

Enter & View Report

Northfield Medical Centre

May 2024



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Report details

Details of Visit	
Service Address	12 Villers Court, Blaby, Leicester LE8 4NS
Service Provider	Northfield Medical Centre
Date and Time	Wednesday 1st May 2024, 11am
Authorised Representatives undertaking the visit	Kim Marshal-Nicols and Dervis Duygun Fethi

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire would like to thank the service provider, patients and staff for their contribution to the Enter & View Programme.

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

This report is written by volunteer Enter and View Authorised Representatives who carried out the visit on behalf of Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire.

Purpose of the visit

- To gather patient views of the service provided at Northfield Medical Centre.
- To observe the facilities and operation of the service.
- To observe patient access.

Methodology

This was an announced Enter and View visit.

We contacted the Practice Management Team in advance and had access to communal areas during our visit.

The visit was observational, involving the Authorised Representatives observing the surroundings to gain an understanding of how patients engaged with reception staff and the facilities.

To reach patients, we spoke to the management team before the visit about using the GP text messaging service. The text message was sent to the patients and we received **193** responses.

Summary of the findings

Summary

- The practice is wheelchair-accessible, has automatic doors, and provides parking with three disabled spaces.
- Facilities include clean and spacious gender-neutral and disabled toilets with alarm cords.
- Patients can book appointments via phone, online, or in person and urgent appointments are available through a triaging system.
- Extended hours are available on Thursday evenings and limited Saturday appointments once a month.
- Booking appointments online is seen as a valuable addition.
- Online medical requests and a new telephone system with call back features have been implemented to ease patient access and reduce wait times.
- The waiting area has a variety of seating options, health information displays and soft background music.
- We noted patients discussing personal health information in an open area at reception which lacks privacy.

193 patients responded to our patient survey.

- **178** people said that they were 'completely satisfied' or 'slightly satisfied' with the prescription service.
- Comments were shared about the inconsistency of seeing the same doctor for continuity of care.
- **171** people were 'happy' with who they have seen for their appointment.

- 173 people were 'completely satisfied' or 'slightly satisfied' with the reception service.
- 179 patients said that they were 'completely satisfied' or 'slightly satisfied' with the quality of medical care and treatment at the practice.
- Patients expressed frustration with the current telephone-based system for same-day appointments. Patients reported having to call multiple times a day to secure appointments. People shared that they resort to queuing early in the morning to try to get an on the day appointment.

Results of Visit

The Practice

Northfield Medical Centre has 12,200 patients.

The practice is comprised of two floors, the ground and first floor. On the ground floor, there are clinician rooms including the reception. The first floor is mainly used for admin rooms and staff.

There is parking available and three disabled parking spaces. The badges are visible and based at a moderate height. Access to the building is easy. The building has automatic doors with a bell near the side of the doors.



There is exterior signage beside the automatic doors which specifies the opening days/ hours of the practice. The manager had told us the opening times and hours for the practice can be found on the website.

There is a pharmacy situated outside near the practice.

Reception and waiting areas

Before entering the waiting room, there is a self-check in screen at the entrance. There is adequate space in the waiting room.

There are a variety of chairs in the waiting room. We observed chairs with arms, bench seats and chairs without arms in the waiting area. The chairs were soft but the bench seats were hard.

There are two television screens located in the waiting room. Both of the screens, display health messages and notification of the clinician's readiness.

There is soft music playing in the background. There is no children's play area. The manager has explained that there is no play area as this would pose a significant infection prevention and control risk.

There are Friends & Family forms on site in order to make suggestions but there is no suggestion box. Hand sanitisers are installed along the reception area and within the toilets.

There is a prescription request form that could be seen in the reception. The décor is well maintained.

There is not a dedicated area for confidential conversations. We were told that the practice staff will try to allocate a room to protect the confidentiality of the patient if required.

Appointments

There is a cloud based telephone system which is used at the practice. During busiest times, 4 people will be in charge of answering the telephones but during non-busy times the calls are answered by 2 or 3 people.

Appointment booking is usually made either by phone, face to face and online. Patients can make their appointment 3 weeks in advance and for nursing appointments, patients can book 4 weeks in advance. Appointments can be booked on the day but before 6.30pm.

The process for making urgent appointments is that the patient could call in to book an urgent appointment when needed. We were told that "If the number of urgent appointments has exceeded safe working capacity, they will be referred to a duty doctor where they will be triaged. This is as opposed to being sent to a hub or urgent care centre."

Home visits are carried out every single day. Before 10.30am, the booking request for home visits should be made. If home visit bookings are left after 11am, this will be passed on to a duty doctor where it will be triaged.

Accessibility

The disabled and gender-neutral toilets are clean. The disabled toilet is equipped with an alarm cord and has ample space. The gender-neutral toilet has moderate space. There is no designated breastfeeding room, but the practice can arrange a free room for breastfeeding if needed. Wheelchairs are available. A hearing loop is present in the GP surgery.

Information available to patients

Reading materials are revealed on the notice board and TV screens which gives information for people visiting the practice. The position and font size of the leaflets were visible, up to date and readable. Health related activities were provided on the noticeboard such as social prescribing and carers support.

Appointment information such as out of hour's information, complaints procedure and carers charter can be viewed in the practice and online. Data privacy of the use of health records was observed on the notice board. Those who wish to take a look in detail about their data privacy, can get a laminated copy from the reception to gain familiarity on how their data is protected.

There are leaflets that indicate helplines for mental health support.



Staffing

The practice has 3 GP partners and 5 salaried GP's. There are 5 GP registrars but some registrars are part-time. There are 5 practice nurses, 2 nurse practitioners, 2 healthcare assistants and 1 assistant practitioner. Furthermore, there are 2 physiotherapists, 1 physician associate, 2 mental health practitioners and 1 mental health facilitator. One social prescriber is used. There are 8 Primary Care Network (PCN) staff, 2 pharmacists, management staff, receptionists, administrators, 1 pharmacy technician and 1 care coordinator.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

There are 8 members in the PPG. The PPG will regularly meet every 2 months.

Patient feedback

We shared the patient survey through the text messaging service. We received **193** responses. See Appendix 1 for the survey responses. Where we asked for comments, we have themed the responses and provided a selection of patient comments.

Recommendations

We recommend that Northfield Medical Practice:

1	Consider all the comments recorded from patients and what the implications are for the operation of the practice.
2	Consider offering patients online booking for same-day appointments.
3	Look to provide a dedicated room for private and confidential conversations, if there is capacity.

Service provider response

The report was agreed with the Service Provider as factually accurate. They have provided the following response to the report:

We would like to thank Healthwatch for visiting our practice in May 2024 and for their work in producing this report. We also extend our gratitude to our patients who took the time to respond to the Healthwatch survey.

We are very pleased that the survey results were extremely positive, aligning with the most recent National GP survey, where we were ranked among the top 20 practices in Leicestershire. These results reflect the hard work and dedication of our team in providing high-quality care despite the significant pressures facing the NHS.

We greatly appreciate all feedback, whether positive or constructive. While the survey reassures us that we are performing well, it also highlights areas where we are continuously striving for improvement:

Access to Same-Day Appointments

With regards to Healthwatch's recommendation to offer online booking for same-day appointments, this is not currently feasible for same-day appointments. Without triage, appointments may not get booked with the most appropriate clinician, leading to insufficient GP availability for those who truly need it and creating a significant clinical risk. We are continuously exploring technological advancements and hope that a more suitable system will be available to us in the future.

We recognise patient feedback regarding access to same-day appointments and have implemented several measures to improve this process:

- **Online Requests** – Patients can now submit non-urgent medical or administrative requests online. This helps to improve access to patients calling into the surgery by phone.
- **Enhanced Telephone System** – Our telephone system offers features such as SMS links for submitting non-urgent requests and a call-back option for those waiting in the queue. Patient feedback on these improvements has been very positive.
- **Expansion of Clinical Team** – We have significantly increased our clinical team, which now includes a dedicated pharmacy team, First Contact Physiotherapist, Physician Associate, Social Prescriber, and Mental Health Practitioner.
- **Extended Hours Appointments** – We now offer medication query appointments on Thursday evenings and limited Saturday appointments once a month.
- **NHS England Pharmacy First Scheme** – We are collaborating with local pharmacies to provide same-day appointments for minor health conditions, where pharmacists can consult, prescribe (if required), or recommend over-the-counter medication.

We are continually striving to make further improvements to our access within the limitations of our available funding and space within the building.

Continuity of Care

Patients do have the option to always choose to see a clinician of their choice for continuation of an existing condition, however, this does mean that sometimes they will have to wait longer to be seen. In line with the NHS Choice Framework, there are circumstances where it may not be possible to offer an appointment with a patient's preferred clinician, such as when that clinician is on leave, or they are at full capacity with no available appointments, or if an urgent appointment is required.

Privacy at Front Desk

With regards to providing a dedicated room for private and confidential conversations, this is a challenge due to the capacity of rooms within our building. We used to have a room that was available for private and confidential conversations, however this room was converted into a clinical room so that we could increase capacity to accommodate increased demand in our services. We do display a poster at our front desk advising patients to let us know if they wish to discuss something in private, and we will do our best to accommodate a private room wherever possible. We also ask patients to stand back at front desk and we play soft music in our waiting rooms to protect the privacy of patients at front desk. We also encourage patients to use the Online Request method as another means of contacting the practice.

Distribution

The report is for distribution to the following:

- Northfield Medical Centre
- LLR Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Leicestershire County Council (LCC)
- NHS England (Leicestershire and Lincolnshire) Local Area Team
- Healthwatch England and the local Healthwatch Network
- Published on www.healthwatchll.com

Appendix 1: Survey Findings

Patients

Q1. When did you last visit your GP practice? (193 responses)

(191) 99% - In the last 2 years

(2) 1% - Over 2 years ago

Q2. How did you book your last appointment? (191 responses)

(146) 76% - Telephone

(14) 7% - Online Booking Services

(37) 19% - In Person

(2) 1% - Other (please specify): Nurse, Staple removal

2 - Unanswered

Q3. How easy is it to get through to your surgery on the telephone to make an appointment? (189 responses)

(26) 14% - Very Easy

(79) 42% - Easy

(53) 28% - Difficult

(26) 14% - Very Difficult

(5) 2% - Not sure

4 - Unanswered

Q4. When you last contacted the GP Practice, how long did it take you to get through on the telephone? (187 responses)

(2) 1% - Less than 1 minute

(68) 36% - 1-5 minutes

(50) 27% - 6-10 minutes

(34) 18% - 11-15 minutes

(32) 17% - 15- 60 minutes

(1) 1% - Over an hour

6 - Unanswered

Q5. Are you happy with who you have seen at the time of your appointment? (190 responses)

(171) 90% - Yes

(19) 10% - No

3 - Unanswered

Q6. In the last 2 years have you had a telephone or online consultation with a practitioner? (191 responses)

(152) 80% - Yes

(39) 20% - No

2 - Unanswered

Q7. How satisfied were you with the appointment? (151 responses)

(49) 33% - Completely Satisfied

(56) 37% - Very Satisfied

(29) 19% - Neutral

(11) 7% - Slightly satisfied.

(6) 4% - Not at all satisfied

42 - Unanswered

Q8. In the last 2 years have you had to book an urgent appointment? (186 responses)

(91) 49% - Yes

(95) 51% - No

7 - Unanswered

Q9. Were you able to see a doctor or clinician on the same day for urgent appointments? (93 responses)

(73) 78% - Yes

(20) 22% - No

100 - Unanswered

Q10. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the practice opening hours? (191 responses)

(53) 28% - Completely Satisfied
(78) 41% - Very Satisfied
(35) 18% - Neutral
(18) 9% - Slightly satisfied
(7) 4% - Not at all satisfied
2 - Unanswered

Q11. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the reception service? (190 responses)

(131) 69% - Completely Satisfied
(42) 22% - Slightly Satisfied
(13) 7% - Slightly Dissatisfied
(4) 2% - Completely Dissatisfied
3 - Unanswered

Q12. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the prescription service? (189 responses)

(139) 73% - Completely Satisfied
(39) 21% - Slightly Satisfied
(3) 2% - Slightly Dissatisfied
(2) 1% - Completely Dissatisfied
(6) 3% - Not used it
4 - Unanswered

Q13. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of medical care and treatment at this surgery? (191 responses)

(136) 71% - Completely Satisfied
(43) 22% - Slightly Satisfied
(9) 5% - Slightly Dissatisfied
(3) 2% - Completely Dissatisfied
2 - Unanswered

People were asked for any other comments including what they like and dislike the most about the GP practice.

Likes:

"They listen to my needs and provide the best and easiest solution to get help."

"I like that there are two opportunities to book urgent same day appointments (8am, 11am), and I

can always get one if I just ring on the hour, and hold on the line a while.

It would be great if there were the option to have blood tests done if I am already there for an appointment (if it's in the am), rather than go back another time."

"I have always been able to get an appointment on the same day if I need one. It takes a while to get through on the phone and you do have to call at exactly 8am or 11am but I've always managed to get an appointment. I find all (bar one) of the practitioners helpful and I regularly see a diabetes nurse who is helpful and can tell they want the best for their patients."

"Always polite and helpful."

"I have only been with the practice for about 1 year but I have Parkinson's so I go. There quite often and all the staff are amazing."

"The staff are always polite and helpful. A good number of doctors employed here. Various clinicians and specialists. Mental health guy was amazing and sorted me out very quickly."

"The Northfield Medical Centre is brilliant. I feel as if they are really looking after me and have my best interests behind all that they do."

"In my experience you can generally get through on the phone and get an appointment."

Dislikes:

"The appointment system for same day by telephone could be improved on possibly with online bookings and drop down conditions or consults given priority. I've often drive to the surgery to book an appointment at the reception and then gone back for the appointment or waited for the call. This is because the queue on the phone prevents getting a same day appointment."

"Difficulty of getting appointment. Having to call back next day at 8am. When you get through no appointments so you have to call back at 11am and so it goes on. Only way to ensure appointment is queueing up at 7.30am. Lots of very ill people do this in desperation."

"Aside from the farce of booking an appointment over the phone which is endemic for NHS surgeries, I am concerned at the lack of screening opportunities for prostate cancer, dementia etc."

"I would like to be asked if I'd prefer a doctor or nurse. I don't think having an asthma review online makes sense."

"Being able to book appointments at any time will be handy rather than waiting till set times not

always possible with work to call at times set. Able to book online will be handy.”

“Feeling that my appointment is rushed to the extent of not having a proper diagnosis.”

“Online appointments no longer available. Takes far too long to get through on the phone so all appointments have been taken.”

“No privacy when discussing the need for appointment, verifying your identity and personal details is in an open area with queuing other patients. Failure to book the correct number of slots resulting in additional visits and seeing other doctors. Lack of empathy with some receptionists. Some locum doctors are great at listening and offering solutions.”

“It's frustrating when the GP asks you to make a further appointment during your consultation, but the reception staff can't pre-book you an appointment and you have to try calling on the day, often unsuccessfully as the appointments are all taken.”

“It is not always possible to see a regular GP, sometimes you have to see who the reception says, I was prescribed antibiotics from a doctor I had never seen, he gave me capsules which I am not supposed to have, it is obvious he didn't read my notes, they should be on there from a procedure I had at the Glenfield Hospital, I find it very difficult to see specialist who can perhaps help with some of my problems.”

“Not being able to book appointments online as pre COVID.”

“Never seeing the same doctor.”

“It would help enormously to see the same doctor as often as possible.”

“To get an appointment, you have to queue up outside at 8am to get a morning appointment. If you phone at 8am you are waiting for ages and the appointments are gone when your call is answered.”

“The interrogation by receptionists and immediately being assigned to a nurse with no option to see a doctor.”

“Not private when having to explain your health condition.”

“Cannot choose who you see so not able to see the same doctor for an ongoing problem.”



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