

Bedford Hospital  
15 Steps Report



October 2019



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# Introduction

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is the local consumer champion promoting choice and influencing the provision of high quality health, social care and wellbeing services for all across Central Bedfordshire.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) has significant statutory powers to ensure that the voice of the consumer is strengthened and heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and care services. HWCB engages and consults with all sections of the local population so that a wide cross section of views are heard, understood and acted upon. Everything we say and do is informed by our connections to local people and our expertise is grounded in their experience.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is one of three local Healthwatch in the County of Bedfordshire and belong to a network of local Healthwatch. Healthwatch England leads, supports and guides the Healthwatch network which is made up of the national body and local Healthwatch across each of the 152 local authority areas in England.

Healthwatch is the only body looking solely at people's experience across all health and social care. As a statutory watchdog our role is to ensure that local health and social care services, and the local decision-makers put the experiences of people at the heart of their care.



## 15 Steps Challenge Preparation







# Preparation

During 2019, Young Healthwatch took part in an Enter and View training session to prepare for visiting the children's wards at Bedford Hospital and other local healthcare establishments that Young People access. <sup>(1)</sup>

In September 2019, the young volunteers also took part in a training programme called '15 Steps'.

*I can tell what kind of care my daughter is going to get within 15 steps of walking on to every new ward*

This powerful statement, from a mother whose daughter needed frequent inpatient stays, inspired the development of the '15 Steps Challenge'.

The 15 Steps Challenge focuses on seeing care through a patient or carer's eyes, and exploring their first impressions.

The Challenge is a simple way of making sure we listen to users of services and see things through their eyes so that it can be improved.

The 15 Steps Challenge toolkits are aimed at adults, but it's important that children and young people have a say in how care areas could be improved too. The toolkit has been written with and is for children and young people to use, so that their views and contributions are heard and valued <sup>(2)</sup>

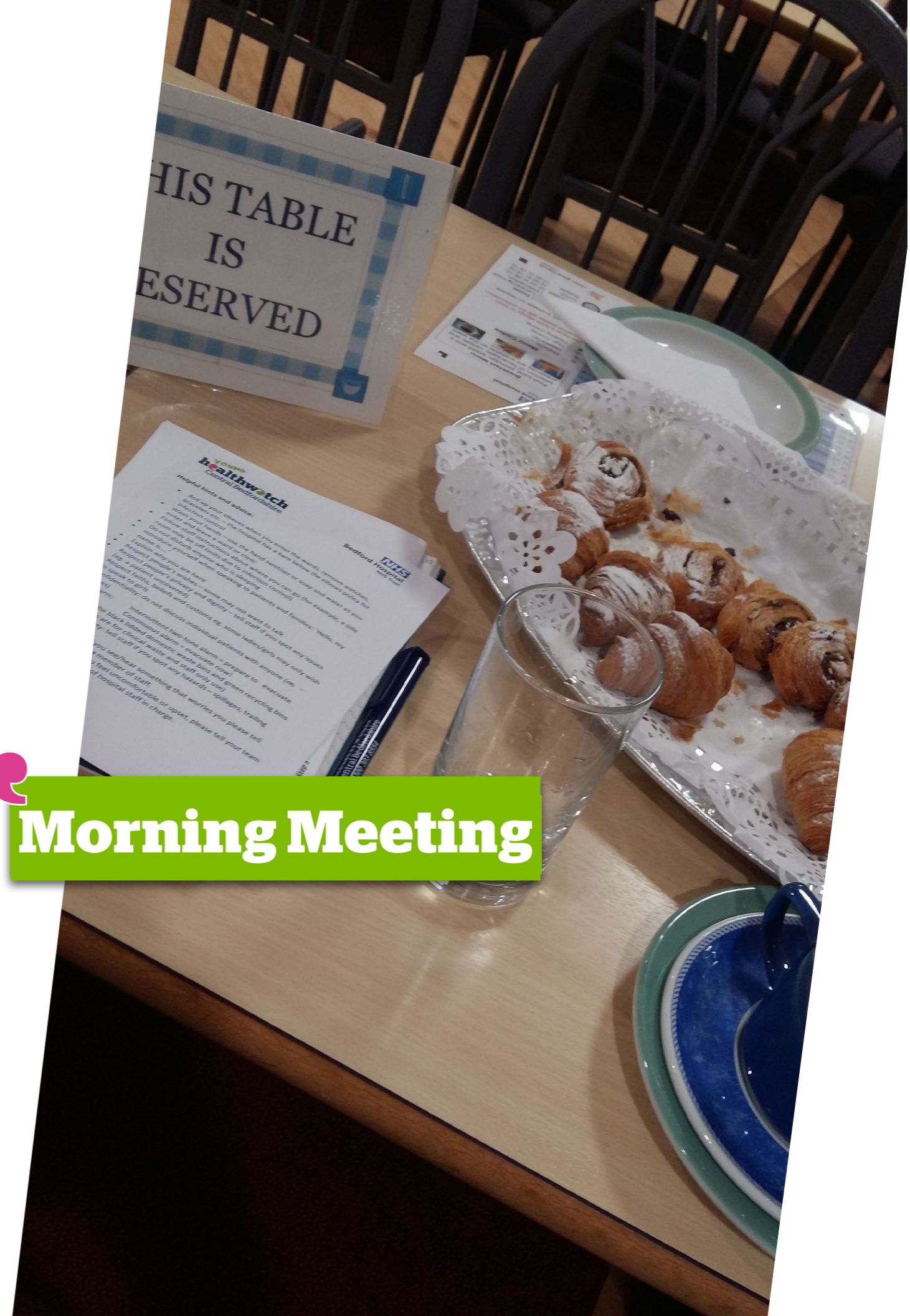
Consistent with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire practice, this report has been written by Young Healthwatch volunteers in their own words and expresses their own opinions. It is based on their observations and those of the people they spoke to - patients and staff. The content has not been altered by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire or Bedford Hospital, except for clarification.

Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will revisit the hospital in an agreed time frame, to have a look at the recommendations we have made and see if any improvements have been made.

<sup>(1)</sup> 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.

<sup>(2)</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/participation/resources/15-steps-challenge/>

## Morning Meeting







# Morning Meeting

On Wednesday 23rd October 2019, Bedford South Wing Hospital invited a handful of Young Healthwatch Volunteers from Central Bedfordshire to conduct a visit, in line with the 15 Steps Training programme.

We were welcomed by Debbie Allman who is the Voluntary Services Manager at the hospital. A table was prepared for us in the hospital's Swannery restaurant, to enable us to be briefed about the day.

Folders that included an overview of the hospital, and children and young peoples' services, were given to each of us. Included in this folder was a page on the chaplaincy: pastoral and spiritual care for all patients, staff and visitors.

We were also handed the current day's menu for the patients, from which we each had to choose lunch for the day.

All food is prepared freshly on the premises, and later in the day we were introduced to Peter Gillard who is the Catering Manager. He gave us an extremely informative book "Mealtime Guide for Patients", which also explained the catering at the hospital in depth.

Following on from the breakfast meeting, we were then introduced to the Matron of Paediatrics, Amanda Blake, who gave us an outline of her job and the needs of the paediatric unit.

Belinda Wood, the Deputy Director of Nursing was also introduced to us and she spoke briefly about what her function entails within the hospital.

We also met the pastor at the Hospital who gave us an insight into her role and the services she goes above and beyond to provide, for patients and staff.



## Outpatients





# Outpatients

## Welcoming

We entered the children's Outpatient department and were shown around by Toni Smith, Paediatric Registered Nurse Lead.

Whilst we were present, the diabetes clinic was in session, which takes place once a week. All the staff we spoke to were extremely helpful and willing to answer any questions that we had and were keen to explore our objectives for the day.

The general environment was clean, but we did note there were some dirty ceiling tiles which we feel could be easily replaced.

## Caring

Whilst on the ward, all members of staff that we interacted with were friendly. Those staff members we did not talk to, still smiled at us

## Safe

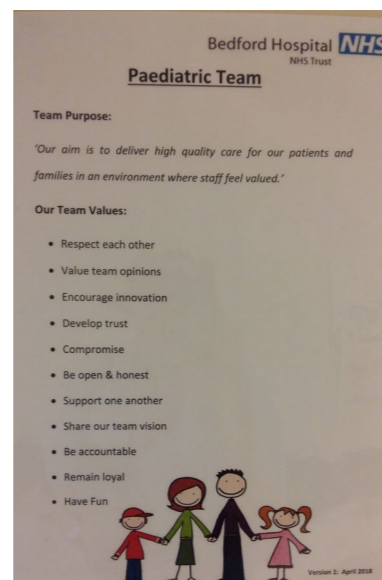
Throughout the ward there were many posters on notice boards giving all the necessary information regarding staff members and what to expect while present in the department. They had several blood taking rooms on the outpatient ward which we were shown.

Again, these were very much decorated to entertain/distract the younger children visiting for blood tests, which we fully appreciated. It would be nice though to consider a room that is less babyish and has a more grown up feel to it. This could be simply done with cool patterned posters or wall art.

There were many decorations throughout the rooms, particularly hanging from the ceiling. This was generally along the jungle theme, which we feel caters towards the younger children visiting the ward.

The main waiting room seemed busy on this occasion and felt slightly enclosed and dark. However, it was equipped with several toys and games to keep younger children occupied during the wait to be seen.

and were aware of our visit and what we were doing there. Overall the atmosphere was very pleasant, and we felt welcomed.



## Catering







# Catering

The catering staff were very friendly and welcoming, with a very good service overall.

When we were served meals from the patients' menu, our team generally found the food to be satisfactory, with very few complaints.

There was a variety of choices including meals suited to the dietary needs of diabetics and vegetarians/vegans. Staff informed us that if a patient had a problem with the day's menu, they would always be happy to find a suitable alternative.

The hospital uses a two-week cycle menu which allows service users that are in the hospital for longer than one week, to have a varied provision of food.

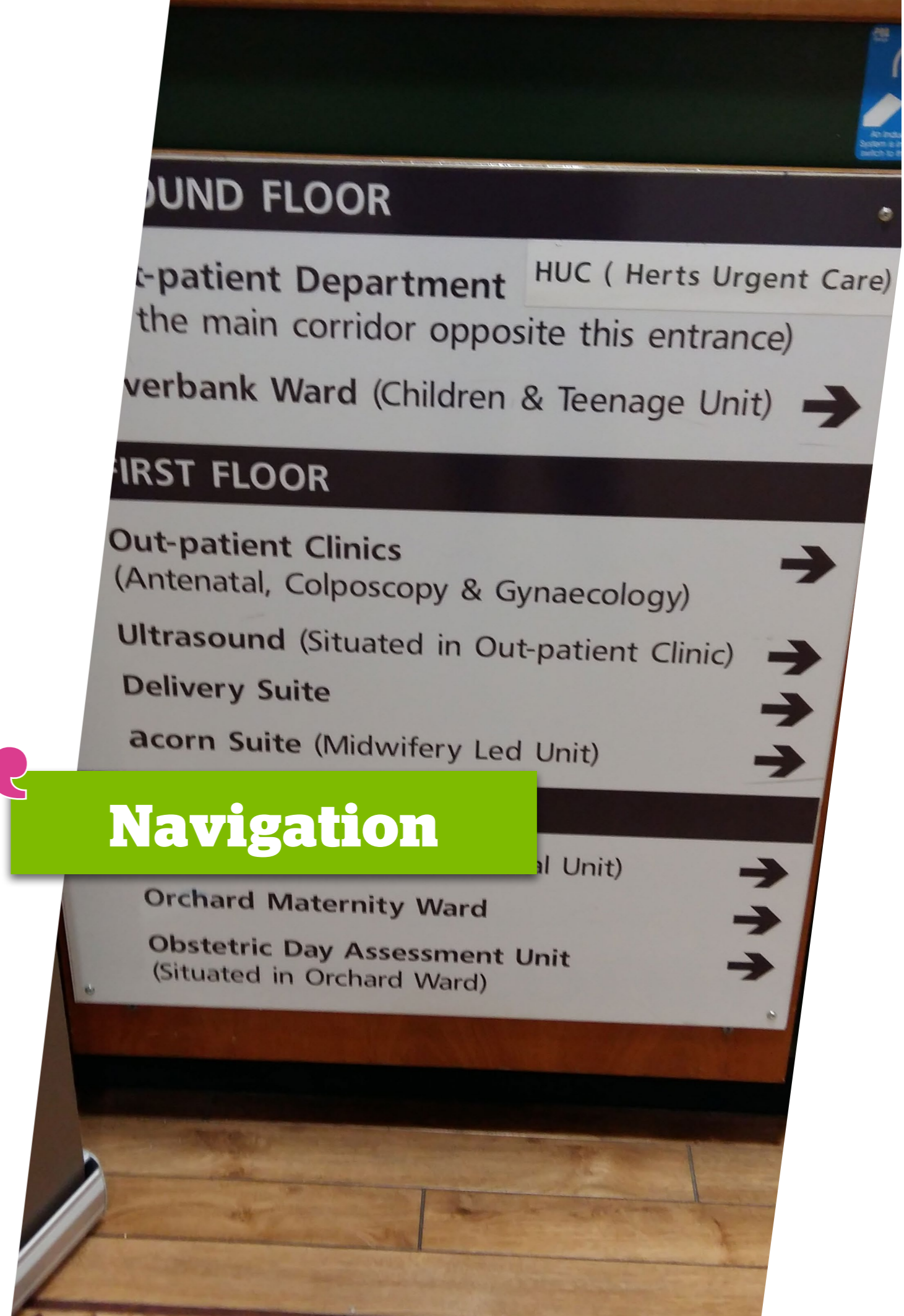
We were informed that the hospital is nationally recognised for their food, which is excellent.

In the children's ward, if a patient wasn't having a hot meal, they were served sandwich alternatives in lunchboxes. The design of the boxes was targeted to younger children, and it was noted that this design would be less attractive to teenagers as it is very much what you would offer a 6-year-old.

Colour coding systems i.e. coloured trays to match dietary needs, could also be emphasised throughout the hospital, not just for the children's ward, as we think this is a great way of organising the patient's meals without over complicating the matter for staff.



## Navigation







# Navigation

Whilst we were walking around, we noted that the signage had coloured stickers on them. To us, this seemed like a pretty good idea so that if someone couldn't read English and saw the signs, they could tell where they were, by the colour.

However, when we looked further, the colour stickers on the signs didn't correlate to the colours of each ward on the maps which we felt was a bit confusing for visitors to the hospital, especially for those on their first visit or unfamiliar with the layout.

We believe this would be beneficial and a quick fix improvement, to help people find their way around the hospital, if it was correctly coded and displayed in more prominent places around the corridors. We struggled to locate maps whilst walking from various departments.

Hospitals will never be easy to find your way around, however we believe these small changes could help massively with navigating and will make going to the hospital a lot less daunting for anyone attending, be it as a patient or visitor.

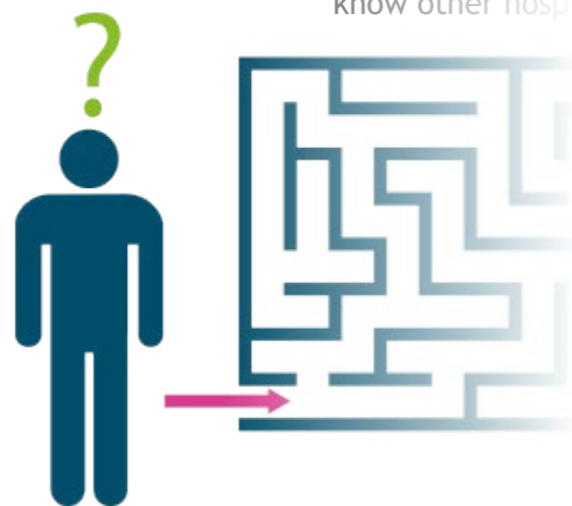
From our observations of the maps, it was also noted that we could not find information on the transport links especially as we had travelled to the hospital on the Park and Ride ourselves.

To promote more people to use these sorts of facilities, which lessens the individual carbon footprint, we feel the hospital maps should make it clearer where the bus stops for this service are, and for them to show directions to the exits. Also have boards on the way out to display the next time of the bus, as some people may not want to wait outside alone or in the cold.

We also suggested just general directions for all transport links and a bus timetable display board at more than just one exit, as we know this is what other local hospitals have.

It really can make a difference, especially for those young people who may be coming to the hospital alone for the first time using public transport.

We did look for a facility to call a taxi, but this could not be found, again, this is something we know other hospitals offer.







# Riverbank Paediatric Ward

One of the main areas of the hospital that we saw was the **Riverbank Ward**, which is the main children's ward for children and young people aged 0 to 18 years old. It is important to acknowledge that from 16 years old, the young people are given a choice of whether they would like to stay in the children's ward or transfer to an adult ward, so not all young people will stay on this ward.



## Welcoming

The layout of the wards involves a buzz in the system to prevent members of the public from entering the ward. We were told that there is a Ward clerk constantly monitoring and letting people in through the gates/doors to prevent strangers from coming in. We noticed that identification was not asked for when using the buzzer for the door, which we felt defeated the idea of not letting the public in.

Once you have been buzzed in, you walk in through a gate which helps to protect the patients and prevents them from exiting the ward without an adult, as it is a high reach latch.

We noticed that the gate was not always closed, so this isn't as effective as it could be.

As you enter the ward, there is a river decoration on the floor (as the ward is called Riverbank) which engages the children. The river leads from the entrance of the ward to the main reception desk, so it's a good visual aid and distraction for young patients.

The facilities on the ward are very accessible as it also includes wheelchair access and special-needs bathrooms for patients that may need it.

## Caring

One of the first things we looked at on this ward was how the mealtimes are arranged.

On this ward, menus are handed out in the mornings and the staff get informed of any allergies or dietary requirements that day. This enables the children to decide what they would like to eat that day, instead of choosing the day before. It also allows the staff to be reminded of any requirements they have to follow when providing meals.

Lunch is usually served around 12pm and supper is served around 4.30pm, however this can change depending on times a patient gets back from surgery or when treatment finishes.

As well as solid foods there is also a variety of pureed foods and other variations to still allow for person centred care, choice and personalisation for the patients.

## Safe

The bed bays are separated in terms of how much care the patient needs.

For example, there are 4 inpatient cubicles near to the nurse's station, where the children that need the most care stay. These bays have observation monitors linked to the nurse's station, so they can be constantly monitored.

Some bays also have double doors, in case of an infection and when isolation is required.

We were shown the one High Dependency Unit room which is a larger room and the windows can be opened/closed to allow for privacy and observations.

There are no services on this ward for intensive care beds.

Aside from main mealtimes there is always fruit and drinks and other snacks available, so the patients or their families can go and get them whenever they need to.

If a child is not wanting what is on the children's menu, they can look at the adult menu to decide what they would like from that.

If the child does not want anything from the adult or child's menu, the housekeeping staff can ring the kitchen to request other meals, as well as requesting specific dietary requirements such as veganism.

Breastfeeding mums are fed on the ward too and if there are no visitors to allow a parent to go and get some food, there will be food provided by the hospital for them also.

There is one treatment room where all procedures will happen, whether that is placing a cannula, administering high-intensity medications or doing dressings. This means that the child doesn't associate bad experiences with their bedside, which is a very positive point and can change a young person's experience entirely.

Whilst on **Riverbank Ward**, we noticed that none of the staff have a way of identifying themselves to the children's ward, only if you read the name badges, which you have to get up close to do.

This may mean that people who cannot read i.e. a very young children or people with a visual impairment, may not know that they are paediatric staff or in the right place.





## Safe cont'd

We were informed by the director of nursing that the staff are receiving new badges which involve the "Hello my name is" campaign and their names will be written in bold letters. Please see our recommendations on how we think this can be made even better for children.

As we focused our visit on children and young people, we found that for the young people themselves, there are many things that the hospital has done to try and engage them and suit the ward to their age more.

Some examples of how this has been done, is by having gaming consoles and iPads for the young people to use.

The ward is shared between very young children and young adults, and it can be difficult to provide young people with their own space.

The staff do try to separate the younger patients from the teenagers, to allow them some privacy, however this is not always possible due to case by case admittance.

We were informed by a CAU (Child Assessment Unit) nurse that there did used to be a separate area for young people to go and spend their time, however it was taken away due to the space needed for other services.

The staff are now trying to think of new ways of including this again as they recognised a "chill out" space for those wanting to watch tablets, phones or videos is very much needed and improves a young person stay in the hospital.

One of the entertainment facilities, for all ages, is a therapy dog that comes around every Wednesday and all patients can sit and pet him. We thought this was a great facility to offer.

If a child is not able to get out of their bed and attend the play room sessions, the play leaders will organise activities to be taken to the child in their bed or beside, for example taking colouring sheets and colouring pencils or providing them with one of the iPads.

In the playroom they host a new craft activity every day, with a protected time of 2-3pm, which ensures the play leaders are not disturbed and help the children to engage in activities.

We were informed by Brenda (player leader) that the ward is in the process of getting a new entertainment tower, with a bigger sensory area and home corner.

One concern of having a projector installed in the middle of the playroom as suggested, is that there are activities for younger children either side, which adolescents may not appreciate.

A place for older children to gather and watch films will allow them to socialise and feel in touch with the real world, which improved WiFi alone, may not offer.

An additional service that is offered on **Riverbank Ward** is a CAMHS office. This is used for patients with mental health conditions and it allows them a space to express their emotions to a qualified professional. Although this is a good space for them, the hours of the professionals are flexible so they're not always present and patients able to access it. The hospital always tries to provide a one-to-one nurse if the patient is presenting with mental health difficulties.

As this is a children's ward, there will often be parents wanting to stay with their children overnight. There are two parent's rooms which have a bed and a kitchen area, if they are staying overnight.

Parents can stay with their children all the time, as well as grandparents. This is because children are more likely to recover when they are in situations that are most like their home environment, for example having visitors will help them engage and play.

We feel this is a great service for the families, though the rooms seemed very clinical and dormitory like. They could be made to feel homelier, with brighter decoration and a home from home feel, as this will naturally ease parents themselves and hopefully have an effect on the child they are caring for too.

In terms of decoration of the ward, we found that it is very childlike and not necessarily appropriate for older children and young people.

An important feature to highlight in the **Riverbank Ward** is that they have a dedicated school room. This allows the children to continue their development and learn the same as their peers in school.

The room included brilliant coloured displays and lots of activities for children to do. The school room is run by Greys Education Centre and the children are eligible to use it, if they stay in the ward for longer than two days. Greys Education Centre can also accommodate for exams if required.

The play leaders ring the schools and get schoolwork sent across to complete with the patient.

Overall, it is evident that there are many brilliant aspects of the children's ward, however, one of the main areas of improvement is the accommodation and facilities for older patients.

It is evident that the ward is already thinking about the ways that this can be implemented from the discussions we had with staff on the day. We hope that we have just reinforced what they are already suggesting along with some new ideas.

## Patients Voice

During the walk around the Riverbank Ward, we were able to speak with a patient who was 14 years old, and agreed to answer some of our questions.

How do you feel about the hospital in terms of its environment?

***I would say it's a very a friendly environment; the way it is laid out means there's a lot of open space.***

Are there any improvements you would make about the children's paediatrics ward?

***It can be difficult to entertain myself at times because there is no WiFi and the signal isn't very strong so I can't use my mobile data, even if there were some sort of device such as a teleport to provide some entertainment.***

How do you find the food provided for you, as well as the packaging that the food is delivered in?

***There is a variety of different foods to choose from. I haven't really noticed the packaging of the food.***

How are you treated by members of staff in the hospital?

***The majority of the members of staff are friendly and treat me like an adult (although night shift nurses are not very talkative).***



# Meadowbank Ward

The **Neo Natal Unit** was extremely clean, private and friendly. It was a comfortable environment for the parents, as well as the babies.

We had the opportunity to talk to a student nurse who was working in the unit and it was great to hear how happy she was with her experience of working there, and the opportunities she is getting throughout her training.

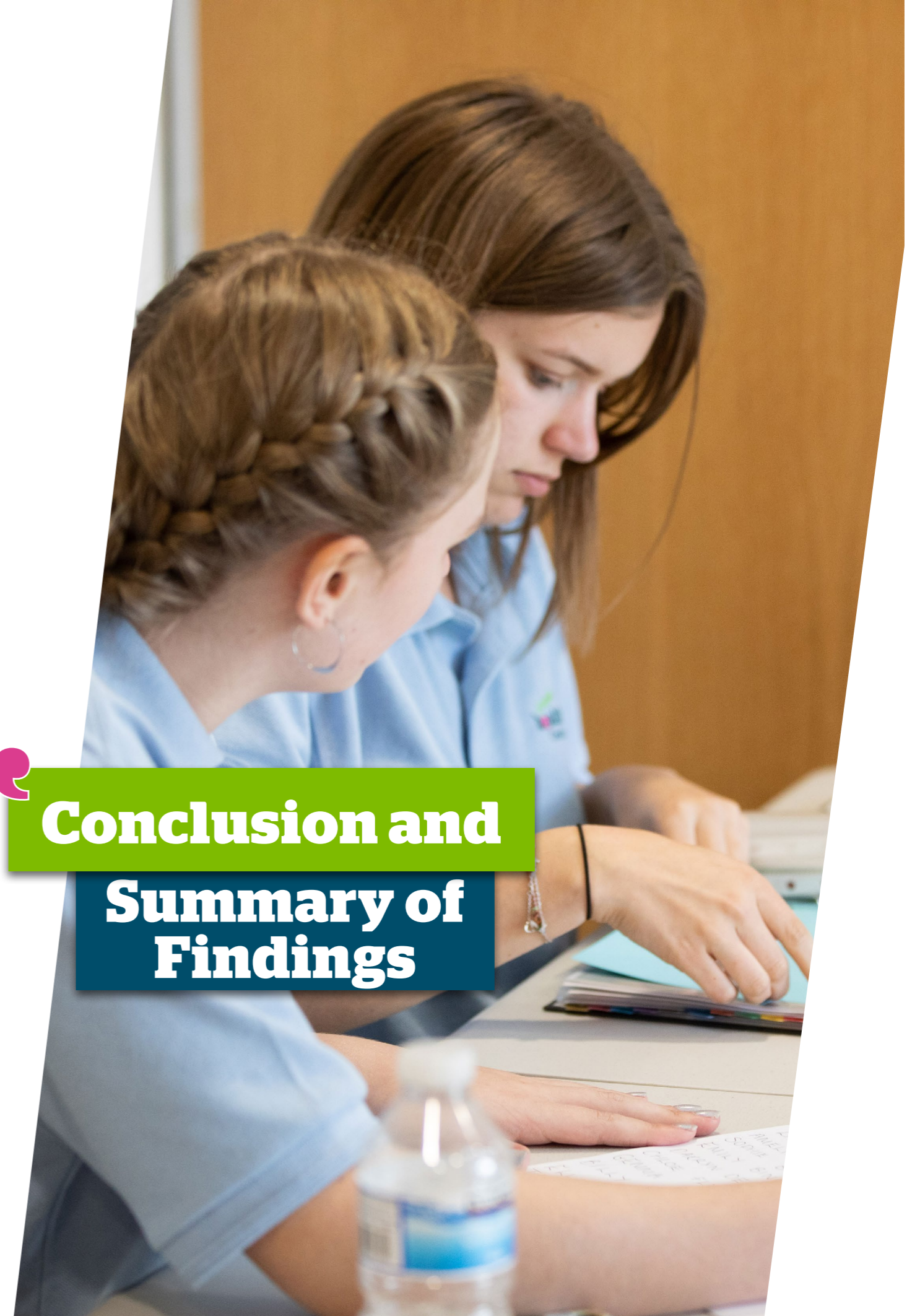
## Positive Observations

- Babies can wear their own clothes from home;
- The babies can often be taken home with tubes still in, rather than staying at the hospital for extended times. Care is provided at home by the nurses visiting on a regular basis;
- There are overnight facilities for parents;
- There are posters displayed around the ward educating parents for when they take their babies home on their own, as it can be a daunting time;
- The hospital has a 'baby snatching' exercise in place for security measures, which is regularly tested on practice runs;
- The charity organisation Bliss help the hospital in supporting families with babies in the Neo natal care;
- The ward accommodates and promotes student nurses within the ward;
- They focus heavily on choice for the parents, such as whether they would like student nurses to be present, if siblings or family can visit, or how the baby is fed and cleaned.

The only improvement we could see on this unit, was ensuring all staff are identifiable as there was a member of staff who, if was not introduced to us, we would not have known she was a member of staff.



## Conclusion and Summary of Findings







# Conclusion

Overall it was a positive and refreshing experience for the team. The staff were happy, very welcoming and friendly.

As an observation throughout the day, the patients appeared to be safe and well looked after.



# Summary of Findings

## What worked well

- Staff from both the medical profession and general hospital staff were all friendly and happy;
- Staff on the **Riverbank Ward** all appeared engaged with the young people and genuinely interested in making their experience a better one;
- Even though it was busy, it did not seem unorganised or frantic;
- Decoration in the areas for young children was vibrant and bright;
- Education and play for those on the **Riverbank Ward** seemed a key element to their care;
- Wide variety of choice of food available for patients, which is cooked fresh on site and catered for all needs;
- When observing the playroom in the paediatric ward, the staff expressed multiple ideas unprompted, to develop its appeal to the older age groups. This shows a genuine interest in the patients which was demonstrated throughout the hospital by the staff. Considering the current strain on resources and waiting times, this was very impressive to witness.

## Recommendations

- Maps - Make it clearer from the entrances of the hospital, that the **Riverbank Ward** is for Children and Young People, whilst making sure the colours on the maps co-ordinate correctly;
- Maps - Display more maps around the hospital;
- Revisit the security policy for the **Riverbank Ward** to ensure the gate is not left open and ID is checked more frequently;
- Paediatrics nurses/doctors/staff to have a symbol/picture on their name badges to symbolise they are for children and young people. We felt it was not something that was clear and could be a very useful and poignant move for the patient experience, to know the staff work in paediatrics;
- If a young person has sandwiches for lunch, do not offer the 'childlike' lunch box for it to be delivered in so they appreciate being treated as a young adult;
- Allocate an area for teenagers/young adults to be able to go and watch a film, use a tablet or just chill out. Just a corner somewhere with some bean bags, away from the younger patients, we feel is all that would be required;
- WiFi - look at the accessibility for enhanced connections for teenagers on the ward. If they have their own devices they can use, this may be crucial in helping them feel more at ease during their stay so they can keep up to date with friends, TV and online apps;
- The area for family to stay overnight to be made to feel warmer and 'home from home' like. This would only need a few brighter decorations, and maybe a suggestions box too for people who use that facility to help develop it further;
- Make books and games for older children available in Children's Outpatients;
- Have a room in Outpatients that is not so 'young children' orientated, with just some funky decorations and a more, young adult feel to it.





**BEDFORD HOSPITAL**  
Main Entrance

## Response from Bedford Hospital



# Response from Bedford Hospital

*“Bedford Hospital have been so pleased that Young Healthwatch approached them to be their first '15 steps' hospital. We hope that this is the first of many joint ventures.*

*Bedford Hospital has put together an action plan to help them address the recommendations and will let Young Healthwatch know when they have achieved them.”*

Recommendation	Action	Responsible Person	Time Frame
Maps - Make it clearer from the entrances of the hospital, that the Riverbank Ward is for Children and Young People, whilst making sure the colours on the maps co-ordinate correctly	Review with facilities team	Adam Brown	Feb 2020
Maps - Display more maps around the hospital	Review with facilities team	Adam Brown	Feb 2020
Revisit the security policy for the Riverbank Ward to ensure the gate is not left open and ID is checked more frequently	Reviewing with Luton and Dunstable Matron	Amanda Blake	Apr 2020
Paediatrics nurses/doctors/staff to have a symbol/picture on their name badges to symbolise they are for children and young people. We felt it was not something that was clear and could be a very useful and poignant move for the patient experience, to know the staff work in paediatrics	Sort out a badge for Paediatrics staff in addition to the yellow standard trust name badges	Amanda Blake	Mar 2020
If a young person has sandwiches for lunch, do not offer the 'childlike' lunch box for it to be delivered in so they appreciate being treated as a young adult	Discussed with ward hostess	Amanda Blake	Completed
Allocate an area for teenagers/young adults to be able to go and watch a film, use a tablet or just chill out. Just a corner somewhere with some bean bags, away from the younger patients, we feel is all that would be required	Funding being sort and a quote being obtained to upgrade an area on Riverbank by Play Team	Amanda Blake	Apr 2020



Recommendation	Action	Responsible Person	Time Frame
WiFi - look at the accessibility for enhanced connections for teenagers on the ward. If they have their own devices they can use, this may be crucial in helping them feel more at ease during their stay so they can keep up to date with friends, TV and online apps	Free WiFi is available on all wards for patients and visitors to access. This is currently speed restricted, however it is in the process of being upgraded, currently planned to take place in May.	Joshua Chandler	May 2020
The area for family to stay overnight to be made to feel warmer and "home from home" like. This would only need a few brighter decorations, and maybe a suggestions box too for people who use that facility to help develop it further	Funding to be procured for improvements to take place	Paediatric Matron	Jul 2020
Make books and games for older children available in Children's Outpatients	Play leaders on ward to identify suitable games and books that are suitable to be used in main ward area	Ward Manager	Mar 2020
Have a room in Outpatients that is not so 'young children' orientated, with just some funky decorations and a more, young adult feel to it	Outpatients to be re-decorated	Sharon Day	Jul 2020



Our Young Healthwatch volunteers have been busy working on a number of projects since they came together over a year ago.

They have also recently received appropriate 'Enter & View' training and are keen to put their learning into practice by visiting health and social care services such as hospital wards, surgeries and care homes. The young people will then be able to report their findings from their unique perspective. If you would like a group of young Healthwatch volunteers to visit your service please contact Amy.Eymor@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk.

There is a lot more information on the Young Healthwatch website, <https://younghealthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk>, including the great achievement of one of our volunteers who has secured a fantastic apprenticeship with Cancer Research UK.

If you are under 25, why not consider becoming a member of Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire? Get in touch for more information, email [Amy.Eymor@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:Amy.Eymor@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk) or call 0300 303 8554.







**YOUNG**  
**healthwatch**  
Central Bedfordshire

**healthwatch**  
Central Bedfordshire

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire  
Capability House Wrest Park  
Silsoe  
Beds MK45 4HR

[www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)

tel: 0300 303 8554

e: [info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)

