



Enter and View Visit Report Station Drive 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	Station Drive Surgery, Ludlow
Provider	Station Drive Surgery
Date / time of visit	Tuesday 3 rd 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 Patient Services Manager, Lead Receptionist and the Access and Education Lead. The practice does not have a Practice Manager.

After this we entered the waiting room and spoke with five patients. We had a written questionnaire available for those wishing to write their responses rather than talk to the representatives. One person completed this.

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

We were also joined by a representative from the Patients Participation Group (PPG) who was very willing to share with us the experiences they have been involved with.

What we found out

Environment

The practice handles over eight thousand patients and this number is growing. We found the waiting room to be light and airy, it offers a number of information options, T.V screen, leaflets, posters and further signs displayed in the front window. It clearly showed the duty Doctor's name and also displayed Healthwatch leaflets. There was a poster on



the notice board about Extended Access appointments. The information screen showed information about 111.

The receptionists seemed very approachable and informative. There were a number of thank you cards from grateful patients. There is a car park adjacent to the surgery and this has level access entrance to the surgery.

GP Appointments

The surgery is open between 8.00am and 8.00pm each day. The staff team agreed that the surgery was very busy but said that they cope well. They run a duty Doctor system where a Doctor will call people back and triage them over the telephone. They will then be given an appointment if necessary. This system has been in place for four or five years and feedback has been really good.

Emergency appointments are available on the day of request and non-emergency appointments are usually dealt with within 4-6 working days. The surgery reserve 25% of appointments for online booking. If any of these are not booked they then offer them out over the phone.

There is also the option of an E-consultation whereby the patient emails the relevant practice and receives an answer by email. If the doctor feels it is necessary the patient will be given a face to face appointment. Patients can request a call-back phone call from a Doctor, these are unlimited as there is a duty doctor available all day. They are also considering Skype consultations in the future.

Receptionists receive ongoing training to develop their skills and with patients they know well they can tell the urgency of the patient's needs from the phone call.

All five patients we spoke to told us it was easy or very easy to get an appointment with the GP at Station Road Surgery.

The representative from the PPG told us that the duty Doctor system was very useful, however, it can sometimes be difficult for people to get an appointment if it is non urgent and the patient wishes to see a named Doctor.

The Patient Services Manager told us that each Doctor has 10 call backs available at the end of a session for regular patients.

Extended Access Appointments

Station Drive Surgery is part of the South Shropshire Medical Group offering Extended Access Appointments. This is a group of surgeries offering their patients out of hours appointments at different locations. Extended Access Appointments are offered at Station Drive daily, Monday - Friday 6.30pm -8pm, alternate Saturdays 8.30am-12pm and between 7.30 and 8.00am on Mondays. We were

informed by the team of Patient Access Manager, Lead Receptionist and G.P access manager that extended access appointments were treated in the same way as those offered during normal working hours.

It is the surgery's policy that patients are made fully aware of the option of Extended Access appointments and the take up is quite high with appointments with GPs, nurses and phlebotomy usually fully booked. It appears to be very successful especially for those patients that find it difficult to take time away from work to attend an appointment during working hours.

The practice team felt confident that patients would know about the system as they have advertised it widely, including printing messages about extended access appointments on repeat prescriptions for several months when it was first introduced.

The team of receptionists received training on Extended Access appointments and this now forms part of the induction for any new staff.

Of the five patients we spoke to four were aware of the Extended Access appointments and one was unsure. One reported that they had used the service on a Saturday morning and felt it was so convenient not to have to ask for time off work to attend during working hours. All three remaining patients who were aware of extended access appointments said that if it was needed they would be pleased that such a service was available.

The representative from the PPG had no feedback on Extended Access appointments. She felt this was not discussed much at meetings at it tends to be older, retired people who attend the PPG meetings. She did tell us that the E-consult service (where patients can email a Doctor) was popular with patients and more people were beginning to use this as they like the service.

Website

The website for Station Drive Surgery has information about opening hours, including extended access hours at the top of a page called 'Opening Hours' which you can clearly access from the site's homepage. They also have a paragraph explaining what extended access opening hours are and that they are part of the South Shropshire Medical Group who are delivering these.

Additional Findings

The PPG representative informed us of the following:

- There is an active PPG and patient involvement is encouraged by the Partners.
- The practice is proactive in looking for research opportunities and projects for example a recent project on atrial fibrillation which meant a lot of patients were screened who wouldn't otherwise have been.
- There are specialist nurse clinics at the surgery for example Diabetes and Asthma clinics.
- There is a Mental Health practitioner at the surgery. Patients do not need to go through the GP to access this service.
- There is a stable staff team and they create a 'supportive, welcoming place'.

Summary of Findings

- We found the practice offered information about appointments including Extended Access in a variety of ways including:
 - numerous leaflets on display throughout the waiting room and in the front window of the surgery
 - on posters on the notice board
 - a comprehensive website
 - receptionists trained to offer a full range of appointments
- Patients found it easy to get an appointment with a GP at the surgery
- Four out of five patients knew about Extended Access appointments
- The surgery has an active Patient Participation Group and patient involvement is encouraged
- The surgery's duty Doctor system works well and patients benefit from this as it keeps appointment waiting times down
- The surgery is very proactive in embracing new developments and looking for new opportunities for example research projects

Recommendations

We could not make any recommendations for improvement in relation to Extended Access appointments as the practice appears to be making patients aware of all types of appointments and offering the full range of appointments at all times.

On our visit Station Drive Surgery appeared to be an example of a well-run practice that meets its patients' needs efficiently and professionally.

Service Provider Response

“We are really happy with the positive report we have received from Healthwatch Shropshire.” Patient Services Manager, Station Drive Surgery

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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