



Enter & View Report

Grand Union Health Centre

January 2024

This report relates only to the service viewed at the time of the visit and is only representative of the views of the staff, visitors, and patients who met members of the Enter & View Team on that date.

healthwatch
Westminster

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Practice Details

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Date and Time of Enter & View Visit:

27 January 2024

12PM-3PM

Healthwatch Westminster Authorised Representatives:

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Introduction

At Healthwatch Westminster, our mission is to collect the perspectives and experiences of individuals, particularly those whose voices are often overlooked, in order to provide them with a platform to share their feelings about a service. The goal of an Enter and View visit is to gather feedback and insights from both patients and staff of a service, while also assessing the quality of the environment.

During our Enter & View visits in December 2023 - January 2024, Healthwatch Westminster visited three GP surgeries in Westminster, with Grand Union Health Centre being one of them.

These GP visits focused on evaluating the accessibility of GP clinics and identifying any challenges patients, especially those who are vulnerable or have disabilities, may encounter when accessing their GP. It is important to note all of the Enter and View visits were conducted by authorised representatives who have the authority to visit health and social care facilities, whether announced or unannounced.

On 29 November 2023, Healthwatch Westminster announced visit to Grand Union Health Centre. During this visit, our team gathered feedback from both patients and staff, and conducted observations of the clinic, which formed the basis of this report. The report highlights areas of good practice as well as potential areas for improvement. As an independent organisation, Healthwatch Westminster does not make judgments or express personal opinions. Instead, we rely on the feedback received and objective observations of the environment. The report is first shared with the Practice Manager to provide them with an opportunity to respond before it is published on the Healthwatch Westminster website at www.healthwatchwestminster.org.uk.

Additionally, we will schedule a revisit to assess the progress of any improvements. The report is also made available to the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch England, and any other relevant organisations.

General Information

Grand Union Health Centre, formerly known as Harrow Road Health Centre and New Elgin practice, is a GP practice located in the heart of Bayswater, London. The practice offers a wide range of services, including the services of physicians, nurses, pharmacists, healthcare assistants, allied health professionals, smoking cessation specialists, healthy lifestyle advisors, secretaries, receptionists, social prescribers, and management, all of which are designed to provide patients with the highest level of quality care on a timely basis, whether that is for minor ailments or long-term care services. The Surgery cares for 20,500 patients as of 2024.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Westminster would like to thank management, staff, and patients for taking the time to speak to us during the visit.

Methodology

During the announced visit, Enter and View representatives engaged with 12 patients and 3 members of staff to gather feedback. Healthwatch Westminster collected the views and experiences of both patients and staff.

A patient questionnaire was utilised, adapted to capture individual experiences, and assess the accessibility of Grand Union Health Centre. Patients were asked to provide suggestions for improving their GP Surgery, including feedback on appointment scheduling, communication, and the overall environment of the surgery. Staff members were also given a questionnaire to gather their perspectives on service provision, appointment management, communication, staffing levels, and support, including training opportunities.

In addition to gathering feedback, Healthwatch Westminster Representatives conducted their own observations on the internal and external environment of the surgery, identifying barriers to accessibility and assessing the friendliness and communication skills of the staff.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, all names, pronouns, and identifiable details have been removed from the report.



Summary

Surgery Demographic

Grand Union Health Centre offer a variety of health care services to meet the diverse needs of the local community, including families with young children, working people, people with long-term health conditions, as well as those who are vulnerable or isolated.

Dedicated to providing essential health services, information, and support to diverse communities, Grand Union health centre provides specialised clinics for the elderly as well as home visits for more vulnerable patients. Despite the digital climate, they provide inclusive online and offline support services.

Demographic questions were incorporated into our Enter and View questionnaire for patients at Grand Union Health Centre.

Appointment Management

Appointments at Grand Union Health Centre are scheduled through the online system PATCHS, NHS application, or via telephone; they can also be arranged in person at reception. Patients undergo triage to ensure they are seen by the most suitable healthcare professional.

Additionally, patients have the option to request video or phone consultations instead of face-to-face appointments. For those unable to physically access the practice, Grand Union Health Centre offers a home visit service provided by G.P's, and Nurses.

Upon arrival, patients can self-check-in using an electronic system that has 22 languages, although some opt to check in with reception staff. Interpretation services, including British Sign Language (BSL), can be arranged in advance for face-to-face or telephone appointments.

In order to prevent missing appointment—which typically lasts 10 minutes—patients are advised to arrive on time. In addition, patients are advised to book a double appointment if they need to discuss more than one thing, or if the problem is complicated.

Visit Summary

Current informational items, including posters, flyers, and pamphlets outlining health related advice, practice details, and Patient Participation Group (PPG), were clearly displayed on message boards that were accessible to people with wheelchairs. The majority of the information was presented in several formats, including size, colour, font, and language.

My Way My Care is an integrated program offered by the Grand Union Health Centre that helps those over 65 maintain their independence, take better care of their health, and engage in daily activities. On Thursdays, the practice also provides services in a mental health clinic, where a substantial percentage of refugees attend. The practice also offers extended access at St. Charles Hospital.

The surgery has Regular Practice Nurses, Clinical Pharmacists, Social Prescribers, interpreters, and home visits are available to vulnerable patients.

The practice actively engages with a Patient Participation Group (PPG) which has a total of 8 members. Patient satisfaction with Grand Union Health centre was generally positive; with most patients seen within 1-10 minutes.

Staff expressed satisfaction with their work environment, feeling adequately supported and capable of delivering person-centred care. Overall, patients and staff alike were content with Grand Union Health Centre Surgery.

Enter & View

Observations

Location and External Environment

The Grand Union Health Centre has a clear and bold signage that makes the practice easy to find. The footpath that leads into entrance is levelled, and the automatic doors on entry are easy to access especially for wheelchair and pushchair users.

The area benefits from excellent public transport links, and road access allows for convenient drop-off and pick-up. The practice has indicated that they have applied yearly to the council but have been unsuccessful in obtaining a designated bay area for wheelchair parking or patient parking in general.

Internal Environment and Waiting Area

The Grand Union Health Centre is a three-story building. The entrance directly leads patients to the reception area located on the first floor, with the option to electronically self-check in, or seek assistance from the friendly team at reception. There is a child friendly play area and play kitchen on the first floor waiting room.

There is relatively ample space that separates the reception area and the waiting area, with transparent glass providing privacy between patients and staff, in adherence to ongoing COVID measures. Patients queuing will find yellow and black tape on the floor dividing them, adhering to social distance guidelines. Various rooms branch off from the central waiting area to accommodate GPs and other clinical and non-clinical teams.

All the floors provide amenities such as water and hand sanitiser with a disabled toilet conveniently located at the end of the corridor, away from the seating area. There was one hand sanitiser station on the first floor, which was further from the entrance. All toilets are equipped with facilities for individuals with disabilities. However, there was a non-pleasant smell near the doors along the corridor connected to the toilet on the first floor. To assist residents in accessing the waiting area or rooms on other floors, there is a lift near the entrance and at the back of the corridor away from the seating area.

Two display screens are located on the first floor of the hospital, but they fail to display the waiting times for patients. Instead, staff members call out the names of patients when it is their turn to be seen.

While there is a comment box, there isn't a clear complaint box present. Nonetheless, patients are advised by the notice board to contact the Practice Manager a letter of complaint. The practice's personnel and general practitioners' names are listed on the notice board, and their images and names can be found online.

Although the clinic provides translation services to patients who struggle communicating in English, one patient was sitting in the waiting room alone, holding a piece of paper that said, "My daughter translates for me." For patients who are hard of hearing, the practice acknowledged that while they do not currently have a hearing loop installed, they provide a sign language video service.

Grand Union Health Centre Interactions

It was a smooth and easy process reaching the Practice Manager in arranging an Enter & View visit over email, especially because we needed to re-arrange another visit because the lift was unavailable at the time. All staff exhibited professionalism and friendliness with Healthwatch staff and representatives.

Patients were called into appointments by the attending doctor or nurse. Healthwatch representatives primarily interacted with patients in the first, second, and third waiting area.

Discussion with Grand Union Health Centre management revealed the practice's implementation of regular separate clinics for older, vulnerable patients.

Patient Involvement

During their visit, Healthwatch representatives interacted with 12 patients; however, 3 patients were unable to finish the questionnaire because they were called into an appointment or had other commitments.

Furthermore, despite being informed of the goal of the questionnaire, a few patients chose not to participate. One patient with mental health difficulties who did submit feedback voiced worries about the attitude of the staff and not feeling included in his care. Others praised the flexibility in scheduling appointments and talking to their doctor about matters more than one health issue in one appointment.

Patients who interacted with the Healthwatch Team were at the Practice for various reasons, including consultations with GP or other healthcare professionals, and general inquiries.

Patient feedback

How did you make your appointment?

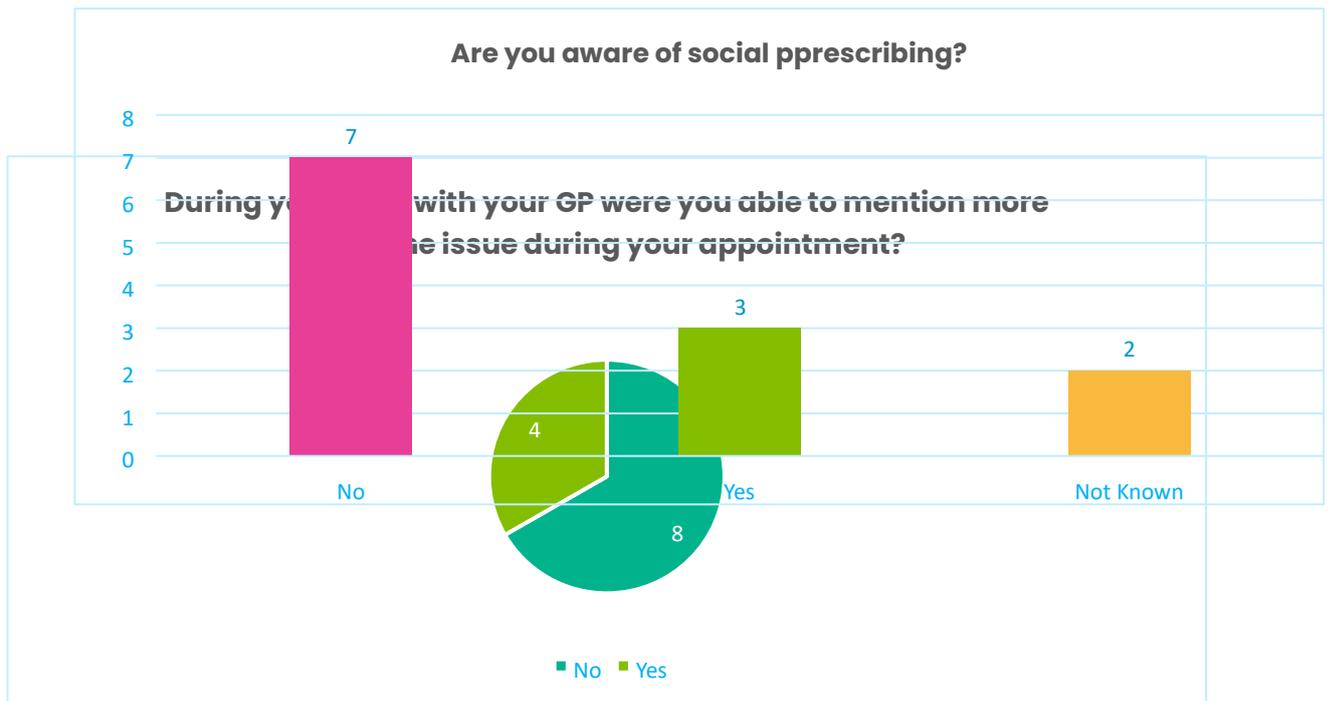
Among the 12 patients interviewed, 9 had arranged their appointments via telephone, following the Practice's protocol of calling between 8:00 am - 6:30 pm to secure a slot. The appointment of one patient was made online through PATCHS, while the appointment of another patient was made in person, and other arrangements were not disclosed.

Overall, all 12 patients found the appointment scheduling process easy and quick. The ease of scheduling a same-day appointment was praised by one patient, while another patient praised the availability of appointments.



"Booked a few days ago, lots of appointments available"





During your time with your GP were you able to mention more than one issue during your appointment?

Out of the total number of patients, only four said they could address more than one health concern in a single visit. The remaining eight said they would need to make future appointments to discuss more issues.

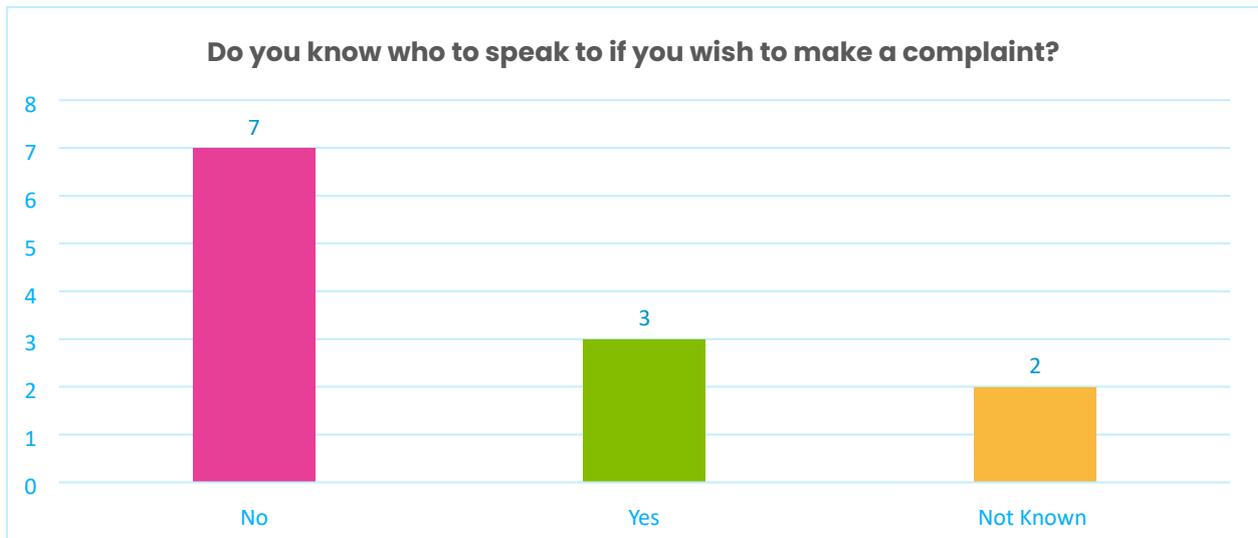
Are the reception staff easy to communicate with?

A total of 11 out of 12 patients who participated in the survey had favourable experiences, two of whom commented that communication with the staff had "improved a lot" and had improved "recently", while one patient did not respond to the survey.

Are you aware of social prescribing?

There were only 3 patients who reported that they were aware of social prescribing, while 7 patients confirmed that they were not aware, and 2 patients who did not respond to the question.

Do you know who to speak to if you wish to make a complaint?



Only three patients stated that they were aware of whom to contact in the event of a complaint. Seven patients, however, acknowledged that they were unsure of how to file a complaint; two patients said they had nothing to complain about, and two patients chose not to answer the question.

Suggestions for improvement

We asked patients how the service could be improved. We heard the following from several patients:

“Being able to talk about more problems. That’s why more people end up in the A&E when not needed.”

“Sometimes my doctor tells me not to discuss too many things during my appointment.”

“I don’t know about local services in my area because the information is not in my language.”

“More time with the G.P, more understanding from doctor, more human connection, doctor and staff can be more friendly.” The patient added that he has mental health issues, and he feels that the staff and doctors are not listening to him, and feels that the service could be improved if he was given more support in being included in his care. Recently, he has

noticed a noticeable improvement in the manner in which staff members communicate with him.

Staff feedback

Three members of the Grand Union Health Centre's reception staff were given a questionnaire from Healthwatch Westminster during the Enter & View visit. These employees were seen momentarily engaging with patients and displaying a warm yet confident demeanour in their positions.

Listed below are some of the questions they were asked.

How have staffing levels changed since the pandemic?

According to one employee, there has been no significant change in staffing levels since the pandemic, except more people working from home. However, there have been significant changes in the expansion of clinicians to include Allied Health professionals, as expressed by two staff members.

How do you support patients to use the online booking/messaging system?

All staff members mentioned supporting patients via text or email on how to use the NHS app, PATCHS, and winter access. In addition, two of the practice's staff mentioned providing in-person assistance to patients who wish to access online services, or recommending that they contact the practice in the morning to schedule an appointment.

Do you have enough time to deal with each patient enquiry?

All staff responded "yes" to this question.

What training have you had over the last year?

All staff members indicated that they had received adequate training to fulfil their duties, specifically mentioning Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring (ABPM) phlebotomy, in-house first aid training, as well as statutory courses and online training.

How do you think the current appointment system can be improved?

According to two staff members, there is nothing that needs to be improved, and substantial improvements have already been made. One staff member expressed a desire to be able to schedule appointments a few days in advance, however, the new contract limits their ability to do so.

Recommendations

Based on observations of the environment and questionnaire feedback from patients and staff, the following recommendations have been developed for Grand Union Health Centre:

- 1.** Westminster Council should support the practice to designate a specific space for parking that is wheelchair-accessible to provide disabled patients more room to manoeuvre around their cars and/or put together, and take apart any other mobility aids, or wheelchairs they may be carrying.
- 2.** Include a dedicated children's play space, which is presently absent from the second and third floor waiting areas.
- 3.** Include a clear complaint box at the practice for patients who are digitally excluded.
- 4.** Provide functional screens, particularly for patients who are hard of hearing, to show the names of patients who are ready to be seen by staff.
- 5.** Provide an inbuilt hearing loop for patients who are hard of hearing.
- 6.** Provide flexibility for people who want to discuss multiple health issues at a single session and cannot double book, particularly during an emergency.
- 7.** To ensure social prescribing is used effectively among patients, it is important to provide patients with a variety of language in communication that informs them about available local services, as well as expand the local services offered in the community.
- 8.** Ensure that staff are trained and have the resources needed to support patients with mental health needs in feeling heard and included in their treatment.

Provider response

Written feedback from Grand Union Surgery in response to the recommendations provided:

Disabled Parking:

We offer parking for disabled patients at the back of our building in our designated staff car park. We would appreciate assistance in liaising with Westminster Council to secure a specific wheelchair-accessible parking space at the front of our building, allowing disabled patients more room to manoeuvre and manage their mobility aids.

Children's Play Area:

We have a small children's play area in our ground floor waiting room. Due to infection control measures during the Covid pandemic, we dismantled most of the play area on both the ground floor and first floor.

Complaints Box:

We are willing to set up a labelled 'complaints' box for patient feedback.

Appointment Call System:

While we have TV screens for calling patients into rooms, many patients prefer direct communication from clinicians and do not routinely use the screens.

Hearing Loop System:

Installing an inbuilt hearing loop system is cost-prohibitive, but we provide various support options for hard of hearing patients, including BSL staff, Silent Sounds Interpreting system, and longer appointment times for effective communication.

Appointment Booking:

Patients with multiple issues are offered multiple appointments, with clear signage and staff training in place. We will ensure this information is communicated more effectively.

Social Prescriber Support:

Our practice social prescriber offers support, with staff trained to refer patients accordingly. We will explore providing information about local services in different languages.

Mental Health Training:

All practice staff, including receptionists, have received formal training to support patients with mental health needs. We will seek updates if there are concerns about the adequacy of this training.