



Enter & View Report

The Charnwood Practice

January 2025

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Report details

Details of Visit	
Service Address	1 Spinney Hill Road, Leicester LE5 3GH
Service Provider	The Charnwood Practice (NHS)
Date and Time	10am, Thursday 23rd January 2025
Authorised Representatives undertaking the visit	Howard Marshall Kim Marshal-Nichols Riyaadh Mussa (Staff)

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.

All comments included in this report are written verbatim to capture the tone and authenticity of the experience, therefore, no editing of comments has taken place. This report is not representative of the experience of all service users.

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 The Charnwood Practice.
- 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 the 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 **243** responses.

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

Summary of the findings

Summary

- Located in Merlyn Vaz Health Centre, the practice serves 8,000 patients.
- Facilities include nine clinical rooms and a large administration office.
- Space constraints due to additional staff (Mental Health Facilitator, Midwife, PCN staff), though shared rooms are available.
- Clear signage inside and outside the building.
- Main waiting area spacious, with additional smaller waiting areas.
- GPs use video screens to call in patients; nurses call them in person.
- Cloud-based telephone system with queuing, though some patients abandon calls.
- Multiple booking options: online, in-person, phone (ring-back option), or email.
- Appointments available up to 8 weeks in advance; emergency triaging done by GPs.
- Additional clinical staff include a Midwife, Paramedic Practitioner, Physician Associate. First Contact Physiotherapist and Mental Health Practitioner
- Weekly care home rounds for Hayes Park and Evington Grange.
- Patients with additional needs receive individual assessments and have access to quiet-hour appointments.
- Saturday clinic available at Primary care Network Main Site Spinney Hill Medical Centre.

243 patients responded to the survey

- Many patients praised the staff for being friendly, helpful and professional.
- Some patients appreciated the level of care provided and the support from doctors and nurses.

- 164 patients (80%) of patients said that it is 'very easy' or 'easy' to get through to the practice on the telephone.
- Comments were made on the prescription service, patients were having to travel down to the practice for repeat prescriptions, while some patients commented on missed items.
- 191 patients (92%) of patients were 'happy' with who they had seen at the time of their appointment.
- 131 patients (76%) of patients were 'completely satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their appointments.
- 186 patients (90%) patients said they were 'completely satisfied' or 'slightly satisfied' with the reception service.
- 183 patients (89%) patients said they were 'completely satisfied' or 'slightly satisfied' with the quality of medical care and treatment at the practice.

Results of Visit

The Practice

The Charnwood Practice is situated within the Merlyn Vaz Health Centre and serves 8,000 patients. The facility includes nine clinical rooms and a large administration office.

The reception area and all clinical rooms are located on the ground floor, with external access provided via low-level ramps for improved accessibility.

Parking is available in a large shared car park, which includes disabled spaces. However, as the car park is shared with two other GP practices and the Urgent Care Centre, finding a parking space—particularly a disabled one—can be challenging during peak times.

The internal décor is bright and clean, creating a welcoming environment.

During our visit, we met with the Operations Manager, Primary Care Network (PCN) Administrator and Patient Participation Group (PPG) Chair and 2 PPG members.

Space constraints were highlighted as a challenge due to additional staff, including a Mental Health Facilitator, Midwife and attached PCN staff. While these professionals require dedicated space, they can borrow rooms as part of the PCN arrangement.

Cleaning services are managed by external contractors.

The practice has cleaning checklists in clinic rooms, and administration offices that staff sign after each shift. The infection Control Lead conducts regular audits

Any issues are reported to the contractor by the Practice Management team.

Reception and waiting areas

There is clear signage both outside and inside the building to help direct patients.

The main waiting area is spacious and located directly opposite the reception desk, with smaller waiting areas situated along the corridor leading to the nursing consulting rooms. Most GPs use video call screens to call their patients, while nurses come into the waiting area and collect patients.

There are plenty of good-quality chairs, though none have armrests. However, near the building entrance, a few bariatric chairs with armrests are available. Patients who need these can inform reception staff, who will assist in collecting them when called.

Hand sanitisers are available throughout the practice. There is a wide selection of reading materials, displayed on multiple notice boards and tables, which are up to date and easy to read.

During our visit there was low-level background music playing continuously, as requested by the PPG.

There is no designated children's play area.



There are leaflets detailing the Complaints Procedure available on the reception counter, while the Carers' Charter and Data Privacy leaflets can be requested from reception.

There are two video screens in both waiting areas which displays health messages for patients.

Appointments

The telephone system is cloud-based and includes a queuing system. However, we were informed that some patients abandon calls after a short wait, and the practice is working on ways to reduce this issue.

Patients can book appointments online, in person, by telephone (with a ring-back option), or via email

Appointments can be booked up to 8 weeks in advance for some nurses appointments and invitation-based appointments can be scheduled up to 6 weeks in advance. Patients also have the option to use the 'Pharmacy First' service.

For emergency appointments, patients provide a brief description of their issue to the receptionist. A GP then triages the case based on the provided details and calls the patient back.

Additional clinical staff, including a Paramedic Practitioner and a Physician Associate, First Contact Physiotherapist and Mental Health Practitioner are available, along with the Pharmacy First service.

Patients can cancel appointments via telephone, Accurx, or email. Sick notes are processed through Accurx. Patients or admin staff fill out a form, which, if approved, is sent directly to the patient.



A Primary Care Network (PCN) Pharmacist conducts medication reviews. The NHS App and SystmOne are also used for managing prescriptions. Once a GP authorises the prescription, it is electronically sent to the patient's pharmacy of choice.

For home visits, a GP assesses each patient's request, and visits are typically carried out by the on call GP on the day and if clinically safe will also refer to Home visiting team

Weekly Care Home ward rounds and visits are conducted by the Physician Associates, covering two care homes: Hayes Park and Evington Grange. All test results are sent to a GP—patients are only informed if results are abnormal or if they specifically request them. Patients can also access their results via the NHS App.

Patients with additional needs are assessed individually, ensuring their needs are met for both practice visits and home visits. A clinician conducts evaluations, and if a patient needs to visit the practice, they are invited during quieter hours. Additionally, a Saturday clinic and evening clinics are available at main PCN site, Spinney

The practice is currently applying for an award for Learning Disabilities Friendly Practice Award

When a patient calls, the receptionist collects their details, and will determine whether the patient needs to see a GP, nurse, physiotherapist, or another professional and book appropriate appointment. Patients also have the option to request a specific doctor or specify a preference for a male or female clinician.

Accessibility

A low-level ramp provides access to the main entrance. All publicly accessible rooms, including reception, are located on the ground floor and are clearly signposted.

The toilets are equipped with emergency pull cords and a hearing loop system is available.

While there is no Braille signage currently, the practice has expressed interest in exploring this option.

Additional facilities include a well-equipped baby feeding room and quiet rooms that can be used for private and confidential conversations.

Information available to patients

Several notice boards were displaying a wide range of health-related information, along with takeaway leaflets for patients. These included posters about upcoming discussions, a Care Quality Commission (CQC) report and a dedicated carers' information board.

A clear poster displays the practice's opening times, along with additional information about out-of-hours services. There is also clear signage informing patients that they can request a chaperone.



Staffing

The practice is staffed by an Operations Manager, two GP Partners, two Salaried GPs, one regular locum GP and have regular locums that are called upon when needed. The clinical team includes two Nurse Leads, one Practice Nurses, a Paramedic Practitioner and a Health Care Assistant. There is also a team of 12 admin staff, including one Team Leader, as well as four PCN Pharmacists and two Pharmacy Technicians. The practice is supported by a Community Midwife and two Health Visitors.

In addition, the practice is supported by attached PCN staff, which include four Physician Associates, one Mental Health Practitioners, two First Contact Physiotherapists, one Social Prescriber and one Mental Health Facilitator.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The PPG has 6 active members who meet every 3 months on a Saturday morning. A GP, Nurse and the Operations Manager usually attend. We met the PPG Chair along with 2 members who came into the practice to meet the Healthwatch team.

Additional Information

The Practice Manager says they have good teamwork with both practice and PCN colleagues.

The PCN Administrator and practice staff promote the NHS app and runs a clinic every Thursday on this.

When asked about biggest challenge, the practice manager expressed a wish for more hours in the day as time is the biggest challenge.

Patient feedback

A survey was completed on the visit, where we asked if patients would like to take part in the survey, and we received **243** responses. 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

We recommend that The Charnwood Practice:

1	Consider all the comments recorded from patients and what the implications are for the operation of the practice.
2	Consider including chairs with arm rests in the waiting areas.
3	Explore the possibility of designating additional parking spaces specifically for disabled patients.
4	Look at reviewing the prescription service for patients based on the comments.

Service provider response

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

We would like to thank Healthwatch for the recent Enter and View visit and providing your report outlining your observations and recommendations.

We are committed to continuous improvement and welcome feedback as a means of enhancing our services. As such, the practice acknowledges the feedback and recommendations and are working with our practice team to ensure we continue to meet the needs and expectations of our patients.

We acknowledge the points raised and are already taking steps to address them.

Our Response and Planned Actions:

1) Chairs with Armrests not available in practice waiting area

We have chairs with arms in the main reception that patients can use as required. We have since ordered two additional chairs with arms for the practice waiting area.

2) Booking Appointments - limitations on booking appointments

The practice has recently implemented an online bookings system called Rapid Health allowing patients over 16 years to self-book appointments and select clinician, appointment date, time and preference for telephone or face to face consultation.

3) Prescription Services - difficulties requesting prescriptions

Patients can now request repeat medication and ask prescription questions using the Rapid Health system. Patients can also access the NHS App, Accurx and The Charnwood Practice website to request

repeat medication.

Practice administrators are also working with the pharmacists and GPs to set up more patients on electronic repeat dispensing. The clinician assesses patients' circumstances and clinical needs and authorises an agreed number of electronic repeat prescriptions. This will reduce the occasions patients need to contact the surgery to request their medication

Next Steps

We are committed to working with Healthwatch and Patient Participation Group (PPG) and continuing to monitor improvements through regular feedback.

We thank all patients who contributed to the Healthwatch survey. If you have any further feedback or would like to join our Patient Participation Group please contact the practice directly or via our website.

Distribution

The report is for distribution to the following:

- The Charnwood Practice
- LLR Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Leicester City Council (LCC)
- NHS England (Leicestershire and Lincolnshire) Local Area Team
- Healthwatch England and the local Healthwatch Network
- Published on www.healthwatchll.com

Appendix 1: Survey Findings

243 Patients

Q1. When did you last visit your GP practice?

204 (85%) - In the last 2 years

36 (15%) - Over 2 years ago

3 - Unanswered

Q2. How did you book your last appointment? (Patients chose more than one choice)

117 (86%) - Telephone

18 (8%) - Online Booking Services

19 (9%) - In Person

8 (4%) - Other (please specify): Telephone consultation, online contact, received text from practice for vaccination, nursing home.

Unanswered - 37

Q3. How easy is it to get through to your surgery on the telephone to make an appointment?

75 (37%) - Very Easy

89 (43%) - Easy

22 (11%) - Difficult

12 (6%) - Very Difficult

7 (3%) - Not sure

38 - Unanswered

Q4. When you last contacted the GP Practice, how long did it take you to get through on the telephone?

12 (6%) - Less than 1 minute

77 (37%) - 1-5 minutes

64 (31%) - 6-10 minutes

34 (17%) - 11-15 minutes

17 (8%) - 15- 60 minutes

1 (1%) - Over an hour

38 - Unanswered

Q5. Are you happy with who you have seen at the time of your appointment?

191 (92%) – Yes

16 (8%) – No

36 – Unanswered

Q6. In the last 2 years have you had a telephone or online consultation with a practitioner?

171 (83%) – Yes

36 (17%) – No

36 – Unanswered

Q8. How satisfied were you with the appointment?

81 (47%) – Completely Satisfied

50 (29%) – Very Satisfied

28 (16%) – Neutral

6 (4%) – Slightly satisfied

6 (4%) – Not at all satisfied

72 – Unanswered

Q9. In the last 2 years have you had to book an urgent appointment?

108 (52%) – Yes

98 (48%) – No

37 – Unanswered

Q10. Were you able to see a doctor or clinician on the same day for urgent appointments?

89 (86%) – Yes

15 (14%) – No

139 – Unanswered

Q11. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the practice opening hours?

92 (45%) – Completely Satisfied

66 (32%) – Very Satisfied

32 (16%) – Neutral

9 (4%) – Slightly satisfied

7 (3%) – Not at all satisfied

37 – Unanswered

Q12. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the reception service?

128 (62%) – Completely Satisfied

58 (28%) – Slightly Satisfied

13 (6%) – Slightly Dissatisfied

7 (4%) – Completely Dissatisfied

37 – Unanswered

Q14. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the prescription service?

128 (62%) – Completely Satisfied

47 (23%) – Slightly Satisfied

14 (7%) – Slightly Dissatisfied

10 (5%) – Completely Dissatisfied

7 (3%) – Not used it

37 – Unanswered

Q15. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of medical care and treatment at this surgery?

137 (67%) – Completely Satisfied

46 (22%) – Slightly Satisfied

13 (6%) – Slightly Dissatisfied

10 (5%) – Completely Dissatisfied

37 – Unanswered

People were asked for any other comments including what they like and dislike the most about the GP practice.

Like:

“This is a very good practice. I am treated quickly and efficiently without having to state my long condition to every doctor I see which is nice. They are always helpful and caring.”

“Can see or speak to a doctor on the day.”

“This is the only GP in the area I would describe as being good. I moved my grandparents' registration to this GP and anytime they have needed an appointment, I have been able to speak to somebody on the phone within 30 minutes and get same-day appointments if I call between 8am and 10am depending on appointment availability. Where possible, they have allocated us same-day cancelled appointments and telephone appointments to determine if we need to visit for face-to-face appointment. Any of my family members registered here have always received good medical advice and appropriate care when needed. The receptionists have always been kind and

helpful. The level of service provided by this practice is unmatched, and other GPs in the area, even ones in the same building, can learn a lot from this GP."

"I have just changed my surgery I am very satisfied with Charnwood is the GP explains to me my health and what is the best step that allows me to make a decision My GP is very good."

"All the doctors are brilliant including receptionist, nursing team, back office staff."

"I like because they do care about us."

"Friendly and approachable, GPs available to see patients, patients are not just handed over to nurse practitioners like other practices (no disrespect to nurse practitioners but a patient would rather see a doctor)."

"Very satisfied with centre no problem with getting in. Receptionist knowledgeable and have always helped or put me through to someone who knows. These are my personal views."

"I use the online service, I use the text reply service and I use the on screen check in. I am not sure if I am understood clearly by the receptionist when I try to explain something or need to spell medications. I like that the practice keeps track of all my check ups and follow ups such as diabetic check, flu jabs etc. and therefore contact me to make appointments. Overall, I would recommend the Charnwood practice to others. Thank you for looking after me."

"They saved my life, I am working with family, didn't know my BP (blood pressure) was so high, they cared for me, available to help guide and support me. My children will see me for years to come. Can't thank the staff and doctors enough at the surgery. I even had Saturday appointment at the PCN and it was it was integrated with the local community pharmacy. Amazing service."

"I like the same day appointment system with the GP and Saturday appointment."

"The online appointment system is very easy to use and a response is given the next day or within 2 days."

Dislike:

"The fact that prescription requests have to be made in person is ridiculous. The only prescription I have is for my contraceptive pill and I have to drive to the surgery, attempt to park (which is always difficult) and request my prescription. On my last 3 attempts I have been in the surgery for less than 30 seconds. It is a waste of time for something that could easily be done over the phone.

I also find the appointment waiting times frustrating. Each time I have needed an appointment,

which is always a blood pressure check for my contraceptive pill, the waiting time is 2-3 weeks – but each time I have been in the surgery there has been NOBODY in either waiting room.”

“Dislike receptionists, many mistakes made with prescriptions or prescriptions not sent out on request and other reasons that are personal.”

“The dislikes: my grandmother once had a problem with her prescription. The GP and pharmacy kept telling us it wasn't their fault. It took a lot of back and forth from our end to resolve it, but the GP receptionist made sure to fix the problem. But this was an exception and we never had the same issue again.”

“The only thing I don't like with the prescription service, I don't always get my full prescription.”

“Never can get in person appointments. Doctor does not like to prescribe anything – always says to buy over the counter things AFTER you have already told doctor they did not work. Appointments are always rushed. Doctor doesn't even see you unless you are an emergency and palms you off to the other doctor who does nothing at all to help.”

“It would be nice to have face to face appointments immediately rather than to have to wait for a telephone appointment and then be called in. Generally do manage to get GP appointments within a week and that is something many practices are struggling to do.”

“The appointments system is not that great especially booking for an emergency appointment. Even on emergency or urgent, Charnwood Practice is not great compared to my other family's GP.”
“It can at times take time to get an appointment within a week.”

“It's just getting through to who you need I don't mind telephone appointments but it is nice to see the doctor if it's urgent.”

“I dislike seeing a different practitioner most times as there is a loss of continuity and patient familiarity.”

“I used to phone before for my repeat medicine on the phone and it was accepted nowadays I have to go and see personally but the receptionist then they will accept me why is that this been changed over the last two years roughly because I still like that phone service then I could go on my one visit to collect the medicine so that should be brought back on the phone repeat preparation please look into it because I think so many customer will like this system again because when you're working you cannot go for twice this way I think so many patients and customer will agree with me thank you and send me the feedback please.”

"My 5 year old son recently had a reaction where his finger started swelling and became scared I was afraid as I had never come across anything as such. I contacted the doctor. Asked to send pic. I sent it out immediately only which was in the morning. Only for doctor to call back at 5pm by then his swelling in the finger had subsided. So case close there. Next morning again swelling in hands and feet. Being a Saturday at to call 111 they refer me to a pharmacy close by. Who did not even look at my son and suggested to take piriton. First off I was waiting all day concerned to hear from GP. And secondly the attention given at pharmacy would be rated 0."

"Sometimes when you contact to see a doctor, and you get a telephone appointment, conversation with the doctor sometimes does not always give an accurate consultation."

"Getting appointments is difficult, and impossible to book an appointment in advance."

"Not seen my own doctor since Covid. Tried many times to get an appointment with my own doctor but never got the chance to see her. I always get to see a locum, Trainee do or another practitioner. Also don't like how you always have to see a Diabetic nurse and never a doctor."

"Dislike that appointments are changed without informing patients. Patients are often treated as if their time doesn't matter & that staff time is the most importance, even if this affects Patients health or safety."



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