



Enter and View Visit Report

Shifnal and Priorslee Medical Practice Shifnal Surgery

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Contents

Page

3	About Healthwatch Shropshire
	 What is Enter & View
4-5	Details of visit
	 Purpose of visit
	 Disclaimer
	 Context of the visit
5	What we did
5-9	What we found out
5	 Environment
5	 Appointments
8	 Extended Access Appointments
9	 Website
9	Additional findings
9	Summary of findings
10	Recommendations
11	Service Provider Response - to visit and report
12	<i>Acknowledgement</i>
12	<i>Get in Touch with Healthwatch Shropshire</i>

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	Shifnal Surgery
Provider	Shifnal and Priorslee Medical Practice
Date / time of visit	Wednesday 4th December 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 Shifnal and Priorslee Medical Practice (Shifnal Surgery). We spoke with the Business Development Manager, the Office Manager, a Receptionist, a representative of the Patient Participation Group (PPG) and 14 patients. We looked at the website, the information boards in the reception area and the signage outside the building.



What we found out

Environment

The reception area is set to one side and gives privacy to patients speaking to the receptionist. The waiting room has ample seating and there are several noticeboards with many notices. We were unable to see any notices telling people about extended access appointments. We saw a notice by the reception desk saying there were “reduced appointments due to local staffing issues”. On a window on the outside of the building it said the surgery is open Monday - Friday 8.00 -1.00 and 2.00- 6.00.

Appointments

We asked patients about their experiences of contacting the medical practice, what they did if they could not get an appointment and if they knew about the extended access appointments.

We used a questionnaire for this and the results are below:

	Good	Reasonable	Poor
How easy is to get an appointment?	2	3	9

	Yes	No
Is it easy to phone the surgery?	5	9

If you can't get through on the phone to make an appointment what do you do?		
	Call 111	3
	Go to A&E	4
	Give up and call again at 8.00 a.m. the next day	5
	Walk to the surgery and speak to the receptionist	2

Once they had managed to get an appointment all the patients were happy with the care they received from the Doctors and staff but many were frustrated with the difficulty of getting through to the surgery on the telephone.

- Nine people we spoke to all said they had to ring at 8.00 a.m. when the surgery opened to make an appointment.
- Seven people said it is only possible to book an appointment on the day you call.
- Two people said they had been offered an appointment up to 14 days ahead.
- Six people said the receptionists tell them to call back at 8.00 a.m. the next day and try again.
- Nine people said they waited 20 - 30 minutes on hold and were told they were caller number 5 (for example) in the queue and they slowly moved forward in the queue; but often the phone cut off unanswered before getting to the front of the queue.

- Two people said they constantly had their phone on redial, dialling up to a hundred times, another said they used two mobile phones at the same time.
- One of the managers told us same day appointments are still available often until after 10.00 a.m.
- Three people said they used the website to make an appointment and they found they were able to get an appointment in a reasonable time. One said the only way to get an appointment on a day in the future is to use the website.
- A manager told us 25% of appointments are made available on line.

We saw three receptionists answering the phones, which we noted at midday were constantly ringing. One of the receptionists was making calls to patients advising them of test results etc.

The Business Development Manager told us that in March 2019 they had identified issues with appointments and the telephone system and they had an ongoing project which had necessitated a review of the functionality of the system, working with the telephone provider to make improvements and training staff including staff on short term appointments. A Manager told us there had been several projects in the past to improve the system but these had not been successful.



Improvements to the telephone booking system went live in October 2019 and these include;

- increasing the booking window for appointments from 2 weeks to 6 weeks,
- increasing the number of same day appointments,
- introducing a duty doctor clinic to review calls coming in and see urgent cases on the same day,
- increasing the number of Advanced Nurse Practitioner appointments so that cases can be dealt with when the patient calls rather than asking the patient to book an appointment at the surgery,
- increasing the number of book in advance appointments for people who work (4 appointments now offered between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m.)
- training staff in signposting people to alternative services e.g. 111, A&E, Pharmacist etc.

The Manager told us that the project is moving to its final test phase and will soon be promoted with the PPG and patients.

Extended access appointments

The Managers told us that the practice is part of a cluster of surgeries - Broseley, Much Wenlock & Cressage, Bridgnorth, Albrighton, Cleobury Mortimer, Alveley, Highly, Brown Clee and Albrighton.

Evening and weekend appointments can be made at Albrighton or Bridgnorth. In addition Shifnal & Priorslee Medical Practice have 4 early morning surgeries (3 at Shifnal and 1 at Priorslee). One patient told us extended access appointments would not be useful because of lack of transport. The manager gave us a sheet about transport including community car scheme and public transport options.

We asked patients if they knew about extended access appointments.

	Yes	No
Are you aware of the extended access appointments?	4	10
Would extended access appointments be useful?	2	5*

- Not all patients answered this question

A Manager told us receptionists can search for extended access appointments on the computer system but because more appointments have been made available at the surgery only a small percentage of the extended access appointments are used. The Manager said often they are not suitable because of location or patients' personal choice.



Two patients said they were aware of the extended access appointments as it is now included “in the lengthy automated voice message” heard when on hold on the telephone, two others said they had seen information on the website. One patient said their partner had used the service but it had not been useful as they had been told to come to this practice to have tests done.

Website

The Manager told us the website has just been redesigned and updated as they had had issues responding to comments on the NHS website. The new website has only been live a week. We looked at the website and it includes information on extended access appointments but it was not clear where or when the evening and weekend appointments are.



The website says that the practice is part of the South Shropshire Medical Group made up of 15 surgeries. One patient we spoke to was aware of the extended access appointments but thought they would have to go anywhere in south Shropshire.

Additional Findings

One patient told us that the electronic book in system now has a cursor you need to move to book in and the patient felt this was making it more difficult for patients to use as before it was a touch screen. We did not see this being used.

The representative from the PPG told us that engagement between the group and the practice has been poor but a meeting is planned for January 2020 which the managers will attend. The PPG representative was unaware of the plans in hand to improve systems. A patient told us that the last minutes of the group on the website are dated 2016.

Summary of Findings

- We did not see any information on the outside or inside of the building telling people about extended access appointments.
- Most people said it is hard to get an appointment.
- Most people said it is hard to get through to the surgery on the telephone.
- Most people give up if they can't get through on the phone and try again the next day at 8.00 a.m.
- Most people think you can only get an appointment by ringing at 8.00 a.m. for a same day appointment.
- Most people told us they wait 20-30 minutes on hold on the phone.
- 3 people were happy using the website and on line appointment booking system.
- The Manager has reviewed and is trialling improvements to the telephone system.
- The Manager has increased the number of appointments available.
- Most people were unaware of extended access appointments.
- The website has been redesigned and it includes some information on extended access appointments.
- The PPG has limited involvement with the surgery.
- All the patients we spoke to were happy with the care provided by the staff.

Recommendations

In order to improve the patients' experience we suggest:

- Improve communication with all patients and with the PPG to promote new ways of booking appointments.
- Consider increasing the number of staff to answer phones.
- Involve the PPG in speaking with patients explaining to them new ways of working and new initiatives.
- Review and update information in the surgery telling people about how to book appointments.
- Promote online booking of appointments so that patients do not have to use the telephone system.
- Promote the availability of extended access appointments especially for people who are employed.
- Review and update website information on extended access appointments.

Service Provider Response

Shifnal & Priorslee Medical Practice wish to thank Healthwatch for their report and acknowledgment that a detailed piece of work had taken place within the practice prior to the visit to improve telephone access and appointment access during 2019 as a result of patient feedback.

At the time of the visit this work was moving towards its final phase patient awareness - communications, promotion, managing expectation so it is not surprising the report makes recommendations in order to improve the patient's experience when booking appointments and we believe they slot in with our practice plan.

Members of the Practice's management team met with the patient participation group (PPG) on Monday 13th January 2020. Communication and involvement was discussed.

Agreement going forward was to plan a series of pre-scheduled visits to the practice by the PPG in which the agenda would focus on speaking with individual or small groups of patients in the waiting room and explaining to them the range of appointments on offer and how to book. Patients interested in registering for on line access will be routed to reception on the day with a view to reducing demands on the telephone system.

Using the Enter and View Visit Report by Healthwatch Shropshire as reference, feedback from the PPG visits and liaising with the wider practice team we will update information notice boards and website clearly telling patient about how to book appointments notwithstanding the day to day work the reception team already do in this area.

At the time of the Sit and View Visit posters promoting on line booking were absent. Posters are removed as a result of wear and tear then procured and replaced which was the case following the visit. Online booking of appointments is promoted on the patient education TV screen in the waiting room, on the new Practice website and by the reception team.

The next PPG meeting is 20 April 2020. In the interim period the PPG have plans to identify volunteers from the group willing to coordinate the pre-schedule meetings. The longer term view is to further improve engagement and make regular planned visits a part of the usual working processes of the Practice.

Inadequate staffing levels does have an impact and not solely on the telephone system. Review of adequate staffing levels is ongoing and the practice is considering increasing the number of staff to answer the phones.

The “You Said We Did” practice response to feedback received from patients this year was discussed with the PPG and favourably received. “You Said We Did” feedback is now available to view on site and on the New Practice Website.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Shropshire would like to thank the surgery staff and patients 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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