

Enter & View Report

Willowbrook Medical Centre

December 2025

Contents

Report details.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	2
Disclaimer	2
Purpose of the visit.....	3
Methodology.....	3
Summary of the findings.....	3
Results of visit.....	4
Recommendations.....	6
Service provider response.....	7
Distribution	8
Appendix 1: Survey findings	9

Report details

Details of Visit	
Service Address	Willowbrook Medical Centre, 195 Thurncourt Road, Leicester, LE5 2NL
Service Provider	Willows Group LTD
Date and Time	Thursday 4th December 2025, 10am
Authorised Representatives undertaking the visit	Kim Marshall-Nichols Riyaadh Mussa (Staff)

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.

All comments included in this report are written verbatim to capture the tone and authenticity of the experience, therefore no editing of comments has taken place. This report is not representative of the experience of all service users.

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

Purpose of the visit

- To gather patient views of the service provided at Willowbrook 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 prior to the visit about using the GP text messaging service. The text message was sent to the patients, and we received **540** responses.

At the end of the visit, we gave our initial findings to the management team.

Summary of the findings

Summary

- Purpose-built building with adequate clinical space.
- Two nurse rooms and six consultation rooms.
- All patient areas located on the ground floor.
- Adequate parking available, with most spaces allocated to the practice and minimal shared use with a nearby school.
- Reception opening times clearly displayed near the front entrance.
- Spacious reception area with room for queues, accommodated within the waiting room.
- Advice provided to patients, with a confidential area available at reception.
- Adequate seating, including soft chairs and some armchairs; no bariatric chairs.
- Patients notified when clinicians are ready via screen with sound or in person.
- Multiple contact systems in use: System Connect, AQRX, NHS App and callbacks.
- Routine appointments are not triaged; patients are signposted, often to Pharmacy First.
- Practice manages 15 care homes within the Leicester city Primary Care Network (PCN), covering around 650 patients.
- Patients can access nurses and Health Care Assistants (HCAs) at any location within the group.
- Midwife clinic operates on site, with separate waiting arrangements near the clinic.

540 patients responded to the survey

- 54 patients (10%) said that it took them **1-5 minutes** to get through to the practice by telephone, however 241 (45%) of patients said that it took them **16-60 minutes** to get through to the practice by telephone.

- Comments were made about not being able to book appointments and not being able to have face to face appointments.
- Comments were made for a preference of having the availability to book appointments online.
- The last time a patient requested an urgent-same day appointment, 51 (13%) of patients said they were offered a same day appointment at the practice with a doctor, however 113 (29%) of patients said they were asked to call back later or the following day and 115 (30%) were not offered an appointment or any of the alternatives listed.
- 206 (38%) patients have rated the practice opening hours as 'Excellent' or Good'.
- 219 (41%) patients have rated the Reception Service as 'Excellent' or Good'.
- 266 (49%) patients have rated the quality of medical care and treatment as 'Excellent' or Good'.
- Comments were made on receiving good service from practice staff and clinicians.

Results of Visit

The Practice

The practice has adequate clinical space, including two nurse rooms and six consultation rooms, within a purpose-built building. All patient areas are located on the ground floor, meaning patients do not need to use lifts or stairs.

There are adequate parking spaces available, with approximately 3 of the 4 spaces of the car park allocated to the practice and the remainder shared with a nearby school; however, the Practice Manager advised that the school uses very few of these spaces, leaving plenty of room for patients.

Reception opening times are clearly displayed near the front door as part of the exterior signage.

We did not see a cleaning routine checklist. There is toilet facilities are available, and there was signage that the practice is breastfeeding friendly.



Reception and waiting areas

The reception area is spacious, allowing room for queues, which are accommodated within the waiting room. Patients are provided with advice on their options, and a confidential area is available through reception on the side.

The waiting room has adequate seating, including soft chairs and some armchairs, though there are no bariatric chairs. There is enough space for patients and clinicians notify patients when they are ready either via a screen with sound or by coming out personally.

Friends and Family suggestion forms and a feedback box are available, along with two hand sanitisers, one of which was full and one empty. Reading materials include leaflets and health-related posters, and the décor is focused on health information. There is no background music or other sound.

Appointments

The practice uses several systems for patient contact, including System Connect, AQRX, the NHS App, and callbacks, which are reported to be working very well. We were told the practice does not triage routine appointments, patients are often signposted, typically to Pharmacy First, as triage has been found to be ineffective and unpopular with patients.

Triage is only used for care home patients and home visits. Patients can usually book appointments up to a few

weeks in advance, depending on how far ahead the rota is available.

Emergency appointments can be made on the same day, with patients often advised to contact the practice or visit Pharmacy First. Cancelled appointments can be managed either by ringing the practice or online.

Issues regarding appointments, such as requests for fit notes, sick notes, or medical letters, are managed through dedicated slots on the rota, with the GP completing these tasks at the end of their clinic. For first-time requests for a fit note, an appointment is required.

Patients are offered a choice of clinician for their appointments, which can be either in person or via telephone, although most patients do not express a strong preference.

Medication reviews are managed by the pharmacy team, with patients sent reminders via text. The process is similar to reminders for blood tests or smear tests, and patients without access to technology can call the practice to arrange their review.

The practice manages all care homes for the Willows within the PCN of Leicester city, covering 15 care homes and approximately 650 patients, except for Southlodge, which is shared with another practice. Home visits are coordinated and managed by on-call GPs, who handle all patient visits to these care homes. We were told the care homes were allocated to the practice by the Integrated Care Board (ICB).

Patients with additional needs, such as those with learning disabilities or mental health conditions, are flagged on the system to ensure staff are aware of their requirements. Patients with learning disabilities are booked at quieter times and can wait in quieter rooms to help reduce sensory overload.

Translation services are available for patients who require them, including a QR code for British Sign Language (BSL), and the practice is aware of all patients who need BSL support.

Test results are communicated to patients via text message, and if patients have not received their results within a few weeks, they are advised to call the practice. Patients can then book appointments with their GP if further discussion or follow-up is needed.

Patients have a one-week wait for blood tests. Weekend appointments are available across the Willows Group.

Accessibility

The practice provides adequate parking spaces for patients with accessibility. Signage is clearly visible and positioned at an appropriate height throughout the building.

All patient areas are on the ground floor, ensuring full accessibility.

Toilet facilities include two disabled toilets, both with sufficient space and alarm cords. Although the practice previously had a wheelchair available for patient use, it is currently not on site. A hearing loop is in place to support patients with hearing impairments.

Information available to patients

Notices and leaflets were up to date and displayed with clear font sizes. The CQC report on display dates to 2016. Health-related information included carers' support, though there was no information on social prescribing, as the Practice Manager noted that a social prescriber has only recently started across the Primary Care Network (PCN).

No appointment or out-of-hours information was observed. The complaints procedure was available via a QR code, and carers' information was displayed through leaflets and posters.



Data privacy and the use of health records were clearly outlined, with the practice’s privacy policy on display.

While there was a screen in the waiting area, it was only used to notify patients when clinician is ready to see them.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The surgery has a Patient Participation Group (PPG) comprising 40 members, with each Willows site represented. The group meets quarterly and there is ongoing interest from additional patients who wish to join.

Biggest Difficulty/ Challenge

The biggest challenge for the practice is patient education. Many patients are not fully informed, and managing patient expectations—particularly regarding the “Pharmacy First” approach—can be difficult. The practice often encounters pushback from patients to Pharmacy First.

Despite efforts to increase the number of clinics, access remains a persistent challenge.

Additional Information

The practice has nine consulting rooms and a team that includes nine GPs (with a minimum of two per day), three health care assistants (HCAs), a pharmacy team, three nurses and one personal assistant (PA).

Patients have the flexibility to see nurses and HCAs at any location within the group. There is a midwife clinic that operates at the practice, with patients waiting near the clinic rather than in the main waiting area.

Patient feedback

A survey was completed on the visit, where we asked if patients would like to take part in the survey, and we received 540 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 Willowbrook Medical Centre:

1	Review patient feedback and themed comments to identify and prioritise improvements in ease of accessing appointments, telephone and call centre service, reception service and continuity of care.
2	Where possible, increase the availability of face-to-face appointments.
3	Review the appointment system to ensure patients can book appointments using the online system.
4	Where possible, ensure patients can be redirected from the call centre to practice staff for more direct support.

5	Work with the ICB and community partners to deliver short, topic-based workshops and multilingual materials (e.g. Pharmacy First, appointment system, NHS/ Airmid Apps, test results).
6	Increase urgent/ same day slots where feasible; when not, offer clear alternatives (such as Pharmacy First, NHS 111, Urgent care centres) and communicate the pathway consistently.
7	Ensure that the telephone service is meeting patients' needs and look to improve waiting times to book appointments.

Service provider response

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

"I would like to respectfully express my reservations about using patient feedback as a benchmarking tool. While patient feedback can offer useful qualitative insights, it is inherently subjective and often influenced by individual expectations, emotions, or isolated experiences. As such, it may not reliably reflect overall performance or quality of service, and in some cases can be disproportionately shaped by dissatisfaction unrelated to measurable care outcomes.

By contrast, objective indicators present a more consistent and verifiable picture of performance. For example, call statistics and other operational data do not support some of the negative conclusions implied by feedback. In addition, the practice performs very favourably against established standards in areas such as required signage, facilities, cleanliness, and the provision of patient information posters. These are tangible, observable measures that demonstrate compliance, organisation, and a positive patient environment.

It is also important to note the significant increase in clinical capacity since Willows took over in 2022. Prior to this, the average number of appointments available on a Monday was approximately 15, compared with a current average of around 55. This represents a substantial improvement in access and service provision that is not reflected in the feedback being used for comparison.

Given these factors, I am concerned that some of the feedback may be influenced by broader negative narratives around general practice, which have been widely amplified in public and media discourse, rather than by the actual performance or standards of the practice itself.

The discrepancy between objective measures and elements of subjective feedback raises concerns about the validity of extrapolating broader performance judgments from feedback alone.

In my view, patient feedback is best used as a supplementary source of information rather than a primary benchmarking metric, and should be interpreted alongside objective, quantitative measures to ensure a balanced and fair assessment."

Distribution

The report is for distribution to the following:

- Willowbrook Medical Centre
- LLR Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Leicester City 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

540 Patients

Q1. When did you last visit your GP practice?

- (307) 57% - In the last 3 months
- (104) 19% - In the last 6 months
- (59) 11% - In the last year
- (39) 7% - 1-2 years ago
- (31) 6% - Over 2 years ago

Q2. How did you book your last appointment?

- (344) 64% - Telephone
- (69) 13% - Online booking services
- (21) 4% - NHS App
- (36) 7% - In person
- (20) 3% - Someone else booked for me (e.g., family, carer)
- (47) 9% - Other (please specify): "NHS 111.", "Rang NHS 111", "They sent an appointment." "Receptionist calls me." "Message from The Willows." "The doctor arranged the appointment." "Repeat check."
- 3 - Unanswered

Q3. When you last contacted the practice by phone, how long did it take you to get through?

- (5) 1% - Less than 1 minute
- (54) 10% - 1-5 minutes
- (47) 9% - 6-10 minutes
- (65) 12% - 11-15 minutes
- (241) 45% - 16- 60 minutes
- (65) 12% - Over an hour
- (36) 7% - I used the call-back function
- (24) 4% - Not applicable - I have not contacted the practice by phone
- 3 - Unanswered

Q4. In the last two years, have you attempted to book an appointment where you needed to see a doctor or clinician on the same day?

- (393) 73% - Yes
- (110) 20% - No

(37) 7% - Can't remember

Q5. The last time you requested an urgent same-day appointment, what was the outcome?

(51) 13% - I was offered a same day appointment at my GP practice with a doctor

(17) 4% - I was offered a same day appointment at my GP practice with a different professional

(27) 7% - I was offered a same day appointment elsewhere (such as at a nearby practice or healthcare hub)

(18) 5% - I was offered an appointment for another day

(47) 12% - I was signposted to an alternative service

(113) 29% - I was asked to call back later or the following day

(115) 30% - I was not offered an appointment or any of the alternatives listed above

152 - Unanswered

Q6. Please rate your most recent experience with the practice on the following aspect: 3 unanswered and not all chose answer choices.

Answer Choices	Excellent	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very poor	Not applicable/ Not used	Response Total
Telephone service to book appointments	4% (22)	13% (73)	15% (79)	17% (89)	46% (248)	5% (25)	536
Practice Opening hours	6% (34)	32% (172)	35% (187)	13% (67)	12% (63)	2% (12)	535
Reception Service	13% (69)	28% (150)	25% (136)	15% (79)	16% (88)	3% (14)	536
Repeat prescription service	22% (120)	38% (204)	14% (73)	7% (36)	6% (35)	13% (68)	536
Quality of medical care and treatment	11% (59)	38% (207)	25% (132)	14% (73)	9% (48)	3% (18)	537
Face to face appointments	14% (75)	31% (168)	21% (112)	13% (73)	15% (79)	6% (30)	537
Online appointments	3% (15)	10% (52)	12% (66)	12% (65)	27% (146)	36% (191)	535
Telephone appointments	4% (23)	16% (86)	21% (115)	16% (85)	30% (161)	13% (67)	537
Ease of accessing information (website, emails, SMS reminders)	6% (32)	30% (161)	29% (154)	14% (76)	12% (66)	9% (46)	535

Q7. Do you have any other feedback about your experience with your GP practice? What do you like most and what could be improved? *Key themes that have emerged: difficulty booking appointments, dislike for call centre system, reception and lack of quality and continuity of Care*

Likes:

"Very good service."

"Willowbrook medical centre is a very good medical centre."

"The reception staff are superb. They are efficient, patient and very helpful, but sometimes I have been asked to ring the surgery & have not been able to get an answer during opening hours."

"Everyone is lovely, keep being amazing as you are."

"On this occasion I can't fault the surgery, I saw a doctor who was very quick after examination to get things rolling for me to be seen in hospital, and I am very grateful for that."

"Very nice work, and staff helpful."

"My experience of this practice is limited as I have only been registered here for three months. Both appointments have been with a nurse, for a check-up, and for a blood test. On both occasions I was seen promptly and received the appropriate service. I am yet to see a GP there."

"All good."

Mixed:

"One on the reception desk is excellent. Experience of some other employees on the front desk are absolutely useless."

"When seen face to face, very good, but very rare can get face to face, when telephone appointment, not happy at all, tried many times for face to face never any appointments, last time ended calling NHS 111 and going hospital"

"The staff are very friendly and courteous on the phone. There needs to be a better solution to phone appointments, I have been number 60 at 8.01am and impossible to get appointments."

"Some staff are very helpful. I can never get an appointment so end up not trying."

"When trying to get an appointment face to face not able to get an appointment even when you call at 08.00

am. When and if you see a doctor, they are very helpful.”

“I have always had excellent service from this surgery. The service is excellent, but getting an appointment is digging for gold.”

“GP very good face to face appointment but very hard to book.”

“The nurses are excellent. Helpful, efficient and professional. The receptionists are uncaring except for one, she is excellent. I would like to see the same doctor now and again. Every visit these days involves your doctor reading about you on the screen instead of examining you or asking you about symptoms. I've seen a new face on every visit.”

Dislikes/ improvements:

“You can never get an appointment to see a doctor.”

“Being able to book an appointment needs to be improved.”

“Impossible to get any type of appointment and booking service always full and queuing as soon as clock hits 8am. Also, worst time to have to call as school run and work so unable to sit in the queues.”

“You can never get same day appointment. takes ages for you to get though on the phone. Online appointments are never used.”

“Last time I booked an appointment was to see the nurse which is no issue I have not seen a doctor in over 5 years as I can never get appointment, It is a joke, the surgery may as well close down, what is the point being registered when you can never get an appointment to see a doctor!”

“Overall, very disappointed with the NHS service, you can never get an appointment when you need it, having same day appointment, you can forget that, told to phone again the next day, you go through the same ring all over again.”

“Appointment making service needs to be improved. Having to go online at 6am where no appointments are available by 6.05am or calling at 8am and being on hold until all appointments are taken is not good service. It is pretty much impossible to get an appointment.”

“I don't understand why it is still operating on an emergency appointment bases? Getting an appointment is difficult and causes issues with work. Literally saying to my employer, I need to see the doctor, so I may be in today, it depends on whether I can/or can't/or what time?!”

"The thing that needs to be improved most is being able to get an appointment. I've not been to doctors for myself for at least 2 years as every time I rang up before I constantly get told I can't be seen or ring back, never ended up getting seen so now anything I get I deal with it myself and that's due to giving up with getting a doctor's appointment as it never happens. My kids have got in a few times but sometime gets told ring again to get told the same stuff everyday you ring."

"You cannot get an appointment ever, you cannot speak to the people at the surgery they are from a call centre, I've asked to speak to the manager multiple times because I've been fobbed off, I was told she would call me back multiple times and she never did, the surgery is awful and the phone handlers do not care about their patients."

"Impossible to get an appointment. Only option is to call NHS 111. Now appointments have gone to a call centre in India. I'm very worried about data protection."

"The call centre in India is a shambles. When you outsource to save money, you lose control. I know of no one who thinks it's a good service."

"Bin the call centre in India they are incompetent. More access to appointments online. A way to get advice triage/through email."

"It would be nice to speak to someone who's actually at the practice not thousands of miles away, not understanding what I'm saying and sending the wrong information."

"Telephone call centre very poor. Do not understand why you are calling and what you want. If you get through to the actual medical centre, you are lucky because they help you. The morning call centre very poor service. Giving wrong advice."

"The app is useless can't get any appointments and still says I need to refer myself for an ultrasound which I had months ago. Still waiting on a urology appointment after being told they would like to rule out cancer but not urgent enough because I'm not 45. Can never get an appointment been trying for weeks now and when I call I go through to a call centre the staff don't listen or understand me just keep being passed around to others. "

"Practice not using NHS app."

"Would be helpful if open on Saturdays, and train younger reception staff with a bit more empathy! Also talking your personal business at the counter is awful people listening etc."

"Willowbrook needs shutting down. Nasty intrusive receptionist that demands information when you feel

embarrassed to say what wrong and if you don't tell them they say no to an appointment. Never any appointments yet they are still accepting people. Doctors mis diagnose you. Telling a desperate old lady to go away go home when she is in need. You can hear behind the reception then talking horrible about a patient. I always get told to travel to other GPs yet there always closed to have meetings. NHS 111 tell me I need to see GP and Willowbrook make me call back and forth between them and NHS 111. Calling at 8am to never get an appointment or running out of phone minutes because you have to wait over an hour to be told call tomorrow when your baby is very poorly. Swapping to cheap medication that caused my diarrhoea and won't let me have my original brand all to save money. "

"The receptionist was dismissive and disinterested, telling me I would need to try again the following day. Without the help I received from the wonderful lady at NHS 111, I don't think I would be here today."

"Reception is not good as everything is computer or online difficult to actually speak to anyone, reception staff to busy chatting in back office I stood in reception after ringing bell also same time I was ringing them on the phone, no reply on phone I could hear them all chatting eventually when she came to reception I said I am on the phone to you for half hour and standing there with phone still ringing and she snapped we are busy yet I was number 1 the whole time she again snapped and ask me what do you want. Waiting room are empty yet no appointments available just told ring the next day, rang next day still nothing available took another day to get appointments."

"I've recently had an appointment with a spinal consultant who said I've basically had incorrect treatment and advice from healthcare professionals for the past three years by GPs at the surgery. I'm now on a 5-month weaning plan to get off medication that I shouldn't have been prescribed; this has come as a result of an MRI scan that doctors have been very reluctant to let me have. I feel like I've wasted three years of my life, causing poor mental health and daily chronic pain. This could have been avoided if I had been able to have the scan three years ago (including waiting ages after an incorrectly filled in referral) and been quickly signposted to the consultant with the expertise to deal with it. So, to answer the question. Please listen to patients. Please fill in referrals correctly. Please check that the prescribed medication is correct. Please make face to face appointments easier to access. "

"Yes, I no longer know the Doctors as they have all changed since covid. I have been with this surgery for over 43 years and never see anything like this."

"We can't get appointments at our doctors. It's frustrating and worrying especially when you are already ill and anxious so we just try and ignore our illnesses now as much as we can. And they never get back to you with results or follow them up so we could have lots of undiagnosed problems going on. I've never known it so bad. It's disgraceful."

"Would like more face-to-face appointments and to see the same doctor from time to time."

"Face to face appointment whenever needed."

"Impossible to get appointments, especially if non-emergency appointments can take several weeks, and impossible to get face to face always seem to be telephone if we manage to get appointment in the first place."

"Easier access to appointments. Providing alternative options such as going to another GP practice. Booking service needs major improvements as most likely cannot get an appointment on the same day."

"Online appointments not used by the doctors. always over 30 people in the queue on the phones takes why too long and when answered they don't understand what you're trying to explain to them. They don't give the right appointments. when asked for a telephone app was given face to face. when asked for a face to face was given a telephone appointment."

"Be able to get an appointment face to face. Not hanging on phone for ages and we should be able to access appointments online. But can never get one. Needs to be looked at."

"Like to be able to access online appointments, have downloaded the apps but doesn't work. Tried speaking to staff but no one helps."

"The current booking system for appointments does not work. If there are 20 appointments available for the day, they should be released in a phased approach. 5 every hour for example. In addition, online booking of appointments does not work. Appointments are not regularly released online."

"It took me over a year to get Airmid to work on my phone. It is unreliable and eccentric. I do not have confidence in it to work when I need it."

"Getting to see a doctor would be good. Whenever you need an appointment, you try and try to get though and by the time they answer all appointments are gone. Told ring again tomorrow."

"I would only request that they start allowing patients to book appointments online to avoid a lot of inconvenience and disruptions to people's schedules."



Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire
9 Newarke Street
Leicester
LE1 5SN

www.healthwatchll.com
t: 0116 257 4999
e: enquiries@healthwatchll.com



@HealthwatchLeic