

# GP practice report

**Upton Rocks**

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.

## 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 Upton Rocks Surgery 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
Address	Upton Rocks, Widnes RUFC Car Park, Heath Road, Widnes, WA8 7NU
Telephone	0151 511 5730
Registered Patients	3,338
GPs	3
Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs)	2
Practice Nurses	2
Care Navigators	6
First Contact Physios	2
Mental Health Nurse	1
HCA	1
Practice Manager	1
Administrative Staff	0 (Care Navigators cover administrative duties)
Clinical Pharmacist	1

## Systems and Services

- Paco Blinx used for online consultations
- NHS Total Triage not in use
- Same-day emergency appointments available by phone
- Pre-bookable appointments available

- Referrals to GP Extra offered
- Phlebotomy clinic available
- First Contact Physiotherapy and Minor Surgery offered
- Mental Health Practitioner available
- Social Prescribing and MSK services in place
- Patient Participation Group (PPG): not confirmed

### **3. External Environment**

Upton Rocks GP Practice operates from a compact portacabin style building set within the car park of Widnes RUFC. Signage is visible inside the car park, although there is no roadside sign, which may make the practice difficult to locate for first time visitors.

The car park itself is large but uneven, with puddles forming after rainfall. Parking bays are not clearly marked. Access into the building is via a ramp leading straight into the waiting area.

### **4. Internal Environment**

Patients enter directly into the small waiting area and reception space. Thirteen seats are arranged in rows facing the reception window, creating a compact environment that can feel warm and enclosed during busy periods. The décor has been recently updated, with grey walls, dark flooring and black chairs giving the space a modern appearance.

A small children's table and chairs were positioned near the back. A patient calling screen was installed above the reception window, although it was not functioning during the visit and was difficult for patients to see. Staff were calling patients verbally instead.

#### **4a. Facilities and Information**

A single shared patient toilet was available, suitable for men, women and disabled users. Staff had separate facilities.

A weight and blood pressure machine was present but out of order. Staff reported that it had been unusable during the last three Healthwatch visits.

A large amount of patient information was displayed across noticeboards, leaflet racks and tables. While the material covered a wide range of useful topics, the volume made the space feel cluttered and visually overwhelming.

Leaflets included wellbeing information, Patient Participation materials, and details of community services. Additional displays featured advertisements for Wellsoon private medical cover, GP Extra, the Armed Forces Hub and UMED Research. A Foodbank collection basket was positioned near the reception area.

An old Widnes World newspaper stand was being used to store a cardboard box of specimen bottles.

Overall, the information available was comprehensive, but would benefit from a cleaner layout to improve clarity and accessibility.

A review of the practice's website found a link to '[You and your general practice](#)' which tells patients what to expect from their general practice, but no information on **Jess's Rule**<sup>1</sup> was displayed.

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<sup>1</sup> **Jess's Rule** is an NHS initiative encouraging GPs to review a diagnosis if a patient presents with the same symptoms three times without improvement. Named after Jessica Brady – who died from cancer in 2020 after her illness went undiagnosed despite multiple GP consultations – it aims to catch serious conditions earlier by prompting clinicians to review the patient's full history, check for red flags, and consider further tests or referrals.

Source: [NHS England – Jess's Rule: Three strikes and we rethink](#)

## 5. Observations During the Visit

Staff were friendly, approachable and supportive throughout the visit. The practice manager was observed providing guidance to a new receptionist, demonstrating positive leadership.

The practice was busy, with patients collecting letters, booking appointments and making enquiries. Care Navigators managed the flow well.

The practice manager explained that Paco Blinx had been in place for several months, although it generated only a small number of online requests each day. Many patients preferred to use the telephone or walk in, and staff were responsive to those who needed help completing requests.

## 6. Patient Feedback

During the visit, we spoke with several patients about their experiences of accessing care at Upton Rocks.

Many patients were positive about staff attitudes and how they usually booked appointments. One patient explained how they used the NHS App for prescriptions, saying:

*"I call to get my appointments. My daughter put the NHS app on my phone for repeat prescriptions – it's great. I order what I need, and it goes straight to the pharmacy."*

Another patient said:

*"No complaints whatsoever. I call up and join the queue or come into the practice to book one."*

A patient who prefers not to use online services told us:

*"Nice surgery, receptionists are lovely. I phone for appointments and staff are always helpful. I don't use the online services."*

Some patients raised concerns about continuity and the difficulty of seeing a GP for ongoing issues. One patient explained:

*“Quite good. I usually get an appointment the same day, but this is my third visit in two weeks for the same issue. The first time there was no doctor, just a nurse who gave me pain relief that didn’t help. Then I was referred to the physio, which made it worse. I need something done today.”*

*(This patient was later referred for an ultrasound scan on their arm.)*

Another patient said:

*“I’ve been three times now and still can’t see a GP, only nurses. I feel like my problem isn’t being properly looked at. I rang today and still couldn’t get a GP appointment – I’ve been booked in with the physio instead.”*

Overall, patients described staff as friendly and helpful. The main concerns centred on continuity of care and the difficulty some people experienced in securing GP appointments specifically.

## 7. Key Findings

### Positive Observations

- Friendly and caring staff
- Clean, newly decorated environment
- Same day appointments available
- Supportive practice manager
- Good range of additional services available

### Areas for Improvement

- External signage could be improved to make the practice easier to find.
- Uneven car park and unclear bay markings
- Patient calling system not working and poorly positioned
- Weight and blood pressure machine out of order
- Warm and cramped waiting area.
- Information boards would benefit from decluttering

## 8. Summary

Upton Rocks GP Practice provides a friendly, supportive and well organised service. Staff were positive and approachable throughout the visit. Despite the very limited space, the practice offers a wide range of services and is able to provide same day appointments for many patients.

The environment is clean and recently updated, although the size and temperature of the waiting area present challenges. Improvements to signage, equipment and the patient calling system would support both patients and staff.

Patient feedback was generally positive, with concerns focused on continuity and access to GP appointments for ongoing issues.

## 9. Recommendations

- Improve external signage
- Review car park surface and bay markings
- Repair or replace the patient calling system
- Repair or replace the weight and blood pressure machine
- Improve ventilation or temperature control in the waiting area
- Reorganise information displays to reduce clutter

## Service Response

The carpark is owned by the rugby club not ourselves, so the maintenance is with them. There is talk on having some remedial work done.

The weight and BP machine was commissioned originally by the ICB but sadly funding was removed.

We do however lend BP machines to patients on request.

The noticeboards have been rearranged since your visit to give a more streamlined view for patients.

We are asked to provide many information posters and leaflets as per policy and due to lack of wall space these can seem a lot and overwhelming but contractually they must be shown.

Regarding the feedback :

The patient who stated there was no doctor so saw a nurse for pain medication: this was not a nurse it was an Advanced Nurse Practitioner, for clarity the nurse is unable to give pain medication but the ANP are.

We have 3 regular GP's that have done the same days every week for the last year we do also have ANP's available.

We encourage the patients to use our First contact Physios who can offer referrals request medication, order scans etc and have a wider knowledge of pain as in accordance with the care navigating and offering of services.

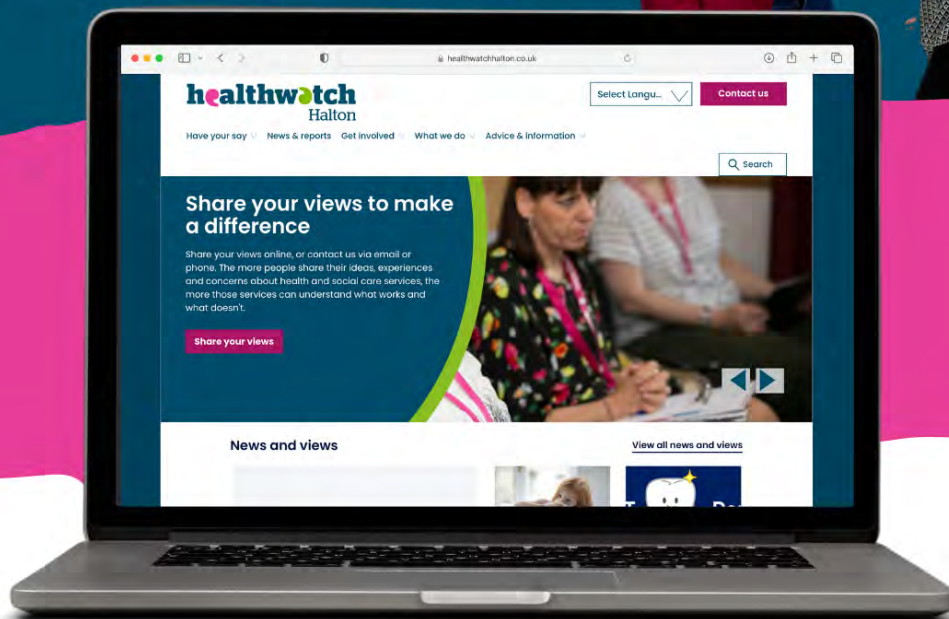
**Suzie Jeffs, Practice Manager – Upton Rocks**



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