



Enter and View Report

GP Access at Fairfield Surgery

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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 Sharon Williams (Practice Manager), Dr Brassill, Dr Alex and Patient Participation Group members, for taking the time to show the visiting team round and for answering their questions. 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 Fairfield Surgery, Manchester Road, Warrington, WA1 3RB.

Date/Time

The visit took place on Tuesday 21st February 2017, from 9:00am - 12:30pm.

Authorised Representatives (Visiting Team)

Jim Sinnott - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

Gwen Lightfoot - Healthwatch Warrington, Authorised Representative

GP Practice Staff

Dr Alex, GP

Dr Brassill, GP

Sharon Williams, Practice Manager

Patient Participation Group Representatives

Description of the Surgery

Fairfield Surgery belongs to the Central East GP cluster and is located on Manchester Road.

At present, the surgery has approximately 3000 registered patients. As well as general consultations, the surgery provides a range of additional clinics and services, including; asthma clinics, Chronic Heart Disease clinics, diabetes clinics, child health surveillance, hypertension clinics, minor surgery, immunisation sessions, family planning service, Multidisciplinary Team Meetings for palliative care, milestone checks, coil fitting, minor surgery, emergency contraception, physiotherapy, travel vaccinations and a range of non-NHs services.

In June 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 a member of 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 is located on the main road from Warrington and is one of three surgeries located side by side. The surgery has good bus and road access and a number of patients visiting Fairfield arrive on foot. However, for those patients using cars, parking could be a bit of problem on Manchester Road when it is busy (although this was not raised by patients as an issue during the visit). Parking is available along the main road and there is allocated disabled parking spaces (for 4 cars) outside the surgery building. Additional parking spaces for disabled visitors can also be made available at the rear of the building (in the staff car park).

The surgery's frontage appeared to be well maintained and signage was clear (showing the surgery's name). Access to the surgery is at the side of the building, which was clearly signed and up a sloped path. The front entrance door opens inward. There is the potential for seated patients to help wheelchair users operate the front door (as seating is located close to the doorway). There is a porch at the side of the front entrance, with room to leave prams, buggies and other ambulatory aids. Surgery staffs make the most of having small premises with restricted access and the limitations incurred by this situation.

Reception Area

The visiting team's first impressions of Fairfield Surgery were that of a peaceful, traditional doctor's surgery. The reception area was clean, bright, warm and had a welcoming atmosphere.

Both receptionist greeted the visiting team promptly and cheerfully; asking the team (as visitors) to sign the surgery's visitors book. The visiting team also signed a confidentiality agreement, as requested (indicating good security policies being in place at the surgery).

The visiting team observed that patient flow through the reception area was efficient, with patients being seen reasonably on time and greeted by reception staff upon arrival (even if they were taking phone calls). As the area is relatively compact, there is no need for an electronic calling system; patients can be called in personally. The visiting team noticed that most patients were well known to surgery staff; with courteous and respectful use of patient first names by staff.

Due to the room being relatively small, there were some restrictions around privacy at the reception desk. However, the desk is off set from the seating area and it is possible for patients move to the side of the desk if wanting to speak quietly. Low-level background music was playing and this helped to mask conversations at the reception desk and contributed to the ambience of the space.

As the reception desk is positioned at a fairly high level, the installation of a lower section may benefit wheelchair users. Furthermore, although the reception space is small, there is some room to approach the reception desk. However, this may be difficult for wheelchair users or patients with buggies if the waiting area is full. This is a known issue at the surgery and care is taken by staff to ensure that access is appropriate, where possible.

The Practice Manager, Sharon Williams, warmly greeted the visiting team shortly after arrival and was very helpful and open about answering questions about the surgery. There were lots of up-to-date information posters in this area that had an informative and positive tone. However, there was a notable lack of Patient Participation Group (PPG) information available.

This point was raised with the Practice Manager and Sharon confirmed that there was a planned revamp of all notice boards (to include more information about the PPG, as the surgery wants to recruit more members) and this information is available on the surgery's website.

Waiting Room / Seating Area

Although the waiting area is small, there appeared to be plenty of seats available without restricting the room too much. Seats could be taken out or brought into the room by staff, as needed. However, there was no raised seating in the waiting area; which is helpful for accommodating disabled patients. The surgery does not have a loudspeaker in place, as practice staff are able to come into the reception area and call patients for their appointments (which is a positive aspect of the service).

Additional Facilities

The surgery had a good sized patient toilet, with disabled access facilities in place. However, the visiting team did not notice an emergency chord in the toilet (which would be beneficial from a safety perspective). There is currently no hearing loop in place at the surgery, but the Practice Manager is in the process of addressing this issue following a visit from the Deaf Society.

The surgery can also provide a private space (if required) for breast feeding mums, translation services and a Braille access laser printer via the Blind Society.

Dementia Friendly Approach

The colour of the walls and carpets contrasted. Furthermore, the carpet should be non-slip and have a neutral pattern to accommodate patients with dementia. However, the surgery's carpet is due to be replaced soon. Also, the visiting team were unable to locate a clock or calendar in the surgery's public spaces.

Navigation around building

Despite the surgery's relatively small size, there was good wall signage that indicated the way to various rooms (for example, toilet, treatment room, GP consulting room) and room doors were also clearly labelled. The surgery's floor surfaces were flat and there were no steps encountered around the ground floor rooms (helping to make them more accessible). There are offices and a meeting room up some steep stairs. However, this area is mainly used by staff and not patients (except for when a psychologist visits); this could present access issues for people with limited mobility.

Cleanliness and Maintenance of Communal Areas

The premises were clean well-kept and in good state of repair, with a neutral odour throughout. The visiting team did not notice any trip hazards, although there was a taped strip at a carpet join. However, the reception carpet is due to be replaced soon. In addition, the visiting team did not notice any hand sanitisers in public areas.

The reception area's floor is currently carpeted, which was highlighted by a recent visit from the Deaf Society as being good for people with hearing issues as it reduces echoing. However, this was also highlighted as a possible infection control issue by a recent Care Quality Commission visit and so is being replaced by appropriate washable flooring. A problem with the flooring recently means that this carpet is currently taped down; this does not present a trip hazard and evidences the quick response by management to an issue that occurred with an uneven floor.

The surgery staff have made the best of the available space (despite the small size of the practice), for example, by using the back of the reception area as an additional space and maintaining an excellent meeting room. Furthermore, both Dr Brassill and Dr Alex's consulting rooms (which the team were invited to see) were pleasant well kitted out rooms in a good state of repair. In addition, an upstairs meeting room is used for visiting psychological therapist sessions. All the rooms seen by the visiting team were clean, well-lit and entirely fit for purpose.

Patient Voice and Feedback

The surgery has an active PPG that consisting of 8 members, 5 of whom are very active and 3 that met with the Healthwatch team during the visit. The PPG meets with staff 4 times per year and the meetings are chaired by Dr Brassill.

In terms of collecting patient feedback, a patient survey is carried out by the surgery annually (the survey results for 2015-16 were given to the Healthwatch Warrington visiting team). A Friends and Family Test post box was also positioned to the left side of the reception desk. However, it was covered over and was difficult to locate. As such, the visiting team would recommend that the Friends and Family Test box be more prominently positioned and that reception staff actively encourage patients to complete the form in order to capture more immediate patient satisfaction feedback.

The patients that the visiting team spoke with all gave really positive feedback about the surgery; with no complaints being made about the booking system (as these patients can usually get through on the phone promptly and get suitable appointment times).

The visiting team also spoke with the 3 PPG members and this conversation presented a picture of complete satisfaction with the practice, with them saying: "everything's lovely" and "some surgeries are too big". One member who had been with Fairfield for many years and lived in Croft told that team that she had no intention of ever moving doctors. The PPG members also said that patients and the

PPG generally enjoyed a great relationship with the doctors, nurses and all staff - as they care for patients in a very personal way.

The Practice Manager explained that complaints are managed as soon as possible. For example, an issue had arisen the day before the visit with a new patient who was not offered an appointment. The surgery identified the issue, the patient was then offered an appointment and the member of staff involved was reminded of the surgery's procedures.

The visiting team did not see any posters or material about Healthwatch Warrington, but did provide Sharon and the PPG members with a copy of Healthwatch Warrington's Signposting Directory. The visiting team also made the offer to provide further copies and information materials for patients. The PPG members were interested in further engagement with Healthwatch Warrington to help strengthen the patient voice.

Safety

All of the surgery's public areas (for example, reception, corridors, doors and exits) were clear of any obstructions, allowing free passage in an emergency.

Staffing, Leadership and Promoting Positive & Respectful Attitudes

At present, the surgery employs 3 GPs, 1 nurse, 4 receptionists and 1 administrator.

The visiting team noted that staff were pleasant; with friendly conversations occurring between staff and patients, which is indicative of a small friendly surgery where it feels like all the patients are treated as individuals.

The visiting team's feeling from observing and speaking with reception staff, the Practice Manager, PPG members, Dr Brassill and Dr Alex was that they wanted to do the best they could for their patients. A passion for patient caring was evident from all the visiting team's conversations with staff.

The visiting team were given the opportunity to speak with two practice doctors. Firstly, the team spoke with Dr Alex who had a lovely, warm disposition. The team also met with Dr Brassill and it soon became clear this man exuded the best of GP attributes and that the ethos of the practice flows from him through to all of his colleagues. In particular, Dr Brassill saw the benefits for patients of having a small, caring practice with the patient at the heart.

All staff spaces were seen by the visiting team; they were all clean, well-presented and typical of what would be expected in a working environment. For example, the meeting room is bright and modern; equipped with modern seating, a small conference table, chairs and a computer on a small computer desk.

The PPG members present during the visit shared very positive feedback about the surgery and this was reflected in the positive feedback that they receive from patient surveys. The PPG members felt that the reception staff are very good and show a good level of training and induction - this was evidenced by the experience of Healthwatch Warrington visitors when entering the building, with reception staff being pleasant, receptive and professional. The PPG members also believed that the low number of patient non-attendances for appointments was due to the respect that the patients had for the practice and staff: “there are good relationships so don’t want to let people down...you feel cared for”.

The Practice Manager said that she had been quite surprised and really pleased as she settled into her role, realising what a great move she had made by coming to a surgery with such a warm, welcoming and caring practice. Sharon mentioned that in her time with Fairfield Surgery, she had seen patient numbers grow from 2,400 to almost 3,000, which suggests that the surgery has a good reputation. When the Practice Manager was asked, from a service perspective, what changes could be made to help improve GP access, Sharon mentioned that there had been a heart failure clinic set up and run as a pilot within the surgery’s cluster. Both GP and patient Feedback about this service was good. However, the service was dependant on NHS Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group funding and was pulled. Sharon said that money could be better spent if it is aimed at older people, for example, by funding projects like the heart failure clinic.

Appointments

The surgery's booking procedures and opening hours are displayed both inside the surgery building and on its website. The surgery is open on the following days and times; Monday (8:00am - 6:30pm), Tuesday (8:00am - 6:30pm, evenings extended on this day), Wednesday (8:00am - 6:30pm, early opens on this day from 7:30am), Thursday (8:00am - 6:30pm, the surgery is closed last Thursday of the month for training), Friday (8:00am - 6:30pm) and Evenings (Extended Hours) 8:00am - 6:30pm.

Patients can make appointments in person (by visiting reception), online and by phone. Patients can request appointments with a named GP. Same day appointments are available; there is a balance of appointments, with 4 being pre-bookable and the rest booked on the day. Patients can ring after 8:15am for same day appointments.

The surgery also makes active referrals to the Out of Hours service and makes patients aware of this by providing clearly visible notices, leaflets, displaying the information on the surgery's website and with reception staff inform patients directly.

Patient Survey Responses

Healthwatch Warrington (with the help of the surgery's PPG members) collected a total of 4 patient survey responses during the visit. In line with the purpose of the visit, patient survey questions focused on patient's access experiences at the surgery.

All respondents were aware that they could book appointments via telephone, with 1 respondent also mentioning that they could book in-person and 1 stating that they knew about the online booking system (but they did not use this). This suggests that telephone access is the most popular method of booking appointments. As a suggestion, more work could be completed to promote online bookings and this was also suggested by one of the respondents.

Encouragingly, all respondents stated that, on average, they waited less than 5 minutes on the phone line to reach the surgery when booking an appointment. Furthermore, 3 out of 4 told Healthwatch Warrington that they could always get an appointment for the time, date and with named GP that they wanted, with 1 patient saying that they 'often' could. Respondents also told Healthwatch Warrington that they have made use of the Out of Hours service. Those respondents that did not use the service would not have required access to Out of Hours (as opposed to being unaware that it existed).

3 out of 4 respondents said that they were 'very satisfied' overall with the surgery's booking system, with the remaining 1 patient stating that they were 'satisfied'. These findings are reflected in some of the excellent comments that respondents made about the surgery: "It's really very efficient - everyone GP reception staff, office staff, nursing staff. You would go a long way to find another surgery like this"; "been with surgery for 40 years very happy no reason at all to move" and "very happy, all the staff are brilliant, 100% never had any cause for complaint". One patient also commented that although they had moved to Stockton Heath some time ago, they saw no reason to change practice as they were happy at Fairfield Surgery.

Summary

From first entering the surgery, the visiting team noticed the welcoming and homely atmosphere. All members of staff were very helpful, open, efficient and cheerful, generous with their time and were happy to answer the Healthwatch representatives' questions. This is shown by the positive patient feedback received by Healthwatch Warrington on the day, as well as that collected previously by the surgery.

Although some changes could be made to facilitate better access at the surgery (e.g. providing more PPG information), the Practice Manager is taking a proactive approach to addressing these issues. Following this really positive visit, the visiting team commented that they would be more than happy to be patients at Fairfield Surgery and give the practice a positive Friends and Family Test recommendation.

Recommendations

1. **Planned Access Upgrades:** the surgery should continue with the planned upgrades and work with the PPG and Healthwatch Warrington to publicise these developments so patients are aware of any changes
2. **PPG Recruitment and Strengthening Patient Voice:** the surgery should work on providing more information to patients about the PPG and actively recruit more members to the group. The surgery could also move the Friends and Family Test feedback box to a more prominent position and encourage patient engagement.
3. **Additional Facilities in the Toilet:** the surgery's toilet would benefit from the installation of a safety chord (if not already in place).

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

We are happy with this report.

Kind regards
Sharon Williams
Practice Manager

