



**Young Healthwatch
Northamptonshire
visit to Northampton
General Hospital**

**October
2017**





Contents

Introduction.....	2
Report from Young Healthwatch.....	3
Visit to Disney and Paddington Wards, Northampton General Hospital	3
Welcoming:	3
Safe:	5
Caring and involving:.....	6
Well organised and calm:.....	8
Conclusions	9
Summary of findings	9
Recommendations:	9
What worked well:	9
About Healthwatch Northamptonshire.....	10
Contact us.....	11



Introduction

In October 2017 four Young Healthwatch volunteers visited Paddington¹ and Disney² wards (the children's wards) and the Paediatric Assessment Unit³ at Northampton General Hospital to give feedback to the hospital about the wards from the perspective of young people. This is the second time that young people have reported their observations of a general hospital children's ward in Northamptonshire (the first was the visit to Skylark ward at Kettering General Hospital in 2016⁴). Healthwatch Northamptonshire staff accompanied the young people on the visit and training was provided to prepare the volunteers.

This report has been written by Young Healthwatch volunteers in their own words and expresses their own opinions. It is based on their own observations and those of the people they spoke to - one child and one set of parents. The content has not been altered by either Healthwatch Northamptonshire or Northampton General Hospital except for clarification.

Preparation

During 2016, Young Healthwatch took part in an Enter and View⁵ training session to prepare for visiting the children's wards at Kettering General Hospital and Northampton General Hospital.

In October 2017 Healthwatch Northamptonshire held a refresher session for the young people that would be visiting Northampton General Hospital.



¹ **Paddington** Ward cares for children up to the age of 19 years with a wide range of acute medical conditions, including those suffering with chronic conditions such as diabetes, Cystic Fibrosis and asthma. Paddington has several larger rooms where children are nursed alongside other children and cubicles where children may be nursed should they have an infection.

² Children are admitted to **Disney** Ward directly from GPs, A&E, Paediatric Assessment Unit or electively for surgery. The ward also specialises in Oncology and Haematology. Disney ward has a number of four-bedded bays, as well as single rooms.

³ The **Paediatric Assessment Unit** (PAU) is an acute medical assessment unit that caters typically from birth to 16 years. Within PAU children are assessed and receive treatment before either being discharged home or admitted to paediatric in-patient facilities.

⁴ www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/resources/young-healthwatch-visit-kettering-general-hospital-report

⁵ Under the Healthwatch regulations, local Healthwatch organisations have the power to Enter and View providers so that our authorised representatives can observe matters relating to health and social care services. The purpose of the visit will be to identify good practice that can be celebrated and shared with others, and to identify any issues about which service users feel concerned.



Report from Young Healthwatch

Visit to Disney, Paddington Wards and Paediatric Assessment Unit Northampton General Hospital, 25 October 2017

Welcoming:

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited Paddington Ward, Disney Ward and the Paediatric Assessment Unit (PAU) at Northampton General Hospital. As soon as we entered the wards we were greeted by very friendly staff, including the ward sister and matron.

The walls in all the areas had a theme of cartoons and characters that the children could relate to and pictures of waves and calming blue colours, as well as a riding horse on Disney ward, which gives a sense of fun and excitement rather than the often associated dread when it comes to hospital. However, there could perhaps be more characters or interactive equipment for older children. It was great to see the doctors in normal clothing so as not to scare the children.

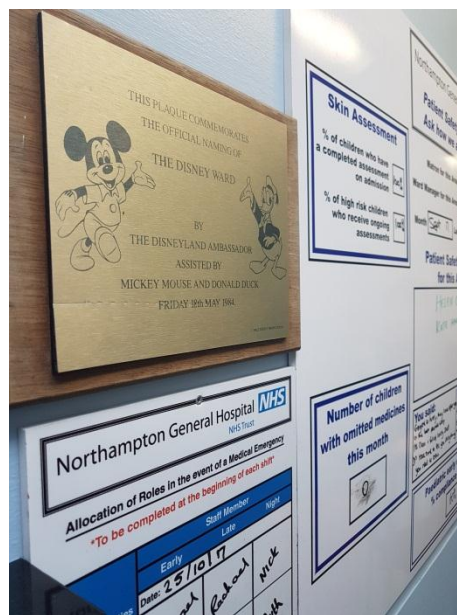
The PAU was very bright, open and light, which presents a very welcoming and friendly atmosphere. In addition there were little touches such as the robot TV and Winnie the Pooh drawings which made it more interactive for younger children. Within the unit, individual TV screens as well as a large screen TV were provided for entertainment purposes so that it suited everyone. Also, there were many charging points for each bed so you wouldn't have to worry about your phone running out of charge.



On Disney Ward there were rooms with three to five beds in them and there are single rooms available for certain patients. They had different rooms for different needs, such as the surgery room. Most of the patients don't stay very long. NGH has utilised the space they have very well and put up informative posters about mental health and have an organised board for all the staff to refer to.



On Paddington Ward, the corridors were very clean and clear to ensure there was little you could trip on, compared to Disney ward where the corridors were slightly cluttered with equipment. The corridors were quiet as well and there were no intimidating beeping sounds, which ensures the experience isn't as anxiety inducing, as coming to a hospital as a young child can be very scary. The space seemed very welcoming with subtle light blue walls making the place feel warmer and less frightening. Compared to Disney ward, Paddington ward looked more appealing to the older children aged between 11-18 years as the colours weren't so bright and would therefore appeal to teenagers. There were a range of leaflets around the walls which would be useful to the parents and patients.



One of the best things about each ward was that they had an outside area where you could go out and get some fresh air. The parents that we spoke to said the fact that they could go out and have some fresh air with their child was one of the things they appreciated the most, or else they would have felt very cooped up.





Safe:

One of the great ways that the paediatric wards safeguard their patients is by having a bell and camera system. Non-authorized people (anyone that is not a staff member with access to the ward) can be buzzed in. Staff in the paediatric wards have an ID card which allow them to get in and out of those doors by simply scanning it. Large blue gates are placed near the exit of the wards to stop children from wandering off the wards without supervision.



The medicines are securely locked in a trolley with one set of keys. The medicine cupboard was locked and the registered nurse had the set of keys and to open it. Others had to obtain the keys from this nurse, allowing them to monitor the quantities of each item. There were always two people to check the dosage and a calculator is used to allow precise calculation for each patient. This lets the medicines be monitored securely and controlled so that none go missing or so no children can access them. All of the stronger medicines are stored in a different cupboard for added safety.

There was an activity centre to provide a safe space for the children. They also separated the wards so the children with weaker immune systems would be separated from those with more infectious diseases.



Caring and involving:

All the beds had a curtain around them so there was privacy if needed. In the oncology rooms there was WiFi, games consoles (a Wii and a PlayStation), a TV, a couch and an ensuite bathroom, which really added a homely touch and allowed a more comfortable atmosphere to be created where patients can have their own space. Furthermore there was a double pull out bed so both parents could stay if they wanted.



Parent facilities included hairdryers, showers and a room with microwaves and kettles, a sofa, and a fridge so they can relax and make any food or hot drinks. This makes it a less stressful time for the parents as well. In addition, the parents we spoke to were happy with their interaction with the staff.

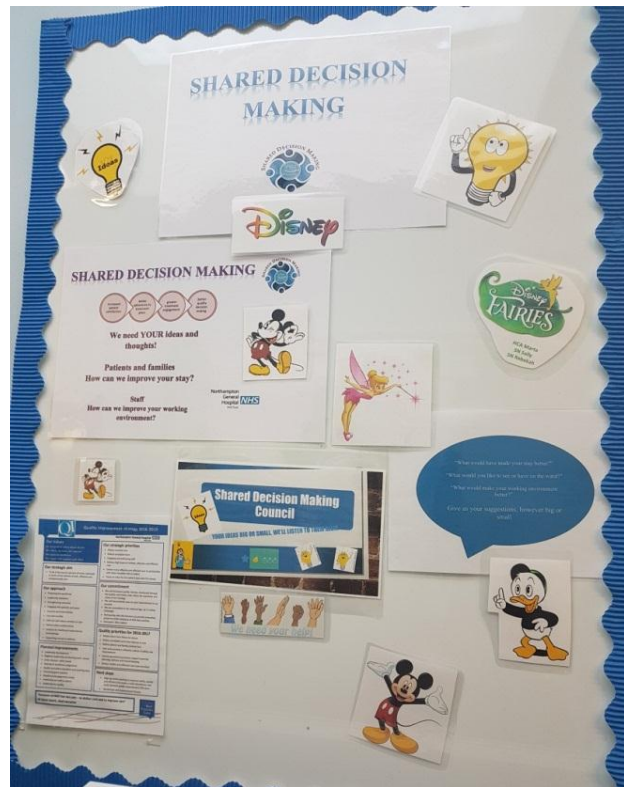
The play specialists really go out of their way to comfort the child. They are present to distract and talk to children during something as small as an injection, to carrying out a pre-op clinic session and being present in the theatres. They explain the procedure suited to each individual using different methods such as specialised dolls or PowerPoint presentations. The play therapists work mostly one on one and any preference from the child can be noted and added to their files for consistency and to make sure they feel more comfortable during their stay. In fact older children can even have access to a teaching assistant and contact the school for work, making sure there is a balance between rest and school work. If they are able they could even take their exam. If required, they can also be referred to an occupational therapist.

They have catered for different ages in the Play Area with different activities for them during the day but in order to improve, they could redesign the area to include different zones for different ages - for example, for the 2-9 year olds have the walls painted in bright, engaging colours with different play equipment for them to wind down with and for the 10 - 17 year olds make the wall colours a little more subtle like blues and purples and add different equipment which appeals more to teenagers.



We could see some great teamwork from the staff and all staff members are encouraged to generate ideas and there is a monthly six-hour meeting where it can be discussed and carried out. The staff on Paddington and Disney Wards were all very friendly and we feel they would make the experience for the children a lot less alarming.

There were feedback forms for patients and parents to fill out on both of the wards.



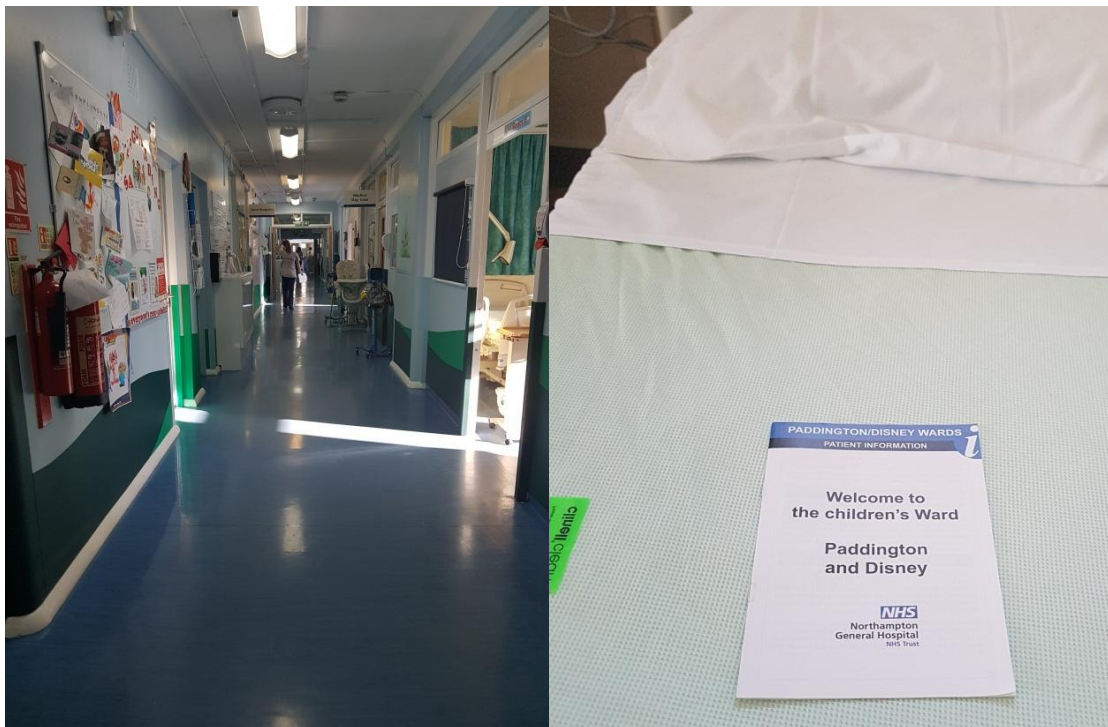


Well organised and calm:

Overall it was very calm and not very loud. Everything seemed very organised and there were signs outside the doors showing whether the room was in use or not. The layout of the straight corridor allowed ease of access and avoided a maze like ward.

We think the directions could have been clearer as although the doors had signs on them and were clear, we didn't notice many signs pointing in the right direction and pictures next to some of the signs may help younger kids to understand. They could include signs on the walls opposite each cubicle door with arrows to the toilets so they don't need to look around, the direction to go is right in front of them. Patients and parents are briefed on where to find the toilets, food and drinks, and how to get in and out when admitted.

We feel that the wards are kept very clean and organised; it is a safe and good place for the patients. The wards have a calm atmosphere with hardly any intimidating beeps or frightening noises ensuring the patient's time in hospital is somewhat enjoyable. You can easily identify the different parts of the wards as there are signs which show where they are.





Conclusions

Overall the children's wards in Northampton General Hospital were welcoming and safe. All the areas we visited were clean and well organised. Space on the wards was utilised well. They appeared to provide a good level of care and there were safety measures in place to safeguard the patients on the wards. The staff seemed happy and friendly. The patient and set of parents we talked to spoke well of their experience of the ward. The children's wards seem to listen to the patients and staff to make improvements for future patients.

Summary of findings

Recommendations:

- There could be more characters on the walls or interactive equipment for older children.
- Children could benefit from a stool to reach the sink in the bathroom a little easier.
- The directions could have been clearer on the ward and could include signs on the walls with arrows to the toilets.
- Corridors on Disney ward could be less cluttered to reduce the risk of tripping over equipment.
- They could redesign the area (play centre) to include different zones for different ages of patients.
- There were concerns raised that having teenagers and babies on the same wards may cause problems with noise levels for patients needing rest.

What worked well:

- It was great to see the doctors in normal clothing so as not to scare the children.
- There was a double pull out bed in the oncology rooms so both parents could stay if they wanted.
- The staff on the wards were all very friendly and make the experience for the children a lot less alarming.
- In Paddington Ward there is also a room for the parents. This makes it a less stressful time for the parents as well. This room can be accessed by parents with children on both wards.



About Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Healthwatch Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and wellbeing and improve the quality of services to meet people's needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and social care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvement, where required.

Our rights and responsibilities include:

We have the power to monitor (known as “Enter and View”) health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of health and social care.

We report our findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision makers and make the case for improved services where we find there is a need for improvement

We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people, to influence how services are planned, organised and delivered.

We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we find out what local people think about health and social care. We research patient, user and carer opinions using lots of different ways of finding out views and experiences. We do this to give local people a voice. We provide information and advice about health and social care services.

Where we do not feel the views and voices of Healthwatch Northamptonshire and the people who we strive to speak on behalf of, are being heard, we have the option to escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations including Healthwatch England, NHS England and the Care Quality Commission.





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