

Whalley and Sabden Medical Practice

Tuesday 6th January 2026

1:00pm – 2:30pm



Disclaimer: 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 and View team on that date.

Contact Details

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Whalley Medical Practice

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<https://www.whalleysurgery.nhs.uk/>

Surgery Contact:

Emma Rollo (Practice Manager)

Katie Read (Assistant Practice Manager)

Date and Time of our Visit:

Tuesday 6th January 2026

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Steve Walmsley (Engagement Team Leader)

Dianne Oldcorne (Healthwatch Lancashire Volunteer)

Introduction

Healthwatch Lancashire is the independent public voice for health and social care in Lancashire and exists to make services work for the people who use them. We believe that the best way to do this is by providing the people of Lancashire with opportunities to share their views and experiences.

Healthwatch Lancashire has statutory powers to listen, act, challenge and gather feedback to improve local services and promote excellence throughout the NHS and social care services.

To help achieve this Healthwatch have a statutory power to 'Enter and View' health and social care services that are publicly funded. The purpose of an Enter and View is to listen to people who access those services and observe service delivery.

Following the Enter and View visit a report is compiled identifying aspects of good surgery within the service visited along with any recommendations for any possible areas of improvement.

As we are an independent organisation, we do not make judgements or express personal opinions but rely on feedback received and objective observations of the environment. The report is sent to the service provider providing an opportunity to respond to any recommendations and comments before being published on the Healthwatch Lancashire website at:

www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk

The report is available to members of the public along with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations. Where appropriate Healthwatch Lancashire may arrange a revisit to monitor the progress of improvements and celebrate any further successes.

General Information

Whalley and Sabden surgery serves patients in Whalley and Sabden area of the Ribble Valley. There are approximately 15,000 patients registered at the practice.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Lancashire would like to thank patients, staff and management, for making us feel welcome and for taking the time to speak to us during the visit.

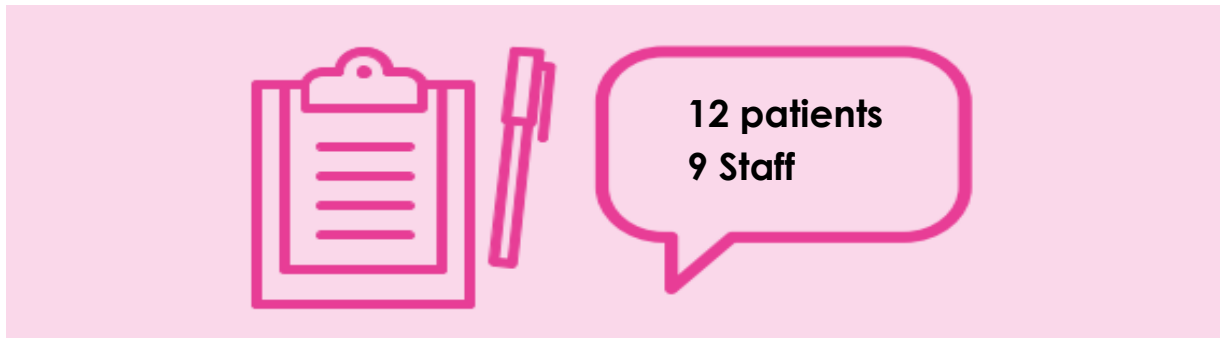
Glossary

MDT – Multi-disciplinary team

PCN – Primary Care Network

What did we do?

Healthwatch Lancashire Enter and View Representatives made an announced visit to Whalley Surgery on the 6th January and received feedback from:



Pre-visit surgery survey

Healthwatch Lancashire emailed a pre-visit questionnaire to the practice to learn about the patient population, services offered and how the surgery manage appointments for patients. Information from this questionnaire is included in the summary below.

Introductory meeting with Practice Manager

At the beginning of the Enter and View visit, Healthwatch Lancashire met with the practice's management team to discuss the surgery's background and view the facilities. The appointment system was explained, along with support offered to patients who are accessing services within the Primary Care Network (PCN).

One to one discussions with patients and their relatives

Healthwatch Lancashire spoke with patients and their relatives about their experiences including appointment booking, how they felt about the service and the care and treatment delivered by the staff at the surgery.

Discussions with members of staff

Healthwatch Lancashire representatives spoke with members of staff about their experiences of delivering services to patients. Questions centred around support for patients and any improvements staff felt could be made at the surgery. Due to the number of clinics running on the day of the visit, staff members were invited to send their responses to Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives outside of the visit.

Observations

Observations were made throughout the visit. This included patient and staff interactions, accessibility measures in place throughout the surgery and the condition and cleanliness of the facilities.

Summary



Healthwatch Lancashire representatives viewed facilities that were available at Whalley Medical Centre. This included the waiting area, external facilities and the reception area.

Overall, the feedback received from patients was positive, with several patient responses describing satisfaction with the quality of care and the attitude of staff. Patients also praised the communication between the surgery and themselves, commenting on how staff provide support with different queries and ensure they are fully informed about appointments. The care delivered by the practice was a highlight of the comments received. Two patients reported that they had chosen to register at the practice because of feedback from other patients.

However, some patients raised concerns about how services were delivered, with some patients mentioning that they were not aware about which surgery services were being delivered at, and that they preferred to use services at the Sabden site, as it was closer to them.

Throughout the visit staff members were observed to be kind, courteous and considerate towards the needs of patients, with some complex enquiries being handled in a sensitive manner.

Surgery overview

Location and public access



The practice is located in the centre of the town of Whalley. There is a second site located in Sabden. It offers a range of local health services such as phlebotomy, out of hours appointments and podiatry. There are frequent local bus services from the bus station, which is close to the health centre.

Parking in Whalley is limited but patients reported that they used the facilities at the Co-op car park next to the surgery, and side streets located around the centre of the village when attending appointments.

Surgery population

Whalley and Sabden surgery serves patients in Whalley and Sabden area of the Ribble Valley. There are approximately 15,000 patients registered at the practice with more patients registering due to moving into new-build developments around the area.

Services available

The centre offers face to face appointments with GPs and nursing staff along with a range of additional services such as health checks, smear tests and chronic disease management. The practice also has practice nurses and healthcare assistants who deliver blood tests, immunisations, dressings and long-term condition monitoring, minor surgery procedures, and access to visiting community midwives and physiotherapy clinics.

Appointment management



Appointments can be made by patients either on the phone, online using the NHS app or by visiting the centre.

Phone calls are handled by a team of care co-ordinators at the practice, with four trained in handling prescription enquiries. When patients make an appointment they are sent a text message reminder. It was also observed that staff would print off appointment reminders for patients attending the practice with appointment enquiries. **(Recommendation 1)**

Online enquiries are triaged and patients are given appointments with relevant members of staff. It was explained that this was to help make sure that there was suitable triage in place before appointments were allocated to patients. Conversations with members of staff revealed that there is a high take up of patients who use the online platforms at the practice to make appointments and contact the practice, this includes a high proportion of elderly patients.

Enter and View observations



Facilities

The main entrance to the centre is reached via a ramp from the roadside. There are clearly marked ramps for patients to use. These have handrails.

The practice has one main waiting area, with a centrally-placed, large reception desk for patients to make enquiries and book appointments. There is a self check in system to the right of the main desk. This was clearly identified with signs.

Signage for the services available at the centre is displayed in a prominent position in the entrance, and was observed throughout the centre. It had a consistent style to aid patients living with dementia and other conditions.

There is ample seating in the waiting area of a standard design and size. It is recommended that some chairs with armrests are introduced in order to provide more support for patients with limited mobility (**Recommendation 2**). The seating is well-spaced to allow for the movement of wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Patients are called to their appointments by members of staff who collect them from the waiting area. There is a screen in the waiting area to call patients but this was not in use at the time of the visit.



The waiting room has multiple large noticeboards displaying information about the local social prescribing services, community services, veteran support, and information about common conditions. The manager of the practice advised Healthwatch representatives that the waiting area and corridor areas are due to be refurbished in the next 12 months. Members of the patient participation group have provided support with these plans. (**Recommendation 3**)

Patient interactions

We observed several interactions with patients who were at different stages of their appointment-making journey. Throughout the visit a number of patients attended the surgery to make enquiries about medication and other issues which were handled calmly and professionally by the staff on the desk.

One patient called at the practice because they had experienced trouble on the app and they were concerned that they were going to miss out on booking an appointment. Staff worked with the patient to show them the steps on the app and then proceeded to book an appointment for them in order to resolve their enquiry. They also provided a paper reminder slip with the details of the appointment

A patient came to the practice who was concerned about the risk of infection, due to their condition. Staff were attentive to this and made sure that provision was made to let them sit in an area away from the waiting room, they also sent a message to the clinician handling their appointment to inform them where the patient would be. The patient, while still anxious, was appreciative of this additional support.

Patient feedback

Healthwatch Representatives spoke with **twelve** patients during the visit.

How did you make your appointment today?

Four patients had their appointments pre-arranged by members of staff on the day of the visit and commented that the process was well explained. One patient referenced the slips that were given out at the reception desk.

“It is a little thing but it really makes a difference because you get this and a text message so you are not likely to forget your appointment.”

Several patients had made their appointments online using the NHS app which was described as being a simpler process than phoning up for an appointment.

Three patients complimented the callback service on offer at the practice.

“Even if you are in the queue they offer the callback and it’s never been too long, not more than 20 minutes usually.”

Three patients explained that they had made their appointments over the phone and they had experienced a wait, but they knew that it was a regular occurrence as with any other GP practice. One patient was worried that they were going to miss out on appointments so they came to the practice to make their appointment instead.

“I had no luck on the phone or the app so I came down to make an appointment and got one straight away.”

One patient had been offered an appointment as a follow up on the day, which they felt was great service.

“I had another appointment and I was advised to take a blood test. I was told by the staff that there was a free slot available and I took it.”

They mentioned that it saved them a follow-up visit and they appreciated the fact that staff gave them the option to take the opportunity to get the test done quickly.

What works well at this surgery?



All twelve of the patients spoken with at the visit, complimented the care and attitude of staff members at the practice, highlighting how they felt that staff made them feel welcome and assisted them.
(Recommendation 1)

“Everyone I deal with seems to care.”

One patient, who had finished their appointment at the time of our visit explained that staff listened to them. This gave them confidence when using services. They praised the flexibility of appointments available through the enhanced access offer.

“They make you feel cared for and it gives you confidence in the system, little things like offering blood tests on Saturdays really makes life a bit easier.”

Is there anything that can be changed to meet your needs?

Two patients commented that they preferred to use the facilities at the other site because they lived nearer to Sabden.

“It would be better if I could get appointments at the Sabden site because I live over that way. Driving on days like this is not fun.”

When Healthwatch Lancashire representatives checked the availability of the service they were attending it was explained that it was only available at the Whalley site. **(Recommendation 4)**

Two members of staff explained that they were told who they would be seeing but felt that they wanted more choice over the member of staff that they saw at appointments, although they accepted that they were being seen by the right people.

Two patients felt that the staff at the practice were doing enough to work with the systems available but they wanted reassurance that they would be able to get a non-emergency appointment in advance if they needed one.

“If you come for an urgent appointment it is usually fine, they will fit you in. It gets more difficult trying to book an appointment one or two weeks in advance unless you have a direct referral from another member of staff.”

Do you receive information from the surgery that is easy to understand?

All patients spoken with felt that staff at the practice shared information in a clear and consistent manner, which meant that they were well informed about their conditions and appointments.

"They make sure you know when your appointment will be and who it will be with. Those little slips are really handy."



Do you know how to make a complaint if needed?

Ten patients out of the twelve patients knew how to raise issues and enquiries. Three patients who were not sure about raising issues commented that they would speak to staff on the reception desk in the first instance.

"I would just ask the staff at the desk if I had a problem."

Staff feedback

Healthwatch Lancashire representatives spoke with six members of staff about their experiences working at the practice and delivering their service.

All six members of staff said that they enjoyed working at the practice and felt that there was a good sense of community within the team which meant they were able to deliver a good level of service to patients. All staff stated they would recommend the surgery to a close relative or friend, with one member of staff describing it as a friendly surgery where everyone's input into patient care is respected. Another said that the surgery is well organised, adding that patients are extremely lucky to have such a lovely environment and staff that care, adding that they would definitely recommend the surgery.

When asked about workload management, staff described a variety of strategies including prioritising urgent tasks, diary scheduling, and liaising with senior staff and GPs as needed. One member of staff noted that wellbeing is a priority at the practice,

"If my workload became too much I could confidently reach out and know I would have help and be able to prioritise."

Regarding support and person-centred care, staff responded very positively. One member of staff who chose to work at the practice specifically because of its reputation said:

"The team puts patients at the heart of what they do. I certainly feel I have the time to provide appropriate support in my role."

All staff described that they felt the training offer meant they were able to develop as a team, noting that training is actively encouraged and promoted within the practice.

"Training is encouraged within the workplace, we are always given protected time"

Three staff described some of the measures in place to improve accessibility for patients with disabilities. They highlighted a range of provisions including a hearing loop, wheelchair ramp, disabled toilet facilities, hand rails, chairs with arms, and access to translators and British Sign Language (BSL) services. One member of staff also noted that the practice has a reasonable adjustments section on its website, along with a reasonable adjustment patient letter.

When asked about potential improvements to the patient experience, two members of staff independently suggested that a larger premises would benefit the surgery, with one noting that a sister site had recently been refurbished and that Whalley would benefit from the same. Another suggested that encouraging greater use of online services could help to improve patient access. One staff member summarised the overall quality of the practice by saying:

"Excellent surgery, with very knowledgeable staff, all of which bring lots of varied experience to the table. From what I have seen, everyone really cares about their roles and wants what is best for the patients."

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated based on observations of the environment and feedback gathered from patients and staff.

1. Celebrate successes and good practice highlighted in this report with staff and partners to share good practice with others.
2. Order additional chairs (with armrests) at differing heights to provide support for patients with limited mobility.
3. Continue involvement of the Patient Participation Group in the development of the planned refurbishment.
4. Develop an information board, or section of the website, to inform patients about the services available at the Whalley and Sabden sites.

Provider response

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe
Celebrate successes and good practice highlighted in this report with staff and partners to share good practice with others.		
Order additional chairs (with armrests) at differing heights to provide support for patients with limited mobility.		
Continue involvement of the Patient Participation Group in the development of the planned refurbishment.		
Develop an information board, or section of the website, to inform patients about the services available at the Whalley and Sabden sites.		

Questions

Is the report factually accurate?

Did you learn anything new about residents' views and experiences, or anything else, as a result of the Enter and View undertaken by Healthwatch Lancashire?

Any other comments?



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