



Enter & View Report

Helsby Street Medical Centre

Visit: 23rd February 2022

Report Published: MAY 2022

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Helsby Street Medical Centre

healthwatch
Warrington
YOUR health and social care champions

April 2022



ABOUT THE PRACTICE

8,500 registered patients. 2 practice nurses, 3 Health care assistants, A pharmacy team and 5 GP's. A Paramedic for minor ailments and Physiotherapist



PRIVACY & DIGNITY

Patients were observed being treated with consideration, kindness, and dignity.

TELEPHONE/ ECONSULT

Patients mentioned there is sometimes issues with contacting via telephone. The practice does not use e-consult for appointments only prescriptions



MAKING APPOINTMENTS

patients can visit the Practice to make appointments in person



SERVICES & TREATMENTS

- Midwife
- Community Dietitian
- Physicians Assistant

HEALTHWATCH PRESENCE

The practice have healthwatch logo and link on their website



PATIENT VOICE



"THE ONLY ISSUE I HAVE IS GETTING THROUGH ON THE TELEPHONE

- IT CAN BE VERY DIFFICULT, AND YOU HAVE TO KEEP DIALLING TO TRY TO GET THROUGH. I AM AWARE THAT THEY ARE CURRENTLY LOOKING AT A NEW TELEPHONE SYSTEM THE SOONER THE BETTER."



"I HAVE BEEN A PATIENT AT THIS PRACTICE FOR OVER 40 YEARS AND HAVE ALWAYS HAD EXCELLENT TREATMENT AND CARE".

"It is difficult to get Face to Face appointments, but if you explain to the reception staff why you need to see the Doctor, then they will fit you in as best they can. If there are no Face-to-Face appointments available, then a telephone consultation will be arranged and if needed a doctor's appointment will be arranged."

"I FEEL SO GRATEFUL THAT I AM A PATIENT AT HELSBY STREET SURGERY."

Background

What is Healthwatch Warrington?

Healthwatch Warrington helps the residents and communities of Warrington to get the best out of local health and social care services. We gather the views of local people and make sure that they are heard and listened to by the organisations that provide, fund, and monitor services.

What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to conduct Enter and View (E&V) visits. Local Healthwatch representatives, who are trained staff and volunteers, conduct E&V visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The Health and Social Care Act (2012) allows local Healthwatch representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families, and carers on premises such as hospitals, care homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, opticians, and pharmacies. E&V visits can happen if people identify a problem. Equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation; enabling lessons to be learned and good practice shared.

Healthwatch E&V visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. If safeguarding issues are raised during a visit, Healthwatch Warrington safeguarding policies identify the correct procedures to be followed.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to the findings observed on the specific date of the visit. This report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users/residents and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time. Wherever possible, the report below is in the words of the E&V team members present at the time of the visit. The report has been collated by Adrienne Roberts, Volunteer Co-ordinator and Enter and View Lead, and some of the text has been formatted to allow for easy reading.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Warrington would like to thank everyone at Helsby Street Medical Centre for their welcome, and in particular, Maia Ensor, Practice Manager, who made time to share information with the team, escort them around the building and answer questions.

Healthwatch Warrington Enter & View: Helsby Street Medical Centre

Purpose of the visit

Since the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the way that Primary Care health services are able to operate, Healthwatch Warrington has received feedback from patients and their carers in relation to difficulty contacting General Practice; and accessing care and treatment. Most of the concerns raised have been in relation to patients being unable to contact their Practice by telephone, email, or electronic form. Many have been unable to make an appointment.

Helsby Street Medical Centre was not identified as problematic and Healthwatch Warrington planned to visit to identify and share the positive feedback they had received from the experiences of the patients using the services.

During the pandemic, E&V visits were suspended for approximately 16 months, and Healthwatch England published guidance and recommendations on recommencing them in August 2021. All visits are risk assessed and planned in agreement with the Practice Manager.

Helsby Street Medical Centre has remained open throughout the pandemic, albeit the service has been delivered differently, with fewer face-to-face appointments and several restrictions imposed during both lockdowns.

The E&V visit was conducted by speaking to staff and patients, observation, and the use of a feedback form. The review team had the opportunity to speak to some patients in the waiting room. Due to certain Covid restrictions still being in place, including social distancing and wearing face masks, it was more difficult to interview patients. Therefore, in addition to interviews, a feedback form was offered to patients with a pre-paid envelope. The feedback form was also made available for patients to complete electronically. Eight forms were returned by post to Healthwatch Warrington, and three were completed electronically. The feedback received from these patients has been used to inform the report.

Details of the Visit

Details of the Service

Helsby Street Medical Centre currently has approximately 8,500 registered patients, and the Practice is open to new patient registrations. Information on registering, and the forms required to register are available on the website or by visiting the surgery in person.

Helsby Street Medical Centre forms part of Central and West Warrington Network. This is one of the five Primary Care Networks (PCN) in Warrington. Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) states that each PCN is responsible for deciding how to provide the right care, at the right time for their total registered patients. For example, this could include sharing health professionals between practices or offering appointments at a different practice in the Network to improve patient access – especially if that practice specialises in an area of care they need.

The Practice was last inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 3rd June 2016 and was rated Good in all areas. The full report is available on the Practice website.

The CQC is – the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. They make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care and we encourage care services to improve.

Details of Visit	
Service Address	Helsby Street Medical Centre 2 Helsby Street, Warrington, Cheshire WA1 3AW
Service Provider	NHS
Date and Time	23 rd February 2022, 10am- 12.15pm
Authorised Representatives undertaking the visit	Adrienne Roberts Jim Sinnott David Edwards

Provider Service and Staff

At the time of the visit, the Practice employed four GP Partners and one salaried GP. There are also several other professionals working in the surgery, including a Pharmacy team, a Paramedic who does home visits and holds a minor ailment clinic. There are two Practice Nurses and three Health Care Assistants (HCAs), and a first contact Physiotherapist who holds a clinic every Thursday afternoon and all-day Friday. The Practice Manager has received lots of positive feedback about these additional services from the patients.

All clinical posts are filled and there were no vacancies at the time of the visit. There were two vacancies that had gone to advert in administrative and clerical staff team.

The team has a good mix of both experienced and new members of staff, and the Deputy Practice Manager has been at Helsby Street Medical Centre for over 20 years. The practice has recently employed a Polish speaking member of staff in the administrative team and the person has been a positive addition to the team because there are a considerable number of patients registered with the Practice who are Polish and do not speak fluent English, and the person offers to support them with translation during consultations and telephone calls.

The Practice Manager escorted the E&V team around the building, and they viewed the facilities that were available for patients and staff. The E&V team was given the opportunity to speak to several members of the staff team, including clinical, administrative and management staff.

All members of staff who spoke to the visiting team were helpful and friendly. Despite being extremely busy, there was a willingness to assist with any questions and requests.

Healthwatch Warrington Enter & View: Helsby Street Medical Centre

One member of staff described how difficult it had been to operate the services the Practice usually provided, throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, and stated that we still say, "What is the challenge today" and do what we can.

Spotlight on Services

The information below has been taken from the Helsby Street Medical Centre website

All patients registered at Helsby Street Medical Centre have a named doctor who has overall responsibility for your care and support. Your registered GP is also your named accountable and your allocated GP. Your allocated GP will be responsible for the provision of your healthcare. If you choose to see another doctor at the surgery, you are entirely free to go on doing so exactly as before.

Your Mental Health is a very important part of your overall wellbeing. Do you have any concerns for yourself or a loved one? If yes, you can use the self-assessment tools here to assess your overall mood and look for signs of anxiety and depression. You can also create a Mind Plan to help maintain and improve your mental health and wellbeing. In addition, you can access lots of helpful Mental Health organisations.

Have your say to improve your care

We would like your feedback on the care or treatment we give you any time you visit your GP or have contact with the practice. It doesn't take long.

Put us to the test and tell us what is working and what we can improve. You can say what you think without giving your name and we will use the information to plan improvements to our services.

Results of the Visit

First Impressions

The main entrance to the Practice is fully accessible, with a wheelchair accessible ramp and double sliding doors that open automatically.

Healthwatch Warrington Enter & View: Helsby Street Medical Centre

The small Practice car park was full when the E&V team arrived, and patients and visitors were parked in the residential area on Helsby street. There was some allocated parking that was clearly labelled for residents living in nearby property. There is disabled parking available on the Practice car park.

There is a bus route that passes the Practice and there is a bus stop situated on Manchester Road, close to the building.

On the day of the visit the exterior of the building was clean and in a good state of repair. There were no obstructions, and the signage from the main road was clear.

Reception/Waiting Area

On arrival at the reception area, the E&V team members were welcomed, asked to sign in, and their temperature was taken by a member of the reception staff before they were allowed to enter further into the clinical areas. The E&V team members were also required to provide a negative lateral flow test and be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 as a condition of the visit.

The waiting room was clean, well maintained and there was a welcoming environment. The reception staff were friendly and efficient and were courteous and helpful towards patients.

There was an electronic signing in unit based in reception; however, this was not in use due to Covid restrictions aimed at preventing the spread of infection. There is a large television screen that was turned off when the visiting team arrived.

There is a smaller, second waiting area along the corridor, close to the consulting rooms. Both waiting areas had well organised notice boards, with up-to-date information, and both areas displayed leaflets informing patients of the date and time of the Healthwatch Warrington visit.

The small waiting area also had a television screen, which was not in use at the time of the visit. Because this waiting area is within close vicinity of the consulting rooms, the review team thought that it may be possible to overhear conversations from within the rooms, and if the television or a radio was used, this would be alleviated.

There were several bright and colourful paintings displayed on the walls and when the review team commented on them, they were informed that they had been painted by the senior Partners father.

Appointments/ contacting the practice

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Practice had several restrictions imposed on the way that they treated patients, and face-to-face appointments were significantly reduced; however, at the time of the visit they had increased to over 50 percent, alongside virtual appointments, and telephone consultations.

Patients can make appointments by visiting the Practice in person or by telephoning. GP appointments are only available on the day and cannot be booked in advance. Appointments with Practice Nurses or Healthcare Assistants can be pre-booked.

Healthwatch Warrington Enter & View: Helsby Street Medical Centre

The Practice Manager informed the review team that the telephone system currently in use does not allow patients to 'hold.' This means that when they phone the Practice, if the line is engaged, they need to keep trying until they get through. They acknowledge that this is frustrating for patients, and they are looking at renewing the contract with a different provider later in the year.

One patient stated that

“The only issue I have is getting through on the
telephone
- it can be very difficult, and you have to keep dialling
to try to get through. I am
aware that they are currently looking at a new
telephone system the sooner the
better.”

*

“Thank you to Dr Steevart and the other partners and
staff. No problems when actually contacting the
practice and it upsets me when people say they've had
a problem. Have they actually tried? These contacts
were for me, and my children and I've seen the nurse
quite a lot as well as doctors.”

*

“It is difficult to get Face to Face appointments, but if
you explain to the reception staff why you need to see
the Doctor, then they will fit you in as best they can. If
there are no Face-to-Face appointments available,
then a telephone consultation will be arranged and if
needed a doctor's appointment will be arranged.”

Patients are asked to complete an eConsult when requesting non-urgent clinical advice, sick notes (fit notes), and letters. There are exceptions for patients who do not have access to this online service. Appointments cannot be booked via eConsult.

The NHS states that -eConsult is a form-based online consultation & triage platform that collects your medical or administrative request and sends it through to your GP practice.

Services/ treatment options available at the Practice

The Practice has offered both flu and Covid vaccinations on site throughout the pandemic, whilst still running other clinics. These include Practice Nursing services, Health Promotion clinics and wellbeing checks, contraception services, joint injections, and non-specialist dermatology advice.

Other sessional services include:

- **Midwife** (Tues 1.30pm – 3.00pm and Thurs 1.30pm – 4.00pm)
- **Community Dietitian**
- **Physician's Assistant** (social service member who offer support to patients) Friday pm

Prescriptions/Reviews

Prescription oversight is a dedicated role for one person. A member of the review team had a discussion with the member of staff who deals with the prescriptions, and she automatically flags up repeat prescriptions five days before due date. The request goes to the GP to sign and send to pharmacy electronically. This means that the medication is ready to be delivered or picked up by patients before/on due date. At the time of the visit, it was reported that 90 percent of repeat prescription requests were sent electronically.

Regular medication reviews are undertaken by the clinical pharmacist and pharmacy technician. Patients are provided with information and advice, and this service has received positive feedback from them.

Privacy, dignity and meeting individual needs

A member of the review team spent some time sitting in the main reception area and spoke to several patients who were waiting to be seen by a member of the team. They commented that they were either happy or very happy with Helsby Street Medical Centre. Patients were also asked if they would complete a Healthwatch feedback form about their experience of contacting and/or visiting the Practice. Below is some of the feedback received-

**“I have been a patient at this practice for over 40 years
and have always had excellent treatment and care”.**

*

“I feel so grateful that I am a patient at Helsby Street surgery.”

Patients were observed being treated with consideration, kindness, and dignity.

All patients were called and greeted in the waiting area by the person that their appointment was with, and then escorted to the consulting room. This was considered to be positive practice by the review team and appreciated by the patients.

Patient Voice and Feedback

The Practice has a Patient Participation Group (PPG), and the minutes are available on the Practice website. The last minutes posted on the website are January 2020.

NHS England states that –

A Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a group of people who are patients of the surgery and want to help it work as well as it can for patients, doctors, and staff. The NHS requires every practice to have a PPG.

Concerns and suggestions can be raised by patients using an online form on the Practice website. Patients Complaint guidance and a form is available on the practice website, under the General Patient Information section.

The Family and Friends Test is available on the website and there is also a feedback box on display in the waiting room. The Practice Manager stated that the team welcome feedback from patients as it helps the Practice to make improvements.

The website for Helsby Street Medical Centre is easy to navigate and contains useful information. There is a Healthwatch Warrington logo with a link to the website, and the visiting team was pleased to see that Healthwatch was being promoted to the patients. This is positive practice and promotes the patients' opportunity to provide feedback on the Practice.

Administration/General running

The Practice Manager joined the Practice last year and she is supported by a deputy who has been working at the Practice for over 20 years. Approximately half of the admin team has changed in the last year. This is due to staff leaving for a variety of reasons. The admin team and the "back office" staff were well organised. There is a traffic light system in place for the completion of daily admin tasks for each member of staff, and any tasks that are not completed, are shared amongst the team.

Staffing and Staff Training

The members of reception and administration staff who spoke to the review team confirmed that there was lots of training for them. They felt supported and help was available from colleagues if needed.

Staff experiencing any problems felt that they could always refer up the chain of command. They described the team as always being happy to help each other and provide work and emotional support. One member of staff commented that

"Nobody is scared to ask for help if or when it is needed."

The Practice Manager informed the review team that members of staff have protected learning time and they all use 'Blue Stream' online training. Some staff have recently completed non-medical vaccinators training.

All the GPs working at Helsby street Medical Centre have been employed there for at least ten years.

Each day one of the GPs is identified to deal with nonroutine and urgent appointments. The review team thought that it was an innovative idea that there was a notice on the 'Duty' doctor's door saying what they were doing that day and advising patients that routine work like repeat prescriptions didn't get done by that doctor.

The 'Duty' doctor on the day of the visit spent time with one of the review team, who himself is a retired GP. He explained how he has designed several computer programmes which are very

patient centred and are helping to improve the efficiency of services and care for both patients and the Practice. He demonstrated how the programmes worked; without breaching the confidentiality of any patients.

In addition to the GP team, Helsby Street Medical Centre is a Training Practice and takes medical students and GP trainees. They work on a rotational basis alongside the regular clinical team.

One of the Practice Nurses spoke to the review team and described lots of new ideas to improve the service. She was very patient centred and positive in her approach to care.

Cleanliness, Environment, and Infection Control

The building and all the rooms entered, appeared clean and well maintained. There were additional precautions being taken by staff and patients, including the use of face masks, social distancing, taking temperatures of visitors on entering the building, and hand sanitiser was available for use by all.

Emergency resuscitation equipment is all well labelled and has its own easy access cupboard.

Since the building opened, there have been extensions to the ground floor to create rooms for additional services. The Practice has a growing multi-disciplinary team and needs more clinical rooms, however, there is no outside space available to extend. Therefore, there are plans for expanding the building upwards to create another floor for office space. This will enable all the ground floor to be a clinical area to provide easily accessible patient services.

There are toilets available for staff and patients, one of which is fully equipped for those with disabilities. All were clean and well maintained, although the toilet close to the main reception required some re-painting.

Other Comments

All members of the review team stated that they would be happy to be a patient at the Practice, or to work as part of the team.

Recommendations

1. The Practice Manager informed the review team that the Practice will be changing the telephone system. The present telephone system is inadequate because there is no hold facility, and it does not give patients the option to join a queue when trying to telephone reception. If all the lines are busy, the engaged tone sounds, and patients need to keep redialling until they get through. The review team recognised that this was very frustrating for patients and recommend that an improved system is introduced as soon as possible.
2. It is recommended that the television or radio provides some low-level sound in the small waiting area to alleviate the possibility of conversations in the consultation rooms being overheard.

Distribution List

This report has been distributed to the following:

- Warrington Borough Council
- Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group
- Care Quality Commission
- Healthwatch England
- Practice Manager

Appendices

Appendix A

Response from provider

Many thanks to the Enter & View Team for our recent visit and positive report. We very much welcomed/enjoyed the visit and to receive such positive feedback was really uplifting.

By way of recommendations, we absolutely agree with the two points mentioned within the report.

- With regards to the inadequate telephone system, we completely understand the frustrations the current system causes. It is one of our main priorities to introduce a new system as soon as possible and we are currently in the process of obtaining quotes and receiving demonstrations from a number of providers. We are looking forward to resolving this issue in the not too distant future once a preferred provider is confirmed.

In relation to background noise, this is something that was paused during the pandemic when not many patients were attending the surgery however we aim to reintroduce Television/Radio to both the reception area and the second waiting area. We are looking into ways in which this can be done effectively without interrupting any other surrounding rooms during consultations. We will have a mental health practitioner starting in May working on Wednesday afternoons.

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healthwatch

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