

Barrowford Surgery

Enter and View Report

Tuesday 20th June 2023

10:00am – 12:00pm



Disclaimer: This report relates only to the service viewed at the time of the visit and is only representative of the views of the staff, visitors and patients who met members of the Enter and View team on that date.

Contact Details

Contact details:

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<https://www.barrowfordsurgery.co.uk/>

Registered Manager:

Catherine Ali

Date and Time of our Visit:

Tuesday 20th June 2023
10:00am-12:00pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Steven Walmsley (Engagement Team Leader)
Dawn Iverson (Volunteer Coordinator)

Introduction

Our role at Healthwatch Lancashire is to gather people's views and experiences, especially those that are seldom heard, to give them the opportunity to express how they feel about a service. The aim of an Enter and View visit is to gather views and experiences of patients and staff of a service and observe the environment to assess the quality of the service.

This was an announced Enter and View visit undertaken by authorised representatives who have the authority to enter health and social care premises, announced or unannounced.

The team collate feedback gathered and observations made to compile a report. The report identifies aspects of good practice as well as possible areas of improvement. Healthwatch Lancashire is an independent organisation, therefore we do not make judgements or express personal opinions, but rely on feedback received and objective observations of the environment. The report is sent to the manager for their opportunity to respond before being published on the Healthwatch Lancashire website at www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk.

Where appropriate, Healthwatch Lancashire may arrange a revisit to check the progress of improvements. The report is available to the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations.

General Information

"Barrowford Surgery is located in the village of Barrowford Lancashire. The surgery has 3,749 patients registered and provides General practice care and other services such as minor surgery, well-person check-ups and blood pressure checks and Advanced planning."

Information taken from pre-visit discussion

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Lancashire would like to thank management, staff and patients for making us feel welcome and for taking the time to speak to us during the visit.

Methodology

The Enter and View representatives made an announced visit on Tuesday 20th June and received feedback from nine Patients and eight staff.

Healthwatch Lancashire obtain the views and experiences of patients and staff. Conversations with patients and staff are adapted to capture individual experiences to help assess the quality of services. Patients were asked about their general feelings about the GP Surgery including their experience of making an appointment, communications, and the surgery environment. Conversations with staff included their thoughts about provision, appointment management, communication, staffing levels and support, including training.

Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives also recorded their own observations on the environment and staff-member interactions.

To retain confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, names, pronouns, and any identifiable details have been removed from quotes.



Summary

Healthwatch Lancashire representatives made an announced visit to the Medical Centre on the 20th of June. A pre-visit discussion was held with The Practice Manager on the 17th May to find out more about the surgery and how they manage appointments for patients.

Surgery Demographic

There are 3,749 patients registered at the surgery. The surgery serves residents of the village of Barrowford and surrounding rural villages. The outer geographical boundary extends to Colne, Barnoldswick and Nelson.

Appointment Management

Appointments can be made over the phone, online or via a walk-in at the surgery. Patient enquiries are managed through a triage system with all members of staff trained in Care navigation. Non-urgent enquiries are triaged by a member of staff who will then allocate an appointment with a clinician or refer the patients to the local pharmacy if the symptoms can be looked at by another trained professional.

It was mentioned that staff explain why they may be referred to other providers instead of their GP so that they are aware of the options that are available to them. This is intended to ensure patients know they are directed to appropriate care.

The phone line is operated by two dedicated members of staff and other members of the administration team can assist with calls if the line is busy. Online appointments were available at the time of the visit and one member of staff was facilitating the appointments from the surgery.

It was explained that patients can make their appointments through the NHS app which can be triaged online. The app will ask them to provide details and photographs if necessary to assist the triage process.

Visit Summary

During the visit, Healthwatch representatives were shown the facilities and services that are provided by the surgery. This included the self-check in system, the waiting areas, reception office and clinical rooms.

At the time of the visit, the following clinical staff were present, one full time GP, one Specialist Nurse Practitioner, two advanced nurse practitioners and two medical students.

Overall, the feedback from patients was positive with 88% of responses being positive about the quality of care and the attitude of staff.

Enter and View observations

Location and External Environment

The practice is located on a cul-de-sac off Higher Causeway near the centre of the Village. The practice has a signpost that is set-back from the main road making its visibility limited.

The car park had space for 9 cars and was full at the time of the visit. Two spaces were reserved for GPs and there was no designated disabled bay. There is access to local bus services to Nelson and Colne which run along Gisburn road, which is approximately 500 yards from the surgery.

Internal Environment and Waiting Area

In the entrance hall, there was a self-check in station for patients to sign in for their appointments. Two patients were using the self-check-in and when asked why they chose to use that rather than going to reception the commented that it was the easiest way to sign in. There was an information and patient calling screen in the waiting room which gave an audible tone and a spoken alert for each patient telling them which room and clinician they were seeing. At the time of the visit there was a radio on in the waiting room which one patient turned down whilst they were speaking with Healthwatch Representatives. Seating consisted of several chairs which were the same size and height.

A one-way system was in place throughout the building to ease the movement of people and clear eye-level signage was seen on doors throughout the entire internal environment to assist with navigation around the surgery. One corridor was narrow, but a wheelchair and pram could still fit. This was one reason for the use of the one-way system to ease the flow of people around the surgery, especially at busy times.

Toilets and communal areas all had hand-hygiene notices and hand gel dispensers. Accessibility was catered for with the building being level access and a hearing loop in operation. Corridors were wide enough for wheelchair access.



Patient Interactions

Healthwatch Representatives observed several interactions between staff and patients in the waiting room, on phone calls and at the end of consultations. Different enquiries were being handled by members of staff, who were observed to be courteous and polite with patients, often addressing them by name.

At the time of the visit the phone system was receiving several calls, but staff were seen to be handling the calls in a methodical and calm manner. Patients who came to the window were seen to be by one member of staff whilst the second handled the calls.

During the visit, staff interacted with patients before and after their appointments. One member of staff was observed assisting a family with impaired mobility find their way out of the practice and helped one member of the group find somewhere to wait whilst the car was brought nearer for their journey home.

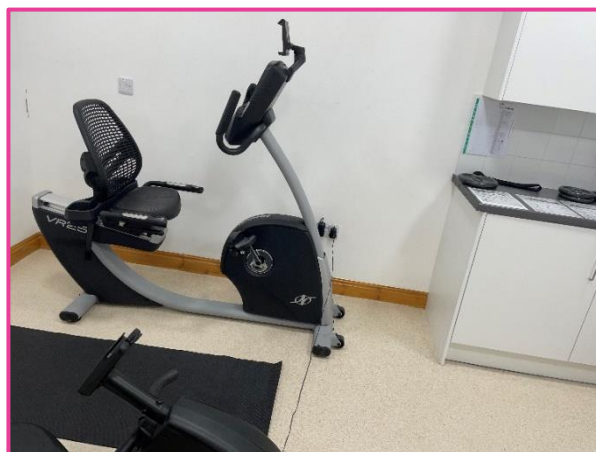
Staff knew patients by name and they took time to ask them about how they were feeling and what had happened since previous appointments.

Patient Involvement

Posters were on display in the waiting to inform patients about the complaints and feedback procedure. A Patient Participation group is currently running at the surgery and posters were on display to inform patients on how to join it. There were a range of other posters on display advertising local groups and other health information.

The website is comprehensive and explains the triage procedure and booking options to patients.

A wellbeing room has been set up for staff to use who have been appropriately inducted in the use of the equipment. This consisted of an exercise bike, a rowing machine and other gym equipment. The manager explained that it was intended to make exercise more accessible to staff who use the surgery to improve their fitness levels and do some exercise. This was a pilot idea within the Pendle East Primary Care Network.



Patient feedback

Healthwatch representatives spoke with nine patients at the visit and received 1 historic response on the Healthwatch Lancashire Feedback Centre.

How did you make your appointment?

Seven of the nine patients had found making an appointment to be a straightforward process with a quick response. "Normally easy to call, they respond quickly." Two patients had been asked to attend the surgery as a follow-up appointment with one having theirs arranged, "whilst in for a blood test."

Several of these patients mentioned that they had been informed by staff members about the online access and were open to trying alternate methods. One patient had made use of the NHS App and said that it was "straightforward and clear."

One patient expressed disappointment with their experience of making an appointment saying that it was "terrible I spent two hours calling with no answer. It rings and rings with no answer. I was offered no alternative method to make an appointment."

What would you change about the process?

Eight of the patients that Healthwatch representatives spoke with were happy with the appointment making process. One patient commented that the process was "fine" and that they didn't feel any changes were needed as it helped them see who they needed to see.

Would you be open to other methods of appointment making?

One patient commented that they liked the idea of the app but were unsure about how they would use it. One patient commented that they had been informed about the use of the telephone or online options to make appointments but they liked how straightforward and clear it was to use the app.



*"It is a good surgery.
I've never had a problem."*



Do you feel that you receive care and treatment that meets your needs?

Eight of the patients were complimentary about the care that they received. One patient gave praise to Dr Ashworth, who they had seen since they registered at the surgery "He really looks after his patients and everyone knows him." One patient commented on how they felt like the staff at the surgery helped them whenever they needed and that they were always able to be seen by the member of staff that they requested as they knew about their long-term condition.

One patient, who left feedback on the Healthwatch Lancashire Feedback centre, made mention of an issue that they had experienced with a blood test where they felt that they were not listened to. "I went to the surgery for some tests and felt judged by the nursing staff. I asked for reasonable adjustments to be made for my blood test and it felt like I was judged and an inconvenience to them." One patient at the time of the visit said that the level of care did depend on which member of staff they saw. They qualified this by explaining how they felt that they could not get past the triage staff for an urgent appointment. They "keep being told to go to the pharmacy."

How do you rate the communication between yourself and the surgery?

Several of the patients expressed positive comments about the communication. One patient stated that they received text messages, calls and voice messages on a regular basis to keep them informed. Another patient praised the online offer of the surgery "I value the use of technology to support a busy reception team with the online appointments and the app."

One patient reported that they felt like they had to chase the surgery for updates on medication which they said was "not good" They mentioned that they had made multiple attempts to find out about how their relative's medication was being reviewed.

Do you think the premises are well maintained, accessible and clean?

All patients commented that they were happy with the facilities and that they were suitably accessible. One patient said that the surgery was "tiptop" and they were happy with the facilities. One patient commented that it was sometimes difficult to park on busy days.

Do you know who to speak to if you are not happy with the service or wish to make a complaint?

Four patients commented that they were unsure about who to approach to make a complaint or raise an issue with the surgery. Two patients said that they would ask at Reception in the first instance if they felt that it was needed.

Staff feedback

Healthwatch spoke to 8 members of the staff team during the visit.

Do you have enough staff when on duty?

All eight members of staff felt that there were enough staff available during the day. One member of staff explained how the staff who respond to calls was handled. They mentioned that other members of the administration staff were able to assist with busy periods. "All staff are care-navigation trained." One explained how they had the flexibility in their role to assist with the clinical appointments and carry out admin at different times so that they could help with capacity. It was mentioned by three members of staff, that there were the odd days where they felt stretched but that was mainly due to staff sickness and they needed to cover other members of the team. They mentioned that "it depends on the day. Mondays tend to be the busiest days for us." One member of the team explained how they tried to make sure that vulnerable patients were protected and that they were able to prioritise their appointments to make sure that they were not put at risk.

Do you feel supported to carry out a person-centred experience?

The main theme drawn from conversations with staff was that the surgery was a "family practice." They explained how they were able to get to know patients quite well and give them the time that they needed to meet their needs. One member of staff explained how they had conducted a meeting with a family about a sensitive matter and they were able to include members of the family in the appointment to make sure that everyone was aware of the course of action that was going to be taken. One member of staff had been with the surgery for some time and mentioned that "We do what we can with the changes that we face." They explained how they had been able to maintain a manageable number of patients so that they could deliver the best care possible.

In a discussion with staff about extended services, they described how it is possible to offer evening and weekend appointments at another practice within the Primary Care Network which gives patients the ability to be seen outside of normal practice hours.

Do you feel you have enough training to carry out your duties well?

All staff spoken with, complimented the training and support from the management team with "Practice meetings every two weeks" Regular training was mentioned which staff felt was helpful to keep up to date with developments and changes in practice. "Clinical reviews are held every two weeks to talk about any patients that we have concerns about and to discuss what steps we need to take."

The surgery has regular supervisions and it was remarked that it had been of benefit. "We shadow each other on a Tuesday which lets us share our expertise and allows us to treat more complex cases with some assistance if we need it." It is part of our ongoing development and allows us to learn from each other."

What is your experience of working here?

Staff shared positive opinions about their experience at the surgery. There was particular mention given to the family atmosphere and the way that the staff support each other "I really feel part of the team." Several mentions were made of how staff had all been working at the surgery for some time which had helped them to form a positive working relationship, which they had a direct impact on the patient experience. "I know my patients quite well." Three of the staff members mentioned that they were "able to ask anyone" if they needed assistance.

Are there any changes that can be made to improve the patient experience?

Two members of staff said that they were in the process of updating the car park to include a disabled bay at the front of the surgery and that they were looking into how they could improve the capacity of the car park. They mentioned that they were not able to extend the size of the car park but were actively looking at how they could resolve capacity and access issues.

One clinician discussed how they wanted to make the practice more dementia friendly. "I want to be able to make the surgery more accessible for patients with dementia." They mentioned that they were starting to investigate this as a possible project in the future. It was also mentioned that "the waiting room is in need of an update."

Three members of staff said that they wanted to manage the appointment times more effectively so that they could make the most of the time they had with their patients. They suggested informing patients about who they were seeing and helping patients understand more about the reasons behind why they were seen by a particular clinician instead of their doctor.

Three members of staff suggested that more work was needed to educate patients about the clinical options that were available to them. "We do signpost to other options, such as the optician or the local pharmacy for minor ailments but some patients are reluctant to take up this option. One mentioned that felt that more work could be done to educate patients on how to "deal with chronic pain."

Any other comments?

“We are a family practice.”

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated based on observations of the environment and feedback gathered from patients and staff.

1. Investigate ways that staff can use to make the practice more dementia friendly through the use of signage, clocks and contrasting décor
2. Continue to educate patients about different methods that are available to make appointment such as the online app or telephone system
3. Update the waiting room and add seating to provide for a range of patient needs with different sizes, with and without arms
4. Move the radio away from the patient information display so that alerts can be heard clearly
5. Review information and ensure that it is readily available for patients and staff to help educate them about how they can deal with chronic pain and other minor ailments
6. Help patients understand more about their medication to alleviate repeat enquiries

Provider response

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe	Comments
1. Investigate ways to make the practice more dementia friendly through the use of signage, clocks and contrasting décor			
2. Continue to educate patients about different methods that are available to make appointments	On website. There are also posted in reception.		
3. Update the waiting room and add seating to provide for a range of patient needs with different sizes, with and without arms			
4. Move the radio away from the patient information display so that alerts can be heard clearly	Done	N/A	

<p>5. Review information and ensure that it is readily available for patients and staff to help educate them about how they can deal with chronic pain and other minor ailments</p>	<p>Care navigation booklets are in reception area for the receptionists. Multiple posters are available in the waiting room and reception area.</p>		
<p>6. Help patients understand more about their medication to alleviate repeat enquiries</p>			

Healthwatch Lancashire held a discussion with the practice manager on the 20th of July 2023 to discuss the report and provide them with the opportunity to respond. The practice manager made the following comments:

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There is an automated message that will be played to callers, after a period of time and a call back will be given as soon as possible.

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We cannot discuss medication with relatives due to the confidential nature of people's medication. This is in line with our confidentiality policy.



healthwatch
Lancashire

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