



Enter & View Report

Chapelford Medical Centre

Visit carried out 28th February 2022

July 2022

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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 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 Chapelford Medical Centre for their welcome and in particular, Aimie Liversidge, Site Manager, who made time to share information with the team, escort them around the building and answer questions.

Purpose of the visit

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

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

Prior to the E&V visit to Chapelford Medical Centre, Healthwatch Warrington had received several concerns/complaints from patients registered with the Practice, and members of the Healthwatch Warrington team had also attended meetings at the Practice in relation to negative feedback received.

Chapelford Medical Centre remained open throughout the pandemic, although the service was significantly reduced with fewer face-to-face appointments and several restrictions imposed during both lockdowns. Other GP medical centres have also been affected with tighter government guidelines. Many patients found it extremely difficult to make an appointment and this continued after the Covid lockdown restrictions were eased.

The E&V visit was carried out by speaking to staff and patients, observation, viewing the buildings facilities, and the use of a feedback form.

The review team had the opportunity to speak to the patients in the waiting room. However, the number of patients accessing the Practice for face-to-face appointments was limited. Therefore, in addition to interviews, a feedback form was handed to patients with a pre-paid envelope. Four forms were returned to Healthwatch Warrington. The feedback form was also made available to be completed electronically via the Healthwatch Warrington website and was kindly distributed by Heather Martin - Chair of Chapelford Patient Participation Group (PPG), to a group of patients who had agreed to take part. Healthwatch Warrington received 51 forms that were completed and returned electronically. The information received from all feedback forms and from the patients who spoke to the review team in person, has been used to compile the report.

Details of the Visit

Details of the Service

Chapelford Medical Centre moved to a new £2.7 million state of the art building on Monday 27th January 2020. Prior to this, and following repeated setbacks and problems with funding, the Practice had been operating from a portable unit for more than a decade on Burtonwood Road,

The Medical Centre, which is based on Santa Rosa Boulevard in the heart of Chapelford, provides high-quality facilities for patients and staff. The centre features eight multi-purpose treatment rooms, a spacious and comfortable waiting room, improved car parking and onsite pharmacy with a private consultation room. It also has a dedicated room for breastfeeding and baby changing, in addition to a Changing Places fully accessible toilet.

The Practice is open Monday to Friday from 08.30am to 6.00pm.

There were approximately 7,100 patients registered with the Practice at the time of the E&V visit. However, the Practice had been given permission by Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to temporarily suspend the registering of new patients from June 2021 for six months. This was due to staff shortages and difficulty in recruiting staff to vacant positions, resulting in the Practice being unable to meet the needs of the existing patients.

Patients were unable to make appointments or contact the Practice and many took to social media and contacted local councillors and MPs to express their frustration.

From November 2021 the list was re-opened, and the registered patient numbers are expected to rise to 10,000.

Details of Visit	
Service Address	Chapelford Medical Centre Santa Rosa Boulevard Great Sankey Warrington WA5 3AL Telephone 01925 598230
Date and Time	28 th February 2022, 10.30am -12.30pm
Authorised Representatives undertaking the visit	Adrienne Roberts Jim Sinnott David Edwards

Provider Service and Staff

The provider is Dr Daniel Bunstone, the lead GP at the Practice, which is part of Warrington Innovation Network, one of the five Primary Care Networks (PCNs) 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.

Chapelford Medical Centre still had several staff vacancies at the time of the E&V visit. Aimie – the Site Manager informed the visiting team that there were the following vacancies: two GPs, Healthcare Assistants, two full-time administrator posts and two part-time administrator posts. Locum GP's currently cover the GP vacancies.

The Site 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, including clinical and administrative staff. All members of staff who spoke to the visiting team were helpful and friendly.

It appeared that the building was under-utilised, and some rooms were unoccupied. There was a large well equipped office with workstations and I.T equipment for approximately 12 members of staff but only three were in use.

Spotlight on Services

Information taken from Chapelford Medical Centre website

As your local primary healthcare provider, we understand our responsibility to enable access to necessary healthcare, and in acknowledgement of recent feedback, we wish to clarify the services available by Chapelford Medical Centre. Appointments for these services can be booked directly via our reception team.

Appointments we offer:

- GP
- Advanced Nurse Practitioner
- Nurse
- Health Care Assistant
- First contact Physiotherapist
- Clinical Pharmacist
- Mental Health Practitioner
- CBT Counsellor

We are proud to offer such a range of clinical appointments and we continue to review this in line with patient requirements.

The practice has explored options to proactively keep on top of growing demand and avoid a crisis, from this we chose to diversify our workforce. This allows us to provide a greater number of appointments and offer more options for accessing care that will help us manage demand as it continues to increase.

To acknowledge concerns relating to permanent clinical staffing, we are currently recruiting permanent GPs and a full time Advanced Nurse Practitioner, along with a healthcare assistant to improve the continuity of access at the practice, some of this resource will be specifically reserved for urgent same day cases.

For further reassurance on accessing appointments, we have recently implemented a new signposting structure to take the pressure off the lines at 8am. The new structure allows us to prebook appointments, should that be required, and assess our patients needs to get them to the right clinician, quicker. For this structure to be a success please only call the surgery at 8am for urgent, same day appointments, any routine appointments can be made throughout the day and therefore you do not need to wait on the line at 8am.

At Chapelford it is our main priority to provide a safe and effective service which meets our patients' needs. We hope you can recognise that the surgery is doing its utmost to maintain standards and improve access in line with our obligations. We thank the patients that have raised their concerns with us and hope that our actions highlight that we are listening.

Results of the Visit

First Impressions

Chapelford Medical Centre is a new, purpose built, single storey building and is accessible by public transport. There is a bus route that passes close to the Practice and there is a new train station nearby. The Practice is in a central location within the newly developed Chapelford Village. House building in Chapelford is ongoing and the population size is continuing to grow.

There is a car park with allocated disabled person parking spaces immediately outside the entrance to the Practice, and there is also a large car park adjacent to the Practice for use by the general public visiting the local supermarket. Access to the Practice and all facilities within are on ground level with no steps.

On the day of the visit the exterior of the building was clean and well maintained. There were no obstructions, and the entrance was clearly sign-posted.

Reception/Waiting Area

The staff on duty at the reception desk were pleasant and welcoming to incoming patients with appointments, and they dealt efficiently with incoming phone calls. Throughout the time that the visiting team was in attendance, there were very few patients entering and leaving the reception area. There were no more than a couple of patients sat in the waiting area at any time, and this was thought to be surprisingly quiet for a Monday morning.

Patients attending the Practice had to wear face masks. The staff in reception did not wear masks and stated that it was easier for patients to hear them and deaf patients to lipread, and they said patients were protected because the reception staff were seated behind a clear screen. The screens did hinder communication because it was not easy to hear when patients/reception staff were conversing.

The staff at reception were able to assist deaf patients by not wearing a mask behind the screens which would aid patients with lip reading. It was noted that it was not easy to hear patients due to the screens. However, the screens have been implemented due to Covid-19 restrictions.

All the clinical staff were observed to be wearing face masks as they carried out their duties and during face-to-face contact with patients.

The E&V team members were required to wear face masks and required to provide a negative lateral flow test and be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

The waiting area was spacious and fixed seating was arranged in rows with appropriate markings for Covid distancing. Due to the waiting area being quiet and the high ceiling in the waiting area, there was significant echoing. This could be easily resolved if there was low level music playing in the reception area.

There was a white board on the wall that listed the clinical staff in attendance on the day, and there were well organised notice boards containing information for patients and carers. The Healthwatch poster was displayed informing patients about the E&V visit and giving them the opportunity to speak to the review team about their experiences of the Practice.

Appointments/ contacting the practice

Patients had reported being unable to contact the Practice during the Covid-19 lockdown, and this continued as restrictions were being eased. When they did manage to contact the Practice, they reported that they could not get an appointment with a GP other than with 'Push Doctor' – a digital platform that was in use and virtually connects patients with GPs. When patients visited the Chapelford Medical Centre website to enquire about making an appointment, they were directed to register and use Push Doctor.

One person stated:

“I have repeatedly requested in-person appointments since being pregnant, I have repeatedly been declined to see anyone in person at the surgery, and only been offered/ forced to use the Push Doctor application. My midwife stated that I needed to see a GP in person to be examined, even stating this to reception did not get me an appointment. GP’s I have talked to through the Push Doctor application have even stated that I should see someone in person and had to advise going to A & E inappropriately. The only option to be seen in person is to turn up to A & E or try to go to the Widnes walk-in centre.”

There was no information in relation to the change on the Practice website and patients were requested to use eConsult or email when contacting the Practice. eConsult was only available for prescriptions and repeat sick notes, not for requesting an appointment.

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'.

Numerous patients had reported that the only way they could see a doctor face-to-face was to go to the walk-in centre in Widnes, because no face-to-face appointments were available at Chapelford Medical Centre when they requested one.

"It has been almost impossible to get a doctor's appointment for some considerable time. The only way to see a doctor is to contact Widnes walk-in centre. An excellent service."

Healthwatch had also received a lot of negative feedback about the telephone system and some patients described waiting for long periods of time or redialling multiple times before they spoke to a member of staff. Other patients were cut off after a long wait and had to redial and join the queue again.

On the day of the visit, one of the patients interviewed stated that she found trying to make an appointment *"very stressful"*. She had spent two hours on the phone from 8am and finally got through (was 15th in queue) at 10am. *"The receptionist had apologised and was lovely though"*. The patient had been given an appointment with the doctor later that morning and stated that it was positive.

A patient, who had been with the practice for 25 years in its previous premises, stated that she had dialled 83 times on the morning of the visit from 8.00am and got through at 8.40am. The patient showed her phone to one of the review team to confirm this.

Feedback from a patient who had completed the online feedback form said that *"Trying to get through to someone to make a face-to-face appointment is a joke. I don't have hours on end to wait in a queue, to then eventually get through and be told there are no appointments left! This is unacceptable and something needs to be done."*

The Site Manager informed the review team that changes had been introduced for patients contacting the Practice by phone and that anyone requiring an urgent same day appointment was asked to phone when the Practice opened at 8.00am. Pre-bookable, non-urgent appointments were available up to two weeks in advance and patients could phone later in the day to book an appointment or for other requests.

Services/treatment options available at the Practice

The Practice has an Advanced Nurse Practitioner who can prescribe medication. There are two further Practice Nurses. They informed a member of the review team that they do not do any dressings on the premises and patients are told to go to one of the Warrington clinics. The site Manager confirmed that due to staff shortages the Practice was unable to provide dressing services at the present time.

"I had a biopsy at Halliwell Jones (Bridgewater) that needed checking and dressing again but the practice doesn't do wound dressing and they told me I had to go to Bath Street - and they sorted it out - they were good."

On the day of the E&V visit, a patient entered the building and spoke to a receptionist. He was overheard saying that he had been contacted to come to the Practice to have his blood

pressure checked. He was then directed to a machine on the corridor and told to use it for the purpose of taking his blood pressure (BP). Soon afterwards the patient returned to the receptionist and informed her that he had been unable to put his arm into the machine. He asked if a nurse was available to take his BP and after being told this was not possible, he would need to make an appointment, he left frustrated without having his BP taken.

After overhearing the conversation, a member of the review team asked if it was possible to try the machine to find out if it was easy for patients to use. A plastic token was handed to the reviewer and there were printed instructions for use on the machine. The machine is designed to take the patients BP from their wrist, not the upper arm which is the usual area. This could cause some uncertainty for patients who had not used the machine before and could also be a barrier for anyone with literacy problems.

It should not be assumed that all patients can use the machine without some requiring assistance, and had the receptionist explained to the patient how the machine worked he would not have left needing to make an appointment to return.

Another patient said:

“It was much better when the surgery was in the temporary hut –you could get to see a doctor and could see the same doctor who would then follow up with progress of your medical problem.”

She thought that the present service could be made more patient friendly like it used to be. She could not build up a satisfactory doctor/patient relationship as before. She felt there was a communication problem when she tried to phone.

Chapelford Medical Centre has offered a flu vaccination service during the months prior to the E&V visit. There has not been any ‘in-house’ Covid vaccination clinics and we have since been informed that Chapelford worked as a collaborative, as did all Warrington practices.

Prescriptions/Reviews

There is a post-box situated in reception for repeat prescription requests. The Practice does not employ a pharmacist, but as part of the PCN they have a clinical pharmacist resource available and shares a Pharmacy Technician with the PCN. However, the pharmacy team at Well Pharmacy is available to advise patients.

One of the visiting team went into the neighbouring Pharmacy (not part of the Practice) to speak to the pharmacist regarding repeat prescriptions. The pharmacist said that patients had to wait three days before their prescription was available. Although most of the prescriptions are done electronically, there is a problem because there is a shortage of doctors to authorise some of them. The pharmacist described some patients feeling disgruntled with the pharmacy because of this. The Site Manager confirmed with the visiting team that eConsult was available for prescriptions and repeat sick notes.

Privacy, dignity and meeting individual needs

The design of the building and the facilities for anyone with disabilities are of a high standard, and there was a Changing Places toilet which was spacious and well equipped. Thousands of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well other disabilities that severely limit mobility, cannot use standard accessible toilets. People may be limited in their own mobility so they need equipment to help them or may need support from one or two carers to either get on the toilet or to have their continence pad changed. The Changing Places toilet provide these facilities.

The feedback received from patients in relation to being treated with dignity and respect was varied and could be improved. Below are some of the responses received-

“Some of the receptionists show no compassion and are plain rude. On a plus side they have some new staff that seem pleasant and helpful.”

“My appointment with the doctor was rushed and I could have done with more time. The receptionists are always pleasant.”

“Receptionists are always polite and helpful and I have no complaints about the doctors and nurses.”

“Staff are rude and never return calls and information is difficult to obtain.”

Another patient informed the review team that following a recommendation by Push Doctor (due to headaches and continuing chest pains) on attending the face-to-face appointment I mentioned the two problems and was told

“well, which one do you want me to address?”

Patient Voice Feedback

The Practice has a Patient Participation Group (PPG) and there is information on the website, including a form for anyone interested in joining. The Practice states that:

‘The Patient Participation Group (PPG) is all about you, our patients, giving feedback on the care you receive’.

‘Have a say about your views on what we do in the practice, services, appointments and how we meet your needs’.

The E&V team could not locate any minutes or information from previous PPG meetings on the Practice website.

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’.

There was a collection box in reception for patient satisfaction surveys; however, there were no forms available at the time of the visit. Information on how to complain is displayed on one of the notice boards in the waiting area.

The most recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection report is displayed on the Practice website. The last inspection report was published on 29th November 2021.

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.

The visit was announced, and the overall rating was ‘Good’. The Practice was rated as ‘Requires Improvement’ for the ‘Responsive’ domain.

Administration and General Management

The Site Manager, who was open from the outset about the negative challenges the practice must deal with and address, stated that the Practice has developed an action plan to address areas for improvement from the CQC inspection report, and in response to complaints from patients. A member of staff reported that the Practice has recently developed a Facebook page to share information. “It is going well, and we have received less complaints.”

The Practice website had been changed prior to the E&V visit, and no longer directs patients to register with Push Doctor. At the time of the visit, patients were asked to complete an eConsult form. There was no information displayed on the website to explain the changes.

Feedback from a patient, states that,

“I have seen a practice nurse and GP face to face recently and have had virtual appointments via Push Doctor. All I would say is that it has been confusing trying to work out from the website how to make appointments.”

The Practice closes for one hour a day at lunch time. This is displayed on the Practice website.

Staffing and Leadership

There was no Practice Manager at the Chapelford Medical Centre at the time of the E&V visit. The previous manager had left the Practice in November 2021 and has not been replaced; however, the Site Manager informed the visiting team that she has a similar role.

Chapelford Medical Centre had several staff vacancies at the time of the E&V visit. Recruitment and retention of both clinical and administrative staff had been an ongoing problem. The Site Manager was actively attempting to recruit to the following roles: two GPs, a Healthcare Assistant and two Administrators.

At the time of the E&V visit, administrative staff were doing various roles to cover reception and 'back office' duties. The members of staff who spoke to the visiting team recognised that there were retention problems and that a lot of staff only stayed for a brief time.

Some members of staff said that they were happy with the work but said there was not much training due to Covid. One member of staff told the review team that training was available online and she was due to commence a two-day course the following week.

If administration staff have problems or concerns, they first speak to the Office Supervisor who is very approachable. One member of staff stated that some of her colleagues had left because they found it difficult trying to deal with patients who were frustrated and dissatisfied with the Practice.

Cleanliness and Environment

The building and all the clinical and non-clinical rooms entered, appeared clean and well maintained. The building was newly built just over two years ago, and the rooms are well equipped, spacious, and fully accessible. There are several large black and white photographs on canvas, which show the history of the area and the former Burtonwood air base.

Due to the ongoing Covid restrictions additional precautions were being taken by staff and patients, including the use of face masks, using hand gel dispensers, and social distancing.

Other Comments

The information displayed on Chapelford Medical Centre website has changed again since the E&V visit. The use of eConsult has ceased and has now been replaced with another system called SystemOnline. Patients are required to register for an online account to use SystemOnline.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the Practice works with the PCN and all stakeholders to improve recruitment and retention of staff, and that all existing staff vacancies are filled as soon as possible.
2. It is recommended that the telephone system is fit for purpose, and patients can speak to a receptionist in a timely manner, without fear of being cut-off or being held in a long queue.
3. From patient feedback, they would encourage the opportunity to meet face-to-face with GP's and would like an increase in these appointments. We do appreciate however, that the face-to-face appointments are limited due to recruitment restrictions but need to include this as feedback from patients.
4. It is recommended that patients are informed of planned changes about the way they can contact the surgery and the Practice website can be navigated easily.
5. It is recommended that staff support patients to use self-monitoring equipment if they cannot use it correctly, for example the blood pressure unit referred to earlier.

Distribution List

This report has been distributed to the following:

- Warrington Borough Council
- Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group
- Care Quality Commission
- Healthwatch England
- Chapelford Medical Centre

Appendices

Appendix 1: Response from Provider

Firstly, thank you to the Healthwatch team who have taken the time to attend the practice and interact with our patients. We welcome the constructive feedback and take all recommendations on board.

As a primary healthcare provider, Chapelford strives to deliver an excellent service to all of our patients, ensuring they receive safe and effective care whenever it is required. That is, and always will be, our top priority.

The team here at Chapelford Medical Centre have made important changes since the time of the Healthwatch review and we are confident that these changes have improved and will continue to improve patient experience.

Chapelford has faced significant challenges over the last year, specifically with recruitment and staff retention. The practice unfortunately had a number of staff experiencing long term sickness, which meant we were highly reliant on locum staff. During this time the practice adapted to this new structure and put systems and processes in place to maintain service delivery. Although, we do recognise and empathise with the impact this had on overall patient experience.

In addition to this we also must consider the challenges Chapelford face in terms of the limitations of primary care funding. Funding for the practice significantly reduced when the contract was changed to an individual GMS contract prior to moving to the new building. Previously, whilst at the portacabin, funding was approximately three times it is now. As of July 2022, Chapelford service around 7,200 patients and the NHS contract we hold provides funding for approximately 75% of our patient list. In order to rectify this deficit, we apply for additional contracts and funding where we can deliver the required additional services. With these challenges in mind, the practice must explore alternative options to keep on top of demand proactively and efficiently.

Chapelford Medical Centre has enhanced and diversified our clinical workforce and, although we no longer work with Push Doctor, we continue to explore digital solutions to help support the delivery of care. This not only allows us to provide a greater number of appointments, reduce waiting times and offer more options for accessing care, but it also means we have a more efficient back-office system in place that will help us manage demand as it continues to increase.

The pandemic has significantly changed the approach to face-to-face care in a GP setting and aligned to this, utilising remote (telephone or digital) consultations forms a core part of the NHS Long Term Plan. That said, we absolutely recognise that face-to-face care will always be a vital and necessary way of delivering healthcare. Improving access to services, including face-to-face where appropriate, remains a high priority for the team at Chapelford.

We have restructured our workforce and can confirm Chapelford now has a permanent clinical and fully staffed administrative team.

The clinical staff include:

Healthwatch Warrington Enter & View: Chapelford Medical Centre

- 2 General Practitioners
- 1 Advanced Nurse Practitioner
- 1 Lead Nurse
- 2 Health Care Assistants

We also have the following additional services which are hosted at Chapelford and are available across our PCN.

- First Contact Physiotherapist
- Clinical Pharmacist
- Mental Health Practitioner

The appointment of the new clinical staff has improved access by 25% and ensures continuity of care, which we are confident will improve patient outcomes. We are pleased to say we have already received a positive response to changes.

In order to retain staff, and maintain continuity for our patients, the practice has reviewed and implemented new ways of working. We recognise the importance of a good work-life balance and positive staff culture.

Now the practice has a full and stable workforce we are no longer required to close the practice at lunchtime. This once more will improve access for patients; especially for those who struggle to access the practice during traditional work hours.

Regarding the wait times on the phone, there are consistent themes that calls were not being answered, or that they were waiting for an unreasonable amount of time. We hear and acknowledge the feedback and would like to assure our patients that we have a plan in place to resolve these issues. Due to ongoing issues Chapelford will be changing our telephone system provider. We are also planning to implement online booking and as previously mentioned we are exploring digital solutions to improve access to care. In the interim we do appreciate your patience and would like to reiterate that if you require an urgent appointment, please call at 8am. For non-urgent appointments, or if you have general queries, we advise you call after 10am. Alternatively you can email the practice with any non-urgent enquiries.

Despite the challenges of the last few years Chapelford are proud to say that we remain motivated and dedicated to providing excellent care to our patients. For assurance about the quality of care at Chapelford, the practice was inspected by the CQC in October 2021 and achieved a 'Good' overall rating. However, it is vital we continue to hear patient feedback in order to progress our quality improvement strategy.

We have an active Patient Participation Group who work with practice staff, providing patient insights and giving feedback on our improvement strategies. We welcome all patients to view our website for more information: [Join our patient group](#)

Once again thank you to Healthwatch and to the patients who shared their experiences, we always welcome the opportunity to reflect on the service we provide.

Appendix 2: Comments from Patients

These comments have come from our feedback centre and through an Enter & View survey sent to patients.

1.	It has been almost impossible to get a doctor appointment for some considerable time. The only way to see a doctor is to contact Widnes walk- in centre. An excellent service.
2.	The appointment I had was right towards the start of the pandemic. I'm not confident we could get to see someone as easily now.
3.	21st Feb -called surgery at 8a.m -40mins engaged tone, when (finally) was through there was 15 calls in front of mine. Not good enough and certainly was not going to wait for I don't know how long, only to be told there were no more slots.
4.	Since this pandemic started we feel that the doctors have used this as an excuse not to have one to one consultation with their patients. So much so we had to book an appointment at the walk- in centre at Widnes and guess what; we actually got to see a Doctor. The other issue is why can't we pre book an appointment instead of trying to phone on the day, dentists don't do this?.
5.	I tried to get my daughter in and had telephone consultations, however when the doctors ring they just say go to hospital or the walk- in centre when it was not an emergency. Hence putting more strain on the hospitals. It was as if the doctor couldn't be bothered to do anything. I have used the eConsult and Push Doctor which were both very useful and there was always a plan of action, however this has now been taken away. For any referrals to hospital the practice takes a long time to send the information and also vice-versa when other professionals send information , it takes them a long time to get it even when I have a copy of the letters sent. Face-to-face doctors' appointments have virtually been non-existent during the pandemic with doctors working from home most of the time. Several times I have rung at 8 am and it can take 40 minutes for someone to answer the phone. This is very hard especially as a teacher doing it at work. Then you are told to ring the next day.
6.	My son has been poorly for weeks, tried to get in, managed to get appt , bloods were then done. Waited for call but didn't receive one so contacted them myself. Dr prescribed iron and vit D. There was no improvement, took me over week and half to get appt with Dr and had to do it through 111 in the end as every morning waited for 40 mins and still no appt available. When I did get to see the Dr she didn't take my concerns very seriously and questioned everything I said. Done poo sample now as she thinks it might be IBD but not all his symptoms are set within this. Wanted a referral to see a specialist as the Dr on 111 advised and full check to be completed , but Dr kept saying I checked him last time. I advised you only checked his tummy. But still no check done. To be honest I am not happy with this service for an 11-year-old boy who is in agony and been off school for 4 weeks. I am considering changing Dr's. Poor show!
7.	I just feel the surgery aren't helpful, staff are rude and never return calls and information is difficult to obtain. Push Doctor didn't work, I needed an appointment face-to-face because I have seen other patients get a face to face appt. I didn't

	understand why GP couldn't just increase my medication , it's easier , I do need to speak to my surgery tomorrow but am unsure what response I will get to see a GP, not happy at the moment with the service.
8.	The staff have been working very hard and under a lot of pressure but have been professional and kind throughout. Sometimes communication needs a little refinement - general text messages (for example about prescriptions over the festive period) can be helpful but are sometimes a little abrupt, quite late and a little ambiguous. As a person with a rare complex chronic condition, not having a consistent practitioner is difficult as it requires re-explanation of the condition and its impact. This is especially the case when having to make decisions about continuing to work etc - it would be helpful to be liaising with someone who knows the progress of the condition.
9.	The surgery is appalling. You cannot get through on the telephone at all. They made you go to Push Doctor. Getting a Push Doctor appointment was also difficult as sometimes the app went down. Then seems to have disappeared altogether. I have had bloods and an ECG done only to be told there were no appointments for nearly 2 months!!!! Then when I finally got my bloods done they went missing. The medical staff are lovely when you actually get to see them but the organisation of the surgery and how its run is shambolic. Strikes me the partners are only interested in Push Doctor or other more lucrative shiny new things instead of getting the foundations of the surgery running smoothly. I can't even move surgery as nowhere will take me on. It's at the point where I haven't even bothered trying to contact them with issues lately. They need new management URGENTLY.
10.	Have not been able to get an appointment to get blood results so had to get them repeated. Have not been able to get an appointment for repeat bloods so still don't know what is wrong. Getting through on the phone has been terrible.
11.	I also needed a GP appointment. It's a real challenge to get an appointment. Not accessible at all.
12.	Trying to get through to someone to make a face-to-face appointment is a joke. I don't have hours on end to wait in a queue then eventually get through to be told there are no appointments left! This is unacceptable and something needs to be done.
13.	Due to complete incompetence at Chapelford surgery not referring me for urgent Anti Coagulation treatment. Treatment was delayed for months. I had face-to-face contact with a relief Dr asking for help. He saw me, listened to my chest, and informed me I had no chest infection, had he listened to my heart and pulse he would have identified I was having a major heart arrhythmia. On a Zoom call Drs informed me I looked well. Perhaps close the surgery down.
14.	It's impossible to get through to the doctors on the phone.
15.	Initial telephone call resulted in a face-to-face appointment and then a referral to a Consultant. I was also able to get a follow up appointment afterwards.
16.	It can be difficult to know the best way to access care as it keeps changing and sometimes we have had no idea. I'm glad the new website is now functioning, but

	patients need keeping in the loop and given clear information on what to do. Push Doctor worked well and needs replacing with something similar.
17.	Access to services has been extremely difficult during Covid. Having to ring up every morning and do "fastest finger first" at 8am to try and secure an appointment. A number of times, I've still been on hold at 9am and just given up trying to get an appointment. Once you get a GPs appointment the service is fine. It's just getting past reception that is the biggest challenge. Push Doctor was very good. I hope they can bring that back. Easy to access, convenient appointments and pre bookable times to choose from.
18.	Difficult to get through to book an appointment. Have to ring at 8am but might not get through till 9, by then all appointments have gone and you have to wait until the following day to try again. Very difficult process when you start work at 8am at a hospital and can't spend an hour on hold on the phone as you have to be on the wards. When will booking appointments in advance come back?.
19.	My care was handed over to my GP following pulmonary embolisms late last year. I was told I would get a review to assess the continuation of taking the medication. None of this has happened, no contact has been made despite me requesting it on a repeat prescription. I did go to the GP on 28 th Oct 2021, following a recommendation by Push Doctor due to headaches and continuing chest pains , on attending the appointment I mentioned the two problems and was told "well which one do you want me to address".
20.	I have seen a practice nurse and GP face-to-face recently and have had virtual appointments via Push Doctor. All I would say is that it has been confusing trying to work out from the website how to make appointments.
21.	Although I was able to get an appointment for my 2-year-old, this was very stressful and involved watching the clock and phoning at exactly 8am and praying I was quick enough to get in the queue on 2 different days. In my experience the staff were very friendly and helpful and are working in very difficult conditions. The surgery needs more GPs in order to accommodate the number of patients.
22.	Very poor service, can never get an appointment for the last 2 years face-to-face, needs sorting out or shutting down, it's pointless being there.
23.	You can't get through to get an appointment!! By the time you've waited over an hour there's nothing left. They're only seeing urgent cases at the moment. My daughter was told she wasn't "urgent" enough to be seen but ended up the same day in a&e on a drip!! Push Doctor was really good but now even that has been limited. There's very little communication from the practice about any changes. They had three GPs who were off sick with stress and two of them left without giving notice so there's obviously something amiss with how it's being managed. Maybe if the Dr spent less time posting about stuff on social media and more time seeing patients it would help! I appreciate the pandemic has put enormous pressure on everyone, but things weren't right before it.
24.	Very difficult to gain an appointment. This survey doesn't address the access issues seen. Phoning at 8am to scramble for a handful of appointments. No permanent GPs for face-to-face appointments with any meaningful availability

	(1day/week for a permanent GP is no good). Let my husband down badly post cancer surgery when he needed help with suspected infected wound. Told to go to walk-in centre. The staff there are overwhelmed and fed up with inadequate appointments at this surgery making them the overspill for needless duties that are not suitable for their surgery.
25.	The option of a face-to-face appt was refused. It has not been possible to access some services due to shortfalls in staff. I have received mixed messages and instructions when making enquiries about seeking advice and treatment options.
26.	The surgery has never been the best, and since Covid it is shocking. I couldn't get an appointment for my baby during Covid and was told they weren't able to see patients under the age of 2!!! What?!!!!!!! When I needed an appointment for a lump I have been disregarded and had appointments via Push Doctor who said it was a hernia. I explained that I had no signs of a hernia and it needed to be felt. Again, I was told this was not possible. 12 months on I am now waiting an urgent referral appointment with a Gynaecologist for this lump. The service at Chapelford surgery has been disgusting.
27.	Push Doctor was a very good alternative service made available during the Covid peak. I always find Chapelford a very good GP service, especially from Nurses & on-site Pharmacy.
28.	Phoning up at 8am is awful, you spend an hour waiting and often don't get through. I need to talk to a Dr about a smear test related issue and was not able to get through to a receptionist. They tell you the importance of getting a smear test, yet you can't even get an appointment half the time. I'm tired of waking up early only to be on hold for an hour or more and sometimes not even getting anywhere. I've thought of moving practices, but I'll bet the service is the same everywhere. It's frustrating.
29.	The service from the practice is good, but getting an appointment is not, and calling at 8am makes no difference- can't get through and then in a queue.
30.	Not being able to see a doctor, can't get through on phone, then all the appointments are taken.
31.	Not usually able to get appointments with a GP. Asked to ring at 8am- not being able to get through for 45-50 mins and then being told all appointments are gone. Usually, you get appointments with a nurse or practitioner. GP appointments are usually via telephone IF you can get one. Been told on many occasions to go to walk-in centre.
32.	Obtaining appointments is ridiculously hard. Usually takes 30 mins to get through (if you don't get cut off first).
33.	Given a Push Doctor appt, as they were unable to examine, I was advised I needed a face-to-face appt but was unable to make one due to reception staff not being able to give pre-bookable appts. After a complaint, I was given an appt. Dr was more concerned about having full health blood tests than condition. After blood tests it took a further 8 weeks to gain another face-to-face appt. Dr still not willing

	to listen to concerns over the condition and eventually did read notes and give suitable medication.
34.	Unable to obtain face-to-face appt with GP or practice nurse. No longer able to use Push Doctor service. Had to use Halton urgent care centre and Widnes walk-in centre (by appts from 111).
35.	Very unhappy with the Push Doctor service and lack of GP availability and extremely long wait times to get through to the surgery by telephone - on one occasion I waited for 1hr 45mins and was then cut off.
36.	I had to move from this GP because of how appalling it was. Over the course of the pandemic I could not get an appointment at all and still struggled when other GPs started taking face-to-face appointments. I had to take my 4-year-old son to the walk-in centre and other alternative services several times because I could not get an appointment for a cough that was there for months. We also had issues getting my husband's pain medication on time when they introduced the Push Doctor service. I felt that they should have consulted patients in advance about the Push Doctor service and how this would affect patient care. They diverted the phone lines to a Push Doctor call centre so I couldn't speak to the GP myself I had to go through Push Doctor. I felt like I was being pushed into using the Push Doctor service when I knew nothing about them. The website even changed to a Push Doctor website and looked like I needed to sign up to it, I didn't want to. My husband ended up signing up.
37.	Never been able to get face-to-face appointment with GP since before pandemic. Call at 8am to be told join the queue, and after being on hold up to an hour there were no appointments left. Booked an appointment with a nurse practitioner 30 days in advance to be told on arrival he could not deal with my problem; I'd have to see a GP.
38.	On occasion I requested a face-to-face appointment because I had a breast lump, but I was still forced to have an online appointment. Totally pointless. More recently the telephone lines are definitely better, but appointments need to improve.
39.	On Thursday 20 January at 8am I called the reception to book an appointment. I was waiting for someone to answer that call and by 8:20am my call was cut off. I finally managed to speak to someone at 8:27am who told me that there were no face-to-face appointments left for that day. I was offered a telephone triage with the Dr at 12:15. I was told that subject to that triage appointment I might then be invited in for a face-to-face appointment. I described my symptoms (lower right stomach pain for over 12 hours) and explained that I needed to see someone sooner and in person. I further explained that a telephone triage was useless as clearly my symptoms indicated that I would need a physical examination in any event and with the pain I had I couldn't wait for a telephone triage and then a possible face-to-face whenever that may be. I was forced to call 111 and use up their resources because my own GP couldn't or wouldn't see me. This is unacceptable. 111 informed me I had to be seen.
40.	I have repeatedly requested in person appointments since being pregnant, I have repeatedly been declined to see anyone in person at the surgery, and only been offered/ forced to use the Push Doctor application. My midwife stated that I needed

	to see a GP in person to be examined and even after stating this to reception it did not get me an appointment. GPs I have talked to through the Push Doctor application have even stated that I should see someone in person, and had to advise going to A& E. The only option to be seen in person is to turn up to A & E or try to go to the Widnes walk- in centre.
41.	I phoned last week asking for BP and blood tests for my husband and myself. Prior to Covid these tests were regularly given, and we were always requested by the practice to make an appointment. We have NOT had these tests since before the pandemic even though other surgeries have done these tests. I was promised last week by a receptionist that she was requesting these appointments, and someone would telephone us. It has NOT happened.
42.	It is really difficult to get face-to-face appointments and a challenge to get through initially to be considered. Push Doctor appointments used to work really well but don't appear to exist anymore.
43.	When there is a need for a GP to actually see you following this recommendation from the pharmacist and the receptionist, she says that is not necessary....and that she will get someone to phone instead to triage. The triage has just been done via the pharmacist! It took several calls plus a request to speak to the Practice manager and a mention of contacting the medical ombudsman before a face-to-face appt was offered. The outcome was an immediate referral to skin specialist for removal of growth ...which could have been done 2 months previously!!
44.	Shocking practice can never get through on the phone. No Drs, staff terrible can't get appointments ,get fobbed off , worst practice I have ever known. Should be closed due to malpractice and incompetence.
45.	It is virtually impossible to make an appointment. You can't get through on the telephone- and then if you are lucky enough to get your call answered there are never any appointments left. Also, some of the receptionists share no compassion and are plain rude. On a plus side they seem to have some new staff that seem pleasant and helpful.



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