

East Harling

Surgery Feedback

November 2023

We were invited by the Clerk & Finance Officer of Harling Parish Council to visit East Harling Welcome Hub to speak with local residents about their experiences with local health and social care services. We visited the Welcome Hub in November and also visited East Harling Surgery.

From these visits we received 26 reviews for East Harling Surgery, we also received a further five reviews through our website since the start of October 2023 and three reviews through the post which are included in this report. The reviews have an average star rating of 2.2 out of five.

Overall, people we heard from told us that staff at the surgery are kind and considerate, however we heard concerns about many staff leaving the surgery and the impact this was having on patient care. We heard about difficulties accessing services including booking appointments and issues and delays with prescriptions. Some patients told us that this put them off seeking help when they needed it or that they were considering leaving the village.

The reviews are displayed in the table below and can be found on our website: www.healthwatchnorfolk.co.uk. A response to the report from East Harling Surgery follows the table of reviews (page 15).

ID	Title	Review	Rating
221901	They are very good to me	I have been in an out of hospital for the past three months. They are very good to me. Between the hospital and the surgery I get looked after very well. I just came down today to drop something off. If I can't get down they come to me. I had a covid and flu vaccine and they came to me for that. If they want me they phone me.	5
221896	most impressed today	Today we had a few appointments one was on time and one was ahead of time. The new male receptionist is considerate, kind and I am most impressed today.	5
219788	above & beyond!	Private Eye once had a column called "scenes you seldom see" satirizing what the public expected but didn't get. Well my flu jab experience would fit this. Jabbed by very efficient young nurse who also offered to look in my ears as I needed another referral for microwax removal AND sent email referring me. I received a phone call the following morning giving me appointment early November. She also offered me a pneumococcal vaccination. Wonderful service, thank you	5
221902	very good	I saw Steve - he really enjoys being here and seeing people like me. He was very good	4
221706	hard to get through	A struggle to get through on the phone and when you do get through it sometimes cuts you off. To see a doctor is impossible. Once you get in it's good, can't fault the staff. We're sad Pauline is retiring, she's so obliging.	4

221704	Worse since covid	The surgery has got worse since covid. So many staff have left and you can't get through on the phone. Once you get in the treatment is good. I work at the pharmacy and we've had prescriptions coming in that haven't been signed by Dr's. I don't understand why we don't have the electronic system.	4
222540	efficient and helpful	Rang for an appointment to see somebody re sudden deafness. 2 week appointment with nurse and seen on time. Efficient and helpful - told what to do to alleviate the wax. This did not work and was referred by the surgery for ear cleaning at Broadland. Quick appointment. Again excellent service there too. What could be improved? Quicker original appointment, as worried by total deafness suddenly. I had a choice of where to go - Wymondham or Broadland. I took the first appointment available which was furthest away - would have been easier if closer.	4
222087	Problem getting through	Last time I visited the surgery it was for an annual review. My blood was taken etc, the usual procedure and the was no problem. The only time I needed to consult the surgery was an attack of shingles. Luckily I had had the vaccine. It was a problem getting through for an appointment and medication. In the end I went to our local pharmacy and they kindly managed to sort it out for me with the doctor. My daughter in law is a nurse so she confirmed shingles and also the pharmacy. Time is important with this.	4

221900	Really Congested	It is really congested - I recently tried to get an appointment. I tried to call but after 40 minutes waiting I came up here to try and make an appointment. I was second in the queue and had to wait 15-20 minutes. I know you have to give a description but it takes a long time. The staff - everyone here - are wonderful, but I put off appointments because of the congestion to get in. It puts me off if not urgent and then it becomes urgent. It is a lovely surgery but it needs more funding.	3
221671	Can't See The Same Doctor Twice	I haven't been able to see the same doctor twice, which is very unfortunate. One of the GPs referred me to the NNUH for a bone scan, the hospital responded and rejected the request. I asked the GP what to do next and he said there was nothing we could do. The receptionists are always very helpful and extremely pleasant.	3
221895	I spent hours on the phone trying to contact	I have been very ill this year. The worst part has been contacting this surgery. I have spent hours of my life trying to get an appointment. When I am here the doctors and nurses are all lovely. I am surprised there are not more Do Not Attends as you can't get through to cancel. I spent an hour trying to check my appointment time. You never see your own doctor. making an appointment 0 Stars car park 0 stars nurses/doctors 5 stars.	2

221898	Something has to be done	<p>Gradually the surgery has gone down hill. This started before covid. We had one of the best surgeries in the area for miles and we felt so lucky, it was brilliant. But the doctors don't stay, we've had some really good ones but they all leave. We've lost at least 8-10 staff, doctors, nurses, practice nurses, all good people. Simon the practice manager is brilliant, we really felt he was on board with the patients. Instead of seeing doctors we just have nursing staff, they're lovely but its not the same as seeing a GP. I had an appointment to see a doctor but on the day it was a nurse practitioner and I ended up with the wrong diagnosis. I ended up being rushed back in a week later. Sometimes you need a doctor and you just can't see one. I'm not blaming the team, they're just doing what they're told.</p> <p>When we had two public meetings none of the partners attended, which we felt was really bad. We feel we'll end up losing our surgery, something has to be done. The low rating isn't blaming the people who work at the surgery but how it's being run.</p>	2
221894	Can't get a Doctors appointment	<p>They got my prescription right first time today - they were good today, staff were polite and helpful. The staff and pharmacy are 5 star as a whole. But you can't get a doctors appointment. Every day you ring up but they have urgent only so you self medicate and I am worrying and just hoping the symptoms pass. I spent £1500 on private medical care to get things done. I am fortunate I can do this. It is worrying.</p> <p>They also need a bigger car park.</p>	2

221893	My worry is people are leaving things	Superb service from phlebotomist Pauline. I have no complaints there but she is retiring. You used to be able to do repeat prescriptions through patient access and that is not working now. I have to walk to the surgery and hand in a slip with a note. It is five days from handing a prescription in to collecting medicine. You can't get an appointment to see a doctor easily. My worry is people are leaving things and things are not being picked up that should. I come from a generation of people who put up with things more than we should, for example I have terrible shoulder pain but have not tried to contact as will keep putting it off. Also I have a routine blood test but they never say if it is ok. A little communication would be great.	2
221716	Hard to get an appointment and staff leaving.	I can never get an appointment. What receptionists consider to be trivial can be quite painful. I've seen a doctor just twice in the past year. There's a high staff turnover. There seems to be difficulty relating to the hospital, communication between the two is very poor. The nurse practitioners are very good but you can't see a doctor. They need to improve the atmosphere for staff retention.	2
221658	The Surgery Is Falling Behind	I have written to the CQC about my thoughts on this surgery and I attended the public meeting the surgery hosted. I found it interesting that the only senior member of staff there was the practice manager, where were the GP partners? As an 83 year old I don't feel that the service is as available as it used to be. The safety net isn't as good. It seems like you have to complain or dig your heels in to get to see anyone. East Harling surgery is falling behind and has gone backward with the services it offers. I'd like to see it greatly improved.	2

221666	Extremely Frustrating	<p>I recently needed a prescription quickly and saw a locum doctor at the surgery. I was told that the locum couldn't sign off on the prescription and that it had to be done by one of the named GPs, but none of them were on site to do it, so I had to wait till after the weekend. A few weeks ago the hospital adjusted one of my prescribed medications, the surgery said they never got a letter, then they said there was no action to take, but I knew the letter said my medication needed to be changed. Previously I called and asked to see someone, I was told it would be 4 weeks so I told them it was urgent and fought to be seen. They made me an appointment for that day and I ended up being referred to the hospital for a same day emergency appointment. One time when I phoned with an issue the receptionist told me to just call 111. It seems to me that there are big administration issues at the surgery. There's been a large number of resignations, especially from nursing staff. It's all extremely frustrating. If you're a bit timid and don't speak up you just don't get the care you need. It's not good at all.</p>	2
221663	Problems At The Top	<p>I had to fight to get in to see someone. I told the doctor I was suddenly getting breathless and they said "that's just how it goes" and didn't take my concerns seriously. Turns out I have heart issues and am now under the hospital and awaiting an operation. The problems with the practice seem to be at the top. The staff aren't happy and they don't stay. They often get my prescriptions wrong and I have to follow up multiple times.</p>	2

221661	We All Just Want It To Be Better	It seems like the surgery has major staff retention issues. There's no continuity at all. I've had to wait 3-4 weeks for an appointment. People have to be very assertive to access care now - it's so difficult to get through and see any service. The state of the practice is a big local issue here. The practice held a public meeting that was very well attended. The practice manager ran it, but none of the partners attended. I am aware of the difficulties the NHS is having - but even in that climate the services they offer could be much better. It's so hard to get through on the phone and they seem to have taken down the online forms I liked to use. We all just want it to be better.	2
222389	Fantastic staff, but no GP appointments	Appointments cannot be requested online, you have to wait in a phone queue for 20 minutes to 1 hour 40 minutes to be told they have nothing available for 4 weeks and no way of booking further ahead. You are directed to the Norwich walk-in centre 26 miles away. The walk-in centre cannot help with ongoing issues, so you have to wait or pay to see a private GP. I need a medication review so my repeat prescription has been cancelled until I see a GP. It is an ongoing nightmare to arrange an emergency prescription. I pity the poor reception staff who try so hard to help but have nothing to offer.	2

220072	Refused cervical smear	<p>I have abnormal cells. I have to have annual cervical smears. I had biopsies last year. NNUH told me to have smear test again in a year. I booked in plenty of time as I knew I would have to wait. It's a very painful event for me.</p> <p>I attended the appointment. Called in by the nurse who stated that I was too early for my test. I told her that I had followed the instructions of the hospital. She said there was no point in the procedure as it was too early so off I went home, after taking time off work to attend and not tested. She told me to book in December.</p> <p>The following day a letter arrived from NNUH telling me to book a test. You can't make this up.</p> <p>I have now just stood at Harling reception for 20 minutes in order to rebook whilst trying to speak very quietly as there were 5 people behind me. Why can't we book online anymore?</p> <p>Why did this nurse feel she knew better than me? No-one chooses to have this procedure done for the fun of it.</p> <p>Wasted time. Stress and anxiety and now more time until I'm tested and more time until I get results.</p> <p>These things have to be dealt with in a timely fashion due to changes.</p>	2
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221904	concerns about the practice	<p>Who is now on the staff? Prescriptions take too long, it is not a reliable service - sometimes there is no GP to sign.</p> <p>They use wrong phone numbers despite frequent reminders to staff. They send emails and we don't always pick those up. They give out poor information like - yes your prescription is with the chemist when it is not. Training is taking place on the front desk while people are waiting. Sometimes a recorded message will say there is no appointment - ring again tomorrow (before you can even speak to anyone). Using the Walk In centre is not ideal if you have no transport.</p>	1
221892	A lot of staff have left	<p>Pauline is the gem of this surgery and she is retiring. A lot of staff have left. The practice manager is even leaving. They are taking on new patients but not providing a service. Some days there are no doctors at either surgery. I have not seen the partners for a long time.</p>	1
221891	There is never a doctor available	<p>When I want to see a doctor - every time - there is never one available/ I don't talk well as I have had a stroke. Communication is terrible there it is just all terrible really. You just don't see people.</p> <p>I am very disappointed, but not that disappointed that I want to leave the village.</p>	1
221888	There are no doctors about	<p>Today I came in for an appointment for myself but there are no doctors about which is disgusting really. Communication is not good at all. One tells you one thing, one says another. They put words in your mouth. And if doctors were happy they would stay.</p>	1

221707	Told to stop medication	<p>You can't get appointments. I had test results and I was told over the phone to stop taking my thyroid medication by a receptionist. The doctor said they'd tried to ring me 3 times but each call was a minute apart. I wanted to be told face to face why my medication was changing. And if it's a serious need then I should have been referred to an endocrinologist. I stopped taking them even though I didn't want to.</p> <p>When you go into the surgery there's no doctors. All the doctors leave. The practice nurses were great but they leave. It's alarming.</p> <p>My husband had open heart surgery in February. The surgery was very good with that. When he came out of hospital they suggested he see a nurse for the stitches. He got a small infection and the first appointment they could offer was 2-3 weeks time. The practice nurse saw it on the system and rang us up and they dealt with it. The cardio rehab told him to go to the doctor for an ECG on a Friday, the surgery told me to call back on Monday because there was no doctor on the premises. I went to the hospital in the end in case it was serious. The doctor didn't call until two weeks later asking me whether I still needed the ECG.</p>	1
221697	No good	<p>My husband had an appointment today which had been made 3 weeks ago to go over some blood test results. They texted him this morning when he was on his way to the Kenninghall surgery to say that it had been cancelled. Today I have just waited ages for my appointment, it was running 25 minutes late. The surgery has got worse since the mass exodus of staff. It used to be really good.</p>	1

221715	High staff turnover	There's a high staff turn over, why is this? You can't get an appointment. I was waiting on the phone for ages and eventually went down to the surgery to see why no one was answering and there was no-one on reception. It's hard to see a doctor at all.	1
221714	Concerned	<p>I have real concerns about the surgery. My impression is that they're struggling and under-resourced. It's not because of the staff, but the system doesn't seem to be working. Referrals are often incomplete and sat on. I asked for a referral in May and it was sent off incomplete so it was sent back. The recipient got it in July and I was told it was sent off in May. I also took my son in because he was displaying self-injurious behaviour and other challenges. He was referred for an Autism assessment. The referral was bounced right back because it was incomplete. I saw the letter that was sent and it was completely inaccurate.</p> <p>I was prescribed a cream for my eczema that wasn't available in Norfolk. This happened 4 times.</p> <p>I think the practice is really struggling. There's so often no appointments.</p>	1
221657	Something Is Fundamentally Wrong	I think it's a terrible surgery. We've actually just put our house on the market to get away from this surgery. We've lived here for 40 years and feel like we have to go. I called for an appointment and had to wait 4 weeks for it. On the morning of the appointment I got a call saying it was cancelled. Then that afternoon I got a text asking me how my visit was! Something is fundamentally wrong there, all the staff are leaving. All the nurses I've seen have been very good, they seem to be trying hard to hold it all together.	1

221656	Don't Take Notice Of The People	<p>Not everyone is on social media, but the surgery seems to expect us all to be on it. They share information that way and people miss out. It seems to me like they can't keep any staff. It just isn't a functioning surgery. It's usually a four week wait for an appointment. They say you have to call on the day for an appointment, but when I eventually get through they say all the appointments are gone.</p> <p>When I was in the surgery a saw a man in his 80s wait in a queue for 20 minutes to speak to a receptionist. All he wanted to do was cancel an appointment!</p> <p>Recently the hospital sent a letter to the practice asking them to prescribe me a new medication. The surgery just filed the letter away and did nothing. I asked them about the new medication and they knew nothing about it. They just don't take notice of the people.</p>	1
221883	Terrible service.	<p>I rarely have cause to go to the doctors but recently I now fear the thought of being ill in east harling. It took 3 weeks for an appointment with a very painful swollen foot, I was told I had Gout and just given some info, when I read it I knew I couldn't have it so I waited ages for blood test results and eventually insisted on an appointment, it's far too long to write but basically I had to book an x-ray which turned into a nightmare of mistakes on there behalf, it took me and my husband going to the surgery an having an argument with management.</p> <p>Eventually I did get an x-ray and found I had a cracked bone that had healed itself due to the 6 weeks of making my first call to this terrible surgery, this is just a small part of my experience, this surgery needs looking into , no wonder staff constantly leave as they don't want to be connected to a surgery with such bad feedback.</p>	1

220923	Repeat Prescription	<p>Ordered online via Systemone which states allow 5 days however I left this 7 days to allow for the weekend and no prescription at the pharmacy. Was told to chase this up at the doctors so walked down and enquired at the prescription desk who said it was done the day before! I was advised that it was most probably still awaiting signature but as I'm going away I needed this. She then went off to check if it was in the pile awaiting signature but nope not there either so has to be re printed and await signature. Told it won't be done till tomorrow despite me explaining that I'm out the country and need these to take with me. The whole point of ordering online is because I work full time and can't just keep taking time off to collect and chase something as simple as this!! Absolutely atrocious service</p>	1
222130	insufficient workforce	<p>My husband and I have been needing the services of the surgery since my husband's diagnosis with prostate cancer in May 2023. There have been countless bodesges with medical staff not available for blood tests and injections. Office staff have always been very helpful but it is obvious that they are working under constraints of an insufficient workforce.</p> <p>What could be improved? Improve relationships between staff and partners so staff stay longer. Improve staffing levels - especially doctors, paramedics, pharmacists and nurses. Ensure staffing levels are maintained when staff are on leave, are sick and at change-over times when staff are leaving and starting. This just requires a bit of forward planning. Bring in locum doctors and nurses when surgery is short staffed. Improve waiting times for appointments - this would be achieved if the previous 4 points were addressed. Improve waiting times on phone.</p>	1

Response from East Harling Surgery

The Practice would like to thank each patient who took the time to provide feedback for the latest Healthwatch Feedback Report. The Practice reviews each piece of feedback as part of our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement of the care we provide for our patients.