

Enter & View Visit:

Elm Tree Medical Centre Thornaby

July 2026



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ENTER & VIEW VISIT

Elm Tree Medical Centre, Thornaby



Visit date: May 2026



Purpose:

- Understand patient experience in primary care
- Identify examples of effective practice



BACKGROUND

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees has consistently received positive feedback about Elm Tree GP Practice, particularly in relation to access to appointments, staff approach, and overall patient experience.

Because of this, we carried out an Enter & View visit to better understand what is working well and identify learning that could support other GP practices.

WHAT WE FOUND

Feedback from patients, staff and our observations during the visit highlighted a service that is well organised, responsive, and strongly focused on patient experience.





Working together with the NHS Healthwatch Network

We're Visiting Elm Tree Medical Centre!

Date: Thursday 16th April
Time: 9am – 1pm

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees will be conducting an 'Enter and View' visit to see how things are running and gather feedback on what's working well and what can be improved.



Share your experiences!

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ACCESS TO APPOINTMENTS

Access to care was one of the most consistent strengths identified.

Patients told us it is easy to:

- Get through to the practice
- Receive advice quickly
- Access same-day appointments where needed

This is supported by a structured triage system, where information is gathered by reception and reviewed by a clinical team. This allows patients to be directed to the most appropriate support, with many issues resolved without the need for a face-to-face appointment.

Patients described the process as quick, efficient and easy to navigate.



‘Patients describe the process as quick, efficient and easy to navigate.’



COMMUNICATIONS AND PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Patients consistently described staff as:

- Friendly and approachable
- Clear in their communication
- Willing to take time to listen

Many patients said they felt comfortable asking questions and were given clear explanations and reassurance about their care.

We observed positive interactions between staff and patients, with a calm and respectful approach throughout.

PERSONALISED CARE

A strong theme across feedback was that patients feel valued and treated as individuals.

Patients told us they:

- Feel listened to
- Are taken seriously
- Are involved in decisions about their care

The practice also supports continuity where possible, including arranging follow-up appointments with the same GP and proactively contacting patients when needed.



‘People told us they felt listened to.’

EFFICIENT SYSTEMS AND TEAM WORKING

The practice uses a range of systems to manage demand effectively, including:

- Monitoring call volumes and staffing levels
- A team-based triage approach
- Flexible staff roles to maintain patient flow

Referrals are processed promptly and monitored, helping ensure patients receive timely care. Staff described a supportive team environment, where colleagues work together to respond to demand and maintain a consistent service.

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

The practice provides a range of support for patients with different needs, including:

- Interpreter services and hearing loops
- Support with using digital tools such as the NHS App
- Alternative access routes for those unable to use digital services

Patients told us they felt supported, particularly where additional help was needed.



‘Staff described a supportive, team environment.’



ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE

We observed a clean, calm and welcoming environment.

Staff interactions were friendly and respectful, and there were clear systems in place to support privacy and accessibility.

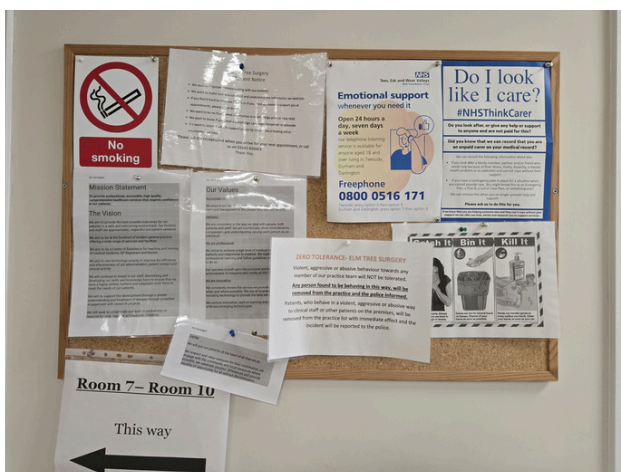
The practice demonstrates a strong team culture, with a shared focus on delivering high-quality, patient-centred care.

KEY LEARNING

Elm Tree Practice demonstrates how positive patient experiences can be achieved through:

- A clear and effective triage system
- Strong communication and empathy
- A team-based approach to managing demand
- Personalised and proactive care
- Continuous reflection and improvement

These approaches could support learning across other GP practices.



CONCLUSION

Elm Tree Practice demonstrates how a strong focus on access, communication, and personalised care can lead to consistently positive patient experiences. The practice has developed effective systems and a supportive team culture that enables them to respond quickly to demand while maintaining a high standard of care.

The feedback gathered during this visit highlights the difference that proactive working, clear communication, and a patient-centred approach can make. There are clear examples of good practice that could support learning across other GP services.

We will share the findings from this visit with partner organisations and GP practices to highlight good practice and support learning across services.

We would like to thank Elm Tree Practice for their hard work, and all those who took the time to share their feedback with us to support this work.

Thank you



‘There are clear examples of good practice that could support learning across other GP services.’

Disclaimer:-

All findings in this report are based on the lived experiences shared with Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees. Our aim is to highlight challenges within local health and care services and support meaningful improvements.

Before publication, all feedback was shared with the relevant services to provide an opportunity for response. Any updates included reflect the collaborative work undertaken to improve outcomes for local people.

healthwatch
Stockton-on-Tees

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees
6 – 8 Yarm Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 3NA



t: 0300 180 0660
e: info@healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk

healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk