

GP practice report

Castlefields Health Centre

October 2025

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About this report

This report has been produced by Healthwatch Halton as part of our Enter and View programme. These visits allow us to observe services first-hand, speak with patients and staff, and gather feedback about people's experiences of care and access to appointments.

Our findings reflect what we saw during the visit and what people told us on the day. We aim to give clear, balanced insight into what is working well and where improvements could be made.

A draft of this report has been shared with the practice for comment, and any clarifications or updates will be included in the final published version.

Castlefields Health Centre

Date of Visit: 22 October 2025

1. Introduction

Healthwatch Halton is the independent champion for people who use health and care services locally. We have statutory powers to visit publicly funded services, observe how care is provided, and gather feedback directly from patients, carers, and staff. The findings from our visits are shared with providers and commissioners to help improve local services.

This visit to Castlefields Health Centre formed part of our wider programme of visits to GP surgeries across Halton. During our visits, we aim to understand patient experience, highlight examples of good practice, and identify any areas where improvements could be made.

2. Background Information

Practice Information	Details
Location	The Village Square, Castlefields, Runcorn
Practice List Size	15,222
GPs	14
Advanced Nurse Practitioners	3, General, Over 75s, Mental Health
Nurses	4
HCAs / APs	4 Healthcare Assistants, 1 Assistant Practitioner
Clinical Pharmacist	3 (2 practice-employed, 1 PCN-employed)
Care Navigators / Receptionists	10 (plus 4 prescription clerks)
Administrative Staff	11
Managers	2

Systems and Services

- NHS Total Triage: Yes
- Paco Blinx: Paco Blinx is not yet a system used by the practice. They are in the installation phase and currently use Accurx. PACO will be implemented in 2026.
- Same-day emergency appointments: Yes
- Pre-bookable appointments: Yes
- GP Extra referrals: Yes
- PPG: Yes (approx. 6 members)

3. External Environment

Castlefields GP Practice is part of a large Health Centre. There is a small car park outside with spaces for around a dozen cars, and additional parking is available

across the road in the Community Centre car park. The building has level access via automatic sliding doors. Upon entry, the main reception and waiting area are located directly in front of the entrance. The reception desk is large and includes a self-check-in screen, though this area can become very busy with enquiries throughout the day.

4. Environment and Facilities

The main waiting area at Castlefields Health Centre provided a positive first impression. It was bright, clean, and well maintained, with a clear layout and a mix of bench-style seating arranged in sets. Seasonal decorations were in place at the time of the visit, helping create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Soft background music played via the radio, and artificial plants added a sense of warmth to the space.

Two TV screens were in use, displaying NHS information. Staff also called patients personally, which supported smoother patient flow. A table with a blood pressure monitor and weighing scales offered self-check options for patients wishing to use them.

Information was well presented. Multiple noticeboards and leaflet racks displayed a wide range of patient resources, including health and wellbeing information, carers' support, local services, and practice updates. A dedicated wellbeing area with its own banner emphasised the centre's focus on patient support.

Three toilets—male, female, and disabled—were directly accessible from the waiting area. Routes through the building were well lit, signposted, and maintained, contributing to a dementia-friendly environment.

A central corridor led to twelve consulting rooms and a small additional seating area. Direct access to Runcorn Pharmacy was also available from within the health centre.

4a. Upper Floors

The Health Centre extends across two upper floors, both accessible by lift and stairs, ensuring good access for patients with mobility needs.

The first floor contains a large secondary reception area and an additional suite of treatment rooms – 15 in total. This area also includes a baby feeding and changing room, several toilets, and health promotion displays. The space was tidy and functional, supporting a broad range of clinical services.

The second floor is mainly used for staff offices and a meeting room. During the visit, a few members of the public were observed entering the building solely to use washroom facilities.

Overall, the upper floors offered well-structured clinical and administrative space, contributing to the extensive range of services available on site.

5. Patient Feedback

During the visit, we spoke with a number of patients attending the Health Centre. Most described positive experiences with the practice. One patient told us, “*I’ve been waiting five months for my implant removal due to an error, but it’s finally being done today. Despite that, I can’t fault this GP practice.*”

Parents attending with children expressed confidence in digital triage and communication. One said, “*I use the online service for my son – it’s really good. You get a response via text explaining the next steps. Staff are friendly.*” Another shared, “*Reception sent me a form to complete, and once returned, I got my appointments without issue.*”

Several patients using online services praised the system: “*I use online services and usually get a same-day response. They triage and advise whether I need an appointment, prescription, or referral.*”

Others emphasised the friendliness of staff: “*Staff are very helpful and supportive – they know me well as I’m here a lot.*”

A small number of patients reported longer waiting times inside the surgery, with one noting, “*Appointments via eConsult are fine, but the waiting times in surgery can be long.*”

Other patients also commented positively: “*Everything is fine – just here for a flu jab.*” “*Everything is fine – GPs, staff, appointments all good.*”

A patient with additional needs told us about their positive experiences: “*I have a*

learning difficulty and can't go online, but reception staff always help me book by phone."

6. Key Findings

Positive Observations:

- *Clean, bright, and welcoming environment.*
- *Wide range of clinics and visiting services.*
- *Friendly and professional staff.*
- *Strong use of health information boards and wellbeing areas.*
- *Clear patient flow supported by electronic and staff-led systems.*
- *Adequate consulting room capacity.*

Areas for Improvement:

- *Delays for specific treatments.*
- *Occasional long waits inside the building.*
- *Self-check-in screen difficult to access when reception is busy.*
- *Some use of washrooms by non-patients.*

Summary

Castlefields Health Centre provides a clean, welcoming, and well-functioning environment with a wide range of services. Staff were professional, patient-focused, and approachable. While most feedback was positive, some patients noted delays and occasional long waits. Overall, the majority reported good experiences with staff, communication, and clinical care.

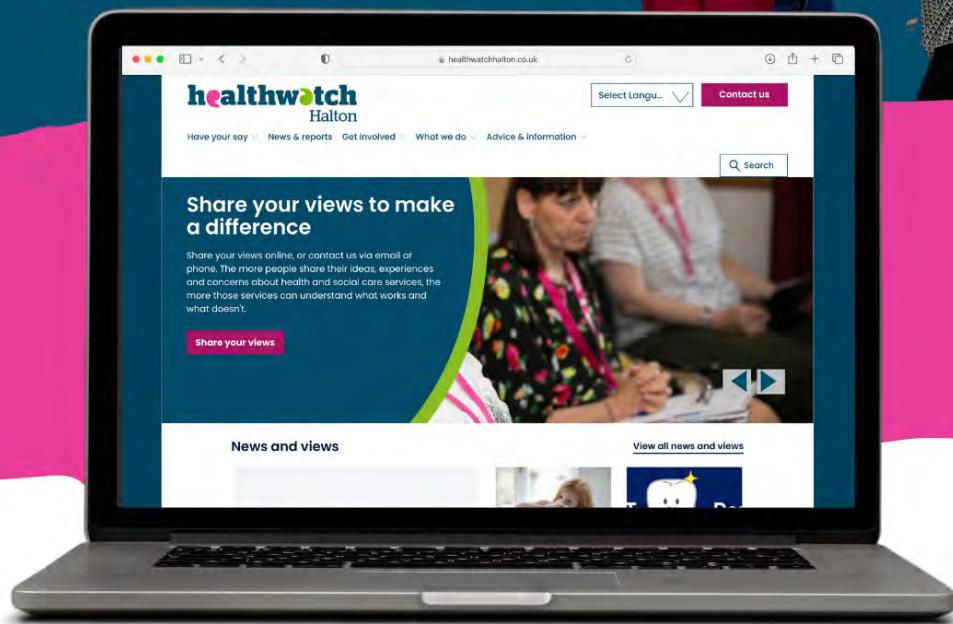
Recommendations

- 1. Relocate the self-check-in screen.*
- 2. Review building access to reduce unauthorised washroom use.*
- 3. Monitor treatment-specific delays.*
- 4. Review patient flow during peak times.*

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We are committed to the quality of our information.
Every three years we perform an in-depth audit
so that we can be certain of this.

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