



East Lancashire Medical Services

Enter and View Report

Sunday 31st August 2025

9:30am

healthwatch

Blackburn with Darwen

DISCLAIMER

This report relates to the service viewed at the time of the visit and is only representative of the views of the staff, visitors and residents who met members of the Enter and View team on that date.

Contact Details:

East Lancashire Medical Services, St Ives House,
Accrington Road, Blackburn, BB1 2EG

01254 915005

Staff met during our visit:

Andy Brennan (Chief Operating Officer)

Dr Pervez Muzaffar (Clinical Lead)

and members of the team

Date and time of our visit:

Sunday 31st August 2025

12pm

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen Representatives

Sarah Johns (Lead)

Liam Kershaw-Calvert (Healthwatch BwD Staff)

Liz Butterworth (Volunteer)

Michelle Livesey (Volunteer)

Introduction

This was an announced Enter and View visit undertaken by authorised representatives from Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen who have the authority to enter health and social care premises, announced or unannounced, to observe and assess the nature and quality of services and obtain the view of those people using the services. The representatives observe and speak to respondents in communal areas only.

This visit was arranged as part of Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen's Enter and View programme to review Accessibility, Approachability and Responsiveness. The team of trained Enter and View authorised representatives record their observations along with feedback from patients, staff and where possible, carers or family.

A report is sent to the Chief Operating Officer of the facility for validation of the facts. Any response from the them is included with the final version of the report which is published on the Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen website at www.healthwatchblackburnwithdarwen.co.uk

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen would like to thank Andy Brennan, Dr Pervez Muzaffar together with staff and patients for making us feel welcome and taking part in the visit.

General Information

East Lancashire Medical Services (ELMS) is a social enterprise organisation delivering Urgent Primary Care Services 365 days a year.

The current CQC rating is Good and was last inspected on 6th September 2017.

Methodology

The Enter and View representatives made an announced visit on Sunday 31st August 2025.

We spoke to 17 patients and 6 staff, where possible within the constraints of the GP surgery routine, people's willingness, and ability to engage and access to people in public areas.

Discussion was structured around 3 themes: -

- Accessibility
- Approachability
- Responsiveness.

The team also recorded their own observations of the environment and facilities.

Our role at Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen is to gather the views of service users, especially those who are seldom heard, to give them the opportunity to express how they feel about a service regardless of their perceived ability to be able to do so.

We use templates to assess the environment of a facility and gather information from respondents, to ensure that reports are compiled in a fair and comparative manner.

Summary:

East Lancashire Medical Services is located off Accrington Road on a main bus route into Blackburn town centre. Although there is no signage directly on the road, patients all found the service easy to find and there was sufficient parking available including disabled spaces.

The service is delivered from two buildings, with one building dedicated to providing an out of hours GP offer for children and the other for adults.

The service is bright, clean, hygienic, and accessible. The walls in both buildings, however, are rather bare and the service could promote patient information on display boards for example different services available locally and health screening information. The music being played in the children's section made for a more relaxed atmosphere and would be good to have in both buildings.

The website is informative, but we noted that it does not have accessibility functions or language options built into it.

Patients we spoke with were able to get through to 111 without any issues and were booked in with ELMS on a timely basis after the initial call or online booking. When patients arrived at ELMS they were seen on time or waited up to 45 minutes if it was a busy day. Staff did however inform patients if there was a long wait time. Patients felt that they had enough time with a clinician and found the staff to be friendly, supportive and good at explaining their diagnosis. All of the patients would recommend the service to family and friends.

Staff felt sufficiently trained to carry out their roles and felt that their service was helping to reduce attends at Royal Blackburn Emergency Department. They felt that patients are able to get an appointment with ELMS easily via 111, however they did feel that not all referrals from 111 were appropriate.

Overall, the service was viewed by our representatives to be effective and supportive of patients.

Enter and View observations

Representatives looked at the website for the service, which was easy to navigate, and information provided in plain English. There is an option for language translation, however, there does not appear to be an accessibility function to be able to change font size or colour contrasts.

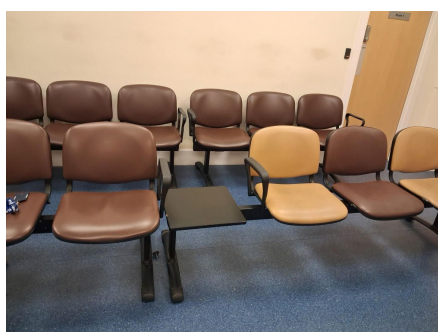
St Ives House is located on a main road into Blackburn on a bus route. Whilst there is signage, this is hard to see from the main road. However, patients we spoke with did not have any issues locating the building. Representatives found there was sufficient car parking facilities close to the building with disabled parking available.

There are two buildings used by ELMS to meet with patients, with patients being seen on the ground floor of both buildings making the service fully accessible. One of the buildings is used for the out of hours GPs to meet with adults and the other for children. The building used to meet with adults has automatic doors which open outwards, however there is a sign on the door to highlight this to patients.

There are two welcoming reception areas in both buildings, with reception desks at an accessible height and with hearing loops available.



In the children's waiting room, there was sufficient seating with a mix of seating with arm rests and without. There was no higher seating for patients with mobility issues, which the service might wish to consider.



At the start of our visit, there were 3 brown mats next to the front row of seats which appeared to be a potential trip hazard and problematic for any patients with dementia. However, after discussion with the clinical lead these were removed immediately, and the space appeared far less cluttered.

There was music playing in the waiting room which created a welcoming atmosphere, we noted that the TV screens were not in use. There is an unusual display around tobacco use which may not be as appropriate in the children's waiting room and could be replaced with patient information about family self-care and posters around the different clinical pathways e.g. Pharmacy First or screening and immunisations information posters.



The bathroom was clean and hygienic and the contrasting floor to units is beneficial for any patients with dementia and there are handrails available. The signage for the toilet could be lowered to be at eye height and ensure that this is tactile for patients with visual impairment. There is baby changing available, but this is not made clear in the reception area. The service might wish to consider putting up signs to make this clear and that they are a breastfeeding friendly environment in the waiting room. ELMS may also wish to consider having a chaperone policy poster in both waiting rooms.



We noted that all patients were met by the clinician in reception and taken through to the consultation room.

In the reception area for adult patients, we noted that there was some seating available for patients, however all patients were being ushered through to seating in the corridor through the door, closer to the consultation rooms.

There were arm rests on the seats which would be beneficial for patients but no raised seats for patients with mobility issues, which the service may wish to consider.



There was no music playing in this waiting room and the TV screen was not in use. There was also no patient information available in the corridor, which might be helpful for patients as well as making the area more visually appealing. Signage for the bathrooms was clear, and they were again clean and hygienic with contrasting flooring and with handrails available.

Introduction to the Service from the Chief Operating Officer

Andy Brennan kindly gave an overview of the service to our representatives. He explained that East Lancashire Medical Services (ELMS) provides an out of hours GP service across Blackburn with Darwen and East Lancashire. They provide this via same day referrals from NHS 111 and the offer is 24/7 all year round. They usually have around 12 GPs on site during operating hours. He explained the waiting time target timescales ranging from 1 hour for urgent up to 6 hours for routine. Category 3 and 4 ambulance calls are seen within 2-3 hours.

The team's clinicians conduct an initial acuity assessment on the phone with patients and will decide whether a patient needs to be seen face to face or is given clinical advice on the phone. The clinicians can all prescribe. The face-to-face appointments are 15 minutes, which allows for good patient care.

Andy told us that on the previous Sunday they had managed 465 cases and 495 on the previous Saturday therefore are deflecting significant numbers of patients away from the local Emergency and Urgent Care departments.

Feedback from Patients

ACCESSIBILITY

Are the opening hours sufficient?

15 patients stated that they were, with one parent of a young child who was ill commenting that it was “good to be able to come here”. One patient did not know the opening hours because it was the first time that they had visited ELMS and another stated that they did not know them but were given them by NHS 111 when they called.

Is it easy to park or travel to?

All of the patients found it easy, with several commenting that they had been to the Out of Hours GP at ELMS before. One patient, however, commented that “it could do with a sign from the road and car park sign because I thought it was the nursery” (next door).

Did you get your appointment via 111? What was your waiting time like whilst on the phone to 111?

“It was quick getting through to 111.”

“I rang 111 this morning and go through ok, they went through several questions with me.”

“Yes I did and it was fine.”

“It was really quick on the phone with 111.”

“I booked it initially online and then was called back 20 minutes later by 111.”

“It took about 10-15 minutes to get through to 111.”

“Yes, I did with no issues.”

“Yes, and it was quick.”

“Yes and got through fine to 111.”

“Yes, and was ok.”

“Yes, I was only on the phone a short time.”

“I booked online with 111.”

“I was on the phone for 10-15 minutes.”

“Only on the phone about 10 minutes.”

“About 10-15 minutes.”

“I got through straight away to 111.”

“About 15 minutes.”

Were you given an appointment here in a timely manner after your call with 111?

“Yes.”

“Yes, they said it could be up to 6 hours later, but I was actually called back 3 and a half hours later.”

“Yes within 1 hour.”

“Yes, they said I would get a call in an hour, but it was much sooner.”

“Yes, it was one hour later that I got a call back from out of hours.”

“Yes, I got a call 1 hour after my initial call with 111.”

“I was called back within 5 minutes by ELMS.”

“Yes, it was quite quick.”

“I got a call back an hour later.”

“I was called back about 2 ½ hours later.”

“I was called back 10 minutes later.”

“I was called back within 5 minutes.

“Within 15 minutes.”

“Within 5 minutes.”

“It was very quick, within 30 minutes.”

“Yes, it was only a short time after speaking with 111.”

“I got call back 3 hours after call to 111.” (Patient had some confusion over appointment time but from talking with staff it appeared the time was clear on their system.)

These were all made within East Lancashire Medical Service’s published timescales for appointments as: -

1. Emergency within 1 Hour
2. Urgent within 2 Hours
3. Routine within 6 Hours

APPROACHABILITY

Are staff courteous and polite?

“Yes.”

“Really good.”

“They’re fine yes.”

“Really helpful on the phone and made sure I came down with my baby because I’m still breastfeeding her. They’re really good here, we’ve been a few times with the kids.”

“Yes, the GP I saw was helpful.”

“Yes, they were good on the phone and in person, it’s close for my family too.”

“10/10”.

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“They’ve been good.”

“Yes.”

“They were good.”

“Yes.”

“The staff were brilliant.”

“They’re fine.”

Would you recommend this service?

“Yes”

“Yes”

“Yes”

“Yes, they’re good.”

“Yes”

“Yes.”

“Yes, it’s fine.”

“Yes, I would.”

“Yes, it’s ok.”

“Yes.”

“Yes, I’ve used it before too.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Yes, I’ve used them before for the kids.”
“Yes.”

How do you feel about the waiting room? Is it pleasant, warm, welcoming, private?

“It’s nice. If they’re running behind, it can be a bit hard with children.”

“It smelt clean.”

“It’s ok, it’s clean.”

“It’s fine but it’s just a corridor.”

“Clean but empty.”

“Yes it’s fine.”

“Yes, it’s good.”

“It’s fine.”

“It’s ok, it’s just a corridor.”

“It’s fine for what it needs to be.”

“It’s fine for what it is.”

“It’s alright.”

“It’s ok.”

“It’s alright. If they had kids’ toys that would be good.”

“It’s ok for what it is.”

“It’s ok, bit small and not much air in here.”

“It’s just a corridor!”

RESPONSIVENESS

Were you seen at the allocated time for your appointment?

All respondents other than two who were in during a busy session in the children’s section and the patient who had some confusion over her appointment time were seen on time, with one person stating that they were seen early.

Do you get enough time with the clinician?

“Yes”

“Yes, and they gave me some helpful information.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Yes, they were good with our baby.”

“Yes they were good with my daughter.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Yes they were good.”

“Yes.”

“Yes, they were amazing. They’ve all been really good.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Yes, the staff are friendly and good.”

“Yes and they explain things really well.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

If you were unable to get this appointment, where would you have gone for support?

“I would have waited for the GP on Monday.”

“Urgent Care.”

“Probably A and E because I’m in agony.”

“I would have put up with the issue until tomorrow. I wouldn’t have gone to A and E. I can’t get an appointment with my own GP until for 3 weeks’ time. I felt I couldn’t wait that long as I was so ill last night. I will keep the appointment for 3 weeks’ time but it’s such a long time to wait when you feel so ill.”

“Probably to the chemist.”

“Probably to Burnley urgent care because it’s quicker than Blackburn.”

“Probably to urgent care.”

“I probably would have waited to see the GP.”

“Maybe the hospital if this wasn’t open.”

“I would have waited for a GP appointment in the week.”

“Probably to the chemist.”

“Probably to A and E, the pharmacist couldn’t help.”

“Probably try to see the GP tomorrow and take time off work or go tomorrow evening.”

“I was given a choice of Burnley or here so I decided to come here.”

“I would have gone to Burnley UTC or waited for a GP appointment tomorrow.”

“Probably Burnley.”

Staff views

ACCESSIBILITY

How easy do you think it is for people to book an appointment with the service via 111?

“Very easy, patients can go through 111 online or call 111.”

“I think it is quite easy to book through 111 either by phone or online.”

“111 can be accessed via phone or online, it’s an easy process to follow.”

“The 111 service will pass cases to the Out of Hours team, and we will book under 5s, and the clinicians will also book.”

“Somewhat easy.”

“Very easy.”

How many patients are seen each day by the service?

“A patient appointment is 15 minutes per patient.”

“Weekdays 20-48, weekends 150+”.

“Approximately 150+ on weekends and 50+ during weekdays”.

“Approximately 150”.

“During the week 47 appointments, weekends 78.”

“It varies, weekends can be very busy.”

What are the waiting times like for appointments with the service?

“Patients are booked every 15 minutes and if we ever run behind, we ask another GP to help out.”

“Usually very good but if there are any known delay it is important to inform patients promptly.”

“Patients are booked every 15 minutes. If surgery runs behind, they are informed on arrival, and we often pull resources from advising GPs to help out if calls are not breached.”

“Appointments are every 15 minutes. Waiting times can vary due to some patients needing to be admitted or an ambulance needed.”

“Patients are usually seen on same day of appointment request.”

“If it’s quiet, patients go straight in but if it’s busy waits can be up to 30-45 minutes.”

APPROACHABILITY

How do you identify and support more vulnerable patients?

“Check medical history form for relevant information, notice if a patient struggles to read and ask if support is needed. Maintain privacy, dignity and respect.”

“Vulnerable patients are often identified at the time of triage. We have a room for more vulnerable patients to wait in.”

“Vulnerable patients are often identified at the point of triage. We can segregate if for example the patient does not like to be in a waiting room with other patients. We would ask the clinician to see them as a priority.”

“Most vulnerable patients are identified at the time of triage. We have a wheelchair and can segregate vulnerable patients.”

“Via 111’s triage and then we have separate rooms for them to have a quiet space.”

RESPONSIVENESS

Do you feel that the referrals from 111 are appropriate for your service?

“Not always.”

“Not every 111 referral is appropriate for out of hours GP.”

“Most of the time but not always.”

“Not always.”

“Yes.”

“Mixed. It feels like they’re trying to triage as quickly as they can.”

Do you feel you have enough training for your role?

“Yes”

“Yes”

“I feel you can never have enough training, and our online training programme is great.”

“Yes”

“Yes”

“Yes.”

Do you feel the service is helping to reduce attendances at Emergency Department?

“Yes”

“Yes definitely.”

“Hopefully yes.”

“Yes significantly. If our service was not provided this would have a massive impact on our emergency department.”

“Yes”

“Yes definitely.”

Response from provider

We were delighted to welcome the Healthwatch Team to ELMS on 31st August 2025 and it was a pleasure to host them and demonstrate the services we deliver to the residents of Pennine Lancashire. ELMS are proud of the quality and effectiveness of the service we offer and pleased that this is reflected in the comments of patients and staff in the Enter and View report.

We are acting quickly to address the improvements around signage and displaying health information suggested in the report in order to create a more pleasant and stimulating environment for patients

ELMS has already refreshed and updated its website and this is now live. This includes full language and accessibility tools which can be seen in the link below

<https://www.elms-nfp.co.uk/>

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Website: [Healthwatchblackburnwithdarwen.co.uk](https://www.healthwatchblackburnwithdarwen.co.uk)