



Enter & View

West Cornwall Hospital
Urgent Treatment Centre

Contents

Contents	2
1 Introduction	3
2 Visit Summary	4
3 Service Overview	4
4 Observations	4
5 Patient Feedback	5
6 Staff Feedback	7
7 Recommendations	7
8 Provider Response	8

1 Introduction

1.1 Details of visit

Service provider	West Cornwall Hospital, Urgent Treatment Centre
Service Address	St Clare Street, Penzance, TR18 2PF
Date of visit	16 th February 2026
Authorised representatives	Nigel Oakes

1.2 Purpose of visit

This visit was conducted as part of a rolling programme of visits to health and social care providers in Cornwall. Our goal was to observe the service in action, hear directly from patients, and make recommendations for improvement.

1.3 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Cornwall would like to thank patients, visitors 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 and are 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 met with three staff members to discuss the service and team and view the facilities.

Conversations with patients

Twenty patients and relatives were asked individually about their experiences with the service including the facilities, the care and the staff.

Observation of facilities

Observations were made throughout the visit, focussing on the condition of the facilities and patient experience. Observations and feedback indicated examples of good practice alongside opportunities to improve the waiting environment, information provision and communication.

3 Service Overview

The Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) at West Cornwall Hospital (WCH) provides services for patients in the West of the county requiring urgent medical care for injuries and conditions such as minor burns, simple limb fractures and minor falls. The department is open from 8am to 10pm, 7 days a week. There is an onsite clinical imaging service available during core hours each day. WCH was rated "Good" overall by Care Quality Commission (CQC) when last inspected in 2022.

4 Observations

The hospital is signposted from the main road and easy to locate. There is no on-site patient parking apart from a limited number of disabled parking bays immediately outside the main entrance. There are ongoing building works which, when completed will release additional patient parking.

The main hospital reception area was spacious, well-lit and tidy, with clear signage directing patients to the UTC. Hand sanitiser and face masks were available for patient use at the UTC reception. The reception desk was manned by a receptionist who was observed to speak to patients in a calm and unhurried manner despite the reception area being busy at times. When approached by the team, they checked our identification and informed us that they had been notified of our visit.

There was a printed note attached to the reception window indicating a waiting time of three hours. This did not align with the information available on the NHS website and was pointed out to the reception team, who immediately took down the notice and told us it had been left up from the night before. There was no other real-time waiting time information on display in the department. The waiting room was brightly lit and was divided into several different waiting areas, centred around the entrance to the UTC. There were several children's toys and books

stored in one waiting area, along with a chalk board and chalks. The floor in the waiting area had discarded food and wastepaper spread over some areas. Several patients commented on this, and it was reported to a staff member who told us they would inform domestic services, but the areas remained uncleaned throughout our visit. The waiting area showed signs of wear, including peeling plaster, missing fittings and temporary seating repairs. There was signage to toilets, including a disabled and changing spaces facility. The toilets were clean and had supplies of soap, paper towels and hand sanitiser.

Healthcare staff calling patients from the waiting area greeted patients and offered assistance where required, allowing adequate time for safe mobilisation.

There were several informational signs in and around the department, displaying information about local pharmacies, safeguarding, the triage and treatment pathway in the department and findings from internal care audits. A poster displaying results of the urgent and emergency care summary for the department was dated 2024.

5 Patient Feedback

Twenty patients and accompanying relatives were asked about their experience of the department.

Waiting times & access to treatment

Twelve patients said that they were satisfied with the initial triage waiting time and all reported been seen for triage within approximately twenty minutes.

Three patients who spoke to us before leaving the department said that they were satisfied with the overall wait time from triage to seeing a doctor. One patient told us, 'It was very slick, I was triaged straight away and saw a doctor within the hour, there was no messing about and I'm grateful that I can get on with my day now'. Another said, 'We're on holiday and were impressed that they saw us so quickly and were able to get notes from our regular hospital, it's great that the care we got was right on the doorstep of our holiday home'.

Five patients who were out of County visitors reported that they had attended the department after checking where to go on the NHS website and all said the information was clear and easy to access. One told us, 'We were looking for the nearest emergency department and thought we might have to drive for miles, but the website said there was only a two hour wait here, so we came and got seen within the hour'. They added 'It's a great set up here, we had the diagnostic tests and saw a really lovely doctor who made us feel safe and well looked after'.

Another holidaymaker told us that they had been referred to the department after attending a local pharmacy for advice, they said 'The pharmacist thought I'd need to be seen by a doctor as I've got a long standing illness that had flared up, so we came here on their advice, it is good to know that the system works as we're being told to try the pharmacy for minor things

but they were very professional and said they thought this was more serious'. They added 'I'm very impressed with the way this was handled and escalated'.

On site facilities

Eight patients and relatives told us that they had had trouble parking when they had arrived at the hospital. One said 'There is no patient parking at all, we stopped in the drop off area and I had to get out and leave my partner to drive off and find somewhere to leave the car, I didn't want to be left alone but had no choice and it was some time before they came back and found me'. A parent of a patient told us, 'I just dumped the car in a residential street so I'm fully expecting a ticket when I get back to it'.

A disabled patient reported that they had been able to park immediately outside in a disabled bay but had had to ask a patient in a wheelchair to move first, they said, 'There was a space but a chap was sat in his wheelchair wearing a hospital gown and having a smoke, he wasn't keen on moving but I explained I need to get in urgently and he eventually moved under the porch and carried on smoking, which I didn't think was allowed'.

Two relatives spoke in positive terms about the waiting room. One said, 'There is an amazing coffee shop that sold a great range of food too, we were able to get something to eat whilst waiting and the entrance area was a comfortable and quiet area to sit and wait'. Another told us, 'I'm so glad there were some toys and books, it made an upsetting wait quite bearable for my little one'.

Information and updates

Three patients told us that following triage they had not been given clear information about what was happening next or how long it would take. One said, 'I got triaged and told to wait back in the waiting room but I'm not sure what's happening next'. Another told us, 'I assume I'm waiting to have an MRI, but they didn't actually say that, just to wait and I'd see someone'. A carer for an elderly relative said 'We're waiting to see the doctor but they couldn't tell us how long it might take, I had to go to reception and they said it might be a couple of hours but it would be good to know a bit more accurately so I can plan what to do with the rest of the family'. They added 'In our local hospital there's a screen with all information on it but there's nothing here'.

Six patients said that they had used an online resource to check wait times, all said that they thought the information was accurate and up to date, one said 'When I went on, it indicated that there were two patients waiting to be seen and when I got here that is exactly what I found'. They added 'This was really useful as it helped me decide where to go for treatment'.

Communication following triage

Several patients reported uncertainty about next steps and expected timeframes, indicating a need for clearer communication during the waiting period

6 Staff Feedback

Three staff members were asked about their experience of working at West Cornwall Urgent Treatment Centre. All were positive about the department and their work conditions but all three also expressed concerns about staffing levels.

One told us, 'We have to close the department early on some days as we don't have enough staff'. Another added 'We're sometimes stretched a bit thin, but we never compromise on the care we provide, and patient safety is our primary concern'.

Staff also commented on the numbers of patients attending the department, one said 'It varies tremendously with the season, as we get a huge influx of tourists, like this week for example it's half term and there are a lot of out of County patients attending'.

A staff member told us that they were proud of the service they provided for the West of the County, saying, 'It's quite a long way to Treliske [Truro], and we can treat so many locals and holidaymakers here, which really takes the pressure off the rest of the system'. They added, 'I love working here and wouldn't want to go anywhere else, management are supportive and visible, and it feels like we're one big happy family'.

7 Recommendations

Healthwatch Cornwall have offered some recommendations based on observations and feedback from patients to improve patient experiences at the department.

- 1) The service may wish to review how real-time waiting information is communicated within the department, as patients reported relying on this to understand expected timeframes.
- 2) Poster and informational signs within the department would benefit from being checked to ensure they are relevant and in date.
- 3) Requests for additional cleaning in the department should be escalated to the domestic services team as a priority to enhance the safety and comfort of patients and carers.
- 4) Providing clearer information following triage about next steps and likely waiting times may help reduce uncertainty for patients and carers.
- 5) Notices advising alternate parking locations whilst building work continues, may assist patients and relatives in planning visits to the department and reduce the risk of inappropriate parking on site and in nearby residential areas.
- 6) Continued review of staffing capacity across opening hours may support service availability and patient safety, with any impacts recorded through existing incident reporting processes.

- 7) Ongoing maintenance to the fabric of the waiting area would enhance patient comfort and reduce minor environmental risks.

8 Provider Response

Healthwatch Cornwall shared the draft report with senior management from West Cornwall Hospital and invited a response by 24 February 2026. Despite follow-up contact, no reply was received before publication. We welcome any future feedback and will add a provider statement should one be submitted.

