



Details of visit

Service address: 1 Houghton Close, Ampthill, Bedfordshire, MK45 2TG

Service Provider: Houghton Close Surgery

Date and Time: 22 October 2015, 10.00 – 12noon

Authorised Representatives: Dave Simpson, Steve Nash, Linda Harrison

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.



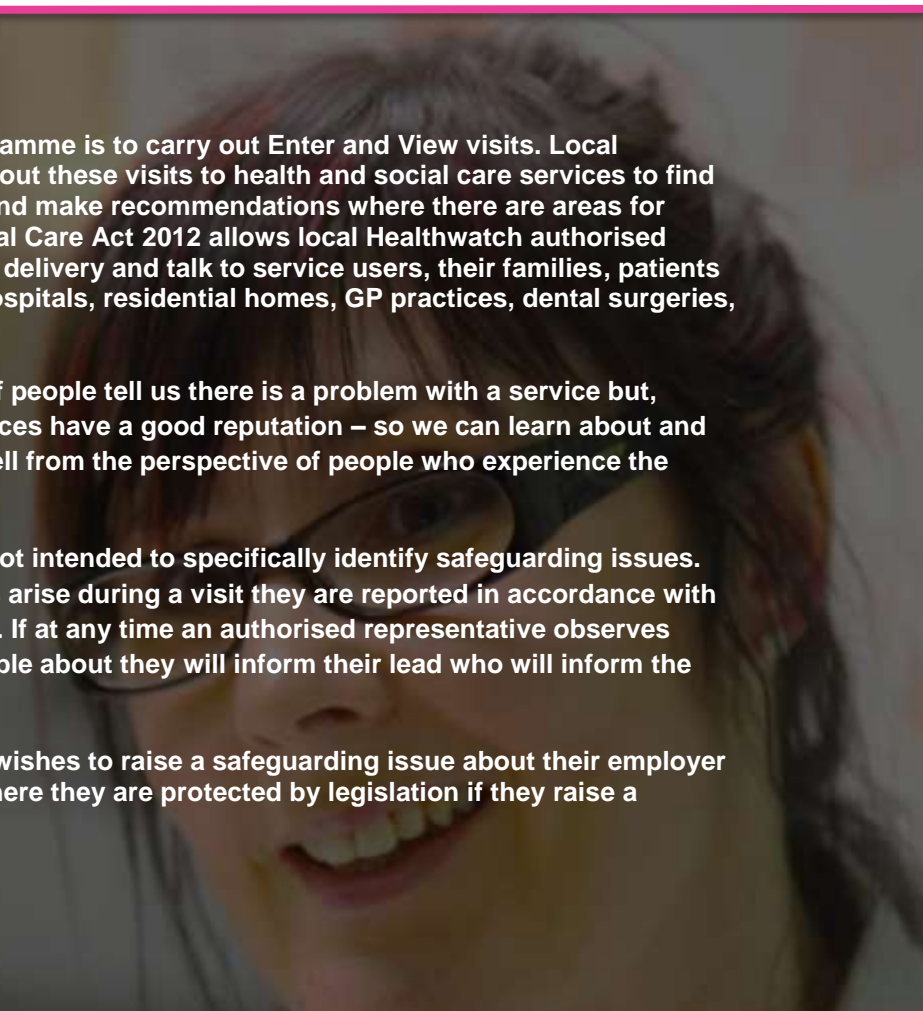
What is Enter and View?

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

This was an announced Enter and View Visit carried out at the Houghton Close Surgery in Ampthill.

A letter and posters announcing HWCB visit were previously sent to the practice. A questionnaire was also sent to the Practice Manager to complete prior to the visit. 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 visit. The purpose was to minimise disruption and inconvenience to patients during the visit.

On the day of the visit, the Practice Manager 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

The Practice, which is a Training Practice, operates from a purpose-built (2002) two storey building in Amptill, which is owned by Assura Property in Warrington. The premises are well maintained, with good access for patients through a set of automatic doors into a glass walled inner lobby which opens into the reception/waiting area.

The seating in the waiting area is positioned so that it faces towards an electronic display board above the corridor which contains the consulting rooms

Should patients need access to the upper floor; this can be reached by a lift or stairs. The ground floor contains the waiting area, reception, consulting rooms, toilets (male, female and disabled) and the dispensary.

Results of visit

Staff

The Practice has the following members of staff:

- One Practice Manager;
- One Office Manager;
- Nine GPs;
- Six Partners;
- Two Locums;
- Four Practice Nurses;
- Two Nurse Prescribers;
- One Healthcare Assistant (HCA);
- One Phlebotomist;
- Nine Dispensary Staff;
- 14 Receptionists;
- One Summariser.

Specialist Services provided

- Chronic Disease Management:
- Asthma;
- COPD/Respiratory;
- CHD;
- Atrial Fibrillation;
- Diabetes;
- Stroke;
- Hypertension;
- Osteoporosis;
- Alcohol;
- Dementia;
- Mental Health;
- Epilepsy;
- Learning Disabilities;
- End of Life;
- Anti-coagulation Clinics;
- Sexual Health;
- Sphere Clinic;
- Cytology;
- Chlamydia Screening;
- Phlebotomy;
- Stop Smoking;
- Immunisation;

- Shingles;
- Men ACWY;
- Influenza;
- Pneumococcal;
- Whooping Cough;
- Minor Surgery;
- Ambulatory BP and ECGs;
- Complex wound Care;
- Avoiding Unplanned Admissions;
- Extended Hours;
- Healthchecks;
- New Patient Medicals;
- Minor Illness.

Surgery Hours

Monday	8:30 am to 6:00 pm
Tuesday	8:30 am to 6:00 pm
Wednesday	8:30 am to 6:00 pm
Thursday	8:30 am to 6:00 pm
Friday	8:30 am to 6:00 pm
Saturday	8:30 am to 11:00 am (pre-booked appointments only)
Sunday	Closed

Environment

Other observations included:

- Good signage outside the Surgery, including out-of-hours numbers and opening times;
- Good disabled and pram/pushchair access into the premises;
- Hand sanitisers available in several locations;
- Electronic booking-in terminal (SystemOne);
- Child-friendly waiting area;
- HWCB posters and leaflets displayed;
- A self-care dedicated noticeboard at front of waiting area;
- Private area available for discussion of confidential matters (test results etc.)

Car Parking

This surgery, although being situated in the area of Ampthill which is home to two other GP Practices, and which suffers from a lack of parking spaces, is fortunate in that it does have an area of dedicated parking spaces including several disabled spaces and an emergency vehicle bay adjacent to the front door. However, the Practice Manager informed representatives of her concern for the safety of patients and staff due to the general congestion in the area which has led on occasions to vehicles mounting and driving on the pavements. These concerns have been made known to the Local Authority.

The car parking area is covered by a CCTV monitoring system.

Patient Information

A good range of patient information leaflets is available in the waiting area; other information appears on the electronic display board and other noticeboards throughout the premises. The Practice website also has a good range of information and links for the benefit of patients.

Registration at the Practice(s)

The Practice Manager informed representatives that new patients can register online or in person at the surgery with proof of identity. Application forms are available at reception or are available to download on the website. Registering patients are given a 'New Patient Pack', and are invited to attend a new patient medical with an HCA while waiting for their patient records to be transferred. This serves as an induction and its purpose is 'to make the new patient feel valued'.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The Practice has both a PPG and a virtual PPG, the former has twelve active members and there are ten members on the virtual group. The age range is 40-80, and the group meets quarterly. The group's purpose is to feedback the patient perspective to the Practice and to be involved in the decisions taken with regard to the services offered at the Practice.

The group is also involved in annual surveys, reviewing website content and has manned a Health Stand at the Ampthill Gala.

The PPG is advertised on the Practice website, on noticeboards and on the scrolling screen in the reception area.

Patient Consultation

Patients opinions are gathered via the Friends and Family Test, the annual survey and by feedback from the PPGs. Information gathered and actions arising from it are published on the noticeboard and on the website.

Appointments System

The Practice manager informed HWCB representatives that patients can book appointments in person, by telephone or online via SystemOne. A large number of GP appointments are available for booking up to six weeks in advance.

Appointments are in the main, for ten minutes, although some GPs allow fifteen minute slots. Minor Illness Nurse appointments are usually longer. Emergency appointments, bookable on the day, are covered by the duty doctor and are usually shorter appointments.

Patients who are too unwell to go to the surgery can request a home visit by the duty doctor. Patients are asked to telephone, ideally before 10:00am. The duty doctor may make a 'triage' phone call before attending.

Out of Hours Care

Care UK provides the 'out of hours' cover for the surgery between 6:30pm and 08:00am and at weekends. The contact number is displayed on the front entrance lobby, the Practice website and Practice leaflet, and is recorded on the surgery's Answerphone message.

Medication & Prescriptions

Medication reviews are carried out at least annually by the GPs. Patients can order repeat prescriptions in person, by posting prescription slips into the box in the reception area, by fax or online. Prescriptions will be ready in 48 hours and will be sent to the patient's preferred pharmacy.

The dispensary offers a delivery service to some of the outlying villages on Thursdays and Fridays.

Patient Questionnaire Results

A total of 15 questionnaires were completed prior to HWCB's visit. Results of the questionnaires completed at the Practice were as follows:

1. **When registering at the Practice did you receive a practice leaflet/handbook?** Four replied 'Yes', four replied 'No' and seven couldn't remember.

2. **Did you find it easy to register at the Practice?** – Eight said 'Yes', six said 'No' and one did not answer.
3. **Do you know if the surgery has a Patient Participation Group (PPG)?** – Eight said 'Yes', six said 'No' and one skipped the question.
4. **Are you a member of the PPG?** – Two respondents are, thirteen are not.
5. **How do you book appointments at the surgery?** (tick all that apply) – Two only use the telephone, two only book in person and three only book online. Three use a combination of all three methods, two use the telephone and online, two use the telephone and in person booking, and one books online or in person.
6. **Are there appointments available in unsociable hours?** (e.g. before 8am or after 6:30 pm) – One person said 'Yes', five said 'No' and nine did not know.
7. **Can you get an appointment when you need one?** – Ten replied 'Yes', two said 'No' and three did not answer the question.
8. **Do you receive a reminder text message about your appointment on your mobile?** – Three said that they did, nine said they did not, two said they don't have a mobile and one skipped the question.
9. **When booking an appointment are you given a choice of Health Professional?** – Thirteen said 'Yes', and two said 'No'.
10. **What choice of Health Professional are you offered?** – Four were offered a choice of MI Nurse, GP or HCA, six were offered GP or MI Nurse, four were only offered a GP and one did not answer.
11. **Do you know what the surgery opening times are?** – Twelve said 'Yes', two said 'No' and one did not answer.
12. **What do you do if you need out of hours care?** – There were twelve responses, seven would phone the surgery and/or the out of hour's number, three said they had no need of the service, one would go to A&E and one would dial 999.
13. **Do you feel you have enough time with the GP, Nurse or Healthcare Assistant to discuss your issues?** – All fifteen respondents said 'Yes'.
14. **Do you feel the GP, Nurse or Healthcare Assistant listens to you and considers your opinion?** – Fourteen said 'Yes' and one was not sure.
15. **Are staff (Reception /Practice Manager) at your surgery helpful and understanding?** – Fourteen said 'Yes', one skipped the question.
16. **Would you recommend your surgery to other people?** – Fourteen said 'Yes', one said 'No'.
17. **Do you know how to make a complaint about the surgery?** – Ten said 'Yes', five said 'No'.

Interaction between Patients and Staff

HWCB representatives observed interactions between patients and staff, both administrative and clinical, and saw that all of these were carried out in a courteous, professional and friendly manner'. Representatives also observed and overheard one receptionist, while answering a telephone call from a patient, alerting the patient to the fact that confidentiality could not be guaranteed due to the fact that the call was being taken in the open reception area.

Clinical and non-clinical staff

HWCB Representatives were able to speak to several members of staff during the visit. All members of staff spoken to expressed the feeling that they were part of a cohesive and well-led team, delivering the best service possible for the patients. All said that they enjoyed working there, and one member iterated '*After 24 years, if I didn't enjoy it I wouldn't still be here!*' Other comments, from several members of staff highlighted that '*We're always re-assessing our working practices to ensure we deliver the best service*' and '*we get very good feedback from our patients.*'

Concerns/Complaints Procedure

The Practice scored four out of five on HWCB's Mystery Shopper report 'Investigating the Complaints Process – General Practice' earlier last year, and representatives are pleased to report that remedial action was taken and that the Practice now scores five out of five.



Additional Findings

The overall impression gained by HWCB representatives was of a dynamic, well-run, caring Practice which has the best needs of its' patients at the forefront of its' 'modus operandi.'

During the visit, HWCB representatives were treated in a friendly and very helpful manner.

General comments received from patients included:

'Never needed to make a complaint'

'It is important to me to be able to book ahead for routine appointments so I can plan these around work commitments. I can do this online though often hard to see the GP of my choice who probably gets booked as is popular.'

'It is alleged or revealed by desk staff that the online system in being abused by patients booking two or three slots to be used or not at their choice. This could easily be stopped by blocking multiple appointments when only one is needed.'

'I feel that some GPs don't listen. Lax care has caused kidney damage in my youngest child which could have been prevented. My oldest child was misdiagnosed with blepharitis when she had orbital cellulitis - fortunately I didn't trust the GP diagnosis and took her to A &E'

'It is difficult to get an appointment with a female doctor. It took us 8 days a few weeks ago.'

'I and my wife have been patients for 20 years and hold Houghton Close surgery and staff in high regard'

Majority of my appointments are made online can be frustrating at times when you can't get to see a particular doctor

Recommendations

The Practice website, on the page of 'Useful Contacts' does not show the telephone number of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. It does contain a link to a 'Healthwatch' website, which is the homepage for Healthwatch England. HWCB recommends that the link be changed to direct patients to the Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire homepage www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk and that the HWCB telephone number be included in the Useful Numbers list – 0300 303 8554

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

I can confirm receipt of your report and also confirm that we are carrying out your recommendations regarding directing patients to the Central Bedfordshire homepage as opposed to the national one and will add the report to our Website for patients to access.

In addition the report will be circulated via e-mail internally.

Regards
Debbie Barry
Practice Manager
Houghton Close Surgery
01525 844991

