



Enter and View Visit Report

Prescott Surgery

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About Healthwatch Shropshire



Healthwatch Shropshire is the independent health and social care champion for local people.

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?

Healthwatch Shropshire gathers information on people's experiences of health and social care services and there are times when it is appropriate for Healthwatch Shropshire to see and hear for ourselves how services are being provided. These visits are called 'Enter and View', and can be 'announced', 'semi-announced' or 'unannounced'. For 'semi-announced' visits the service provider is told we will visit but not the date or time of the visit.



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



Enter and View visits are carried out by a team of specially trained and DBS checked volunteers called Authorised Representatives. They make observations, collect people's views and opinions anonymously and produce a report.

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



Details of the Visit

Service	Prescott Surgery, Baschurch
Provider	Dr Guildford and Partners
Date / time of visit	Thursday 23 rd January 2020 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/gpfv/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. We met and talked with the Practice Manager and the Chair of the Patient Participation Group (PPG). We later spoke to 10 patients and 2 reception/pharmacy staff.

We looked at the waiting room and at notice boards to see what information was available to patients, especially regarding Extended Access appointments.

What we found out

Environment

The Practice is situated in the village of Baschurch and serves a largely rural area. The Practice number is approximately 7,000. The Practice is proud to be accredited as Dementia Friendly and staff have made visible changes to promote this, for example by providing coloured toilet seats and using clear signage that includes pictures. All staff are Dementia aware.

There are 2 full time and 4 part time doctors, plus regular locums. The Manager told us that they have had no problems recruiting GPs and that locum doctors frequently want to stay with the Practice. There are also 2 nurses and a health care assistant.



This is a dispensing Practice as there is no independent pharmacy locally and this is accessed from the large, airy waiting room.

The building is situated on a main road and is easily accessible. It is purpose built and has a car park alongside. Currently the building is fully occupied and whilst the space is adequate at present, the Manager showed us plans for possible building expansion should the need arise in the future. The Manager said that parking can be a problem.

The waiting room is bright, has comfortable bench-type seating and an accessible water dispenser. There is a play area for young children in one corner. There are notice boards displaying a range of information including one devoted to self-care, the use of the 111 service and the pharmacy service. There was a poster advertising our Healthwatch visit at Reception.

There is a screen showing the surgery hours, advice on baby movement in pregnancy, plus other advertising or general health information. The Manager told us that there is a deliberate effort made to present uncluttered notice boards because it was felt that people paid more attention to the information displayed. There is a rack containing information leaflets.

We could not see any list of services provided by or available at the Practice although the Website has a full list.

The Manager and PPG Chair said they have an excellent partnership, working on Agendas for introducing improvements and changes. The PPG take a very proactive role within the Practice and there is a PPG noticeboard with dates of meetings in the waiting room. Both the Manager and the PPG Chair find the liaison between them beneficial to the Practice.

GP Appointments

Telephones are answered within a short time, with three options offered - appointments, prescriptions or other.

All patients who ring to ask for a GP appointment are asked if they are comfortable telling the receptionist the nature of their problem, but if they decline, they are given a GP appointment. It is felt that there is no need for triage management. If a patient does tell the receptionist the reason for their request, they may be directed to one of the Practice nurses if appropriate. Sometimes a GP appointment may be available sooner.

The Manager and receptionists told us that they are always able to offer an appointment on the day if needed and have a 'rolling programme' of available appointments. At lunchtime, next-day morning appointments are freed up for booking for urgent issues.

Roughly 25% of appointments are available for patients to book on-line.

Telephone appointments are also available and include a call with a specific doctor when they have available telephone call slots.

The Practice Manager said that patients usually wait up to two weeks for a routine appointment and may have to wait up to three weeks to get an appointment with a specific doctor. One patient said that it was easier to get a same day appointment for children. In the past they had used A&E, a pharmacy and the 111 service if they couldn't get an appointment. Another patient said they would use self-care.

The patients we spoke to told us that generally it was 'easy or very easy to get an appointment'. One patient said that they are always seen. One patient was unhappy that they could not access the named GP that they wished to see as an emergency. They had a specific medical problem and felt that only one of the doctors had the appropriate qualification to treat them. However, they said that they always get to see one of the medical staff if they had an acute issue.

One patient who needs regular appointments said 'they are good at fitting me in. It is a very good practice.' All the patients we spoke to commented on the friendliness and helpfulness of the staff, both administrative and clinical.

Extended Access Appointments

The surgery offers its extended hours programme with three other surgeries, all based in Oswestry some 12 miles away, offering appointments on evenings Monday to Friday, 6.30 - 8.30pm and a Saturday morning, 8am - 1pm. Prescott Surgery does not host any Extended Hours sessions and the Practice doctors are not part of the clinical team providing the service.

We saw one poster about Extended Access in the waiting room, but none of the patients who we spoke to were aware of the service or what it meant. When we explained how the service worked, one patient said they would be interested in it and another said that their husband had had to wait 2.5 weeks for an appointment and that extended access appointments were never mentioned. One patient said they had never been in a position to need an extended access appointment and another said that they would use the service if they had to wait too long for the next routine appointment. One patient said they don't drive at night so wouldn't be able to use evening appointments.

Receptionists have been trained to offer Extended Hours appointments, but it seems that the use of this facility is infrequent. There does not seem to be a demand for them as requests for appointments are generally met.

We spoke to an employed patient who was unaware of the extended service. They thought it was "a good idea" but had never had an occasion when it would have been more appropriate to use the service.

Website

We looked at the website for Prescott Surgery prior to our visit. The lead item was the news of the upcoming visit of Healthwatch Shropshire, giving the phone number for any patients who would like to contribute but who were not attending on the day.

The opening hours of the Surgery are:

Monday to Friday: 8.30am - 6pm

Closed at weekends.

The 'Book an Appointment' offer goes direct to 'Patient Access' and does not mention Extended access appointments. Extended access appointments are not mentioned under 'Patient Information: Appointments' either.

Under 'Surgery News' there is a link for 'Evening and Saturday am appointments' which goes on to explain the arrangement with the Oswestry Practices. There is further information about the introduction of the Extended Access system under 'Opening Hours'.

There is a comprehensive list of the services on offer at Prescott Surgery, including immunisation, travel vaccinations, childhood vaccinations and minor surgery.

Additional Findings

- The Surgery has a good relationship with all staff. The word 'team' cropped up frequently. One member of staff told us "No-one here is more important than anyone else." Another said, "I could speak to anyone here if I had a problem."
- The Manager told us that there is a deliberate policy of making Locum GPs feel welcome before they even arrive at the Practice and that they are integrated into the team.
- Prescriptions can be ordered on-line, by phone or by use of the prescription drop-box.

Summary of Findings

- Prescott Surgery serves a mainly rural area.
- The surgery is accredited as being Dementia Friendly.
- The number of patients at the surgery is increasing but within manageable limits.
- There is a comprehensive range of services offered listed on the Website, but not in the waiting room.
- Extended Access information is in both the waiting area and on the website but not very prominently displayed.
- Signposting to other health professionals is used if patients are willing to tell reception staff the nature of the issue when they call to make an appointment.
- There is a friendly ethos within the workplace.
- Patients are very satisfied with the availability of appointments and the service the Practice provides.
- Extended Hours are offered, but not routinely.
- Distance to participating Extended Hours surgeries is a possible issue.

Recommendations

In order to improve the patients' experience we suggest:

- Consider asking Receptionists to routinely mention the availability of Extended Access appointments when offering patients appointments for which they might have to wait 2 or 3 weeks.
- Review how the information about Extended Access is displayed on the website to increase patients' awareness and understanding of the offer.
- Consider promoting a list of additional services in the waiting room in addition to the website.

Service Provider Response

March 2020

Due to the ongoing situation with Coronavirus (COVID-19) we have not received a response to our report. When we do receive a response we will update this report and republish it.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Shropshire would like to thank the Practice Manager, PPG Chair, staff and patients of Prescott surgery for their assistance and co-operation with this Enter and View visit.

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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