



Details of visit

Service address:	Lower Stondon Surgery, The Hawthorns, 109 Station Road, Lower Stondon, Henlow, Bedfordshire, SG16 6JJ
Service Provider:	Dr Collins and Partners
Date and Time:	13th August 2015 14:00 – 16:30
Authorised Representatives:	Dave Simpson, Linda Grant, Margaret Roberts
Contact details:	Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Capability House, Wrest Park, Silsoe, Bedfordshire, MK45 4HR Tel: 0300 303 8554

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire would like to thank the service provider, patients and staff (clinical and non-clinical), for their contribution to the Enter and View Programme.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all patients and staff (clinical and non-clinical), only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.



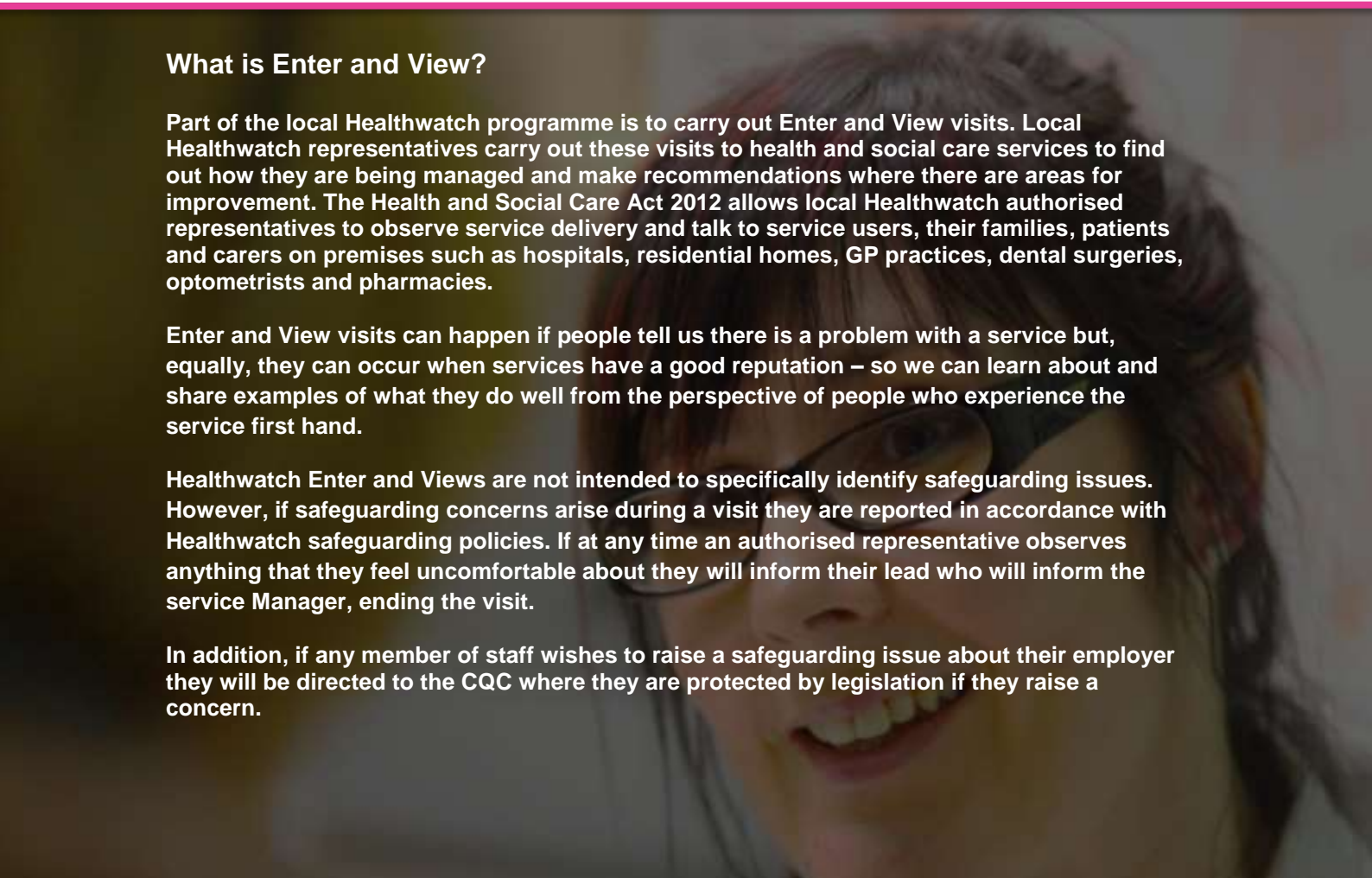
What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being managed and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families, patients and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies.

Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation – so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Healthwatch Enter and Views are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies. If at any time an authorised representative observes anything that they feel uncomfortable about they will inform their lead who will inform the service Manager, ending the visit.

In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer they will be directed to the CQC where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.



Purpose of the visit

- To engage with patients of GP Practices and understand how dignity is being respected;
- Identify examples of good working practice;
- Observe patients engaging with staff (clinical and non-clinical), and their surroundings.



Strategic drivers

- Care Quality Commission dignity and wellbeing strategy.
- GP Surgeries are a Local Healthwatch priority.

Methodology

This was an announced Enter and View Visit carried out at The Hawthorns Surgery site. A letter and posters announcing 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.

The Practice Manager had arranged 'booked slots' for HWCB representatives to talk to a GP and members of their administration and clinical staff. This was in addition to speaking to a member of the PPG who was in attendance. Unfortunately HWCB representatives were unable to engage with patients in the waiting area on the day of the visit, as it was a very 'quiet' afternoon and patients were not kept waiting long enough to engage with HWCB representatives. 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 Hawthorns Surgery is a modern building (opened in 1990) on one level, serving residents of Lower Stondon. This surgery is one of the smaller GP Practices in the Central Bedfordshire area in which a small team work well together and clearly care for their patients.

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

Results of visit

Staff

The Practice has the following members of staff:

Three GP partners; two male and one female, plus one female salaried GP;
Two Practice Nurses;
Two reception staff;
Five other staff;
Midwives (based at Shefford Health Centre);
District Nurses (based at Shefford Health Centre);
Health visitors (based at Shefford Health Centre);
Physiotherapists (based at Shefford Health Centre).

Specialist Services provided

Phlebotomy;
Ante-natal Clinic.

Surgery Hours

Monday	08:00 – 19:30
Tuesday	08:00 – 18:30
Wednesday	08:00 – 18:30
Thursday	08:00 – 18:30
Friday	07:15 – 18:30
Saturday/Sunday	Closed

Results of visit

Environment

The Hawthorns Surgery in Lower Stondon operates in a single-storey modern purpose built facility, with plenty of parking, including disabled parking and appropriate wheelchair access. There is good visible signage both inside and outside the building however, due to high hedges at the entrance to the lane from the main road 'The Hawthorns' sign board was partially obscured and easily missed.

The premises throughout are light and airy with an ambient temperature. A large reception/waiting area contains a reception desk and a 'SystemOne' terminal which patients may use to record their arrival. Patients are notified when they are due to go for their appointment by the relevant GP or nurse coming to the waiting area to call for them.



Other observations included:

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

Car Parking

This modern surgery has what appears to be ample parking for both patients, including disabled bays, and for staff. The disabled bays are adjacent to the entrance; staff parking is to the rear of the building.

Patient Information

The surgery has a good and varied selection of leaflets available for patients displayed in racks and on a table in the waiting area and on a Community Noticeboard. The Practice website also contains general patient information. The surgery operates a Facebook page and a Twitter account, although HWCB representatives' research showed that neither had been updated since December 2014. A Practice Newsletter was referred to however the only one seen by HWCB representatives was on the website and is dated Autumn 2014.

Registration at the Practice(s)

HWCB representatives were advised by the Practice Manager that patients can register at the surgery by personally visiting the Practice, or by downloading forms from the website and emailing them to the Practice.

The Practice operates a policy whereby people can make an appointment prior to registration and the Practice also operates a temporary residents policy, particularly in light of the large influx of workers presently engaged in the housebuilding industry in the area.

A Practice leaflet is made available to patients on registration.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The Practice operates a PPG which meets bi-monthly (3-monthly in the summer). The Practice Manager confirmed that the group provides very useful feedback; the average age range is 45 – 75. At the time of the visit, HWCB representatives were advised that the group consists of eight regular members, three male and five female. The group is very active and helps with fundraising and also manages a stall at the local school's Christmas Fayre.

The PPG is advertised on the surgery website, on Facebook, in the waiting room and in the Practice's newsletter. Staff indicated that it is difficult to recruit to the PPG and more young people were needed.

Patient Consultation

The Practice gains feedback from patients from main sources listed below:

- GP Survey.
- Patient comments/suggestions directly to the Practice in the Suggestions Box.
- Results of the Friends and Family Test.
- Facebook and Twitter feedback.

Any issues identified from these areas are discussed with the PPG at the next meeting. The Practice has also had discussions with the PPG over appointment availability within the Practice.

HWCB representatives were advised that the PPG felt that the surgery did not always have enough pre-bookable appointments available. To address these concerns the Practice subsequently set up a system in which appointments will always be available to book, up to thirteen weeks ahead, which helps patients who have regular appointments and also the patients who need to see the nurse for appointments such as INR or regular injections. The surgery has employed another GP to improve the availability of appointments. All four doctors now have appointments available to book up to thirteen weeks ahead'. (Extract from 2014/15 Patient Participation Enhanced Service – Reporting Template)

Appointments System

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

Emergency appointments are available from 12:00 daily and late appointments with the Practice Nurse are available on Mondays.

The Practice operates a text reminder service for appointments 48 hours prior to appointment time and this has contributed to the reduction in DNAs (Did Not Attend) to 2.6%. Home visits are mostly for housebound patients and palliative care patients; the duty doctor will decide whether a home visit is required.

HWCB representatives were advised that appointments times are allocated for 10 minutes although one of the four GPs has 15 minute appointments.

Out of Hours Care

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

Medication & Prescriptions

The Dispensary is based in the Practice and is open during these hours;

Monday	08.00 - 13:00 and 16:00 – 19:30
Tuesday	08.00 - 13:00 and 16:00 – 18:30
Wednesday	08.00 - 18:30
Thursday	08.00 - 13:00 and 15:30 – 18:30
Friday	07.30 – 13:00 and 14:00 – 18:30

Dispensing medications depends on individual circumstances and patients can order repeat prescriptions on line or in person. Repeat prescriptions are available in 48 hours.

HWCB representatives were advised by the Practice Manager and several members of staff that since the opening of an independent pharmacy close by in the village, they have had to curtail the delivery service they previously offered to many of their 'less mobile' patients.

In addition, there is very limited parking available at this pharmacy and feedback from patients and staff has indicated that the service provided is of poor quality and is causing problems (i.e. wrong medication, wrong dosage.)

Patient Questionnaire Results

The Practice currently has 5,293 patients registered. A total of 10 survey questionnaires were completed during the preceding two weeks.

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

1. 60% of patients recalled receiving a practice leaflet when registering at the surgery, the remaining 40% couldn't remember;
2. 90% of patients said they found it easy to register at the Practice;
3. 50% of patients who completed the questionnaire confirmed they were aware the Practice(s) has a PPG and 50% answered that they did not know if the Practice had a PPG;
4. None of the patients who completed the questionnaire was a member of the PPG;
5. 44% of patients who responded to the survey booked their appointments by telephone, 39% booked in person and only 17% booked online;
6. The majority of patients were aware that late appointments were available for booking;
7. 70% of patients who completed the questionnaire felt they could access an appointment when they needed one however, 30% felt they could not get the appointment they needed, and 13% gave other qualifying responses;
8. 70% of the patients who completed the questionnaire confirmed they received a text reminder about their appointment, 10% said no, with 20% indicating they did not have a mobile phone;
9. 70% of patients spoken to and who completed the questionnaire confirmed they were given a choice of health professional when booking the appointment;
10. 90% of patients who completed the questionnaire were aware of the Practice opening times;
11. A range of responses was given to the question regarding what to do if 'out of hours' care is needed; the most popular response was to ring the surgery out of hours number and as many said they would ring 111;
12. 90% of patients answered positively to the question whether they feel they have enough time with the GP to discuss their issues;
13. 90% of patients felt that the GP listened to their concerns and considered their opinion;
14. 90% of patients found the staff at the Practice helpful and understanding;
15. 90% of patients would recommend the Practice to other people; a very small percentage said they would not and 10% were 'unsure'
16. Only 50% of patients who responded were aware the Practice has a complaints policy and knew how to complain; 50% did not know.

Interaction between Patients and Staff

HWCB representatives observed members of staff both clinical and administrative speaking to patients. All interactions witnessed were conducted in a professional but friendly manner. Representatives also briefly met the Midwife (based at the Shefford Health Centre) who was visiting and seeing patients and noted the same standard of professionalism and courtesy.

Clinical and non-clinical staff

All members of staff seen and spoken to during the visit were friendly and helpful to the representatives and to the patients they were observed interacting with. This included both clinical and non-clinical staff. Staff spoken to during the visit explained that they liked working at the Practice and felt the service provided at the Practice was good.

The majority of staff when asked how they felt about working at the practice responded with; *'I love working here'*. The majority of staff also felt supported in their work and indicated there was *'adequate'* numbers of staff available, *'We work well as a team, and cover each other when needed'* and that *'the balance of skills is right'*.

All staff confirmed they attend various training courses for their role, including in-house training and GP training. One staff member confirmed, *'I have been very well supported and have been encouraged and able to learn new skills'*. However, one staff member felt that the external training on offer is very expensive and that there was *'a lack of Locality, CCG and PLZ training,'* also that *'there needs to be Equality & Diversity training'*

When staff were asked if there were any changes they would like to make at the Practice, comments ranged from; *'Longer GP appointments'* and *'I'd like a proper chair for patients when having their bloods taken,'* and *'more time with my patients'*, to *'a better appointment system with the Lister Hospital, sometimes they take too long'*. However, all agreed that the patients are very well looked after and they strive to work with their patients to give the best possible service.

Concerns/Complaints Procedure

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

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

Additional Findings

HWCB representatives were informed by a member of staff that the Practice is under increasing financial pressures due to the changes made to GPES (General Practice Extraction Service) and CQRS (Calculating Quality Reporting Service) which leads to delayed payments of invoices.

Representatives were also informed that the MSK (Musculoskeletal) Service run by Circle Health is *'inefficient, with some referrals 'bouncing' and long delays.'*

HWCB representatives were pleased to note that the Practice has responded positively to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's 'Mystery Shopper Report' 'Investigating the Complaints Process – General Practice'. The Practice had previously met two of the five measures and now meets all five measures.

General comments received from patients included:

'Just registered as a new patient so I have no experience of these last questions!'
'Excellent – staff always helpful and able to get appointments for myself and my children. A service'*
'No complaints at all!'

'I like this doctors. They are friendly. I can get appointments. They have always looked after me through a few issues I have had.'

'I don't like the NHS policy on where I can or can't collect my prescription. I used to collect it from the surgery dispensary, now I have to go elsewhere. I don't like it.'

Recommendations

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire recommends that as part of their regular training, all staff, clinical and administrative, should have additional training to ensure that they fully understand both the Complaints Policy and the Complaints Procedure.

HWCB would also recommend that staff training is reviewed to ensure all staff are able to take up the training offered and to be aware of staff suggestions for training requirements.

HWCB recommends that, as the Practice refers to a Newsletter, Twitter account and Facebook page, that these be updated on a regular basis to ensure they are current.

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

Thank you for your report following your visit to the surgery on 13th August 2015

The report has been passed to all staff in the practice, both clinical and non-clinical for their comments.

We have considered the contents of the report and feel we need to comment on a few statements in it.

The report states that complaints information is not displayed. The waiting room has a fully stocked supply of the complaints procedure. There is also information regarding the complaints procedure on the noticeboard by the dispensary.

You state names and photographs of GP's were not displayed; the sign in the entrance lobby has now been reprinted with the names of all the doctors. The GP's are not happy to have their photographs displayed on the board.

You also state breastfeeding and baby changing facilities were not apparent. On the patients toilet there is a large sign that says baby changing facilities. At the time of the visit you correctly say no breastfeeding facilities were apparent. We will put a sign up to alert patients to the fact they can request this.

I would also point out that staff training is reviewed regularly and staff are always encouraged to take up any training that is available. Unfortunately there is a huge lack of training opportunities for administration staff in General Practice and the majority of training has to be sourced independently and is extremely costly for which no funding is available. There is however a limited amount of training available on line and the staff are always given time during their working hours to partake in this.

Jill Watson
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