



# Community Diagnostic Centres

Report on our visits to Taunton Diagnostic  
Centre Jan/Feb 2024

**healthwatch**  
Somerset

# What we did



We visited the Diagnostic Centre at Blackbrook, Taunton as part of a Healthwatch England project about Diagnostic Centres across the country.

# What we did

- We made 3 separate visits, on different days and times
- We carried out 32 interviews with people who agreed to speak to us on the day
- We completed an accessibility audit of the site, which included information about travel routes



# About Taunton Diagnostic Centre

- The centre has been open since 2021
- The centre is run by Alliance Medical Ltd
- Somerset NHS Foundation Trust contracts with Alliance Medical Ltd to provide diagnostic imaging services for NHS patients
- The centre offers MRI, CT, Ultrasound and Xray. The centre is one of only three in the South West to have a Philips 3T Elition scanner
- The centre is open Monday to Saturday 8am to 8pm
- In January 2024 the centre saw over 2000 NHS patients

# Our report

This report covers three main areas:

- Overall patient experience
- Accessibility. This includes the accessibility of the site, and accessible communication
- Travel. This covers transport, parking, directions and signage

# Overall findings

- People emphasised how positive the experience had been. Mainly due to the environment and caring attitude of the staff
- People told us about how convenient the location is, especially when driving
- People felt staff were organized and appointments were on time
- People were impressed with how quickly they got their appointment after referral



I would come here next time if given a choice.  
It was wonderful that the appointment was on time.



The staff were very kind. There was no waiting around.  
I cannot fault this service



# Overall findings – patient experience

- 18 people said getting their tests done quickly was top priority
- Most people were not given a choice of appointment time because they accepted the first appointment time offered to them and did not need further options
- Most people were happy with the location. Two people told us they would have preferred to visit the acute hospital as it was closer to home
- People with different mobility or sensory needs felt they were catered for
- People told us the environment at the Centre was calm and relaxed
- Most people were happy with the information they received ahead of their appointment

# Overall findings: patient experience



- People were impressed with the speed of getting an appointment
- 14 people had their appointment within a week of the referral. 11 people waited between 1 and 4 weeks
- 2 people had waited 3 months for their appointment



Doctor rang me and asked if I could get here within the hour as there was an appointment



I spoke to the GP on Friday and we were offered an appointment on the same day. That was too quick and I couldn't organise things that quickly. So we took the next appointment which was today





# Patient experience



Thought it would be like the hospital but it's much less rushed and noisy.



This place is lovely. The waiting room is relaxed and the staff are all lovely.



# Overall findings – accessibility

- There is clear signage at reception about a hearing loop
- Fire alarms use lights as well as sounds
- There is a dedicated quiet space if needed by people with autism or dementia
- Interpretation – we did not speak to anyone who needed translation or interpreter services
- Several people told us they were hard of hearing and staff had taken time to make sure they had heard what was said
- We felt that higher chairs could be provided for people with certain mobility issues
- Almost all the people we spoke to had been asked if they had any communication needs

# Overall findings: accessibility



- Wheelchairs are available for people with mobility needs
- The calm environment is helpful to people with sensory needs
- People told us they were not rushed and this helped them to feel more relaxed

 The receptionists were so welcoming - they took the stress out of the appointment. This meant my husband also felt reassured and more relaxed. 

# Overall findings: accessibility



- Access to the building is flat and level
- People felt their communication needs were met
- Staff had checked with people that they understood what would happen next



The disabled spaces have enough room to get the wheelchair out of the car



I'm used to explaining about my wife's communication needs. I do everything for her, sort out appointments, etc. Staff were lovely, the way they treated her and spoke to her.



# Overall findings – travel

- Two bus routes can be used from Taunton town centre. This is approximately an 8 minute ride. The buses operate Monday to Saturday between 0700 and 2200
- The bus stop is a few minutes walk away
- There is plenty of on site parking and it is free of charge
- The car park is exclusively for users of the Diagnostic Centre and is directly adjacent to it
- The car park is on a level with the building
- There are several spacious disabled parking spaces close to the entrance with no steps or kerbs to navigate

# Issues and comments about travel

- Some people living in rural areas are not served well by regular bus routes or by proximity to a train station. They are dependent on family or friends for a lift
- Not everyone received directions beforehand
- A few would prefer closer or more convenient locations

I needed to be driven here. If I came by bus I would have needed to take two buses and walk from the bus stop. That would have taken me about two hours so would not have been easy.

Easy to get here. Information about where the centre is and how to get here was sent with my appointment letter.

# Overall findings: travel



- 29 people arrived by car, 2 walked and 1 arrived by bus
- People liked that they didn't have to pay for parking
- Disabled spaces have plenty of room for wheelchair access and there are adequate numbers of spaces
- For 28 people travel time to the centre was less than 30 minutes



Very convenient. I come from Chard and this place is the right side of Taunton, which means I don't have to drive across Taunton like I would for Musgrove hospital



# Our recommendations

- People spoke highly of the Centre and hoped they could have any future appointments there
- The Centre could consider acquiring some higher level chairs in the waiting room for people with mobility issues
- Ensure that people receive clear information about travelling in advance of their appointment



# What next

- Healthwatch England's report is here [Briefing \(healthwatch.co.uk\)](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk)
- Healthwatch England will make recommendations to NHS England
- Healthwatch Somerset will share this report with NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust
- Healthwatch Somerset will publish the report on their website

# Acknowledgements

**Healthwatch Somerset would like to thank the manager and staff for welcoming and enabling us to carry out these visits.**

**Thanks go to the patients and their families who spoke so openly with us about their experience of using the Diagnostic Centre.**

# For more information

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