



Details of visit

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| Service address: | Larksfield Surgery, Arlesey Road, Stotfold, Hitchin, SG5 4HB |
| Service Provider: | Larksfield Surgery Medical Practice |
| Date and Time: | 29th July 2015 10:00 – 12:00 |
| Authorised Representatives: | Dave Simpson, Steve Nash, Margaret Roberts |
| 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.



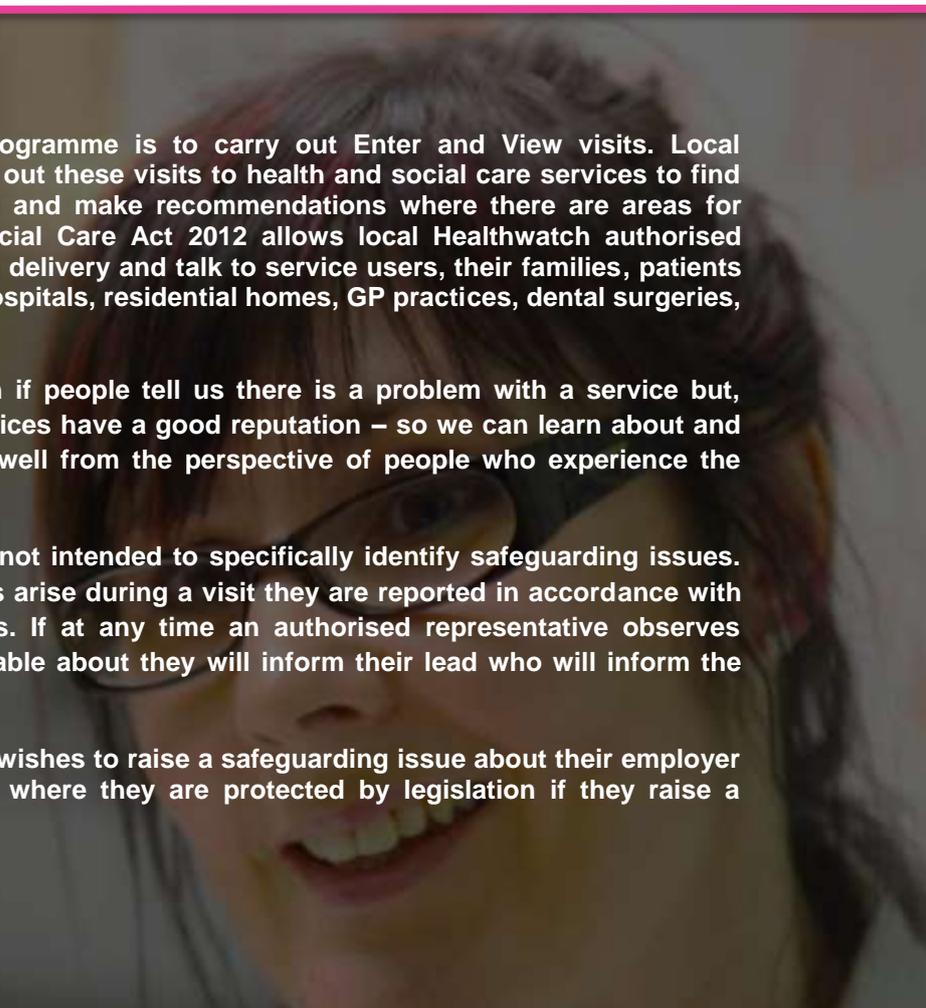
What is Enter and View?

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 Larksfield Surgery site in Stotfold.

A letter and posters announcing Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's 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 (HWCB) also 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 however, only five questionnaires had been completed and the HWCB team leader chose to leave the 'response box' and questionnaires on the premises for a further two weeks to give more patients the opportunity to complete.

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 two members of the PPG who were in attendance. Unfortunately, HWCB representatives were unable to engage with patients in the waiting area, who were all reluctant to speak with the team.

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 Larksfield Medical Practice is a modern surgery (opened in 1999), serving residents of Stotfold, Arlesey, Henlow Village and Clifton. It is a Training Practice where GP Registrars can spend up to a year completing their specialist training as a GP.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's representatives were made very welcome by the Practice Manager and all of her staff, who assisted the team as much as possible.

Results of visit

Staff

The Practice has the following members of staff:

:

- Five GP partners; four male and one female GP;
- A varied number of locums and trainee GP registrars;
- Eight Practice Nurses, includes two Minor Illness Nurses and one Nurse Prescriber;
- One Health Care Assistant;
- Ten reception staff;
- Twelve other staff;
- Midwives (based at Shefford Health Centre);
- District Nurses (based at Shefford Health Centre);
- Health visitors (based at Shefford Health Centre);
- Physiotherapists (based at Shefford Health Centre).

Specialist Services provided

- Phlebotomy;
- Minor Injuries Service;
- Smear Testing;
- Cryotherapy;
- Clinics: COPD; Asthma; Diabetes; Baby immunisation; CHD; ABP; Epilepsy;
- Vaccinations: Influenza;
- NHS Health checks;
- Stop Smoking service;
- Sexual Health services.
- All Enhanced Services (other than INR/ Anti-coagulation)

Surgery Hours

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|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Monday | 08:00 - 13:00 14:00 - 18:30 |
| Tuesday | 08:00 - 18:30 |
| Wednesday | 08:00 - 18:30* |
| Thursday | 08:00 - 18:30* |
| Friday | 08:00 - 18:30* |
| Saturday/Sunday | Closed |

Extended Hours Surgeries* take place from:

07:00 - 08:00 on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday (not every week)

18:30 - 20:00 on Wednesday and/or Thursday (not every week)

*Extended hours appointments must be pre-booked.



Environment

The Larksfield Surgery Medical Practice in Stotfold operates over two floors in a modern purpose built facility, with plenty of parking, including disabled parking and wheelchair access. Visible signage both inside and outside the building is good.

The premises throughout are light and airy, with an ambient temperature. A large reception/waiting area contains a reception desk and a 'SystmOne' terminal which patients may use to record their arrival. Patients are notified when they are due to go for their appointment by an audible beep and a message on a scrolling LED display.

Access to the upper floor is gained by both stairs and a lift. A second waiting room is sited upstairs for the GP clinic rooms on that level; a staff kitchen facility, offices and a conference room.

Other observations included:

- Clear signs to rooms, opening hours and toilets with a range of literature available to patients;
 - PPG Information displayed;
 - Equipped with disabled toilet;
 - Hand sanitisers available on the reception desk;
 - Clear guidance on how to inform reception of your arrival;
 - Friendly and approachable reception staff;
 - Electronic booking system at suitable height for patients;
 - Call system for patients via scrolling display in waiting area;
 - Breastfeeding and baby changing facilities available.
 - Water and tissues available on request from the receptionist;
 - The HWCB posters were displayed in the waiting room.
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- Complaints information was not displayed;
 - NHS Friends & Family Test response box present, but no pens available.
 - Names and photographs of GP's were not displayed;
 - A Hearing Loop was not present.

Car Parking

This modern surgery has what appears to be ample parking for both patients, including disabled bays, and for staff. The disabled bays are adjacent to the entrance. Bicycle racks are available for use by both patients and staff.

Patient Information

The surgery has a good and varied selection of leaflets available for patients displayed in racks and on a table in the waiting area plus a Community Noticeboard.

Registration at the Practice(s)

HWCB representatives were advised by the Practice Manager that patients can register at the surgery with proof of address and ID; current exceptions are travellers and the homeless.

The Practice operates a policy in which local residents can make an appointment prior to registration. All new patients are required to attend for half an hour prior to the appointment scheduled with all relevant documentation. The Practice also operates a temporary resident's policy under their Acute Treatment Scheme and carefully monitors this process.

A Practice leaflet is made available to patients on registration.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The Practice operates two PPG's; one virtual and one physical. The latter group meet bi-monthly. The Practice Manager confirmed that the group provide very useful feedback; the average age range is 48 – 75. At the time of the visit, HWCB representatives were advised that the physical group consists of 11 to 14 patients and the virtual group, 60 patients. Both groups are very active and are always involved in helping to promote the flu clinics. They were also instrumental in the setting up of a carers group and the placement of a PPG suggestion box in the waiting area.

The PPG is advertised on the surgery website, on Facebook, on the TV screen in the waiting room and in the Practice's New Patient leaflet. The PPG's AGM is advertised in the local paper. However staff indicated that it is difficult to recruit to the PPG and more young people were needed.

HWCB representatives were advised that the Practice Manager and one or more of the GP's at the Practice attend the PPG's however this is difficult to sustain on a regular basis due to workload and commitments.

Patient Consultation

The Practice gains feedback from patients from four main sources:

- NHS choices
- Patient comment cards to the PPG
- Patient comments/suggestions directly to the practice in the Suggestions Box.
- Results of the Friends and Family Test.

Any issues identified from these areas are discussed with the PPG at the next meeting. The Practice has also had robust discussions with the PPG over planned changes within the Practice and the way in which the Practice responds to anonymous negative comments on NHS Choices. Both of the above are ongoing issues.

In addition, the Practice also monitors their Facebook page for trends and comments which includes disseminating items of news and immediate interest.

Appointments System

The Practice Manager confirmed that patients can book appointments in person, on the telephone or on line, Monday to Friday. Some early morning and late evening appointments are available on certain days as detailed above.

For emergency appointments a duty doctor is available every day and will carry out a 'telephone triage' with patients who have called the Practice. The receptionist will also ask patients if the Minor Illness Nurse can assist.

The Practice operates a text reminder service for appointments 48 hours prior to appointment time. Home visits are mostly for housebound patients and palliative care patients; the duty doctor will decide whether a home visit is required.

HWCB representatives were advised that appointments times are allocated for 10 minutes although patients can request longer.

Out of Hours Care

Out of hours care in Stotfold is provided by M-Doc based at Biggleswade Hospital. The Practice relay information about this service to patients via the practice leaflet, on their website and in their Newsletter.

Medication & Prescriptions

The Dispensary is based in the Practice; opening hours are 08:00 – 13:00. Dispensing medications depends on individual circumstances and patients can order repeat prescriptions on line or in person.

Repeat prescriptions are available in 5 working days.

The Practice has been attempting to recruit a replacement dispenser since March 2015 but with no success to date. As a consequence the dispensary closes each day at 13:00.

Patient Questionnaire Results

The Practice currently has 13,326 patients registered. A total of 16 survey questionnaires were completed during the month.

Results of the questionnaires completed at the Practice were as follows:

1. A third of patients recalled receiving a practice leaflet when registering at the surgery;
2. 81% of patients said they found it easy to register at the Practice;
3. 69% of patients who completed the questionnaire confirmed they were aware the Practice(s) has a PPG and 31% answered that they did not know if the Practice had a PPG;
4. None of the patients who completed the questionnaire was a member of the PPG;
5. 45% of patients who responded to the survey booked their appointments by telephone, 38% booked online and only 17% in person;
6. The majority of patients were aware that late appointments were available for booking;
7. 62% of patients who completed the questionnaire felt they could access an appointment when they needed one however, 25% felt they could not get the appointment they needed, and 13% gave other qualifying responses;
8. Almost all the patients who completed the questionnaire confirmed they received a text reminder about their appointment with a very small percentage indicating they did not have a mobile phone;
9. Almost all patients spoken to and who completed the questionnaire confirmed they were given a choice of health professional when booking the appointment;
10. 87% of patients who completed the questionnaire were aware of the Practice opening times;
11. A range of responses was given to the question regarding what to do if 'out of hours' care is needed; the most popular response was to ring the M-Doc Service closely followed by calling the surgery out of hours number;
12. The majority of patients answered positively to the question whether they feel they have enough time with the GP to discuss their issues;
13. 81% of patients felt that the GP listened to their concerns and considered their opinion;
14. 75% of patients found the staff at the Practice helpful and understanding;
15. 75% of patients would recommend the Practice to other people; a very small percentage said they would not and 6% were 'unsure'
16. Only 56% of patients were aware the Practice(s) has a complaints policy and knew how to complain; 44% did not know.

Interaction between Patients and Staff

HWCB Representatives observed members of staff both clinical and administrative speaking to patients and all interactions were conducted in a professional but friendly manner. Comments from patients included: *'Overall the care and treatment received at the surgery is excellent, however there is some resistance from admin staff to new ideas'*, and *'We could do with more privacy in the reception area'*, although *'most people respect confidentiality in the waiting area.'*

Clinical and non-clinical staff

All members of staff seen and spoken to during the visit were friendly and helpful to the representatives and to the patients they were observed interacting with. This included both clinical and non-clinical staff. Staff spoken to during the visit explained that they liked working at the Practice and felt the service provided at the medical centre was good. *'I love working here; the team works well together and is supportive'*. The majority of staff also felt supported in their work and indicated there was 'adequate' numbers of clinical staff available, although some staff members expressed that recruitment is an ongoing problem but that *'staff go above and beyond what is expected!'*

All staff confirmed they regularly attend various training courses for their role, including in-house training and GP training. *'I have been very well supported and have been encouraged and able to learn new skills'*. Clinical meetings are held every month; significant events are discussed and daily meetings are held with the Nursing Team.

When asked if there were any changes they would like to make at the Practice, comments ranged from; *'access to more GP time for patients'* and *'I'd like to stop moving from room to room'* to *'enable patients to see their preferred GP'*. However, all agreed that the patients are very well looked after and they strive to work *with* their patients to give the best possible service. One member of staff indicated that patients sometimes have to wait four weeks to see their preferred GP.

Concerns/Complaints Procedure

The Practice Manager informed representatives that the Practice has a complaints procedure. A Patient Complaint Form will be given to a patient who has a concern about the service received. The patient would need to either complete the form or write directly to the Practice Manager.

Clinical staff appeared less well informed about the Practice(s) complaints process/policy and most stated that they would try to resolve the matter informally at first. Others were unclear about the procedure and would simply tell the patient to put their complaint in writing, speak to the receptionist/Practice Manager or direct them to the Practice website. Staff confirmed that complaints are discussed at monthly Practice meetings.

Additional Findings

The Practice Complaints Procedure is not clearly signposted within the Practice, nor is it clearly defined on the Practice website, wherein patients are told *'If required, please either collect or request a complaints pack.'*

General comments received from patients included:

'This is an excellent doctor's surgery, thank you'

'The car park is really good. Generally speaking, the surgery is good'

'It is difficult to book an appointment for less than a week or two in advance especially if I need it before 8 am or after 5 pm – very difficult on working people'

'I find it infuriating that reception staff always ask the reason for the appointment, they are not the expert and it's not supposed to go through them'

Recommendations

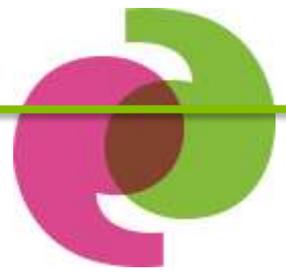
HWCB recommends that, in relation to the Practice Complaints Policy and Procedure;

- Clear signposting of 'How to make a complaint' is displayed in the waiting areas and on the website
- The actual Complaints Procedure should be detailed on the website;
- All practice staff should be given refresher training on the Complaints Policy and on the Complaints Procedure.

HWCB would further recommend that the Practice works with the PPG to inform the wider cohort of patients about their difficulties and constraints due to lack of successful recruitment etc. This could be via the Practice Newsletter, website or similar.

The Practice is currently not recording 'Did Not Attend' (DNA) figures. HWCB representatives were advised that these were last collected in 2012 when the figure shown was 3.68%. HWCB strongly recommends that this data continues to be collected and is displayed in the waiting areas to clearly inform patients of the effect this has on appointment availability.

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

No Provider Response received.
HWCB – 10.12.15

