



**Enter & View: Community Diagnostic  
Centre at Withington Hospital full report**

**March 2024**



## Background

Local Healthwatch have a legal power to visit health and social care services and see them in action. This power to enter and view offers a way for them to identify what is working well with services and where improvements could be made.

Healthwatch also gather the views of service users, families, and carers through other means to help inform the quality improvement of health and care services.

For this project, several local Healthwatch across the country were commissioned by Healthwatch England to enter & view a number of community diagnostic centres (CDCs). The reasons for this were as follows:

1. Recognising that CDCs are a flagship policy set up to be a crucial part of the elective care recovery plan, aiming to reduce pressure on acute services, ringfence resources for elective diagnostics, and increase diagnostic capacity.
2. Desire to understand patient experiences of CDCs, as while NHS England began publishing statistics on the performance of CDCs in March 2023, no one had yet investigated the experience of patients.

The scope of the Enter & View exercise was to explore different aspects of the patient experience, particularly:

- Accessibility
- Expectations
- Choice
- Quality

## The visit

Four Healthwatch Trafford authorized representatives carried out the Enter & View at Withington Hospital CDC on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2024. The visit went smoothly with the cooperation of the staff team on site.

## Planning for the visit

Healthwatch Trafford staff and Enter & View authorized representatives undertook some activities to prepare for the visit including:

- Planning meetings for representatives to discuss their approach.
- A site visit prior to the Enter & View to get an idea of layout, size, and to meet the team.
- Training for staff and representatives to refresh knowledge and skills.

Patient interview questions were centred around travel experience, referral pathways, and their experience during and after appointments.

## After the visit

Two patients consented to a follow-up telephone interview. We wanted to hear their reflections after testing as well as their experience receiving results. We reached out two weeks after the visit, and their responses were generally positive.

The patients were asked if anything stood out as being particularly good about their experience getting a diagnostic test or scan. Both said the experience was excellent and had no complaint about the service received. Both patients received their test results earlier than suggested on the day of their appointment; the results arrived after a week rather than two.

When considering improvements or changes, one patient felt the CDC should be expanded and furnished with more equipment so that more patients can benefit from the services.

Patients were asked if they had any final thoughts and reflections about their CDC experience. They said the following:

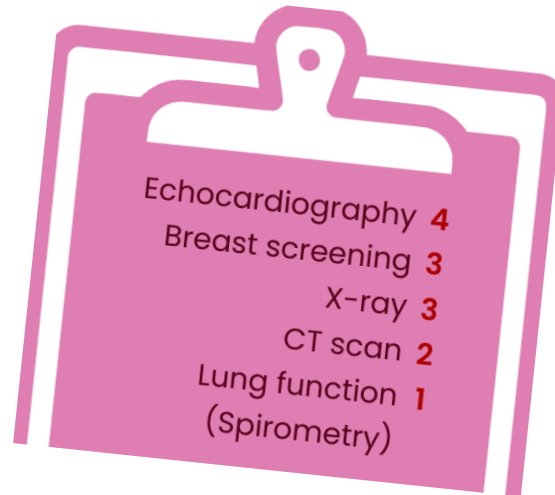
*“They are a magnificent team, and they should be commended. The whole experience has been good. All tests done at Withington CDC have always run smoothly [...]. It is a welcoming environment. Grateful to have the service close to me.”*

*“Withington Hospital is really good and convenient to get to for me.”*

## Findings

### Reasons given for attending the CDC

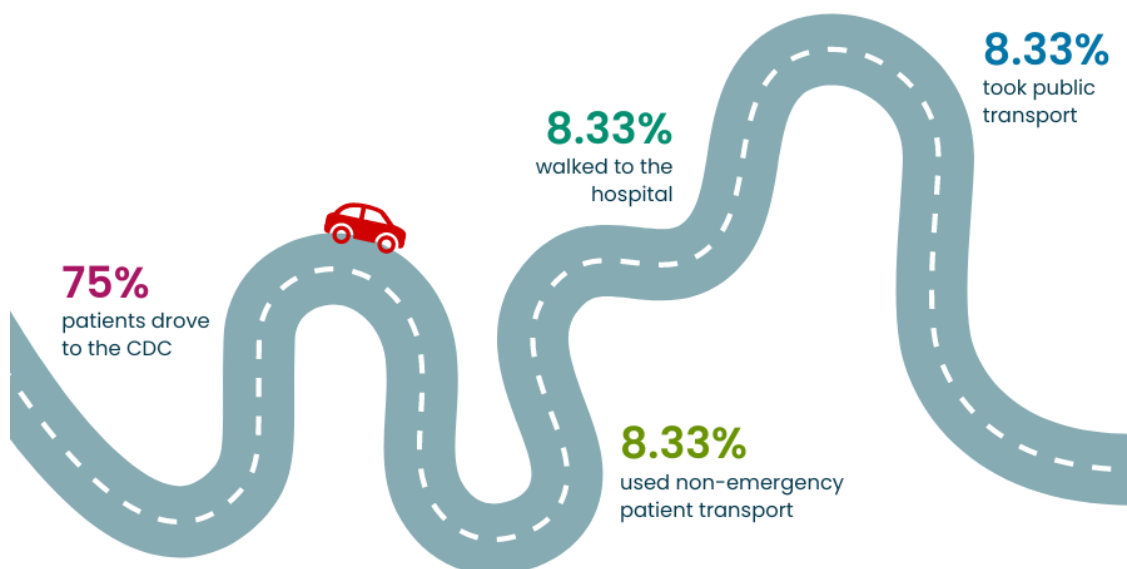
Representatives interviewed 13 patients who came for different types of tests at the CDC site. Patients attended for the following diagnostics:



### Travel to site

Patients were asked about their experience getting to the site. All patients were positive about their travel experience, and described it as 'good', 'quick', and 'convenient'. None of the patients reported difficulty getting to their appointment.

We asked patients what mode of transportation they used and most responded that they drove, with fewer using other modes such as public transport.



All patients interviewed found it easy to locate the CDC. Some comments about their experience getting to the CDC site after arriving at the hospital:

- *“it was easy to find my way because I’m conversant with the site.”*
- *“the site has good signposting.”*
- *“it was easy to find way around the site because I’ve been coming to the hospital since childhood.”*
- *“hospital is well signposted.”*

## Referrals

We asked patients about their CDC referral pathways. 50% of patients were referred by their GP and the other 50% by radiography, cardiology, and orthopaedic specialists.

Patients were asked how long they had to wait for an appointment after being referred. We observed a significant difference in the waiting times for those who came for imaging compared to those who came for respiratory and cardiology tests, with most patients who came for imaging waiting less.

Below is a table showing the various reported waiting times for tests:

	<b>Imaging (CT scan, MR, DEXA, and NOUS)</b>	<b>Respiratory and cardiology tests</b>
<b>Waiting time after referral</b>	15 minutes (referred same day)	2 - 3 weeks
	1 day (referred day before)	About 4 weeks
	3 days	15 weeks*
	2 weeks	

\*It is worth noting that some of these appointments were for regular monitoring; four patients were attending yearly check-ups and had received referral letters through the post, including cardiology and breast screening. The breast screenings did not take place as part of the national CDC programme but occurred at the same site, making their experience similar but not part of the CDC-specific experience.

### Prior knowledge of CDCs

We asked patients if they knew about community diagnostic centres before attending their appointment. 50% of patients interviewed had heard about them, and the remainder had not. Patients had heard about CDCs from the following:

- *“From coming around for tests/ scans.”*
- *“Been having tests done all my life.”*
- *“From experience and have been before following a GP referral.”*
- *“Some caravans go around the area to promote breast cancer screening.”*
- *“Heard of CDCs through local NHS work/ experience and the government spoke about building more CDC sites across the country in the media.”*

### Prior expectations

We asked patients about their expectations of the CDC. Four of the patients who had prior knowledge said it met their expectations and one was indifferent.

### Waiting times and areas

All patients found the waiting area comfortable, pleasant, tidy, and well looked after. Patients also confirmed that waiting area provided adequate dignity and privacy.

Patients were asked if their appointment was on time upon arrival at the CDC. 60% of patients responded with ‘yes’ and 40% responded with ‘no’.

Patients that responded ‘no’ waited between 10 – 15 minutes for their appointment. Most long waits were at the respiratory and cardiology test sections. One patient waited for 10 minutes for imaging as there was confusion around their GP referral, but situation was resolved by staff.

### Experience of test/ scan

Most patients interviewed gave positive feedback on their test/ scan experience, with two patients mentioning a bit of tolerable discomfort. Some comments are below:

- *“It was very very good.”*

- *"Test was okay but a bit uncomfortable."*
- *"It was good, easy, and quick."*
- *"It was painless. [...] The experience was a pleasant one."*

### Communication with CDC staff

All patients interviewed gave positive feedback about CDC staff. Patients also commented positively on staff professionalism. Healthwatch Trafford authorized representatives also noticed this. 100% of patients said they were able to communicate effectively with staff at their CDC appointments. When asked if CDC staff proactively inquired about their communication needs prior to the appointment, all responded 'no'.

22% of patients interviewed had additional communication needs and told us that CDC staff had accommodated those needs during their appointment. One patient mentioned leaving their hearing aids at home and informed CDC staff that they needed to speak clearly when communicating, which they did. Another patient with hearing difficulties came with their spouse, who acted as an interpreter between the patient and staff.

All patients interviewed said they got the chance to ask CDC staff questions and felt listened to at their appointment. 89% of patients interviewed said CDC staff explained when and how their results would get to them after the appointment.

None of the patients we spoke to were given any material to take away after the appointment, however most patients did not feel it was necessary.

### Overall patient thoughts

Patients were asked what was particularly good about their overall experience. All comments about their CDC experience were incontrovertibly positive, and many patients especially highlighted how fast their experience was:

- *"Pleasant and efficient staff."*
- *"Everything was good [...] Didn't have to wait long after getting to hospital."*
- *"10/10. It was an excellent experience today."*
- *"It was really quick."*

- *“Receptionist was very helpful [...]”*
- *“I loved the whole experience [...]. Been coming for years. The staff have been professional and efficient, [...] patients are grateful for the service.”*
- *“Hospital was very clean and well signposted.”*

When asked about potential improvement, 78% of patients said nothing could have improved their CDC experience. 22% of patients felt the experience was good but shared some comments. Below are some examples:

- *“[...] My GP just needs to do better around booking CDC appointments.”*
- *“Had a situation where a nurse practitioner called me for a pre-assessment and CT scanning staff called me for an appointment while still being with the nurse practitioner. Think there should be better communication between [...] staff doing the tests.”*

## Accessibility audit

Two authorized representatives carried out the accessibility audit of the CDC site and its environs. They made observations in and around the building, checked the Withington Community Hospital website, and asked CDC staff questions.



*Withington Community Hospital entrance*



## Patient transportation options

There are a good number of transport options to site available for patients, including trams, buses, non-emergency patient transport, and ring + ride. The closest tram station is 6 -10-minute walk to the CDC.

Patients have the option to get a bus from one of three bus stops, each a few minutes' walk from the entrance. Frequent buses from across Greater Manchester travel to the site 7 days a week.

Patients can be picked up and dropped off directly outside the CDC entrance, with 30 minutes free parking available. The pavements around site were clear and accessible, and there was also a free phone for taxi booking near the exit.

## Considerations for patients with mobility constraints and other disabilities

Hearing loop was available and working at the CDC.

There was no ramp or lift to CDC areas but there was a buzzer available to press at the car park entrance if assistance is required. CDC areas were on the ground floor, so a lift was not required. There were chairs along the main corridors of the CDC but there was sufficient room for wheelchair access.

Corridors were had multicoloured flooring with black lines dividing them, which could be confusing for dementia patients<sup>1</sup>. The floors and walls were in contrasting colours. There were handrails on the walls in case patients needed support along the corridor.

Staff confirmed information can be made available to patients in Easy Read formats if needed.

## Considerations for people who don't speak English

CDC staff confirmed that care navigators cannot formally act as clinical interpreters, but can overcome language barriers when booking appointments and on the reception desk. They can and do also arrange formal interpreters for

---

<sup>1</sup> NHS (2023), *Patient-led assessments of the care environment, Dementia-friendly environments: guidance for assessors*, p.4

clinical consultations when required, as per NHS guidelines. There is information for people who need translators on appointment letters, the hospital website, and on request.

### Signage in and around the CDC

Signs within the hospital were clear and visible. The main reception is approximately 200m from the entrance and the desk was unmanned. Patients were observed asking for directions around the entrance. There was no signage at the tram stop directing patients to the CDC.

### Fire exit signs and alarms

Fire exits were clearly indicated in different formats (words and pictures).

### Quiet rooms

There is a quiet room available at the CDC but not easily seen. The corridor and waiting areas were spacious and calm with little noise.

### Blue badge parking

There were an adequate number (31) of blue badge parking spaces available at the CDC parking lot. Parking is free for blue badge holders.

### Website ease of access

The hospital's website was found to be very comprehensive and accessible. There was a complaints and compliments procedure on the website in different formats. The website also had information about parking cost rates.

## Additional observations

### Good practice

We observed a lot of good practice, and it is important to commend CDC staff for their work, including the following:

- Positive and empathetic attitude
- Efficiency and promptness

- Keeping a clean and tidy environment (inside and outside the CDC)
- Provision of care navigators to support patients at appointments
- Openness to receive patients' feedback.

### Patient experience

There is a clear focus on improving the patient experience. The work put into this can be seen in the NHS Elect Experience Based Design exercise done in September 2023 and the observed quality of the site during our visit.

### Recommendations

We believe the following would further improve patients' experiences:

- Staff could proactively ask patients whether they have communication needs upon arrival, as some patients may have hidden disabilities or be unaware that they can ask for support.
- Better communication around pre-assessments, and between patients and staff around scans/ tests. This includes informing patients what their procedure might require ahead of the appointment e.g., not wearing metal to certain scans or wearing easy-to-remove clothing, or bringing a family member or a friend in case they feel out of energy after a test.
- Clear signage directing people to the site from public transport stops.
- Displaying a notice at the unmanned entrance desk to direct patients to the main reception.



Healthwatch Trafford authorise representatives at the CDC

12-14 Shaw's Road   
Altrincham  
Cheshire  
WA14 1QU

healthwatchtrafford.co.uk   
0300 999 0303   
  


[info@healthwatchtrafford.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchtrafford.co.uk)

@HealthwatchTraf

Companies House Reg No. 08466421. Registered in England and Wales.

