

**healthwatch**  
Warrington

**YOUR health and social care champions**



**Enter & View Report**

**Holes Lane Medical Centre, Woolston**

January 2023

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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 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 conduct Enter and View (E&V) visits. Local Healthwatch representatives, who are trained staff and volunteers, conduct 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 Karen Dixon, 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 Holes Lane Medical Centre for their welcome, and the practice manager along with the engagement 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.

Healthwatch Warrington received mixed feedback about accessibility of medications, repeat prescriptions and gaining appointments and the visit was planned to identify and share both positive and negative feedback that they had received from the patients using the services at the time of the visit.

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.

Holes Lane Medical Centre has remained open throughout the pandemic, albeit the service has been delivered differently, with fewer face-to-face appointments and several restrictions imposed during both lockdowns.

The E&V visit was conducted by speaking to staff and patients, observing, and the use of a feedback form. The review team had the opportunity to speak to patients in the waiting room. It was not convenient for some patients to speak to the review team on the morning of the visit, therefore, in addition to interviews, a feedback form was offered to patients with a pre-paid envelope. The feedback form was also made available for patients to complete electronically along with the text messenger service the surgery uses to communicate with patients.

## Details of the Visit

Details of Visit	
Service Address	Holes Lane Surgery 28 Holes Lane Woolston Warrington WA1 4NE
Date and Time	8/11/2022 10:30am– 12:30pm
Authorised Representatives undertaking the visit	Karen Dixon Volunteers Co-ordinator Crissi Morad

## Details of the service

We reviewed the information and data available to us about November 2022. We have not found evidence that we need to reassess the rating at this stage. We will continue to monitor information about this service.

The Care Quality Commission, (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.

CQC report dated 30/03/2020: a comprehensive inspection rated this practice as **Good overall**, and they related all population groups as **Good**. No breaches of regulations were reported at this time.

## Provider Service and Staff

There are over 10,200 patients registered at this Practice with 27 staff here to accommodate and support patients and their requirements. There are 7 GP's, 2 Salaried and 5 of them are partners in the Practice.

3 Practice nurses along with a GP assistant.

There are 8 Reception/ Patient advisors and 6 Admin/ Management

All training is ongoing with modules being available via Blue-Stream training.

# Spotlight on Services

## **Booking an appointment**

You must use eConsult as your first method of contact for treatment & advice. Requests via eConsult for non-urgent problems can be made during the Practice working hours of 8am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday. If your eConsult is submitted before 12pm you will receive a response the same working day before 6:30pm, for any submissions after 12pm you will receive a response the next working day before 6:30pm.

For those patients who do not have access to the internet, the Practice has an I-Pad set up in reception. Should you require assistance a member of the team will be at hand to help.

## **Pre-bookable appointments:**

Several appointments are released up to 2 weeks in advance.

24/48-hour appointments:

Several appointments are released 1-2 days in advance.

Book on the day appointments:

Several appointments are reserved for that day. This allows patients who are ill on the day to be dealt with quickly via telephone/ video consultations or face to face appointment.

Appointments are released automatically by the computer system.

When all appointments are taken, doctors will fit in patients as an emergency if deemed appropriate.

The appointment system is constantly being reviewed.

## **Extended Access appointments:**

We offer an "Extended Hours Service" on certain days of the week. A limited number of telephone consultations are available with our doctors. They are available between 7:30 am – 8:00 am & 18.00 pm – 19.00pm (please enquire at reception about telephone consultation access).

This service is aimed at providing access for patients who find it difficult to attend during our normal opening times. The extended hour appointments are for working people or school age children. For more information about this service please contact our reception staff. We also have appointments with our nursing team during the extended hour service.

# Results of the Visit

## First Impressions:

The Practice is a modern building, set back from the road. We did observe that there is no signage on the front – only on the building itself- if you are unaware of the location you would miss the car park. The outside area and small car park were small but neat and tidy- we did observe that there were only 2 disabled bays and parking is very tight.

## Reception/Waiting Area

The clean, bright and tidy reception area was near the front door as you walked in with multi-lingual information available for all. There was General Practice information on a notice board and further information on boards around the waiting area with some very useful data displayed. However, we noticed that certain information wasn't up to date, for example "number of missed appointments this week".

The reception area offers some good facilities for patients to utilise when required, such as a free-to-use BMI machine, blood pressure check and heart rate bar in the corner. It was noticed that there was plenty of hand sanitizer available in this waiting area.

The Practice has a small reception area within a fair-sized waiting room. Whilst the patients were checking in, there was no background noise (i.e radio/ tv). There was a television which displayed useful information and guidance from the NHS which would occasionally play audible messages and due to the quietness of the reception this would startle you.

## Appointment/ contacting the practice

Appointments were advised to be made using the eConsult method. These are then triaged by the GPs, they assess the patients and prioritise and assign the course of action. Phone call appointments were also available but were more limited. A computer was available in the waiting area for patients to use for eConsult. We were advised that this was not frequently used.

There is an option to complete an elite form via the receptionist- and one was completed during our visit, however, due to the quietness of the waiting room there was little privacy.

Booking for non-GP appointments – Smears and other nurse appointments and routine checks are available via telephone, email, and text access to either self-book or request an appointment. – However, results from our survey show that patients aren't aware of this and have used e-consult when booking routine smears etc- this service should be communicated better.

## Services/treatment options available at the Practice

CAB drop-in service is available on a Tuesdays and this appointment can be made at reception.

Physiotherapy services are available with a GP referral.

Mental health support is available two and a half days a week, this can be accessed via GP referral, but this service was not freely advertised.

Podiatry services were not available at this Practice but were available at a close by NHS facility.

Evening appointments – evening and early morning appointments are available with both GP and nurses at the practice. We also offer through the PCN extended hours appointments up to 9 pm.

## **Prescriptions/Reviews**

Repeat prescriptions can be done by paper request or online, however, a patient log-in must be requested at reception.

There is a note that states 'if prescriptions are to be made/ picked up by a family member then a signed letter by the patient will be sufficient'.

## **Privacy, dignity and meeting individual needs**

During our visit we noticed that privacy and dignity were not met for patients that needed to talk to the reception staff. The reception is open and at times silent so that anybody can hear what is being said.

## **Administration and general management**

Staff were welcoming and assisted us in our observations. All phone enquiries are answered in the back office and there is one receptionist at the front desk.

On several occasions, we observed that the person on reception was very busy and sometimes left the reception unattended. Patients came into the practice with nobody present. Even when the receptionist returned - they were busy with admin tasks. At one point during our visit there were 4 people in the queue that hadn't been dealt with, whilst the receptionist continued with his admin randomly shouting (without looking up) "If you have an appointment please use self-check-in"

On the one occasion someone needed to check in they used the self-check-in option and was told that there was no appointment for them (which was an error)

The reception staff's priority should be the patients in front of them.

## **Other Comments**

During the observation at Holes Lane Medical centre, a female patient was visibly upset with their carer and came into the Practice requesting help as she could not complete the e-Consult form online and felt that she needed some support.

The receptionist did assist and help by filling out an eLite form - however, due to the quietness of the reception, those waiting could hear all the detail. The patient was suffering from mental health problems and was told that the doctor would be in contact within the next 24-48 hours. We later found out that the Practice offers a mental health drop-in with a practitioner that can be self-referred. This would have been a good interim solution for the patient if the receptionist had signposted them.



## **Patient Participation Group**

The staff and management are committed to improving the services at this medical centre by introducing the PPG Group and already have 7 core members. They have created a virtual PPG where those who cannot attend meetings can have their say on Practice matters.

## **Patient Voice Feedback**

As part of this Enter and View, we sent out a survey to the patients with the help of the Holes Lane staff. Paper surveys and Freepost envelopes were provided as well as a link to the online survey via their text message service. We received **668** responses.

Below is the infographic overview of findings followed by an in-depth analysis.



# Holes Lane Medical Centre

November 2022

**healthwatch**  
Warrington  
YOUR health and social care champions



## ABOUT THE SURGERY

**10,200** registered patients. **3** Practice nurses, **1** GP Assistant, **7** GP's. **8** Receptionists/ Patient Advisors **6** Admin/ Management Staff.



## PATIENT VOICE

### Rate your GP Practice

Overall **62%** rated the surgery either Good, Very good or OK



- Staff
- Location



- eConsult
- No advanced booking system
- Unable to get through on phone



*"I just find it all so distant- it has changed a lot."*

# 48%

Patients found getting an appointment a **negative** experience. **34%** had mixed feelings and **18%** thought it was positive.

## e consult

Is the only option for booking appointments- even routine appointments

*"Even when I know I need to see the nurse, for a cervical smear for example, I have to 'make something up' for the eConsult form. There is no option to just book a smear test."*



**52%** Were **happy** with the opening hours, those that weren't wanted appointments in the evening after/ before work.



**67%** Found getting repeat prescriptions a **positive** experience.



said they were unable to get an urgent same day appointment - **21%** stated they could.

*"Unlikely to get an appointment in 2 days, advised to use NHS 111"*



Overall patients response was **positive** about reception staff **37%** rated the service OK.

### Overall Medical care and treatment rating



### What single change would improve your experience of accessing care at your GP Practice?



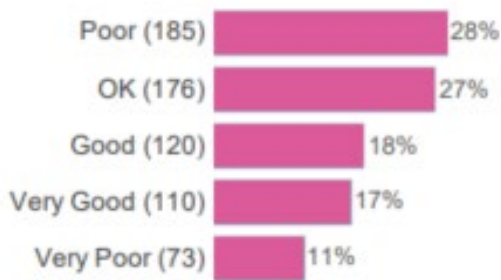
**"Make appointments easier without filling out eConsult"**

**"Face to Face Appointments"**

**"Evening appointments for those that work"**

Overall, 64% rated the surgery as either Very good (17%), Good (18%) or OK (27%)

### How would you rate this GP Practice?



**When asked to comment about what they liked about the practice the most common themes included:**

- Staff- (GPs, Nurses, Admin)
- Location of the Practice
- However, 17 people stated that they liked nothing/ very little

Regarding their experience of getting an appointment was that it is too reliant on

eConsult for all appointments- if you want an advance appointment you have to go through eConsult- however they turn them off when they have staff shortages making it impossible to get an appointment.

**When asked to comment about what they disliked about the practice the most common themes included:**

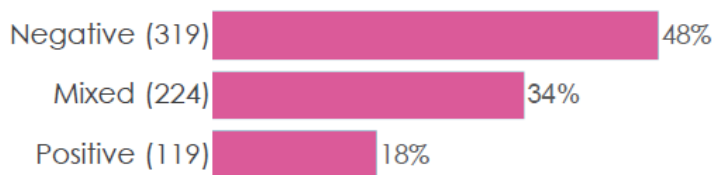
- eConsult
- Inability to get an appointment
- Unhelpful receptionists
- No advanced booking system, even for routine procedures
- Unable to get through on the telephone

One patient commented, *"I just find it all so distant- it has changed a lot."*

*"Even when I know I need to see the nurse, for a cervical smear for example, I have to 'make something up' for the eConsult form. There is no option to just book a smear test."*

*"I recently wanted to see a doctor, phone lines were only for emergencies. The online eConsult form was closed for at least 2 days saying it was due to the lack of doctors. My need was not an emergency, but I was still in a lot of discomfort and unwell. I felt like I was alone with no help. On my third day of trying- the eConsult was back open. After spending a lot of time filling in the forms, it said I could not safely be diagnosed and would need to phone the surgery for an urgent appointment. Upon phoning the surgery, I was told they had no appointments for the day- which was Friday, so I could be triaged over the phone and a doctor would contact me on Monday."*

### What is your experience of getting an appointment at your GP practice?



Several people comment that they don't bother trying to get an appointment because it is *"virtually impossible"*

If the surgery wants to continue the eConsult route- they need to make sure that they are letting patients (who have no access to the internet/ can't fill out forms) know that an eLite version over the phone is possible.

*"I have witnessed a 90-year-old man not being able to book an appointment because he couldn't use the iPad in reception. The receptionist refused to book him in even though the whole situation would have taken less time to book him in manually." – on this occasion, the receptionist should have offered the gentleman an eLite option.*

eLite is a version of eConsult that the receptionist can fill out at the reception. On the official website for eConsult they describe it as follows **'We know that not every patient can use eConsult, however, it can help a practice if every patient request that comes into the practice comes in the form of an eConsult. We call this an 'eConsult Lite' (eLite or e life) - you don't get the full depth of detail that a patient might submit, but it provides a much richer history when taken over the phone'**.

Many patients said that even after filling in an eConsult they waited weeks for a response and even when a telephone appointment had been made, they didn't even receive the call.

*"Went in person to get an appointment. Told I had to do an eConsult and then I would be triaged remotely. After doing an eConsult I had a text to say I would get a call from a doctor at 6.30 in the evening over a week later. The call never came."*

People feel that there is no personal service anymore when accessing the practice.

*"The only way is eConsult which is the worst system I have ever used. The personal service you used to get from this surgery has now gone"*

One patient did comment regarding appointments: *"Never had an issue in 45 years I have been at the practice!"*

Some people praised the surgery for their vaccination process and others mentioned that they felt the surgery had made improvements and were making an effort.

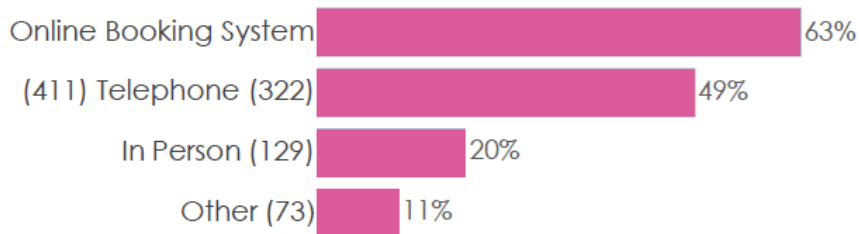
Patients are finding booking routine appointments for smear tests impossible as they are told to do an eConsult and there is no option to simply require a smear test and have to make up an ailment.

*"Even when I know I need to see the nurse, for a cervical smear for example, I have to 'make something up' for the eConsult form. There is no option to just book a smear test."*

We received comments about the telephone consultations : *"It was OK, but prefer to visit the surgery face to face,"*

*"Convenient but prefer face to face" "Happy with telephone consultation and the response time as much improved"*

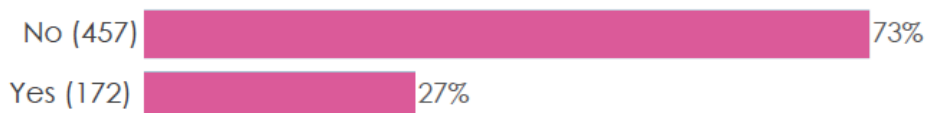
What methods do you use to book an appointment:  
(Please select all the apply)



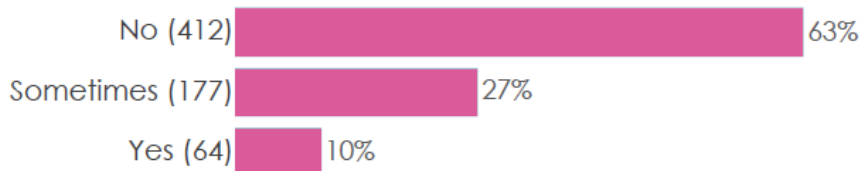
Even though telephone/ in person / other have been selected the consensus in the comments was eConsult - *"eConsult form - which is not a booking system. There is no method to book an appointment anymore as form decides whether you need to someone or not."* *"eConsult, they won't accept anything else"*

*"You are FORCED to use all other methods. If you turn up to the desk in the surgery, you are frogmarched to a terminal in the waiting room to fill out eConsult. If it gave me the options, I wanted I would have used it at home. It is rubbish from a patient perspective"*

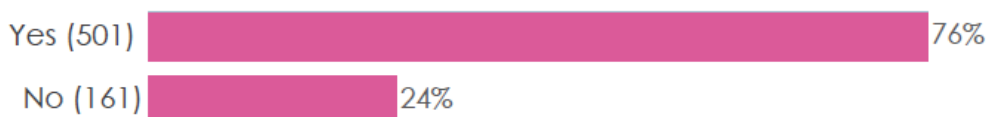
When making your appointment, are you given the option of seeing the doctor or the nurse?



Do you always see the doctor or nurse of your choice?



Have you had a telephone or online consultation with your doctor?



Those that answered 'No' hadn't requested an appointment, many were happy with the telephone consultation option, those who weren't felt that the personable aspect was missing

*"It's very difficult to have a telephone doctors app, how can they do an effective appointment over the phone"*

One person stated that they were left confused as they couldn't understand due to having an issue with their hearing.

*"I didn't understand a lot that was said because of my hearing"*

*"For some things it's fine but for other issues, it doesn't work. How can you diagnose a skin condition by phone?"*

*"Great. Even though it was via telephone I didn't feel rushed and felt like they were fully engaged with my concerns"*

For urgent appointments, can you normally see the doctor or nurse on the same day?



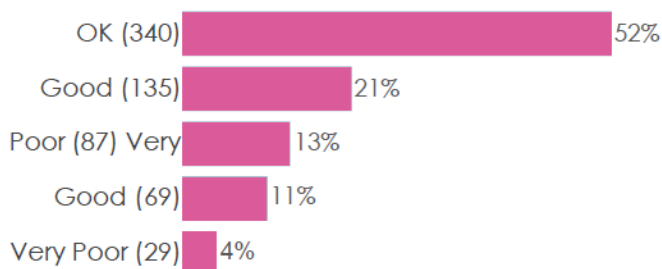
Most people stated that due to only getting appointments via eConsult- which normally takes 2 days to get a response- getting an emergency appointment was near impossible

*"NEVER EVER same day appointment. If urgent, the receptionist says go to A&E. This is poor and puts extra workload onto A&E"*

*"Unlikely to get an appointment in 2 days, advised to use NHS 111"*

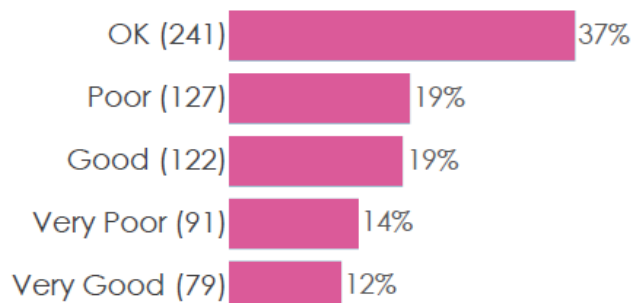
*"I feel the surgery is like a call centre with no face-to-face contact. It feels as though the surgery wants to do everything quickly to get you off the phone"*

How satisfied are you with the practice opening hours?



The majority of those who took the survey were happy with the opening hours. Those unhappy with the opening hours were those who were working. The hours were not conducive to their working hours. *“Working full-time makes it very difficult to get to appointments. Later appointment times would be great”*

### How would you rate the reception service?



The overall response was positive about the reception staff:

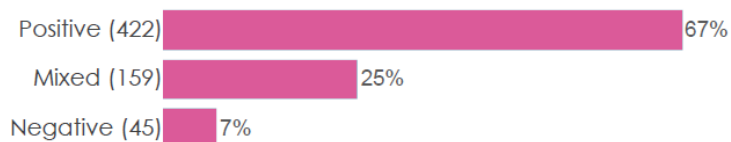
*“Receptionists are only doing what doctors tell them. But it seems that a receptionist's main job is to fob you off”*

*“Very helpful when you need anything they try to sort it for you”*

*“I feel sorry for the reception people as they are only following instructions and at times take the flack.”*

Some find that they just get fobbed off and told to do an eConsult and can't get information from them - *“Can be difficult to get answers you need. e.g rang to arrange flu jab and was told I wasn't eligible despite being on Chemo. Argued and got a flu jab arranged”*

### What is your experience of getting repeat prescriptions?



The overall response was positive about getting repeat prescriptions. Those that order online find the process very easy, however some mentioned issues

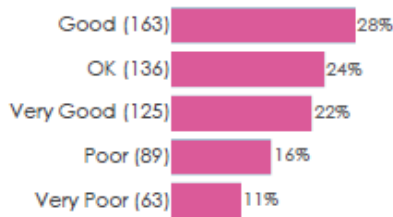
between Pharmacies and the surgery.

*“Easily ordered online but have to wait as there is time gap between ordering online and it being ready at pharmacy, it's about 4 days.”*

*“Wasn't getting elderly parents repeat script at chemist, had to go surgery to sort out where I found out the surgery had changed their email address. They admitted they hadn't/couldn't tell all patients. When last looked incorrect email was still displayed on website!”*

Several people have said that they have had to chase up prescriptions *“Have to chase prescriptions”*

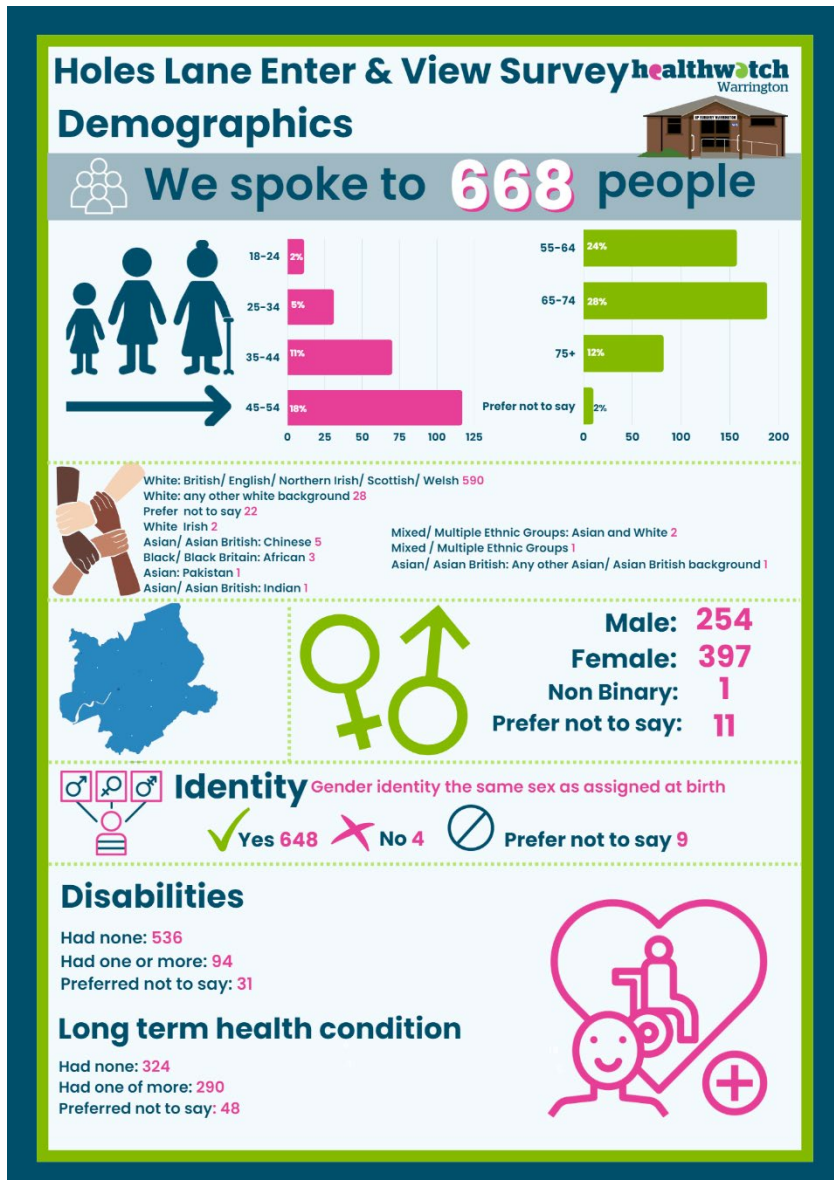
How do you rate the quality of medical care and treatment at this surgery?



Whilst there could be an improvement in the quality of care, the majority of those were happy with the treatment from the surgery.

We asked patients **What single change would improve your experience of accessing care at your GP Practice?**

The consensus was being able to make appointments easier and without filling out an eConsult, closely followed by having more face-to-face appointments and having appointments in the evening for those who work.





# Recommendations

1	To include Healthwatch Posters and information ICAS complaints to be displayed in the receptions area. This will allow an independent choice for patients to feedback
2	Consider the opportunity to make routine checks pre-bookable without having to go through eConsult option.
3	Reception staff to be aware of services offered and signpost patients to them when appointments not available e.g. Mental Health Support drop-in.
4	To increase better signage from the road.
5	To consider reducing the tasks of the person on the front desk so that they can be more patient focused, as the receptionist is the first person to see the patient.

# Distribution List

This report has been distributed to the following:

- Warrington Borough Council
- Warrington Together Place Director.
- Care Quality Commission
- Healthwatch England
- Practice Manager/Operations Manager and Patient and Staff engagement Administrator

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Response from Provider

We welcome the report made Healthwatch Warrington in November 2022. Here at Holes Lane Surgery, we strive to continuously improve our service and independent reports such as Healthwatch are invaluable to help us make these improvements. We have read the report and discussed it in an all-practice meeting, a working group was appointed to respond directly to the report and our comments are below. We have divided these into general comments, factual errors and response to recommendations and improvements that we have already undertaken since November and will implement further improvements in due course.

### General comments

1. Privacy in the waiting room – we are aware that the waiting room does not provide the opportunity for confidentiality. We are exploring the use of music or another background to provide privacy at the reception desk. We already provide the use of a room for patients who request it.
2. Practice signage – we have made progress with a new sign shortly to be erected outside the practice.
3. Use of e-Consults for appointments – like many GP surgeries, we find that we are experiencing a large volume of patient demand. In order to provide a responsive and safe service to patients, the use of e-consult allows us to triage patients effectively thus prioritising urgent need whilst accommodating and managing routine appointments efficiently. We are aware however the need for constant communication with patients to highlight all the routes available to them to see a clinician. We welcome both telephone enquiries and walk in.
4. Notice boards – since your visit in November, we have reorganised and improved the notice boards in the waiting room to include more up to date information for patients and a 'you said we did' section to highlight improvements made at the practice.
5. Quotes from patients – we note in the report the many quotes from patients. We have a robust and responsive patient complaints process and PPG group, we welcome suggestions to help us improve. We do feel however that it would be counterproductive to comment on individual patient feedback without context in your report.



# healthwatch

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