



Enter & View

Port Isaac Surgery (incorporating Bridge Medical Centre)

healthwatch
Cornwall

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1 Introduction

1.1 Details of visit

Service provider: Port Isaac Surgery

Service Address: Hilson Close, Post Isaac, PL29 3TR

Date: 1st June 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 resident/patient wellbeing and quality of life.

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 residents 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 manager, a dispensary assistant and members of the administrative team

Conversations with residents

20 patients were asked about their experience of the surgery

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

Port Isaac surgery has a main practice branch located close to the town centre and a branch surgery in Wadebridge. Patients registered with the practice can access services at either branch. The practice has approximately 10,500 registered patients from a catchment area of over 100 square miles of North Cornwall. The practice was rated 'overall good' by CQC when last inspected in 2022.

4 Observations

On arrival our identification was checked, we were asked to sign in and were issued with visitor identification badges.

The reception area was clean, well-lit and organised, with healthcare information neatly displayed. A large number of chairs were available including some with easy access for patients with restricted mobility. Information on safeguarding, data protection, alternate routes to treatment and self-help groups were available. There was a large screen television displaying information on out of hours treatment options and other surgery information. A friends and family user survey form and suggestions box was prominently displayed.

There is an electronic check in screen in the entrance way, which gives patient the option of entering their details manually or via a smartphone accessed QR code. Patients were observed using both systems without need for assistance.

Reception and dispensary staff were observed communicating clearly with patients and managing a busy desk area. Throughout the visit there were never more than three patients waiting to be seen. No concerns relating to waiting times were raised by patients during the visit. Staff calling patients from the waiting area greeted patients and offered assistance where required, allowing adequate time for safe mobilisation.

The surgery is equipped with both a passenger and stair lift for patients who were required to use the upper floor of the surgery.

There were numerous hand sanitiser points throughout the surgery, and all were filled and functional. There is a patient toilet available on both levels of the surgery, there were clearly signposted, clean and well equipped.

The on-site dispensary is situated next to the reception area and the dispenser on duty was observed helping patients with medication queries in a calm and efficient manner. A patient carer with a medication query was helped by the dispenser, who explained the process for requesting issuing a particular product and offered to help with ordering and organising delivery.

Access to clinical and office areas was via security coded access doors. No safeguarding concerns were observed during the visit or raised during conversations with patients or staff.

5 Patient feedback

Twenty patients and carers were asked for the experience of the surgery.

Digital access

Patients described mixed preferences for accessing appointments, with some valuing the convenience of online triage and booking while others preferred telephone contact. Eight patients told us that they preferred to not use any on-line service to make an appointment. One said, 'I don't go on-line, so I have to ring the surgery, and they fill in the forms for me. I don't have a computer and get confused with my phone, so I can't see myself ever using the system'. Another told us, 'It's just my personal preference, I don't like putting intimate details into a computer or phone, I don't trust them and I don't like all the questions it asks'. They added 'I would much prefer if I could just make an appointment to see a doctor without having to explain why'.

Six patients spoke in positive terms about the on-line triage system. One said 'It's brilliant, I went on this morning and it gave me an appointment with a nurse straight away', Another said, 'The system they have got is much better than having to ring in, it was a job to get an appointment in the past and you couldn't get through on the phone, now I've got every confidence that it can help decide how urgent my problem is and get me seen by the best person'.

General surgery issues

Two patients were unhappy that following the retirement of their GP they had not been told who they would be seeing moving forward. One said, 'We got a message to say our GP was retiring but it would have been nice if they'd told us who was replacing them'.

Three patients reported difficulties in finding a parking space near to the surgery.

Staff attitude

Fifteen patients/carers commented favourably on staff attitude. A carer for a young child said, 'The team here are lovely, they genuinely care and we as a family feel very well looked after'. Another patient told us, 'I'd describe the staff here as friendly and accommodating'. A patient who had recently moved to the practice said, 'The reception team are so helpful and kind, they made sure me and my family were properly registered when I first got in contact and since then we've been seen by a fantastic doctor, who was very friendly and approachable'.

6 Staff feedback

Management team

The practice manager met with us and explained the management structure within the practice. They provided evidence of adequate managerial cover at both sites and described a stable workforce. We were shown the appointment booking system and had the triage system explained to us. The role of the 'care navigators' was explained in the context of triage system, and we were told that these staff were key to the efficient functioning of the practice.

The practice manager told us that space constraints within the practice were a challenge and recognised that some patients were digitally isolated and unable to use online resources for booking appointments.

We were also told that the practice had specialist team members looking at different aspects of their patients care pathway, including frailty, palliative care and safeguarding. They also explained the role of practice care coordinators, who review secondary care discharge information to help make onward care plans.

Healthcare team

Staff described a supportive team culture and spoke positively about training opportunities. A dispensing assistant told us, 'I came here as a receptionist, then moved into a care navigator role and from there have had training to become a pharmacy dispenser'. She added, 'The

encouragement I've received has been amazing, management really do care about the team and are very supportive of development'.

A member of the reception team described the management team as 'Supportive and approachable'. Other members of the healthcare team commented on the great teamwork that is evident throughout the practice and said that the doctors interacted well and often will all the other staff members. One said, 'It's a very happy practice, we get on well together and work hard for our patients, the atmosphere here is professional and friendly and that comes from the great support shown by the management team'.

All staff spoken to during the visit said they would recommend the practice as a good place to work

7 Recommendations

Healthwatch Cornwall have offered some recommendations based on observations and feedback from both residents and staff to improve experiences in the practice.

- 1) There is limited car parking in the vicinity of the surgery. Patients would benefit from signage informing them where they can park nearby. This would support patient access to the surgery, reduce stress and reduce the risk of inappropriate parking.
- 2) Some patients described difficulty using online systems. The service may wish to reflect on how digital access is supported, alongside alternatives for those who are digitally excluded
- 3) Some patients reported uncertainty about continuity of care following GP retirement. The service may wish to consider how information relating to GP retirements, replacement arrangements and continuity of care is communicated to patients.

8 Provider feedback

Port Isaac Surgery would like to thank Healthwatch for an excellent and constructive visit, which was welcomed by the practice, our staff, and our patients. We appreciate the time taken to listen and understand both patient and staff experiences, and we value the feedback provided to help us continue improving our services.

We recognise that parking at Bridge Medical can be challenging. The parking available on site is restricted to staff only, due to limited space and the need to ensure clinicians can remain on site to provide safe care. However, there is ample public parking within the town, and we are working to improve signage to make this clearer for patients following a recent meeting with a supplier.

In relation to the online system, we understand that some patients may find this difficult to use. In line with NHS guidance on digital inclusion, our reception team will support patients by calling them back, helping complete the process over the phone, or where appropriate assisting face to face, to ensure everyone can access care.

Following Dr Barfield's retirement, patients have been allocated a named GP to support continuity of care. Patients may change to their usual GP once they have established a relationship. Communication regarding the retirement was issued by the ICB/NHSE rather than the practice, and due to system limitations, it is not possible to contact all patients individually about GP allocation changes. However, we will always support patients with any queries.

We remain committed to providing safe, respectful, and high-quality care while continuing to make practical improvements based on the feedback received.

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