

Enter & View Visit Report

Priory Gardens Surgery
6th December 2023

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Details of visit

Service address:	Priory Gardens Surgery, Grove View, Integrated Care Hub, First floor, Court Drive, Dunstable, LU5 4JD
Date and Time:	6 th December 2023 10am to 1:00pm
Authorised Representatives:	Diana Blackmun, Carol Carter, David De Butts
Contact details:	Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Capability House, Wrest Park, Silsoe, Bedfordshire, MK45 4HR Tel: 0300 303 8554

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) would like to thank the service provider, patients, visitors and staff for their contribution to the Enter and View visit.

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, 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 and care workers 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 concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies.

Purpose of the visit

- To engage with patients of the GP surgery and understand how dignity is being respected in GP surgery environment;
- Identify examples of good working practice;
- Observe patients and relatives engaging with the staff and their surroundings;
- Consult with patients, relatives and staff about their experiences of the environment within the surgery and how care is delivered.

Strategic drivers

- GP surgeries are a Local Healthwatch priority.
- To engage with patients of GP Practices and understand how dignity is being respected;
- Identify examples of good working practice.

Methodology

This was an announced Enter and View Visit.

Priory Gardens Surgery recently moved premises to a larger Integrated Care Hub in Dunstable and Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB), as an independent organisation, were invited to visit the surgery to meet with patients and their relatives, including staff. Notification of the intended visit, and posters informing patients and staff of the date of our visit, were previously sent to the surgery.

Upon arrival, representatives were met by the Practice Manager and practice staff.

In order to understand patient experience HWCB representatives used observational activity and conducted interviews over a period of approximately three hours within the waiting area, consultation room and office space.

After speaking with staff, HWCB representatives spoke with patients and distributed Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire leaflets. Patient questionnaires were also taken away by patients to give to their relatives (also patients of the surgery), to be completed and returned after the visit.

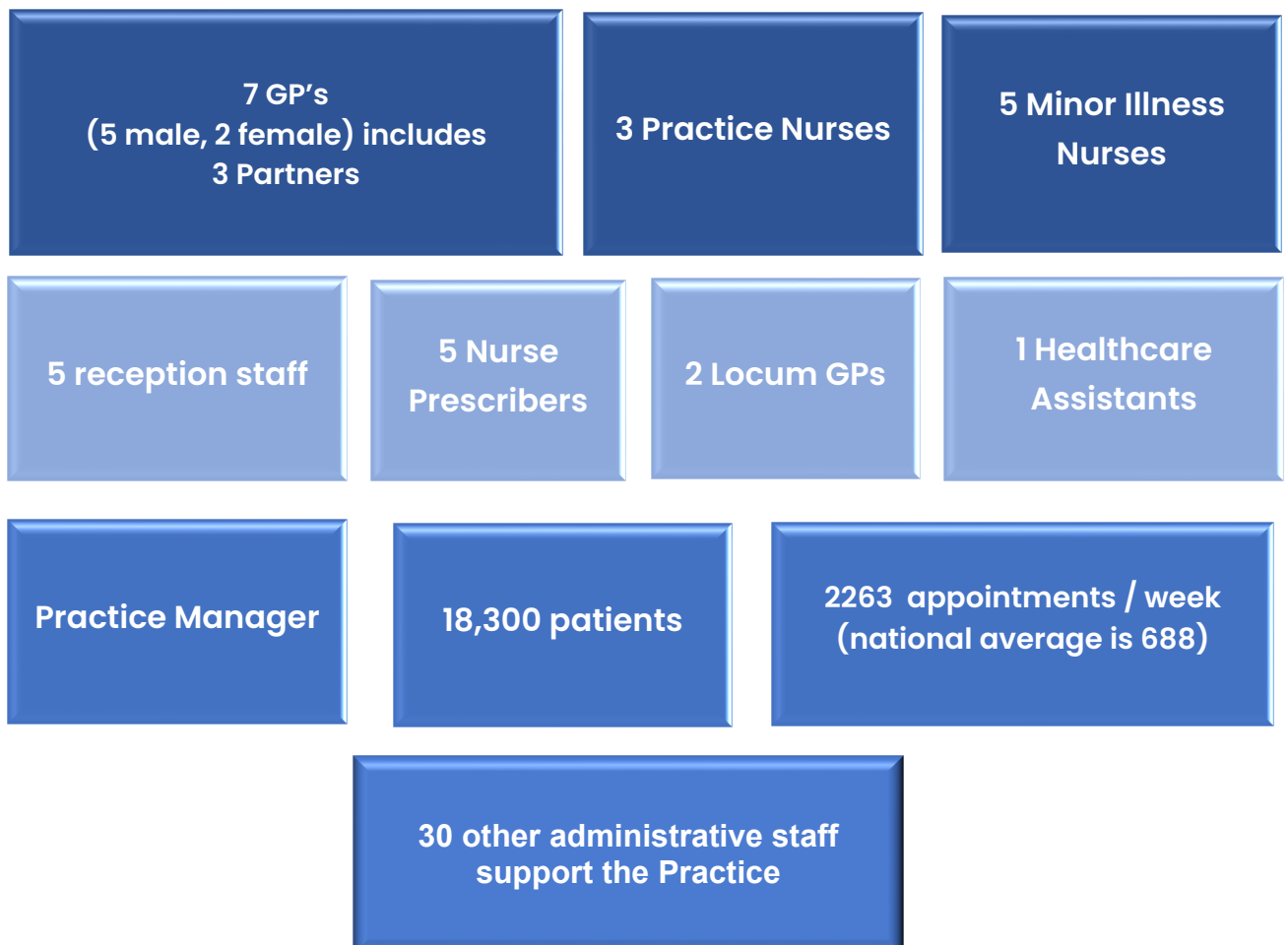


Summary of findings

This visit was prompted by the Practice recently moving to larger premises at a different venue; the Integrated Health and Care Hub. This is a 'one stop' hub where people can access high-quality care and services seven days a week, close to where they live, making it more accessible, convenient and easier for residents to use. It brings together a mix of health and care professionals in a single location to promote more joined-up working between the NHS, the council and voluntary and community sectors.

Priory Gardens Surgery is a GP surgery in Dunstable, working as part of Chiltern Hills Primary Care Network. The surgery is situated in a residential area and comprises three levels (GP Surgery is on the first level of the Hub).

The Practice Manager gave details of current staff and patient numbers as follows:



The service provided includes:

GP appointments
(both on the day and pre- bookable)

Minor illness appointments

General nursing appointments and Nurse Prescriber appointments

Vaccinations
this includes childhood immunisations, adolescent immunisations, flu/ pneumonia/ shingles inoculations and travel vaccines

Specialist Clinics

Walk in Clinic for Acute Symptoms and Bloods

Minor surgical procedures

Contraceptive and sexual health advice

ECG's & blood pressure Clinics Monday to Friday mornings

Diabetic clinics
(these include diabetic checks/ follow ups)

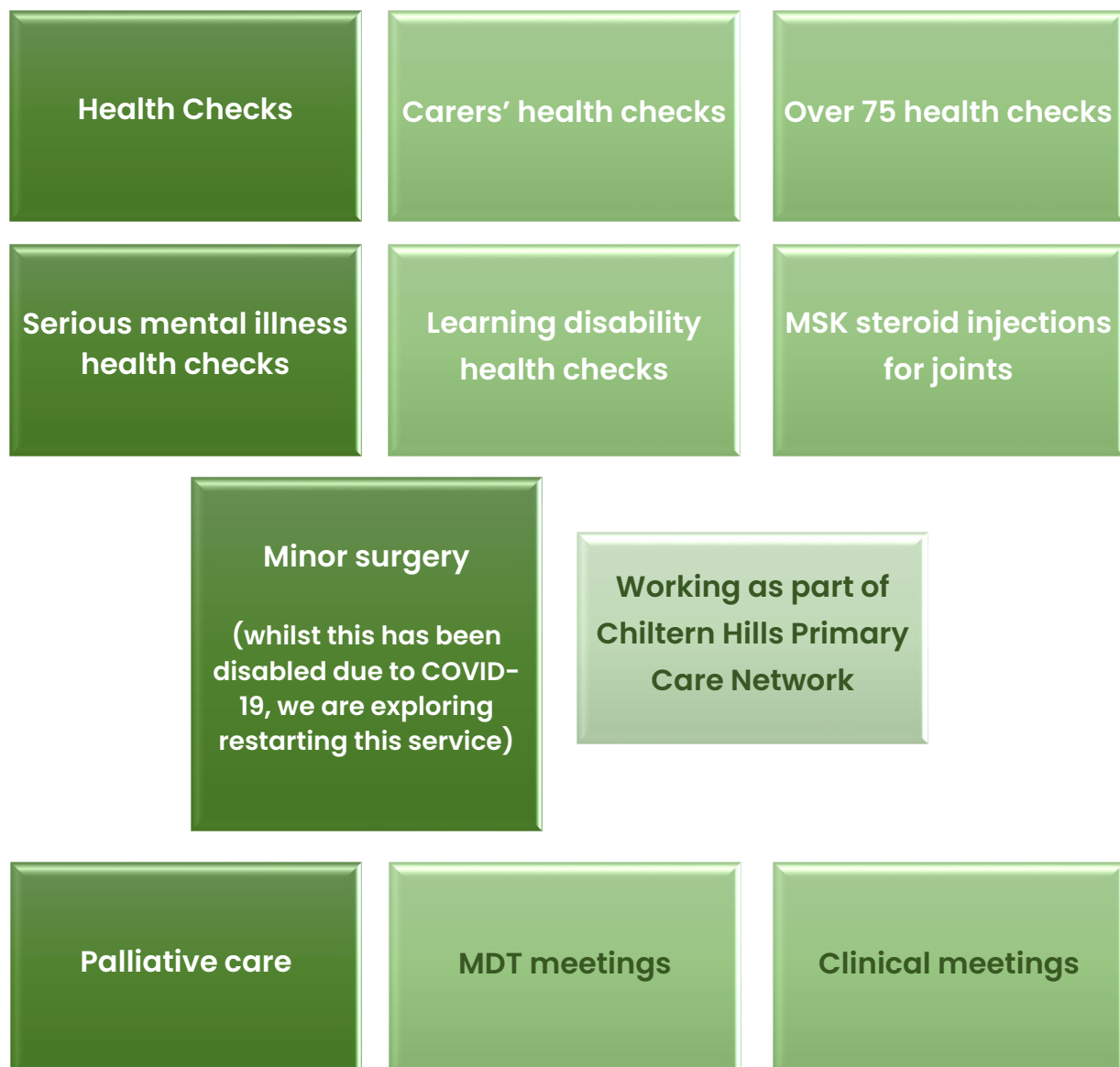
Longer appointments and home visits

SPHERE clinics coils and implants fitting and removal

Phlebotomy clinics Monday to Friday

End of life care

Smoking cessation service



HWCB engaged with patients in the waiting area, eleven of whom completed the questionnaire, a mix of male and female patients.

HWCB representatives also spoke to staff as follows:

- Practice Manager
- Front Desk Assistants / Admin
- Paramedic
- Partnered GP
- Healthcare Assistant / Health & Wellbeing Coach
- GP Assistants
- Surgery Volunteer

Results of Visit

Environment

This is a very modern, new building, easy to access, with a main entrance at the front which is very well signposted. On entry a manned reception for the whole building is slightly to the right with signposting to all areas within the building.

There is ample car parking available, for both patients and staff, and although the car park is 'Pay & Display', patients are able to park for free if they enter their registration number at main reception and receive a 'free' pay and display ticket. However, we could see no evidence that this arrangement is promoted outside of the surgery, so those patients, visiting for the first time, would be unaware of this benefit.



The surgery is situated on the first floor of the building; lifts and stairs accessible to all with good signage.

On entry to the surgery, representatives found the environment to be clean, light and airy and the interior smelt fresh and clean. Surgery reception is clear to see and manned by receptionists. Patients can either check in via the receptionist or by entering their details on a touch pad.

Reception staff were polite and helpful, and all were wearing name badges. Hand sanitisers were clearly visible, and patients can request a private room if required and available.

The area is very spacious with plenty of room for wheelchairs, pushchairs and mobility scooters. A hearing loop system is in place and a wheelchair is available for patient use by request and the toilets are well signposted.

The waiting areas are spacious, clean and smart although the seats are very basic; hard plastic which can be fairly uncomfortable if waiting for a long period of time. The rooms are devoid of any literature, no doubt to keep infection control to a minimum but a TV was sited in each waiting area with NHS information displayed.

Representatives did not see a separate children's area or activities for children whilst waiting, and very few healthcare or support leaflets were available as the majority of information was provided via the TV screen, although Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire leaflets were clearly visible.

Representatives did not see information displayed about the Patient Participation Group (PPG) or speak to any members on the day of the visit. A translation service is available by phone although it is unclear how this can be accessed. Representatives also noticed that information available was not provided in different languages.

Although clear signage was seen at the main entrance representatives did not see 'surgery opening times' displayed in the surgery itself or a 'comments' box for patients and/or their relatives to feedback information about the new surgery (especially for those unable to do so online).

Patients are able to 'sit and wait' at certain times, if unable to secure an appointment, and all patients are called to their appointment either by the clinician or healthcare professional. The clinical rooms are also bright, clean and cheerful with new fixtures and fittings.

Patient Questionnaire Results

The patients who completed the questionnaire had been registered with the practice between 5 and 50 years.

Overall satisfaction results from the patients who responded to the questionnaire, for quality, care, treatment and service at the surgery, on a scale of between 1 – 10, (1 being very bad and 10 as excellent), patients rated the surgery as either a '7' or '8'.

Several patients' said, *"it's better since they moved here"* and *"I feel it is going well"*.

Changes to improve the service, as suggested by patients, included *"booking an appointment could be improved; give appointment straight away, often told to ring again tomorrow"* and *"would be better to be able to book on line, not sure if you can still do that"*.

The majority of patients spoken to had booked their appointment by telephone, others had called NHS 111, and one patient had 'walked in and waited'. Most patients were also aware they could book an appointment 'on line' and visit the surgery in person. One patient told us they had called at 8.10am for an appointment and was told to *"come immediately to reception"*, although when they arrived at 8.20am they were told to come back at 11am. This could have been due to a miscommunication with reception staff as the sit and wait service does not open until 11am.

Many patients confirmed they did not have to wait long to be seen and the reception staff were all friendly and polite. The majority of patients spoken to confirmed they can discuss their needs with their clinician, they feel involved in decisions about their care and treatment, and their clinician listens to them and considers their opinion. Only one patient spoken to said they **did not** feel involved in decision making, and one other patient said they **did not** feel they could *'always'* discuss their needs.

The patient responses as to whether someone could choose to see a female or male clinician were mixed. Some patients said they were not given a choice of male or female clinician when making an appointment, although the majority *'did not mind'* who they saw as they were happy to be seen by whoever was available at the time. Only one patient said they felt they were able to choose saying *"I can choose if I want"*.

Very few patients knew how to make a complaint about the service they receive at the surgery, with those who did saying they would *"speak to the Manager"*

Other comments included, *“there seems to be a lot of referrals to the nurses; sometimes I would like to see a doctor”*. Another patient said, *“quite happy at the moment; my daughter previously complained about her medication, which has improved”*. One patient commented that he had *“joined the practice on line and this was very easy to do”*.

Staff Responses

Staff who were interviewed had worked at the surgery between two months and three years, a mix of part time and full time workers.

All of the staff spoken to were really positive and happy to be working at the surgery, comments included, *“really enjoy it”, “love it”, “it’s good, primary care is stressful, and we are trying our best, some patients are automatically angry”,* and *“it’s a huge upgrade from our last place, lots more space for us and the patients”*.

Staff members felt that an adequate provision of staff was available at the practice, and also felt supported by their Manager, particularly when dealing with challenging patients, and any complaints. One staff member said, *“very helpful, both as a colleague and Manager”*. Others felt all staff *“worked as a team”* and *“the Partners are very supportive, which has improved over the last two months”*.

The GP Partner explained the practice is *“where we should be”* regarding current clinical staff provision, with a ratio of one GP per 2000 patients. He confirmed the appointment of two long term locums over the past six months has helped with continuity of care for patients. However, winter pressures are demanding but they *“have a good team”*.

Staff have access to training either face to face or via eLearning and generally receive training once a month, examples being Safeguarding, Care Navigation, GDPR, Cancer Care, Minor illness, Prescribing, Benefit Support and Bereavement. Training is discussed at staff meetings. The GP Partner spoken to regularly accesses training as part of his continual professional development, this includes annual appraisals and set targets for the following year to become a GP Trainer.

All staff receive an appraisal, either yearly or half yearly, attend monthly 1 : 1's and daily briefings. Staff felt very supported by their Manager and team members, and were aware of the complaints procedure and how to escalate a personal complaint by either approaching their line Manager, Practice Manager or GP Partner.

If a patient raised a complaint with staff they would initially try to resolve by discussing with the patient, and listening to their concerns. GP's and staff felt it was important to acknowledge the complaint and to hear details of the complaint from the patient's perspective.

If the complaint was unresolved, staff would refer the patient to the Complaints Policy and/or escalate to the Practice Manager or Partner GP to investigate further. Formal complaints are acknowledged within a particular timeframe and discussed with the Practice Manager and at Partners meetings. HWCB representatives were advised that the maximum number of complaints received in a month was 20, and year to date, the total number is 76. The majority were resolved with approx. 10 upheld.

When asked if there were any changes staff would like to make to their way of working to improve the patient experience, comments included, ***"would like to be able to 'book in advance' appointments, "would like to see more feedback, "bring telephone system back in house"*** (this has since been done), ***"to continually improve the relationship we have with our patients"*** and to ***"have more staff but not sure if that is realistic?"***.

Staff were also asked if there were any changes they would like to make to their way of working if they were given the opportunity. Staff were keen to better manage their own workload and meet KPI's but also said, ***"they are mostly good days"***. Others were keen to receive ***"all the training and support they could possibly need"***, and would like to broaden their variety of patients and generally improve their knowledge. Another said, ***"to reduce my hours"***. One suggestion was for a text message (via Accurix) to be sent to all patients following a consultation, requesting feedback. This would boost morale for staff, and Partners would be more aware of staff interaction with patients which could highlight any action to be taken and subsequent learning.

Of all the staff spoken to only four had previously heard of Healthwatch and were aware of its role and functions.

Patient Access

The Practice has recently ended a contract with an external telephony service who were responsible for booking patient appointments, and bought the system back 'in house' as they acknowledged there were issues with patients struggling to get through to the surgery and securing appointments in a timely way.

The surgery has invested resources to ensure their 'in house' telephone system is robust and fit for purpose, as they are aware damage was caused by the external company with patients left feeling very frustrated and angry.

On average the Practice will receive 400 to 500 calls per day and the current average wait time for pick up is down to four minutes which is a vast improvement.

When patients were asked what ways they were aware of to book an appointment at the surgery, the majority said they would telephone and some said they would go *"on line"*. One patient said, *"by phone a week ago; this was the earliest appointment"* and another said they had *"walked in at 9.20am this morning and was told I would be seen at 11am"*. One patient told us, *"I rang today by phone this morning but if I need an appointment I generally call at either 8am or 1pm and I can get an appointment normally in a few days' time"*.

Core Opening hours at the surgery are from 08.00 to 18.30 Monday to Friday. For those patients that cannot attend in week day opening hours, the surgery is open on a Saturday morning from 08.30 to 12.30 for pre booked appointments. Alternatively, for out of hours service, patients can book a GP appointment over the weekend or evening at a GP surgery in the Chiltern Vale Locality. This is called Chiltern Vale Extended Access. A small number of specific surgeries are open on different days and times to create more options for patients.

When asking patients how they would access out of hours care, one patient spoken to said, *"look on the website, I have not done it yet so I am not sure but I think the website would have the answer"*. Others said either they *"don't know"* or they would call *"NHS 111"*, and another patient said, *"don't know at the moment would probably check website or ring 111"*.

Patients can book appointments for 15 minutes but can be longer for a specific service. If a patient requests a home visit, a GP will initially speak to the patient on the phone to assess, and if required, a paramedic will visit the patient.

The Practice manage a 'Sit and Wait' service for patients who are keen to see a Clinician on the day of contact. The average patient intake for the 'Sit and Wait' service is 36, with patients generally waiting for an average 1.5 hours. The service is currently run for three mornings a week which the Practice plan to increase to five mornings per week from January 2024 due to its popularity with patients.

Patient Consultation

Feedback from patients is gathered through the Friends and Family Test although HWCB representatives did not see a box for posting feedback forms on reception or in the waiting area.

In addition, HWCB representatives did not see any information displayed regarding their complaints procedure within the Practice.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The PPG is made up of a group of volunteer patients from the Practice who work with staff, and interact with other patients, to give feedback on services delivered by the surgery and to support the work of the surgery, e.g., recent activity assisting the Flu clinic.

The PPG is managed by the Practice Manager and a Partner GP, both of whom attend the meetings, although other GP's and staff can attend if needed/required. The current members are a newly formed group and are actively recruiting for additional members.

The Practice website gives details on how a patient can join the group or they can enquire at reception.

Recommendations

HWCB would recommend that a copy of the most recent CQC report is displayed in the waiting area.

From patient feedback received it would appear that when patients visit a clinician within the surgery, they receive a good service, and many patients were very pleased with the new premises. However, there was still some residual feelings of frustration with regard to the appointments system and the wait for pick up via the phone.

HWCB would therefore recommend that the Practice notify all patients (via text) that they have recently revised their booking system and phone calls will be answered within a certain timeframe (if applicable) if they have not already done so. This would help to alleviate patient anxiety about calling the Practice.

HWCB would also recommend that the surgery consider a 'parent and child' friendly area to include the availability of books, toys, etc. to keep children occupied whilst waiting to be seen.

In addition, the Practice needs to ensure that complaints leaflets are more visible and available to patients in the waiting area and on reception. Regular feedback from patients can help to continually improve the way in which services are provided and delivered.

HWCB would also recommend that leaflets, noticeboard information and a TV screen should also be available in different languages to meet the needs of the patient demographic.

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

Dear Healthwatch

Thank you for taking the time to send me the report, and provide us with your experience of our service.

In response to your report, I would like to share with you.

In 2023, we opted to outsource our phone services to an external company due to the increased demand during the winter of 2022/2023. Unfortunately, we encountered several issues with the service provided, resulting in a noticeable impact on our overall service quality. However, as of December 2023, we concluded this contract and welcomed a new team of medical call agents. This transition has significantly enhanced our phone service, reducing the average wait time from 1 hour and 20 minutes to just 15 minutes during peak hours. We sincerely apologise to our patients for any inconvenience experienced with our telephone service in 2023 and are optimistic that they will observe a marked improvement in 2024.

In May 2023, we implemented changes to our appointment system as directed by NHS England. We made diligent efforts to facilitate a smooth transition and ensured that all patients were reminded of the new appointment system through our PPG Newsletter released in December 2023.

Recognising the importance of family-friendly facilities, we currently provide a baby changing and feeding area for our patients. In alignment with CQC guidelines, we will also explore the implementation of a child-friendly area.

To enhance accessibility, we will display information on our screens about how to contact us, including procedures for filing complaints, and provide guidance on accessing information in different languages.

We express our gratitude to Healthwatch for conducting an enter & view on our surgery. We genuinely appreciate their insights and will actively incorporate their recommendations into our operations and look forward to our continued improvements via patient feedback.

Many thanks

Louise Cole

Business Manager & Primary Care Network Manager for Chiltern Hills PCN

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
Capability House, Wrest Park, Silsoe, Beds, MK45 4HR
www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

t: 0300 303 8554
e: info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk