

Enter and View Report: Stockton Heath Medical Centre

Date of visit: 15th September 2021

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Stockton Heath Medical Centre

September 2021

healthwatch
Warrington
YOUR health and social care champions



ABOUT THE SURVEY

16,300 registered patients. The team consists of **54** staff including, **28** administrative staff, **15** nurses and **8** GP's.



TELEPHONE/ ECONSULT

Some patients are struggling to use eConsult due to it either not working/ unable to access. Issues with waiting times on the telephone.



PRIVACY & DIGNITY

Patients are visible when getting blood tests to all those in the waiting rooms



PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP

Practice has an active PPG, so the patients voice is heard.



SERVICES & TREATMENTS

Flu vaccinations and a Covid Vaccination Walk in Clinic on a Saturday morning - open to anyone, not only patients registered with the practice.



PATIENT VOICE

"I WAS TRYING EVERY DAY AND FINDING QUEUES OF BETWEEN 11 AND 21 IN THE TELEPHONE QUEUE".



"Sometimes waiting 30-40 minutes on the phone 3rd/4th in queue, for the line to go dead when number 1"

"I'VE ALWAYS HAD EXCELLENT SERVICE FROM STOCKTON HEATH MEDICAL CENTRE. THE ECONSULT IS A GREAT TIME SAVER FOR THE GPs. I'VE ALWAYS HAD A RESPONSE WITHIN A FEW HOURS OF SUBMITTING THE FORM".



"I have used eConsult and when I asked for a face-to-face appointment it was given".

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 that they are heard and listened to by the organisations that provide, fund and monitor 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 staff and volunteers, carry out E&V 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, opticians and pharmacies. E&V visits can happen if people identify a problem. Equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation; enabling lessons to be learned and good practice shared.

Healthwatch E&V visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. If safeguarding issues are raised during a visit, Healthwatch Warrington safeguarding policies identify the correct procedures to be followed.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to the findings observed on the specific date of the visit. This report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users/residents and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time. Wherever possible, the report below is in the words of the E&V team members present at the time of the visit.

The report has been collated by Adrienne Roberts, Volunteer Co-ordinator and Enter and View Lead, and some of the text has been formatted to allow for easy reading.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Warrington would like to thank everyone at Stockton Heath Medical Centre for their welcome, and in particular, Karen Chriscoli, Practice Manager, who made time to share information with the team, escort them around the building and answer questions.

Purpose of the visit

Since the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the way that Primary Care health services are able to operate, Healthwatch Warrington has received feedback from patients and their carers', in relation to difficulty contacting General Practice; and accessing care and treatment. Most of the concerns raised have been in relation to patients being unable to contact their Practice by telephone, email or electronic form. Many have been unable to make an appointment.

During the pandemic, E&V visits were suspended for approximately 16 months, and Healthwatch England published guidance and recommendations on recommencing them in August 2021. All visits are risk assessed and planned in agreement with the Practice Manager.

Stockton Heath Medical Centre has remained open throughout the pandemic, albeit the service has been delivered differently, with fewer face-to-face appointments and several restrictions on services that were imposed during both lockdowns. Some members of staff were deployed to assist with Covid vaccinations.

The E&V visit was carried out at the Practice by two Authorised Representatives from Healthwatch Warrington and they obtained information by speaking to staff and patients, observation, and the use of a feedback form.

The review team had the opportunity to speak to some of the patients waiting outside for their appointment, or as they were leaving following an appointment. Due to the restrictions imposed by reduced contact with patients, it was difficult to interview them. Therefore, in addition to interviews, a feedback form was handed to patients

with a pre-paid envelope. Eight forms were returned to Healthwatch Warrington, and the information has been used to enhance the report.

Details of the Visit

Details of the Service

Stockton Heath Medical Centre currently has approximately 16,300 registered patients. The team consists of 54 staff including, 28 administrative staff, 15 nurses and 8 GP's. These include a specialist Mental Health Doctor, Doctor with special interest in Dermatology and Doctors with special interest in Frailty. The Practice is a training practice and currently has 2 GP registrars and 2 foundation level doctors training with them.

There are nurse led services; Women's health including cervical screening, contraception and hormone replacement therapy (HRT), Treatment room services, Tissue Viability, Asthma, Diabetes and immunisations.

Additional roles across the South Warrington Primary Care Network include First Contact Physiotherapist, (who now see patients at the Practice face-to-face on Tuesday and Wednesday). Social Prescribing link worker, Mental Health Practitioner and Paramedics.

The management team are reviewing clinical rotas to ensure they are working to efficiently meet patient demand and ensure every patient is seen by the appropriate clinician for their need.

Location, Date and Time

Stockton Heath Medical Centre

The Forge, London Road, Stockton Heath, Warrington, Cheshire. WA4 6HJ

Tel: 01925604427 www.stocktonheathmedicalcentre.co.uk

The visit took place on 15/09/2021 from 09.30 am to 12.15pm

Panel Members

Adrienne Roberts - Volunteer Co-ordinator and Enter and View lead, Healthwatch Warrington

Morgan Unsworth - Volunteer and Authorised Representative

Provider Service and Staff

At the time of the visit, the Practice employed 54 members of staff. There were three administrative staff vacancies and two GP vacancies. Two students had been employed on a temporary basis to cover some of the administration work.

Staff retention is good, and the visiting team spoke to several staff who had worked at the Practice for many years. One of the staff interviewed by the team has worked at the Practice for more than 30 years, is an Associate Partner, and described how the Practice supports staff in their professional development, and funds training for job roles that meet the changing requirements of the patient population.

The Practice Manager escorted the E&V team around the building, and they viewed the facilities that were available for patients and staff. The E&V team was given the opportunity to speak to several members of the staff team, including clinical, administrative and management staff.

All members of staff who spoke to the visiting team were helpful and friendly. Despite being extremely busy, there was a willingness to assist with any questions and requests.

Spotlight on Services -

Information taken from Stockton Heath Medical Centre website and windows/doors of the building.

Update for Patients July 2021

We are open (and have been open) for face-to-face appointments throughout the pandemic. We are however working differently to how we were before March 2020.

We will continue to ask all staff and visitors to wear face coverings when they attend the surgery this is to help protect all from the virus particularly sick, vulnerable and immunosuppressed patients.

We are currently using a different entrance to our surgery. **We are using a rear entrance to the surgery (through main car park, towards rear of Marks and Spencer, you will see our staff car park, our rear entrance is to the right-hand side of the building.** Please ring bell for assistance.

We are doing this to help maintain safety for patients and staff, screening temperature checks and brief questions will be asked before entry to the building is permitted. Our reception seating area is small, and we cannot safely accommodate large numbers of patients whilst adhering to social distance guidelines. You may be asked to leave by a different entrance when you have attended your appointment.

For appointment requests our preferred route is for you to submit and eConsult via our website, see link below.

If you cannot request access via our on-line platform eConsult our receptionist will assist you with this over the telephone, please note the increasing number of patients choosing to request access over the telephone has led to increase in queues and waiting times for calls to be answered. An eLite triage template can take up to 10 minutes per patient to process.

If you cannot do either of these options and attend the surgery instead, then we will assist you in completing a triage template. Please be patient as this may take some time; the receptionist will need to call a colleague to assist you and you may have a wait until the colleague is free.

We will continue to ask you to request your prescriptions electronically either via our website or by email warccg.prescriptionsteam@nhs.net or you can post your request in the box on the gate to our staff car park. You can collect your prescriptions direct from pharmacy (we will send your prescription electronically to the pharmacy of your choice).

We will also ask you to submit admin queries via eConsult, see link below. If you cannot do this, we will assist you at the back door reception, but you may have to wait a while for additional assistance.

Results of the Visit

First Impressions

The main entrance to the Practice remains closed and there are notices informing patients of the changes that have been made to accessing the building, and how to do so.

The entrance at the rear of the building can be accessed from the car park. The Practice car park was full when the E&V team arrived. There were several vacant parking spaces on the pay and display car park, immediately behind the Practice car park. The Practice car park is private for staff but does have provision of three access car parking spaces for patients who have poor mobility.

There is a bus route that passes the Practice and there is a bus stop situated on London Road, close to the building.

On the day of the visit the exterior of the building appeared to be clean and in a good state of repair. There were no obstructions, and the temporary entrance signage was clear.

Reception/Waiting Area

The present entrance and reception area at the rear of the building is wheelchair accessible and at ground level. Patients with an appointment are asked to ring the doorbell and they are greeted by a member of staff, who confirms who the appointment is with and at what time. The patient may be asked to wait outside, depending on the number of patients seated in the temporary reception area. There is no overhead cover outside and although this was not a problem on the day of the visit because the weather was warm and sunny, according to patients it has been problematic during cold, rainy weather.

There are six chairs, spaced at a safe distance in the temporary reception area and the number of patients seated are monitored by a member of staff, who is responsible for entrance and exit. During the E&V visit, there were up to four

patients waiting outside; however, at some times during the morning, there were none.

Prior to entering the building, the patient's temperature is taken. This applies to all visitors and the E&V team members also had their temperature taken when they entered the building. The E&V team members were also required to provide a negative lateral flow test and be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

Appointments/contacting the Practice

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, the Practice has had several restrictions imposed on them, and the way that they treat patients. Face-to-face appointments have been significantly reduced; however, they have been offered when clinically appropriate. Virtual appointments are also offered by telephone or video.

Patients are required to complete an eConsult when requesting an appointment. The NHS states that *-eConsult is a form-based online consultation & triage platform that collects your medical or administrative request and sends it through to your GP practice.*

Some of the concerns raised are in relation to eConsult, with some patients saying that the system is not working and others saying that it is making it more difficult to get an appointment using this system. However, on the day of the E&V visit, some patients described a positive experience of using eConsult.

Some of the feedback received from patients was that eConsult can be time consuming and others stated that "some people over the age of 70 do not have computer knowledge". Another patient stated that because they could not complete an eConsult form electronically, they had to do it by telephone before they could be given an appointment. They waited 40 minutes to get through to the Practice and then had to complete the form with a member of staff. The patient asked why the Practice could not go back to the usual method for making an appointment by telephone.

One patient had made a team member aware of their concerns about the eConsult service not working, and when they tried to phone the Practice to get an appointment, they were 28th in the queue, and then it took around an hour and a half to reach third in the queue again having experienced long wait times on multiple occasions recently.

Another patient stated that “I’ve always had excellent service from Stockton Heath Medical Centre. The eConsult is a great time saver for the GPs. I’ve always had a response within a few hours of submitting the form”.

One patient stated that they had used eConsult several times and had been able to make both telephone and face-to-face appointments. Another patient stated that “I have used eConsult and when I asked for a face-to-face appointment it was given”.

Telephone calls to the Practice have been identified as a problem for some of the patients interviewed and those who completed the feedback forms. One patient had made a team member aware that when they had tried to phone the Practice, they were waiting for around 30-40 minutes, when they were only third in the queue and when they got to first in the queue, the line went dead. They had this happen to them a couple of times causing them to become frustrated as they only wanted an update about something. The patient then came to the surgery and was told to email them to receive the update. Another patient stated that it was usual to wait approximately one hour when trying to telephone the Practice.

Services/treatment options available at the Practice

As part of their large clinical team, there are nurses who are specialised in Women’s Health, Asthma, Diabetes and Tissue Viability. The services are often nurse led and they can prescribe and treat various conditions without the need for the patient to see a GP.

There are some additional roles that the Practice is looking towards developing, and some that have already taken effect are those of a Social Prescriber, First Contact Physiotherapists and a Paramedic doing some home visits for an initial Triage.

Other additional services the Practice provides are Flu vaccinations as part of the Flu Campaign, and a Covid Vaccination Walk in Clinic on a Saturday morning between 9am and 12pm. This clinic has proved successful in vaccinating many people and is open to anyone, not only patients registered with the practice.

Prescriptions/Reviews

There is a small team of staff that deal with all prescriptions and queries. They are non-patient facing, located in a separate office and do not take direct calls from patients or health professionals. The 'back office' administrative staff manage all incoming calls. The prescription team have a dedicated email direct to them, this helps in responding to medication queries directly. If a patient does attend the surgery for support, a member of the prescription team will go down to speak to the patient to help resolve any query. Health Professionals have an emergency contact number for the Practice, so they do not have to wait in a queue.

One patient described needing a blood test and a repeat prescription; however, they received a text message informing them that they needed to have a review appointment. They made several attempts to phone for an appointment and could not get through. "I was trying every day and finding queues of between 11 and 21 in the telephone queue".

Privacy, dignity and meeting individual needs

A member of the review team spent some time sitting in the office where staff were managing the phone lines and dealing with appointments and enquiries. All conversations overheard demonstrated respect, and the staff were polite and helpful. This positive response was also confirmed by the team member who sat in the waiting room and heard staff being respectful and helpful when dealing with patients by telephone and face-to-face.

From the waiting room it was possible to observe patients who were having blood samples taken because the room being used was adjacent to the waiting room and the door was open. Privacy and dignity should be considered at all times when performing any clinical intervention.

The Practice has specific services to meet the needs of women's health problems and specialist clinicians have adapted their roles to meet their needs. There is a nurse who works closely with patients with learning disabilities and has developed a close working relationship with Bright Futures, which is a learning disabilities support service with numerous residential settings across Warrington. Bright Futures has requested that the majority of their residents are registered at Stockton Heath as they have developed a good working relationship with the team.

The Practice has a high percentage of elderly patients and approximately 2,500 are 75 years and above. A member of the clinical team stated that those patients who are most vulnerable are known to the Practice staff and supported with appointments and access to treatment. An example of this given was tissue viability (wound prevention and management).

There is an accessibility form on the website which is available for patients to bring any communication difficulties to the attention of the Practice. There are also some fact sheets available on the Practice website in other languages.

Patient Voice and Feedback

The Practice has an active Patient Participation Group (PPG), and the minutes are available on the Practice website. The meetings are chaired by the Practice Manager; however, this is with the agreement of the group members. Healthwatch Warrington attended the most recent meeting and those in attendance confirmed that they prefer that the meeting is chaired by the Practice Manager.

NHS England states that -

A Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a group of people who are patients of the surgery and want to help it work as well as it can for patients, doctors and staff. The NHS requires every practice to have a PPG.

Concerns and suggestions can be raised by patients using an online form on the Practice website. Patients Complaint guidance and a form is also available on the practice website, under the policies section. The response to complaints is overseen by the Practice Manager.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection reports are displayed on the Practice website. The last inspection report was published on 29th August 2018. It was a focused inspection on 'Are services Responsive' and was rated '**Good**'. The overall rating for the Practice is also '**Good**'.

The CQC is - the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. They make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care and we encourage care services to improve.

Administration and general management

The Practice Manager uses an 'open door' policy and stated that she is fully supportive of the team and is grateful for everything that they do, including the additional workload of supporting vaccination clinics. This was confirmed by members of staff. One member of staff described feeling valued and another stated that she was "really well supported".

Some information a team member received from the Practice, is that staff have been under extreme amounts of pressure over the past 18 months due to Covid 19 and some staff have left due to this because they have not been able to cope, and there has also been five staff off due to having Covid 19. This has resulted in being two staff members short each day, causing delays and complaints from patients.

The Practice Manager has organised that the Practice washes the scrubs for their clinical staff onsite as one of the ways to support the staff team, who often work long hours that far exceed their contracted hours.

Staffing /Staff training

There is a staff notice board displaying lots of positive messages and praise that the Practice has received from patients. This is thought to be beneficial to staff wellbeing, especially during the pandemic, when staff describe being under a significant amount of stress.

There are programmes available to support the staff such as the Cheshire and Mersey Resilience Hub and an Employee Assistance Programme. As well as the support programmes for the staff they also have a 10-minute 'Huddle' to discuss what's going on and what they may need help with. The clinical team have a weekly meeting to discuss cases, new guidance and significant events.

The visiting team had the opportunity to speak to some members of the staff team and asked them questions about their roles and team leadership. They also sat and observed interactions between them in different areas. It was evident that they felt supported and were supportive of each other.

One member of staff confirmed that she had access to training and that most mandatory training and induction for new members of staff was done "in house". The practice uses the Blue Stream Academy E-learning platform. Another member of staff stated that requests could be made to do additional training, and this was usually agreed by the management team. This was further supported by a member of staff who stated that she and some colleagues had been funded to do degrees and given study time to complete them.

The benefit of the additional training has meant that new and extended clinical roles have been developed. There are assistant practitioners in post who were funded by the Practice to do the training.

The NHS states that - *An assistant practitioner is a non-occupational specific role that has been developed to assist organisations to deliver high quality, patient-centred care in a variety of settings. Although they are not registered practitioners, they have a high level of skill through their experience and training.*

Cleanliness, Environment, and Infection Control

The building and all the rooms entered, appeared clean and well maintained. There were additional precautions being taken by staff and patients, including the use of face masks, social distancing, taking temperatures before entering the building, washing staff uniforms on site, and hand sanitiser was available for use by all.

There are toilets available for patients on the ground floor, one of which is fully equipped for those with disabilities, and there are staff and visitor toilets on the first floor. All were clean and well maintained.

Recommendations

1. Waiting times on the telephone - The most frequent concern raised by patients, was the length of time waiting to get through to the Practice by telephone. It is recommended that the system is improved and waiting times are reduced.
2. The use of eConsult - Consider reintroducing the option to make appointments by telephone in addition to eConsult. This system is easier for some patients because they do not have access to the internet and/or cannot complete the online form.
3. Privacy when taking blood samples - It is recommended that when blood samples are taken, the procedure cannot be observed by any patients sitting in the reception.

Distribution List

This report has been distributed to the following:

- Warrington Borough Council
- Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group
- Care Quality Commission
- Healthwatch England
- Practice Manager

Appendices

Appendix A

Response from provider

Thank you for a positive report.

Telephone calls to the Practice have increased exponentially since November 2020; demand from patients who delayed contact during lockdowns, increases in episodes of poor mental health, vaccine queries, requests for vaccine appointments. The Practice reception team process a template called eLite for those patients who cannot process eConsult on-line themselves. This process can take 15 minutes and adds to workload on telephones.

Review appointments can be arranged by text, our Assistant Practitioners send out the appointment time with a “text back” option if the time does not suit.

Assistant Practitioners have completed formal educational and vocational training up to foundation degree level.

Since the enter and view visit the Practice has opened up an additional waiting area so that patients are not waiting outside during inclement weather whilst still adhering to social distancing guidelines.

Doors for some shared clinical areas are kept open to adhere to “space/fresh air” guidance during the pandemic. If a patient requests more privacy, a different room can be used or the door can be closed.

The Practice would like to make note that they are unhappy that their rating on Healthwatch site is dependent on 3 patient responses, our team and PPG all feel this is not reflective of the feedback we receive and provides a distorted opinion.