. They explained that they feel supported by the management team and colleagues, that they felt well trained to undertake their duties, and that they have enough time to spend with patients. Staff also told us that they would recommend this Practice to their friends and family.

The manager highlighted that they are very keen on supporting staff wellbeing and are always looking for new ways to help support their staff. They have a comfort box for staff to help themselves if they require anything from it. The manager mentioned that she wants to ensure that the staff feel valued.

# Surgery Overview



## Location and public access

Tarleton Group Practice sits within Tarleton Health Centre, which is situated in the centre of Tarleton village

The Practice has a small car park to the side with spaces for patients, staff and two disabled parking spaces. There is also parking available next to the Practice in the village car park. The Surgery can be accessed via public transport with a bus stop around two minutes' walk away. The Practice is situated next to the main village with shops, pharmacies and other amenities.

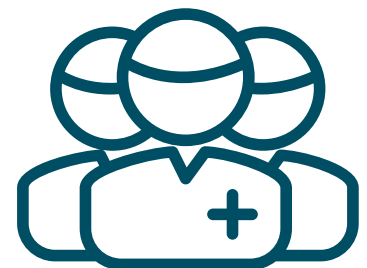
## Surgery Population

“Our practice boundary covers Tarleton, Hesketh Bank, Mere Brow and some of Rufford, the area is a Semi rural area, with a practice patient list size of just over 10,000. Practice list size increased following the closure of the single-handed practice in Hesketh Bank. The community is mainly elderly, quite affluent patients and young affluent commuters. We do have a proportion of socially isolated elderly patients and a number who live in deprivation and poverty. We also have many migrant workers.” (Practice Manager)

## Services available

In addition to GP services, patients also have access to other Clinics within the Practice including:

- Clinical Pharmacist
- Physiotherapist
- Mental health practitioner
- Associate psychological practitioner
- Social prescribing link worker.



At the time of the visit there were sixteen staff working within the Practice in varying roles including 3 GP partners, 1 GP Registrar, 2 Health Care Assistants, 3 Members of management including the practice manager, assistant practice manager and reception manager, 1 GPA/ Clinical coder, 4 Receptionists, 2 Administrators

## Appointment Management

Patients can book their appointments on the telephone, via the NHS app or through the website. The Practice releases approximately 20-30 same day urgent appointments each morning at 8.00am and open the pre bookable appointments 1 week in advance.



The Practice does not open same day urgent appointments online for safety and appropriate use of appointments. The staff are trained to identify the most appropriate doctor to try to maintain continuity wherever possible.

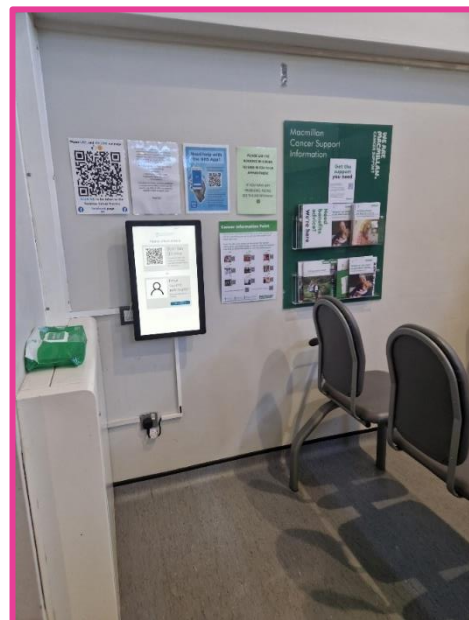


# Enter and View observations

## External Environment

Accessibility to the Practice is good, with drop downs curbs from both car parks facilitating ease of access to the main entrance. The Practice is accessed through two automatic doors, which open to the reception area. The car park at the back of the Practice has 7 patient spaces, 8 doctor spaces and 2 disabled spaces. There is another car park directly next to the practice that is free to use, and patients can park there as well.

The Practice manager explained to Representatives that they received a green funding grant, which was used to create a wild flower garden at the back of the Practice, and a community space with benches that patients and staff can use. She also told us about an initiative which allowed staff to use two electric bikes for home visits. Staff can also hire the bikes for personal use if they wish to do so.



## Internal Environment and Waiting Area

On entering the Practice, you can see the HCRG (Health Care Resourcing Group Ltd) desk, which is unmanned but has patients coming in to the practice to use their services. They use some of the consultation rooms at the front of the practice.

The main reception desk is to the right of the entrance and was manned at all times during the visit. The reception desk has a drop-down section for anyone using a wheelchair for access. They also have a notice advising patients to speak to reception staff if they would like privacy. A notice on the reception desk allows patients to follow the Group Practice Facebook page via a QR code.



Patients can check-in via a machine situated at the back of the reception area. Patients were observed to be using the machine throughout the visit. There were a few occasions where patients were seen using the machine and then going to the main reception desk as the machine was not working. (recommendation 1). Next to the self-check in machine were wipes for patients to use before and after using the machine.

The waiting area was clean and tidy and free from clutter, it was accessible and had room for wheelchairs and prams to easily move around.

The Practice has twelve clinical rooms which can be easily accessed from the reception area. The clinical



rooms are clearly signposted from the reception area, but during our visit the numbers were covered with paper and new numbers written on. Each clinical room number could be clearly seen from above each room with the name of the doctor or nurse that was in the room at the time.

The radio was playing quietly in the background in the waiting area. A television screen shows medical campaigns, videos and support services for patients to access. The TV screen also audibly announces when it is time for an appointment and displays the room patients should go to.

There is ample seating, with 41 seats in total to use, including two larger seats and three taller seats. The waiting room has space for wheelchairs and prams.



The reception area features three information boards, including a veteran's board with information and support, a CQC (Care Quality Commission) board showing the latest inspection, and a Macmillan support section with leaflets.

There is a clock in the waiting area above the reception desk, but it was not dementia friendly. (Recommendation 2)

There is one large accessible toilet near the waiting area for patients to use, which was clean and well stocked at the time of the visit.

## Patient Interactions



Healthwatch Lancashire observed several interactions with patients during the visit. Staff on the reception desk were observed to be caring and courteous towards patients coming into the Practice. They were seen to be dealing with enquiries quickly and effectively. Some patients experienced delayed appointments during our visit, with several waiting 15-20 minutes beyond their scheduled appointment time. Patients were kept up to date on waiting times by reception staff, who announced that one of the doctors was behind schedule and would be with them as soon as possible. Patients did not appear to be asking at reception about wait times.

One patient had used the self-check in machine, but it wouldn't work, she asked if it had been changed and the staff member said yes, we changed it a few months ago. A few patients were seen to be using the self-check in machine, but this wouldn't work which meant they then had to use the reception desk. (Recommendation 1)

One patient who came into the practice to book an appointment was told by the receptionist that they could not get them in today. However, they explained that

they could prebook them in for next week. They then wrote down the date of the appointment and time and handed it to the patient.

Another patient was observed approaching the reception desk to ask about a follow up appointment they needed, they were told there were no appointments today and none to prebook for the next week so they would need to ring in the morning. The receptionist was polite and apologised that they couldn't get them an appointment.

One member of staff was observed coming to get a patient for an appointment and apologising for the delay before walking them through to the clinic rooms. A patient was observed coming out of their appointment and a doctor was seen opening the door for them to exit safely.

## Patient Involvement

Tarleton Group Practice currently has an active Patient Participation Group (PPG) which meets around every 8 weeks. There is currently about 10/12 active members.

The Practice assists them as much as possible by providing secretarial support for minutes and agendas, and the Practice Manager always attends in person. The PPG have been quite instrumental in suggesting positive changes in the Practice. The Manager has encouraged members to have meetings with representatives from other organisations as well.



There was no visible PPG poster in the Practice and all the patients spoken with on the day of the visit were not aware of what a PPG was and how they could join it. (Recommendation 3)

The Practice has an informative website which allows patients to book appointments and order prescriptions. It provides information on requesting sick notes/fit notes, test results, and other general information about help and support organisations. It also allows patients to submit feedback on the Practice. The Practice also has an active Facebook page with updates about the Practice, support and NHS campaigns.

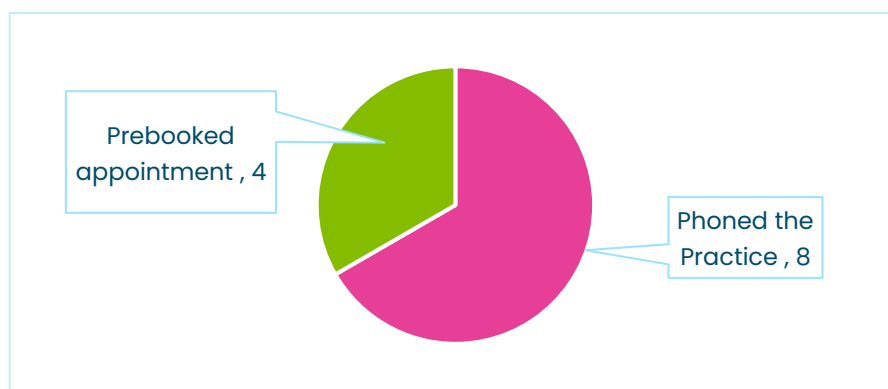
A conversation with the Practice manager highlighted what the Practice has in place for anyone who requires extra support. These include a learning disability check which is done annually and ensuring that the same doctor sees patients for continuity of care. Hearing loops are being updated at the moment and this is an ongoing action.

The practice has invited patients with visual impairments into the practice to ask them what changes they feel could be made to improve the environment. They provide language line and BSL (British Sign Language) interpreters via video link for patients. They try to book patients in who are sensitive to loud noise at quieter times and can provide a private room if needed. The family and friend's section on the website is open for patients to leave feedback.

# Patient feedback

Healthwatch Representatives spoke with twelve patients during the visit.

## How did you make your appointment today?



Most of the patients spoken with during the visit had booked their appointment via phone call that morning, with four patients having their appointments prebooked by the Practice. One patient mentioned the difficulty of obtaining a same day appointment, noting that you need to call at 8am to have any chance.

**“You need to ring bang on 8am or you’re in a long queue.”**

Two patients mentioned that they had their appointments prebooked when they last came to see the doctor, so they found this easy to do.

**“This was done for me, so it was easy for me.”**

On the other hand, three patients spoke about the ease of ringing the Practice in the morning and how they always get straight through. They mentioned that they had called in the morning and had got straight through to the Practice.

**“I find ringing for an appointment quite easy; I always get straight through.”-**

**“Very easy for me, I rang at 8am, had to wait a short time but got an appointment.”**

## What works well at this surgery?

Several patients spoke positively about the clerical and clinical staff within the Practice, commenting that they feel listened to and receive good care. Patients told us that staff are friendly and accommodating to their needs. They also spoke about how they find getting appointments at the Practice.

**“All the doctors are lovely and really listen to you.”**

One patient mentioned that they had recently spoken with a doctor in the morning to clarify something they were concerned about, and the doctor called back later in the day to talk them through their options. Another patient

mentioned that staff had managed to pull two separate appointments together, so they did not need to return on another day. These two instances are indicative of a number of positive experiences patients told us about during our visit.

**“You can always get an appointment, and I feel the staff really listen to you.”**

One patient spoke about their experience of speaking with a doctor in the morning and they wanted to clarify something, so they rang the patient back the same day to talk them through their options.

**“I spoke to a doctor the other week and within the day they rung me back to tell me what the next steps are and what is happening, the communication is great.”**

Two patients commented on the communication within the Practice, stating that this is very good, and staff are always helpful and friendly.

**“Communication with patients is very good, staff are friendly and helpful.”**

**“I’ve had two appointments today and they’ve put them on the same day and similar times, so I don’t need to come back again another day.”**

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

Seven patients stated that they felt no changes needed to be made and that the Practice is running well. One patient mentioned that they were very happy with the Practice, but parking can be a problem at times.

**“Parking is a problem, but I know they have next door as well.”**

Two patients spoke about how they were unsure what was an emergency and what is not. This can sometimes be confusing, and you are unsure if you just need an appointment for a few days’ time or one immediately.

**“it’s hard sometimes to know what a medical emergency is and what is routine, so when you ring in the morning asking for an emergency appointment, they tell me it’s not urgent, but I struggle to understand how they know that over the phone.”** (Recommendation 4)

Two patients mentioned that they really appreciate the tv screen showing different information, but it would be nice to have something up in the waiting area or leaflets to take away with them.

**“I like the tv screen as it shows a lot of information but more in the waiting room would be nice, either boards or leaflets for us to take away.”** (recommendation 5)

Two patients mentioned the long wait times to see the doctor and meant that sometimes they were waiting for nearly an hour to see a doctor. They mentioned that this is not highlighted anywhere if the GP is running behind.

**“The wait to see a doctor can be long and I’ve waited in the wait area for up to an hour before.”** (recommendation 6)

One patient spoke with Representatives about how they used to be able to get evening appointments even if it meant travelling to the other GPs within the PCN (Primary Care Network) but they mentioned that this hasn’t been the case recently and they are no longer able to get appointments at other surgeries.

**“More evening appointments available for patients that work shifts, I used to get offered appointments at the other surgeries in the PCN, but I haven’t been recently.”**

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

All patients spoken with were happy with the information they received from the Practice.

One patient spoke to representatives about how they have received booklets in the past from doctors and they have been very accessible and easy to understand.

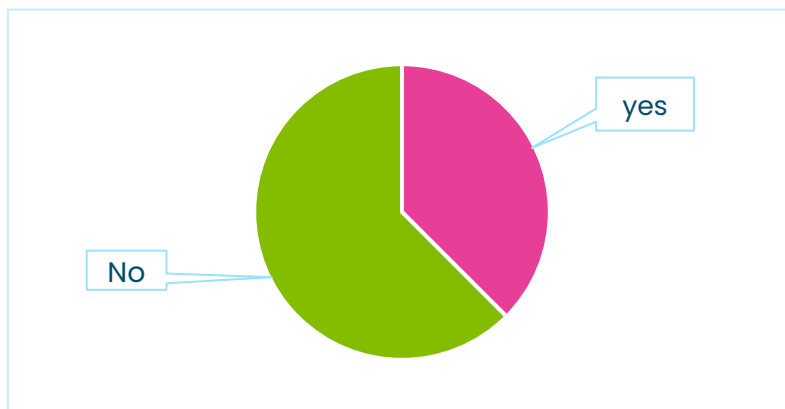


**“I have received information booklets to take away with me and they are very helpful.”**

One patient spoke about how they like the text message reminders especially when you have booked an appointment in advance.

**“We receive texts to remind us of appointments that have been booked in advance.”**

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



Nine patients at the time of the visit were not sure where to go if they had a complaint. Three patients were aware of where to go or knew what they would do if this was something they needed to do.

**“Yes, I would just go to reception and ask.”**

Two patients commented that they would look on the website and look into how to make a complaint. The other patient said they are sure they saw something on the NHS app the other day about this.

**“I’m sure I saw something on the app about this the other day.”**

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

All twelve patients spoken with on the day of the visit were not aware of what a Patient Participation Group is and how they join it. There was no Patient Participation Group poster visible within the reception area or waiting area of the Practice. (recommendation 3)

# Staff feedback

Healthwatch received feedback from six staff members on the day of the visit.

How do you manage your workload?



Staff members spoken with mentioned that they prioritise tasks throughout the week and work through them and delegate where needed.

**“Look at the tasks required and any deadlines there are then prioritise them, if I am struggling, I can delegate some work, and I would speak with the manager.”**

One member of staff spoke about prioritising work but also ensuring that the patient comes first, but to be aware that paperwork still needs doing.

**“I think it’s just prioritising our work, the patients come first but we have to ensure we get the paperwork side done as well.”**

One member of staff mentioned that an increased staff team has helped with workload as they are now able to take some of the pressure.

**“Increased partners, GP’s and trainees has really helped with workload and additional roles to help support us.”**

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



One member of staff spoke with representatives about how they felt they had enough time to spend with patients and they are not rushed.

**“Yes, I feel I can spend time with patients to help find a solution to a problem they might have.”**

One member of staff commented on how management are a great support and how there is always an open-door policy which they appreciate.

**“Yes, there is always an open door for support.”**

**“I do feel supported, I have been here for many years, and I find the manager is very supportive and I also feel supported by the GP’s.”**

Two staff members talked about the communication between staff members and how they have regular meetings and updates.

**“I feel we are very team orientated here and we have regular catch ups with management and partners.”**

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

All six members of staff mentioned that they felt they had sufficient training, and they felt they could ask for more training if needed.

**“Yes, I feel sufficiently trained, anything I am not sure about I would be confident to ask the appropriate person.”**

**“We are all up to date with training and given time out to do it as well.”**

One member of staff spoke highly of the practice, stating that they help their staff develop and grow within the practice.

**“They are a very supportive practice and want to support you to grow within the practice, I have been on extra training and have been able to develop, and I feel they believed in me which was nice.”**

One member of staff spoke about how they have regular training sessions, and they find these beneficial.

**“We close for half a day a month to do essential training, and I feel these are very beneficial.”**

## **What measures are in place for people with additional communication needs and people with disabilities such as people with physical impairments or who are Deaf?**

During conversations it was clear to see that staff were aware of what was in place for patients coming into the Practice. A few examples given included Hearing loop, Wheelchair accessible- check in desk is wheelchair level., Interpreters, Sign language, Extended access out of hours, Spare room if anyone needs quiet.

One member of staff highlighted that staff are shown the accessible information standards and managers always keep staff up to date on this.

**“We are trained on the accessible information standard so we are aware of what we should be providing and what is missing.”**

## **What is your experience of working here?**

When speaking with staff it was brought to our attention that many had been working there for many years and were happy within their roles. Staff were asked what their experience of working at the Practice is like and would they recommend this service to a close friend or relative.

**“Absolutely, without a doubt I would.”**

**“I would, I love it, my friends and relatives are already registered here.”**

One member of staff shared that they were proud to be a part of the team, and they feel supported by the team.

**“I’m proud to be a part of this team here at the Practice.”**

**“I have been working here for many years and I enjoy coming to work, I feel supported and would say we make a very good team.”**

**“The job can be quite stressful at times, but I feel we are all supported very well.”**

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



When speaking with the staff at the Practice they spoke about how they are always striving for change and will implement change where it is needed.

Only one staff member shared a change they would like to see implemented but mentioned that this was already in the works and the manager is on with this.

**“Update hearing loop system which I know is in the works.”** (Recommendation 7)



# Recommendations

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

1. Examine the check-in machine to ensure patients have free access to this and it is working appropriately.
2. Implement measures to ensure that the Practice is more dementia friendly through the use of images on signs and dementia friendly clocks. (See appendix for more information)
3. Implement a Patient Participation Group board which highlights what a PPG is, display the meeting minutes and how patients can join.
4. Inform patients about staff roles as part of the appointment making process so patients are clearer who they are seeing and the reasons why using leaflets or by informing patients when they contact the surgery.
5. Provide more information within the Practice waiting area on notice boards or leaflet stands so patients can learn about the various support services available to them and can take information away.
6. Review waiting times within the practice to ensure patients are not sat in the waiting area for long periods of time for their appointment.
7. Ensure the hearing loop is up in reception, tested and being used for patients.

Appendix

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-friendlyresources/organisations/dementia-friendly-environment-checklist>

# Provider response

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe	Comments
Examine the check-in machine to ensure patients have free access to this and it is working appropriately.	Raise complaint to MLCSU	Actioned	The Practice invested heavily in a new self check in board and TV information screen and the equipment we have is some of the best available to general practice at the moment, unfortunately we are based in a rural location and the internet speed often lets the system down, we have raised this as an issue to our IT providers. This is what makes the hardware 'glitchy' and is out of our control. We will use your feedback to raise this issue again with MLCSU our IT provider.
Implement measures to ensure that the Practice is more dementia friendly through the use of images on signs and dementia friendly clocks. (See appendix for more information)	The Practice will look at replacing the waiting room clock with a dementia friendly clock. When preparing notices for the waiting room we will keep your feedback in mind	6 months	We are already sourcing a clock.
Implement a Patient Participation Group board which highlights what a PPG is, display the meeting minutes and how patients can join.	I will task the PPG with this.	3 months	I have requested a quote for another noticeboard, we are forbidden to attach items to the walls

<p>Inform patients about staff roles as part of the appointment making process so patients are clearer who they are seeing and the reasons why using leaflets or by informing patients when they contact the surgery.</p>	<p>Who's who on new website, the booking team would dispute this feedback and are trained to always explain who the appointment is booked with and what role they hold.</p>		<p>We are currently changing website providers; we will look to create a who's who board including pictures if the staff are willing. Regarding ARRS staff we advertise the new appointments and roles on the PCN and Practice Facebook pages</p>
<p>Provide more information within the Practice waiting area on notice board or leaflet stands so patients can learn about the various support services available to them and can take information away.</p>	<p>The Practice decision was to remove leaflets from the waiting room to avoid patients getting out of date information and also to avoid unregulated services leaflet dropping. We have the McMillan board and leaflet holder.</p>		<p>The Clinicians often print out patient information leaflets and send links to the more digitally able patients. We are working hard towards reducing our carbon footprint and working towards an environmental sustainability friendly practice, multiple leaflets goes against this drive.</p>
<p>Review waiting times within the practice to ensure patients are not sat in the waiting area for long periods of time for their appointment.</p>	<p>To discuss at practice meeting and remind staff to adhere to practice policy regarding clinics running late</p>	<p>2 months</p>	<p>The Reception staff are trained to advise any patient waiting longer than 15 minutes of the delay</p> <p>I will discuss at the next practice meeting</p>

Ensure the hearing loop is up in reception, tested and being used for patients.	The Practice has invested in a new communication system which will be installed in the next 4 weeks that include integrated loop hearing system and also addresses the confidentiality issues created by the refurbished front desk	4 weeks	
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**Any other comments?**

One point raised by a patient about extended access appointments is untrue, the practice still offers evening and weekend appointments, clinics are still held at Burscough but also in addition the Practice is hosting many of the extended access clinics. Our access to extended access appointments has increased not decreased



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Lancashire

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