

GP practice report

Oaks Place Surgery

December 2025

Contents

About this report	3
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Background Information.....	4
5. Patient Feedback.....	6
5. Key Findings	7
6. Summary	8
7. Recommendations	9

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. A draft of the report is shared with the practice for comment, and any clarifications or updates are included in the final published version.

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 health and care services, observe how care is delivered, and gather feedback directly from patients, carers and staff. We share our findings with providers to help improve services.

Enter and View visits give us the opportunity to speak with people using services, understand their experiences, and highlight both good practice and areas where changes could support better care.

This report summarises what we observed and what people told us during our announced visit to **Oaks Place Surgery** on 10 December 2025.

2. Background Information

Practice Information	Details
Address:	Oaks Place Surgery Caldwell Road, Widnes, WA8 7GD Telephone: 0151 495 5140
Registered Patients:	3915
GPs:	1
Advanced Nurse Practitioners:	12
Practice Nurses:	1
Paramedics:	0
Care Navigators	5
Practice Manager / Deputy	2
Administrative Team	3
Healthcare Assistants	1
Clinical Pharmacist	1

Appointment Systems

- *Blinx PACO GP.*
- *NHS Total Triage: No*
- *Same-day appointments: Yes*
- *Pre-bookable appointments: Yes*
- *GP Extra referrals: Yes*
- *Patient Participation Group: No active group*

3. Environment and Facilities

Oaks Place Surgery is situated within the Health Care Resource Centre and shares its main waiting area with Newtown Surgery and the Urgent Treatment Centre. The building is fully accessible with level access and automatic doors.

3.1 Reception

The reception desk is set back within a glass-fronted area. An electronic check-in device is available to the right of the window. Posters displayed at reception covered infection prevention messages, measles awareness and NHS anti-abuse guidance.

3.2 Waiting Area

The waiting area forms part of the wider shared space used by Newtown Surgery and the Urgent Treatment Centre. Although the green chairs are designated for Oaks Place patients, staff confirmed that patients generally sit wherever seats are available. The seating and flooring were in good condition, with a suitable mix of chairs to meet different needs. A TV screen was present but switched off, and no electronic calling system was in use, meaning staff came into the waiting area to call patients in person.

3.3 Information Boards

Three notice boards displayed health and wellbeing materials.

However:

- Several posters were untidy or torn.
- Displays appeared cluttered and inconsistent.
- No information about Healthwatch Halton or a PPG was visible.
- A prescription post box was present but not clearly labelled.

3. Clinical Areas

Clinical rooms are located further down the corridor, shared with maternity and phlebotomy services.

Staff were friendly and welcoming throughout our visit.

4. Patient Feedback

During our visit, patients shared a range of views about accessing appointments, using online systems and their overall experience of care at Oaks Place Surgery. Many people spoke positively about staff, describing them as friendly, helpful and supportive. One patient told us, *“Staff are amazing – really good,”* and others said they were usually able to get emergency appointments when needed.

4.1 Access to Appointments

Patients described mixed experiences when booking appointments. Some secured same-day care by phoning early in the morning, while others said they experienced long waits on the phone or were asked to come back the following day. Some patients said they had been directed to the Walk-In Centre when no appointments were available. Parents reported challenges when trying to book for children. One person shared, *“I called yesterday for an appointment for my son. I was told none were available and to come today or go to walk-in.”*

4.2 Experiences of Seeing Different Clinicians

Several patients said they were often booked with locum GPs, and a small number felt this made it more difficult to resolve ongoing issues. One patient explained that they had seen the same locum twice in the same week for a problem that still felt unresolved. Others spoke positively about the ANP team and described staff as responsive once they were seen. Some people also mentioned waiting beyond their appointment time, including one who said, *“My appointment was at 10am – I’ve been waiting half an hour.”*

4.3 Digital Access and Confidence

People’s confidence with digital tools varied considerably. Some used the NHS App or Patient Access for prescriptions or checking information, but many preferred to telephone the surgery. Several patients explained that they did not feel confident using online systems due to visual impairment, limited digital experience or language barriers. One patient said, *“I’m visually impaired and not tech savvy,”* while another told us, *“English is my second language; I don’t use NHS Apps.”* A patient who used the NHS App shared, *“Sometimes I have to call for help understanding the results.”*

4.4 Communication and Overall Experience

Most patients described staff as friendly and approachable. People attending routine clinics, such as diabetic reviews or asthma checks, reported positive

experiences. However, a small number of patients shared less positive experiences, mainly relating to appointment availability or how their enquiries were handled. One patient expressed strong dissatisfaction, saying, *“Can I be honest? This practice is s**t and not working at all,”* while another described a previous situation where a family member with mental health needs felt *“interrogated by the receptionist.”*

Although these comments were not widely shared, they highlight occasions where communication could be improved.

Overall, patients reported positive interactions once they were in contact with staff, but feedback suggests that improvements to access, communication and digital support would help create a more consistent experience across the practice.

5. Key Findings

Positive Observations

- Welcoming, friendly staff; strong rapport with patients.
- Clean and friendly environment, with suitable seating and layout.
- Good range of clinical rooms and accessible facilities.
- Same-day and pre-bookable appointments available
- Dedicated Clinical Pharmacist and experienced ANP team.

Areas for Improvement

- Long telephone wait times reported by several patients.
- Mixed experiences with appointment availability.
- Lack of clear information on PPG and Healthwatch Halton.
- Untidy, torn, and poorly organised notice boards.
- Prescription post box not clearly labelled.
- No patient calling system; TV not in use.
- Concerns raised about reception staff communication in sensitive cases.
- Patients described mixed experiences when seeing different clinicians, particularly when follow-up involved locum GPs.

6. Summary

We visited Oaks Place Surgery on 10 December 2025 to observe the environment, speak with patients and gather feedback about people's experiences of accessing care.

Whilst the clinical rooms and corridors were considered appropriate for people living with dementia, the main shared waiting area presented some challenges. As a large communal space serving multiple healthcare services, including two GP practices, a walk-in centre, pharmacy, X-ray department and other clinics, the area can become busy and noisy. Together with the flooring pattern, these factors may make the environment less dementia-friendly for some people.

Many patients told us they were able to book appointments when needed, particularly by attending in person or calling the surgery. People generally described positive experiences once they were seen. Some patients did, however, raise concerns about waiting times for routine appointments, and a small number highlighted challenges with the current prescription process.

Confidence with digital systems varied. While some patients used the NHS App for prescriptions, others preferred telephone or face-to-face contact. Parents needing to request frequent prescriptions, such as infant formula, reported that the process could be time-consuming.

During our visit we observed limited patient information on display, an old prescription box still fixed to the wall and an electronic calling system that was not in use. Addressing these small practical issues could help improve clarity and patient flow.

Overall, Oaks Place Surgery provides a supportive and accessible service, offering a range of clinics and additional services to meet patient needs.

The suggestions in this report focus on improving communication, strengthening information displays and reviewing operational processes to support a consistently positive experience for patients.

7. Recommendations

1. Patient information displays

The surgery may wish to review and reorganise patient noticeboards to ensure information is easy to find, well-presented and kept up to date, including details about the PPG and Healthwatch Halton.

2. Electronic calling system

Reinstating the electronic calling system, or using an alternative digital method, could support smoother patient flow and reduce reliance on verbal announcements, especially for those with hearing difficulties.

3. Communication

Most patients described good communication, though a few had concerns about sensitive enquiries. It may be helpful to review these situations to make sure patients feel comfortable and supported.

4. Waiting time concerns

Monitoring waiting times and updating patients when delays occur may help reduce uncertainty, as some people told us they waited beyond their appointment time.

5. Digital access and prescription processes

The practice could explore whether digital options for frequent prescriptions, such as infant formula requests, can be simplified for parents. Continuing to offer non-digital routes would help patients with visual impairments, hearing impairments or limited English to access services more easily.

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9. Continuity for follow-up appointments

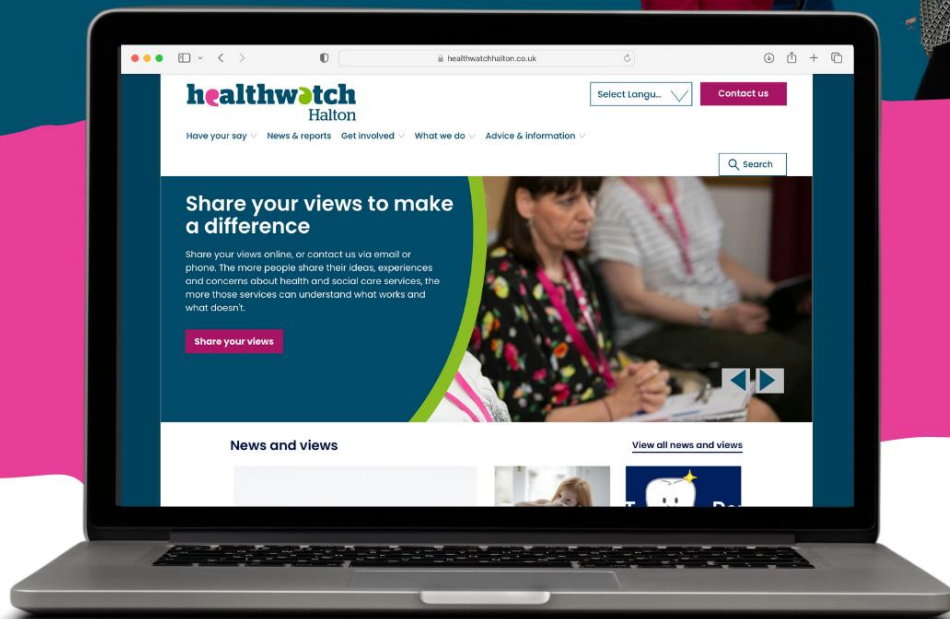
Some patients described challenges when follow-up involved different clinicians. The practice may wish to consider ways of supporting continuity, for example clearer follow-up plans or consistent messaging about next steps.

Healthwatch Halton thanks the management, staff and patients of Oaks Place Surgery for their cooperation and openness during this Enter and View visit.

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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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