

# Enter & View Report

Merridale Medical Centre

January 2023

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# Report details

Details of Visit	
Service Address	5 Fullhurst Avenue Leicester LE3 1BL
Service Provider	Merridale Medical Centre – RP Tew
Date and Time	Wednesday 11 January 2023, 10am
Authorised Representatives undertaking the visit	Chris Bosley and Janina Smith

## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire would like to thank the service provider, patients, and staff for their contribution to the Enter & View Programme.

## 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 experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

This report is written by volunteer Enter and View Authorised Representatives who carried out the visit on behalf of Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire.

# Purpose of the visit

- To gather patient views of the service provided at Merridale Medical Centre.
- To observe the facilities and operation of the service.
- To observe patient access.

## Methodology

This was an announced Enter and View visit.

We contacted the Practice Management Team in advance and had access to communal areas during our visit.

The visit was observational, involving the Authorised Representatives observing the surroundings to gain an understanding of how patients engaged with reception staff and the facilities.

To reach patients, we spoke to the management team prior to the visit about using the GP text messaging service. The text message was sent to the patients, and we received 22 responses.

At the end of the visit, we gave our initial findings to the management team.

# Summary of the findings

## Summary

- The practice accommodates for parents with children by having a baby change area and private breastfeeding rooms.
- Patients commented that the staff at the practice are helpful.
- Patients highlighted the difficulty of getting appointments.
- Patients spoke positively about phone consultations.
- Patients said they would like to be able to see the doctors more.
- Patient feedback forms and boxes are located at the reception desks and patients are able to make repeat prescription requests at reception.
- Hand sanitiser is available to use at the reception desks and in the corridor.
- The practice appeared to be clean.
- There was an adequate provision of toilets in the practice.
- Self-use blood pressure and weighing machines were available but were not immediately obvious to patients.
- Adapted toilets were available and suitable for disabled persons however the accessible alarm cord in some toilets did not reach the ground.

- One toilet required patients to wipe the seat with wipes provided. However, no wipes were available.
- The complaints procedure was not on display.
- The practice did not have newsletters or out-of-hours information on display.

## Results of Visit

### The Practice

Merridale Medical Centre has 14,000 patients.

The catchment area covers Braunstone and the Narborough Road area up to Westcotes. Purpose built, modern, large two storey building with all clinical rooms on the ground floor and adjacent pharmacy operating as two separate businesses. The GP Practice lease the building on a fully maintained basis. It is light and has spacious public areas with plain white walls.

The building and entrance are clearly signed with the practice opening hours however we did not notice any external opening hours or out-of-hours notices.



### Parking

There are adequate parking spaces for patients at one end of the building. The walkway from the carpark to the entrance is shared with a vehicle route. Although the pedestrian route is designated on the shared route, space is very tight and we noted that vehicles passed very close to pedestrians.

There is a separate staff parking area. There are two disabled parking spaces near the entrance.



### Staff

The practice has four full-time GPs and one part-time, two are partners and the others are salaried GPs. Supporting the medical team are one advanced nurse practitioner.

Three emergency care practitioners, a physician associate, physiotherapist, mental health practitioner, specialist diabetic pharmacists, two practice nurses, two healthcare assistants and a phlebotomist and within the primary care network we have two physiotherapists, social prescriber, health and wellbeing coach, advanced nurse practitioner and four pharmacists.

We were told that there are regular monthly clinical meetings with staff and there are ample training opportunities for all staff. The third Wednesday in every month is allocated to staff training.

The emergency care practitioner or doctors make weekly visits at two care homes in the area. The practice works with district nurses to ensure that the needs of housebound patients are met.

The practice is also part of a Primary Care Network with Beaumont Leys health centre, Fosse Family, Asquith Surgery, Rushey Mead health centre and The Parks. This enables the practice to cross refer patients to these practices as well as share additional medical expertise.

We were told that the reception staff have had training in antisocial behaviour and is usually managed by staff keeping calm. The staff can get assistance from the reception team leader. Staff are trained to de-escalate situations that may give rise to anti-social behaviour and if necessary patients will receive a written warning about their behaviour. Patients are rarely taken off their patient list.

## **Reception and waiting areas**

The reception area is designed with main and sub waiting areas that can be easily partitioned off if needed. There are two reception desks and at the time of the visit there were two receptionists that were on duty. There was separation from patients via a glass screen fitted with microphone facilities. The receptionists did not appear to be rushed and dealt with all patients in a pleasant manner and queues were quickly dealt with.

The area around the reception desk is spacious, which is an adequate distance from the chairs. However, the room is echoey. People with hearing difficulties could struggle, and conversations could possibly be overheard. There was no ambient sound or music.

There were signs that a chaperone can be made available.

We did not observe a dedicated confidential room and there were no signs at reception to indicate a confidential area. We noted that the reception area had been configured to provide a degree of confidentiality if needed.

The waiting area was not large however during the time of the visit it did not appear overcrowded and the turnover of patients was speedy. In the waiting area there were vinyl seats which were all at the same height with no provision for bariatric patients, children or elderly persons. There were comfortable seats with some having armrests. Not all of the seats were taken and there was a steady flow of patients.

Some of seats were damaged in the reception area as well as in the corridor sub-waits.

There was a combination of a digital display and buzzer which called patients to clinicians' rooms. Clinical room doors were clearly marked with the clinician's name.

There were patient feedback forms and boxes at the reception desks. There is a box at reception for repeat prescription requests. Hand sanitiser is available to use at the reception desks and in the corridor.

The practice appeared to be clean, There was an adequate provision of toilets both within the waiting area and in the clinical corridors.

The Practice runs a Covid-19 vaccination service when needed.

## **Appointments**

We were told that appointments are made via eight telephone lines and in person at reception from 8am. Eight members of staff answer the phones in the morning. Online appointments can only be made with nurses for routine procedures. Online appointments cannot be made with GPs. On some days, all appointments can be taken by 8.20am but on other days there can still be appointments available mid-morning. Patients are advised to arrive at the surgery 10 minutes before their appointment time.

We were told that the receptionist triage patients following guidelines provided by the GPs. A duty GP is available for advice. The guidelines are regularly reviewed and monitored. Patients can book up to two days ahead. We were told that the practice provides on the day appointments and two day ahead bookable appointments. When all appointments have been taken, emergencies can be seen by the duty GP. Patients

are signposted to alternative services by receptionists when they are seeking appointments. E.g., patients are advised that the practice will contact them should a test result require further action.

The patient liaison manager felt that more could be done, nationally, to educate patients about their alternatives to seeing a GP. They are actively supporting the current initiative to encourage patients to visit a pharmacist when possible.

The practice core opening times are Monday to Friday 8am–6.30pm. We also provide an enhanced access service Monday to Thursday 6.30pm–8pm on behalf of the Primary Care Network, however the information on the patient leaflet and website differs.



Patients can request home visits which may be carried out by a practitioner from the surgery or the home visiting service.

## Pharmacy

A pharmacy independent of the surgery occupies one end of the building.

## Accessibility

Access to the surgery is even and flat with the entrance accessed via automatic doors. There are two disabled parking spaces.

One of the reception desks is at a low level. There was a hearing loop in operation although no evidence of Braille signage was noted. A poster on the reception window advised patients with sensory disabilities etc. to contact reception for appropriate assistance however this notice was partially covered with a box. There is adequate room for patients' wheelchairs in reception however at the time of the visit there was no wheelchairs available in the reception area.

Self-use blood pressure and weighing machines were available in a side corridor and were not immediately obvious to patients. We noted that a patient was asking reception if these facilities were still available.

Adapted toilets were available and suitable for disabled persons however we noted that the accessible alarm cord in some toilets did not reach the ground. The accessible toilet was not spacious, one toilet required patients to wipe the seat with wipes provided, however no wipes were available at the time.

Baby change and private breast feeding rooms were available as well as nappy disposal however the chair in the breastfeeding room was not particularly comfortable.

## Information available to patients

We were informed by the patient liaison manager that patients are notified of alternative services by receptionists when they are seeking appointments. We were told the website is currently under reconstruction so it is not all up to date. It is updated directly by the patient liaison manager. The leaflet racks were empty as a Covid-19 prevention measure. There are several notice boards covering pregnancy related information, Covid-19 awareness, Patient Participation Group (PPG) and other health

information. One notice board had the latest CQC certificate and the December 2022 Friends and Family test numbers. All notices and signs were in English. A number of mental health notices were displayed on the doors and walls.

Two video screens were currently not in use. We were told they were waiting for an IT technician to update the content.

We did not see any newsletters displayed. There was not any out-of-hours information. There was not a staff list displayed in the reception. We did not see the complaints procedure displayed.

Booking appointments online was still listed on the website and there was no advice about the range of clinicians and services offered. There was no general health advice or links to NHS sites for specific health conditions.

## **Patient Participation Group (PPG)**

At the time of the visit, we did not speak to any PPG members.

## **Patient comments**

We spoke to 4 patients in the practice.

Several patients were asked about their experiences in getting appointments. All patients reflected on the difficulty of ringing in at 8am and felt that it was “pot luck” getting through in time for an appointment that day. The phone system did allow patients to know their position in the queue and many gave up when they realised how long the queue was.

One patient had said that there are often queues at 8am outside waiting to book appointments.

Patients advised that they were not happy being triaged by reception staff, one person in particular felt that they asked too many personal questions.

It was difficult getting to see the same GP for an on-going problem and several patients were not happy having to go through the same symptoms every time they visited the surgery.

## **Patient feedback**

A survey was sent to the GP patients using the text messaging service, and we received 22 responses. We also gave patients the opportunity to contact us via telephone to share their feedback.

See Appendix 1 for the survey responses. Where we asked for comments, we have themed the responses and provided a selection of patient comments.



# Recommendations

## Recommendations made from findings

1	Consider all the comments recorded from patients and what the implications are for the operation of the practice.
2	Ensure the complaints procedure is available and visible in the practice for patients to be able to access.
3	Ensure all information posters are accessible and visible for patients to see.
4	Ensure seating area is adequate for patients and comfortable, ensure damaged seats are replaced to avoid injury.
5	Ensure the chair in the breastfeeding room is adequate.
6	Ensure the practice extended hours service match the information on patient leaflets and website
7	Reinstate having information leaflets for patients to access.
8	Regularly offer patients the choice of seeing a doctor or nurse of their choice.
9	Offer more appointments with GPs as well as patients having the choice to be able to book appointments with the GP using the online service.
10	Practice to explain to patients about other alternatives to seeing a GP.
11	Practice to inform patients of all the facilities available at the practice.
12	Video screens to have the updated content as soon as possible.
13	Practice to provide and display out of hours information for patients.

1. .

# Service provider response

The report was agreed with the Service Provider as factually accurate. They have provided the following response to the report.

- Self-use blood pressure and weighing machines were available but were not immediately obvious to patients.

***We have displayed signs for these.***

- Adapted toilets were available and suitable for disabled persons however the accessible alarm cord in some toilets did not reach the ground.

***Due to health and safety this is not permitted.***

- One toilet required patients to wipe the seat with wipes provided. However, no wipes were available.

***The signs advising this have been removed.***

- The complaints procedure was not on display.

***The complaints procedure was on display on the reception desk however was just behind the glass - we have placed our complaints procedure in our reception area on the front desk. This is also available online.***

- The practice did not have newsletters or out-of-hours (OOH) information on display.

***OOH information has now been displayed- newsletters are on website.***

- There was no ambient sound or music.

***The surgery used to play music, but due to negative feedback the practice opted to remove this.***

- No wheelchairs available in the reception area.

***Wheelchairs are available to patients on request, these are not stored in reception for health and safety/fire risk purposes.***

- The chair in the breastfeeding room was not particularly comfortable.

***This is because the infection control prevention team advised against using non-wipeable chairs.***

- There was not a staff list displayed in the reception.

***Staff names are provided on entry to each corridor, displayed on each room door and on the website.***

- Booking appointments online was still listed on the website and there was no advice about the range of clinicians and services offered.

*There was no general health advice or links to NHS sites for specific health conditions. These are all on the website - however we are going to dedicate a board and use this to explain different clinical team roles.*

*Volume of calls are reviewed and audited on a monthly basis. Since the increase in phone lines which were implemented in October 2022 we have seen a huge improvement in wait times and reduction of calls abandoned.*

*GP/ Clinicians appointments need to be triaged to ensure appropriately booked, to avoid inappropriate bookings/ wasted appointments.*

## **Distribution**

### **The report is for distribution to the following:**

- Merridale Medical Centre
- LLR Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Leicester City Council
- NHS England (Leicestershire and Lincolnshire) Local Area Team
- Healthwatch England and the local Healthwatch Network
- Published on [www.healthwatchll.com](http://www.healthwatchll.com)

# Appendix 1: Survey Findings

## 22 Patients

Q1. How would you rate this GP Practice?

9 - Very Good

1 - Good

4 - Ok

5 - Poor

2 - Very Poor

Q2. What do you like most?

**Main themes:** Staff being helpful, listening and being understanding.

- "Understanding clinical staff, receptionists are helpful."
- "All the staff are welcoming helpful and professional."
- "That all the staff from reception to doctors take the time to listen and help."
- "Very quick to act on concerns raised regarding health issues."
- "Some reception staff are kind, understanding and empathetic. There has been an improvement. The female doctor has been helpful and listened."

Q3. What do you dislike the most?

**Main themes:** Getting through to the practice, getting an appointment and staff.

- "Nobody answers the phone."
- "How long it can take to get through at 8.30am."
- "The customer service, the total lack of empathy, impossible to make an appointment. Very untidy for a fairly new practice. The doctors are good if you can get appointment to see them but that's impossible. Nurse practitioners think they run the place."
- "Not being able to see a doctor."
- "You ring at 8am to be number 27 in the call queue and when you finally get through to be told

all appointments have gone and to try again the next day for the same thing to happen.”

- “Trying to get through on the phone and get an appointment.”
- “It’s so hard to get an appointment or get answers from your appointment. I’ve not had a mental health check for over a year.”

#### Q4. What is your experience of getting an appointment at your GP practice?

- 8- Positive
- 9- Mixed
- 5- Negative

**Main themes:** Method of booking an appointment and getting an appointment.

- “Need to be available to book online. If you are at work you can’t make an appointment. If you manage to get through there are few if any appointments left. On two occasions had face to face appointments cancelled and swapped for telephone appointments but not communicated until I have left work and travelled 15 miles to get there. I have had to have paid cover for my job costing my employer £50 for each appointment covered.”
- “Was easier when you could book online or book appointments in advance.”
- “Easier to queue for an appointment than on the phone.”
- “Not enough GP appointments available.”
- “My daughter has been trying since November to get a blood test. Twice it has been cancelled on the day.”
- “Sometimes you get through and when you do it’s usually helpful.”

#### Q5. What method do you use to book an appointment? (tick all that apply)

- 17- Telephone
- 11- In Person

People were asked to comment on whether they were given a choice of practitioner.

#### Q6. When making your appointment, are you given the option of seeing the doctor or the nurse?

- 13- No
- 8- Yes

**Main themes:** availability of GPs, offered to see different type of clinician/practitioner dependent on symptoms.

- “Would like to be able to see a general practitioner more frequently.”
- “You never seem the same person and have to explain your history each time. My GP is not seeing patients now and I don’t know who I should see.”
- “Doctors often not available. It’s a lottery as to which nurse clinician you see and therefore how you are treated. I have had very dismissive treatment from some, excellent from others.”
- “You are offered an appointment according to your symptoms which I feel is appropriate.”
- “Want to see doctor but they want me to see nurse.”
- “I am asked about my symptoms and sent to the person most experienced to meet my needs.”

**Q7. Do you always see the doctor or nurse of your choice?**

**10-** No

**4-** Yes

**8-** Sometimes

People were asked to comment on their experience of telephone or online appointments.

**Q8. Have you had a telephone or online consultation with your doctor?**

**11-** Yes

**11-** No

**Main themes:** positives of having telephone consultations however with some negatives.

- “I have no problem with telephone appointments.”
- “Found it easier to speak to my GP about ongoing health issues, which did not require a face to face appointment.”
- “Good service for general non urgent treatment.”
- “It’s not the same, but it is convenient when you are at work.”
- “It is helpful if my illness is straight forward but difficult if I am ringing about a rash or lump.”
- “Some successful, some felt pointless as I still needed to go in and be seen. It was obvious when booking I needed an in person appointment.”

Q9. For urgent appointments, can you normally see the doctor or nurse on the same day?

11- Yes

10- No

**Main themes:** positive and negatives of getting an urgent appointment.

- "Can usually leave a message for a call back."
- "I have recently had some concerns about my health. After contacting my surgery, was called in to be seen in the next few hours."
- "Impossible. On hold for hours. When you get through it's to an unsympathetic receptionist."
- "I am disappointed with the service we get now. I feel the service is stretched too much."
- "What a patient think is an urgent appointment the reception staff do not always agree."
- "It becomes very stressful to try and get appointments."

Q10. How satisfied are you with the practice opening hours?

8- Very Good

2- Good

10- OK

2- Poor

0- Very Poor

Q11. How would you rate the reception service?

8- Very good

4- Good

5- OK

2- Poor

2- Very poor

- "Receptionists always try their best to help me when needed."
- "The receptionists are as helpful as they can under the circumstances."
- "Very hit and miss some staff are so helpful others can be quite rude and make you not want to ring in case you get them."
- "Reception service has improved in the last year."

## Q12. What is your experience of getting repeat prescriptions?

15- Positive

5- Mixed

2- Negative

- "I have to always go through the pharmacist rather than a doctor or mental health nurse."
- "Generally ok. Very busy practice and a lot of prescriptions to process."
- "Why have repeat on the app but always need a clinician to authorise?"

## Q13. How do you rate the quality of medical care and treatment at this surgery?

10 - Very Good

2 - Good

8 - Ok

2 - Poor

0 - Very Poor

People were asked what single change would improve their experience of using their GP practice.

### **Booking appointments and availability of appointments**

- "Would be easier for people to book appointment a few days in advance. However, I am aware that this depends on the NHS and how they make the medical system and not on the surgery itself."
- "More appointments and more availability online and knowing who your appointment is going to be with."
- "Being able to book an appointment more easily."
- "If patients who fail to attend their appointments actually cancelled instead of just not turning up then more appointments would be available for patients."

### **The booking of appointment process**

- "Better phone contact please. Answering time usually very poor even if I am number one in the queue."
- "Web chat service to see if an urgent appointment is needed instead of relying on reception staffs opinion."
- "Better telephone booking system."
- "That they pick up phone."



## **Having the option to see the doctor.**

- "Being able to see a general practitioner more easily."
- "To be able to see a doctor before to be sent at emergency room."
- "More doctors."
- "More funding for more doctors to be able to deal with the demands of the catchment area."



Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire

Clarence House  
46 Humberstone Gate  
Leicester  
LE1 3PJ  
[www.healthwatchLL.com](http://www.healthwatchLL.com)  
t: 0116 2518 313

e: [enquiries@healthwatchll.com](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchll.com)



@HealthwatchLeic