

Enter & View of Community Maternity Services

Contents

Contents.....	2
About Healthwatch Swindon.....	3
What is an Enter and View?	3
Details of the visit.....	4
Visit overview	5
Key Findings	6
Recommendations	6
Observations and findings.....	7
Eldene Health Centre.....	9
Swindon Health Centre.....	11
Department Response.....	14
Provider Response	14

About Healthwatch Swindon

Healthwatch Swindon is the towns independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to make sure that those running services, put people at the heart of care.

As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure that NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to your feedback and use it to improve standards of care.

We are here to listen and understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf.

We focus on ensuring that people's worries and concerns about current services are addressed. We are totally independent and can provide you with impartial and independent signposting advice.

We are part of a network of 150 local Healthwatch across England and cover the whole of Swindon.

What is an Enter and View?

One of the ways we meet our statutory responsibilities is by using our legal powers to Enter and View health and social care services to see them in action.

During visits we collect evidence of what works well and what could be improved to make people's experiences better.

We do this by observing the quality of service, observing the setting and how people are interacting, and talking to people using the service, including patients, residents, carers, staff and relatives.

Enter and View visits are carried out by our authorised representatives who have received training and been DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked. These visits are not part of a formal inspection process or audit.

We share our reports with those providing the service, regulators, the local authority, NHS commissioners, the public, Healthwatch England and any other relevant partners based on what we find during the visit.

Details of the visit

Service visited: Eldene Health Centre (Dr Guilding's Surgery), Eldene, SN3 3RZ and Swindon Health Centre, 1 Islington Street, SN1 2DQ.

Visit date: 22nd April 2024

About the services

Community midwifery team provide the health care and support for women during and after pregnancy in both community venues and patients homes.

Purpose of the visit

To review and understand how Community Maternity Services are being provided in Swindon. We were invited to visit by the maternity team.

How the visit was conducted

A date was agreed with the staff and a time set.

The visit was carried out by three authorised representatives. The team spoke to members of staff and patients.

Information was collected from observations and conversations with staff and patients.

At the end of the visit there was a final team discussion to review and collate findings and initial feedback was provided to the team.

Healthwatch Swindon authorised representatives

Ann-Marie Scott (staff member)

Josephine Fliski (staff member)

Phoebe Hembling (Student Placement)

Disclaimer

This report relates to this specific visit to the service, at a particular point in time, and is not representative of all patients/staff, only those who contributed. The visit did not include accessing any records. This report is written by two Healthwatch members of staff who are Authorised Representatives using collated feedback they and the placement student gathered.

Visit overview

After arranging a suitable date with the maternity team, we met with a member of staff to communicate the process and ask any additional questions. We discussed our plans for the visit and were encouraged to speak to as many people as possible. The only restrictions in place were to safeguard women during their appointments with a midwife, we did not enter any spaces being used for that purpose.

Following the removal of midwifery services from most of Swindon's General Practice's (GP's), they now operate primarily through hubs with only a few Practices offering space for antenatal and postnatal care. These hubs are split across the town to offer four 'zones' of support. During our visit we viewed hubs in Zone 3 and 2.

We were greeted and welcomed by two senior midwives, providing us the opportunity to view the premises, ask questions and speak to patients at both hubs.



Swindon Health Centre Community Hub

Key Findings

The following are our key findings from the visit and should be considered alongside both our observations and what people told us.

- Friendly and efficiently run clinic, despite locality issues through use of their Accurx system.
- Estates not properly furnished, requiring staff to take 'DIY' measures to improve their functionality.
- Lack of appropriate space to run parent courses and appointments.
- Some clinical spaces do not have the facilities to meet hygiene or safety standards.
- Parents reported their midwifery care as 'Brilliant'.
- Staff work above and beyond given the chaotic set-up.

Recommendations

We would like the trust to consider the following recommendations for improvement. These are based on our findings from the visit.

- Hubs to be in fixed and appropriate locations, each providing sufficient clinical space for number of patients accessing midwifery services.
- Removal of shower curtains etc and facilities furnished with appropriate and adequate fixtures and storage to improve functionality of appointments and non-clinical space.
- All clinical rooms should have wash basins, lockable doors, privacy glass and screens to maintain patients' dignity and hygiene standards.
- Safe and secure settings for parent courses.
- Designated staff areas, to ensure patients clinical needs can be discussed privately and allow staff an area for emotional release to maintain their efficiency and enhance their resilience.
- Clear and professional logos and signage to indicate the Maternity Hubs should be implemented.

Observations and findings

General Observations

Whilst the care provided at both sites was clearly exceptional and all staff members are dedicated and passionate about ensuring women receive the best care possible, both sites are very different in how they can be managed and utilised.

Midwives at both sites, have made the most of what space has been allocated to them and created a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Communication from the midwife team to patients, is brilliant. With the Accurx system in place, medical records can be accessed with ease, appointment reminders sent with location information where necessary and women chased should they miss an appointment. It even allows for video calls.

All appointments are booked online or via the phone and linked to Accurx. It's working well, particularly with refugees and vulnerable women. They can use the system via free Wi-Fi spots and can change the website to another language if required.

Swindon Health Centre (SHC) can provide parent craft sessions and breastfeeding classes in their waiting area. However, the space is very open offering no privacy and regularly interrupted by the homeless seeking somewhere warm and dry or those seeking medical interventions after over-dosing.

The West Swindon Hub (WSH) also holds these classes but not always accessible for people to attend if living on the east side of town.

We learnt that Morden Medical Centre (MMC) has access to two rooms, but ideally need three. They have approached the host organisation to share access with another team who only use their room once a week, but at present this access has been denied. Ironically due to how the rooms are allocated, the midwives caring for patients in Moredon are required to visit WSH. Only patients from Penhill and surrounding areas are able to access midwifery services at MMC.

Observed Challenges

The rooms used for patient care were very clean however not necessarily the most appropriate, with minimal privacy and a waste bin being used to prevent people accessing the room at the Swindon Health Centre whilst in use due to the doors not having the necessary locks.

Stability of services is uncertain at Eldene Health Centre (EHC), with clinics being moved ad-hoc to accommodate other clinical teams. The need for a permanent base is clearly needed.

Estates in general are a challenging issue. Relationships with GP's are mixed, with some surgeries working brilliant such as Lawn, Old Town and The Meadows.

However, there are gross concerns about midwives mid appointment being asked to vacate clinical rooms.



Examination bed with privacy screens

Whilst midwives make every effort to support women with the fractious issues with localities, even the midwifery team struggle to ensure patient care remains at a high standard.

The fragmented service means the midwifery team being unable to provide a daily service at EHC and patients having to go to the town centre or over to WSH.

The communication system in place works very well, but there is still some uncertainty due to the inconsistency in where clinics will be held. With some patients finding the set up confusing and missing appointments.

With no midwifery presence within any GP's in SN3 postcode area of Swindon. Eldene health centre sits within the 2nd most deprived area of Swindon. With many patients for whom English is their second language.

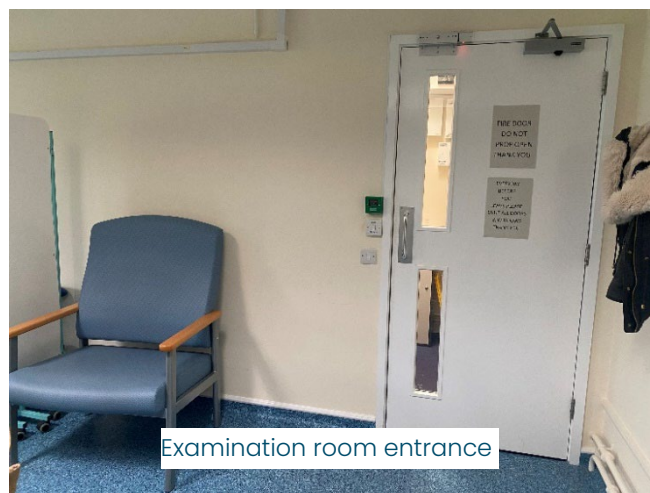
The consequences of not having a permanent clinical base are the team has had to operate from leisure centres and the local rugby club. Each posing their own challenges, from an infestation of vermin to lack of clinical facilities or medical team for support. With average costs for a temporary setting being £20,000 per year for 3 days use. The lack of a permanent base also prohibits the community midwifery team from running drop-in clinics in all areas.

Not all the hubs offer adequate parking, requiring staff who visit multiple locations, difficulty accessing some sites and having to share parking passes or rely on other members of staff to go out of their way to support travel needs.

Eldene Health Centre

Upon entering the EHC, despite its décor being dated and tired it was very clean. There isn't a central reception but fortunately staff members were very polite and courteous directing us to the appropriate waiting area. The view of the team is that it needs one receptionist supporting all services.

The room used for clinical appointments, is also a training room. With large windows to one side, it also has a roof light to help make the space bright and airy. It's occupied with a variety of furniture. Due to no privacy glass on the door or windows, screens are used to give patients privacy.



The temporary nature of the space does mean there is nowhere for a desktop and records can only be accessed using laptops.

The lack of storage means equipment is stored in a shared cupboard and then brought into the room during clinics. There is also some equipment stored on the floor due to inadequate storage facilities. All other equipment is labelled 'eye clinic'.

With no feeding room or changing facilities, parents are having to use the clinical room and/or an accessible toilet.

To support the Hub, there is a mobile phone that patients can call, the only issue is that some prefer to text rather than call even when asked not to, and midwives do not always see the texts quickly.

There was limited to no post-natal information. Very plain and impersonalised. Should the clinic run over their allotted time, there is no back-up space for the midwifery team to use.



Shared Desk Space



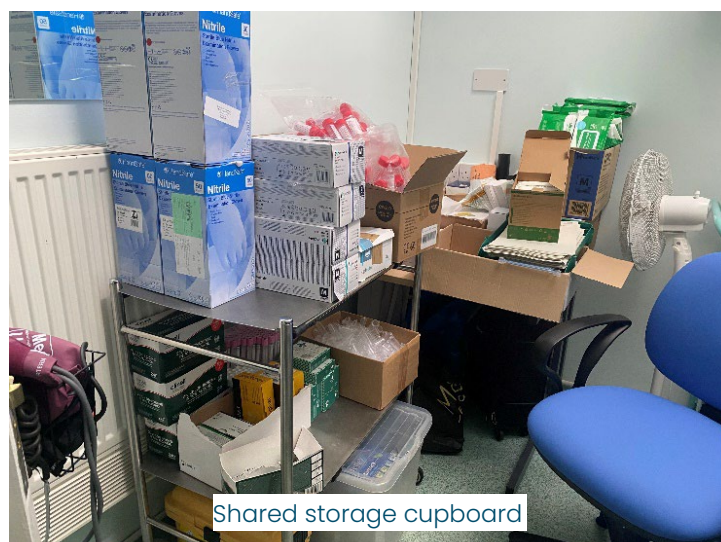
Medical equipment in examination room

Patient Feedback

“Love the service, the midwives are fantastic”

“Always great at handing over information to different midwives”

“Compared to Cornwall, having services so close, clean and accessible, Swindon is brilliant. We fortunately have the means to travel, so if we had to travel further we would. But everything works well right now and we’re very grateful”



Shared storage cupboard

Swindon Health Centre

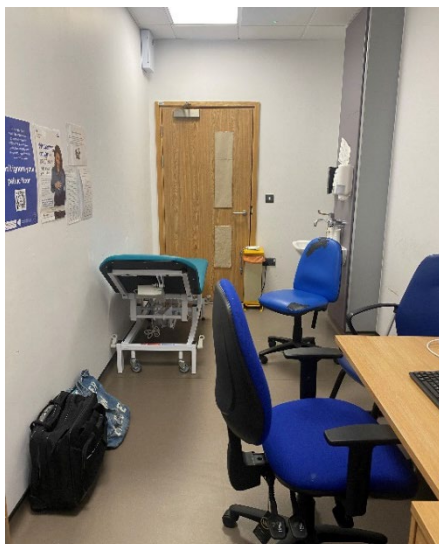
Upon visiting the centre, it is apparent there is no central reception which results in some confusion as to which area you need to visit. The hub is based on the ground floor at the front, with their office and staff area squeezed into an old reception space with large windows, one of which was designed to remain partially open for ease of communication during its original use. Homemade signs above the windows help to identify the Hub.

Whilst waiting to enter, other patients had approached the window to 'book in' for appointments elsewhere within the building. Waiting area was large, clean and tidy but open to anyone entering the building.



Staff provided a warm and friendly greeting. The multi-purpose office/staff room/reception desk has its windows adorned with shower curtains to provide some level of privacy to maintain confidentiality. A tightly packed area can also be accessed by the neighbouring service. A constant flow of staff coming and going due to lack of parking passes added to the chaos of the area, posing delays to midwives providing home visits.

One corridor has been partially converted into an extra clinical room but has no lockable doors. With one end being blocked by bins to prevent access from the neighbouring service. The space was big enough for a medical bed, chair and small desk but very cramped.



Converted corridor



Due to lack of space, one storage room doubles up as a consultation room and houses the staff's microwave.

The few purpose-built clinical rooms are nice and spacious with lockable doors, appropriate storage and have been personalised with information for patients accessing Swindon Maternity Services.



With no toilet in the area, women who need to provide urine samples must go to the public toilet which is often found very dirty.

The facility does have a feeding/changing room, but it is locked, and you must obtain a key from the security team.

Even with such mayhem, being able to all work together and have one central location works.

During our visit to the building, we were provided with a tour. On the 3rd floor there were multiple clinical rooms, none of which were in use, all could be accessed via a private waiting area.

Breastfeeding and Parent classes etc are run weekly in the Hub's waiting area. The team try to block it off to ensure only people attending the classes can enter. However, every week the homeless and individuals seeking urgent medical interventions following drug overdoses etc interrupt the classes, unnerving the parents. Security now escorts parents and staff out in the evening to help make them feel safer.

Patient Feedback

“Convenient, clean and great care.”

“I had an ectopic pregnancy, followed by a miscarriage, still birth and another miscarriage. All before the birth of our baby. The midwives are fantastic. Their Help after my still birth, led to the birth of my baby.”

“Everything is always clean, and staff are brilliant”

“Had issue with Carfax GP, needed a two-week-old baby seen, had not been registered by mum. Tradition is that if mum is registered, they will see a newborn. Carfax refused as the baby was not registered. This was a refugee mum who finds the system confusing, they are also not using the translation call line which is regularly used by the midwife team. Popped to see reception at Carfax on occasion to see if they could help new parents and babies to get appointments and was turned away. Seems they have lost that family practice approach.”

Acknowledgements

The Healthwatch Swindon team would like to thank all Community Midwives and patients for a friendly welcome and unlimited access to the premises.

Department Response

“Our thanks go to Healthwatch for their encouraging and detailed report that shares key findings from your recent visit, and to our staff and families for working with Healthwatch during their visit.

We are pleased that Healthwatch identified a positive, supportive, warm and welcoming environment across our community maternity services whilst recognising the estate challenges. Healthwatch recognised good communication between midwives and families, with supportive computer systems being in place.

We value the patient feedback to support ongoing discussion with the GP practices and the Integrated Care Board to improve the services provided and to support discussions regarding the allocated estate.

We recognise that there is still more work we need to do, and our maternity leadership team, supported by the wider maternity team, is working hard to drive forward continuous improvement to enable us to provide the very best level of service to our community.”

Lisa Marshall, Director of Midwifery and Neonatal Services

Provider Response

“Thank you to Healthwatch for their recent visit to our community maternity services. Our maternity teams work really hard to provide quality care for every woman, family and baby and it’s pleasing to see their hard work recognised in this report.

Our thanks also goes to the women and families who have left such positive feedback on our community maternity services, who have taken the time to share words of kindness and gratitude for the care they were given.

Whilst we recognise there are areas for improvement, including in the physical space this service is run from and its facilities, we are thrilled that the staff have been acknowledged for exceptional care. We would kindly welcome Healthwatch back at another time to showcase where the team will be making real change to the service, as they continue on their improvement journey.”

Lisa Cheek, Chief Nurse at Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust



Sanford House
Sanford Street
Swindon
SN1 4HE

www.healthwatchswindon.org.uk

t: 01793 497 777

e: info@healthwatchswindon.org.uk

× [@HealthwatchSwin](https://twitter.com/HealthwatchSwin)

[Facebook.com/HealthwatchSwindon](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchSwindon)