



Details of visit

Service address:	1 Leighton Road, Linslade LU7 1LB and Ridgway Court, Grovebury Road, L/Buzzard, LU7 4SF
Service Provider:	Leighton Road Surgery
Date and Time:	18 August 2016 10:00 – 12:30
Authorised Representatives:	Dave Simpson, Linda Grant, Catherine Davies, Susan George, Den Fensome, Linda Harrison
Healthwatch Observer:	Stefanie Lillie
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.

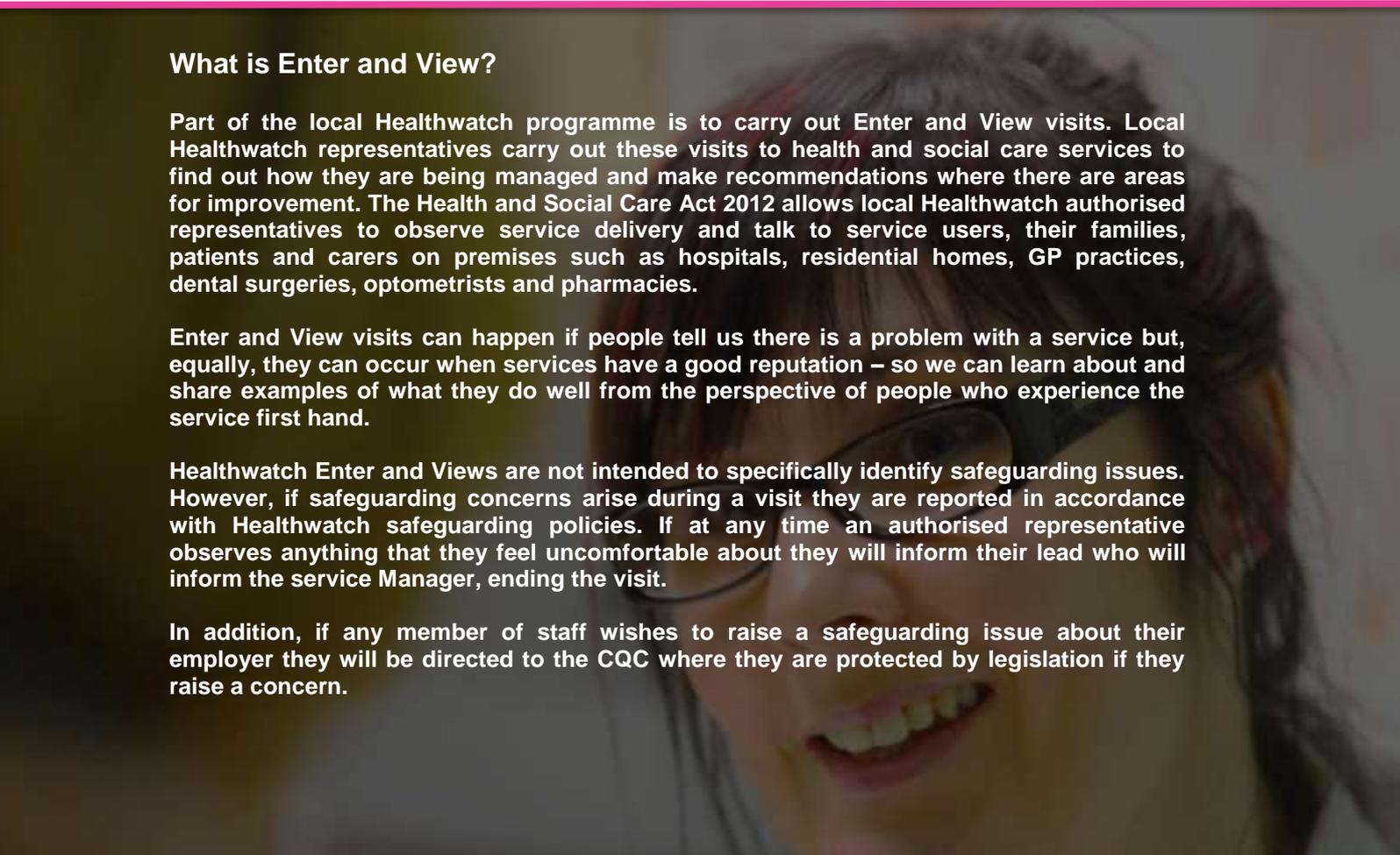
What is Enter and View?

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 Leighton Road Surgery, Grovebury Road Surgery and LRS at Ridgeway Court.

A letter and posters announcing Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's (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. These were delivered to all three sites. The purpose was to minimise disruption and inconvenience to patients during the visit.

On the day of the visit, the Practice Managers had arranged 'booked slots' for HWCB representatives to talk to 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 for GP Registrars operates from three sites in the area, the main one is at Leighton Road situated between a petrol station and a small industrial complex. These purpose-built premises are owned by Assura Ltd of Warrington and are maintained by the Partners.

The branch surgeries are located at Ridgeway Court on Grovebury Road in a modern, two-storey brick-built complex housing several other businesses. LRS at Ridgeway Court and Grovebury Road Surgery are situated in two adjoining wings of the Ridgeway Court complex, which is located in an industrial area of Leighton Buzzard.

Future plans include 'knocking through' the adjoining wall between LRS at Ridgeway Court and Grovebury Road surgeries to facilitate easier access for patients. The latter surgery includes patient waiting areas located in three different sections of the building. Access to the upper floors on these two sites is via several flights of stairs and three internal lifts, including disabled access lifts.

The Leighton Road Surgeries and Grovebury Road Surgery amalgamated on 1st April 2016, and the intervening period has been a time of change, adjustment and learning for both staff and patients. At the time of the visit, the Leighton Road Surgery site hold daily 'Sit and Wait' clinics, while all routine appointments and clinics are held at Ridgeway Court. The Leighton Road site is also the 'administrative hub' and contains the call centre.

The Leighton Road group of surgeries currently serve approx. 22,600 patients in the Leighton Buzzard area.

The overall impression gained during the visit is of a modern, forward thinking, caring Practice which aims to provide the best service for its patients.

HWCB representatives were also impressed by the very large number of HWCB Patient Questionnaires which were completed and would like to thank the reception staff at the surgeries for encouraging patients to fill in the questionnaire.

Results of visit

Staff

Practice staff at all three surgeries, in total, include:

- Nine GPs – four of whom are Partners, and four locums;
- Four male and five female GPs;
- 15 Practice Nurses;
- Seven Minor Illness Nurses;
- Two Nurse Prescribers;
- Newly recruited pharmacist;
- Five Healthcare Assistants (HCAs);
- 16 Reception Staff;
- 24 other staff members.



Specialist Services provided:

- Daily 'Urgent Care Sit & Wait Clinic';
- Daily 'Drop in Bloods' Clinic;
- Minor surgery clinic;
- Joint Injection clinic;
- Post Natal check clinic;
- Obstetric Ultrasound clinic – provided by the L&D University Hospital;
- Diabetes;
- COPD;
- Asthma;
- Anticoagulation;
- Hypertension;
- Heart Conditions;
- Baby Immunisation;
- Coil;
- CHD;
- Smoking Cessation;
- Maternity Services;
- Travel Immunisation;
- Phlebotomy with 'Drop-in Blood' Clinic;
- Yellow Fever Centre (Registered and non-registered patients);
- Sexual Health and Family Planning (Sphere Clinic) (Registered and non-registered patients);
- Practice based Mental Health Workers Counselling Service (Provided by East London Foundation Trust) at all three locations;
- NHS Health Checks;
- Terrence Higgins Trust and Brooks Advisory Service – weekly service provided through the surgery.

Surgery Hours

Monday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm
Tuesday	8:00 am to 8:30 pm
Wednesday	8:00 am to 8:30 pm
Thursday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm
Friday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm
Saturday	8:00 am to 2:00 pm on one Saturday per month
Sunday	Closed

Environment

Leighton Road Surgery

At the entrance to the surgery there is a ramp to allow wheelchair access. Reception is easily located on the left as you enter the building with the waiting area on the right with stairs leading up to the surgery offices. As the Surgery now operates as a 'sit and wait' clinic, the waiting area was quite crowded on the day of the visit.

Other observations included:

- A wheelchair is available for patient use located by the Blood Pressure Machine;
- Toilets are located within the building although no signage is visible to direct patients;
- SystmOne terminal sited near the reception desk for patients to electronically register arrival which is at a suitable height for disabled/wheelchair users.
- GP/Nurses will enter the reception area to call patients for their appointment;

- Representatives noted that all reception staff were friendly, helpful and approachable;
- The opening / closing times of the surgery were clearly displayed in the foyer along with the 'repeat prescription box';
- A good range of leaflets and information is available within the surgery, on the TV screen and on their website, including PPG information;
- Representatives did not notice listed names and photographs of GP's displayed at the surgery.



Grovebury Road and LRS at Ridgeway Court Surgeries

The building is in good general condition, with ramped access for wheelchair using patients. The surgeries are clearly well signed at the entrance to the complex and on the outside of the building. The internal décor is clean and bright, although one HWCB representative felt that it could be improved by the addition of some pictures on the walls. The Practice manager informed representatives that some institutions had been invited to provide local artwork but limited response so far.

Other observations included:

- The reception desk is not visible from the entrance but is well signposted;
- A CCTV monitoring screen is sited at the Grovebury Road reception; however representatives noted that it was placed very high on a wall at right angles to the receptionist's desk. Furthermore, it was a fairly small screen, split into six aspects making it very difficult for the receptionist to effectively monitor events;
- Toilets are clean and situated throughout the building;
- Electronic booking-in terminals are sited at the entrance, but at the time of the visit the terminal at LRS, Ridgeway Court was not working;
- Internal TV screens currently not working;
- The reception desk and Dispensary access point at Grovebury Road are shared, which means there is little opportunity for confidentiality.
- Patients may breastfeed wherever they wish and if they require a private room, one will be provided for them.

Car Parking

The car park for Leighton Road Surgery is located directly off the main road. Blue badge spaces are sited next to the entrance on either side and there is a marked ambulance bay. Parking spaces here are limited and access to spaces at the rear of the building can be tight at busy times. There are two bicycle racks also provided for patients.

At Ridgeway Court there is a good amount of car parking outside the LRS entrance (10+ spaces, two disabled slots). At the Grovebury Road entrance there are two disabled parking slots and several parking bays for patients. The Practice Manager informed representatives that patients could only use bays marked for the surgery and the practice needed to ensure that patients were not using bays dedicated for other tenants of the building. There are also two bicycle racks for patients.

An area of the car park at the front of the building, adjacent to the LRS entrance, is cut off by security fencing (as at the time of the visit). Representatives were unclear whether this would eventually be available for patients.

Patient Information

All three surgeries have a selection of Patient Information leaflets available, TV screens are situated in all three sites but at the time of the visit most appeared not to be functioning. A comprehensive amount of information is available on the Leighton Road Surgeries website.

Registration at the Practice(s)

Patients can register at the Practice either in person at the surgeries or online. A Form

GMS1 must be completed as well as a lifestyle questionnaire, which also invites the new patient to make an appointment for a Healthcheck.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The PPG describe their group as; *“We are an independent group of Surgery Users who care about the way our surgery works and the service it can provide. We meet regularly to respond to new initiatives and issues that influence the Surgery. We present a vital link of opinion on behalf of all Surgery Users. Leighton Road Surgery is unique and we want to help it meet all our needs”.*

An application form is available for patients wishing to join the PPG which asks for a name and address. The form also gives each patient the opportunity to tell the PPG about themselves and why they would wish to join Leighton Road Surgery PPG. They also offer a “Virtual membership” for those wishing to join the PPG but unable to commit to meetings.

Patient Consultation

Patient consultation includes the Friends & Family Test questionnaires and the PPG. The GPs also carry out 360 degree appraisals with patients and these are discussed at Practice meetings.

Appointments System

Routine appointments, which are now carried out at the Ridgeway Court Surgeries, can be booked in person, by telephone or online via SystemOne. Appointments are for 10 minutes, although longer ones may be requested.

Urgent, same day appointments are accommodated at the ‘Sit and Wait’ clinic which is held daily at Leighton Road Surgery, where patients are guaranteed to be seen.

Out of Hours Care

Out of hours care is provided by Care UK. Details of this service are on the Practice noticeboards, on posters at the surgeries, at the main entrance doors and on a message on the answerphone.

Medication & Prescriptions

Clinical reviews of patients’ medication are carried out at least annually, but more frequently if desired and/or necessary. These may be face-to-face with the patient, or over the telephone. The appointment of an ‘in house’ pharmacist may lead to some changes in this process.

Repeat prescription requests can be made by placing the slip into the boxes at the surgeries or online via SystemOne. The turnaround time is 48 hours (two working days).

Patient Questionnaire Results

A total of 78 patient questionnaires were completed prior to the visit between the three sites. Results of the questionnaires completed at the Practice were as follows:

1. **When registering at the Practice did you receive a practice leaflet/handbook?** – Ten replied ‘Yes’, 23 said ‘No’ and 45 could not remember.
2. **Did you find it easy to register at the Practice?** – 58 said ‘Yes’, one said ‘No’ and 19 could not remember.
3. **Do you know if the surgery has a Patient Participation Group (PPG)?** – 32 said ‘Yes’ and 46 said ‘No’.
4. **Are you a member of the PPG?** – Only four respondents were PPG members, 74 were not.
5. **How do you book appointments at the surgery?** (tick all that apply) – Ten people used a combination of Telephone, Online and/or In Person, five used



Telephone and/or Online, 17 used Telephone and/or In Person, 38 only used the Telephone, four booked Online and/or In Person and one each only booked In Person or Online.

6. **Are there appointments available in unsociable hours?** (e.g. before 8am or after 6:30 pm) – 23 said 'Yes', 16 said 'No', 38 did not know and one did not answer.
7. **Can you get an appointment when you need one?** – 29 said 'Yes', 36 said 'No' with thirteen other comments including; '*Have to rely on sit-and-wait which is inconvenient when I'm working full-time;*' '*Cannot book on internet – no dates available;*' '*There are rarely appointments available online;*' '*It depends on urgency;*' '*Hardly ever online;*' '*Most of the time, NO!;*' '*Don't make enough slots available in advance;*' '*Four week wait sometimes;*' '*Sometimes. I can never book online. No available slots. Ever!;*' '*Urgent yes. To see a particular GP no.'*
8. **Do you receive a reminder text message about your appointment on your mobile?** – 50 said 'Yes', 20 said 'No', with eight saying they do not have a mobile phone or had not given their mobile number to the Practice.
9. **When booking an appointment with your GP are you given a choice of: Minor Illness Nurse, GP, Other e.g. Healthcare Assistant (HCA)?** – Three respondents said they were not given any choice and 16 did not answer the question. Of the remainder, 18 said they were only offered a GP, seven a Minor Illness Nurse and five an HCA. One was offered a GP or HCA, 20 a GP or MI Nurse and eight were offered all three.
10. **Do you know what the surgery opening times are?** – 52 answered 'Yes' and 24 said 'No' with two not answering the question.
11. **What do you do if you need to see a doctor out of hours?** – 28 would ring the Out of Hours number or call the surgery to get it. Four would go to a Walk-in centre, eight would call the paramedics or go to A&E, 19 would call 111*, two would wait until the surgery re-opened and 17 did not answer.**
12. **At your appointment, do you feel you have enough time with the GP, Nurse or Healthcare Assistant to discuss your issues?** – 63 answered 'Yes', eleven said 'No' and four did not answer this question.
13. **At your appointment, do you feel the GP, Nurse or Healthcare Assistant listens to you and considers your opinion?** – 67 said 'Yes', four said 'No' and seven were unsure.
14. **Are staff (Reception /Practice Manager) at your surgery helpful and understanding?** – 55 answered 'Yes', 19 said 'No', one was unsure and three did not answer this question.
15. **Do you know how to make a complaint about the surgery?** – 31 said that they did, 44 said they did not know and three did not answer the question.

* Six of this number identified the number as 101 and three said they would call NHS Direct.

**Three said they had never needed to and one responded "*Pray!*".

Interaction between Patients and Staff

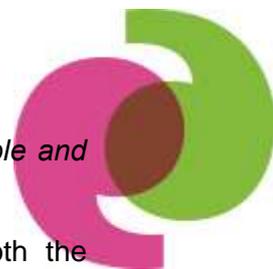
HWCB representatives observed interactions between patients and staff, both administrative and clinical. All interactions were carried out in a courteous, professional and friendly manner. Several comments from patients on the questionnaires also made reference to the approachability, helpfulness and friendliness of the staff.

Clinical and non-clinical staff

HWCB representatives spoke to several members of staff during the visit who, almost without exception voiced the opinion that it is '*a great place to work*' and '*I really enjoy it here.*'

Most staff spoken to also agreed that the period of months since the merger had '*thrown*

up a number of challenges’, and ‘it has been quite hard work, but we’re adaptable and feel that we’re getting there.’



In general, HWCB representatives noted that staff felt well supported by both the management and the GPs. However all staff spoken to felt that *‘sometimes there were just not quite enough staff on duty to cope with demand.’*

Concerns/Complaints Procedure

The Practice scored two out of five on HWCB’s Mystery Shopper report ‘Investigating the Complaints Process – General Practice’ earlier this year. Representatives are pleased to report that remedial action was taken and the Practice now scores five out of five. However one concern remained; during the visit some members of staff spoken to seemed to only have a vague idea of the complaints procedures.

Additional Findings

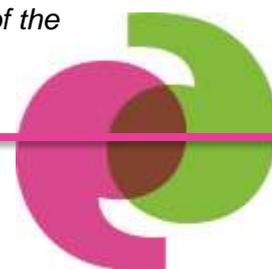
The Leighton Road group of surgeries is going through a transitory phase following the merger, and has a vision and big plans for the future, including setting up a Walk-in Centre for the whole of Leighton Buzzard. The Practice’s currently provide GP services for three local Residential and Nursing Care Homes.

The Grovebury Road Practice operates a policy of employing two sixth form school leavers per year to gain valuable work experience working as administrative members of staff, which also serves to strengthen links with the wider community.

Working closely with the Luton & Dunstable Hospital, the Practice hosts a midwife ‘hub’ at the Grovebury Road site which is open to all Leighton Buzzard residents. A daily counselling service is available at the Grovebury Road surgery operated by East London Foundation Trust (ELFT), Mental Health provider for Bedfordshire and Luton.

General comments received from patients included:

- *‘A three-hour wait is much too long; more doctors should be here’.*
- *‘I have cancer and part of my treatment is a three-monthly Cadex injection. Today I arrived at Grovebury Road for my 8:00am appointment. No record of this anywhere so sent to Leighton Road ‘Sit and wait’. Cancer is obviously life threatening and very traumatic. It is now 10:05 am, still waiting, no sign of being seen. Very stressed, missing work. Not Happy!’*
- *‘I have registered for online bookings but have not heard anything’.*
- *‘The new arrangement is difficult. We have to walk to a bus stop (10 mins), get the bus to Grovebury Road or alternatively a Taxi (£10 return). Can elderly patients not be treated at Leighton Road Surgery?’*
- *‘If I need to see a GP on the day they are fully booked – unless it is an emergency, then referred to whoever is available’.*
- *‘It’s OK coming to Sit & Wait but should have more doctors on.’*
- *‘I have called every morning this week at 8:00am to get an appointment. It’s now Friday and had to come to the Sit and Wait. I understand this is only for urgent matters. I don’t class my symptoms as urgent, but it’s the only way to see a doctor.’*
- *‘I do think you should be able to book an appointment when you ring up rather than have to do the Sit and Wait, as usually waiting over an hour which is quite inconvenient’.*
- *‘The nurses and doctors are very helpful. Practice is very busy’.*
- *‘Despite the Sit and Wait, it can still be up to a month for a routine appointment which is too long and therefore forces people to use the Sit and Wait for smaller non-urgent appointments’.*
- *‘I would not complain; they do their best.’*
- *‘Not a patient, but attending with 11-year-old granddaughter who is. Reception*

- 
- very helpful when we rang and when we arrived. Excellent service. Thank you.'*
 - *'We have just amalgamated with another surgery prior to that I could answer these questions; as I have not experienced the new regime I cannot comment. However, it's not looking good i.e. no appointments for blood tests just turn up and wait between 8-12; not easy if fasting or have a disability.'*
 - *'Geographic split in surgeries - causing treatment problems'.*
 - *'I find all receptionists very helpful. I feel sorry for the abuse they get.'*
 - *'I feel the Sit and Wait clinic devalues your patient's time.'*
 - *'Those of us who always attend appointments are penalised by those who don't. This is because few appointments are available in advance to try and minimise the no-shows. But it makes those of us with heavy work commitments and travelling too difficult to organise in advance. The naming system for the three buildings is too confusing and needs changing.'*
 - *'Even though under pressure, the reception staff are good.'*
 - *'Appointments can be very difficult to get.'*
 - *'Very good doctors, but not enough of them. Very difficult to get a non-urgent appointment. Situation has got worse in the last 10 years.'*
 - *'Based on today's experience, having only one person on reception creates queues. Today she was very good dealing with a wide range of queries from patients – but another body would have reduced delays'.*
 - *'The Sit and Wait service needs to be quicker; I have been here 3 hours and there are still another 4 people before me. The doctor seems to be giving people 20-30 minutes per person.'*
 - *'It's very hard to find appointments these days; it has to be on the day most of the time and not many options available.'*
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Recommendations

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) supports the 'forward thinking' approach displayed by the Practice to improve the overall experience of patients including access to clinicians. However, in light of many comments made by patients on the questionnaires, HWCB would recommend that patient opinion and/or feedback on the changes at the surgeries is regularly sought in order to maximise patient satisfaction.

HWCB also recommends that the CCTV screen at Grovebury Road is positioned for maximum effect, possibly within the actual reception desk, as it is ineffective in its current position. In addition, we would recommend that regular maintenance of all the electronic booking in terminals takes place to ensure all are working correctly for the benefit of patients.

HWCB noted that some practice staff were not fully aware of the complaints procedure/process and would therefore recommend that all members of staff undertake refresher training into the Practice's Complaints Procedure and Policy.

The majority of comments received from patients indicated a frustration with the current appointments system, which is not unknown within a busy practice(s). HWCB would therefore recommend that the Practice consider utilising a project which aims to educate patients to ensure that each patient can receive the right care and treatment at the right time and possibly alleviate pressure for appointments with the GP (e.g., encouraging patients to make an appointment with a Practice Nurse or Minor Illness Nurse). HWCB have recently been working in partnership with Flitwick surgery to gather information from patients to gain an understanding of patient expectation of services provided by a modern GP surgery, ultimately to help improve the patient experience. HWCB would be happy to work with all

three surgeries in Leighton Buzzard in a similar way if you feel this would be of benefit to you.

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

- Once all changes to the structure of the building are complete, a patient questionnaire will be circulated for feedback and comments.
- The electronic booking in terminal was deliberately turn off whilst the merger of the patient appointment rotas was being implemented so that patient were not confused regarding waiting rooms etc. All of our equipment is regularly serviced. If a fault develops it is reported that day to the respective support agency.
- All practice staff know to whom they should direct complaints. They also know the location of complaint form and information for patients. I do not expect all staff to know the exact process of a complaint; only that part that pertains to them whilst interacting with a patient.
- Patients are regularly informed and educated with all aspects of our appointment system. We have pre-bookable routine appointment, 2, 3 and 4 day reserved appointments that are released to ensure patients can access appointment during the week. We also have the 'Urgent Care, Sit & Wait' clinic which is staffed by one doctor and up to four experienced minor illness nurses each day both morning and afternoon. This appointment system ensures that, if used appropriately, patients have a variety of appointment choices. We also offer a Drop-in Blood Clinic which offers patient the opportunity to come and have their blood test at a day and time of their convenience instead of being tied to an appointment time.

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