

Irwell Medical Practice Bacup

Wednesday 28th August 2024

11:00am – 2:-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

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Irwell Medical Practice

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Surgery Contact:

Pauline Aspinall (Strategic Manager)

Jess (Practice Manager)

Date and Time of our Visit:

Wednesday 28th August 2024

11:00am – 2:00pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Steve Walmsley (Engagement Team Leader)

Charles Howarth (Healthwatch Lancashire Volunteer)

Introduction

Healthwatch Lancashire is the independent public voice for health and social care in Lancashire and exists to make services work for the people who use them. We believe that the best way to do this is by providing the people of Lancashire with opportunities to share their views and experiences.

Healthwatch Lancashire has statutory powers to listen, act, challenge and gather feedback to improve local services and promote excellence throughout the NHS and social care services.

To help achieve this Healthwatch have a statutory power to 'Enter and View' health and social care services that are publicly funded. The purpose of an Enter and View is to listen to people who access those services and observe service delivery.

Following the Enter and View visit a report is compiled identifying aspects of good surgery within the service visited along with any recommendations for any possible areas of improvement.

As we are an independent organisation, 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 service provider providing an opportunity to respond to any recommendations and comments before being published on the Healthwatch Lancashire website at:

www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk

The report is available to members of the public along with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations. Where appropriate Healthwatch Lancashire may arrange a revisit to monitor the progress of improvements and celebrate any further successes.

General Information

Irwell Medical practice serves patients in Rossendale, primarily residents of Bacup. There are between 14,900 and 15,000 patients registered at the practice.

Acknowledgements

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

Glossary

MDT – Multi-disciplinary team

PCN – Primary Care Network

What did we do?

Healthwatch Lancashire Enter and View Representatives made an announced visit to Irwell Medical Practice on Wednesday 28th August and received feedback from:



Pre-visit surgery survey

Healthwatch Lancashire emailed a pre-visit questionnaire to the Practice Manager to learn about the patient population, services offered and how the surgery manage appointments for patients. Information from this questionnaire is included in the summary below.

Introductory meeting with Surgery manager

At the beginning of the enter and view visit, Healthwatch Lancashire met with the Practice Management team to discuss the background of the surgery and to view the facilities. The appointment system was explained, along with support offered to patients who are accessing services within the Primary Care Network (PCN).

One to one discussions with patients and their relatives

Healthwatch Lancashire spoke with patients and their relatives about their experiences including appointment booking, how they felt about the service and the care and treatment delivered by the staff at the surgery.

Discussions with members of staff

Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives spoke with members of staff about their experiences of delivering services to patients. Questions centred around support for patients and any improvements staff felt could be made at the Medical Surgery.

Observations

Observations were made throughout the visit. This included patient and staff interactions, accessibility measures in place throughout the surgery and the condition and cleanliness of the facilities.

Summary



Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives viewed facilities that were available at Irwell Medical Practice. This included the waiting area, reception office and the waiting area for the pharmacy team.

Overall, the feedback received from patients was positive with several patient responses describing satisfaction with the quality of care and the attitude of staff. Patients also praised the communications between the surgery and themselves, describing the usefulness of text message reminders and most patients remarking how the process of making an appointment was quick and easy.

However, some patients raised concerns about delays in the appointment making process, commenting on how it can take some time to get through on the phone at certain times during the day. One improvement that was suggested by patients, they would like to have more options to manage their care online. It was felt that this might help alleviate the need to ring the surgery in the morning if they could book an appointment online.

Throughout the visit staff members were observed to be kind, courteous and considerate towards the needs of patients with some complex enquiries being handled in a sensitive manner. Conversations with staff highlighted that they felt the team was able to meet the needs of patients and that there were robust procedures in place to help patients overcome barriers that they experienced. Praise was given to the management team for the way that they support staff and how they are approachable if staff members need support.

Surgery Overview

Location and public access



The practice is located in the Bacup Primary Health Centre which offers a range of local health services. The facility is close to the centre of Bacup on Rochdale Road. Frequent local bus services can be accessed from a bus stop close to the centre. There is a drop off point directly outside the front of the centre which allows patients using taxis to gain direct access to the centre.

A car park is located across from the centre, on Rochdale road, with five disabled bays. Access to the centre from the car park was made easier through the use of a zebra crossing. It was explained that the car park is owned by the local council but the health centre has priority for the car park. The signage on the car park indicated that the parking area was for the health centre.

Surgery Population

Around 15,000 patients are registered at the practice. Discussion with practice management highlighted that 58.5% of patients have a long-standing health condition, which is above the national average of 54.6%. Conditions included cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease, diabetes, mental health and long term respiratory problems. The practice has a below national average amount of patients living with cancer, strokes and atrial fibrillation.

Services available

The practice offers face to face appointments with GPs and nursing staff along with a range of additional services such as social prescribers, Care Coordinators, a mental health (MH) Practitioner, a first contact practitioner, clinical pharmacists, trainee nurse associates, a health and wellbeing coach and advanced clinical practitioners.

Appointment Management



Appointments can be made by patients either on the phone, online using the AccruRx self-triage system or directly at the reception. Patients can request a link to the triage system via their mobile phones without needing to speak with a member of staff on the phone.

Appointments for diabetic patients are initially booked with a health care assistant (HCA) by clerical staff, then the Diabetic Nurse team review their investigations and book them in for a telephone review if needed to increase/decrease medications or offer other advice. Other annual reviews such as hypertension, asthma, COPD, are also booked by the clerical team and patients are reminded about these in advance using a text message alert. These are coordinated via the patient's birth month. Clerical staff will also book phlebotomy appointments and general clinic appointments such as pill checks, depo injections, b12 injections.

Phone calls are handled by a team of care co-ordinators at the practice with four trained in handling prescription enquiries to provide further assistance to patients.

Enter and View observations

External Environment

The main entrance to the building catered for wheelchair users by being level with the kerb and having automatic doors. The weather was inclement on the day of the visit and puddles were forming around the entrance. Drainage is in place to deal with excess water, but it was mentioned that the entrance area could occasionally flood.

Signage outside the building is clear and easily visible, helping patients find where they needed to go.

Internal Environment and Waiting Area

The health centre has a large desk in the main entrance where a member of staff directs patients to the right area of the centre. Irwell Medical Practice is split across two floors, with nurses located on the lower floor, including the East Lancashire Alliance extended hours services. The main general practice, other allied healthcare professionals and prescription services is located on the first floor.

The practice has two main waiting areas, with reception desks on each floor for patients to make enquiries and book appointments. A self check in system is present near the front door of the practice, and at the entrance to each area of the centre. These were all of a standard design and user interface which was consistent for all services delivered at the centre.



Signage for the services available in the centre is displayed in a prominent position in the entrance. This signage was observed throughout the centre. It had a consistent style and visual cues to aid patients living with dementia and other conditions. It was noted that there were also signs in the lifts which informed patients which floor they needed to travel to.



There is ample seating in the waiting area of a standard design and size, although some chairs are adapted to provide assistance to patients with mobility impairments. The seating is spaced to allow for the movement of wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Patients are called to their appointments using a visual screen mounted on the wall facing the seating area. This screen calls patients with an audio alert, displaying the patient's name, the clinician's name and the room they need to go to. Staff were also observed collecting patients in lieu of using this facility

The waiting room has multiple large noticeboards displaying information about the local social prescribing services, community services, veteran support and information about common conditions. Of note is a board which explains the different roles that staff play at the practice with explanations for patients about what they can do to help patients understand that they don't always need to see their GP.



Patient Interactions

Healthwatch Lancashire observed several interactions with patients who were at different stages of their appointment making journey.

Phone call enquiries were observed being handled by members of staff at the time of the visit. These enquiries answered in a prompt manner by members of staff in the reception area. Calls were handled with courtesy and staff were able to give effective solutions to patients' enquiries.

One member of staff was on the ground floor to handle enquiries, and two members of staff were on the upper floor reception desk. Throughout the visit patients were seen approaching the desk on the ground floor and were directed upstairs to the right area. This was approached in a calm and professional manner as some patients appeared visibly confused about where they needed to be. One patient was observed leaving an appointment in some discomfort and approached staff at the ground floor desk to raise a concern about their appointment. This was handled in a sensitive manner by staff who sought out assistance to help resolve the concern.

Throughout the visit all staff visibly made time throughout the visit to speak with patients, which meant that patients were able to be seen quickly.

Patient Involvement



An active Patient Participation Group (PPG) is currently in operation and is advertised on the surgery website and prominently in the waiting area. There are a series of events planned in co-operation with the PPG which are themed to ensure that the right services are in attendance at future events. These are advertised and supported by both the staff at the practice and members of the PPG. There was a positive relationship observed between PPG members and staff which was evidenced by

their involvement in planning events designed to meet the wider needs of the patients that use the practice.

The website features clear and user-friendly information about booking appointments, requesting prescriptions, and making use of the NHS app to access services. A rolling banner on the website advertises local events, services and information about upcoming vaccination programmes.



Patient feedback

Healthwatch Representatives spoke with **eight** patients during the visit.

How did you make your appointment today?

Five of the patients spoken with had arranged their appointment using the telephone system and two appointments were pre-arranged by staff at the practice either as a follow up to a previous appointment or from an online enquiry. One patient commented that they had attended the practice to make arrangements for an appointment later in the year. One patient commented that they felt the process took a long time online. They explained that they found the process complicated especially if they wanted feedback quickly. They wanted to know more about how their enquiry could be handled in a more immediate manner. (recommendation about online appointment making process)

“It takes too long online to get an appointment.”

The patients who had their appointments arranged by the staff explained that it was a clear and straightforward process and that they knew what they needed to do.

One patient, who attended to practice to make arrangements, explained how staff had accommodated their needs and made sure that they were fully informed about the arrangements for their future appointment.

“It was easy, they said that I could choose who to see and gave me a time that worked for me, especially with how far we have to travel from.”

One patient complimented the process of making an appointment explaining that it was quite straightforward.

“It was really easy to be honest I didn’t have any issues they answered in about 5 minutes and I got an appointment this morning.”

They mentioned that it was reassuring that the process was not difficult, especially as they had not accessed the service for some time.

One patient explained that they had attended earlier than their appointment time and they were experiencing some delays.

“They have told me that they are running late.”

They commented that the delays had been explained to them and that a reason was given.

What works well at this surgery?



Five patients complimented the attitude of staff members at the practice, highlighting how they felt that staff listened to them and assisted them

“Staff are empathetic here, they listen to you and try and help you however they can.”

Four patients praised the care that they received from clinical staff at the practice, explaining that they felt the staff listened to them and gave them the time they needed in appointments.

(recommendation 2)

“The doctors are excellent.”

One patient described how they were unsure about other people’s experiences about care navigation by different members of staff when they made a phone call or an enquiry online as they felt unsure that they would always be directed to the right place.

I think they are good at making sure we get to see the right person but I know not everyone feels the same.”

They mentioned that they felt that they needed a little bit more information about why they had been allocated an appointment with a particular clinician, especially if it meant their condition was not serious. (recommendation 3)

One patient complimented the management team at the practice explaining how they were always available if they needed support.

“the management are always on hand with we need them and they make sure we get the help we need. That is all it needs.”

They gave examples of how management had provided them assistance when they had a query about medication and were able to help them resolve the issue they had encountered.

Is there anything that can be changed to meet your needs?

Four patients provided feedback to this question. Two said that they felt there was not a lot that needed to be changed in order to improve the experience for patients using the service.

“There is not really anything that they need to do differently here.”

One patient mentioned that they felt elderly patients should be given priority for a dedicated GP.

“They will always see someone who knows them and their clinical history.”

They mentioned that they felt it would improve the continuity of care for patients who can present with more serious long-term conditions that needed an in depth knowledge of patient history, which could be lost if more than one person was involved in patient care.

One patient commented that they felt face to face consultations were not always offered soon enough and that they wanted to have greater choice in how they were seen by clinicians.

“I want to see face to face consultations offered sooner, instead of a telephone appointment and then being called into the practice.”

They felt that being offered more choice about attending appointments would make the practice more accessible. This point was followed up with the practice management who explained that they would always take patient choice into consideration when arranging appointments.

Do you receive information from the surgery that is easy to understand?

All patients spoken with felt that staff at the practice shared information in a clear and consistent manner, which meant that they were well informed about their conditions and appointments.

“They are very clear and take the time to explain things.”

Do you know how to make a complaint if needed?

All eight patients were confident about how to raise issues and enquiries. One patient who was on the Patient Participation Group complimented how it was simple to make enquiries with staff at the practice.



“Patients know that if they are stuck they can come to us (the ppg) if they have a problem.”

Do you know what a Patient Participation Group is?

Two patients spoken with were representatives of the Patient Participation Group and were positive about the impact that the work the group carried out had with the practice. They mentioned that they were working with the practice to recruit more members.

“We are encouraging people to get into what we do.”

They explained how they were looking to grow the membership of the group in order to be more representative of the local population. (recommendation)

Staff feedback

Healthwatch received feedback from **twenty** staff members during the visit.



Do you have enough staff when on duty?

All twenty members of staff felt that they had enough staff to meet the demand at the surgery. They gave examples of how the staff deployment was flexible and able to meet the needs of patients, although there were some challenges that they were working on particularly during busier periods.

“It depends on staffing. Monday and Tuesdays are harder as we get a lot of enquiries but we catch up during the week.”

One member of staff mentioned that staffing was mostly a challenge when there were bouts of sickness or annual leave. They mentioned that they felt supported to catch up and give patients the support they needed.

Staffing was described by two members of staff as being flexible in order to meet with a large demand of patients. They explained how staff were able to assist in different ways to either field calls or provide additional support with prescriptions and medication enquiries.

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



Support from management and the team was praised in almost all conversations with different teams within the practice. It was mentioned that staff shared their expertise, particularly amongst the clinical team to learn about patients' conditions and needs.

“We have our daily meeting to share ideas and give each other advice. That way patients are being given the treatment and care that they need.”

Staff explained how daily meetings had been implemented some time ago, and were an invaluable tool to help with staff development and to support colleagues handle sensitive cases together. It was felt that this was a positive tool used to

make sure that patients and staff felt supported. Additional steps in place to improve the patient experience included weekly review meetings to delegate tasks and respond to patient enquiries in a timely manner.

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

Staff felt that the training they received allowed them to meet the needs of the patients they serve. Most comments concerned regular mandatory training such as safeguarding and the sentiment was that it was professionally managed at the surgery. They mentioned that this meant their training was up to date, and they could pursue training that they required for their role.

“We get regular updates and there is always support offered if we have a specific training need.”

Staff complemented how the practice hosts medical students and has recruited some to the staff team.

“It really shows that we are doing a good job if people want to come and work here after they have done their training here.”

What measures are in place for people with additional communication needs?

Staff explained that the practice had interpreters with Cosign that they had used in the past and that they were working on making sure that patients' communication needs were being met in all instances.

“We use interpreters for people with additional languages and we have found if there is an issue we will be able to sort something out quite quickly.”

What is your experience of working here?

All members of staff spoken with on the day felt that they had a positive experience working at the practice. They complimented the support from the management team and from other members of the team.

“We are all friends too which is good.”

One member of staff complimented how the management team would provide support, particularly when they needed to resolve a challenging issue or deal with high demand from patients, particularly with phone enquiries.



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

All twenty members of staff complemented how the staff team worked together, in particular with members of different teams supporting in patient facing areas. It was suggested that one step that could be taken to provide further administrative support to patients would be to have a drop in point for patients to make administrative enquiries in order to provide assistance with requests for patient records and other related tasks. (recommendation 5)

“Patients can’t always speak to the right member of staff at busy times which means their enquiries don’t always get resolved quickly, particularly if it concerns their records or details that need changing.”

One member of staff commented on the accessibility of the desk areas, explaining that they felt they were in need of some adjustment to make them easier for patients using wheelchairs to speak to members of staff.

“We have looked into it in the past as it is impossible for patients in wheelchairs to speak with people on the desk as its too high.”

They felt that altering the desks, particularly in waiting areas, would make them more accessible as they are, at present, too high. (recommendation 6)

Three members of staff commented that there had been issues with patients being unable to obtain their medication from pharmacies, which meant that they needed to return to the practice to get a new prescription which caused frustration on both sides. The practice manager explained that work was underway to address this, but it was not a straightforward issue to resolve due to supply issues for some medications.

Recommendations

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

1. Consider providing additional information to the appointments page on the website to explain appointment making options to patients.
2. Celebrate successes and good practice highlighted within this report by sharing online, through the PPG group and in staff meetings.
3. Inform patients about staff roles as part of the appointment making process so patients are clearer who they are seeing and the reasons why
4. Continue to promote membership of the PPG group by sending advertising materials to local community groups.
5. Hold a monthly Admin drop in stall for administrative enquiries for patients.
6. Investigate making enquiry desks more accessible by lowering a section of the desks at the reception areas and the pharmacy desk.

Provider response

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe
Investigate adding additional information to the appointment page on the website to explain appointment making options to patients.	We will discuss this with our website provider and update the information on the webpage and our Facebook page to make this clearer to patients.	Actioned by 29 th November (it can sometimes take a while for the website to be updated so I have allowed extra time for this).
Celebrate successes and good practice highlighted within this report by sharing online, through the PPG group and in staff meetings	We will share this report with all staff at the Practice and directly with our PPG. We will also add it to our website and our Facebook page for patients to have access to and read.	Actioned by 31 st October.
Inform patients about staff roles as part of the appointment making process so patients are better informed about how they can help with their enquiry.	We have recently recruited three new care coordinators and three new admin team members and have enquired to book them onto Care Navigation training. We have also added this to our next Reception + Admin Team meeting in November to discuss with the team and highlight how we can improve communication with patients and explain what each role can do effectively when booking the appointment. We can also share this information with patients via our website and Facebook pages.	Actioned by 22 nd November.

<p>Continue to promote membership of the PPG group by sending advertising materials to local community groups</p>	<p>We have scheduled bi-monthly Facebook posts re our PPG and how to join, hoping this will raise regular awareness of our PPG and how to join. Our PPG also recently carried out a hearing loss awareness drop-in session at the Practice on the 9th + 10th October, this session promoted the PPG. The PPG will also be attendance at our Flu/Covid Clinics this winter.</p>	<p>Throughout Oct, Nov + Dec.</p>
<p>Hold a monthly Admin drop in stall for administrative enquiries for patients.</p>	<p>This will be discussed with our Admin Team at their next meeting on the 11th November and we will discuss how we can make this happen as we think it is a great idea and will benefit patients.</p>	<p>To be discussed on the 11th November + hopefully put into place from January 2025.</p>
<p>Investigate making enquiry desks more accessible by lowering a section of the desks at the reception areas and the pharmacy desk.</p>	<p>Since your visit we have consistently tried to resolve this issue with the building owners unfortunately, they have not found a solution yet. However, as a Practice we have decided to move the Prescription Team + facilities to another reception area on the second floor of the Practice. This new area has lower desks for patients and more room for the Prescription Team to work effectively. This will be a big move and change for the Practice and our patients so we will need to plan for this properly. We will advertise this move to patients for a couple of weeks initially and then decide on a move date.</p>	<p>We are aiming for this move to carried out by the end of January 2025 if not before.</p>

Questions

Is the report factually accurate?

Yes, this report is factually accurate.

Did you learn anything new about residents' views and experiences, or anything else, as a result of the Enter and View undertaken by Healthwatch Lancashire?

We found this visit extremely useful and are very appreciative of the feedback and recommendations found. We feel as though all recommendations are fair and we will do our best to action them in the next few months. As a Practice we are always keen to hear what our patients think of the service we are providing to them and understand that improvements will need to be made periodically, however it is extremely satisfying hearing that patients are very happy with the service we provide on the whole. We are also extremely grateful to our wonderful team of staff, and it is lovely to hear that they feel well supported and enjoy working at Irwell Medical Practice.

Any other comments?

Thank you for your visit, we have found the whole process fair, useful and enjoyable.



healthwatch
Lancashire

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