



healthwatch
Wakefield

Spectrum Sexual Health Clinic Visits

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Introduction

This report presents findings from visits and engagement activities conducted by Young Healthwatch volunteers.

The initial visit in October 2022, and its follow-up in September 2023, were organised to look at improvements by the clinic in response to recommendations about access to the service.

Four young volunteers from Healthwatch Wakefield took part in an outreach visit at the Spectrum Young People Clinic on Tuesday 18 July and Friday 1 August 2023.

These visits were designed so that volunteers could talk with young people there to understand their experiences better. This helped create a space for young people to speak up and share what matters to them.

Aim

The overall aim of the work led by the volunteers was to engage with young patients to get their perspectives and firsthand experiences.

By sharing these voices, the aim was to understand their needs and concerns with sexual health services.

This collaborative approach with the service aimed to empower young volunteers to contribute to the ongoing improvement efforts, making sure their feedback directly influenced changes aimed at enhancing the overall clinic experience.

In the end, we wanted to create a clinic where young people felt like their voices mattered, where they were respected, and where they got the support they needed to stay healthy in terms of their sexual health.

Methodology

The volunteers organised a revisit to the clinic, engaging again with young patients to understand if there had been any improvements in the service since their initial visit.

Prior to and during the visit, a structured observation exercise was conducted, focusing on aspects such as accessibility, privacy, service quality, and the overall clinic environment. Feedback from patients was gathered through direct observation and informal interviews with clinic users, with their consent. To guide the discussions, prompt sheets were used, covering topics such as facilities, what patients liked and disliked, and any support they needed. These visit questions were not asked in a specific order, and not all questions were posed to every patient, allowing for a more open and natural conversation about their experiences.

Comments from patients were recorded with their permission, making sure their voices were accurately represented. Visitors and staff were provided with Healthwatch leaflets, encouraging them to provide feedback anonymously if they wished to do so.

Overview of changes implemented since the first visit

Insights from the Service Manager highlighted the various areas where changes have been made in the past year. These changes are significant as they may have influenced the differences noted by young patients.

Improvement suggested

Move the intercom inside Spectrum for increased privacy and confidentiality.

Improvements made

The intercom was moved inside, and main entrance doors were opened for patient access during clinic hours. The intercom is used only during specific times or when it gets dark outside.

Improvement suggested

Enhance the waiting room to create a more welcoming environment, colourful information boards and pod seating.

Improvements made

Chairs were repositioned closer together to allow for patient support, and notice boards were updated to add colour and reduce the clinical feel. Additional seating was purchased for the waiting area.

Improvement suggested

Add colour and warmth to clinical rooms, while maintaining cleanliness and safety.

Improvements made

Plans were made to change the counselling room to include a sofa, plant, and pictures for a more relaxing atmosphere. The paint colour remained white for cleanliness and to accommodate patients of all ages.

Additional Suggestion

Increase promotion of the clinic on social media to reduce stigma and encourage more individuals to use sexual health services.

Note

While not directly addressed, the idea of promoting the clinic on social media to reduce stigma and increase accessibility was suggested for consideration

Findings

"One of the most crucial aspects for young people accessing healthcare services is feeling welcomed and supported. Improved signage and clearer communication about wait times would not only ease the stress of finding the clinic but also help us better plan our appointments. It's about making healthcare more accessible and accommodating for everyone."

Abbie

The visiting volunteers were attentive to feedback from young people at Spectrum regarding accessibility to the clinic.

Many expressed difficulties finding the clinic when not accompanied by someone familiar with its location, particularly when arriving by bus. To address this, they suggested improving signage and signposting from the bus station and nearby car parks. In response, the clinic added a film guide on their websites "find a clinic" page and placed a prominent sticker on the window to help locating the clinic.

Concerns were raised about long wait times during appointments, with some people waiting on the floor near the entrance. Suggestions included displaying information about staff availability and wait times on a screen or whiteboard.

Additionally, there were requests for appointments to be available alongside walk-ins to reduce wait times. The clinic clarified that appointments cannot be booked during drop-in hours but can be scheduled on other days.

Attendees also proposed the introduction of a vending machine and snack facilities, as only water was seen. The clinic acknowledged this suggestion and expressed plans to reconsider putting in vending machines and offering fruit on the reception counter.

Feedback highlighted the perceived small and cramped waiting area, with the seating arrangement hindering access to information leaflets and posters. While the clinic had purchased additional chairs since the previous visit, further evaluation was suggested to determine if additional seating was necessary.

Discussions between young volunteers and clinic staff led to suggestions for optimising the waiting area layout, with the clinic agreeing to trial and provide feedback on proposed changes.

"It is so important to us at Spectrum that we listen to the voice of young people to ensure our service meets the needs of our patients. Young Healthwatch give us excellent steer, great suggestions, and practical ideas for making our service better for young people. We are grateful for your involvement, and we hope to keep working closely with you to make sure our service is as good as it can be for young people".

Julia Brooke, Head of Service for Wakefield Integrated Sexual health

Final Thoughts

The collaborative efforts to address issues such as accessibility, wait times, and the overall clinic environment reflect a commitment to prioritising the needs and experiences of young patients.

Moving forward, continued dialogue and proactive measures will be essential in sustaining these positive changes and ensuring that the clinic remains a welcoming and supportive space for all.

By valuing the voices of young people and implementing their suggestions, we can create an environment that is not only functional but also empathetic and inclusive.

This report serves as a testament to the power of collaboration and the potential for ongoing improvement in healthcare services when young people are actively involved in the process. With a shared commitment to responsiveness and innovation, we can pave the way for a future where healthcare truly meets the needs of every individual it serves.

Recommendations

The remarkable improvements seen in the overall findings are a testament to the collective efforts of the Spectrum Health team. Their dedication is evidently making a meaningful difference in young people's experiences. Their commitment to excellence is visibly enhancing the quality of patient experiences accessing healthcare services.

We recommend the following.

1. Enhance the clinic environment to be more 'young person' friendly by incorporating vibrant and inviting elements in waiting areas, such as colourful decor, engaging posters, and seating arrangements.
2. Explore further use of digital platforms for appointment bookings and inquiries to streamline the process for young patients., Consider options such as online scheduling systems and virtual consultations to improve accessibility and convenience.
3. Maintain open channels for patient feedback through regular surveys, suggestion boxes, or online forums to ensure continuous service improvement.

Conclusion

The Spectrum Health CIC Sexual Health Clinic has demonstrated a commitment to enhancing patient experience by responding to volunteer feedback with actionable improvements. Healthwatch Wakefield commends the clinic's proactive approach and recommends continued engagement with clinic users to further refine and tailor services to their needs.

This report underlines the valuable role of volunteer led visits in healthcare settings, emphasising the importance of ongoing dialogue and collaboration between service providers and patients to optimise service delivery and promote patient satisfaction.



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