

Enter & View Report

Service	Croydon University Hospital - Orthotics Department
Address	530 London Road, Croydon, CR7 7YE
Manager	Alexandra Mathieson - Head of Integrated Adult Therapy
Date and time of visit	Tuesday 24th November 2015 at 10.45am
Status of visit	Announced
Healthwatch Croydon Enter & View Team - Authorised Representatives	Annamika Koomoshan, Anne Milstead
Lead Authorised Representative	Annamika Koomoshan
Healthwatch Croydon contact details	Healthwatch Croydon, 24 George Street, Croydon, CR0 1PB

Reason: Healthwatch Croydon trends analysis report showed a high number of people had problems with booking appointments.

Acknowledgements: Healthwatch Croydon would like to thank Alexandra Mathieson and the Orthotics staff, patients and carers for their co-operation during the visit.

Purpose of the visit: The Health and Social Care Act allows Healthwatch Croydon representatives to observe service delivery and to talk to service users, their families and relatives on premises such as hospitals, residential care homes, GP Practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. The visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service, but equally, they can take place when services have a good reputation. We can therefore learn from shared examples of what they are doing well from the perspective of the people who experience the service first hand.

On this occasion, 2 Authorised Representatives (including a Healthwatch staff member) carried out observations and engaged with patients, carers and staff. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations on areas for improvement if required. Healthwatch Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policy. If at any time an Authorised Representative observes a potential safeguarding concern, they will inform their lead and service manager. The Lead Authorised Representative will then end the visit. In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to Croydon Council's Safeguarding Team.

About the service

The Orthotics department provides a triage service so patients and outpatients are referred to the correct area. This process assesses the urgency for an appointment and the type of appointment required. The referrals are received from GPs via Croydon Referral Support Service or directly from the Consultants and hospital wards. 8.7% of their appointments are non-attendance.

At present, locum Orthotists were covering until the permanent Orthotist starts his new position in January 2016. Once a month, the Orthotist carries out a community visit to Rutherford School to support children with leg braces and spinal braces. On occasions, the Orthotist assesses patients on the wards. When the substantive Orthotist is in post it is anticipated that there will be more multidisciplinary sessions e.g. with vascular, trauma and orthopaedic and the neurorehab team. In addition the department orders and stores equipment for other hospital departments such as:

- Plaster room
- Fracture clinic
- Physiotherapy - orders not stores
- Podiatry - orders not stores
- Vascular team - orders not stores

It was understood that whilst the demand for the services has increased, the resources and budgets had remained the same. The service delivers within its financial envelope, through careful stock management and ordering process ensuring value for money. Two new trauma and orthopaedic surgeons were recruited without consideration of the impact on other services such as orthotics. Therefore putting pressure on existing staffing levels and on the supply of orthoses. Previously the waiting times were 4-5 weeks, now the waiting time is 4 months. On some occasion the department is not receiving referrals from Croydon Referral Support Service. With the appointment of the new Orthotist it is anticipated that the number of appointments available will increase as the Orthotist has a greater capacity to see patients than a locum.

There are currently two phone lines, which do not have a call waiting system or allow patients to leave a message. The IT system is slow and the process to change appointments, book appointment takes staff longer. The impact of this is that if the receptionist is on the phone altering an appointment then other users are unable to get through on that line. The Orthotist explained that the treatment room is not big enough to properly observe patients using equipment. Often, there is not have enough flat space to plaster patients and sometimes has to use the floor. There is a plinth similar to that used by the plaster room that can be used to plaster patients.

Orthotics department suggested solution: Merge both the Physiotherapy and the Orthotics departments together so there is shared working. This would support the Orthotics department in sharing the resources of the Admin Hub to deal with booking appointments and referrals. There would be more storage space for the department to store equipment to share resources in a safer way.

Observations

Staff were observed dealing with patients in a friendly and professional manner. Patients did not wait long for their appointments. Information was available on the department Complaints Procedure and the NHS friends and family test. Other information was displayed within the waiting area:

- Healthwatch Croydon poster
- Code of conduct - ABC Policy
- How to fight flu
- Text reminder service

Outside the entrance there was a hand sanitiser for patients to use on arrival or exit.

Feedback from patients

	Question	Response
1	Referral	The aim was to obtain outpatients' experiences about the referral process. Everyone was very satisfied with the referral process.
2	Booking appointments	The aim was to obtain outpatients' experiences in booking appointments. One person said they received an appointment letter but had to change it to a more convenient time during half term staff accommodated the request. Other people commented that calls are answered and dealt with straightaway.
3	Staff interaction with patients	The aim was to obtain patients' experiences of staff interaction. Feedback received was that staffs are excellent and that they receive an excellent service. One particular carer comments "I have a child with special needs, staff takes this into consideration. On arrival for appointment I am seen straightaway."
4	Treatment	<p>A carer commented "The Orthotist is flexible in dealing with the needs of her daughter. I have popped in today to ask the Administrator a question without an appointment. Staff are supportive and caring I feel listened too, this is a really good service."</p> <p>One carer's feedback regarding the Orthotist "It's reassuring to hear that my partner is managing the treatment correctly and that we are doing the right thing. My partner and I felt listened to, with her MS condition, the Orthotist has given an open referral to manage her condition, and it's a breath of fresh air."</p>

Feedback from staff

	Question	Response
1	Positive aspects of the role	The aim was to give staff an opportunity to feed back the positive aspects of their role. Staff commented "I like the interaction with patients. I feel I am doing something helpful."
2	Challenges and difficulties of the role	The aim was to establish if staff encounters any challenges within their job. Staff commented, "I cannot deal with the demand of the job now I am ordering things for other departments, dealing with deliveries and unpacking, storing equipment for other departments. Plus stock items are held for other departments. The store cupboard is full of boxes from the top to bottom shelves plus boxes on the floor. I recently had an injury from boxes falling on top of me from the top shelf. Dealing with ordering and deliveries is taking me away from my job role and is having an impact on booking appointments for the orthotics departments. I feel under a lot of pressure from providing admin support to 4 clinics alone." The record system is mainly manual as an invoice has to be matched to each patient and this can only be done by a paper record which is time consuming."

Feedback from staff

	Questions	Response
3	Improvement and suggestions	The aim was to find out if staff are able to make any suggestions. Staff commented “Ideally the department should have one full time and two part time members of staff to cover the admin, orders, and deliveries. In addition, there should be two Orthotists to deal with the demand of the service and to cover leave. Another suggestion is for the Orthotics to stop ordering and storing equipment for other departments, therefore allowing the Orthotics department to concentrate on their own area.
4	Training and development	The aim was to establish whether staff are offered training and development. Staff commented that they are offered training but they do not have time to attend training courses.
5	Support from management	The aim was to establish if staff are supported by their Manager. Staff commented that they feel supported by their Manager and they understood that their Manager is sometimes restricted with implementing changes. Also, they understand that their Manager covers a large number of departments at Croydon University Hospital.
6	Process in patients booking appointment	The aim was to establish the appointment system. Staff commented that “Patients come straight through to the department. If the department is busy with phone calls they notify PALS. Sometimes outpatients do have problems with getting through.”
7	Complaints	The aim was to establish how the department deals with complaints. A member of staff commented “Complaints go straight through to the Manager.”

Conclusion

Overall, positive feedback was received from outpatients regarding the appointment booking system and interaction and treatment from staff. Internally, the overall impression is the department provides a good service which was commented on by outpatients. A member of staff fed back that they felt under pressure with the current work load.

Positives

- Outpatients commented staff are excellent and that they also receive a brilliant service
- Outpatients very satisfied with the treatment they receive
- Outpatients felt staff listen to them and understood their needs
- Outpatients stated that it was easy to call to book or change an appointment
- Patients did not have to wait long for their appointment
- Staff made outpatients feel welcome and dealt with any enquiries in a friendly manner

Recommendations

- Feedback from Admin staff is that they spend the majority of their time ordering items and dealing with deliveries for other departments e.g. plaster room, physiotherapy etc. These items are then stored in their stock cupboard awaiting collection. Therefore, this takes time away from the core functions of their job role within the Orthotics Department and puts additional stress on staff.

Recommendation: To look at alternative methods for other departments to order their own equipment and deal with their deliveries plus storing their items within their own area. This will reduce the pressure on the Orthotics Department. Also, there should be a means of identifying ways of supporting the individual with their health and wellbeing.

Actions taken to date by the Orthotics department:

- Orthotics no longer supply hosiery so admin do not have to order this.
- Orthotics do not have a walk in clinic, all patients have an appointment, and this has reduced the workload for the admin in supplying goods.
- Plaster room supply all walker boots, slings etc that once came to orthotics. This has reduced workload for admin.
- Discussions with plaster room to hold some stock to free up space in stock room.
- Discussions with inpatient physio and neurophysio to hold own stock and order.
- Children's physio order their own stock.
- Podiatry order own stock.
- Referrals triaged and redirected to podiatry or hand therapy were appropriate.
- Removed stock from store room freeing up space, and brought stock down from higher shelves.
- Reviewing the use of materials management which is a process whereby a minimum stock level is maintained of core stock items which will save on the need to order and to hold large stock levels.
- Quote for new shelving/storage.

Orthotics Department feedback: Orthotics is looking at a computerised system that orders stock items automatically when it reaches low levels. Management are considering moving the Orthotics Department next to the Physiotherapy Department within a larger area. If a member of staff is feeling stressed they are referred to Occupational Health for support.

- The stock cupboard was nearly full from floor to ceiling height and the majority of shelves were packed with equipment. From observation the Authorised Representatives were unaware of how staff store or collect equipment above height level so that items are able to be lifted down safely i.e. item weight should be considered.

Recommendation: Review the Health & Safety of the stock cupboard. Action: to undertake a risk assessment of the stock cupboard to prevent an injury.

Actions taken by the Orthotics department:

- Stock not required removed.
- Shelves clear to bring stock down.
- New orthotist will have more capacity to see and issue items already received and so clear the stock.
- Staff demonstrated that the water within the treatment room was scalding hot which is a health and safety issue and could potentially burn a patient or a member of staff.

Recommendation: Action: to get the hot water tap repaired to prevent an injury.

Actions taken by the Orthotics department: Works department have resolved this.

Disclaimer

This report is a representative sample of the views of the outpatients, carers and staff that Healthwatch Croydon spoke to within this timeframe and does not represent the views of all the outpatients, carers and staff at Croydon University Orthotics Department. The observations made in this report only relate to the visit carried out at Croydon University Department on Tuesday 24th November 2015 at 10:45am.