



Enter and View Visit Report

Cambrian Medical Centre

Visit date: 11th December 2019

Publication date: 21st January 2020

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About Healthwatch Shropshire



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We work to ensure your voice counts when it comes to shaping and improving services. We address inequalities in health and social care, to help make sure everyone gets the services they need. We are a charity.

There are local Healthwatch across the country as well as a national body, Healthwatch England.

What is Enter & View?

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The responsibility to carry out Enter and View visits was given to Healthwatch in the **Health and Social Care Act 2012**.



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Enter & View visits are not inspections and always have a 'purpose'.



Details of the Visit

Service	Cambrian Medical Centre, Oswestry
Provider	Cambrian Surgery
Date / time of visit	Wednesday 11th December 2019 10.30am
Visit team	Two Healthwatch Shropshire Enter and View Authorised Representatives (ARs)

Purpose of the Visit

Advertising and ease of access is one of the core requirements for improving access to general practice. The purpose of these visits is to see if GP Practices are meeting these requirements as set out by NHS England¹:

- Ensure services are advertised to patients, including notification on practice websites, notices in local urgent care services and publicity into the community, so that it is clear to patients how they can access these appointments and associated service.
- Ensure ease of access for patients including:
 - all practice receptionists able to direct patients to the service and offer appointments to extended hours service on the same basis as appointments to non-extended hours services
 - patients should be offered a choice of evening or weekend appointments on an equal footing to core hours appointments.

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 experience of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/gp/gp/vf/redesign/improving-access/>

The Context of the Visit

Healthwatch Shropshire (HWS) has received many comments regarding the availability of GP appointments in the last year. The public seem generally unaware of extended access appointments (appointments available outside normal surgery opening hours) being available. HWS are gathering further information about access to GP appointments through a hot topic. A hot topic is targeted activity looking at one particular aspect of health and social care and inviting views from the public.

We decided to visit GP surgeries across Shropshire to discuss appointments and see how they are offering extended access appointments, if they are advertising them in the surgery and if they are making patients aware of them when they ask.

We visited GP practices representing a range of list sizes and in different areas of Shropshire.

What we did

Two Authorised representatives visited the surgery. On arrival we met and talked with the Finance Manager and the Reception Manager. Later we spoke to the prescription clerk and 10 patients in two of the three waiting rooms at the surgery.

We looked around the waiting rooms to see what information was available in the surgery about appointments and in particular Extended Access appointments.

What we found out

Environment

The Practice has 13,000 patients at the current time. The surgery has 5 partners and 3 salaried GPs. They are currently one full-time doctor down and are struggling to recruit.

The Practice also has a Nurse Practitioner, six Practice Nurses, four Health Care Assistants and provide a phlebotomy service. There are also clinics with the clinical Pharmacist and a Physiotherapist.

The Practice is situated in a large building which also houses the Community Health Services, a Minor Injuries Unit and a pharmacy. There are 3 surgery waiting areas and we accessed 2 of them.



GP Appointments

The Finance Manager and Reception Manager told us that they were seeing an increase in demand for appointments. They said this was due to higher patient expectation rather than an increase in patient numbers as their list size is currently quite stable. It was felt that many patients opted to try and see a GP first, rather than speak to a Pharmacist or self-manage often simple conditions. The reception staff, by asking a few questions, try to signpost patients to the appropriate healthcare professional, although this can be resented by some patients.

Appointments can be booked online or over the phone. 45-50% of appointments are available to book online. Currently these are for Doctors, asthma, cervical smears, and travel vaccination clinics, the last three are nurse led. Any cancelled appointments made online are automatically freed up to be re-offered.

Same day appointments can be made by phone or in person only and may be available morning or afternoon. If there are no urgent slots left, then the patient will be directed to the Extended Access option or the duty GP will phone them back at an agreed time to discuss and advise. The waiting time for a routine appointment can vary. If the patient is willing to see any GP the wait is around 10 days, if a specific GP is requested the wait can be longer. The wait for a routine appointment with the clinical Pharmacist or Physiotherapist is around 3 days.

The Practice has recently introduced email consultations, which we were told are useful for administrative issues, medical issues or simple advice. This involves the patient completing a questionnaire which is seen by the duty doctor or appropriate staff. The response time is 48 hours.

The value of the Nurse Practitioner and Pharmacist was highlighted and it was hoped that, as patients became more used to considering an alternative to seeing a doctor every time, some pressure would be reduced.

When asked “How easy is it to get an appointment?” 9 patients said “very easy” or “easy”. One said “difficult”. This appeared to be because a specific GP was requested and therefore an appointment wasn’t readily available.

Patients also told us that the ‘GPs are amazing’ and that all the staff are ‘very pleasant and helpful’.

Extended Access Appointments

The surgery offers extended access appointments from 6.30-8.00pm on weekdays and on Saturday mornings. They are in a group of four local practices and appointments take place at Cambrian Surgery one week out of every three. The other weeks they are offered at other local surgeries, one being just across the road.

The receptionists have had training on offering extended access appointments. These will tend to be offered if people can't get an appointment, they are popular with patients and most extended access appointments are used.

Of the 10 patients we spoke to only two had heard about Extended Access appointments. One was unsure and said they may have been offered their flu jab out of hours. When we explained what Extended Access appointments were three people said they thought it was a good idea.

We saw posters about Extended Access appointments in the two waiting areas we visited. One was a long corridor and the poster was at one end so most people would not see it.

Website

We looked at the website for the surgery. On the Opening Hours page of the Cambrian Medical Centre website there is a signpost to Extended Access info. This states that appointments are available 18.30- 20.00 Monday-Friday; 8.00-13.00 Saturday; 8.30 - 12.30 (Sunday and Bank Holidays).

Extended Access could be better explained on the Opening Hours page. The Extended Access page is not signposted on the Appointments page.

Additional Findings

- We were told both reception and prescription desk staff are sometimes subject to rudeness and aggression, but one staff member said, "It goes with the job and often some will come in or phone to apologise later."
- The Practice has responsibility for the Derwen College at Gobowen and holds a clinic there once a week. Speaking to a carer in the waiting room we were told, "if we need to bring someone to the Practice, I've never had to wait more than 48 hours for an appointment."

- We saw a poster advertising a walk in clinic for blood tests every weekday morning.
- One patient suggested that her child should be flagged on the surgery system as he has a serious health condition and she has to ask for triage and repeat details.

Summary of Findings

- The surgery is experiencing high demand for appointments. The wait for a routine GP appointment is 10 days or longer to see a named GP.
- The surgery use a duty Doctor system to triage patients requesting same day appointments.
- The surgery offer Extended Access appointments when people cannot get an appointment on the day.
- Most people we spoke to were not aware of Extended Access appointments.
- Seven of the ten patients we spoke to did not know about Extended Access appointments.
- There were posters telling patients about Extended Access in the two waiting areas we saw, however, there were a lot of different posters on display and it would be difficult to place these posters prominently enough that patients would definitely see them.
- Appointments are available with a Nurse Practitioner, Nurses, Pharmacist and Physiotherapists.
- The surgery has recently introduced the e-consult system which allows patients to email a GP or other medical professional at the surgery. So far this system is proving popular.
- Patients were generally very happy with their treatment at Cambrian Medical Centre.

Recommendations

In order to improve the patients' experience we suggest:

- Look at different ways to promote the availability of extended access appointments as the layout of the surgery could make the effective use of posters difficult
- Review website information on Extended Access appointments and see if this could be made more prominent

Service Provider Response

The response from the Provider appears below our recommendations in blue.

- Look at different ways to promote the availability of extended access appointments as the layout of the surgery could make the effective use of posters difficult

We have increased the number of posters around the building plus we have tried to find more prominent placements of them.

We have an active twitter account and regularly promote the service and will continue to do so.

This service has only been commissioned until 31st March 2020 and going forward if continued is likely to be a Primary Care Network service. The appointments are used fully and over promotion at this stage may give rise to disappointment if the service changes in 10 weeks' time.

- Review website information on Extended Access appointments and see if this could be made more prominent

The website is set up in such a way that latest news is featured in a more prominent place this changed from latest news in November. We are now reviewing this to see if we can give the service a refresh on the site.

This is under review. The Practice Manager has asked web developers to add an action bar with information on the service. This will be completed by 31st January 2020.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Shropshire would like to thank the Trust, patients, visitors and staff for their contribution to this Enter & View.

Get in Touch

Please contact Healthwatch Shropshire to share your views and experiences of this service or any other health and social care service in Shropshire. We gather comments anonymously and share them with service commissioners and providers to highlight areas of good practice and identify areas for improvement.



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