



Details of visit

Service address:	Asplands Medical Centre, Asplands Close, Woburn Sands, MK17 8QP and Woburn Surgery, Eleanor Close, Woburn, MK17 9QU
Service Provider:	Asplands Medical Centre
Date and Time:	28th & 30th September 2015 10:00 – 12:30
Authorised Representatives:	Diana Blackmun, Dave Simpson, Nicola King, Steve Nash
Contact details:	Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Capability House, Wrest Park, Silsoe, Bedfordshire, MK45 4HR Tel: 0300 303 8554

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire would like to thank the service provider, patients and staff (clinical and non-clinical), for their contribution to the Enter and View Programme.



Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all patients and staff (clinical and non-clinical), only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

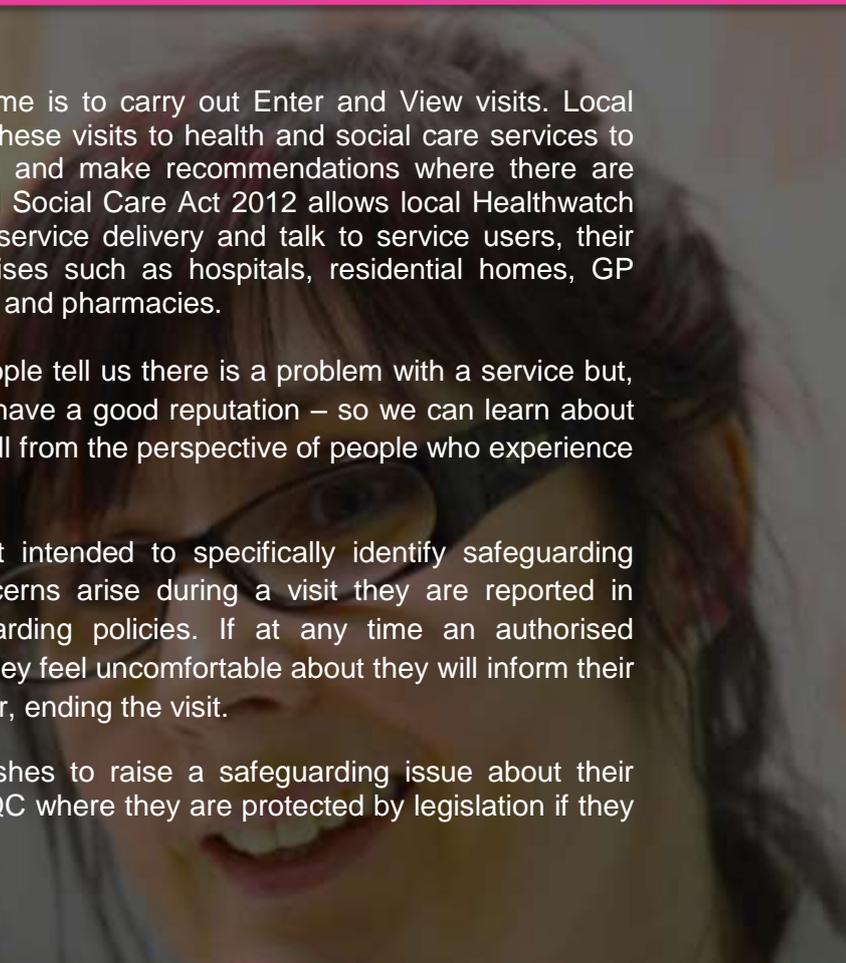
What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being managed and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families, patients and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies.

Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation – so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Healthwatch Enter and Views are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies. If at any time an authorised representative observes anything that they feel uncomfortable about they will inform their lead who will inform the service Manager, ending the visit.

In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer they will be directed to the CQC where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.





Purpose of the visit

- To engage with patients of GP Practices and understand how dignity is being respected;
- Identify examples of good working practice;
- Observe patients engaging with staff (clinical and non-clinical), and their surroundings.

Strategic drivers

- Care Quality Commission Dignity and Wellbeing strategy.
- GP Surgeries are a Local Healthwatch priority.

Methodology

The visits were announced Enter and View Visits carried out at two surgeries which comprise Dr Wallace & Partners; Asplands Medical Centre, Asplands Close in Woburn Sands and Woburn Surgery in Eleanor Close, Woburn.

A letter and posters announcing HWCB visits were previously sent to the practice. A questionnaire was also sent to the Practice Manager to complete prior to the visits.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire delivered copies of a questionnaire for patients to fill in, together with a 'response box', to post their completed questionnaires prior to HWCB's visits. The purpose was to minimise disruption and inconvenience to patients during the visits.

On the days of the visits, the Practice Manager had arranged 'booked slots' for HWCB representatives to talk to several GPs and members of their administration and clinical staff. This was in addition to speaking to patients in the waiting area. Representatives also undertook a tour of the premises to observe accessibility, including disabled access, the availability of patient information and condition of the building.





Summary of findings

Asplands Medical Centre is a Training Practice, and operates over two linked sites, Asplands Close in Woburn Sands and Woburn Surgery in Eleanor Close, Woburn.

Asplands Medical Centre is a modern Practice which sees itself at the leading edge of the evolving Primary Care system and tries wherever possible to maintain a traditional approach to General Practice. It has a 'usual doctor' system for booking appointments, which is maintained as much as possible.

HWCB's overall impression gained during the visits was of a well-run patient friendly Medical Practice which is well supported and valued by its patients. This is evidenced by its' very low DNA (Did Not Attend) rate of 1% or less.

On the day of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's visit to Asplands Close surgery, the Practice Manager was unavoidably absent due to an emergency. The Senior Partner deputised for the Practice Manager who explained it was her last day at the surgery prior to retirement.

Results of visit

Staff

The Practice has the following members of staff;

- Seven GPs (six are partners); three male and four female GPs;
- One Practice Manager (also a Partner);
- Four Practice nurses;
- Two Nurse Prescribers;
- Three HCAs (Healthcare Assistants);
- Eight Reception Staff;
- Twelve other members of staff.

Specialist Services provided

- Diabetic;
- Asthma;
- COPD;
- Well Women;
- Family Planning;
- **Sexual Health;
- Phlebotomy;
- NHS Health Checks;
- **Physiotherapy;
- **Midwife – based at Milton Keynes Hospital;
- Child Immunisation;
- Podiatry;
- Dermatology;
- Minor Surgery;
- Counselling;
- Training medical students and registrars;
- Smoking Cessation & Weight Reduction.

Services marked ** are only offered at the Asplands site.

Surgery Hours

Monday to Friday 08.00 – 19.00 and Saturday 08.30 – 12.00 (Asplands Medical Centre)
Monday to Wednesday 08.30 – 18.30 and Thursday to Friday 08.30 – 13.00 (Woburn Surgery)

Out of Hours Care

Out of hours care is provided by Milton Keynes Urgent Care Services. The number is shown on the Practice website, the Practice leaflet and the Answerphone when the surgeries are closed.



Environment

Asplands Medical Centre

The Practice is housed in a modern (1984) building in a quiet residential area of Woburn Sands. Operating over two levels, the 2nd floor is used for a meeting room and offices. Entry to the building opens into the waiting area which is equipped with a blood pressure monitoring unit and weighing machine.

The reception desk is open and low enough to be accessible to all patients including those in wheelchairs. The dispensary is located next to the reception desk.

The decoration is clean and light with the appropriate amount of seating in the waiting areas.

Other observations included:

- The letter box at the Woburn surgery has no 'capture' box or basket on the inside, the post would fall onto the floor which raises security and/or confidentiality issues.
- The waiting area had a relaxed atmosphere with background music playing.
- The SystmOne electronic booking-in terminal was clearly accessible near to the reception desk.
- The waiting area is child-friendly, with a selection of toys and material available for children.
- A room for breast-feeding can be made available on request.
- Toilet facilities and hand sanitisers are located at several places throughout the building.
- A chaperone service is available at both surgeries.
- Patients are called for their appointments by the GPs entering the waiting room and calling the name of the patient.
- The reception desk is sufficiently far away from the waiting area to afford some degree of confidentiality.

Woburn Surgery

Woburn Surgery is a smaller satellite surgery of the Asplands Medical Practice. It is housed in a single storey building, set near to the main street in Woburn in a quiet residential area. The grounds are well maintained, grassed areas. The sign on the surgery wall is a copper plate which was partly obscured by tree foliage.

Entry is gained through two doors, situated fairly close together which could create difficulty for unaccompanied wheelchair users. This leads through to a corridor and the reception window.

The warm light and airy waiting room is opposite the reception window and contains a selection of patient information leaflets and notices and a tropical fish tank.

A children's play area is near the waiting room with books and crayons to occupy children and encourage them to play quietly.

Other observations included:

- A weighing machine and a Blood Pressure self-monitoring machine are sited in the corridor leading to reception.
- An Emergency Defibrillator device is sited in the corridor leading to the consulting rooms.
- An Anaphylactic Shock kit is available.
- A disabled toilet and a 'Unisex' toilet are available.
- A rest room is available for any breastfeeding mothers to use.
- Names and photographs of GPs and staff are not displayed.

Car Parking

Woburn Surgery has eight allocated parking spaces close to the surgery; no designated disabled spaces. A sign is visible at the surgery advising patients and visitors of additional parking available at the nearby Woburn Village Hall.

Asplands Surgery has 19 parking spaces at the front and side of the surgery and there is 'on street' parking in the adjacent Close.

Patient Information

Both surgeries have a good and varied selection of leaflets available for patients on noticeboards, at the reception desks and in the waiting areas. Patients are able to access the website for further information.

Registration at the Practice

HWCB representatives were advised that patients can register at Asplands and Woburn Surgeries with proof of address and ID. The public can apply to be a temporary patient from the locality for up to three months; e.g. music student, contractors, Center Parcs holidaymakers.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The Practice has an active PPG and a 'virtual' online forum, both of which are advertised within the surgeries and on the Practice website. Recruitment is by GP nomination, word of mouth and interest shown by patients.

The Physical group has a core of 10-12 members, with ages ranging from 26 to 70+, and meets every 2-3 months. A GP, the Practice Manager who is also one of the Partners, and a secretary from the Asplands surgery attend these meetings.

The group acts as a 'critical friend' to the Practice, identifying issues to bring to the attention of the Practice Manager. The group has also helped compile patient surveys.

One patient spoken to by a HWCB representative, when asked if they knew if the surgery had a PPG, replied *'Yes, I've seen it online but don't believe it works. Nothing PPG is relayed to patients, which it should be.'*

Patient Consultation

Consultation is achieved by individual surveys, suggestion boxes at the surgeries and the NHS 'Friends and Family' questionnaires including an electronic version on the Home Page of the Practice website.

HWCB questionnaires. This may be due to patient's being unaware of the request to complete the questionnaire when attending the surgeries.

Results of the questionnaires, for both surgeries were as follows:

- 1) **When registering at the Practice, did you receive a Practice Leaflet/Handbook?**
- Five of the patients who completed the questionnaire recalled receiving a practice leaflet, three said that they didn't and one couldn't remember.
- 2) **Did you find it easy to register at the Practice?** - All of the patients said that it was easy.
- 3) **Do you know if the surgery has a Patient Participation Group (PPG)?** - Five of the responses were **Yes** four were **No**.
- 4) **Are you a member of the PPG?** – Eight of the respondents were not, one was a member and clearly stated that *'but there's been no meeting!'*
- 5) **How do you book appointments at the surgery?** – All nine replies booked in person, seven also booked via the telephone and six used online booking.
- 6) **Are there appointments available in unsociable hours? (e.g. before 8:00 am or after 6:30 pm)** – Four responses were **Yes**, one **No** and four did not know.
- 7) **Can you get an appointment when you need one?** – Eight replied **Yes**, one **No**; two comments received were *'Never more than 2-3 days wait'* and *'Always, have never been turned away.'*
- 8) **Do you receive a reminder text message about your appointment on your mobile?** – Seven said they did, with two saying they don't have a mobile.
- 9) **When booking an appointment are you given a choice of Health Professional?**
– All patients who completed the questionnaire confirmed that they were given a choice of Health professional.
- 10) **What choice of Health Professional are you offered?** – All nine respondents were offered a GP appointment; five were offered a Minor Illness Nurse appointment with one being offered an HCA appointment.
- 11) **Do you know what the surgery opening times are?** – Seven replied **Yes**, two **No** with one patient stating that *'It's not easy to find out!'*
- 12) **What do you do if you need out of hours care?** – Only five responded to the question, two would ring the surgery telephone, one would call 111 and two commented *'Call 111 to arrange relevant treatment; either attend 'out of hours' or if required await an ambulance.'* and *'I have not needed this service as yet so am unaware.'*
- 13) **Do you feel you have enough time with the GP, nurse or Healthcare Assistant (HCA) to discuss your issues?** – All nine responses were positive.
- 14) **Do you feel the GP, nurse or Healthcare Assistant listens to you and considers your opinion?** - All nine responses were positive.
- 15) **Are staff (Reception/Practice Manager) at your surgery helpful and understanding?** - Eight responses were positive with one commenting *'Extremely!!'*; one respondent was unsure.
- 16) **Would you recommend your surgery to other people?** – Eight replied **Yes**, one patient said *'No! Purely selfish reasons - I want them for myself!'*
- 17) **Do you know how to make a complaint about the surgery?** – All nine replied **Yes**.

General comments received from patients included (both from the questionnaires and talking to patients during the visit):

- *Waiting for appointments can take time but I don't mind;*
- *Sometimes appointments feel a little rushed by the doctor;*
- *I prefer to see my own doctor but that's not always an option;*
- *Opening times could be better;*
- *GPs can sometimes come across a bit abrupt;*

- *Not happy about having no choice about where to register for a doctor as it has to be in your catchment area;*
- *There is a waiting time for appointments but I am so grateful for the appointment so don't mind waiting;*
- *Reception staff can sometimes be abrupt (Asplands);*
- *Some of the staff can sometimes think they are above the doctors and come across high and mighty (Asplands);*
- *I would recommend this group surgery to anyone. I think we are really lucky to have this surgery in our area;*
- *Can book appointments online but prefer to book in person so not fobbed off;*
- *The appointment times are too short;*
- *Can wait a long time and one time waited over an hour;*
- *When the chaperone service runs on a Tuesday/Thursday at Asplands the surgery can be full up and this makes waiting time for the appointments really long;*
- *Doctors are thorough and you can discuss anything;*
- *One patient at Woburn Surgery stated that the blood pressure machine being located in the foyer is not very private;*
- *Would prefer the Practice to be part of Milton Keynes CCG rather than Bedford;*
- *I have been a patient at this Practice since the day it opened and I used to see Dr Logan for 40+ years. It is a wonderful Practice, well run with excellent GPs and all the other services, such as nurses, physiotherapy. I feel lucky to be a patient here;*
- *This Practice is better than many NHS Practices, I know another where no appointments are offered - just queues;*
- *The service provided by both surgeries Asplands (Woburn Sands and Woburn) is very friendly efficient, effective, and staff are very accommodating i.e. will always do their best to help and support whoever needs it. Completely exceed all expectations and cannot praise them enough;*
- *Couldn't ask for a friendlier, supportive, helpful, efficient/effective service! Thank you all! (Happy Patient!).*

Interaction between Patients and Staff

HWCB representatives observed reception staff chatting to the patients and helping out by arranging suitable appointments wherever possible. All such interactions were carried out in a friendly, courteous manner.

Clinical and non-clinical staff

During the visits, HWCB representatives spoke to several members of the Practice, including GPs nurses and administrative staff, all of whom stated that they worked in a lovely environment and were happy to be there.

All members of staff spoken to informed representatives that the Practice allowed plenty of time and opportunity for training and advancement of their careers.

One GP praised the MSK service accessed by Primary Care saying *'The service is really responsive; when something doesn't go right they do sort it out and get back to you. Their ethos and culture is very proactive.'* However, regarding the Dermatology service, the remarks were *'Not working very well, and 'a bit 'clunky' – not that responsive, emails get lost.'*

Additional general comments included *'What upsets me most of all is care for the elderly; it is difficult to care for them in their own homes; we need better coordination between Health and Social Care.'*

A Community Nurse, employed by SEPT, said that she enjoyed the work and felt supported by the team at the surgery, but was frustrated by a shortage of community nursing staff. At that time it appeared that SEPT was unable to recruit the right people as Community Nurses.

Asked about any changes the nurse would make to the way of working, several observations were put forward, as follows:

- *'The amount of time spent doing paperwork – I would prefer to be with patients.'*
- *'The process SEPT uses for grade 3 pressure sores needs to be improved.'*
- *'The locality where I work, I would change to make where I am based more central.'*
- *'The OneCall system is awful – it just puts another (non-medically trained) person in the way – needs revising.'*
- *'Referrals from hospital are not working well – patient was sent home with bilateral leg ulcers, we were not told the patient had been discharged.'*
- *'Sometimes no fax referrals from the hospital received e.g. when a catheter is fitted.'*

Other comments received from staff members include;

- *'We offer a very good service here.'*
- *'Definitely feel supported here, we are a good team and the GPs will often step-in'*
- *'It can be frustrating at times – not enough appointments.'*
- *'Privacy at reception can be difficult, but solutions are available.'*

Concerns/Complaints Procedure

HWCB carried out a 'Mystery Shopper' project earlier in the year, investigating GP surgeries Complaints Policies. The subsequent report showed the Practice scored three out of five in the survey. HWCB is pleased to report that the Practice now meets all five criteria.

All members of staff interviewed by HWCB representatives during the visits appeared to have at least a 'working knowledge' of the complaints policy and/ or where it can be found. However, understanding of the policy and procedures was often sketchy.

Additional Findings

As a training practice some patients have participated in video recording of their consultations to allow an analysis of consultation techniques by the trainee GP's. These recordings are only viewed by other doctors and are usually destroyed within a few days without leaving the building. Every patient who participates is informed that his or her consultation will be recorded and will be asked to sign a consent form.

Recommendations

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire recommends, in light of a number of negative comments from patients regarding the PPG, that the Practice and the PPG establish a programme or project to promote and raise awareness of the PPG and its role, to all their patients registered at the surgery.

HWCB representatives were informed by one of the partners that a trial had taken place into establishing Wi-Fi in both practices and they were keen to move this forward. HWCB supports this initiative and recommends this is put in place as soon as possible for the benefit of patients.

HWCB recognise that whilst all members of staff at the practice may be aware there is a Complaints Policy, it was felt that there were a number of staff who did not have a good knowledge of its procedure and timeframe. HWCB therefore recommends that all staff are given further training and/or a refresher training session on the Practice Complaints Policy and its Procedures, for the benefit of patients.

HWCB will directly contact the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group with regard to Community and Dermatological services and request a review and assessment of service provision in light of information received during the visit.

Finally, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire recommends that this report is shared with the patients and staff (clinical and non-clinical) of the Practice and to advise that if they should wish to contribute any additional comments about the report, to contact Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire direct



Service Provider response

The paragraph about a patient being spoken to about the PPG – we have always put the surveys and reports on the website and have also had paper copies in both surgeries available for patients. I appreciate this was the patients perception. We are in the process of updating our website and will have a much clearer section on the PPG.

Home visits – we encourage patients to try and book first thing in the morning we do not insist ‘must be booked for 11 am’. We often have visit requests coming in after that time and GP’s will go and visit.

We have recently commenced a weekly delivery service for dispensing patients who are housebound which is run by volunteers. This is for Woburn patients on a Tuesday and Asplands patients on a Friday.

I would question the ‘number’ of negative comments from patients regarding the PPG – I can only read one and the other is odd if from a PPG member. We have raised the profile over the years setting up meetings etc. which no one turned up to.

**Emma Barter
Managing Partner
Dr. Wallace & Partners**

