

Howdale Surgery

Feedback

June 2025

In June 2025 we visited Howdale Surgery to speak with patients about their experience with health and social care services. From this visit we received 14 reviews for the surgery. The reviews have an average star rating of 3.8 out of 5.

Howdale Surgery is a GP surgery in the town of Downham Market. Upon their last inspection in August 2018, the surgery received a rating of "Good", from the CQC. There were approximately 7100 patients registered with the surgery at the time of the inspection. Howdale Surgery offers a variety of services including smoking cessation, chronic disease management and minor surgeries.

Healthwatch Norfolk Officers who visited Howdale Surgery noted:

- Healthwatch Norfolk officers were welcomed by reception staff
- Waiting room appeared clean and tidy with clear notice boards with up-to-date information for patients. The information included a sign asking patients to report to reception if they were waiting for more than 20 minutes.
- There appeared to be adequate parking for patients in the surgery car park and there was a larger free car park next door.

- One patient had parked a mobility scooter in the accessible parking place leaving no obvious place for a blue badge holder with a car.
- The practice manager told HWN staff that they were in the process of re starting a Patient Participation Group.

Overall, patients seemed satisfied with their care, praising how lovely they found staff and their helpfulness. However, people did express their frustrations over the overall organisation of the practice with issues such as appointments being booked with the wrong doctor or prescriptions not being sent to the correct place.

Below there is a graph that shows the key themes and feelings shared in the feedback collected by Healthwatch Norfolk.



Figure 1 – A graph depicting review themes and sentiment for the feedback collected from Howdale Surgery by the Healthwatch Norfolk Engagement Team.

The reviews are displayed in the table below and can be found on our website www.healthwatchnorfolk.co.uk.

ID	Service Provider	Title	Review	Rating
260465	Howdale Surgery	They were very quick today	Today they were very quick but sometimes there is a queue. Today has been easy as I have just picked up my prescription, but I do usually think the service here is good.	5
260464	Howdale Surgery	The staff are 5 star	It's not too long to wait to be seen and I can get an appointment as I need. The staff are very good, definitely 5 star. It's all good.	5
260129	Howdale Surgery	Cheerful, receptive and helpful staff	<p>The staff are always very cheerful, receptive and helpful and you usually get a quick response. I can get an appointment okay and the conversation on the phone with the doctor last week was very good and he was very kind.</p> <p>I can also pick up my prescriptions from here which is convenient. It would be better if when they are doing flu vaccines the appointment could be generated by them and not the patient as it's difficult to know when they are going to do them. Last time I didn't get any notification.</p>	5
260126	Howdale Surgery	The staff are helpful	It's all okay, the staff are kind and it's very convenient as I only live up the road. I have had to wait a while for an appointment but other than that it's okay.	4
260124	Howdale Surgery	Overall, I'm happy here	Overall, the service is quite good, and I am happy here. They usually fit you in if you need an appointment and the staff are lovely.	4

260123	Howdale Surgery	The staff are all so lovely	I have never really had a problem, the staff are all so lovely and most of my experiences have been very good. It can be hard to get an appointment. The trickiest bit is having to call between 8.30 and 9am. It is school drop off time and I'm also a teacher. I can't take calls for telephone appointments at an unspecified time during the school day. If it was easier to get an appointment I would have given a 5 out of five star rating.	4
260175	Howdale Surgery	I have been coming here for many years and I'm happy	I can usually phone and get an appointment and if I need, I will be offered an appointment the same day. Consistency can be a problem with who you see. One doctor puts you on a path and then the next one says I wouldn't do that, and they try something else, and the treatment gets changed. I struggle with change. The staff are very good, I've been coming here for many years and I'm happy.	4
260173	Howdale Surgery	It's all pretty good	All okay, I had to queue for a bit for my prescription today but otherwise it's okay. It's all pretty good.	4
260170	Howdale Surgery	A month is too long to wait for an appointment	I have had to wait a month for an appointment, and I think it too long. There are lots of people and they are building even more houses. I think the level of trust and continuity of care is an issue too.	4
260169	Howdale Surgery	Usually, it's a good service	The staff are lovely and it's usually a good service. The only reason I haven't given a 5 star rating today is because of the confusion over where I pick my prescription up from. I was sent to boots and then I had to come back here to get it.	4

260168	Howdale Surgery	My regular asthma check works well	<p>Everything that is regular like my asthma check always seems to work well and is very good, but for other things it can be very hard to get an appointment.</p> <p>Just over a year ago I had an appointment but when I arrived I was told the wrong appointment had been booked and they couldn't do as I had hoped and expected. They had booked the appointment, and I found it very upsetting. The person I saw threw my sample away and said they couldn't use it. I was so upset by this experience that I left and didn't come back for a year.</p> <p>It feels like it is difficult to easily get what you need, and you don't always get enough information.</p> <p>You don't know who you are going to see. There used to have staff name boards with photos in the waiting area, and I think if these were there again patients would find it helpful.</p>	3
260167	Howdale Surgery	I'm very unhappy with the service today	<p>I had an appointment this morning with a doctor but when I arrived, they told me it was at the Marham surgery. I was not told this when I booked. I've never been to Marham surgery, and I don't even know where it is. It's ridiculous and I'm not very happy.</p> <p>Now they have just offered me a telephone appointment instead and that's not what I wanted.</p>	3
260163	Howdale Surgery	Care from cradle to grave no longer exists	<p>Things have fallen apart. I have seen locum doctors here and it's not been good. I have been referred to the hospital and I was told they could see no more patients, so I chose to go private instead. It seemed I had no choice. The GPs and hospital don't seem to speak to each other and there is no joined up thinking. No one is talking to anyone else. There is no continuity of care. Staff tell you they are doing</p>	2

			as they are told but no one is listening to the people in the firing line, the patients	
260150	Howdale Surgery	Everything seems to be falling apart	Things don't seem to be working so well. I spoke to a doctor at length on a previous visit and another appointment was made to see them again. When I turned up for the follow up visit it was with a different doctor even though I had been assured it would be with the one I saw before. Seeing a different doctor makes no sense. I was also not as comfortable speaking to a female doctor on my second visit. I also asked the doctor today if they could look at my swollen foot and I was told I would have to make another appointment and come back. They are making it difficult to see a doctor. It puts you off bothering. There seems to be so many problems at the moment, and everything seems to be falling apart.	2