

Enter & View Castle Meadows Surgery August 2025



Purpose of visit

In 2023 over 1000 people shared their experiences of accessing GP services with us. Their feedback led to the development of the Dudley GP Practice Charter.

We want to understand what people's experiences of accessing their GP services are like now, if the Dudley GP Practice Charter has helped patients and if anything can be improved.

We selected one GP practice at random that is recognised as a Modern General Practice* to conduct an Enter & View visit in as part of this piece of work. We randomly selected Castle Meadows Surgery for a Enter & View visit.

We also conducted an Enter & View at Jhoots Pharmacy, which is located next to Castle Meadows, to see what people who use their service think of the GP practices, and also to discover people's understanding of pharmacy services, and if they use pharmacy services as an alternative to visiting their GP practice (this report is available on our website).

**Modern general practice includes using digital tools and the expansion of clinical pharmacy to support general practice and primary care.*

Enter & View

Healthwatch Dudley has the legal power to visit health and social care settings.

Enter & View visits and reports capture feedback and opinions from residents, friends and relatives and independent observations made by Healthwatch Dudley staff at that point in time.

We publish our findings at www.healthwatchdudley.co.uk and share the report with relevant organisations.

About Castle Meadows Surgery

Castle Meadows Surgery is a purpose-built surgery located in Dudley a few miles from the town centre, close to several housing estates.

The practice website says it is listed as a Safe Surgery and a Veteran Friendly Practice



CQC Castle Meadows



**Care Quality Commission inspected in November 2021
and reviewed in July 2023**

The overall rating was Good. The ratings for different areas are below:

Safe- *Good*

Effective- *Good*

Caring- *Good*

Responsive - *Good*

Well-led- *Good*

- ✓ The practice provided care in a way that kept patients safe and protected them from avoidable harm.
- ✓ There were clearly defined and embedded systems, processes and practices in place to keep people safe and safeguarded from abuse.
- ✓ Patients received effective care and treatment that met their needs.
- ✓ Staff had the skills, knowledge and experience to deliver effective care, support and treatment. There was clinical oversight and effective systems for quality improvement.
- ✓ Staff dealt with patients with kindness and respect and involved them in decisions about their care.
- ✓ Patients could access care and treatment in a timely way.
- ✓ The way the practice was led and managed promoted the delivery of high-quality, person-centre care.

What we did



Planning the visit

Healthwatch Dudley visited Castle Meadows prior to the visit to deliver the Enter & View notice, posters and information.

On the day of the Enter & View, there were no posters on display at Castle Meadows.

In Castle Meadows there was a Healthwatch Dudley feedback box asking for peoples' experiences of accessing their GP practices as part of our wider research into access to GP services.

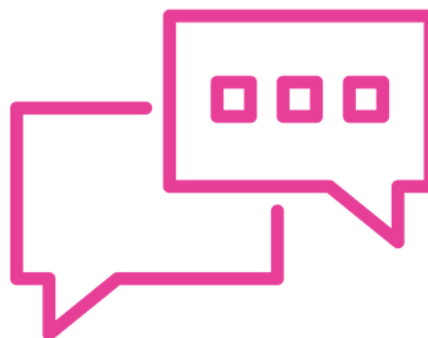
The visit

We carried out the announced Enter & View visit with one member of Healthwatch Dudley staff and one volunteer on 6th August 2025 between 10 am and 12 noon.

Reception staff informed us that all five consultation rooms were in use. They were being used by the following healthcare professionals:

- Nurse
- Physician's Associate
- Paramedic
- Two GPs

In addition, three GPs were working in an office, screening requests and making telephone calls to patients.



We spoke to seven people during the visit.

What has it been like trying to contact or get an appointment at your GP practice recently?

The people we spoke to said they were able to get an appointment, for some people the process was easy but others struggled when asked to complete an online form.

"It's good, at first going online was a pain, sometimes it's hard to write it down and trying to say what you need to. I wouldn't have made an appointment today, but my husband did it because he was worried. They called 10 minutes later to book me an appointment. Previously, I came in to book an appointment, but they told me to go online, you can't just walk in."

"I had surgery two weeks ago and needed a follow-up appointment. I had no problem booking one. My son booked it online for me, I don't bother calling at 8am. I've never had a problem. I don't visit much; I come in for blood pressure monitoring. I've recently had an operation at a private hospital and it was really good."

"Generally, I can get an appointment, but the communication in between isn't consistent. I fill in the online form, I sometimes get a call from a GP, other times I get a call to come in. I have never needed a same day appointment. They are quite quick to respond. I'm not sure if you can ring and ask for an appointment, I've not tried for a few years."

What has it been like trying to contact or get an appointment at your GP practice recently?

Patients had mixed experiences when calling or attending the surgery to book an appointment.

The triage system should be communicated with patients and those who are unable to complete the online form should be supported.

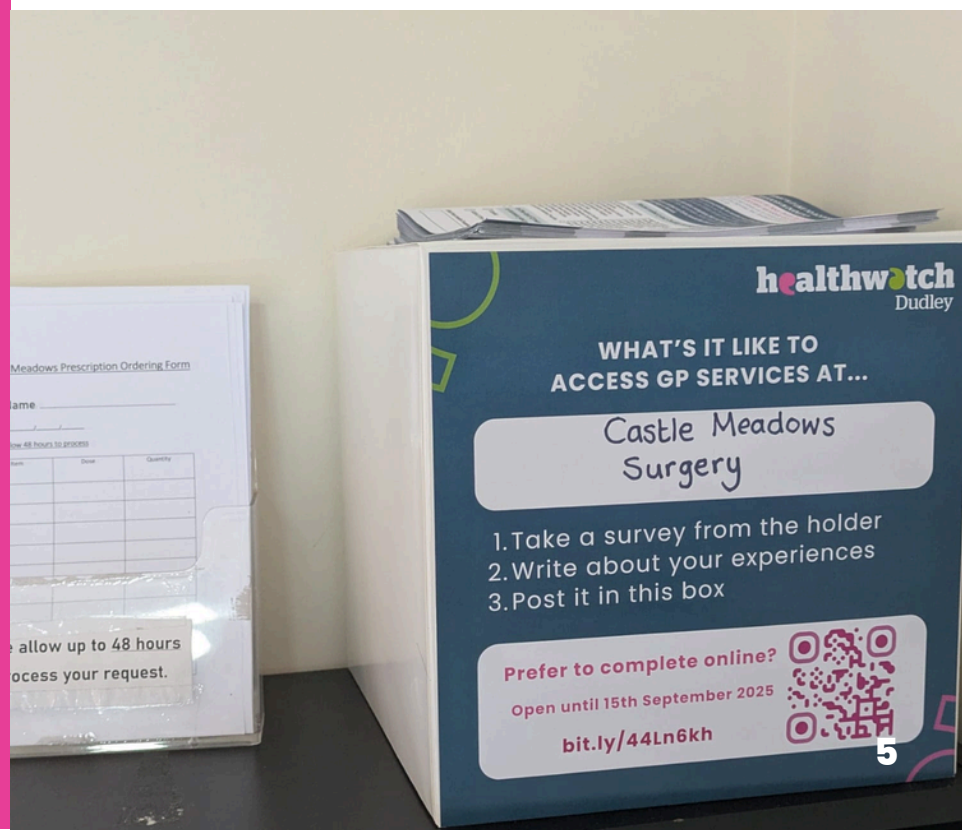
Patients told us that they are using the new booking system and complete a form online that is triaged before they are offered an appointment.

There were mixed reactions to the new system, some people were comfortable with using the form, others raised the following concerns:

- The online form is long and has many questions to answer.
- Some people call the practice but are instructed to go online.

"I booked online. Previously, I would call the practice to book. I don't like booking online, I prefer to call. Recently I was really unwell with a fever and too unwell to complete the form. There's lots of questions to answer."

"I completed the online form, then I tried calling. They texted me to say they had booked me an appointment. I used to just call before but now I go online."



Have you noticed any changes in the past year?

"I can't just write 'I don't feel well', they ask you loads of questions. I have done a form before, but doing the form puts me off."

Patients at Castle Meadows have noticed recent changes to how they book appointments. Online booking is now more frequently used. One person told us that they experience more delays since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, other patients said they have not had any issues in getting an appointment.

"The online form is a new thing."

"Don't think so, but everything is online. I can't order a prescription over the phone now. What about those who can't go online."

"More things are now online. This can be good as there's no queue, but it's not for everyone, some of the population can't do it. I use the NHS app to view results and order prescriptions. I have to book my husband's appointments as he can't do it."

"I always get an appointment so I haven't noticed a change."

"Generally if you want to speak to someone specifically you can. I have called in to see the nurse today. Having to explain yourself on the form is hard, especially if you're dyslexic, which I am. Explaining an issue online is more difficult than talking to a doctor face-to face."

If you had to tell a friend one thing about your GP practice, what would it be?

There were mixed responses when we asked patients what one thing they would tell their friend about Castle Meadows. The majority of the people we spoke to mentioned the ability to get appointments and prompt services. However, some people had experienced issues in getting an appointment.

"The receptionists are lovely. The GPs change all the time. Consistent GPs would be good, you don't get to bond with them. You feel at ease if you know the GP."

"I'm okay, but my son has swapped GPs. It was a nightmare to get an appointment."

"I get appointments quickly, I completed the form this morning and got an appointment. I wanted a quick response as I need to know if I can go back to work. It's a small surgery, but you don't have to wait long to see someone. You're seen quickly. I moved here as someone recommended it to me."

"I've been coming here for 29 years. I'm happy with the service."

"I feel comfortable and supported here. Over the last two years they had a change around so it seem better."

Are you aware of the Patient Charter?

Are you aware of different staff working in the practice?

All four of the people we asked, said they were not aware of the Dudley GP Patient and Practice Charter.

Currently, the Charter is available online but has not been shared widely by GP practices or placed as a physical copy in waiting rooms.

There was variation in the awareness of the wider healthcare team at Castle Meadows Surgery. One person commented that they prefer to see a nurse to a GP as the nurse can take more time in an appointment and they are more likely to see the same nurse for different appointments.

Number of people aware of different Health Care Professionals



Nurse practitioner- 3



Physicians Associate - 1



Paramedic - 1



Not aware of other health professionals - 1

"I prefer to see a higher level nurse rather than a GP. A GP can be quite quick and dismissive. The nurse is more easy to speak to, spends time and is more relaxed. There is a high turnover of GPs here, you get used to one and they move on."

The environment

The reception and waiting area was clean and tidy when we visited.

There were five chairs in the waiting room for patients. All chairs were the same height and type with no armrests. We observed one patient struggling to sit and stand up from the chair.

The notice boards displayed up-to-date and relevant information. However, the information was not organised into categories.



There was a TV screen mounted on the wall but it was not switched on when we visited.

The walls on one side of the room were bare. There was space for artwork or other décor to make the surgery feel more welcoming.



There was an accessible toilet available for patients to use. We noticed that the lock on the toilet door was difficult to use and may present challenges to those who have limited mobility.

Outside the building, there is a small grassed area which was well maintained. There was also a small car park with spaces marked for staff and accessible parking bays.

Sharing feedback

Patients and their families are able to leave feedback on Castle Meadows via the practice website. The homepage on the website displays the NHS Friends & Family survey with drop-down options to make it easier to complete.

Castle Meadows has an active Patient Participation Group (PPG). Information about the PPG is displayed on the website, however the information about the next upcoming meeting was out of date.



Additional comments

"My husband gets texts to remind him of things like his flu jab, I don't mind that. I can use the system where you get a text and put in a pin number to look at something."

"There is no GP on the Russells Hall estate so I have to travel here. I rely on my son to bring me. I struggle to order a repeat prescription online because I need to enter my date of birth and I'm 83. I have to scroll really far back to select it, so I give up."

"Nice surgery, nice place."

"Overall it's improved here."

Recommendations



Website

- The website should maintain up-to-date information on the PPG.
- The information for Safer Surgeries should be changed from a JPEG to a different format with links that can be clicked and followed.



Environment

- Use TV screen to share information
- Consider using artwork and other décor to make the environment more welcoming.
- Change the lock on the accessible toilet to make it easier for people with limited mobility to use.
- Provide a variety of chairs in the waiting room, including ones with higher seats and arm rests.
- Organise notice boards so related information is grouped together.



Booking appointments

- Share information on how the triage system works.
- Provide this information in a variety of ways.
- Consider training staff to explain new booking systems to patients who may not be aware of changes.
- Consistently offer support to triage patients if they are unable to complete an online form themselves.



Wider clinical team

- Share info about wider health care team both online and in the practice.
- Notice boards, pamphlets and the TV screen could potentially be utilised to explain the roles of different healthcare professionals.



Repeat Prescriptions

- Let patients know how to order prescriptions if they are unable to use online systems.
- Make it easier to enter DOB on the order form, one patient said that the current system is a calendar you have to scroll through, consider a type in format.



GP Practice Charter

- Promote the GP Practice Charter within the surgery. Provide physical copies and promote it on the TV screen so patients know what to expect from their GP practice.

Thank you

Thank you to the patients for sharing their experiences with Healthwatch Dudley.

Thank you to the staff at Castle Meadows Surgery for making us welcome during our visit.

We hope our observations and recommendations contribute to improving the experience for patients at Castle Meadows Surgery .



healthwatch

Dudley



**Committed
to quality**

Healthwatch Dudley is committed to providing a quality service, from how we collect data, to the information we provide. Every three years we perform an in-depth audit, in conjunction with Healthwatch England, to ensure we meet this high standard.

**If you would like this report in another
language or format please contact us.**

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