

Skelmersdale NHS Walk-in Centre

Enter and View Report

17th June 2025
10am-12pm



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:

Skelmersdale NHS Walk-in Centre

Concourse Shopping Centre

Skelmersdale

WN8 6LT

Registered Manager:

Dr Victoria Jeffrey (GP, Head of Urgent Care)

Paul Monteith (Governance lead)

Carmen Smith (Clinical Nurse Manager)

Maureen Riley (Service Manager and registered CQC Manager)

Date and Time of our Visit:

Tuesday 17th June 2025

10am – 12pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Steve Walmsley (Engagement Team Leader)

Ann Christopher (Healthwatch Volunteer)

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

Skelmersdale NHS Walk-in Centre is located in The Concourse Shopping Centre in the middle of Skelmersdale. It provides services to patients with minor injuries and illnesses for residents of Skelmersdale and nearby villages in West Lancashire.

The service is delivered by the HCRG group.

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.

Glossary of terms

HCRG

HCRG care group, a private provider of community health and social care services in the UK.

What did we do?

Healthwatch Lancashire Enter and View Representatives made an announced visit to Skelmersdale Walk in Centre and received feedback from:



Pre-visit questionnaire

Prior to the visit, the management at Skelmersdale NHS Walk-in Centre was provided a pre-visit questionnaire to complete. The aim of this questionnaire is to gather information about the patient population, services offered and how the practice manage appointments for patients. Information from this questionnaire is included in the summary below.

One to one discussions with patients and their relatives

Healthwatch spoke with patients about their experiences including accessing the service, how they felt about the care and treatment delivered by the staff at the centre.

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 centre.

Observations

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

Summary

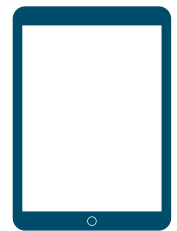
Local Demographic



The centre is mainly used by residents of the Skelmersdale area, however it was explained that residents of West Lancashire also make use of this service. A discussion with the Centre Manager highlighted that patients would sometimes attend the centre before making the journey to the local accident and emergency at Ormskirk Hospital as it can be more convenient for them to attend the walk-in and then be transferred to other services if required.

Attending the centre

Patients can self-refer to the service and attend the walk-in centre or they can be referred by the 111 service or their GP. Some community based appointments, such as podiatry and cardiac nursing, are also available at the centre which are delivered by the HCRG group. Patients can attend pre-booked appointments at the centre for these services.



Visit Summary

Healthwatch Lancashire representatives carried out a planned visit to the Skelmersdale walk-in centre on the 17th June 2025 and spoke with patients and staff about their experiences using and working at the centre. Feedback was mostly positive about the care with patients complimenting the friendliness of the staff and the manner in which they were treated whilst using the service.

Patients gave a mixed response in terms of their experiences of waiting times both historically and at the time of the visit. Some comments concerned information that was provided when they were being referred by the 111 phone line where their expectations had been unintentionally raised by 111 staff being unaware of the real time status of waiting times at the centre.

Patients felt that the service being located in the Concourse shopping centre was a real positive because it meant that care was directly accessible in the local area and meant that, in most cases, they would not need to make the journey to Ormskirk or Southport to be seen by clinicians.

Staff felt that their experiences working at the centre were positive, although some concerns were raised about the staffing levels during busier periods. There was feedback provided by members of staff about the triage process being a strength at the centre as it meant patients were seen quickly and were allocated to the right clinician for their treatment needs.

Enter and View observations

Location and External Environment

Skelmersdale NHS Walk-in Centre is situated within the Concourse shopping centre in the middle of Skelmersdale. The centre has a large part covered multi-storey car parking area with approximately 700 spaces for shoppers and patients to use.

The centre is also a transport hub for the local area with the bus station being co-located within.

There are seven dedicated disabled parking spaces outside the front of the walk-in centre. At the time of the visit there was capacity in the car park for patients to attend the service. The car park has level access to the centre with drop-kerbs being available for wheelchair users and people using mobility aids to access the centre. An ambulance bay is also in place for transfers to other medical settings.



Out of hours access is catered for by a call system located outside of the centre which has a sign informing patients to press the bell to access. However, this is not clear, as the sign explaining this is located around the side of the window from the call bell. It is suggested that this be re-sited to make it clearer to patients. (Recommendation 1)



Internal Environment and Waiting Area



The waiting area is spacious with seating arranged around the outside of the waiting area. Patients can register upon entry to the centre at the reception desk which is clearly identifiable. At the time of the visit, patients were invited to register in a booth at the end of the reception desk. It was not clearly signposted that this was where to register, but a member of staff explained that they directed patients to use this booth as it offered a measure of privacy when discussing personal information with patients. It was felt that adding some signage to help patients identify where to sign in would help patients entering the centre. Signage in the clinical areas is clear and helps direct patients to where they need to go. (Recommendation 1)

The waiting area was clean and free from clutter with all chairs appearing in a good state or repair. The chairs were all a consistent size and shape, which may not suit all patients' needs. (Recommendation 2). Some Dementia friendly features were observed, such as matt flooring and contrasting handrails, there was no means of identifying day date and time, so it is recommended that a dementia friendly clock is acquired for the centre. (Recommendation 3)



Noticeboards contained information about Pharmacy First, Self-care and other services available in the local area. It was noted that there were materials available to patients in several different languages around the waiting area. Information on noticeboards is up to date, however there were some boards that looked in need of some attention as there was damage on them from where people have been leaning on them.



There are feedback forms available for patients to fill in to share their experiences with the service however, there is nowhere to put them in a confidential manner. (Recommendation 4)

Patient Interactions



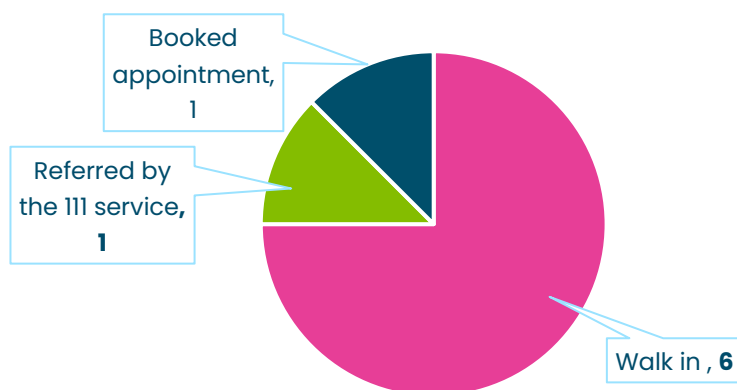
Staff were observed to be polite and courteous with patients and ensured that patients were directed to the correct area of the reception desk, as they were using the section with the privacy screen. Some patients were visibly confused by this. However, staff explained the use of the screen to patients and gave reassurances to them so they knew the measure was in place to protect their privacy. (Recommendation 1). Staff on the reception desk also booked patients in for the community services and private dental service on offer in the centre. These were handled in the same manner as patients walking into the centre

Patients were called to their appointments by a member of staff who would greet them and direct them to the treatment room. Patients reported that the care they received from staff at the centre was excellent.

Patient feedback

Healthwatch representatives spoke with eight patients during the visit.

Attending the service



Tell us about your experience so far

The six patients that Healthwatch Lancashire representatives spoke with commented on how quickly they were triaged upon their arrival to the centre.

“It never takes a long time really, they see you quite quickly to triage you.”

Four patients commented that they felt the staff were polite and treated them with care, especially when they were attending with urgent care concerns.

“They told us how long we would need to wait to be seen by the nurse.”

What works well at this centre?

One patient, who lives in Skelmersdale, commented that it was more convenient for them to attend the service, in the Concourse Shopping Centre, than it was to travel to the Urgent Treatment Centres at Ormskirk or Southport.

“It’s only two minutes down the road which is easier than going to Ormskirk.”

“I struggle travelling to the centre at Ormskirk because I use the buses. This is only 2 minutes down the road.”

One patient explained that they had previously attended the centre and been referred on to the hospital services at Southport for more treatment. They were grateful that staff made sure they gave clear information about why they were being transferred and helped make appropriate arrangements to travel to the hospital.



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

Three patients commented that they weren't sure about the signing in process upon entry to the centre. They explained that they appreciated that they needed to sign in at the booth, to give them privacy, but there was nothing to direct them to that part of the reception.

“Its really good they give us privacy but we weren't sure where to go.”

One patient felt that they would benefit from clearer information about waiting times at the centre, particularly during busier periods. They described a prior visit where the service was working at high capacity.

“We went two months ago and it was pretty busy, there was a two or three hour wait which we understood, but we weren't clear on how long we would need to wait. The sign told us to expect two hours.”

They felt that someone giving an update on waiting times would make the experience better in future visits.

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

All patients described the communication and information provided to them at the centre as being excellent when it came to treatments and care required for different conditions.

“they told me that I would need to go to Southport for further investigations. They told me what to expect and that what they were investigating needed a scan which they couldn't do here. ”

The patient commented that, whilst they weren't happy they needed to go to Southport, they felt reassured that they were informed of the reasons as to why

they needed to go. The staff helped them arrange a taxi to travel between the services as they did not have access to their own transportation.

Any other comments

One patient raised a concern about how the 111 service conveyed information about waiting times to be seen at the walk-in centre as they gave the impression that they would be seen quickly when this was not the case. (Recommendation 5 & 6)

“They’re a waste of time on the 111 phone. They said I would need to go to the urgent care centre at Skem and they told me there wouldn’t be much of a wait. When I got there the waiting time was 2 hours. Now I don’t mind because we needed seeing but it was ridiculous.”

Staff feedback

Healthwatch representatives spoke with four members of staff during the visit

How do you manage patient demand?

All four members of staff felt that the triage process for patients was an element that they were proud of in order to treat patients by priority.

“It never takes a long time to get people through the triage.”

One member of staff mentioned that changes in patient numbers and demand was sometimes a factor in how they worked through the daily lists. They felt that the shift patterns were fair and made sure that the busier times was equally shared amongst team members.



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

Two members of staff complimented the training and development work that had been put into the triage process at the centre.

“The triage process helps us ensure that people are seen by the right person. Having this function helps manage expectations and allocate the right clinician to the patient.”

One member of staff explained that they had listened to feedback from patients around maintaining their confidentiality, when checking in to the service.

“Giving patients the ability to talk about their symptoms in the booth helps them keep things confidential. I usually just call them round when they come in and they like that they can tell me things in relative privacy.”

What measures are there in place for people with disabilities such as people with physical impairments or who are Deaf?

Staff at the centre explained that they had made sure their leaflets and other information was available in multiple formats. Discussions with the staff on the reception desk showed that there were processes in place to provide support for patients that were Deaf, although they acknowledged that this was a smaller number of patients that used the centre.

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

Two members of staff commented that they had experienced period of high patient demand and felt that the staffing levels did not necessarily correlate with the increased needs of the patients who were using the service.

“We have had some shifts were it was really busy and there was no one there to support us. This is made worse when there is staff sickness.”

It was felt that the shift system works but there weren't always clear contingencies on particularly days such as Mondays when patients needed support after a weekend. (Recommendation 7)

One member of staff described some issues that they had experienced with patients using the dental services co-located within the centre. (Recommendation 8)

“I've had it where patients appear to have been skipped in the queue because someone has come in after them, for the dentist and they feel like that person has taken their turn. It would help if there was something that told patients about this.”

Two members of staff reflected comments from some patients in regards to referrals from the 111 service where patients' expectations had unintentionally been raised about how long they would expect to wait to be seen at the centre. It was felt that call handlers at the 111 service didn't have real-time information about how long the expected wait times were at the centre. (Recommendation 5 & 6)

Recommendations

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

1. Improve the signage at the point of entry of the centre so that patients are clear about where they need to check in.
2. Invest in a range of chairs to cater for a range of patient needs, including different size of chairs, handrails etc. (see appendix)
3. Carry out a review of dementia friendly features in the centre and look to install a dementia friendly clock that displays the day, date and time.
4. Install a confidential patient feedback collection box for friends and family tests along with patient comments.
5. Work with the 111 service to develop real-time updates on waiting times at urgent treatment centres across West Lancashire.
6. Ensure that patients who have been referred into the centre through 111 are aware that waiting times may not be the same as mentioned on the calls.
7. Work with staff to develop more effective rostering plans to cover for known busier periods.
8. Add information to noticeboards to inform patients about dental service appointments so that patients are aware their appointment slot has not been taken/lost.

Provider response

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe	Comments
Look at the staffing rotas and ensure staff are mixed from time to time in order to provide opportunities for shadowing to help staff learn from each other.	All clinical and administration staff work across both the Ormskirk UTC and SWIC sites. Each shift is rostered according to skill mix and availability. This means that staff mixing occurs daily. Skill mix considerations include practitioners that cover injuries, paediatrics and senior staff.	Continual	Staff also complete peer reviews to enable learning. Discussion in full team meeting in relation to staff feed back to explain processes and request that specific issue/oversight is brought to our attention.
Invest in a range of chairs to cater for a range of patient needs, including different size of chairs, handrails etc. (see appendix)	This has been highlighted to NHSPS and they are reviewing the requirement for the waiting room as this is a shared space.	1 month	
Carry out a review of dementia friendly features in the centre and look to install a dementia friendly clock that displays the day, date and time.	Clock now in place.	1 month	
Install a confidential patient feedback collection box for friends and family tests along with	This is now in place and new boxes ordered through procurement	1 month	

patient comments.			
Work with the 111 service to develop real-time updates on waiting times at urgent treatment centres across West Lancashire.	This will be on Shrewd and we have communication with Mersey and Cheshire ICB Centres and are work on access development with them. Escalation was on EMS until this was discontinued by the ICB earlier this year.	Awaiting the development by the ICB of SHREWD for the service	
Ensure that patients who have been referred into the centre through 111 are aware that waiting times may not be the same as mentioned on the calls.	We will ensure that the wait time signage is more clear and is regularly updated. 111 do not usually make comment on wait times. Raised with NWAS/111 service leads.	1month	
Work with staff to develop more effective rostering plans to cover for known busier periods.	Activity is reviewed on daily basis by leadership team and changes to the staffing numbers are made regularly. It is acknowledged that some days are unexpectedly busy due to the nature of the service, there are escalation plans in place for this and on site or on call management support for this.		Raised in team meetings

Add information to noticeboards to inform patients about dental service appointments so that patients are aware their appointment slot has not been taken/lost.	There is a display board at Skelmersdale detailing the different services running from the centre. We will ensure that it specifically states that patients for other services have booked appointments and may be taken in sooner.	1 month	
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Any other comments

The themes of feedback are similar to those for our FFT feedback. We have made some changes in line with previous feedback but due to the nature of the visit this feedback is more specific and demonstrates there are further changes for us to make and so this has been a very useful report.

In the main report one recommendation is regarding the outside buzzer/bell. This has been highlighted to the Concourse management team and NHSPS as this is a landlord solution and has previously been raised with them.

Navigating patients around the Urgent and Emergency care system is a focus nationally as well as locally within our ICB. There are nationally agreed public communications that signpost patients to UTCs and 111 for certain conditions and they are widely available on social media as well as television and radio. Within our services we will continue to give patient education regarding the services that are available to them within our local area.

Enter and view visits have been carried out at both Ormskirk Urgent Treatment Centre and Skelmersdale Walk in Centre. (<https://healthwatchlancashire.co.uk/enter-view/enter-view-reports/>) As staff at these services work at both sites there are some comments that were brought to Healthwatch Lancashire staff that cannot be directly used for one of the reports. There is one recommendation list specific to each service observed on the day. A separate list below highlights recommendations that have been developed on the back of feedback for both sites from members of staff.

Recommendations for Both sites

1. Look at the staffing rotas and ensure staff are mixed from time to time in order to provide opportunities for shadowing to help staff learn from each other.
2. Promote your services and what you provide to services including 111, primary services and local residents to ensure that patients are receiving the correct care and professionals know where to appropriately refer in to.
3. Ensure an open dialogue between other centres in order to help with capacity and support one another by signposting patients to centres with more availability.
4. Carry out a review of the IT systems to identify issues and how these could potentially be improved to help staff with efficiency.
5. Review the 'triage away' system to see how this is impacting staff and capacity.
6. Investigate ways of utilising additional members of staff to provide assistance at busier times.
7. Review any agency staff before bringing them back into the service, take feedback from staff members who have worked with them to ensure a smooth transition for both staff and patients.
8. Ensure a clear summary is sent out to staff who aren't able to attend staff meetings due to being on duty.

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe	Comments
Look at the staffing rotas and ensure staff are mixed from time to time in order to provide opportunities for shadowing to help staff learn from each other.	All clinical and administration staff work across both the Ormskirk UTC and SWIC sites. Each shift is rostered according to skill mix and availability. This means that staff mixing occurs daily. Skill mix considerations include	Ongoing	Staff also complete peer reviews to enable learning. Discussion in full team meeting in relation to staff feed back to explain processes and request that specific issue/oversight is brought to our attention.

	practitioners that cover injuries, paediatrics and senior staff.		
Promote your services and what you provide to services including 111, primary services and local residents to ensure that patients are receiving the correct care and professionals know where to appropriately refer in to.	This is on our DOS and Service finder. Heads of service regularly attends appropriate meetings with other organisations. Professionals do have access to our referral pathways. Patient safety is a high priority and as such we do see patients that require a lower level of care however the pathways in place are regularly reviewed.	Ongoing	Navigating patients around the Urgent and Emergency care system is a focus nationally as well as locally within our ICB. There are nationally agreed public communications that signpost patients to UTCs and 111 for certain conditions and they are widely available on social media as well as television and radio. Within our services we will continue to give patient education regarding the services that are available to them within our local area.
Ensure an open dialogue between other Urgent treatment centres in order to help with capacity and support one another by signposting patients to centres with more availability.	This will be on Shrewd and we have communication with Mersey and Cheshire ICB Centres and are work on access development with them	In progress	This piece of work is being worked on locally outside of our control.
Carry out a review of the IT systems to identify issues and how these could potentially be improved to help staff with efficiency.	This is ongoing we are reviewing NHS digital systems. Data analysis is regularly carried out to support this		We have been unfortunate to have been affected by 2 cyber attacks, both into different parts of our clinical systems over the past 3 years, there are processes in place for

			our service to continue to function, but we appreciate this has been frustrating for staff and it has been escalated appropriately.
Review the 'triage away' system to see how this is impacting staff and capacity. Investigate ways of utilising additional members of staff to provide assistance at busier times.	This is under review by the management team and staff members. Staff feedback is regularly requested. This is monitored daily there is an escalation pathway in place and shift co-ordinators have autonomy to move staff across sites as demand requires.		This has been a ongoing piece of work involving staff into the decision making process including workshops and pilots of different ways of working.
Review any agency staff before bringing them back into the service, take feedback from staff members who have worked with them to ensure a smooth transition for both staff and patients.	We only use agency staff when required, who have the correct skill mix and fully meet compliance. Peer reviews are carried on all staff including agency. We have not used any but a small cohort group for a period of time and have not had any feedback regarding specific agency staff.		Any agency staff that do not meet our standards are not give further shifts. We will discuss this in our team meeting and ask that any concerns are highlighted to leadership team- this can be done in confidence.

Ensure a clear summary is sent out to staff who aren't able to attend staff meetings due to being on duty.	The slides and minutes for the meeting are circulated to all staff by email following each meeting. They are also saved on the staff shared drive to allow access. All relevant updates are also added to the morning huddle folder for discussion and emailed to staff separately. This has been in place for several years. For all to review and respond. Updates are share via email and in the huddle file for handover. Staff have time to read their emails at the end of each day.		Discussed in team meeting and awaiting staff feedback
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Appendices

Guidance on waiting area seating:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/binaries/content/assets/website-assets/data-and-information/areas-of-interest/estate-and-facilities/place-2024/assessment-forms/place-2024-communal-areas.docx>



healthwatch

Lancashire

Healthwatch Lancashire
Leyland House
Lancashire Business Park
Centurion Way
Leyland
PR26 6TY

www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk
t: 01524 239100
e: info@healthwatchlancashire.co.uk
📱 @HW_Lancashire
📘 [Facebook.com/lancshealthwatch](https://www.facebook.com/lancshealthwatch)