

Enter & View Report

Saffron Health Practice

June 2024



Contents

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Report details..... | 2 |
| Acknowledgements..... | 2 |
| Disclaimer..... | 2 |
| Purpose of the visit..... | 3 |
| Methodology..... | 3 |
| Summary of the findings..... | 3 |
| Results of visit..... | 4 |
| Recommendations..... | 6 |
| Service provider response..... | 7 |
| Distribution..... | 8 |
| Appendix 1: Survey findings..... | 9 |

Report details

| | |
|--|---|
| Details of Visit | |
| Service Address | 509 Saffron Lane, Leicester LE2 6UL |
| Service Provider | Saffron Health |
| Date and Time | Tuesday 11 June 2024, 11am |
| Authorised Representatives undertaking the visit | Howard Marshall and Kim Marshal-Nichols |

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire would like to thank the service provider, patients and staff for their contribution to the Enter & View Programme.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

This report is written by volunteer Enter and View Authorised Representatives who carried out the visit on behalf of Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire.

Purpose of the visit

- To gather patient views of the service provided at Saffron Health Practice.
- To observe the facilities and operation of the service.
- To observe patient access.

Methodology

This was an announced Enter and View visit.

We contacted the Practice Management Team in advance and had access to communal areas during our visit.

The visit was observational, involving the Authorised Representatives observing the surroundings to gain an understanding of how patients engaged with reception staff and the facilities.

To reach patients, we spoke to the management team prior to the visit about using the GP text messaging service. The text message was sent to the patients and we received **348** responses.

At the end of the visit, we gave our initial findings to the management team.

Summary of the findings

Summary

- The practice serves 17,480 patients and operates from a spacious, clean, and accessible two-story building with 29 clinical rooms and 4 waiting areas.
- Appointments can be booked via multiple channels with a call-back option available on the telephone system.
- Accessibility is good, with flat access, disabled parking, emergency alarm cords in toilets, wheelchair availability and a hearing loop system.
- No bariatric chairs are currently available, although this is being considered.
- Staff were reported as helpful and friendly, and the practice facilitates an 'out-of-hours health hub' with a separate reception.
- Many patients report waiting a long time (often 40+ minutes) to get through to the practice, only to find no appointments available.
- Some patients have been able to see the same GP, which ensures better follow-up care.
- Several patients feel they are often directed to call NHS 111 rather than getting help directly from the GP practice.
- Patients feel well-cared for, with doctors and staff offering attentive, respectful and dignified service.
- Patients find the online booking system unhelpful, with appointments unavailable even when they log on early.
- Once an appointment is secured, patients report receiving effective treatment and care.

348 patients responded to the survey

- 76% of patients said it is 'very difficult' or 'difficult' to get through to the practice on the telephone to make an appointment.
- Comments were made regarding the challenges in securing appointments, particularly in-person appointments.
- 47% of patients said they 'never' and 38% of patients said they 'sometimes' see the doctor or nurse of their choice.
- 81% of patients were 'happy' with who they had seen for their appointment.
- 71% of patients were 'completely satisfied' or 'slightly satisfied' with the reception service.
- Comments were made on all staff being welcoming and helpful.
- 85% of patients were 'completely satisfied' or 'slightly satisfied' with the prescription service.
- 42% of patients said that they were 'completely satisfied' with the quality of medical care and treatment at the practice.

Results of visit

The Practice

The practice has 17,480 patients.

The practice is housed in a two-story building that features 29 clinical rooms and four waiting areas. Three of the larger waiting areas are equipped with patient notification screens, and the smaller waiting area is situated outside the onsite pharmacy.

The practice provides ample space for patients, including a dedicated quiet room for those who need it. The building is noted for being very clean and has both lift and stair access. While there is no on-site parking, on-street parking is available. Exterior signage displays the practice's opening days and hours. Cleaning is managed by contractors, though no visible checklists are present.

The practice offers toilet facilities, and a breastfeeding room is available, or patients can opt to use the quiet room for breastfeeding.

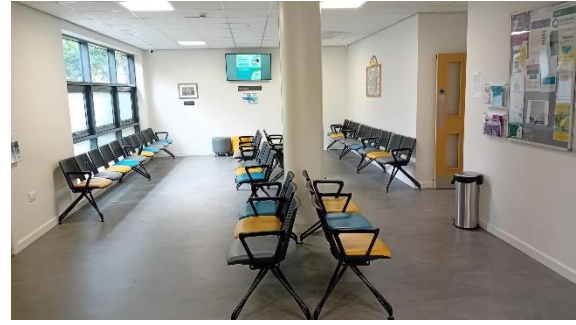
Reception and waiting areas

During our visit, there were no queues at the reception, and we were informed that queues are generally uncommon due to the spacious waiting area and a large reception desk. For patients needing more privacy, a quiet room is available, which can also serve as a confidential area for discussions.

The seating in the waiting area is generally comfortable, though there are no bariatric chairs currently available the seating in all waiting rooms are designed to accommodate a wide range of body types and accessibility needs. However, it was mentioned they would look into providing separate bariatric chairs if this was needed. The space in the waiting room is adequate, and patient notification screens are available in each of the three main waiting areas. The fourth, smaller waiting area isn't within sight of one of these screens however this smaller waiting area is situated outside the onsite pharmacy.

Friends and Family suggestion forms and a submission box are located at reception, and hand sanitiser is readily available. While there are no reading materials due to COVID-19 precautions, the decor is excellent. There is background music and video playing at a low volume.

The children's play area has been removed due to following Infection Prevention Control protocols to maintain cleanliness and safety for all patients.



Appointments

The practice uses a telephone system that is cloud based with a 'Call Back' option. There is no Freephone. Patients are able to make appointments in person, by phone, online, and Accurx using a Smartphone.

For on the day appointment requests, a GP will call back. We were told that the practice utilises its website and social media platforms to keep patients informed and updated.

There is a dedicated 24 hour phone number to cancel appointments. Appointments can be booked 3, 5, 10 and 14 days in advance due to availability. Patients can request appointments via text message using a 24/7 link. There's a 24/7 dedicated call line used for 'review appointments', flu jabs and smear tests also with the option to cancel appointments.

For urgent GP appointments, patients will be triaged by a GP and will be invited in on the day if deemed necessary.

We were told that they visit home bound patients but sometimes use DHU Healthcare services. The practice looks after 12 Care / Residential and Learning disability homes; practice staff also do ward rounds at Nursing Homes.

There is a Prescribing Lead (GP Partner) and 3 Pharmacists who look after the management of medications.

When asked if the practice is offering patient choice on whether they see the doctor or the nurse, we were told not always but they try to. They use 'continuity markers'. It was explained that continuity markers are where the practice aims for patients to see the same GP when possible, such as follow up appointments; this allows the GP to get to know the patient's case/ health, which aids continuity of care.

When receiving test results, patients are encouraged to use the NHS app, if the results are abnormal the patient will be contacted.

Accessibility

There are two disabled parking spaces located at the front of the building, while on-street parking is available for other patients. The signage around the building is clear and visible at a good height, ensuring easy navigation. Access to the building is flat, making it easily accessible for all patients.

Inside, there are spacious toilets equipped with an alarm cord for emergencies. A Wheelchair is available on-site, and mobility scooters can also be brought in. While there is no Braille signage, the facility is equipped with a hearing loop for patients with hearing impairments.

Information available to patients

The positioning and font size of information throughout the practice are adequate and up to date. Health-related activities, such as social prescribing and support for carers, are available. Information on appointments and out-of-hours services is clearly provided, as is the complaints procedure.



A video screen is in use to display health messages and relevant updates.

Staffing

The practice is staffed by 7 GP partners, 4 salaried GPs, and 1 to 3 registrars. Nurses: Care Home (part of a team that visits the care home), 4 practice nurses, 2 healthcare assistants, 1 nurse associates, 1 trainee nurse associate and 2 phlebotomists. Additionally, there is a paramedic and 3 pharmacists on site, along with a business manager, practice manager and a reception manager.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

There is a PPG group at the practice, the group is very active and meets every 6 weeks.

Additional information

When asked the biggest difficulty or challenge the practice faced, we were told, "How to positively communicate with the patients and that negative media coverage hasn't helped".

We were told GP Partners are moving to 15 minute appointments rather than 10 minutes. During the visit, all staff we met were helpful and friendly. Saffron Health also facilitates an 'out of hours health hub', which is a separate service operating with their own separate small reception desk and just a few clinical rooms are available with the rest of the building being closed off.

Patient feedback

A survey was sent out using the GP text messaging service prior to the visit and we received **348** responses. See Appendix 1 for the survey responses. Where we asked for comments, we have themed the responses and provided a selection of patient comments.

Recommendations

We recommend that Saffron Health:

1

Consider all the comments recorded from patients and what the implications are for the operation of the practice.

2

Look at releasing appointment slots at various times throughout the day rather than a single time to avoid overwhelming the system.

3

Ensure the online system is user-friendly and responsive, and improve transparency around appointment slot availability.

Service provider response

The report was agreed with the Service Provider as factually accurate. They have provided the following response to the report:

Thank you for your recommendation to consider all recorded patient comments and their implications for our practice operations. We greatly value patient feedback as it provides important insights into the experiences and needs of those we serve. We as a team regularly review patient feedback to identify trends and areas for improvement. We recognise the importance of taking a holistic view of these comments to ensure they inform our decision making. We will continue to prioritise this approach as part of our commitment to continuous improvement.

Although we do not have separate bariatric chairs, the chairs we do provide in all our waiting areas are designed to be inclusive and accessible to all patients, including those who may require bariatric accommodations. By choosing furniture that supports a wide range of body types and weights, we ensure that all patients feel comfortable and welcome without the need to designate separate seating.

We continuously review how our appointment system operates to ensure it meets patient needs effectively. In the past we have explored releasing slots at different times to help manage system demand and avoid overwhelming it. While we recognise the potential benefits of this approach, we understand it is an area that requires ongoing evaluation, we will take your suggestion forward as part of our continued efforts to improve access.

We agree that ensuring our online platform is user-friendly and responsive is crucial to improving patient experience and enhancing transparency around appointment slot availability. We are committed to continually refining our online system to make it as efficient as possible. Your feedback will be taken into consideration as we explore further improvements.

With the support of our Patient Participation Group, we have already implemented a helpful patient leaflet designed to provide patients with information on how they can access the practice. Additionally, we are currently in the process of creating another leaflet that highlights the different roles within the practice. We will take your suggestion of a regular newsletter into consideration as we continue to enhance our communication efforts.

Distribution

The report is for distribution to the following:

- Saffron Health Practice
- LLR Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Leicester City Council (LCC)
- NHS England (Leicestershire and Lincolnshire) Local Area Team
- Healthwatch England and the local Healthwatch Network
- Published on www.healthwatchll.com

Appendix 1: Survey Findings

Patients – 348

Q1. When did you last visit your GP practice?

(92%) 315 - In the last 2 years

(8%) 28 - Over 2 years ago

5 - Unanswered

Q2. How did you book your last appointment? (Percentage exceeds past 100% as patients choose multiple answers.)

(71%) 226 - Telephone

(16%) 50 - Online Booking Services

(8%) 27 - In Person

(11%) 35 - Other (please specify): *111, on the app, doctor or reception phone call, Accurx, NHS site, Ambulance, referral by nurse, text message.*

30 - Unanswered

Q3. How easy is it to get through to your surgery on the telephone to make an appointment?

(4%) 13 - Very Easy

(17%) 54 - Easy

(26%) 83 - Difficult

(51%) 162 - Very Difficult

(2%) 6 - Not sure

30 - Unanswered

Q4. When you last contacted the GP Practice, how long did it take you to get through on the telephone?

(1%) 3 - Less than 1 minute

(12%) 37 - 1-5 minutes

(16%) 50 - 6-10 minutes

(22%) 68 - 11-15 minutes

(41%) 129 - 15- 60 minutes

(8%) 27 - Over an hour

34 - Unanswered

Q5. How often are you given an option of seeing a doctor or the nurse?

(9%) 27 - Always

(18%) 58 - Mostly

(47%) 150 - Sometimes

(26%) 81 - Never

32 - Unanswered

Q6. How often do you see the doctor or a nurse of your choice?

(6%) 19 - Always

(9%) 30 - Mostly

(38%) 120 - Sometimes

(47%) 149 - Never

30 - Unanswered

Q7. Are you happy with who you have seen at the time of your appointment?

(81%) 257 - Yes

(19%) 59 - No

32 - Unanswered

Q8. In the last 2 years have you had a telephone or online consultation with a practitioner?

(88%) 279 - Yes

(12%) 39 - No

30 - Unanswered

Q9. How satisfied were you with the appointment?

(19%) 54 - Completely Satisfied

(27%) 76 - Very Satisfied

(29%) 80 - Neutral

(13%) 35 - Slightly satisfied.

(12%) 33 - Not at all satisfied

70 - Unanswered

Q10. In the last 2 years have you had to book an urgent appointment?

(58%) 184 - Yes

(42%) 131 - No

33 - Unanswered

Q11. Were you able to see a doctor or clinician on the same day for urgent appointments?

(42%) 77 - Yes

(58%) 107 - No

164 - Unanswered

Q12. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the practice opening hours?

(18%) 57 - Completely Satisfied

(25%) 77 - Very Satisfied

(37%) 117 - Neutral

(10%) 33 - Slightly satisfied

(10%) 32 - Not at all satisfied

32 - Unanswered

Q13. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the reception service?

(39%) 125 - Completely Satisfied

(32%) 103 - Slightly Satisfied

(15%) 48 - Slightly Dissatisfied

(13%) 41 - Completely Dissatisfied

31 - Unanswered

Q14. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the prescription service?

(60%) 189 - Completely Satisfied

(25%) 81 - Slightly Satisfied

(7%) 22 - Slightly Dissatisfied

(5%) 16 - Completely Dissatisfied

(3%) 9 - Not used it

31 - Unanswered

Q15. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of medical care and treatment at this surgery?

(42%) 132 – Completely Satisfied

(35%) 110 – Slightly Satisfied

(16%) 50 – Slightly Dissatisfied

(7%) 22 – Completely Dissatisfied

34 – Unanswered

Please add any other comments including what you like and dislike the most about the GP practice.

Likes:

“GP good.”

“Wonderful care in spite of difficulties with getting appointments. Always treated with dignity, respect and understanding.”

“I have just joined the practice in April 2024 so everything is good because I haven’t been with surgery long so far what I have seen looks good.”

“Always get the care needed.”

“Once you get through to the surgery, generally you can expect a good service.”

“Very helpful & support team in the practice.”

“I love how friendly and welcoming the staff and doctors are at the surgery. They are always very polite and helpful.”

“What I like Doctors don’t rush they listen to everything I said and explain what the best way for me. They all lovely there.”

“All staff are professional and helpful. You are given time to ask questions and are not rushed through your appointment. Staff are friendly, and the GP’s gives listening ears.”

“The medical care is good once access to a doctor is granted. Getting access to a doctor isn’t always easy.”

"I would just like to say how amazing the practice is at understanding my needs."

"Reception staff have been very helpful and doctors come across as though they are 'working to rule'. Reception staff are going above and beyond."

"My GP practice are super helpful and supportive of my health needs. The receptionists are always pleasant and efficient. I never feel frustrated after contacting my surgery as my health problems are dealt with quickly and with care."

"My experience of saffron heath GP's is that they are always friendly, helpful and provide a high quality of care."

"Very pleasant helpful reception staff in house physio, in-house pharmacy. Provides a good service under very difficult circumstances."

"I would like to be able to see the same GP. I have been able to, of late, but it's not easy. Fortunately, this GP is brilliant and ensures a good follow-up."

"I am completely satisfied with the GP practice and I also like being able to park near-by."

Dislikes:

"I dislike that if you aren't up at 6am you'll likely fail to get a slot that day. Impossible when ringing."

"Barely ever able to see a doctor face to face. It takes too long to get through and the lines are usually full so the phone gets put down. By the time you do get through, there are no appointments left. It's unfair, especially on those who work and can't spend all their time ringing up. I have to use 111 to get an appointment now."

"Never get appointments and always a long waiting to get through the phone even though I call for 8am."

"Appointment slots even online fill up extremely quick."

"Extremely hard to get an appointment when needed and have to spend lengthy periods of time waiting to speak to someone before then being told no appointments left."

"Just the usual 8am scramble, not being able to get through, and the accurx system is just the same. Not easy to get help."

"I would really like to see a doctor, rather than a telephone call from a doctor who I've never seen before."

"Difficulty getting an appointment face to face or telephone. Told to book online at 6am and always full."

"The online link to book appointments is not helpful, how can you say the service is open from 6am and on several occasions I logged on at 6am and all the appointments had gone. I'm not happy with how you also seem to filter out appointments according to age. Basically if you're not 60 or over you're not interested in our health."

"Can never get face to face appointment always consultation done over phone so I personally think proper diagnosis is not always given."

"There are never any appointments when you ring after being in a queue of 40-50 minutes, I give up because I have an ongoing problem & they don't know what it is. I appreciate they are busy even so the system is ridiculous. To make appointments it's better to do so online from 6am & even then you have to be quick, I've used 111 a few times because our surgery you can't speak or see anyone."

"You cannot get an appointment you always end up going to out of hours. Reception staff tell you your problem does not warrant a doctors and to go home with tonsillitis and gargle water, they give medical advice when not qualified."

"Cannot make a routine appointment with a doctor or nurse."

"Trying to get through for a same day appointment is impossible either by phone or online, even when calling at 8am the phone lines are full therefore you cannot get an appointment."

"All I can say is that you can't get in the doctors to see a GP the last time I tried I was told there were no appointments or phone back ring NHS 111 which I did for 111 to tell me there will be a ring back from my own practice so why was I not told this from the start when I phoned my gp it is harder to get to see a doctor now then in lock down you can only phone for appointment between 8.30am-9am and there always gone."

"Never get to see a doctor even when you ring at 8am in morning."

"There seems no chance of an appointment with a doctor. When an appointment is given one is never told who you will be seeing. Even a telephone appointment is never a guarantee to be with a

doctor.”

“Only difficulty in seeing a doctor or nurse.”

“Never get to see GPs of your choice.”

“Getting through is an ordeal, then when you eventually get through no appointments available, told to ring back next day & so it starts I’ve again, reception staff not helpfully at all.”

“I have been with this surgery for over 30 years it is difficult to get an appointment also some of the reception are very rude and unhelpful which does not help when you are feeling unwell.”

“Not able to get an appointment, waiting ages for them to answer phone sometimes phoned up to 40 times before getting through no appointments, frustrating and annoying.”

“Never see a doctor.”

“It is extremely difficult to even get through on the phone and often only get to see a paramedic when asked to see a GP.”

“Can never get in to see a doctor always telling me to ring NHS 111.”

“When you ring the phone at 8am, the phone line is busy, but yet, when I visit the practice I hardly see them on the phone. And when the phone line it’s not busy, there’s no appointments available.”

“It’s very hard to get a face to face with a GP and it’s difficult to explain over the phone.”

“Can never get through on the phone and when you do no appointments left and almost always told to ring NHS 111.”

“The telephone booking service is awful – you cannot get through or when it offers to ring you back, by the time they ring you back all the appointments are gone! It’s a lottery from day to day whether you can get through and book an appointment.”

“Having to ring on the day at 8am to book an appointment is a joke. I have tried so long to book an urgent appointment in the morning only to be told that there is no appointments left and I should try the chemist or NHS 111 instead.”



Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire
9 Newarke Street
Leicester
LE1 5SN

www.healthwatchll.com
t: 0116 257 4999
e: enquiries@healthwatchll.com



@HealthwatchLeic