

GP Enter and View Report

The Village Medical Centre, Littleborough

Peel St, Littleborough OL15 8AQ



Introduction

Healthwatch Rochdale (HWR) is the independent voice of Heywood, Middleton, and Rochdale residents. We listen, challenge, and shape local health and social care services.

Healthwatch Rochdale representatives conducted an Enter and View visit at The Village Medical Centre, Littleborough on 23/09/2025 as part of a planned Quality Visit conducted by the Primary Care Team, GM Integrated Care HMR (Heywood, Middleton, and Rochdale locality). The Village Practice is a GP practice in Littleborough with a list size of approximately **4,200** patients and run by GP Care Services.

Purpose of Visit:

The purpose of the visit was to review how patients access GP services, including appointment booking systems, accessibility of information, and the overall patient experience including that of the Patient Participation Group (PPG). We spoke with three patients in the waiting area during the visit plus made observations and engaged with staff. There was a telephone mystery shopper review done the same week looking at appointments etc. This combined approach highlighted several areas for improvement to services for patients.

Who was involved:

- Moira Auchterlonie – Project Officer HWR
- Claire Mason-Poole – Practice Manager
- Kelly Vines – Director of Strategy and Resources, GP Care Services
- Jackie Woodhall – Primary Care Commissioning Team

Executive Summary

Quick Wins: Here are three quick wins which could improve the service and patients' experiences at the Village Practice .

- 1. Move the PPG banner to the waiting room to encourage new members.**
- 2. Add a link to the PPG website page so interested patients can find out more.**
- 3. A "you said we did" noticeboard to show the impact of patient feedback.**

Key recommendations include: Review telephone system as no menus available when line engaged, update practice name on smart screens, add more self-care options to the on-hold telephone menu telephone system, and a *"you said we did"* noticeboard to show the impact of patient feedback.

These findings and recommendations have been shared with the practice, and a formal response has been requested in line with Healthwatch's statutory role. For more information on this please click [here](#).

Booking system:

Telephone System

- Unable to determine the telephone system as the telephone was consistently engaged on the times called. There was no pre-recorded message.
- The surgery was telephoned again the next week. The call was answered in 34 seconds, and the call back option was offered after a further minute. The receptionist answered after 3 minutes and 21 seconds. The holding messages were that 70 + year olds could order prescriptions after 2pm, and it gave the caller position in the queue. No other self-care options offered in the message.
- When ringing the practice, the smartphone screen showed the old practice name.

Appointment Access

- Test results were accessed via PATCHS or available by phone after 2pm.
- On the day of the visit, appointments were still available for the afternoon.
- Extended hours services are provided at the nearby Littleborough Group Practice.
- The practice can refer patients to advanced paramedics and paediatric nurses.
- Appointments are mainly face-to-face, with patients able to choose between face-to-face or telephone consultations depending on clinical necessity.

Staffing and Availability

- The practice operates with the ethos of a traditional family doctor practice.
- One receptionist on duty during the visit. Most patients checked in with the receptionist, though some used the self-service check in the main waiting room.

Digital Systems

- For routine appointments patients are directed to the PATCHS system and NHS App. Patients can ring the practice and book in person at the reception.
- Repeat prescriptions can be ordered using the NHS App, the GP online system called Patient Access, via request through PATCHS or drop off at the surgery. There is a clear link on the practice website.
- The practice uses the PATCHS system, though few appointments are booked this way. The receptionist said that mainly their older demographic prefers traditional booking methods e.g. ringing up or queuing outside.

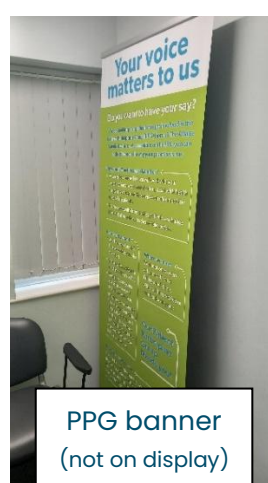
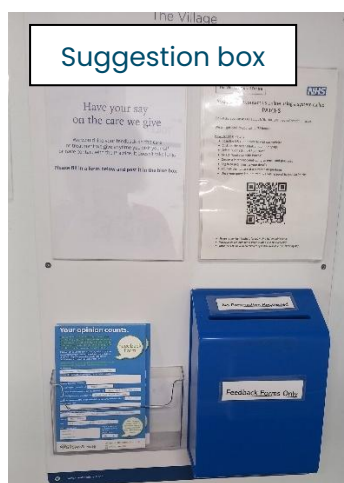
- An open day was held around the theme of "NHS digital" at Littleborough Health Centre.
- Practice staff help patients to log onto the NHS app.

Observations:

- Good transport links with bus stops nearby, a car park and on-street parking. The practice is near to Littleborough train station. The building was wheelchair accessible with wide automatic doors. The waiting room was clean, tidy with plenty of seating.
- There was a prescription box outside the practice entrance on the porch wall.
- The reception area was in the waiting room.
- The unisex toilet was very clean and accessible.
- The TV screens were not in use on the day of the visit.
- Banner about practice quality has lots of information and difficult to read.
- The PPG banner was tucked away in a corner so not in view of patients.
- No interpreter information on the website which may reflect the patient demographic.

Patient engagement:

- The practice has a well-established active PPG that meets every six weeks, often with a GP in attendance.
- The PPG is on the practice website, detailing its aims and members. The link to join is not working.
- The practice manager said a practice newsletter is published every six weeks (not seen in the waiting room during the visit).
- Minutes are taken but the PPG does not wish to publish them on the website.
- The group appears to operate as a "friendly little club" with no plans to recruit new members.
- An improvement made by the PPG was installing a hook in the bathroom behind the door – a small change that made a positive difference for patients.
- PPG members additionally maintain the flowerpots at the entrance to the practice.
- The PPG is active in the local community and supports local charity events. These include Macmillan coffee mornings, Littleborough pink day for breast cancer research, scarecrow events, and poppy displays near the War Memorial.
- The members supported a recent health information day in the town organised by the Pennine Primary Care Network.



Recommendations and Practice Response

	Healthwatch Rochdale Recommendation October 2025	The Village Medical Centre Name & position of responder	Update/Actions/Further comments Date: November 2025
1.	Review telephone system, as no menus available when line engaged.	Claire Mason- Poole Manager	When the Line is engaged there is an option for patients to use the call back facility and what place the patient is in the queuing system, we removed some of the options as per patient feedback was that we had too much information before the patient spoke to reception.
2.	Change practice name on smart screens to show correct practice name. Old name used.		The Practice name has never changed, and we don't use any smart screens in the practice, so I am unsure what this means.
3.	Add in more self-service options to the telephone messaging.		I am currently organising this with our phone company to look at changing options and what works best for the practice.
4.	Move the PPG banner to the waiting room to encourage wider patient involvement.		The PPG banner is back in reception area, this was moved to the front door area due to needing extra space for the flu and covid clinics this was explained on the day.
5.	Add 'Join Us' link on PPG page of website		This has been added to the practice website on 17 th November https://www.villagemclittleborough.nhs.uk/patient-participation-group
6.	Copies of the practice newsletter at reception and waiting area to keep patients informed.		The Practice Newsletter is done quarterly so at the time of the visit there wasn't a newsletter available the December/Winter newsletter will go out on 1 st December for patients and copies be left in the waiting room.
7.	Increase PPG diversity and patient engagement with different groups.		The current members of the PPG represent the wider demographic of the practice area, we actively look to recruit new members to join and we discuss this at the end of the meetings each time in case any members know of

			friends neighbours of family members who wish to join.
8.	Implement " <i>you said we did</i> " noticeboard to show the impact of patient feedback.		We will look to add a new notice board to the reception area to accommodate this information.
9.	Share report and discuss findings at a PPG meeting.		This report will be shared at the next PPG meeting in Jan



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