

Minor Injuries Unit Acorns Centre, Accrington Enter and View Report

14th July 2025
9:30am-12pm



Disclaimer: This report relates only to the service viewed at the time of the visit and is only representative of the views of the staff, visitors and patients who met members of the Enter and View team on that date.

Contact Details

Contact details:

Minor Injuries Unit
Acorn Primary Health Centre
421 Blackburn Road
Accrington
BB5 1RT

Registered Manager:

Becki Slater, Lead Emergency Nurse Practitioner

Date and Time of our Visit:

Monday 14th July 2025
9:30am – 12pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Steve Walmsley (Engagement Team Leader)
John Moore (Healthwatch 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

The minor injuries unit has recently been moved to the Acorn Centre from Accrington Victoria. It provides services to patients with minor injuries for residents of Accrington and across East Lancashire.

The service is delivered by ELHT.

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.

Glossary of terms

ELHT

East Lancashire Hospitals Trust

What did we do?

Healthwatch Lancashire Enter and View Representatives made an announced visit to Accrington Minor Injuries Unit and received feedback from:



Pre-visit questionnaire

Prior to the enter and view visit, the management at the Minor Injuries Unit was provided a pre-visit questionnaire to complete. The aim of this questionnaire is to gather information about the patient population, services offered and how the practice manage appointments for patients. Information from this questionnaire is included in the summary below.

One to one discussions with patients and their relatives

Healthwatch spoke with patients about their experiences including accessing the service, how they felt about the care and treatment delivered by the staff at the centre.

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

Local Demographic

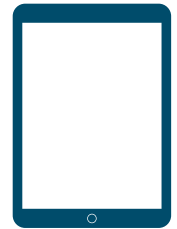


The population of East Lancashire is 413,745 and the population of Hyndburn is 84,261 (2021 census data)

The centre is mainly used by residents of the Hyndburn area, however it was explained that residents of East Lancashire also make use of this service. A discussion with the Centre Manager highlighted that patients would sometimes attend the centre before making the journey to the nearby accident and emergency at Royal Blackburn Hospital as it is more convenient for them to attend the minor injuries unit and then be transferred to other services if required.

Attending the unit

Patients can self-refer to the service or referred by the 111 service, Emergency services, GPs and the Ambulance service if they meet the criteria.



Patients can only attend the unit if they have suffered from an injury such as suspected fractures, breaks, wounds or similar, the service is not commissioned to handle patients who present with sickness. Patients are redirected to a more appropriate healthcare facility following an initial assessment to ensure they are safe.

Upon arrival, patients are directed to tablets, at the entrance of the unit, to answer a series of Self-assessment questions to speed up the triage process. Patients are then given an appointment either for the same day or the next available opportunity, depending on clinical need. This is communicated to the patient verbally and via a written time sheet to ensure patients are aware of when they can expect to be seen.

Visit Summary

Healthwatch Lancashire representatives carried out a planned visit to the Minor Injuries unit at the Acorn Centre on the 14th July 2025 and spoke with patients and staff about their experiences using and working at the centre. Feedback was mostly positive about the care received, with patients complimenting the friendliness of the staff and the manner in which they were treated whilst using the service.

Patients expressed satisfaction with the waiting times and the processes that had been put in place to allocate appointments and provide triage for the conditions with which they attended the service. Although some issues were experienced with the tablet streaming service, which experienced a technical failure during our visit. Some patients expressed frustration about the need to use the tablets, but some were more satisfied when they saw how it worked to their benefit.

Staff and patients complimented the new setting for the service but gave feedback on the lack of air conditioning, given that on the day of the visit the weather was quite warm.

Enter and View observations

The Acorn Primary Health Centre

The Acorn Primary Health Centre is located near the centre of Accrington and is a multi-purpose health centre which houses several primary health services provided by the local Primary Care Network (PCN) and ELHT. The centre is host to services once situated at Accrington Victoria Hospital (see appendix), such as the Minor injuries unit, sexual health clinics and pre-existing GP services.

Location and External Environment

The centre is accessible on a bus route which links Accrington to Blackburn, with regular services between both towns.

There are ten dedicated disabled parking spaces outside the rear of the centre. At the time of the visit there was capacity in the car park for patients to attend the service. The car park has level access to the centre with drop-kerbs being available for wheelchair users and people using mobility aids to access the centre.

The minor injuries unit has a dedicated entrance at the rear of the centre which is directly accessed from the car park. With clear signage directing patients to the appropriate entrance of the building.

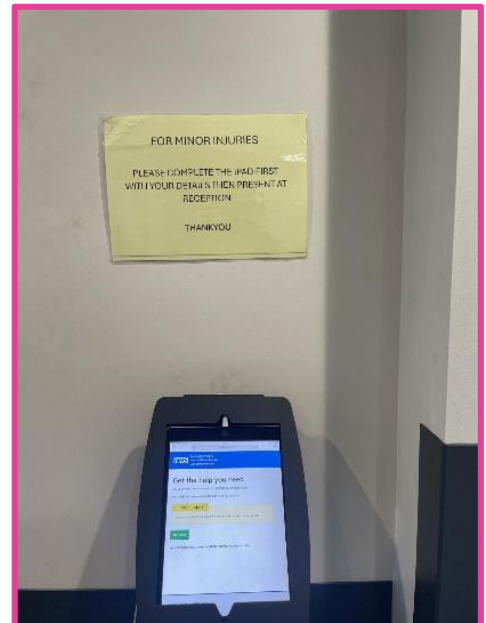


Internal Environment and Waiting Area

Upon arrival at the unit, patients are directed by staff to use a Self-assessment system on tablets in the entrance. This system helps to triage and assign a priority level to each patient for staff to book the patient an appointment with an appropriate clinician, patients are also triaged by a member of staff if appropriate to ensure they are getting the right care for their needs. Some patients were observed missing the tablets and stated that they did not know they needed to use this feature first. It is recommended that clearer signage for the tablets is created to help guide patients through the signing in process and that they need to complete this self-assessment. (Recommendation 1)

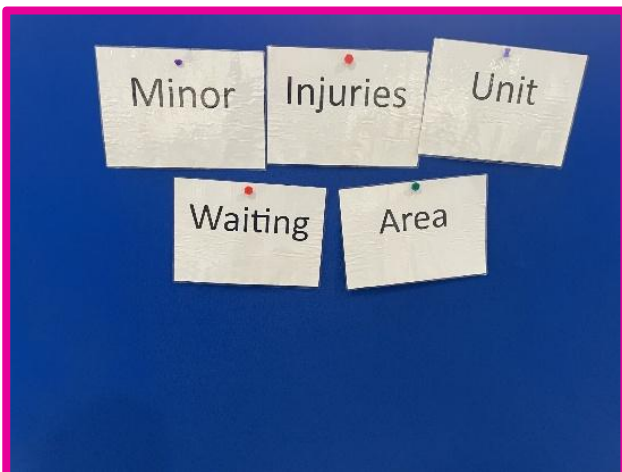
The entrance also serves as a waiting area with a variety of seating for patients to use whilst they wait to be triaged. Once triaged they are then invited to wait in the main waiting area of the centre for their appointment.

The main waiting area is spacious with seating arranged around the outside of the waiting area. Patients entering from the



Blackburn Road entrance can access the centre via the stairs or lift. There is clear signage on the lower floor of the centre however, it was felt that adding some signage at the lift entrance to the waiting area would help patients identify where to go for the minor injuries unit as it is not immediately clear where patients needed to go when using this entrance. (Recommendation 2)

Signage within the clinical areas is clear and helps direct patients to where they need to go.



The waiting area was clean and free from clutter with all chairs appearing in a good state or repair. The chairs throughout the Minor Injuries Unit consisted of different sizes and heights to cater for patients' needs. Dementia friendly features were observed, such as matt flooring and contrasting handrails, there was no means of identifying day date and time so it is recommended that a dementia friendly clock is acquired for the centre. (Recommendation 3)



Noticeboards contain information about staffing levels and services available at the centre such as sexual health clinics and GP services. These are clear to read and at the time of the visit were up to date.

Patient Interactions



Staff were polite and courteous with patients and ensured that patients were directed to use the tablets to sign in upon entry. Some patients were noticeably unhappy when asked to use the tablets. However, staff explained the process to those patients and gave reassurances to them so they knew why they needed to sign in on the tablets first. During the visit the tablet system went down and this meant patients could not use them to begin the triage process. Staff on the reception desk reacted quickly to this issue and ensured that patients did not experience any delays whilst another member of the team worked to restore the service.

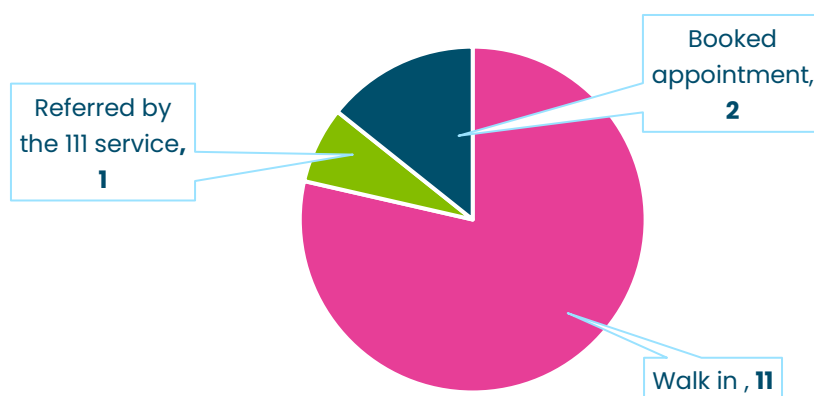
Staff on the reception desk gave patients their appointment times or invited them to stay for triage. They wrote the times on a slip to remind patients when their appointment was planned for, which patients felt was useful so they knew what to expect.

Patients were called to their appointments by a member of staff who would greet them and direct them to the treatment room. Patients reported that the care they received from staff at the centre was excellent.

Patient feedback

Healthwatch representatives spoke with fifteen patients during the visit.

Attending the service



Two patients who attended for a pre-booked appointment had visited the centre over the weekend and had been invited back to the centre for their appointment.

Tell us about your experience so far

The fifteen patients, that Healthwatch Lancashire representatives spoke with, commented on how quickly they were triaged upon their arrival to the centre.

“It never takes a long time really, they see you quite quickly to triage you.”

Three patients complimented the streaming service on the tablets explaining how they sped up the process of the visit for them.

“its really straightforward, I filled out the tablet and got an appointment. I think I was seen within 25 minutes.”

Four patients commented that they felt the staff were polite and treated them with care, especially when they were attending with urgent care concerns.

“They told us how long we would need to wait to be seen by the nurse and gave us the time we would be seen which is good.”

They commented that they were told by the staff on the reception desk that they would need to wait an hour to be seen but their slot was protected for them. They said that they felt being informed was a real benefit to them as they knew what to expect.

All fifteen patients complimented the care that they received whilst visiting the centre citing how relaxed the staff were with them and how they felt like they had time to explain things whilst being seen.

What works well at this centre?

One patient, who works in the local area, commented that they had chosen to attend the Minor injuries unit instead of travelling to the Accident and Emergency department as they knew they stood a better chance of being seen quicker than they would at the main hospital.

“It’s miles better here and there are no queues which is great.”

Two patients commented on how they felt well informed by staff about the status of their appointments, next steps and what they would need to do to manage their conditions.

“I came here after a fall and they talked me through what I would need to do, they said I would need to be triaged and I might need to go to Blackburn if they think its serious.”



Is there anything that could be changed to meet your needs?

Three patients commented that they weren't sure about the signing in process upon entry to the centre. They commented that they had approached the desk and been told to use the tablets which they didn't mind because the staff told them why they needed to follow that procedure.

One patient, who had experienced difficulties using the tablet commented that they felt like it was a barrier to them accessing the service, partially because the tablets had broken down when they spoke with Healthwatch Lancashire representatives.

“I can’t use the b**y thing and they won’t see me till I have used it.”**

This patient left the centre as a result of the tablets not functioning and expressed frustration that this was not the first time they had experienced issues with using technology at healthcare settings. Another patient who had experienced a similar issue explained that the staff had taken the issue into account and had provided them assistance to register at the centre.

Three patients complimented the waiting area on the day of the visit, but mentioned that it was particularly warm in the clinical areas.

“it’s really warm in the centre I saw the lad looking after me was sweating buckets.”

It was explained that there was no air-conditioning provided in the clinical areas which was something that patients commented on as result of the warm weather at the time of our visit. (Recommendation 4)

Do you receive information from the centre that is easy to understand?

All patients described the communication and information provided to them at the centre as being excellent when it came to treatments and care required for different conditions.

Patients who were given an appointment to return to the centre later in the day complimented the process and said that they felt reassured that they would be seen and knew roughly how long they would need to wait to be seen.

“They told me when I would be seen so I knew how long I would need to wait. It was about an hour which wasn’t a problem. ”

They mentioned that having a physical slip of paper with appointment details, helped them remember when to come back to the centre if they wished to leave the centre and grab a drink from the local shop. They mentioned that knowing how long they might need to wait and being told clearly was something that made the waiting experience less of an issue for them.

Any other comments

Two patients complimented the new setting for the service

“It’s better than the Vic (Accrington Victoria Hospital)”

They commented that the service was just as good as it was at the previous setting but the facilities were more up to date and user friendly.

Staff feedback

Healthwatch representatives spoke with six members of staff during the visit

How do you manage patient demand?

Four members of staff felt that the processes that were in place to manage patient flow was something that they were proud of. They mentioned that the appointment system helped manage patient expectations and kept them informed.

“Being able to give patients a timeslot helps them so they know how long they will need to wait.”

Four members of staff complimented the support that is provided through the tablets in the lobby, because it helped with the triage process to ensure that patients were being seen by the right professionals.

“We don’t often get patients who attend here who should be seen at another setting but there are always some who do need to be seen at say Blackburn or Burnley if they present with sickness, which we can’t provide for. The tablets have helped with this so if someone attends who should go elsewhere, they can be told at the earliest opportunity.”



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

Two members explained that the triage process also helped where patients are allocated to the right person for their care needs.

“We have nurses here who can look at an injury and a physio if they need that level of care.”

One member of staff explained that because the patients were allocated timeslots to be seen, it meant they knew how long they could have with each patient and they could make sure patients were given exactly what they needed.

“It is more relaxed here than at Blackburn, even though it can get busy, but we can manage the demand and give a good level of care here because we can have more time with the patients.”

Discussions with management revealed that there are plans in place to revamp the centre which will include a better layout staff and patients to utilise so that there will be more room and capacity to see patients. These plans include more accessible patient bays.

One thing that was mentioned was a lack of air-conditioning being costed for in the newly developed centre which, on the day of the visit, was one of the warmest parts of the centre.

“It would make life more comfortable if they had air-conditioning in here as it gets a bit much. At the moment, I am reliant on these cheap fans off Amazon.”

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

Discussions with the staff showed that there were processes in place to provide support for patients that were Deaf, although they acknowledged that this was a smaller number of patients that used the centre and they mentioned that there were difficulties experienced in the past.

“We just write things down for them or talk to their relative which works. Its hard getting an interpreter when its such short notice.”

It was felt that there were issues with the process because of the lower number of patients requiring this service. It is recommended that some training is put in place to refresh staff about Deaf awareness and the existing processes that are in place for booking interpreting services within the trust. (Recommendation 5)

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

Three members of staff commented that they felt that patients would benefit from improve information about their choices for urgent care so that the chances of them accessing an appropriate service was increased.

“We have had it where someone has come here when they should have gone to Blackburn. The ironic thing is if we ring an ambulance for transport they end up waiting longer because they are classed as a lower priority emergency because they are in a place of care. We can look after people but that takes us all away from the patients we are allocated and that drives waiting times up.”

They mentioned that if patients knew where it was appropriate to go they would have a reduction in instances where they have had to refer a patient to another service within the trust. (Recommendation 6)

One member of staff mentioned that the systems in place for patient triage were having a positive impact on patients but there needed to be some work done to help prevent these systems becoming a barrier for patients.

“You do get it where someone will underplay how serious their condition is on the tablet and we triage them. There is no substitute for that clinical knowledge. I think its one reason why patients get frustrated, when the tablets are working, because it looks like duplication. Having a person do the triage is better than the tablets at the moment because patients can sometimes struggle to correctly describe their condition on the tablet. Then there is the person we saw earlier who left because the tablets failed. That is not the best situation.”

They felt there should be a balance or a member of staff on hand to assist patients using the tablets to make sure they were being used effectively, particularly with vulnerable people. They mentioned that staff would help if they could but they were usually busy with other patients. (Recommendation 7)

Recommendations

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

1. Implement clear signage to direct patients to use tablets to self-assessment before they sign in. (see appendix 2 for ideas).
2. Update signage on the first floor to help patients navigate to the service from the Blackburn Road entrance.
3. Carry out a review of dementia friendly features in the centre and look to install a dementia friendly clock that displays the day, date and time.
4. Investigate the possibility of implementing air-conditioning within clinical areas of the minor injuries unit to provide better conditions for patients and staff during warmer weather.
5. Liaise with the Translation services and development Manager to deliver mandatory refresher training on processes and provisions available to support patients who use interpretation services.
6. Develop a comms strategy to provide information to patients about the emergency services that they can access and where it is appropriate to attend for different conditions.
7. Consider utilising available volunteers within the trust to provide support for patients using the streaming service at the beginning of their visit to help them access the tablets.

Provider response

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe	Comments
Implement clear signage to direct patients to use tablets. (see appendix 2 for ideas).	CHP and ELHT are currently planning the redevelopment for a new unit and radiology at APHC, signage will be incorporated in this redevelopment.	September 2026 forecast for completion	
	Temporary laminated cost-free signage can be arranged	September 2025	
Update signage on the first floor to help patients navigate to the service from the Blackburn road entrance.	CHP and ELHT are currently planning the redevelopment for a new unit and radiology at APHC, signage will be incorporated in this redevelopment.	September 2026	
	Temporary laminated cost-free signage can be arranged	September 2025	
Carry out a review of dementia friendly features in the centre and look to install a dementia friendly clock that displays the day, date and time.	Housekeeper to ask in trust if there are any spare dementia clocks if unavailable will request quotes for clocks, potentially ask ELHT&me charity to help supply Involve unit dementia link champion to help obtain clocks	October 2025	
Investigate the possibility of implementing air-conditioning within clinical areas of the	The CHP Architect has confirmed the redevelopment will incorporate ventilation standards	September 2026	

minor injuries unit to provide better conditions for patients and staff during warmer weather.	outlined in Health Building Notes (HBN) & Health Technical Memoranda (HTM's) which provide guidance on specialised ventilation for healthcare premises		
Liaise with the Translation services and development Manager to deliver mandatory refresher training on processes and provisions available to support patients who use interpretation services.	<p>There is a noticeboard with translation services in the staff room created by the unit Link champion</p> <p>Quality team have also asked the trust Translation Services Manager, to review the recommendation around staff's use and awareness of translation services.</p>	<p>Already in place</p> <p>November 2025</p>	
Develop a comms strategy to provide information to patients about the emergency services that they can access and where it is appropriate to attend for different conditions.	ELHT communications team produce regular advertisements in regard to appropriate use of services and what presentations can be seen at MIU/UTC/ED	Ongoing	
Use volunteers within the trust to provide support for patients using the streaming service at the beginning of their visit to help them access the tablets.	<p>Reception team and See and treat nurse practitioner support using the streaming tools in reception.</p> <p>Unit manager to consider requesting additional volunteer support</p>	Ongoing	

Any other comments

Appendices

Appendix 1

Community Health Partnership news:

<https://communityhealthpartnerships.co.uk/news/services-move-into-modernised-space-at-accrington-acorn-primary-care-centre/>

Appendix 2 – examples of streaming service signage

<https://healthwatchlancashire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Enter-and-View-Report-Fleetwood-UTC-1.pdf>



healthwatch

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