

Walker Medical Group

Enter and View Report

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Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Newcastle Enter and View team, also referred to as Authorised Representatives, would like to thank the management team, patients, and staff at Walker Medical Group for their cooperation, and for sharing their views and experiences of the service with us. This report highlights the views and experiences of patients and staff members. It also captures the experiences of service users who were present at the time that the Enter and View visits took place. It is important to note that this does not represent the experiences of all service users or staff.

Healthwatch Newcastle have a legal power to visit health and social care services and to see them in action. This power to Enter and View services offers a way for Healthwatch to meet some of our statutory functions and allows us to identify what works well and where things can be improved. Please note that Enter and View is not an inspection.

The legislative framework for Healthwatch Newcastle is split between what Healthwatch Newcastle must do (duties) and what they may do (powers). Healthwatch Newcastle have a power under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Part 4 of the Local Authorities Regulations 2013 to carry out Enter and View visits.

The legislation allows Healthwatch Newcastle Authorised Representatives to visit publicly funded health and social care settings and speak to the people who are using and working within the service. This direct feedback allows us to identify areas of improvement, recognise good practice, and to champion the voices of the people using health and social care services.

Enter and View visits can be carried out in a range of publicly funded services such as, Doctors surgeries, Hospitals, Clinics, Day centres, Care homes, Dentists, Opticians and Pharmacies. Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues, however, if they arise, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch Newcastle safeguarding policies.

Purpose of the visit

As part of fulfilling its statutory role to gather the views and experiences of people using local health and social care services, the Healthwatch Newcastle Committee selected General Practice services as a focus for its Enter and View programme in 2025.

This decision was based on recurring feedback from members of the public regarding their experiences with General Practices (GP) across Newcastle. Common concerns included long waiting times, difficulties accessing appointments, the availability of reasonable adjustments (changes or adaptations made to remove or reduce a disadvantage that a person may experience because of a disability or health condition, enabling them to access services on a more equal basis), and overall patient experience.

General Practice (GP) patient survey results highlighted that Walker Medical Group received a 25% response rating. Feedback in relation to overall experiences was mainly positive, however some feedback highlighted areas that can still be improved, i.e. 17% of patients rated their overall experience as fairly poor/poor.

In addition, Healthwatch Newcastle received feedback from a member of the public who reported a negative experience at Walker Medical Group, stating that the practice did not feel neuro-affirming. This raised questions about how accessible and inclusive the service may be for autistic people and those with other additional needs, prompting further exploration through an Enter and View visit.

The practice is also located in an area of Newcastle associated with higher levels of deprivation, where residents may be more likely to experience health inequalities. Healthwatch Newcastle therefore recognised the value of gathering direct feedback from people using the practice services to ensure their voices are reflected in the evaluation of care. The Enter and View visit provided an opportunity to collect insights from service users about their experiences, while also allowing staff to share their perspectives on what works well within the practice and where improvements could be made. This approach supports a balanced understanding of the service and helps inform recommendations for improving accessibility and patient experience.

Planning and Preparation

The Enter and View visit was planned in collaboration with the management team at Walker Medical Group to ensure that it did not affect the provision of care or compromise the privacy and dignity of people using the services. The management team also informed Healthwatch Newcastle of any specific health risks to service users, staff, and visitors prior to the visit.

During the visit Healthwatch Newcastle planned that Authorised Representatives conducting the Enter and View were to speak with respondents primarily on a one-to-one basis, in person and on site. Service users present in the practice reception area would be provided with a survey to complete privately and were informed of a designated room within the GP venue where they could share their views confidentially with an Authorised Representative if they wished to do so. Blank surveys with freepost envelopes were also left at reception for individuals who preferred to submit their feedback at a later time.

In addition, Healthwatch Newcastle provided staff and service users with contact details so they could share feedback electronically or via telephone if they preferred. Prior to the visit, the Enter and View team liaised with the GP management team to explore ways to make the survey accessible to service users who were not present on the day. As part of these discussions, the practice used its GP text messaging service to send patients a link to the survey, on multiple occasions, enabling them to provide feedback remotely

Information Gathering

Two, two hour in-person visits took place at Walker Medical on Monday 1st December 2025 and a Wednesday 10th December 2025. An online survey went live on Monday 17th November 2025 asking the same questions that were done on both in-person visits (appendix A.1). The online survey was available until Monday 9th February 2026, a 12-week period of engagement.

Walker Medical Group posted on their social media platform (Facebook) about Healthwatch Newcastle coming to visit with the aim of collecting feedback from patients. They also provided the online survey link to reach as many service users as possible. Healthwatch Newcastle also posted across their own social media pages too. Walker Medical Group also sent the survey link to patients on the practices SMS service (however the total number of patients on this text service is unknown).

In the two Enter and View visits, we collected feedback from 30 patients in-person (17 on the first visit and 13 on the second) and 336 patients responded through the online survey. In total, we collated and analysed feedback from a total of 366 patients registered with Walker Medical Group.

Healthwatch Newcastle gave a separate survey to staff (Appendix B.2). We received five responses out of the 32 staff members (15.6%) that are based at Walker Medical Group.

What people told us

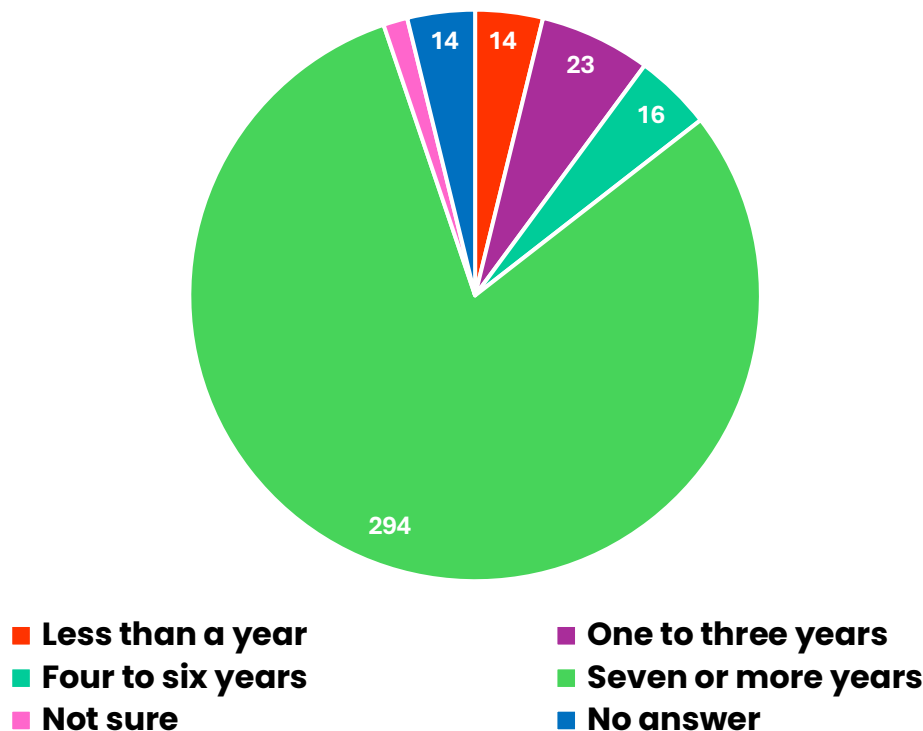
1. Patients

Overall Experiences:

Healthwatch Newcastle asked respondents how long they have been a patient at Walker Medical Group. Out of the 366 respondents, 294 (80.3%) indicated that they have been a patient for seven or more years. Of this group, 16 (4.3%) respondents had been a patient at Walker Medical Group between four to six years, 23 (6.2%) respondents between one to three years and 14 respondents (3.9%) had been a patient for less than a year.

Five respondents (1.4%) indicated that they were not sure for how long they have been a patient at Walker Medical Group and 14 (3.9%) did not answer the question.

Number of respondents answering "How long have you been a patient at Walker Medical Group?"



We asked respondents to share any positive feedback they have from the service they have received by Walker Medical Group.

- The most common comment was that staff are friendly and helpful, with 74 respondents (20.2%) mentioning this.
- Many respondents also praised the doctors (41 responses, 11.2%) and nurses (30 responses, 8.2%), saying they are professional, caring and good at their jobs.
- 29 respondents (7.9%) said they are able to get an appointment when they need one
- 38 (10.3%) mentioned that the service is efficient
- 21 respondents (5.7%) said staff made them feel supported and at ease
- Some people also highlighted quick action on tests and referrals, including early diagnosis of serious conditions.

However, 49 people (13.3%) said they did not have a positive experience to share and a further 59 respondents (16.1%) who did not answer the question. The feedback suggests that kindness, professionalism and quality of care are the main strengths of the practice.

Healthwatch Newcastle asked respondents to share negative feedback

- 38 respondents (10.3%) said it can be hard to secure a GP appointment
- 18 people (4.9%) reported long waits on the phone
- 22 respondents (6%) expressed frustration with the online appointment system, particularly older patients and those who are less confident using technology.
- 9 people (2.4%) said they would prefer more face-to-face appointments rather than phone consultations.
- Some respondents reported concerns about
 - long waiting times (twelve responses, 3.2%)
 - reception staff attitude (eight responses 2.1%)
 - feeling dismissed or not listened to by a doctor (nine responses, 2.4%)
 - There were also a small number of concerns about prescriptions, administrative errors, and communication issues.

However, it is important to note that 71 respondents (19.4%) did not answer if they had any negative experiences at Walker Medical Group and over 150 respondents (40%)

explicitly stated that they have no negative experiences to share of Walker Medical Group. Overall, the main negative experiences relate to access to appointments and communication systems rather than the clinical care itself.

Change:

We asked respondents if there was anything that they would like to change about Walker Medical Group to make it better. Most suggested changes relating to the appointment system.

- 52 respondents (13%) said they would like improvements to how appointments are booked
- 34 people (9.2%) specifically said the service relies too much on online or digital systems. Many people raised concerns about older patients or those who are not confident using technology.
- 27 people (7.3%) said phone access should be improved, including shorter waiting times and more staff answering calls
- 24 respondents (6.5%) would like more GP appointments available
- 15 respondents (4.1%) said they would prefer more face-to-face appointments rather than phone consultations.

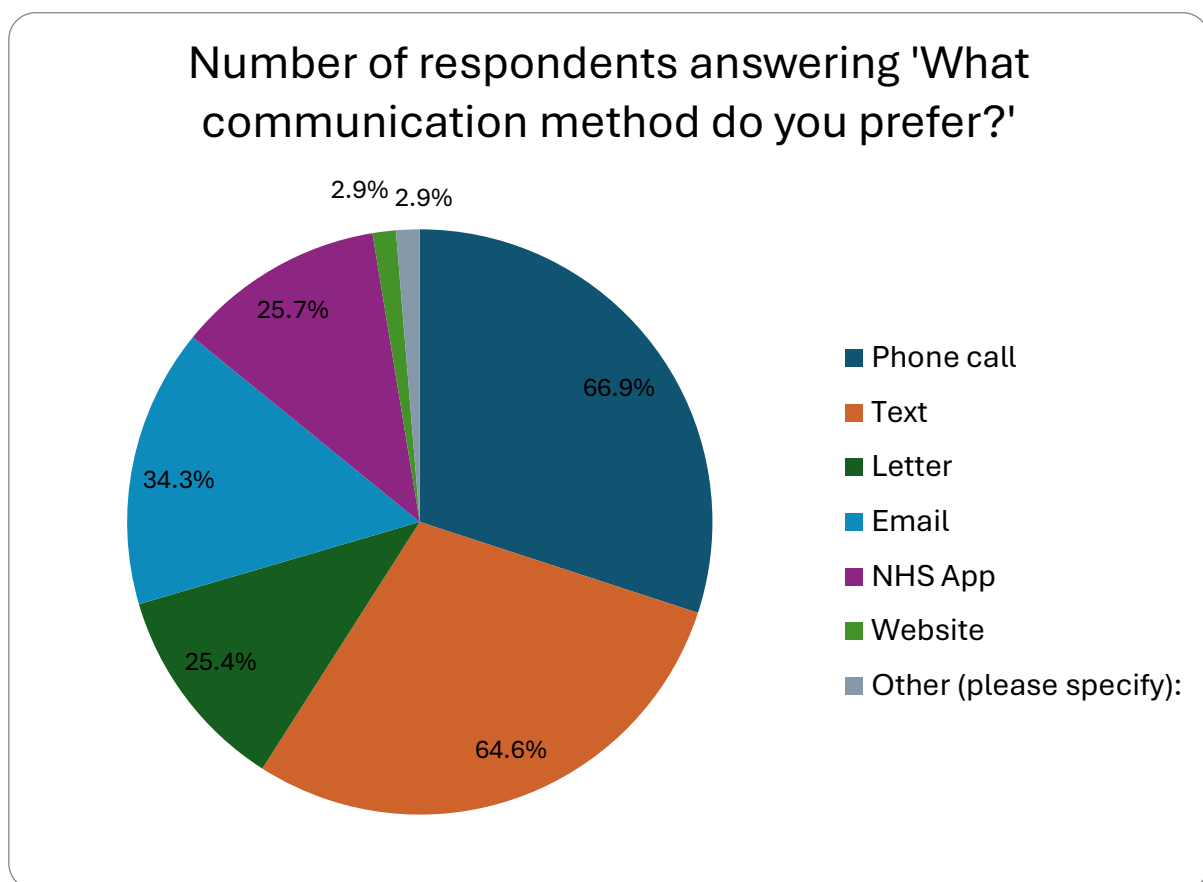
Some respondents also mentioned wanting to see the same doctor more consistently, have more flexible appointment times, or improved reception staffing and communication. However, it is important to note that a large number of people (120 out of 366 surveyed (32.7%)) said they would not change anything and are happy with the service as it is. 70 respondents (19.1%) skipped answering the question.

Communication:

Contact method:

When patients were asked how they prefer to communicate with the practice, the two most commonly chosen methods were phone call (66.9%) and text message (64.6%).

Around one third of respondents preferred email (34.3%), while approximately one quarter selected letter (25.4%) or the NHS App (25.7%). Very few people chose the website (2.9%) as their preferred communication method.



Those who selected “Other” (2.9%) mainly said they would prefer to walk into the surgery, speak directly to a receptionist, or discuss matters face-to-face during an appointment.

Overall, the results show that patients prefer a mix of communication methods, with traditional and direct contact methods such as phone calls, text messages and in-person conversations rather than website-based communication.

Relationship with staff:

A total of 331 patients (90%) shared feedback about their relationship with staff at Walker Medical Group. The majority of comments were positive.

- 214 people (64.7%) described staff as friendly, helpful, professional or excellent
- 158 people (47.7%) specifically mentioned kindness, feeling listened to, or being treated with care and understanding
- 137 comments (41.4%) directly praised doctors and/or nurses.

A smaller number of patients raised concerns which limits a positive relationship with staff members at Walker Medical Group.

- 27 people (8.2%) mentioned issues relating to reception or administrative staff.
- 16 people (4.8%) said that not being able to see the same doctor consistently made it harder to build a relationship
- 14 people (4.2%) felt that phone or digital systems reduced personal interaction.

Overall, the feedback shows that most patients feel they have a positive and respectful relationship with staff, with strong appreciation for kindness and professionalism. Concerns were raised by a small proportion of respondents and mainly related to systems or continuity, rather than the attitude or care provided by clinical staff.

Concerns:

We asked respondents if they have any issues or concerns with Walker Medical Group. 290 respondents provided an answer. 196 people (68%) said “No” or “None,” showing they had no issues at all.

However, 94 people (32%) reported at least one concern. The main issues were:

- **Difficulty getting appointments:** 30 responses (8.2%) mentioned it was hard to get through, appointments were rare, or they couldn’t see a doctor in person.
- **Problems with the NHS app or online booking:** nine patients (2.4%) said the system was slow, confusing, or didn’t work properly.
- **Reception and staff interactions:** 12 patients (3.2%) reported rudeness, unhelpfulness, or frustration with reception asking too many questions.

- **Medication or referral issues:** six people (1.6%) mentioned problems getting specific medicines or specialist referrals.
- **Desire for continuity or face-to-face care:** seven patients (1.9%) said they wanted a designated GP who knows them or more face-to-face appointments.
- **Other serious concerns (e.g., delays in care, misdiagnosis, patient vulnerability):** five patients (1.3%) mentioned significant issues affecting their treatment.

When asked if they would know what to do if they had a concern, 170 people (56%) said yes, while 131 people (44%) said no or were unsure. Among those who knew:

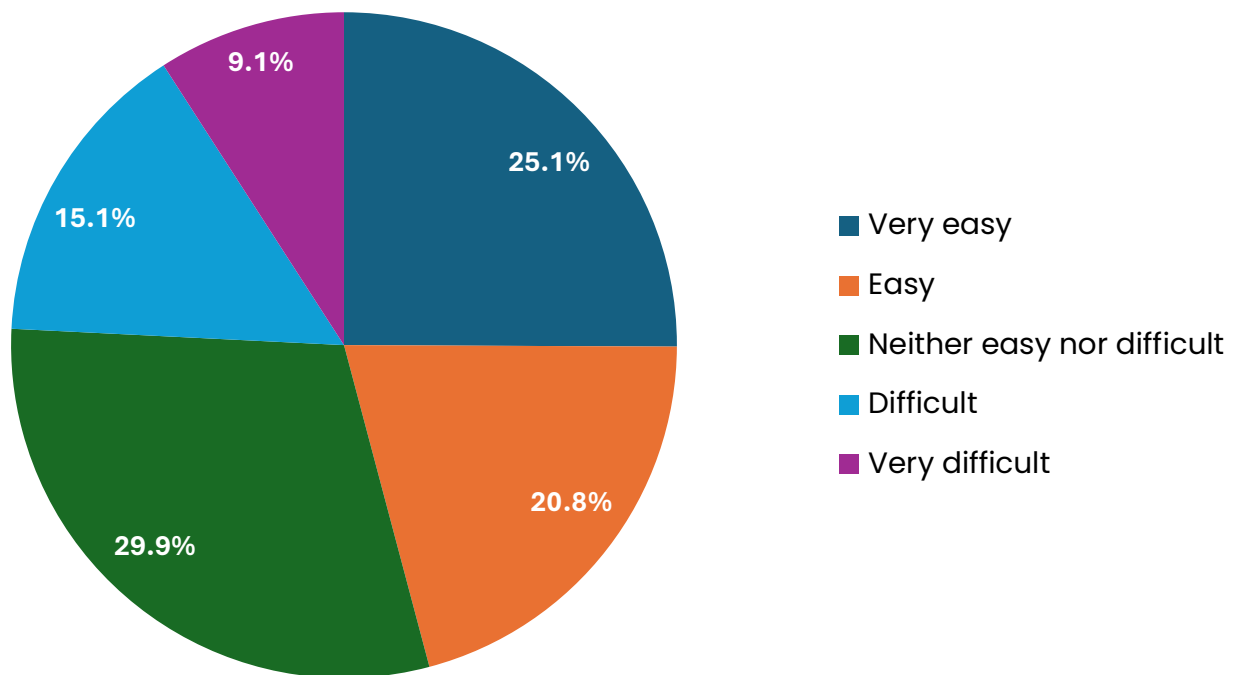
- **127 patients** (34.7%) would contact the **Practice Manager**.
- **17 patients** would (4.6%) speak to **reception or office staff** first.
- **10 patients** (2.7%) would approach **other staff or doctors**.
- **16 patients** (4.3%) mentioned following a **formal complaint procedure** or escalating through management.

The data suggests that most patients are happy with Walker Medical Group, but around a third experience issues, mostly with appointments, online access, and reception staff. While over half know who to contact if there's a problem, a significant 44% are unsure, suggesting clearer guidance on raising concerns could help patients feel more confident and supported.

Choice:

Respondents were asked to rate how easy or difficult they find it to book an appointment and why. 351 respondents (95.9%) provided a rating and 279 respondents (76.2%) answered why they have given their specific rating.

How easy or difficult is it to book an appointment?



161 of respondents (45.9%) rated booking as *Very easy* or *Easy*. These patients commonly said they:

- Usually get an appointment when needed
- Find the phone or online system straightforward
- Receive call-backs quickly
- Feel staff are helpful and doing their best
- Have seen improvement since the new online system

Some noted that while the process itself is easy, the actual appointment date may be days or weeks ahead, which they accept as part of current NHS pressures.

The largest group, 105 patients (29.9%), said booking is *Neither easy nor difficult*. Their comments suggest:

- It depends on timing and demand
- You may need to wait in a queue

- You can get an appointment, but not always at a preferred time
- Experiences vary – sometimes quick, sometimes delayed

For 85 patients (24.2%) who rated booking as *Difficult* or *Very difficult*, the main concerns were:

- Long telephone queues, particularly in the morning
- Being unable to get through or being high in the queue
- Appointments appearing unavailable online
- Difficulty using online systems due to limited digital confidence
- Delays in seeing a GP specifically
- Inconvenient call-back times, especially for working patients

To gain a clearer picture of how the appointment system is working for patients, we asked three focused questions about access and waiting times. These explored whether patients could get appointments at the times they need, how long they wait to secure an appointment, and whether they are seen on time on the day. The aim was to better understand patient experiences and identify any areas where improvements could be made.

Question	Yes	Sometimes	No	Total Responses
Appointments available at the times you need them?	132 (38.0%)	170 (49.0%)	45 (13.0%)	347
Do you have to wait a long time to get an appointment?	49 (14.1%)	149 (42.8%)	150 (43.1%)	348
Do you have to wait past your appointment time to be seen?	40 (11.5%)	157 (45.1%)	151 (43.4%)	348

Nearly half of patients (49%) said appointments are sometimes available at the times they need, while 38% said they can get an appointment at the right time. A smaller group (13%) said they are not able to get appointments when they need them.

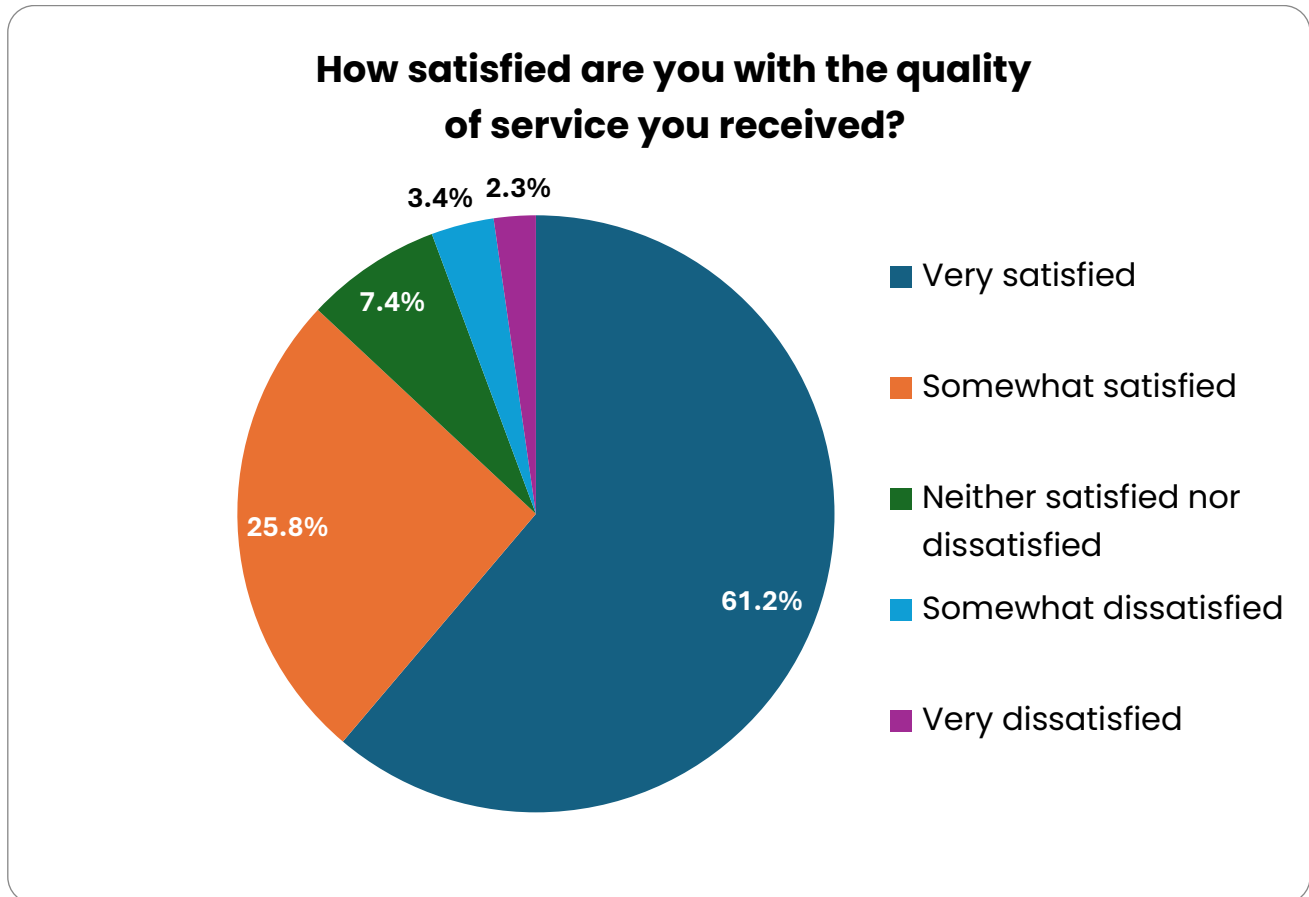
When asked about waiting times for appointments, most patients said they either do not have to wait a long time (43%) or only sometimes have to wait (43%). Around 14% said they do have to wait a long time.

Similarly, when asked about waiting past their appointment time on the day, most patients said they are either seen on time (43%) or only sometimes experience delays (45%). Just over 11% said they regularly wait past their appointment time.

Overall, the most common answer across all three questions was "Sometimes". This suggests that for many patients, access and waiting times are generally manageable but not always consistent. While a smaller group experience regular difficulty, the majority report that delays happen occasionally rather than all the time.

Care:

We asked respondents to rate how satisfied they are with the quality of service they receive from Walker Medical Group and provide reasons why.



A combined 216 respondents (61.2%) said they are *Very satisfied* with the quality of service they receive. Many comments highlighted:

- Caring, professional and respectful staff
- Being listened to and supported
- Good follow-up and communication
- Positive experiences with nurses and doctors
- Feeling well looked after, particularly for ongoing or serious conditions
- Long-standing trust in the practice

Several patients acknowledged pressures on the wider NHS system but praised the local team for doing their best under difficult circumstances.

A smaller group, 26 patients (7.4%) felt neutral. Their comments often reflected mixed experiences – generally good care, but occasional issues such as waiting times, appointment access, or variability depending on the situation.

A minority, 20 patients (5.7%) reported dissatisfaction. Concerns raised included:

- Difficulty seeing a GP specifically rather than a nurse
- Problems with the appointment booking system
- Waiting times (both for appointments and on the phone)
- Concerns about follow-up or administrative processes
- Isolated negative clinical or communication experiences

The data shows that patient satisfaction with the quality of care is a clear strength. Most patients describe positive, respectful, and professional interactions with staff, and many express strong loyalty and trust in the practice.

Where there is dissatisfaction from patients, it is largely linked to access to systems, appointment availability, or administrative processes rather than the clinical care itself.

Finally, we asked respondents if they would like to tell Healthwatch Newcastle anything else about Walker Medical Group. Among those who did leave additional comments 197 respondents (53.8%), the overall tone was largely positive.

Many patients:

- Thanked staff for their care and hard work
- Described the practice as friendly, professional, and supportive
- Said it is the best GP surgery they have been with
- Praised nurses and nurse practitioners in particular
- Described the practice as an important and valued part of the local community
- Encouraged the team to “keep up the good work”

Several patients shared personal examples of quick responses, helpful treatment, and feeling well looked after — particularly for urgent needs or long-term conditions.

While fewer in number, some comments raised important concerns:

- Difficulty booking appointments or changes to the appointment system since COVID-19
- Preference for speaking to someone directly rather than using online systems
- Wanting longer appointments (feeling that 15 minutes can feel rushed)
- Wanting continuity of care with the same doctor
- Concerns about reception staff manner in some cases
- Frustration with digital systems or the NHS App
- A small number of serious complaints relating to communication, delays, follow-up, or trust

2. Staff

We received five responses out of 32 staff members (15.6%) that are based at Walker Medical Group. The aim is to provide an open and transparent overview of staff experiences, strengths within the practice, and areas for ongoing improvement.

Overall Experience:

Of the five responses from staff members, two staff members have worked at the practice for seven years or more. One staff member worked at the practice for three years and another staff member for two years. One staff member said that they have been working at the practice for less than a year.

Those who worked at the practice for three years or more (three respondents), shared a positive experience that they have had at Walker Medical Group. All three respondents shared that the staff team is friendly with other comments included, being promoted and good teamwork in the practice amongst staff members.

Two staff members who have worked for two years or less did not share a positive experience when asked on the survey.

Staff members were also given the opportunity share any negative experiences. Two staff members shared negative experiences which was focused around misbehaviour from patients to staff when there is a lack of appointments.

The remaining three members of staff did not share any negative experiences.

Change:

Staff members were asked what they would like to be changed at Walker Medical Group for the service to be improved. Three staff members provided responses. These included:

- A fair pay for staff working on the nursing team (the respondent said that they feel nursing team staff are not “paid what they are worth”)
- More appointments available for patients
- A better staff morale

One member of staff said that they would like to have “less staff sickness”. This suggests that staff sickness is frequent within the practice and that there is none or minimal support available to run the practice effectively when a member of the staff team is off sick.

Communication:

Relationship with staff/patients:

All five staff members said that they have a good working relationship with staff and patients. One added that the practice manager is friendly as well as describing the staff team as “nice”.

As well as describing their relationship with staff and patients as “good”, one staff member described themselves as approachable and being a team player which contributes to a good working relationship.

Concerns

We asked staff members if they have any concerns while working at Walker Medical Group. Two said that they had a concern which have been addressed or resolved. One

specified that their concern was about unfair pay whereas the other staff member did not specify what their concern was about.

Two staff members specified that they have no concerns.

One staff member did not answer the question.

Further to this, staff members were asked if they know what to do when they do have a concern and who they would speak to.

Four respondents answered that they do know what to do if they did have a concern with only one respondent who gave the example that they would speak with their line manager or the practice manager if they did have any concerns.

One respondent answered the question as “not applicable”.

Choice:

We asked staff at Walker Medical Group about how easy or difficult it is for patients to book an appointment, how long patients typically wait to get an appointment, and whether appointments are available at times that meet patients’ needs.

Three of the five staff members said that it is quite easy to for patients to book an appointment. Two of the staff members shared that there have been advances in their booking system, a link to book or consult for an appointment is available online, as well as an option for reception staff to fill in a consultation form in the practice.

One staff member responded it depends on the demographics of the patient if they find it easy or difficult to book an appointment with factors such as age and socioeconomic status affecting their ability to book an appointment.

One staff member said that this they have no knowledge of this as the question is not applicable to them. The role of the staff member is not known.

“Depending on demographics, age socio economic status”

“Very easy as we now have changed to system connect. Patients can access online or reception can complete the form for them”

“Quite easy. New system link through text/website”

Four staff members said that they find that patients are able to get appointment when they need them or it depends on the demands of when patients need appointments. Two staff members added that morning and evening appointments are available as well as same day appointments available if needed. One staff member said that with their online system waiting times for patients to get an appointment have decreased. As above, one staff member that they have no knowledge to answer the question as the question is not applicable to them.

“Yes, appointments are available at different times, now we have on the day appointments if needed”

“Yes, with the new system the waiting time is shorter. We have evening and morning appointments”

We asked staff members if they offer patients reasonable adjustments when required. This question was applicable to four staff members and they all answered yes. However, there was no examples or details of reasonable adjustments that have been offered or requested.

Additional comments:

Staff members had the chance to tell us anything else about Walker Medical Group that they would like to share. Only one staff member shared a comment which was that Walker Medical Group is a “great place to work”.

What we observed

Key areas of observation were:

External Environment

Walker Medical Group building looks clean and well kept; it is well-lit and welcoming. The building looks large from outside. There are adequate car parking spaces and an overflow car park around the back with clear signage on where the entrance is in relation to rear car park. Located in a busy community space next to a pharmacy and shops. The building is situated next to Walker Park, bus stops connecting Newcastle City Centre and metro stations are close by.

On arrival

The inside environment looks and feels clean, creating a calm and warm atmosphere. There are plenty of notice boards full of NHS information and informative posters on antibiotics. The reception area felt very quiet, with a sense that people have been waiting a long time, but this could be due to people who have just turned up early for their appointment. Digital screens were available for check in for patients, or they can choose to sign in at reception. There was around 10-15 people in the waiting room at any one time however it didn't feel overcrowded. The Practice manager and centre staff were very welcoming towards the Authorised Representatives.

Internal Environment

The waiting area was spacious with adequate seating and plenty of space for wheelchair access. Bright coloured walls with plenty of natural light through the window. CCTV and aircon in operation. In the waiting area, there was no entertainment for children or young people to be occupied. There was no toilet in the reception area and no signage for any toilets in the building. Medium width corridors with relatively clear signage on room locations. Digital screens on the walls with some informative details. The screens notifies those waiting who is to be seen next and in which room.

This is good information sharing and notifying people it is their appointment time with a notifying bell to grab attention. The screen doesn't stay on very long therefore some people struggled to see which room or doctor they are seeing. Hand sanitiser stations sporadically placed around the building. Metal health and wellbeing posters displayed frequently. The communal spaces (including toilets) all looked clean and well taken care of.

Social Interaction

The staff provided clear and informative instructions, there was music on in the waiting area creating a more relaxed environment. We observed an older couple wishing to book an appointment with the reception team, which was met with a friendly and accepting response from the staff member who booked the appointment. The member of staff we observed was helpful; they held friendly conversations between staff members and service users at the desk. A bell is present at reception to notify reception staff upon arrival if you require their assistance. There was a lot of questions posed to the reception staff about booking appointments online or on the NHS app and how to do this.

Healthwatch Newcastle observed a lot of confusion with patients asking reception about picking up prescriptions from pharmacy next door. We heard a lot of conversation between patients regarding delayed appointment times, this was mentioned multiple times during the day. There was only one member of reception staff behind the desk dealing with people causing a continuous small queue multiple times during the day.

Recommendations

The recommendations listed below are based on our observations carried out over two Enter and View visits, feedback from service users and staff.

Prepare and have available appointment/booking systems guidance

To make the booking process clearer and easier for patients, reduce confusion and help people access care quicker, it is recommended that Walker Medical Group produce clear instructions and guidance, explaining:

- how patients can book appointments
- different ways in which they can book (telephone, online or in the surgery)
- which appointments are urgent and which can be booked in advance
- Information on telephone operating times

Making sure this information is easy for patients and staff to find. This guidance should be available on the practice website, in the surgery, and from reception staff.

Transparency in communication to patients

The practice could improve transparency by regularly sharing clear and easy to understand information about appointments and availability. Sharing information about appointments can help patients, staff and others understand how the services are being used and how the practice is managing demand. It also shows that the practice is open and accountable and is always looking for ways to improve its services.

The information could include:

- How many appointments are available compared with how many are needed.
- How many appointments are being used.
- How long patients usually have to wait for an appointment.

- What the practice is doing when the information shows that changes are needed.

All information should be easy for patients to understand. It should use plain English, simple charts and pictures, and no complicated words or jargon. The information should also be easy to translate or change into different formats if a patient asks for this.

Reasonable adjustments

The General practice should make sure that reasonable adjustments are consistently offered, recorded and reviewed for patients who need them. This will help ensure that everyone can access GP services fairly and without unnecessary barriers.

The practice should:

- Ask patients if they need any reasonable adjustments to access or use the service.
- Record agreed adjustments clearly on the patient's record and make sure staff can see them when needed.
- Make adjustments available across all parts of the service, including appointments, communication and information.
- Provide information in accessible formats, such as easy read, large print, translated information or other formats where required.
- Consider patients who may need additional support because of a disability, communication difficulty or other access need.
- Make sure all staff understand their responsibilities around reasonable adjustments.
- Regularly check that adjustments are still appropriate and are being provided consistently.

This would help the practice provide a more inclusive and accessible service and reduce barriers for patients who may otherwise find it difficult to access care.

Clearer Communications and Guidance on raising concerns

It is recommended that the practice strengthen communication with patients regarding how to raise concerns, provide feedback, or make a complaint about the service. Clear, accessible guidance helps ensure that patients feel confident that their voices are heard and that any issues can be addressed in a timely and constructive manner.

Patients should be able to easily understand what steps to take if they are dissatisfied with any aspect of their care or experience, who they can speak to, and what they can expect from the process. Providing transparent information about how concerns are handled also demonstrates the practice's commitment to accountability, learning, and continuous improvement.

The practice should ensure that information on raising concerns is clearly displayed and easy to access in multiple formats. This may include visible signage within the surgery, information on the practice website, leaflets available at reception, and inclusion within new patient information packs. Guidance should outline the different ways patients can raise issues, such as speaking directly with a member of staff, contacting the practice management team, or submitting written feedback through established channels.

Support for cover when staff sickness arises

It is recommended that the practice review and strengthen arrangements for providing cover when staff sickness or unexpected absence occurs, to help maintain service continuity and minimise disruption to patients.

GP teams often operate with limited staffing capacity, and unplanned absences can place additional pressure on remaining staff members. Without adequate contingency arrangements, this can lead to increased workloads, longer waiting times, delays in responding to patient queries, or reduced appointment availability. Ensuring that there are clear and reliable processes in place for managing staff absences can help the practice continue to deliver safe, effective, and timely care.

Consideration could also be given to ensuring that key roles and responsibilities are appropriately shared or cross-covered, so that essential administrative and operational tasks can continue if a member of staff is unexpectedly unavailable. This might include cross-training staff in certain duties, where appropriate, to provide additional flexibility during periods of absence.

Service Provider Response

As for all Enter and View reports, a response statement was requested from the service provider to allow them to address, acknowledge, and engage with the findings that have been presented by Healthwatch Newcastle.

Walker Medical Group has chosen not to provide a response statement for this report on Walker Medical Group' Services.

Appendices

Appendix A – Questions

- **A.1. Service User Questions**
- **A.2. Staff Questions**

Appendix A.1. – Service user questions

Enter and View service user questions- Walker Medical Group

We are here today on an Enter and View Visit on behalf of Healthwatch Newcastle. The purpose of an Enter and View visit is to understand how health and social care services are provided through finding out people's views, making observations, gathering evidence, reporting findings, and making recommendations. We aim to put this information into a report which is sent back to the service before being published publicly on our website. We would like to talk to you today to gather your views and experiences of the service. All your feedback will be anonymised.

Overall experience

1) How long you have you been a patient at Walker Medical Group?

2) Are there any positive experiences you would like to share?

3) Are there any negative experiences you would like to share?

Change

4) What would you change about Walker Medical Group to make it better?

Communication

- 5) How would you describe your relationship with staff members at Walker Medical Group? What makes it good/bad?

- 6) Do you have any issues with Walker Medical Group? If so, what are they?

- 7) If you did have an issue about the service, would you know what to do and who to speak to?

- 8) What communication method do you prefer? Please circle the relevant options:

- Calls
- Texts
- Letter
- Email
- NHS app
- Website
- Other

Choice

- 9) How easy or difficult is it to book an appointment? Please circle the relevant option:

- Very easy
- Easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Difficult
- Very difficult

Why have you given this rating?

10) Are there any appointments available at the times you need them? Please circle the relevant option:

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

11) Do you have to wait a long time to get an appointment? Please circle the relevant option:

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

12) Do you have to wait past your appointment time to get seen to? Please circle the relevant option:

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Care

□

13) How satisfied are you with the quality of service you receive?

Circle the relevant option below:

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Why have you given this rating?

14) Do have anything else that you would like to tell us about Walker Medical Group?

Appendix A.2. – Staff Questions

Enter and View staff questions- Walker Medical Group

Overall experience-

We are here today on an Enter and View Visit on behalf of Healthwatch Newcastle. The purpose of an Enter and View visit is to understand how health and social care services are provided through finding out people's views, making observations, gathering evidence, reporting findings, and making recommendations. We aim to put this information into a report which is sent back to the service before being published publicly on our website. We would like to talk to you today to gather your views and experiences of the service. All your feedback will be anonymised.

- 1 Could you tell me about your experiences so far working at Walker Medical Group, and how long you have you been working here?

2. Are there any positive experiences you would like to share?

- 3 Are there any negative experiences you would like to share?

Change

- 4 What would you change about Walker Medical Group to make it better?

Communication

- 5 How would you describe your relationship with staff members and service users at Walker Medical Group? What makes it good/bad?

- 6 Do you have any issues? And if you do, have you raised them? And with who? And if you haven't raised them why not?

- 7 If you did have an issue, would you know what to do and who to speak to?

Choice

- 8 How easy is it for service users to book an appointment?

- 9 Are appointments available at the times service users need them? Do they have to wait a long time to get an appointment?

- 10 Do you offer service users reasonable adjustments when required?

Any other comments



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