

GP practice report

Murdishaw Health Centre

December 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.

1. Introduction

Healthwatch Halton carried out an Enter and View visit to Murdishaw Health Centre on 3 December 2025 to understand how patients access appointments, how the environment supports their experience, and what people think of the care they receive.

During the visit, we spoke with patients in the waiting area and observed reception interactions, patient flow, and general activity within the practice.

Patients arrived steadily throughout the morning for appointments, prescription queries and general enquiries.

2. Background Information

Practice Information	Details
Address	Murdishaw Health Centre, Gorsewood Road, Runcorn, WA7 6ES Tel: 01928 712061
Registered Patients	7,959
GPs	3
Advanced Clinical Practitioners	3
Practice Nurse	1
Women's Health Practice Nurse	1
Care Navigators	5
Care co-ordinators	3
Business Manager	1
Practice Ops Manager	1
Complex Care Co-ordinator	1
Healthcare Assistants	1
Nursing Associate	2
Clinical Pharmacist	1
Admin Team	3
Secretary	1
Clinical Pharmacist	1
Pharmacy Technician	1

Access and Systems

- PATCHS: Yes, admin use only NHS Total Triage: No
- Same-Day Appointments: Yes, via telephone
- Pre-bookable Appointments: Yes
- GP Extra Referrals: Yes
- Patient Participation Group: Yes – 2 members
- Phlebotomy: Not commissioned

3. First Impressions and Environment

The practice has recently undergone a full renovation and presents a bright, clean and modern environment. Walls are finished in white or exposed brick, and the flooring throughout the patient areas is a durable grey nonslip material. The reception desk is positioned to the right as patients enter the practice, making it easy to see and approach.

The waiting area contains around a dozen blue chairs, a mix of fabric and wipeable materials, all in good condition. Information boards and leaflet racks offer details about local health support and seasonal campaigns. A “Quote of the Day” board and a Christmas tree were in place during the visit, contributing to a welcoming atmosphere.

A self-check-in screen is located on the back wall. The patient calling system is displayed through the television screen, which also shows health messages and plays music. No audio alerts were in use during the visit. An Education Room is available for baby change and breastfeeding and can also be used as a family room.

Clinical rooms along the corridor appeared clean, tidy and well maintained.

Parking around the practice was observed to be limited. The location opposite two junior schools is likely to contribute to congestion at peak times.

Disabled parking bays are provided close to the entrance, although these were also observed to be in high demand during the visit.

4. What People Told Us

We spoke with multiple patients during the visit. Their comments reflected a mix of positive experiences, frustrations and suggestions for improvement.

Access and appointments

A recurring issue was difficulty getting through by telephone at 8am. Several patients said they spent long periods redialling or waiting on hold before connecting. One patient told us:

“You can usually never get through and after waiting and waiting it then rings off.”

Shift workers described particular challenges:

“I work nights so it’s hard to get an appointment as I’m asleep at 8am.”

Parents also reported difficulty securing appointments for children, with one describing the need to stay up late to use digital systems:

“I feel like I have to stay up until midnight when it comes back on... especially if it’s for my child.”

Another patient said:

“I usually phone for appointments but it is very difficult to get one, have to wait weeks sometimes.”

Some patients said they resorted to attending the practice in person when they could not get through on the phone.

Digital access

Experiences of PATCHS and the NHS App varied. Some patients used the NHS App comfortably for checking records or prescriptions. Others described frustration with PATCHS:

“PATCHS is too confusing.”

“Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t.”

Parents highlighted the inability to link children’s records:

“I do wish they would link children’s records to parents on the NHS App so I can see appointments, records etc.”

Others said they would like to use digital tools but needed support to set them up.

Prescriptions

Several patients raised concerns about prescriptions, including missing items, inconsistent quantities, and needing to attend the surgery in person to make requests:

“Scripts not always right, items missing so have to come back again to sort it out.”

Patients with multiple long-term conditions reported difficulties obtaining suitable

repeat quantities:

“...I find it very difficult to get repeat medication... have asked multiple times for amounts to be changed... but no one listens.”

Urgent situations

One patient shared a significant concern following a recent stroke. They explained that their blood pressure became dangerously high during a physio visit, and the clinician attempted to call the practice. They recounted:

“...my blood pressure was really raised so she called the practice to get a doctor’s visit. She was blocked totally and couldn’t get anyone to speak to her...”

Later in the interaction, the patient added:

“...they advised her to go to a pharmacy... needless to say I ended up in A&E.”

Other issues raised

Parking was highlighted as difficult, with patients noting a lack of disabled bays:

“Parking is a problem, only two disabled parking bays so difficult to find somewhere to park.”

Despite these concerns, patients consistently spoke warmly about the staff team.

5. Key Findings

What is working well

- *Friendly, professional care navigator and reception team*
- *Clean, modern, and welcoming environment following renovation*
- *Effective patient information displays and communication materials*
- *Availability of emergency and pre-bookable appointments*
- *Interpreter services supporting accessible healthcare*

Where improvements may help

- *Difficulty getting through on the telephone at busy times*
- *Difficulty getting through on the 8am telephone line*
- *Long call waits and call drop-offs*
- *Challenges using PATCHS; patients have limited awareness of digital tools*
- *Prescription inconsistencies and inflexible repeat quantities*

6. Summary

During our visit, Murdishaw Health Centre was calm and welcoming, and patients spoke **very positively** about the care they received from staff. Many people described clinicians and reception staff as friendly, supportive and committed to helping them.

However, experiences of appointment access varied. Several patients reported long waits on the telephone, difficulty getting through during peak times and needing repeated attempts before securing an appointment. Shift workers and parents described particular challenges fitting booking times around their responsibilities.

Confidence in digital tools varied, with some patients finding the NHS App helpful while others were unsure how to use PATCHS or had difficulty linking children's accounts. Patients told us clearer guidance would be beneficial.

Overall, the visit highlighted strong, compassionate staff relationships with patients, alongside opportunities to strengthen appointment access, communication and digital support.

7. Recommendations

The recommendations below are based on what we heard from patients during the visit and observations made on the day. They are intended to support the practice in building on what is working well, while addressing areas where small adjustments may help improve access, communication and patient confidence.

7.1 Review Telephone Access Systems

Patients repeatedly described difficulties getting through by phone, particularly at 8am.

- *Review call-handling capacity and demand at peak times.*
- *Ensure any queuing or call-back system is clearly explained to patients.*
- *Explore whether changes to call routing or staffing patterns could help reduce waiting times.*

7.2 Strengthen Digital Access Support

Several patients said they were unsure how to use PATCHS or the NHS App.

- *Provide simple, accessible guides explaining how PATCHS and the NHS App are used at the practice.*
- *Offer brief digital support for patients who need help getting started.*
- *Raise parental access to children's NHS App records at system level, reflecting local feedback.*

7.3 Appointment Options for Different Groups

Night-shift workers, carers and parents described challenges linked to appointment release times.

- *Consider offering a small number of appointments released at different times of day to reduce pressure on the 8am bottleneck.*
- *Consider exploring additional booking routes that might support people who cannot telephone at 8am.*
- *Ensure patients are aware of alternatives such as GP Extra.*

7.4 Strengthen Communication Pathways with External Clinicians

One patient case highlighted delays when a community clinician needed to escalate a concern urgently.

- *Review how urgent clinician-to-clinician contact is managed to ensure external professionals can reach the practice promptly when escalation is required.*

7.5 Review Prescription Processes

Patients reported missing items on repeat prescriptions and difficulty adjusting quantities.

- *Review a sample of recent prescriptions to identify common errors or delays.*
- *Ensure medication quantities for people with multiple long-term conditions are appropriate and minimise unnecessary visits.*

7.6 Parking and Access Information

Parking difficulties are influenced by the two junior schools opposite the practice, which can create significant congestion at key times of the day.

- *Consider providing information to patients about when parking is likely to be busiest (for example, during school drop-off and pick-up times).*
- *It may be helpful to advise patients to allow extra time for parking at these times.*

7.7 Develop and Promote the PPG

Consider ways to encourage wider patient involvement to increase membership and broaden representation within the PPG.

7.8 Signposting Awareness

Some patients needed help navigating digital tools during the visit, and staff were also provided with information about the NHS My Planned Care platform. Ensuring everyone is aware of the key digital resources available to patients can help support consistent signposting.

- Consider offering brief updates or reminders about tools such as the NHS App, NHS My Planned Care, and other local services.

It may be helpful to share quick-reference guides or internal notes so staff feel equipped to direct patients to the right information when needed.

Practice response

Access and appointments –

Patient stated they struggle to get through on the phone – We are sorry to hear our patients feel this way. We are hopeful that now with the introduction of our digital front door that is open from 8am – 6:30pm, will reduce the waiting times on the phone line and help with those patients who face the 8am struggle.

I am unsure on the comment about the need to stay up late or waiting till midnight, our system turns off at 6:30PM, although I do believe this used to be on from midnight, this feature has now been turned off.

Digital access –

We are sorry to find that some of our patients find PATCHs confusing. We are, as are the rest of Halton, moving to a new and more accessible digital front door, this will be shared with our patients nearer our go live date and staff are undergoing training.

I will raise the issue about linking a child's patient access to the parents.

Other issues raised –

Unfortunately, the carpark is owned by HBC, so this is difficult for us to manage as there are two schools also.

As stated, we are moving over to new system for our digital front door towards the end of February, we will be holding digital access support sessions for patients who may need this. We are hopeful that this will help with the busy one lines.

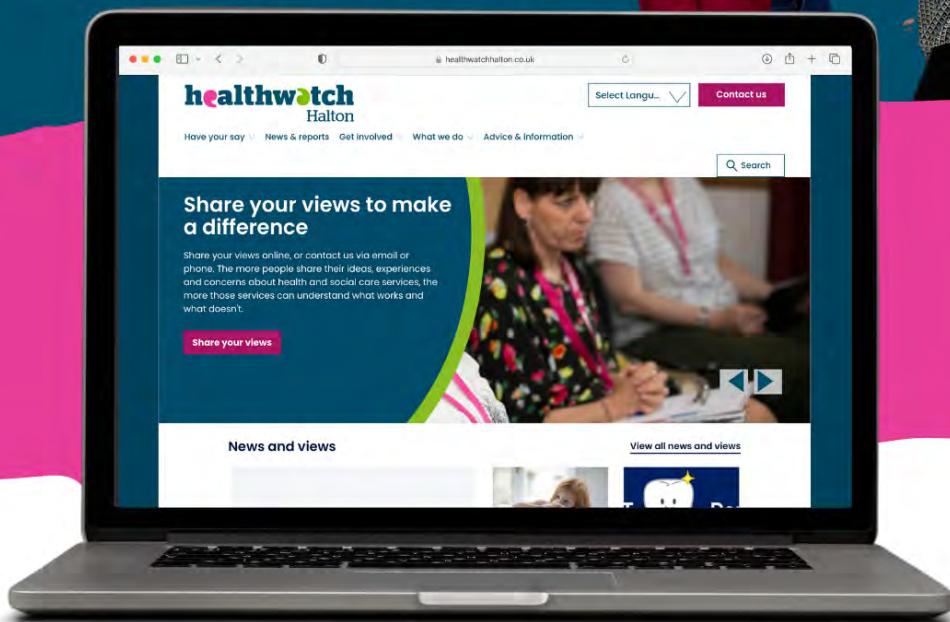
We will take on board your recommendations outlined.

Michelle Jones – Practice Operations Manager

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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.

healthwatch Halton

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