



Enter and View Visit Report

Mytton Oak Medical Practice

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About Healthwatch Shropshire



Healthwatch Shropshire is the independent health and social care champion for local people.

We work to ensure your voice counts when it comes to shaping and improving services. We address inequalities in health and social care, to help make sure everyone gets the services they need. We are a charity.

There are local Healthwatch across the country as well as a national body, Healthwatch England.

What is Enter & View?

Healthwatch Shropshire gathers information on people's experiences of health and social care services and there are times when it is appropriate for Healthwatch Shropshire to see and hear for ourselves how services are being provided. These visits are called 'Enter and View', and can be 'announced', 'semi-announced' or 'unannounced'. For 'semi-announced' visits the service provider is told we will visit but not the date or time of the visit.



The responsibility to carry out Enter and View visits was given to Healthwatch in the **Health and Social Care Act 2012**.



Enter and View visits are carried out by a team of specially trained and DBS checked volunteers called Authorised Representatives. They make observations, collect people's views and opinions anonymously and produce a report.

Enter & View visits are not inspections and always have a 'purpose'.



Details of the Visit

Service	Mytton Oak Medical Practice
Provider	Mytton Oak Medical Practice
Date / time of visit	Monday 13th January 2020 10.00am
Visit team	Two Healthwatch Shropshire Enter and View Authorised Representatives (ARs)

Purpose of the Visit

Advertising and ease of access is one of the core requirements for improving access to general practice. The purpose of these visits is to see if GP Practices are meeting these requirements as set out by NHS England¹:

- Ensure services are advertised to patients, including notification on practice websites, notices in local urgent care services and publicity into the community, so that it is clear to patients how they can access these appointments and associated service.
- Ensure ease of access for patients including:
 - all practice receptionists able to direct patients to the service and offer appointments to extended hours service on the same basis as appointments to non-extended hours services
 - patients should be offered a choice of evening or weekend appointments on an equal footing to core hours appointments.

Disclaimer

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

¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/gp/gp/vf/redesign/improving-access/>

The Context of the Visit

Healthwatch Shropshire (HWS) has received many comments regarding the availability of GP appointments in the last year. The public seem generally unaware of extended access appointments (appointments available outside normal surgery opening hours) being available. HWS are gathering further information about access to GP appointments through a hot topic. A hot topic is targeted activity looking at one particular aspect of health and social care and inviting views from the public.

We decided to visit GP surgeries across Shropshire to discuss appointments and see how they are offering extended access appointments, if they are advertising them in the surgery and if they are making patients aware of them when they ask.

We visited GP practices representing a range of list sizes and in different areas of Shropshire.

What we did

Two authorised representatives visited the surgery. This was an announced visit meaning that the Practice had been told we would be visiting. We met and talked with the Practice Manager and the Office Manager. We later spoke to one receptionist and 10 patients.

We looked at the waiting room and at notice boards to see what information was available to patients, especially regarding Extended Access appointments.

What we found out

Environment

The Practice has approximately 11,000 patients, but this is increasing markedly due to large estates being built within the immediate locality. We were told that more houses were 'in the pipeline'.

There are 4 partners, 2 of which are full time, 2 salaried GPs and 2 Registrars (trainee GPs).

There are also 2 Practice Nurses, 2 Advanced Nurse Practitioners (both part time) and 2 Health Care Assistants.

The Practice also has a Pharmacist clinic for 1.5 days per week, a Physio for 2 half days per week. Patients can self-refer to the physio clinic for back pain and joint issues.



There is a Care Co-ordinator, 11 reception/administrative staff and 3 medical secretaries.

The building is purpose built and has car parking. The Manager told us that they need more surgery space due to increasing demand.

The reception area is immediately inside the front door and there is a self-check-in screen as well as a receptionist. The single waiting room is accessed from the reception area.

Appointments

The Practice Manager and Office Manager told us that the reception staff ask patients for basic information when they phone for an appointment so that they can be directed towards the most appropriate member of staff. When patients telephone and are on hold there is a message spoken by one of the Doctors, who gives their name, explaining the reasons for the wait to the caller, which has reduced some of the abuse the receptionists can face. The phone menu has two options - speak to reception or a secretary.

100% of routine appointments are available to book online. Cancellations can be made by text, online or by phone. Same day appointments are available by phone or a GP will phone the patient back. Extended hours appointments are offered if there are no others available.

When we asked patients “How easy is it to get an appointment?” One said, “It can take 3 weeks for a non-urgent appointment.” Two patients said, “Very easy, but it takes a long time for the phone to be answered.” When asked if that was the case all day, or just at the busiest times the reply was, “they’re always busy.”

A receptionist told us that there were 5 phone lines but not always 5 people available to answer them. The number of staff available to answer phones varies between times of the day and days of the week. At busy times 5 staff will be available.

One patient told us it was, “Very easy to get an appointment, but I always used the GP as a last resort. I go to the pharmacy and get advice before I trouble the doctor.”

Three of the patients interviewed stated the practice was “excellent”, “the best they have ever attended” and was run by “charming staff”.

Nine of the patients we spoke to were very happy with the practice and the service given. One patient had several complaints, ranging from not receiving a call back to not being treated for their diabetes efficiently. This patient retracted some of their comments later adding that the surgery was fine but they were unhappy with some services.

We saw a poster on display saying that on average 25 appointments were missed at the practice every month. The poster encourages people to cancel unwanted appointments.

Extended access appointments

The surgery is part of 'The Darwin Federation' group of Practices who offer extended hours appointments. These extend into weekday evenings and Saturday mornings. We were told that, "Doctor appointments are taken up, but Nurse appointments are less used."

There is an extended hours cervical smear clinic which has had good attendance and the Practice Manager told us that this has resulted in an increase in uptake of smear tests.

In-house training had been given to receptionists on offering extended hours appointments and there was a notice above the self-check-in screen in reception and on the notice board in the waiting room. When we spoke to the Practice Manager and Senior Receptionist towards the end of our visit, we suggested that they may need to extend offering these appointments to routine patients, not just those who were unable to get an appointment at the time of phoning.

The receptionist we spoke to said she would offer Extended Access appointments only if she faced problems booking an appointment for somebody in regular surgery opening hours. If a patient does require an out of hours appointment, then the receptionist will check on screen and make the appointment at whichever surgery is available. Although there were 5 receptionists they were not always available to take phone calls as they are also required to process scans and prescriptions, this does result in an often long delay in answering the phone. Some patients mentioned a wait of 20 minutes, which they claimed made them frustrated and angry.

The notice boards in the surgery were comprehensive and covered a very wide range of subjects including diabetes, young addiction clinics, open access clinics, goods neighbour scheme and many more. There was a poster explaining about Extended Access adjacent to the patients booking in screen. This was very prominent and easily read by all patients entering the surgery. There was also well-stocked information leaflet shelving.

Website

We looked at the website for Mytton Oak Practice which lists its opening hours as Monday - Friday 8.00am until 18.00pm.

There is a full list of the services and staff available at the Practice, including a rolling message highlighting the extended hours appointments and including the offer of cervical screening within this. There is a separate page for information on Extended Access with a hyperlink to further information.

Additional Findings

The practice offers a range of services including:

- Minor surgery
- A midwifery clinic every Tuesday
- Family planning clinics
- Immunisation clinics

Summary of Findings

- The surgery list is increasing due to developing housing estates.
- Lack of space within the building is an issue.
- There is a good range of services offered at the surgery.
- Notice boards and information displays are clear.
- A recorded message from a Practice GP at the beginning of each telephone call helps to protect reception staff from abuse.
- Extended hours appointments are advertised and offered.
- Patients find it easy to get an appointment but often face a long wait for the phone to be answered.
- Patients were happy with the Practice, the staff and the service that they receive.

Recommendations

We suggest that the practice considers the following:

- Highlighting the extended hours appointments to patients who might find it difficult to come to the surgery during usual opening hours.
- Look at ways to reduce some pressure on the telephone system.

Service Provider Response

March 2020

Due to the ongoing situation with Coronavirus (COVID-19) we have not received a response to our report. When we do receive a response we will update this report and republish it.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Shropshire would like to thank the practice, patients, visitors and staff for their contribution to this Enter & View.

Get in Touch

Please contact Healthwatch Shropshire to share your views and experiences of this service or any other health and social care service in Shropshire. We gather comments anonymously and share them with service commissioners and providers to highlight areas of good practice and identify areas for improvement.



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