



## Details of visit

Service address:	89 West Street, Dunstable, LU6 1SF
Service Provider:	West Street Surgery
Date and Time:	17 <sup>th</sup> April 2018
Authorised Representatives:	Dave Simpson, Linda Grant, Michael Hyde, Leanne Fitzsimons
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.



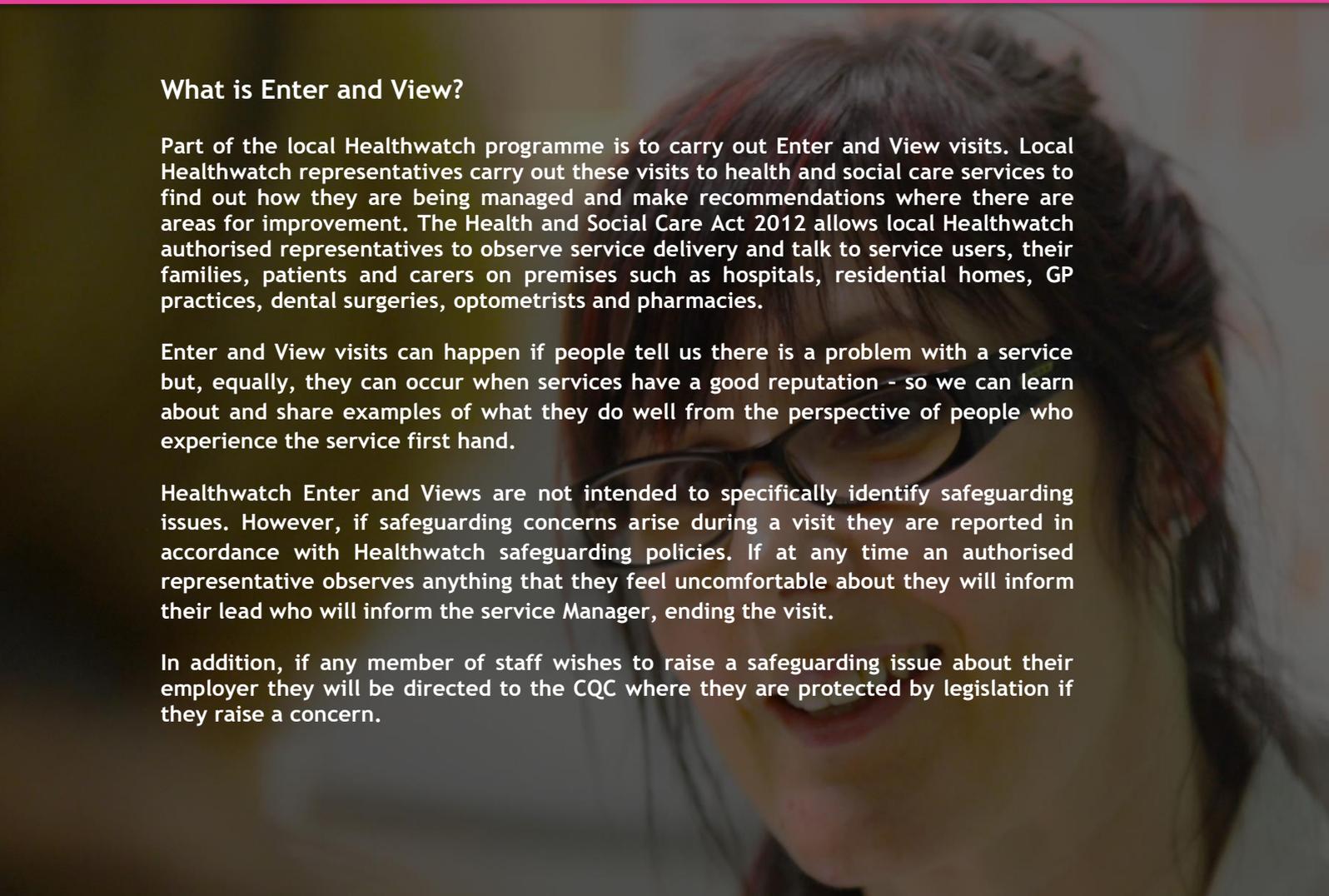
## What is Enter and View?

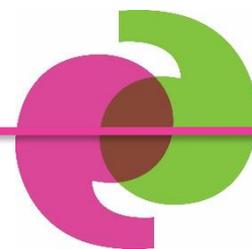
Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being managed and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care 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 West Street Surgery in Dunstable, Bedfordshire.

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. The purpose was to minimise disruption and inconvenience to patients during the visit. As an example of good practice HWCB has included this procedure in all future visits.

On the day of the visit, HWCB representatives spoke to several members of the administration and clinical staff 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 is housed in a two-storey building, owned and maintained by the Partners, off the main road out of Dunstable towards the west and The Downs. Waiting area and consulting rooms for patients are located on the ground floor; the upper floor is for office staff only.

On entering the building, HWCB representatives noted that HWCB posters announcing our visit were on display. However, it was disappointing to hear from the receptionists that they were unaware of the visit and its purpose. Staff appeared to be surprised by our request to speak to the Practice manager, stating that she would be unavailable all morning.

Following a telephone call by the receptionists to the Practice Manager, representatives were informed that the manager would delay a planned conference call to meet the team and enable representatives to start the visit.

## Results of visit

**Staff - The Practice has the following members of staff:**

- 6 GPs - 4 males and 2 females
- 3 GPs are Partners, 2 are Locums
- 5 Practice Nurses
- 2 Nurse Prescribers

- Minor Illness Nurses
- 1 Healthcare Assistant (HCA)
- 13 Receptionists
- 11 Other Staff Members

**Specialist Services provided:**

- Asthma
- Carer's Support
- Cervical Smears
- Child Health
- Chlamydia Screening
- Contraception
- COPD
- Diabetes
- Flu Jabs
- Health Checks
- Heart Monitoring

- INR (Warfarin Monitoring)
- Keeping Healthy
- Minor Surgery
- Nursing Services
- Postnatal Care
- Phlebotomy
- Sexual Health
- Stop Smoking
- Test Results
- Travel Clinic
- Vasectomy Clinic

**Surgery hours:**

Monday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm	**6:30 pm to 7:30 pm
Tuesday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm	
Wednesday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm	**6:30 pm to 7:30 pm
Thursday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm	
Friday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm	
Saturday	Closed	
Sunday	Closed	

\*\*Extended hours (for pre-booked appointment)



## **Environment**

The entrance into the practice is into a fairly crowded 'lobby area' which includes the reception desk, entry into the disabled toilet, and a blood pressure monitoring cubicle. The comments and repeat prescription boxes are also housed in this area with a passageway leading to consulting rooms on one side and the main waiting area on the other side. The SystemOne booking in screen is affixed to the wall of this passageway opposite reception.

The general ambience is warm, light and airy, with information boards and TV screens in the waiting area.

### **Other observations included:**

The baby changing/disabled toilet is very small and cluttered with some broken tiles, and at the time of the visit there was a wheelchair stored in the room further reducing space.

A notice was stuck to the reception desk advising patients that the Practice can no longer issue urine sample pots which patients must now purchase from pharmacies at a cost of 38p. This is due to a change of policy at the L&D Hospital.

## **Car Parking**

The surgery has limited car parking, with 16 spaces and one dedicated disabled parking space. Representatives noted that the majority of spaces seemed to be occupied by staff members' cars, and the markings for the disabled space in particular were extremely faded and almost invisible.

## **Patient Information**

The waiting area includes noticeboards and TV screens with patient information plus visible leaflets. The practice website is comprehensive and fairly easy to navigate, and the Practice handbook also contains good information for patients.

## **Registration at the Practice**

Patients may register in person at the Practice by collecting a registration pack or may download the forms from the website before returning them to the Practice along with two forms of ID one of which must be photographic.

Non-registered patients may receive emergency treatment for up to 14 days, after which they must register as a temporary resident for three months.

## **Patient Participation Group (PPG)**

The Practice has a PPG with ten regular members attending meetings. The PPG is advertised in the Practice on noticeboards, in the Practice Handbook, and on the website.

## **Patient Consultation**

Feedback from patients is gathered through the NHS Friends & Family Test, via emails from patients and the Comments and Complaints box in the reception area. The Practice manager informed representatives that, in the future, the PPG will be utilised to help with surveys.

## **Appointments System**

On the day appointments may be booked by telephone from 08:00 for a morning appointment or from 11:00 for an afternoon appointment. Appointments may also be booked online via SystemOne or in person at the surgery.

Some early morning (from 7:00 am) or late evening (until 7:30 pm) appointments may be booked up to six weeks in advance.



### **Out of Hours Care**

Out of hours care is provided by the NHS 111 telephone line. This is advertised to the patients on the website, in the Practice Handbook, on noticeboards and on the Practice's answerphone.

### **Medication & Prescriptions**

Patient's medication reviews are undertaken annually or more frequently if appropriate and are done by a clinician with the patient. Some may be done by telephone depending on the type of medication being reviewed.

Patients may order repeat prescriptions in person, or online using SystmOne, and prescriptions will be available within 48 hours.

### **Patient Questionnaire Results**

Of the questionnaires delivered prior to the visit by HWCB representatives, a total of **39** were completed by patients. The results of the questionnaires completed at the Practice are shown at **Appendix A**.

In summary, of the patients at the Practice who completed the questionnaire:

- a) Many found it easy to register at the Practice, although quite a high percentage did not remember receiving a copy of the practice leaflet / handbook.
- b) A very high percentage of those who answered the question about patient surveys indicated they had completed a survey within the last year.
- c) A fairly high percentage said they did not have to wait too long on arrival at the surgery and they clearly found the staff very easy to interact with.
- d) The majority of patients felt that they could discuss their needs and concerns with their GP and a slightly lower percentage felt that the GP listens and considers their opinions as well as feeling involved in decisions about their care and treatment.
- e) Interestingly, under half of the patients who completed the questionnaire said they *were* able to choose to see a male or female GP, but worryingly, 46% of patients said that there were practitioners they would rather not see. Reasons for this are highlighted at question 20 in the Appendix.
- f) A fairly high percentage stated the reception staff / Practice Manager is accessible and sensitive to their needs.
- g) Results of the overall quality, care and treatment at the surgery is scored in question 23 of the Appendix.
- h) Unfortunately, well over half of patients, who completed the questionnaire, did not know how to make a complaint at the surgery or that the surgery has a PPG.
- i) Patient suggestions for any changes they feel the Practice could make to improve the service for patients is given in question 25 of the Appendix, including additional comments in question 28.

In addition, representatives spoke to several patients during the visit, further comments received as follows:

*'I struggled to register as I have no ID. I have Mental Health issues but was not taken anywhere for privacy when trying to register. I had to wait two weeks for an appointment.'*

*'I haven't been asked to participate in a survey but would gladly help to improve things for patients in the future.'*

*'The Practice Manager is always looking for ways to improve things.'*

*'The staff are nice, they always try to accommodate my needs if they can,'*

*'I would like to see more things in the waiting room for my children to keep them occupied whilst waiting.'*



### **Interaction between Patients and Staff**

Representatives observed patients entering the premises, approaching the receptionist and being attended to in a friendly, speedy and expeditious manner. Patients did not appear to be occupying the waiting room for unduly long periods before being called for their appointments.

An HWCB representative observed one new patient from Eastern Europe, who spoke very little English, approach the receptionist to ask to register at the practice. The receptionist dealt with him in a professional and compassionate way, gave him the necessary forms, and to explain as best as she could what he had to do next.

### **Clinical and non-clinical staff**

During the visit, HWCB's representatives were able to speak to several members of the clinical staff (nurses) and the administrative staff, receptionists and secretaries.

The majority of nurses gave the opinion that they felt understaffed, and several were critical of the lack of support from the Practice Manager. They were very clearly frustrated with the appointments system and stated that more appointments were necessary. They all felt that the current computer software, which only releases appointments at certain times, was less than satisfactory.

This opinion was shared by some of the reception staff who advised representatives of the increased frustration caused by this particular system, particularly for patients. When trying to book in person, staff were forced to stand and wait until the software reached the allotted time to release appointments. This occurrence was witnessed by the HWCB Lead representative, and one receptionist stated *'The rules are too rigid, the computer only releasing appointments at set times means I am prevented from helping patients at times - it's so frustrating!'*

The consensus among all of the administration staff spoken to is that the practice is understaffed and that they feel *'unsupported and not listened to by management'*. The majority of administration staff added that they *'used to enjoy coming to work, but now feel under pressure, unsupported and that there is a lack of communication between the Partners, Management and staff'*.

### **Concerns/Complaints Procedure**

The Practice has a robust 'Concerns and Complaints Policy'; leaflets and forms are available from Reception and are available on the Practice website.

### **Additional Findings**

While speaking with staff members, HWCB's representatives felt it apparent that there was a negative atmosphere within the practice and we understand that there were several unresolved grievance procedures outstanding. Comments from staff relating to this include the following:

*'The surgery has had a lot of changes and the communication is very bad. I feel the staff work hard but there is no appreciation and the staff are undervalued. The partners need to get a grip of what is happening as the practice manager does not listen to the staff. They need to be more aware, more considerate of their staff.'*

*'We need more secretarial cover. Staff are not being listened to. Management is not dealing with grievances in the appropriate manner.'*

*'I used to love coming to work but now I feel bullied and I have joined the union.'*



In addition, when asked *'Are there any changes you would like to make to your way of working to improve the patient experience'*, comments included the following:

*'More support from the Practice Manager and GP's which we do not get at the moment'*

*'To ensure my work is kept up to date which means someone helping me or more hours allocated to me and cover for two weeks holiday'*.

*'Staff morale and unhappiness needs investigating'*.

*'staff wellbeing'*.

*'I feel I have a wealth of skills to offer but I am not being listened to'*.

*'More communication generally between management and staff'*

*'We do the best we can with the resources we have'*.

*'The rules are too rigid; computer releasing appointments at set times; unable to help patients'*.

Many staff also felt quite strongly about the lack of training opportunities; in answer to the question *'How often do you attend staff training for your role'*, answers varied from *'no'*, *'never'* and *'very rarely'*. Staff stated they were not encouraged to attend training courses but had to make their own enquiries to keep up to date with training needs.

Despite the longevity of some of the administrative staff members, when asked how they feel about working at the Practice, comments included, *'extremely low morale'*, *'frustrated'*, *'I used to enjoy it'*, *'pressured'* and *'stressful'*. Other staff mentioned that they *'enjoy'* their work; it was *'convenient'* and another said that it was *'absolutely fine'*. Additional comments include:

*'I feel very frustrated that I cannot use common sense to help the patient because of "the rules" and the computer system'*.

*'I feel that we are being let down by the management structure; this is bad for staff morale and the patients'*

*'There is a distinct lack of empathy towards patients'*

*'There are no leeway's'*

The Nurses were mainly positive about working at the Practice, comments included *'love working within the nursing team and with patients'* and *'enjoy working here, I have a good relationship with other staff members'*, another commented that they *'love the team here but do not feel supported'*. Asked if there were any changes they would like to make at the Practice, comments included:

*'Be more proactive with improving the patient experience. At the moment we fight fires and the Manager is not interested in improving things'*

*'Listen to patients; make positive changes; feedback to patients; make better use of PPG'*

*'Unlock appointments daily; stop DNA's, more accessibility would stop patients waiting up til 12.01am to make appointment; upskill reception staff so patients can be diverted to right area'*.

*'Less time pressure on us would benefit patient in the long run; change appointment system to book on the day'*.

Representatives were informed that a mediator was due to meet with staff members



during the following week.

Due to the many contentious additional comments received from staff at the Practice, both during and after the visit, these additional comments have been sent directly to the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group for review.

## Recommendations

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire firstly recommends that the lines denoting parking bays, particularly the disabled parking bay, be repainted as soon as possible.

In light of the fact that the reception area is so crowded and offers little or no chance of any confidentiality, HWCB recommends that consideration be given to re-arranging and/or restructuring the whole reception area to afford a degree of privacy to patients to vastly improve the patient experience.

HWCB noted that the surgery's hours displayed on the website do not correspond with those in the Practice Patient Leaflet, and some of the other information in the leaflet is out of date. HWCB recommends that this leaflet is scheduled for revision as soon as possible.

HWCB has noted that the Practice website asks patients to leave a review on the NHS Choices website. It was disappointing to note however, that Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is not referred to on the Practice website, and would recommend that a link to HWCB's website be at least included in the related links section of the Practice website. It is also noted that there are some references to the PCT on the website, and HWCB recommends that these be changed to Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group as soon as possible.

We understand that the Partners at the Practice recognise there have been difficulties between management and staff recently which has led to poor working relationships. HWCB would therefore strongly recommend that the Partners continue to support and listen to all staff during this time and act on the recommendations of the independent management consultant, with the full cooperation and engagement of staff, to ensure the patient experience and quality of service is not affected now or in the future.

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

## West Street Surgery Feedback from the Healthwatch Visit – 17<sup>th</sup> April 2018

Unfortunately the majority of staff here at West Street Surgery all work part-time, as all staff present at that time were informed of the visit and as stated posters were placed around the building, including the Reception Area.

I am a little confused that you can state that I as the Practice Manager will delay a planned Conference Call to meet Health watch Representatives? If I had to deal with something urgently, I would hope that you could understand this. My diary changes from minute to minute, as does most Primary Care workers as you do not know what's coming through the door or over the telephone.

### Car Parking:

I would like to point out that the majority of Practices in the Chiltern Vale Locality do not have a car park at all; patients have to use the local pay-and-display carparks. We may have a 'small' car park as you state, but it still has 13 patient and 1 disabled space, there is also a two hour free car park opposite.

### Waiting Area:

Unfortunately we are unable to have toys, etc. in the waiting area for children to play with due to infection control.

### Additional Findings:

It was not for your representative's responsibility or business to note any grievances reported, being resolved or unresolved. These issues were not for general discussion however I appreciate they do have a knock on affect to morale, etc.

Likewise, regarding my administration staff being informed by your representative that the Practice will not be moving into the Dunstable Hub when it is built, as she so kindly did even though the owners/Partners of the Business have not yet made their final decision. This caused raised anxiety levels regarding security of positions, let alone the feeling of lack of communication from management to staff.

Finally, I have always made it clear to all staff within the Practice that I am available to support them or discuss they have both personally and professionally, as I operate an open door policy.

I would also like to point out that we have had a previous inspection, I believe it was 2016 unfortunately no report was ever received.

**Lizzy Burraway**  
**Practice Business Manager**  
**West Street Surgery**

