

Visit to Spectrum Sexual Health Clinic

October 2022

Healthwatch Wakefield is your local health and social care champion for the District. From Overton to Knottingley and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

We have the power to make NHS leaders and other care providers listen to what you have to say. We also offer information and advice to help you to get the support you need. Our service is free, simple to use and can make a real difference to people in Wakefield District and beyond.

Visit Date: Thursday 13 October 2022

Visited by: Healthwatch staff member Safeen, Healthwatch Wakefield volunteer Paul, and Young Healthwatch volunteers Abbie, Ali, and Francesca.

Spectrum Staff: Andi Cope, Relationships and Sex Education Lead, and Julia Brooke, Head of Wakefield Integrated Sexual Health Service.

Other people and organisations: Wakefield Commissioner, and British Pregnancy Advisory Service also known as BPAS.



Healthwatch Wakefield and Young Healthwatch volunteers, Francesca, Paul, Ali, and Abbie

The visit

The Spectrum Sexual Health Clinic tour was a surprising experience and was extremely insightful as it provided a deeper look into the lives of those behind the doors of Spectrum.

Abbie said that in her personal opinion, as someone who had never been before, she was giving feedback as to how she would imagine the experience could be from the perspective of a service user.

We believe there are a few changes and adaptations that could be made to help the service.

Areas we visited

The location of the clinic was discussed and suggested that it could be signposted more clearly as the door was quite hidden away and out of the way.

To access the building, the entrance has an intercom system in use where people have to speak into an intercom to confirm their appointment before being allowed in.

This can take time, it can also be cold and windy outside, and people may feel embarrassed talking into an intercom outside the clinic.

Could the intercom be moved inside Spectrum, or a procedure applied such as texting when outside to confirm a patient has arrived?

Everyone felt that the intercom was a clear point of change and should be moved indoors to be more private and protect patient confidentiality and anonymity, the staff however seemed aware of this issue and explained how Covid affected this.

Reception

The waiting area appeared quite daunting and therefore some changes could be made to present a more welcoming feel. Perhaps more colourful information boards to create a safe and secure feel for those awaiting a nerve-racking appointment, while being aware of infection control.

Seating was socially distanced during the visit. Some people may want to sit with anyone with them offering support, and we suggested pod seating.

Seating was basic for infection control reasons and digital leaflets are in operation to reduce infection. They don't have leaflets and magazines due to infection control.

Other types of seating could include PODS if they are wipeable for infection control.

Have a few monitors or TV screens up displaying information in rotation around certain sexual health topics.

Telephone lines

It was understood that the staff were aware of issues with the phones and wanted to improve this drastically. They explained it could take a while to get through which may discourage some individuals to call up again as it may have taken them hours to pluck up the courage to pick up the phone only to be put on hold.

Clinical rooms

The clinical rooms could also be made more colourful for younger service users the rooms were however clearly as clean, empty and clinical as they were for the safety of the service users.

There is a private room for delivering support and counselling. This room could be more comfortable with couches and supporting sensory toys. It currently has a large PC desk in the room and feels a little cramped.

A sofa being integrated into one of the rooms which can be used to give bad news was discussed. This would make it different from the rest and provide that sense of comfort especially if someone has come on their own. The painting around the room was welcoming however for the essence of the news it was felt more could be done to comfort the patient.

The Laboratory

The laboratory in particular was quite remarkable in our opinion as we believe it presented an insight into the jobs of those at the clinic which we may have not anticipated them to do.

"For some reason I had assumed that the clinicians were solely trained on sexual health only whereas the service manager explained their knowledge on the different drugs and temperatures at which they must be kept and how they could administer adrenaline, if need be, I also found the information on microscopy very interesting which proved how knowledgeable the clinicians were on sexually transmitted diseases."

Other suggestions

"An idea I had was that perhaps if the clinic was promoted more on social media, then this would help limit some of the stigma that surrounds those looking for the service of sexual health clinics and could perhaps encourage more people to walk through the doors. Therefore, if this increases the use of clinics perhaps, they could spread and branch out more across other areas as it may be quite taxing for younger individuals to travel to Wakefield especially with the current financial crisis."

“All staff were very accommodating, and I felt at ease with them even though I had just met them which was great.”

“Overall, other than these minor changes I believe that the spectrum sexual health clinic tour was a fantastic opportunity which exacerbated the need for sexual health and taught me things I did not know before”.

Service Response

I've read the feedback and shared with the team. Very positive feedback and thank you for taking precious time out to do this with us. I really enjoyed meeting everyone and I hope we can do this again at some point in the future.

In terms of actions following the feedback. We are currently looking at removing the intercom and moving this inside. We are opening our main entrance doors so patients and visitors can walk into our service from 1 February 2023. The intercom will only be used when the doors are locked during staff training times, Wednesdays 12.00 to 2.30 pm, and when it gets dark outside during the Winter months.

I've also taken on board the feedback for the counselling room and if we can find some funding, I'd like to change the room and buy a sofa, a plant and pictures to make the room more relaxing and less clinical. We can't, however, remove the PC as we need this for clinical telemedicine as we simply don't have enough rooms on some days at certain times.

The waiting room. We have changed this so it looks a little more inviting and moved our chairs nearer so patients can have their support, friend, or carer next to them. We've also made it look a little more colourful and less clinical by updating our notice boards.

If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thanks once again for your time.

Julia Brooke

Head of Wakefield Integrated Sexual Health Service
Spectrum Community Health CIC

Next steps

Young Healthwatch have been invited back to the service in August 2023 for an update. If you have anything you'd like to share about your experience of this service, or want to give any feedback or be involved, please do get in touch.

“Thank you Healthwatch for attending our clinic tour. It is our aim that patients in Wakefield always feel comfortable and confident when accessing our sexual health service. It is through hearing honest and creative ideas like yours that we can improve the experience for all our patients.”

Andi Cope, Relationships and Sex Education Lead

**Healthwatch Wakefield
The Plex
15 Margaret Street
Wakefield
WF1 2DQ**

www.healthwatchwakefield.co.uk

t: 01924 787379

If you are Deaf or hearing impaired you can text us on 07885 913396

e: enquiries@healthwatchwakefield.co.uk

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