

Children's Ward
Ward 3
Stoke Mandeville Hospital
Enter and View Report



November 2024

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Visit details

Details of visit	
Service Provider	Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Service Address	Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Mandeville Rd, Aylesbury HP21 8AL
Date and Time	14th November: 2pm – 4pm
Authorised Representatives	Oonagh Browne and Susan de Kersaint-Seal

Summary of findings

There were **21** in-patients on the Children’s Ward during our visit with two children waiting to be admitted later that day. Most patients (15 out of 21) were **babies** and young children up to the age of 4 years. We spoke to two children aged 7 and 4 years. We also heard from nine parents/caregivers and five members of staff.

These findings represent an account of what we observed and heard on the day that we visited:

- + The ward was clean and bright with clear signage on the walls. The play areas for patients, including the outside space and school room, were neat and tidy. Two patient and parent/caregiver areas had restricted access:
 - The sensory room for patients with sensory needs and other patients was locked during our visit
 - We were told by a parent/caregiver that the room for storing and preparing baby milk was sometimes locked. It was both opened and locked at different times during our visit.
- + We heard from a member of the paediatric team that staff record information on mobile devices whilst delivering care because the ward is moving from paper to electronic observation charts. We saw information displayed on walls about electronic observations and observed staff using iPhone devices.
- + Patients can leave feedback about the ward by choosing a ‘clothes’ themed feedback card, top (good) or trunk (bad), from a clear A4 envelope which is in the reception/waiting area. There was one completed ‘top’ on display.

- + Two children (aged 7 and 4 years) told us that they felt homesick. One was missing their family pet. They did not tell us about their experiences on the ward. One of them did not fully understand why they were there.
- + Parents/caregivers were **mostly positive** about their communication with hospital staff and felt informed about treatments and decision making. However, a few felt that communication could be better. They said that they did not feel informed about treatments, waiting times and meals or food restrictions. Also, one parent/caregiver said that doctors speak in 'medical' language which is not always easy to understand. Whilst another told us that staff use acronyms for different units around the hospital which are also not clear for members of the public to understand.
- + Most parents/caregivers liked the facilities for children in particular the variety of toys and outside play area. Some told us that the facilities for parents/caregivers could be better i.e. 'real' cups instead of paper cups for hot drinks and constant hot water for showers.
- + The staff that we heard from were very positive about their experiences on the ward especially the environment and atmosphere - working with children and having nice colleagues. One suggestion for improvement was to provide more training opportunities to be able to perform extra duties on the ward.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been suggested to Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust Paediatric Leads based on our conversations and observations during the visit:

- Display information on doors of patients and parent/caregiver areas which have restricted access – the sensory room and baby milk preparation kitchen – to let everyone know how to use the space. This could include details of open times or staff members who could open the areas upon request.
- Posters about electronic observations could be more eye-catching with a **colour** photograph of the actual mobile iPhone device used by teams so that patients and parents/caregivers can recognise it more easily.
- Collecting feedback from younger and older patients could be improved by having 'tops' and 'trunks' on one card which can later be cut accordingly. This might encourage more children to leave feedback as they would not be seen taking a good or bad feedback card. Anonymous feedback boxes to collect the cards could

be placed in different areas allocated for patients (younger and older) as well as areas for parents/caregivers.

- Ensure that communication given to patients and parents/caregivers is:
 - clear and medical terminology is fully explained
 - free from acronyms i.e. give the full name of hospital units/departments
 - consistent in terms of giving timescales for waiting, treatments and meals.
- Encourage parents/caregivers to bring reusable cups for hot drinks and provide more 'real' cups in the kitchen. This would reduce single-use cup waste and might make parents/caregivers feel more at home.
- Look at ways to increase communication and visibility of hands-on training opportunities for multidisciplinary teams on the ward.

Service response to recommendations

The following response was received by email on 7th January 2025.



07/01/2025

Dear Zoe

**Response to Healthwatch Bucks Enter and View Visit Report – Children’s Ward 3,
Stoke Mandeville Hospital**

Date of Visit: 14th November 2024

We are grateful to Healthwatch Bucks for conducting the Enter and View visit and for providing detailed feedback on the Children’s Ward at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. We value the opportunity to hear from patients, parents/caregivers, and staff, and we appreciate the constructive recommendations made to improve the ward's services. The Children’s Ward team is committed to continually enhancing the care and experience for patients and their families. Below is our action plan in response to the recommendations made during the visit.

Action Plan in Response to Recommendations

Recommendation	Action	Timeline
1. Display Information on Restricted Access Areas	- Update signage for sensory room and baby milk preparation kitchen with clear instructions on access and usage	- February 2025
2. Improve Visibility of Electronic Observations	- Design and display new posters featuring a photo of the iPhone device used for electronic observations (in colour).	- February 2025
	- Include explanation on how the electronic observation system supports patient care.	- February 2025
3. Improve Feedback Collection from Younger Patients	- To create a combined feedback card that includes both positive and negative feedback options.	- Cards and boxes introduced by February 2025
	- Introduce anonymous feedback boxes in various ward areas for easy collection of feedback from children & young people	
4. Improve Communication with Parents/Caregivers	- Provide staff with training on communication, focusing on explaining medical terminology in layman's terms and avoiding acronyms.	- Training rolled out by February 2025.
	- Develop and implement a "Welcome to ward 3 leaflets" for parents, children & young people to ensure consistency	- System implemented by February 2025.
5. Encourage Use of Reusable Cups for Hot Drinks	- Offer 'real' cups in the parent/caregiver kitchen and provide signage promoting sustainability and reusable cup usage.	- New cups available – January 2025 - Poster signage – January 2025

	- Stock reusable cups and encourage parents to bring their own when possible	- January 2025
6. Increase Communication and Visibility of Hands-On Training Opportunities	- Explore options to increase visibility and access to hands-on training opportunities for the multidisciplinary team	- Plans developed in January 2025
	- Communicate upcoming training sessions more clearly through team, SDU meetings, email updates and ward training board	- January 2025
	-Review of current training provision following staff engagement questionnaire	- January 2025

We value the insights shared by Healthwatch Bucks and are committed to implementing the recommendations to improve both the patient and staff experience on the Children's Ward. The action plan outlined above reflects our commitment to making positive changes in response to the feedback received. We will continue to monitor the progress of these actions and keep Healthwatch Bucks informed of our developments.

Thank you once again for your valuable input and for supporting us in improving the care we provide.

Yours sincerely,



Raghuv Bhasin
Chief Operating Officer

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Stoke Mandeville Hospital

What is Enter and View?

Enter and View visits are carried out by local Healthwatch to find out how health and social care services are being run. They make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The law allows local Healthwatch to see how a service is delivered. We can visit hospitals, care homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. We talk to the people who use the service and their families/caregivers and sometimes staff.

We talk to these people to help us understand what is done well and what could be done better. We then share this learning with others.

We do not look for issues around the safety of people (safeguarding) during our Enter and View visits. We report any concerns as set out in our policy. We tell members of staff who want to raise an issue about where they work to talk to the CQC. This way they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

Methodology

We spoke to the Lead Nurse for Paediatrics at Stoke Mandeville Hospital about doing an Enter and View visit on the Children's Ward at the end of September 2024. Our visit was announced by email on 29th October 2024.

We prepared semi-structured sets of questionnaires and observation templates ahead of our visit. We also did a risk assessment in line with Healthwatch Bucks internal policies and procedures.

Background

Children with a range of conditions and injuries are cared for on Ward 3. This ward provides inpatient services for children (from birth to the age of 16 inclusive) who need unplanned surgery, as well as outpatient appointments and day surgery.

It is located on the ground floor of the Wendover Wing.

Ward Tour

We entered the ward by ringing a buzzer. There are cameras at nursing stations to monitor the entrance/exit.

We were given a tour of the ward by a senior member of the paediatric team. The children's ward provides 26 beds, including cubicles separated by bays which allows patients to be near children in their own age range. The corridors were clean with colourful information boards on the walls.

Parent/caregiver facilities

Areas for parents/caregivers include a:

- lounge with a table and chairs so that they can have a quiet space to relax
- small kitchen with tea and coffee making facilities
- milk preparation kitchen to store expressed and other types of baby milk. The door to this room had a digital code lock. It was both open and locked at different stages during our visit.

Schoolroom

There were no patients in the hospital schoolroom when we looked around it. This large room has desks, chairs and a good range of educational materials. We spoke to the

hospital schoolteacher who explained how school-aged patients are supported through learning at their own pace. They said that the schoolroom offered children a space to relax and engage in education in a 'non-medical' setting.



Picture 1: The schoolroom

Children's playroom

Younger children have access to a playroom equipped with TV portals, interactive learning toys, and materials for crafting. There is also a sensory room in this area for patients with sensory needs and other patients. It was locked at the time of our visit. We were told that access to the room is monitored as the sensory equipment is expensive.



Picture 2: Children's playroom

Other spaces that we were shown during the tour included:

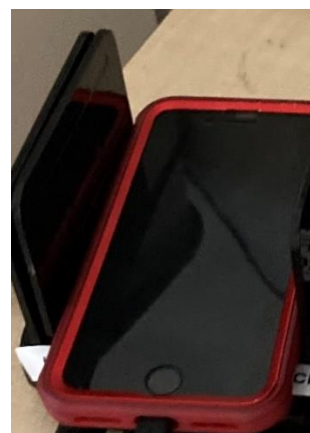
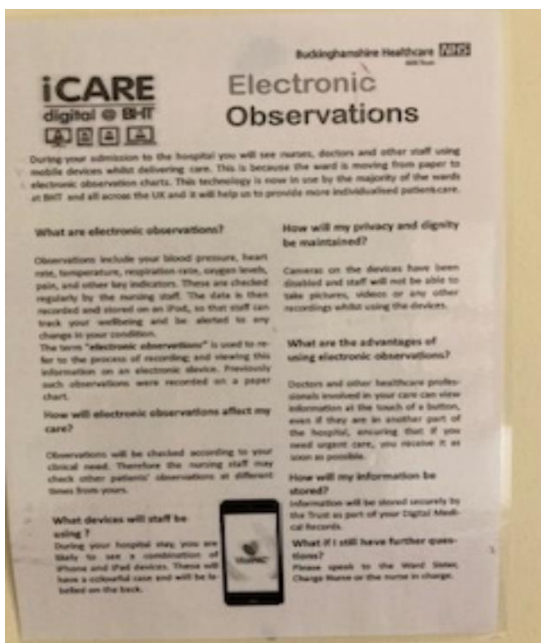
- An outside play area - this had a good range of outdoor toys in an enclosed space. There were no children in this area when we looked around

- Waiting area/tv lounge – this has seating and a tv playing children’s programmes. Children were waiting in this area with their parents/caregivers
- Seminar room for staff – this is used by multidisciplinary teams for meetings. It’s also used for storing equipment for electronic observations i.e. iPhone devices
- Quiet room for sensitive conversations with parents/caregivers – this is a calm and private space with comfortable seating.

Visual information

Information displayed around the ward was targeted both and children and adults. There were posters with QR codes linking to more information about medical conditions. There were also posters with QR codes linking to **an Amazon Wish list** for those wanting to donate items i.e. toys and books.

There were posters throughout the ward with information about **electronic observations**. We were told that observations such as patients’ blood pressure, heart rate, temperatures are recorded by nursing staff using an iPhone device to help cut down on paper usage.

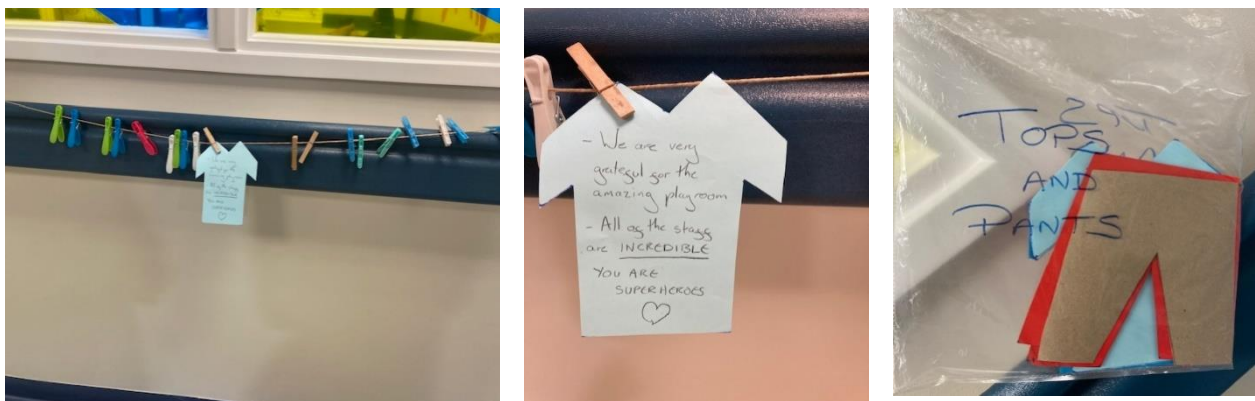


Picture 3: Electronic observations guidance (on display around the ward) and iPhone device (in staff room)

There was a staff picture board along the corridor with photos and names of key medical and support staff, including doctors, nurses, and paediatric specialists.

Collecting patient feedback

Patients can leave feedback about their experience on Ward 3. Children of all ages on the ward can leave feedback by completing a Tops or Pants card. Tops is for positive feedback and pants for negative. There is feedback 'clothesline' outside the main waiting area, opposite the reception desk. Cards for positive and negative feedback are kept in a clear A4 envelope for patients to choose. There was one positive comment on a 'Top' at the time of our visit.



Picture 4: Tops and pants feedback display

What we heard

Children's feedback

We spoke to two children aged 7 and 4 years. Both were with their parents/caregivers during our conversations.

Feeling homesick

They did not tell us about their experiences on the ward but rather said they missed home. One told us about missing their pet rabbit:

I miss my toys and pets.

The other just wanted to be home:

I want to go home.

One parent/caregiver us that:

[Their child] Doesn't really understand why they are here.

Parents/carers' feedback

We listened to feedback from nine parents/caregivers. Most were with children who were in-patients on the ward.

Communication with hospital staff

We heard mixed opinions about communication with ward/hospital staff. Whilst **most** thought it was excellent and consistent, others said that it could be better.

When asked if hospital staff kept them updated on treatments and involved them in decision making, we heard:

Staff have been amazing with [child], they have been much better here than the hospital we were in before. They listen to our concerns and tell us what's going on.

Communication is good.

It's a hospital so I knew it was going to be busy, but they have been great at telling us about waiting times. Nothing really more that can be done.

Doctors not so much, nurses are alright [at giving updates].

One parent/caregiver felt that doctors spoke in **medical language** which was not easy to understand. They also told us that they did not feel heard:

I feel like no one is really listening or looking at [child's] history notes

Another parent/caregiver said that staff use **acronyms** for different units around the hospital which are not easy to understand either e.g. OR – Operation Room

The same parent/caregiver also told us that:

There is a lot of waiting with little communication regarding treatment or time scales.

They told us that their child had limited access to food due to pending medical tests. However, they were not informed about how long this would last.

I have no idea when the next meal is coming.

Facilities on the ward

Parents/caregivers told us that the play facilities for children on the ward were good with well-equipped indoor and outdoor play areas.

The playroom is lovely with lots of toys.

There is lots of crafty stuff and the walls look bright.

[Child] likes to watch TV in the lounge.

Other comments about facilities included:

- The baby milk preparation kitchen is sometimes locked
- There are paper cups in the kitchen for hot drinks and not many 'real' cups
- Some of the hospital equipment (for treatments) looks dated
- The shower water is sometimes cold

I've had cold showers for the past couple of days, but it was hot this morning.

Staff feedback

We spoke to five members of staff from multidisciplinary paediatric teams during our visit. They were welcoming and answered our non-structured questions as we walked around the ward. We asked three of them the following structured questions:

1. What do you enjoy most about working on the ward?
2. What could be improved, if anything?

What do you enjoy most about working on the ward?

They said:

- The environment itself, seeing children get better
- Support from ward manager
- Nice colleagues and good team

What could be improved, if anything?

They said:

- More training opportunities to be able to perform extra duties on the ward i.e. take blood samples

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Bucks would like to thank the children and young people, parents/carers and Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust Paediatrics teams for sharing their feedback with us.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on a specific date. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all children staying on the ward, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

If you require this report in an alternative format, please contact us.

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