

# GP practice report

**Peelhouse Medical Plaza**

November 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 Peelhouse Plaza Medical Practice on 5 November 2025 as part of our ongoing programme of visits to GP practices across the borough.

Enter and View visits enable authorised representatives to observe services, speak with patients and staff, and gather feedback about people's experiences of accessing care. The focus of this visit was to understand patient experiences of appointment access, the environment and facilities, and the quality of information and communication within the practice.

## 2. Background Information

Practice Information	Details
Address	Peelhouse Plaza, Peelhouse Lane, Widnes, WA8 6TN
Registered Patients	13,713
GPs:	7
Advanced Nurse Practitioners:	4
Practice Nurses:	4
Paramedic:	1
Care Navigators:	14
Managers:	3
Administrative staff:	12
Healthcare Assistants:	2
Clinical Pharmacists:	2

### Systems and services:

- *Patches: Yes (admin and appointments)*
- *Blinx Paco: Yes (in transition)*
- *NHS Total Triage: No*
- *Emergency same-day appointments: Yes (by phone)*
- *Pre-bookable appointments: Yes*
- *GP Extra referrals: Yes*
- *Patient Participation Group: Yes (7 members)*
- *Phlebotomy clinic: Yes*

### **3. Practice Overview**

Peelhouse Plaza Medical Practice is located adjacent to a busy main road. Limited parking is available on the main road and at the side of the building, though these spaces are not designated for surgery use. The main surgery car park is located approximately 100 metres away.

There is level access from the street into a small entrance hall, which also provides access to the on-site pharmacy.

Reception is located within the main waiting area. Three reception desks are present, with two staffed at the time of the visit. A rope barrier and signage were in place asking patients to wait to be called forward.

The main waiting area is large, with all consulting rooms leading directly off it. A separate corridor houses additional treatment rooms.

### **4. Environment and Facilities**

Several electronic self-check-in screens are positioned around the waiting area. Multiple TV screens display NHS advertisements without sound, and there was no background music playing during the visit. It was noted that the wall clock was not working.

The waiting area contains a range of patient information boards and banners, including materials from external organisations such as Active Halton. A “You Said, We Did” board and a patient suggestion box were available. Some information displayed was out of date, including Patient Participation Group (PPG) minutes dated March 2023.

A privacy screen at the rear of the waiting area was covered with posters and patient information, giving it a cluttered appearance.

Several hand sanitiser dispensers were observed around the waiting area, although some were empty at the time of the visit.

An atrial fibrillation (AF) testing station was available for patient use. The building is served by a lift to the upper floors, and a wheelchair was available for patients who require it.

Reception staff were observed to be friendly, professional, and helpful when interacting with patients.

## 5. What people told us

Overall, patients spoke positively about the care they receive and the professionalism of staff, while also highlighting ongoing challenges with appointment access, booking systems and flexibility.

We spoke with a number of patients during the visit. Their feedback reflected a broad range of experiences, with recurring themes around access to appointments, use of digital systems, continuity of care, and the quality of care received.

### Positive experiences and quality of care

Many patients spoke positively about the care they receive once they are seen by clinical staff. Doctors and clinicians were frequently described as professional, supportive and reassuring, and several patients expressed confidence in the care provided. One patient told us:

*“All the doctors are great once you get seen.”*

Some patients also described positive experiences when seeking urgent care, including timely responses and same-day appointments when needed. One person said:

*“First appointment in a long time – I rang this morning as an emergency and got a GP appointment within five minutes, which was great.”*

Reception staff were also viewed positively by a number of patients, particularly in terms of politeness and helpfulness during face-to-face interactions.

### Access to appointments

Access to appointments was the most common area of concern raised. Many patients described difficulty getting through on the telephone, particularly at 8am, with long waits and repeated attempts often required. One patient explained:

*“The phones can ring for 40 minutes. When I finally got through, it took 34 minutes.”*

Others described queue positions and the need to ring repeatedly as part of their daily experience, with one patient commenting:

*“I was 6th in the queue this morning.”*

Several patients told us that pre-bookable appointments were rarely available, leading to frustration and pressure to contact the practice early each morning.

### **Digital access**

Patient experiences of Patches, Blinx Paco and the NHS App were mixed. Some patients felt confident using digital systems and valued the convenience they offered. One patient said:

*“Amazing – I use everything: NHS App, Patches and Blinx Paco. I find it easy, but I feel sorry for elderly patients.”*

Other patients found online systems confusing or unreliable and preferred speaking to someone directly. One person told us:

*“I find online and NHS apps too complicated. I prefer speaking to someone.”*

Several patients felt that the transition between digital systems added to uncertainty about how best to book appointments.

### **Continuity of care**

Continuity of care was important to many patients, particularly those with long-term or complex conditions. Several people told us they would prefer to see the same GP who knows their history, and expressed frustration when follow-up appointments could not be booked with the same clinician.

### **Working patterns and flexibility**

Some patients, particularly those working shifts or on rota-based schedules, felt current appointment times did not always meet their needs. One patient commented:

*“I work on a rota and can’t take time off easily. They’re not flexible for shift workers – they should offer evening appointments.”*

Overall, patient feedback reflected strong appreciation for the quality of care and staff professionalism, alongside ongoing challenges around appointment access, booking systems and flexibility.

## **6. Key Findings**

## What is working well

- Clean, spacious and accessible environment
- Professional, courteous and helpful reception staff
- Wide range of clinical staff and services available
- Positive patient experiences once appointments are secured
- Once seen, most patients described their care and treatment as positive.

## Where improvements may help

- Ongoing difficulty accessing appointments by phone, particularly at 8am
- Mixed experiences with online systems during the transition from Patches to Blinx
- Limited flexibility for working patients and shift workers
- Out-of-date information displayed in the waiting area
- Some empty hand sanitiser stations
- Patient concerns about continuity of care

## 7. Summary

Peelhouse Medical Plaza provides a clean, accessible and well-equipped environment, with a wide range of services available to a large patient population. Staff interactions observed during the visit were professional and welcoming.

However, patient feedback highlighted some challenges around appointment access, particularly via the telephone at peak times. Digital systems were reported to work well for some patients but created barriers for others, especially those who are less confident with technology. Many patients expressed a strong preference for speaking to someone directly and for seeing the same GP for ongoing care.

Overall, the visit identified a committed staff team and positive clinical care, alongside opportunities to improve access, communication and patient confidence in booking systems.

## 8. Recommendations

### 1. Review appointment access

Continue to explore ways to reduce pressure on the 8am telephone system and ensure clear communication about available appointment routes.

### 2. Support digital and non-digital users

Provide clearer guidance on using Patches and Blinx, while ensuring alternative booking options remain accessible for patients unable to use online systems.

### 3. Ensure continuity of care

Where possible, support patients with ongoing conditions to see the same clinician.

### 4. Update patient information

Review noticeboards regularly to ensure information, including PPG materials, is current and relevant, and reduce clutter on privacy screens.

### 5. Environmental checks

Monitor and refill hand sanitiser dispensers routinely and address non-functioning equipment such as wall clocks.

### 6. Consider flexibility for working patients

Explore options for more flexible appointment times to support shift workers and those unable to attend during standard hours.

## **Service response**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the findings of the Enter and View visit.

The practice would like to clarify that we do offer extended access appointments on a Monday evening.

We acknowledge the comments regarding the notice boards within the practice and will review these to ensure they are tidy, up to date and clearly presented. We will also ensure that all hand sanitiser dispensers are fully stocked and routinely checked.

With regard to appointment access, the practice operates a care navigation model. This means that the clinician a patient initially requests to see may not always be the most appropriate clinician for their clinical need, and patients may be directed to another member of the clinical team to ensure they receive timely and appropriate care.

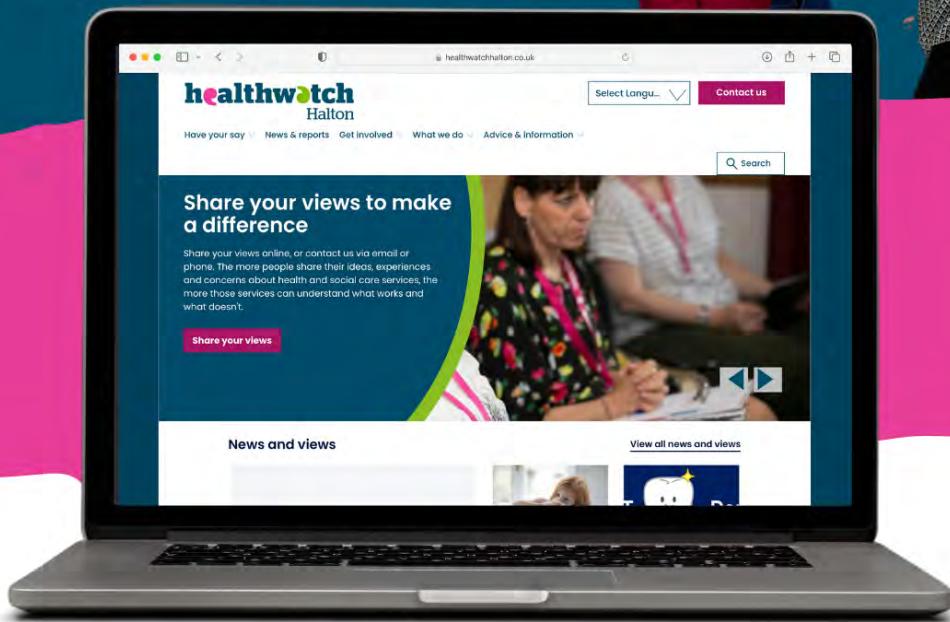
The practice does provide pre-bookable appointments, and patients are also able to book appointments online. We recognise that patients who prefer to telephone the practice may experience a queue at busy times; however, a call-back function is available to reduce the need to remain on hold.

**Jane Forshaw, Practice Manager**  
**Peelhouse Plaza Medical Practice**

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Every three years we perform an in-depth audit  
so that we can be certain of this.

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