



# Enter & View Report

Willows Medical Centre

November 2025

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# Report details

Details of Visit	
Service Address	Willows Medical Centre, 184 Coleman Road, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE5 4LJ
Service Provider	Willows Group LTD
Date and time	Tuesday 11th November 2025, 10am
Authorised Representatives undertaking the visit	Dulna Shahid (Staff) Riyaadh Mussa (Staff)

## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Leicester and 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 staff members who are trained Enter and View Authorised Representatives who carried out the visit on behalf of Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire.

# Purpose of the visit

- To gather patient views of the service provided at Willows Medical Centre.
- 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 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 **380** responses.

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

# Summary of the findings

## Summary

- Willows Medical Practice serves around 6,500 patients in a large, purpose-built building.
- The practice is clearly signposted with ground-floor access to reception, waiting area and consultation rooms.
- The reception and waiting area is small but adequate with blue hard chairs and the reception desk has an accessible lower section.
- A self-check-in machine is available, it has multilingual options.
- Patient information leaflets and noticeboards with health information. Some outdated posters noted, but current mental health leaflets available. The TV screens are not in use.
- Online and phone booking available; routine appointments 2–7 days ahead, urgent same-day appointments available. Admin requests (fit notes, letters) have dedicated slots.
- Home visits provided for patients unable to attend the practice.
- Appointment information on automatic doors; out-of-hours information not visible. We did not see practice opening hours.
- Medication reviews managed in-house by the pharmacist. Test results accessible via NHS App or Airmid App.

## 380 patients responded to the survey

- 120 (32%) of patients said that it took them 16-60 minutes to get through to the practice by telephone, and 30 patients (8%) have said they have used the telephone call back function.
- Comments were made about 'difficulty' with booking appointments and not being able to book appointments.  
277 (73%) of patients have said they were offered a same day appointment at the practice with a doctor.
- The last time a patient requested an urgent-same day appointment, 51 (19%) of patients said they were offered a same day appointment at the practice with a doctor, however 82 (30%) of patients said they were asked to call back later or the following day and (87) 32% were not offered an appointment or any of the alternatives listed.
- 159 patients (44%) said the telephone service to book appointments was 'poor'.
- 183 patients (51%) said face to face appointments was 'excellent' or 'good'.
- 102 patients (29%) said the reception service was 'excellent' or 'good'.
- Comments were made on staff being 'helpful'.
- 184 patients (52%) said the quality of medical care and treatment was 'excellent' or 'good'.

## Results of visit

### The Practice

Willows Medical practice has approximately 6500 patients. The practice is in a large purpose-built building. The practice is clearly signposted from the outside. Access to the entrance to the practice is via wide automatic double doors. On the day of our visit the automatic doors were stuck in one position and posters and notices on the door were difficult to see due to the doors being stuck. We were told engineers were coming out to get this resolved.

There is parking available with 1 disabled parking space.

The reception, waiting area and the six consultation rooms are all on the ground floor. We were told patients do not usually use the first floor unless they have a consultation. There are staff only rooms which are not accessible to patients. There is a lift to access the second floor. The internal décor of the practice is bright and clean with natural light coming in.

We could not locate any visible opening hours for the practice during our visit. Staff informed us that the opening hours are displayed on the automatic doors.

### Reception and waiting areas

The reception desk is of two heights and accessible, it has a lower section on the side. The waiting area is relatively small and consists of rows of blue, hard chairs with no armrests. There is ample seating available with adequate space around the reception area.

There is a self-check in machine with a poster encouraging patients to use it. Alternatively, people can sign in at reception. The self-check-in screens are multi-lingual, making them accessible to a diverse patient population. Arrows on the floor guide patients towards the reception desk, while also there are 'Join the flu vaccination' stickers on the flooring area. Next to the reception desk there is a repeat prescription drop off box.



In the waiting area, there is a desk with leaflets, change of address forms and repeat prescription forms. There are noticeboards around the waiting area, as well as posters around the reception desk.

There were two TV screens in the waiting area, although they were not in use. Hand sanitisers were available and there was no background music. A Friends and Family poster was also displayed.

We observed clinicians coming out to the waiting area to call patients in. We were informed that a room is available for confidential conversations.

During the visit, it was slightly cold in the waiting area because the automatic doors were stuck open, allowing a cold breeze to come in.

## Appointments

Patients can book appointments using the online booking system or by calling the practice. For urgent appointments, we were told that patients are advised to call on the day. Patients can book routine appointments 2–7 days in advance. Appointments can be cancelled either by calling the practice or online.

For issues related to admin requests—such as fit notes, sick notes, or medical letters—there are specific appointment slots allocated. The team can process and issue fit notes and other documents as needed.

We were told all care homes that are registered are managed at Willowbrook. Patients can request a home visit and a GP will go out to patients if a patient is unable to visit the practice.

Patients with additional needs are supported by the practice’s Learning Disabilities (LD) team, who are familiar with the patients and work across all sites. Each site has a Health Care Assistant (HCA) and the team collaborate closely to ensure appropriate care.

Medication reviews are managed by the in-house pharmacist, they also have an automated system.

Patients can access their test results online and are encouraged to use the NHS App or the Airmid App. Patients may also receive text messages with links to information, or with instructions to book an appointment with a GP if their results need to be discussed.

## Accessibility

There is a dedicated baby changing and feeding room, which can also be used as a prayer room. The practice has a male and female toilet that is accessible, equipped with an alarm cord and handrail. The facilities are clean and spacious.

We were told there is a hearing loop available and information in braille is available on request. We were told that, due to the diverse ethnic population attending the practice, there are staff members who speak additional languages. Interpreters are also arranged when a patient requires one. We were also informed that the practice is aiming to recruit GPs who speak other languages to support consultations.



## Information available to patients

Around the reception and waiting area there were multiple noticeboards with information available for patients. There is health related information displayed such as mental health support, managing referrals online, diabetes information etc. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) report is displayed. We did not see the complaints procedure displayed, however, we were told there is a policy and leaflet but it is currently being reviewed and will be displayed soon.

There is information about data privacy displayed with a QR code for patient access. There is information displayed on visiting local pharmacy if needing advice or treatment for minor injury or illness. There is an information poster for carers. There were outdated "Crisis Café" posters displayed; however, the practice did have up-to-date Mental Health Café leaflets available at reception and on the information desk in the waiting area.

Appointment information is displayed on the automatic doors however we did not see anything on out of hours information. Appointment information mentioned is about phone line opening times, online telephone consultations and routine appointments.



## Patient Participation Group (PPG)

We were told there are 40 staff members across the entire Willow Group site, and that they hold quarterly meetings. We were told PPG members have a lot of input on what the practices do.

We observed PPG posters displayed around the waiting area.

## Patient feedback

During our visit we spoke to one patient who shared their experience. *"Overall is it good, I stay here, since they joined with the other practices, it is easier to get appointments. Blood test and other tests is straight forward. I am connected with the NHS App; I can look up blood test results. One time I had to call and I was given a Saturday appointment for blood test."* The patient also spoke about their experience with the pharmacy: *"They have their own pharmacist. It has helped me a lot, they called me to explain about the new medication, I have a lot of confidence and support from pharmacist. I have medication reviews and they are great."*

## Biggest Difficulty/ Challenge

When asked about the biggest difficulties and challenges, staff explained that patient education is a significant issue. The practice experiences a lot of 'pushback' from patients who may not fully understand changes such as the 'Pharmacy First' initiative or the appointment system. Patients frequently attend the practice for conditions that could be self-managed or treated through the Pharmacy First service. Some patients also feel overwhelmed by the level of information provided and staff explained that they struggle to find the right balance between informing and overloading patients.

We were told that abuse towards staff has increased since the pandemic, to the extent that the police have had to attend on some occasions.

Funding was raised as a consistent and ongoing challenge. Staff expressed concern that there are insufficient resources to meet patient demand, affecting the practice's ability to operate at full capacity.

Delays in Smear Test Training – We were told only nurses with specific training can conduct smear tests. Staff told us that training waiting times are long, which limits the number of smear tests the practice can offer.

## 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 380 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 Willows Medical Centre:

1	Review the 380 responses and themed comments to prioritise improvements in phone access, appointment availability and reception service.
2	Display opening hours and out-of-hours options clearly inside the practice, on the website and via the TV screens.
3	Consider using the waiting-area TV screens for up-to-date health information, service changes (e.g., Pharmacy First) and queue/ triage advice.
4	Increase urgent/ same-day slots where feasible; when not, offer clear alternatives (such as Pharmacy First) and communicate the pathway consistently.
5	Work with the ICB and community partners to deliver short, topic-based workshops and multilingual materials (e.g. Pharmacy First, appointment system, NHS/ Airmid Apps, test results).
6	Regularly audit posters and leaflets to remove outdated materials.

## Service provider response

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

“I would like to respectfully express my reservations about using patient feedback as a benchmarking tool. While patient feedback can offer useful qualitative insights, it is inherently subjective and often influenced by individual expectations, emotions, or isolated experiences. As such, it may not reliably reflect overall performance or quality of service, and in some cases can be disproportionately shaped by dissatisfaction unrelated to measurable care outcomes.

By contrast, objective indicators present a more consistent and verifiable picture of performance. For example, call statistics and other operational data do not support some of the negative conclusions implied by feedback. In addition, the practice performs very favourably against established standards in areas such as required signage, facilities, cleanliness, and the provision of patient information posters. These are tangible, observable measures that demonstrate compliance, organisation, and a positive patient environment.

It is also important to note the significant increase in clinical capacity since Willows took over in 2022. Prior to this, the average number of appointments available on a Monday was approximately 15, compared with a current average of around 55. This represents a substantial improvement in access and service provision that is not reflected in the feedback being used for comparison.

Given these factors, I am concerned that some of the feedback may be influenced by broader negative narratives around general practice, which have been widely amplified in public and media discourse, rather

than by the actual performance or standards of the practice itself.

The discrepancy between objective measures and elements of subjective feedback raises concerns about the validity of extrapolating broader performance judgments from feedback alone.

In my view, patient feedback is best used as a supplementary source of information rather than a primary benchmarking metric, and should be interpreted alongside objective, quantitative measures to ensure a balanced and fair assessment.”

## Distribution

### **The report is for distribution to the following:**

- Willows Medical Centre
- 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](http://www.healthwatchll.com)

# Appendix 1: Survey Findings

## 380 Patients

### Q1. When did you last visit your GP practice?

(224) 59% - In the last 3 months

(72) 19% - In the last 6 months

(41) 11% - In the last year

(13) 3% - 1-2 years ago

(30) 8% - Over 2 years ago

### Q2. How did you book your last appointment?

(262) 69% - Telephone

(37) 10% - Online booking services

(18) 5% - NHS App

(19) 5% - In person

(13) 3% - Someone else booked for me (e.g., family, carer)

(31) 8% - Other (please specify): *"Through NHS 111," "Wasn't getting appointments so emailed the complaint email then was given one", "Called to review blood test results, after few unsuccessful call attempts", "midwife", "I had a text telling me I had an appointment made for me by them", "doctor", "blood test".*

### Q3. When you last contacted the practice by phone, how long did it take you to get through?

(11) 3% - Less than 1 minute

(43) 11% - 1-5 minutes

(52) 14% - 6-10 minutes

(40) 10% - 11-15 minutes

(120) 32% - 16- 60 minutes

(67) 18% - Over an hour

(30) 8% - I used the call-back function

(16) 4% - Not applicable - I have not contacted the practice by phone

1 - Unanswered

**Q4. In the last two years, have you attempted to book an appointment where you needed to see a doctor or clinician on the same day?**

(277) 73% - Yes

(67) 18% - No

(36) 9% - Can't remember

**Q5. The last time you requested an urgent same-day appointment, what was the outcome?**

(51) 19% - I was offered a same day appointment at my GP practice with a doctor

(11) 4% - I was offered a same day appointment at my GP practice with a different professional

(12) 5% - I was offered a same day appointment elsewhere (such as at a nearby practice or healthcare hub)

(12) 5% - I was offered an appointment for another day

(14) 5% - I was signposted to an alternative service

(82) 30% - I was asked to call back later or the following day

(87) 32% - I was not offered an appointment or any of the alternatives listed above

111 - Unanswered

**Q6. Please rate your most recent experience with the practice on the following aspect:** There was 24 unanswered response. A total of 356 people responded, however, not all selected from the provided answer choices.

Answer Choices	Excellent	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very poor	Not applicable/ Not used	Response Total
Telephone service to book appointments	9% (31)	13% (46)	14% (51)	16% (56)	44% (159)	4% (13)	356
Practice Opening hours	10% (36)	32% (113)	30% (107)	9% (31)	15% (52)	4% (13)	352
Reception Service	10% (34)	19% (68)	22% (77)	22% (77)	25% (89)	3% (11)	356
Repeat prescription service	17% (60)	26% (92)	17% (61)	9% (33)	14% (51)	17% (58)	355
Quality of medical care and treatment	14% (48)	38% (136)	24% (83)	7% (26)	14% (50)	3% (12)	355
Face to face appointments	17% (60)	34% (123)	20% (72)	10% (34)	14% (49)	5% (18)	356
Online appointments	6% (21)	13% (47)	13% (45)	12% (43)	27% (93)	29% (101)	350
Telephone appointments	8% (30)	21% (74)	17% (62)	15% (52)	29% (103)	10% (34)	355
Ease of accessing information (website, emails, SMS reminders)	11% (40)	27% (96)	21% (75)	10% (36)	18% (63)	13% (44)	354

Q7. Do you have any other feedback about your experience with your GP practice? What do you like most and what could be improved?

*Key themes: booking appointments: Long waits, no same-day slots, app doesn't work, queues at phone line, must call 8AM, told to call back daily. Telephone access issues (Language issues, long wait times): Long queues dropped calls and hard to understand. Some respondents complained about calls being outsourced to call centres. Reception staff rudeness / lack of training: Described as rude, dismissive and lack empathy. Positive feedback for doctors / nurses / staff. Good clinical care once seen.*

**Likes:**

"Happy with the service received. No problems really. It's near to where I live and easy to access."

"Doctors very professional."

"I would like to commend all the reception staff, doctors and nurses and staff at the surgery"

"I was attended by the receptionist for booking my GP appointment. She was very helpful, polite, and provided useful information throughout the process. I really appreciate her support and excellent service."

"Good Services"

"Very helpful staff and GP excellent service and feel like real family doctor service, God bless the surgery and all staff."

"Doctors very professional."

"The staff are good at the reception, helpful, know what they are doing, very humble, professional. However, they are working very hard, but they are understaffed. I would like to commend all the reception staff, doctors and nurses and staff at the surgery. I would really appreciate if you could get more staff and take off some of the burden off the overburdened staff."

**Mixed:**

"The recent phone system change is awful as it creates a disconnect between the person I speak to on the phone and the actual GP surgery. The practice also makes mistakes often and regularly which increases the amount of work need to be done on the patient's part to actually get the care or medication required on time. Having been at this surgery for years the quality has declined consistently and has failed to get better. The only redeeming factor is that the doctors themselves at the surgery are excellent."

"The GP practice is good, but it's very hard to get an appointment. I often wait a long time on the phone, and

then I'm told there are no available appointments. My daughter has eczema, and I couldn't get her an appointment either, so I had to go to the pharmacy. Some reception staff are not very friendly. I hope this can improve."

"Great that I can usually see same doctor. Some reception staff look as though they can't be bothered, leave desk empty at times so not always anyone to speak to when you come in. Always cold in waiting area."

"I have had a good service for me personally but booking review appointments for my two children has been a nightmare. My last call was deliberately cut when I was still explaining why I was booking an appointment for my 7 year old who should be going for a review."

#### **Dislikes/ improvements:**

"Appointments rarely available on NHS app. Usually signposted to an emergency walk in centre for more serious matters. Nurse appointment has been cancelled by the practice on 3 occasions."

"Every day when I attempt to make an appointment by phone the first 10 minutes after 8am the system says number not recognised. When I finally connect, I am 30+ places down the queue and all appointments are taken."

"I have been trying for 5-6 weeks now to book a non-urgent appointment with a female doctor. I still have not managed to get an appointment. The receptionist tried once and said nothing available and that they would retry the next day, they have not called back. This was 2 weeks ago. Poor follow up. Now I dread trying to call and get through to reception as I know I will face similar issues."

"You have outsourced to a call centre in India must be breaking GDPR. Can't understand a thing that they are saying Worst GP of all time."

"You should be able to ring your surgery and talk to a person rather than a call centre with people that ask you to talk slower as they can't understand you. What is happening and you can't ring and talk to a human."

"Can't get appointments when needed, due to chronic pain and issues I can't call at 8am when advised so I never get seen. The call centre which is now not even in the UK is worse than useless. It's easier to see a vet than a doctor."

"The appointments are never available no matter how early you call."

"It would be good if more appointment slots could be made for next day or within the week as it will reduce the number of calls for patients when the same day appointments are not available."

"Yes, this GP surgery is an absolute mess. The staff at reception sigh and give me nasty looks when I'm talking to them. The "book appointment on app" doesn't exist because there's "no available appointments" EVER on the app. When you call the GP for help you get put through to a call centre OUTSIDE OF THE COUNTRY where you can hear other men laughing in offices and shouting while you're on the phone and because it's routed to another country, I don't understand what they are saying. This gp went severely downhill!"

"When you call for an appointment on the day it's in a call centre and they speak to you like rubbish and put the phone down on you. You can never get hold of the surgery in the day either."

"Reception staff need "customer care" training! Signposted to check in on the touch screen but never works then the reception staff sit with their backs to you behind a portable screen & it is hard to get their attention. Many times, I have stood waiting to check in in a queue!"

"Very rude telephone and reception staff could not understand between I need to make an appointment for this day and non they are saying you must call back on this day."

"Extremely horrible service especially during booking, made so many calls and was still not booked in had to go in to book as well several days for booking."

"The doctors don't listen. I was struggling with my mental health and when I saw the doctor she was very dismissive. I asked if it was menopause, she laughed and said I was too young, I was prescribed anti-depressants Sertraline. I was still struggling so I asked if I was neurodiverse. Again, she laughed and said as it is so typical everyone thinks they are neurodiverse. I demanded a referral to NHS Talking Therapies where I was clearly diagnosed as neurodiverse and the therapist said I should be expedited on the waiting list as it was urgent. When I called to see if the letter had been forwarded, they had no idea what I was talking about. I was really struggling, I lost my job, I called 111 they gave me all my options to get the diagnosis privately."

"The quality of the practice has decreased sharply over the years. Appointments are difficult to come by and rely waiting on the phones for 30 minutes at a time. Reception staff try to be helpful but on occasion they lack understanding of what is being asked for them. Possibly a training or language issue. Appointments with GPs can be difficult to procure resulting in having to go through 111. Even when you get in front of a GP, they are quick to dismiss and misdiagnose your concerns so that problems escalate before they are diagnosed correctly."

"If I need a prescription to be written by the doctor that has been mentioned in hospital notes, I am told I still need to call in and make an appointment. When I call in the next morning at 8am I am then told there are no appointments. It's all very frustrating."

"I'm having to use my son's inhaler as not able to get an appointment to see my GP for a prescription."

"MRI Results from hospital not on my record. Not many appointments on app. also saying no appointments rather than saying when the next appointment would be."

"Please improve on same day appointments and blood test appointments and receptions are very rude."

"Very poor reception staff. Lack of knowledge and respect no empathy. Appointment system online does not work either. Airmid does not work either. Fed up of it."



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