



## **Enter and View Report**

### **GP Access at Greenbank Surgery**

Visit: 7<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Report published: 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017

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# Background

## What is Healthwatch Warrington?

Healthwatch Warrington helps the residents and communities of Warrington to get the best out of local health and social care services. We gather the views of local people and make sure they are heard and listened to by the organisations that provide, fund and monitor these services.

## What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out *Enter and View* (E&V) visits. Local Healthwatch representatives, who are trained volunteers, carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The Health and Social Care Act (2012) allows local Healthwatch representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, care homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. *Enter and View* visits can happen if people identify a problem but equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation. This enables lessons to be learned and good practice shared.

Healthwatch *Enter and View* visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. If safeguarding issues are raised during a visit Healthwatch Warrington has safeguarding policies in place which identify the correct procedure to be taken.

## Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to the findings observed on the specific dates set out below. This report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Warrington would like to thank the staff, in particular Gwen Green (Practice Manager), Joanne Gerrard (Office Manager) and the surgery's Patient Participation Group representatives (Mary and Doreen) for taking the time to show the visiting team round, answering questions, and for helping to distribute patient surveys. We would also like to thank our trained volunteers for their contributions.

## Background and Purpose of the visits

Healthwatch Warrington made the decision to visit GP practices within the borough; with a focus on access and the general environment of surgeries. This is because access to primary care services (mainly GPs) has been identified as a recurrent theme within the public feedback data collected by Healthwatch Warrington.

GP access is often highlighted as a problematic aspect of patient experience, with common issues including; difficulties encountered when booking appointments, a lack of appointment availability and communication problems. However, public service reviews also hint at areas of good practice that could be highlighted and shared. Therefore, our authorised representatives visit GP practices in different clusters to gather feedback directly from patients and conduct specialist Enter & View visits.

Healthwatch Warrington engages with local Patient Participation Groups, GP practices and partner organisations to share our findings and help make improvements through recommendations.

## Details of the Visit

### Location

The visit took place at Greenbank Surgery, 274 Manchester Road, Warrington, WA1 3RB.

### Date/Time

The visit took place on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2017, from 9:20am - 11:45pm.

### Authorised Representatives (Visiting Team)

Esstta Hayes - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

Ildico Boden - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

### GP Practice Staff

Gwen Green, Practice Manager

Joanne Gerrard, Office Manager

Nicky Twiss, Reception/Administration

Tina Waywell, Reception/Administration

### Description of the Surgery

Greenbank Surgery belongs to the Central East GP cluster and is located on Manchester Road. At present, the surgery has approximately 8,900 registered patients. As well as general consultations, the surgery provides a range of additional clinics and services, including; hypertension clinics, diabetic clinics, antenatal clinics, nurse-led clinics for smears and pill checks, child health surveillance, minor surgery and cryotherapy, heart disease clinics, COPD clinics, dietician, asthma clinics, mental health clinics, weight management clinics, travel vaccinations and a number of non-NHS services. In July 2015, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) rated the surgery as overall 'good' in its inspection report.

## Results of the Visit

Wherever possible the reports below are in the words of the E&V team members who were present at the time of the visit. The reports have been collated by the Healthwatch Warrington team and some text has been formatted to allow for easy reading; however the essential facts of the visiting team's reports have not been altered.

### Observations from the Visit

#### External Access and Appearance

The surgery does not have a designated car park; parking is on road. The road outside the surgery (Manchester Road) is very busy with traffic and bus activity. The surgery is also immediately adjacent to two other surgeries and a pharmacy. Parking was difficult to find for the visiting team and was found off road approximately 5 minutes away. The surgery does have disabled access via a paved ramp, with painted blue handrails along its length. The adjacent pharmacy can be accessed via the entrance ramp and through the surgery itself.

#### Reception Area

The double width external entrance doors were folded back, with inner automatic doors, aiding access for those with mobility issues. The surgery has a wall mounted electronic display to call patients via a bell, with the appropriate name and room number displayed. The electronic display was also used to show other relevant information e.g. health campaigns and upcoming PPG meetings. The flooring was wooden throughout, with carpeted areas upon entry. Reception was an open desk and manned by 1 or 2 members of staff during the visit, who were polite and courteous. The visiting team also noticed a sign that stated: "Defibrillator Here", to aid people experiencing cardiac arrest. There was a rope near the desk for privacy purposes (to avoid other patients overhearing any discussions at reception).

Display boards were well ordered (with flu vaccines advertised and a ‘You Said, We Did’ section), but some posters were out of date (for example, an advertised Healthwatch Warrington event was dated October 2016). A Friends and Family Test reply box was sited next to reception; with a wall mounted prescription box opposite reception at eye level, with clear signage.

### **Waiting Room / Seating Area**

The surgery’s waiting area is large, open and clear. Seating is provided in rows, with some rows shorter to enable use of buggies/prams and wheelchair/mobility scooters. The seating provided was upholstered, at the same height, and some chairs had arms (which can be of help to those patients with mobility needs). Wall boards displaying information are placed at eye height, with several children’s artworks displayed throughout. Patient Forum information is at eye level, immediately next to the surgery’s front door. A Carers’ Board display shows information and support for carers.

### **Additional Facilities**

The Practice Manager confirmed that the surgery provides the following additional facilities to improve access for patients with additional needs; foreign language leaflets and information, translation services, British Sign Language support, a hearing loop and wheelchair ramp. However, 3 local GP surgeries share 1 disabled car parking space between them, which could pose issues for access given patient numbers. A disabled toilet is available within the surgery. Unfortunately, one toilet was out of service during the visit.

### **Cleanliness and Maintenance of Communal Areas**

Hand sanitiser was available in the waiting area. Communal areas were clean, well maintained and bright. Leaflet displays were orderly and clear.

## Patient Voice and Feedback

The surgery has an active Patient Participation Group (PPG) with around 26 members and growing (with 5 regular attendees). The PPG meet bimonthly, but this is soon to become quarterly. Information about the PPG was provided in the waiting room, but this could be clearer and made to be more eye catching on the notice board. Healthwatch Warrington were also given copies of the surgery's staff structure, health and safety policy, the smoking policy and complaints procedure.

## Safety

The visiting team were requested to sign in and complete a data protection form upon arrival. This indicates that proactive security measures are in place at the surgery.

## Staffing, Leadership and Promoting Positive & Respectful Attitudes

The surgery has a total of 27 members of staff, including; 7 GPs, 3 Practice Nurses, 2 Nurse Practitioners, 12 reception/admin staff, 1 Office Manager, 1 Practice Manager and 1 Healthcare Assistant. Staff are assessed on their wants, needs and skills to help allocate them to roles. Lots of training is undertaken at the surgery to ensure consistency. For example, all staff are trained to undertake switchboard and reception duties, so they can help with these roles as needed. During the visit, the working environment felt calm and well-ordered and low-level music was playing.

The Practice Manager and Office Manager explained that a Partners meeting is held every week or every other week, with staff meetings held every month and clinical meetings held every 6 weeks. Many of the core staff have been with the surgery over 10 years and the Managers explained that they operate an open door policy to ensure that staff are able to communicate and raise issues readily with them. Furthermore, the Practice Manager stated that the surgery had built very strong relationships with other Practice Managers in the area, enabling information and advice sharing between surgeries.



## Appointments

The surgery advertises its opening hours and admissions procedures both on-site and on its website. Patients can book appointment in person (by visiting reception), online, by phone (including phone triage), or via written request (as required, for example, if a patient was unable to use any other methods). Appointments are available as walk ins/same day, within 48 hours or in advance (within 7-14 days).

The surgery operates the following opening hours; Monday (8:00am - 6:30pm), Tuesday (8:00am - 6:30pm), Wednesday (8:00am - 8:00pm - evening extended hours are from 6:30pm - 8:00pm), Thursday (8:00am - 6:30pm), Friday (8:00am - 6:30pm) and is closed on weekends. There is a daily drop-in from 8:00am - 10:00am each morning. The surgery closes one Thursday afternoon (each month) for staff training.

In addition to its own extended hours, the surgery also actively refers patients to the Out of Hours service, advertising it by displaying information on the surgery's website, providing leaflets and notices and with reception staff informing patients about the service directly.

Furthermore, the surgery has a daily drop in with Nurse Practitioners from 8:00am - 10:00am; to try and alleviate the pressure on GP time. The surgery also runs the Violent Patient Scheme for Warrington surgeries - if a doctor or a member of staff within a surgery is affected by a patient's volatile behaviour, the patient is asked to attend appointments at Greenbank (known as a safe haven practice), where both the members of staff and patient are protected from any further harm. The surgery currently supports around 26 patients on the scheme, though figures can vary.

During the visit, most patients that the Healthwatch Warrington team spoke with expressed frustration with trying to book appointments. One patient said he was queuing from 7:15am, only to find that by the time the surgery had opened, almost all appointments had been taken. Some patients felt that the appointments were instantly taken by those trying to book on-line.

Another patient said that they had got through twice on the phone and pressed (1), waited two or three minutes, only for a voice recording to state that the number was no longer available. The patient did not have a computer and was still trying to get an appointment. The patient was going to call back at a later date, but was still not hopeful of getting an appointment. Another patient said that it appeared that only certain appointments were released for booking each day, as they wanted to book an appointment one Friday but were told that some appointments would be released for a particular doctor on Monday and some on Tuesday for another doctor.

The patients that the visiting team spoke with seemed happy with their care, once they had accessed their clinician.

### Patient Survey Responses

The visiting team received a total of 23 survey responses from patients at the surgery, with the survey questions focusing on their access experiences.

Over 90% respondents were aware that they could book appointments by phone, with around 1/3 also mentioning the ability to book online and in-person (suggesting that phone access is still the most popular choice of booking).

In terms of the average length of time that it takes to reach reception (when booking by phone), around 22% of respondents stated that they had to wait longer than 10 minutes to get through, with 17% of respondents stating that they usually could not get through at all because lines are so busy. This is indicative of some potential difficulties in terms of phone access at the surgery (for example, phone line capacity).

When respondents were asked whether they were usually able to get an appointment for a suitable date and time for them, 50% stated that they could 'sometimes' get such appointments, with 27% stating that they could 'never' get a suitable appointment. Around 23% of patients stated that they could 'always' or 'often' get a suitable appointment. Furthermore, 61% of respondents indicated that they could get an appointment with a named GP, with 17% stating that they could 'often' get one and 22% stating that they 'never' could.

When questioned about using the Out of Hours service, 35% of respondents stated that they in fact utilized the service. This could be related to the surgery's advertisement of its availability and proactive approach to referrals. For example, one respondent stated that the surgery referred them to a specialist physiotherapist. However, this trend could also mean that there is a greater need for extended or different hours at the surgery itself (as was suggested in a number of survey responses).

As such, patients were asked about their overall satisfaction with the surgery's booking system and around 57% of respondents told the visiting team that they were 'satisfied', with around 35% of respondents stating that they were 'not satisfied' or 'very unsatisfied' with the system.

When asked to share general feedback and suggestions, some respondents shared positive comments that focused on the quality of care and staff attitudes at the surgery, such as: "Happy with surgery" and "Doctors are very good here".

However, a number of patient responders shared concerns regarding access, such as; "Sometimes wait a long time for the phone to be answered and costs a lot to ring on your mobile", and; "Online system is infuriating. There is never a suitable time. But if I visit in reception, in person, I can always get a suitable appointment". Other patients were unhappy with some aspects of patient and staff interaction (including complaints management) and the length and availability of appointments. This led some respondents to suggest that a better phone handling system should be put in place at the surgery and more funding should be allocated to NHS services to achieve better access.

## Summary

The visit team found the surgery staff, Practice Manager and Office Manager to be very friendly, helpful, talkative and approachable. During the visit, the team were able to speak with admin/reception staff (Tina Waywell and Nicky Twiss). Nicky has been a member of staff for around 7 years, while Tina has been at the surgery for 11 years. Both staff fed back that the surgery team is very strong and co-operative with GPs, nursing staff and the admin/reception team being on first name terms. Both staff said it was a nice place to work and that they feel greatly supported by the surgery's management team.

Staff highlighted that there are difficulties posed by patient expectations which are set by other services (for example, Hospitals), who assure patients that results for tests (for example, electrocardiograms) will be accessible within several days. The team mentioned that this does not take into account the necessary write up and communication timelines, which can cause unnecessary frustration for patients. Both members of staff fed back that patient expectations and service provision can be difficult to balance due to the limitations of technology in areas like phone access.

When asked, from a service perspective, whether any changes could be made to help improve access at the surgery, the Practice Manager told the visiting team that more GPs and clinicians would help to meet the needs of the surgery. However, they can be difficult to recruit (although the surgery has always managed to recruit clinical staff).

# Recommendations

1. ***Refresh and Update Noticeboards:*** some of the information on noticeboards was seen to be outdated and requires a refresh. The PPG information could also be presented more clearly and in an eye catching fashion on the notice board.
2. ***Work with PPG to build stronger patient feedback base:*** the PPG members present during the visit demonstrated that they are a valuable asset for the surgery and could be instrumental in gathering more patient feedback and strengthening patient voices. Both recommendations will allow the surgery to communicate more effectively with patients, act on their concerns in a timely manner and better manage expectations.

## Distribution List

*This report has been distributed to the following:*

- *Warrington Borough Council*
- *Warrington CCG*
- *Care Quality Commission*
- *Healthwatch England*

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### *Response from Provider*

Regarding the report - we have found a couple of items that are incorrect;

Page 7 - each of our three patient toilets are Ok for people who may be disabled.

Kind Regards

Gwen Green

Practice Manager

