



# Enter & View

## Gunnislake Health Centre

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Details of visit

Service provider: Tamar Valley Health, Gunnislake Health centre

Service Address: The Orchard, Gunnislake, PL18 9LZ

Date: March 9<sup>th</sup> 2026

Authorised representative: Nigel Oakes

## 1.2 Purpose of visit

The purpose of this Enter and View visit was to observe the environment and care processes within the practice, hear directly from patients and staff about their experiences on the day, and identify opportunities to improve patient wellbeing.

## 1.3 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Cornwall would like to thank patients and staff who took the time to share their experiences during this visit.

## 1.4 Disclaimer

This report relates to findings observed on the specific date above and is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all patients and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time of the visit. Findings should be interpreted as a snapshot of observations on the day of the visit and not a judgement of clinical effectiveness.

## 1.5 About Healthwatch Cornwall

Healthwatch Cornwall is an independent organisation committed to amplifying the voices of Cornwall's residents in the planning and delivery of health and social care services. Through public engagement, we gather their views and experiences with these services. We ensure these perspectives are represented in decision-making processes both locally and nationally, driven by the belief that community feedback is vital to improving standards of care.

## 1.6 What is Enter and View?

As a local Healthwatch we are authorised to "Enter and View" health and social care services through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Local Authorities Regulations 2013 (part 4). These services can include hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists, and pharmacies.

Enter and View visits are an opportunity to see services in action, listen to and understand the experiences of individuals who use them, and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The visits are organised based on feedback received about individual services or in response to themes identified in our research.

## 2 Visit Summary

### **Conversations with staff**

Healthwatch Cornwall spoke with the practice operations manager and a member of the administrative team

### **Conversations with residents**

Twelve patients were asked about their experience of the practice.

### **Observation of facilities**

Observations were made throughout the visit, focussing on the condition of the facilities, administrative procedures and patient experience. Overall, observations on the day and feedback from patients was largely positive and noted good practice alongside areas for improvement.

## 3 Service overview

Gunnislake Health Centre is part of the Tamar Valley Health Group. It is situated in the village of Gunnislake and serves a population of approximately 17,000 patients. The practice has a second surgery located at Callington. Both surgeries have an on-site dispensary. The practice was rated by the CQC as 'Good' when last inspected in 2018.

## 4 Observations

The surgery is situated next to a large public car park with dedicated disabled parking bays. Free parking is available for up to two hours. The entrance to the surgery is well signposted and easy to access. On arrival our identification was checked, and we were asked to sign a visitors log. Visitor identification badges were issued to us.

The reception area was clean, well-lit and organised, with healthcare information clearly and neatly displayed. Information was displayed on such topics as safeguarding, research and pharmacy services. All notices were in date. There was a large screen television displaying healthcare information. Hand sanitiser and facemasks were available.

Reception staff were observed communicating clearly with patients and managing a busy desk area. Patients were observed being called and escorted by clinical staff into consultation and treatment rooms.

Staff interactions observed during the visit appeared respectful and patient centred. Patients were supported at a pace appropriate to their mobility needs, with staff providing assistance where required.

## 5 Resident/patient feedback

### **Availability of appointments**

Five patients commented that they would have preferred to have had their appointment at the Callington surgery. One told us "Transport here has been a bit of a nightmare, I live close to the surgery in Callington so would much rather have gone there, but they said there were no appointments'. Another said, 'I've had to come here three times this week for an injection and three times next week, which is inconvenient because I live closer to the other surgery [Callington]'. They added, 'It might be because I needed an urgent appointment, but I need six infections and even when it's routine, I still can't seem to get one here'.

Two patients reported that they were unhappy with the amount of time they had to wait for an appointment. One said, 'I filled in an electronic consultation form and didn't hear anything for a couple of weeks so in the end I rang up and was offered a nurse appointment three weeks later. I was also told I would be referred for physiotherapy some months ago, but I've heard nothing'. Another patient told us, 'It seems like you have to take what they give you if it's not really urgent, I've been waiting weeks to see the Doctor but at least when you do get an appointment they seem to be running on time'.

Patients described mixed preferences for accessing appointments, with some valuing the convenience of online booking while others preferred telephone contact, particularly where wait times were shorter.

One patient told us that they disliked the telephone triage service, saying, 'It's difficult to get through on the phone and you end up waiting on the line for ages, then when you do get through there are too many questions'. They said that they would be happy to use the online system, but it was currently 'too difficult'.

### **Quality of care**

Ten patients described the care they had received from the practice in positive terms. One told us, 'It's a great service, I've got every confidence in them, from the receptionist to the GP, they are all amazing. I had a serious heart problem, and they sorted me out and gave me my life back'. Another said, 'You couldn't wish for a better or more caring surgery, they take the time to get to know you and I've never felt they rushed anything. I even had a call from a manager when there was an issue with my medication, and they were amazing the way they sorted everything out'. They added, 'People have a lot to say about the NHS, but I won't hear a word said against them here, we're proud of this surgery'.

## **Pharmacy/dispensary services**

Three patients reported issues with accessing their medication. One said, 'I'd much rather have picked up my medication from the dispensary, but they said they couldn't do it as I lived close enough to a chemist in town, which doesn't seem right'. Another told us, 'They need to speed up the prescription process, I'm on a particular medication and there seem to be supply problems, so I always seem to have to ring up and try and get it urgently'. They went on to tell us, 'I feel as if I'm having to organise everything myself

# 6 Staff feedback

## **Management team**

The practice operations manager described a stable workforce, with access to regular medical locums. They told us that the greatest challenges the practice currently faced were associated with the space available and the fabric of the building. As the surgery at Gunnislake is landlocked, there are limited options for expansion, although they told us of plans to relocate some services to Callington when they have additional space available as this site also runs at capacity.

## **Administrative team**

Staff described a supportive working environment and positive team culture. They told us that some patients preferred to phone the surgery rather than use the online system, whilst others preferred to attend the surgery in person. They explained the booking and triage systems, and we saw urgent appointments being made for the same day, with others being prioritised within a week and more routine cases within four weeks.

# 7 Recommendations

Healthwatch Cornwall have offered some recommendations based on observations and feedback from both patients and staff to improve patient experience.

- 1) Some patients expressed concerns about the length of wait for routine appointments. The practice may wish to review access to routine appointments to ensure an appropriate balance between continuity of care and waiting times.
- 2) Some patients expressed a preference for appointments at the Callington surgery; the practice may wish to review availability of services at this surgery.

- 3) Supporting increased use of the electronic booking system would be of benefit to both patients and the practice. Consideration should be given to encouraging use where possible and allocation of resource to assist those patients experiencing digital isolation.
- 4) Continuing dialogue with local pharmacy service providers may reduce delays in obtaining prescribed medication for patients who reported supply issues.
- 5) The surgery may wish to explore opportunities for expansion and/or redeployment of staff to increase space for clinical services.

## 8 Provider feedback

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Healthwatch team for their recent visit and for the constructive engagement with our practice. We have taken time to carefully review both the patient feedback received and the recommendations provided, and we are committed to using this insight to review and improve the services we deliver.

All medical requests are appropriately triaged by our clinical multidisciplinary team (MDT) to ensure that patients are offered an appointment with the most appropriate clinician within a safe timeframe. We recognise that this approach may not always meet individual patient expectations; however, we continually monitor both demand and capacity and are actively working to improve continuity of care and waiting times wherever possible.

We are currently operating at full capacity within our clinical rooms at the Callington site. This capacity will increase once we are able to expand the size of the building. In support of this, we are working closely with the ICB and our local MP to progress plans for expansion. We have already purchased land adjacent to the practice and are progressing through the necessary processes to secure funding for development.

We are also engaging with our Patient Participation Group (PPG) to support patients in setting up and using the NHS App. This peer-led approach aims to build patient confidence in using digital communication tools and improve access to services. Encouraging greater use of digital tools for ordering repeat prescriptions will help us streamline processes and reduce turnaround times.

We recognise that delays in dispensing medications can be frustrating for patients and are working with our dispensing team to improve turnaround times and communication.

It is important to note that dispensing services are only available to patients who meet eligibility criteria, specifically those who live more than one mile from their nearest community

pharmacy. As a result, not all patients registered with the practice are able to access dispensing services directly.

We will continue to ensure that eligible patients receive a timely and reliable service, while also supporting non-dispensing patients to access prescriptions efficiently through local pharmacies.

In relation to prescribing, we endeavour to support patients through ongoing challenges with medication supply by sourcing and prescribing suitable alternatives where necessary. Our dispensaries utilise multiple suppliers to maximise our ability to provide a wide range of medications.

We remain committed to continuous improvement and value the feedback provided, which plays an important role in shaping our services for the benefit of our patients.

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