



## Details of visit

Service address:	Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EZ
Service Provider:	Houghton Regis Medial Centre
Date and Time:	16 <sup>th</sup> May 2018
Authorised Representatives:	Dave Simpson, David De Butts, Linda Harrison, Den Fensome
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.



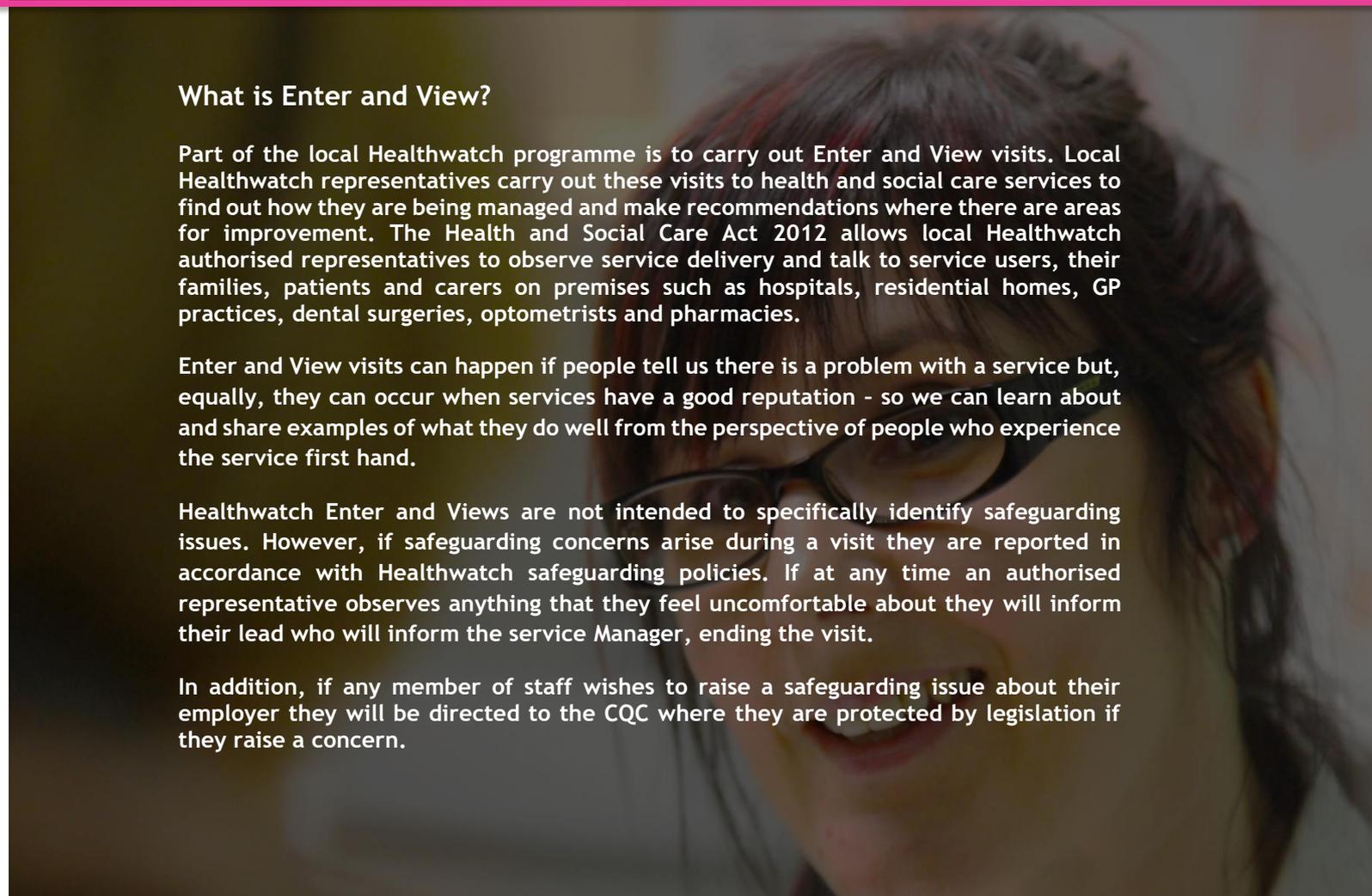
## What is Enter and View?

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 Medical Centre in Houghton Regis.

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

Houghton Regis Medical Centre is a well-established Training Practice which is housed in a single-storey building in Peel Street near the main Bedford Square shopping area. It was built in 1971 and is showing signs of its age. The premises are owned by a previous GP Partner and are maintained by the current partners. However, there is no maintenance arrangement in place for the surrounding grounds, and at the time of the visit the grassed areas (including pavements) were unkempt and littered. An independent pharmacy is co-located in the building.

When HWCB representatives arrived at the Practice, the staff were unaware of the intended visit. Representatives were advised by Practice staff that HWCB's letter announcing the visit had been mislaid. Furthermore, when retrieving and opening the response box supplied for the use of posting HWCB's questionnaire's, which are delivered to the Practice up to two weeks prior to the visit, it was disappointing to see that no questionnaires had been completed and posted. Representatives were therefore concerned that staff did not seem to be aware, or question why, the box and accompanying questionnaires were situated on the reception counter. It would also seem apparent that staff had not encouraged patients to fill in the questionnaires.

As soon as the Practice Manager was available, representatives talked at length with her about the history of the Practice and challenges faced by the Practice and its staff. The Practice Manager arranged for representatives to talk to several 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.

The Practice holds a 'Gold Standard' staff meeting for two hours every second Monday and hosts the Chiltern Vale MDT meeting fortnightly.

The Practice Manager informed representatives that the Practice has a 'cradle to grave' ethos in that patients are seen by their own GP wherever possible. Representatives were also shown an 'Appointment card' which is given to each patient who book appointments in person at the surgery.

<p><b>APPOINTMENT CARD</b> 01582 866161 /866733 Appointments can be booked from 8.30am for morning surgery and 2.30 for afternoon surgery Please ring after 11am for test results or any other enquiry as our lines are less busy <a href="http://www.houghtonregismedicalcentre.co.uk">www.houghtonregismedicalcentre.co.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Appointment</b></p> <p>GP - Nurse - Prescribing Practitioner _____</p> <p>Day: _____ Time: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Please give as much notice as possible to cancel an appointment as this can be offered to other patients _____</p> <p>We have a patient group that meets every 6 weeks, all are welcome , ask Reception for details</p>
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## Results of visit

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

- Four GP Partners - 3 male and 1 female
- One female salaried GP
- Two Practice Nurses
- One Practice Manager
- One Office Manager
- 1 Minor Illness Nurse Prescriber

- 1 Healthcare Assistant (HCA)
- 8 Administration / Reception staff
- One member of staff acts as Practice Patient Liaison Officer for 'challenging patients'

**Specialist Services provided:**

- Minor Surgery
- Midwife led Antenatal Clinic
- Anti-Coagulation (Wafarin) Clinic
- Phlebotomy
- Cervical Screening
- Family Planning
- Joint & Soft Tissue Injections
- Immunisations
- Health Promotion Clinics
  - Asthma
  - Diabetes
  - Hypertension
  - Smoking Cessation

**Surgery hours:**

Monday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm
Tuesday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm
Wednesday	7:00 am to 8:00 pm
Thursday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm
Friday	8:00 am to 6:30 pm
Saturday	8.00am to 12.00pm (2 Saturdays per month)
Sunday	Closed

## Environment

### Other observations included:

The waiting area was recently redecorated and is light and airy with a hearing loop and an electronic booking in system for patients (SystemOne). The waiting area is 'breast feeding' friendly, however there is limited space so could not be referred to as 'child friendly'.

The reception desk itself is very high and presents a challenge for wheelchair users to access reception staff. A side room adjacent to reception is used for confidential conversations although, this again, is not 'wheelchair friendly'.

### Car Parking

A car park for patients use is located at the front of the building with some designated disabled car-parking bays however, the Practice does not own the car park and it is used extensively by visitors to the shopping area. The condition of the car park is also in need of repair, being quite heavily 'pot-holed'.

### Patient Information

The Practice website is comprehensive and has good information for patients. However Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is disappointed to note that HWCB is not listed as an entry on the 'Useful Contacts' page.

The waiting room area also contains a good supply of patient information, however there is little or no information about Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

HWCB representatives were advised that the Practice Handbook is currently being rewritten by the Practice Manager, and a newsletter is produced twice yearly (Summer and Winter), the cover of which is designed by a PPG member.



### Registration at the Practice(s)

Patients register at the Practice in person. Forms may be collected at reception or downloaded from the website. Proof of address and ID is required, and all patients are photographed (with their consent) for inclusion in their records.

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

The PPG is well attended, with an age range of 30 - 80 years. The PPG contributes to the Practice by analysing survey data, designing and contributing to the newsletters, raising awareness of local developments and assisting patients at the 'Flu day'; car parking and making cups of tea.

The PPG is advertised within the Practice, in newsletters and on the Practice website. Meetings are held every six weeks.

### **Patient Consultation**

Patient opinion is generated via the suggestions box, the NHS Friends & Family test, information from the Practice Patient Liaison Officer, and the General Practice Assessment Questionnaire on the Practice website.

### **Appointments System**

Patients must book appointments online via SystmOne, by telephone or at reception at the surgery. Appointments are bookable up to four weeks in advance, and there may be some same day appointments available. The Practice has designed a two-sided appointment card with good information for the patient.

The Practice's ethos is '*cradle to the grave*' meaning patients should normally see the same GP which facilitates continuity of care. GP appointments are normally 10 minutes although in some circumstances double appointments may be booked.

Home visits may be available for a patient who cannot physically get to the surgery, patients should call before 10:00 am to request a visit. The GP may carry out a telephone triage before attending.

Telephone consultations with a GP may also be available on request.

### **Out of Hours Care**

The NHS 111 service provides out of hours care, which is advertised in the Practice leaflet, on the website and on the answerphone.

### **Medication & Prescriptions**

Patient's medication is monitored by the prescriptions clerk and reviews are always carried out by a GP together with the patient, as and when required.

Repeat prescriptions may be ordered online using SystmOne or by putting the request slip in the box near reception. The turn round time for repeat prescriptions is 48 hours.

### **Patient Questionnaire Results**

As previously stated, unfortunately, no patients completed HWCB questionnaires prior to the visit. However, at the time of the visit, HWCB representatives interviewed several patients. The results of the interviews completed at the Practice during the visit are shown at **Appendix A**.

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

HWCB representatives observed interactions between some patients and the reception staff, all of which were conducted in a courteous and friendly manner. Patients are called in for their appointments by the receptionist.

At the time of the visit, representatives did not observe any undue delays in patients being called and seen.

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

Several members of staff were spoken to by representatives during the visit. The majority of staff expressed concern that the Practice is understaffed administratively, although recruitment is underway.

Representatives were surprised and concerned that of all the members of staff spoken to, only one had heard of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and, disappointingly no members of staff had any idea of HWCB's role and function.

All staff members spoken to were very happy to be working at the Practice. One staff member commented - *'I am very proud of my role. I do all I can to resolve patient's problems to make the patient journey as good as it can be. I smooth out their experience. I am an ear to listen, to empathise.'*

Other comments made by staff were:

*'I've worked here for 15 years, I love it!'*  
*'We could do with a new building.'*  
*'Late night opening would help.'*  
*'Make it easier for patients to get appointments.'*  
*'I could do with more training courses to improve expertise.'*  
*'A bigger desk!'*

### **Concerns/Complaints Procedure**

The Practice has a robust complaints procedure which is explained in detail in a comprehensive leaflet available from the Practice. In the first instance, the complainant will be referred to the Practice Patient Liaison Officer who will endeavour to resolve the issue.

If the complainant wishes to take the matter further, they will be given the complaints leaflet and forms, and the procedure will be explained to them.

Representatives were unable to locate any reference to the complaints procedure on the Practice website.

General comments received from patients included:

*'Not happy with treatment; not received attention I would like (MRI Scan), been fobbed off with pain killers and had to get a physio and a chiropractor privately'.  
'Approx. three years ago my husband (diabetic) had a mix up with his prescription and I registered a complaint formally and informed the PPG but there was no response; although things have improved recently'  
'When having a smear test there is no blanket - it felt a bit unfriendly and doesn't put the patient at ease'  
'Improve the waiting times'  
'It's easier to register on line - tell people about the on-line booking system'  
'There is one doctor I prefer not to see as she can be a bit rude'  
'Very difficult to get through on the phone as its always busy'  
'I rang 23 times today - please make it easier to get an appointment'  
'I don't feel the GP listens to me as much as I would like'  
'Its taken me three days to get an appointment'  
'I always prefer to see my own doctor as she is female'  
'Listen more to the patients'*



## Recommendations

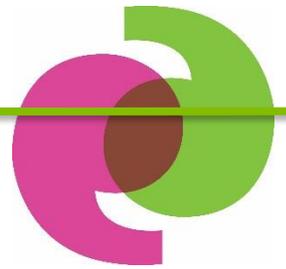
HWCB understands that the Practice does not have a lease or contract in place with regard to the area immediately surrounding the surgery and the car park, and we are mindful of the difficulty this presents with regard to maintenance and upkeep, however HWCB would recommend that the Practice pursues all available options to ensure that those responsible can address the issues highlighted in the report regarding the condition of the area outside of the Practice.

HWCB further recommends that consideration be given to lowering the reception desk, or part of the desk, to enable better access for wheelchair users, similarly to look at the adjacent confidential conversation room to ensure it is better suited for this cohort of patients.

As HWCB could find no reference to the Practice complaints procedure on the website, we would recommend that this is addressed as soon as possible and patients informed, on line, of the current procedure.

In light of the apparent lack of awareness among both patients and staff, of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and its role and functions, it is recommended that a link to HWCB's website and telephone number be incorporated into the 'Useful Contacts' page on the Practice website. In addition, HWCB would be happy to supply posters and leaflets for the waiting area and to attend a PPG meeting to explain our role to members of the group.

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.

