

Enter and View Report:

Barkantine Practice

121 Westferry Road, London E14 8JH

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Visit Details	
Service Visited:	Barkantine Practice
Address:	121 Westferry Road, London E14 8JH
Service Manager:	Mostafa Farook
Date & Time of Visit:	11 th April 2024, 11am – 3pm
Status of Visit:	Announced
CQC Rating:	Overall Good
Date of CQC Report:	September 2019
Authorised Representatives:	Shreya Mandal, Zainab Amusa, Casey Granahan and Sruthi MS
Lead Authorised Representative:	Shreya Mandal

1. Visit Background

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets is your **local, independent health and social care champion**. We help local people to voice their **views and opinions** about the services they use.



We **listen** to people and **collect their feedback** on health and social care services.



We **report on key findings** and **make recommendations** for improvement.



We **present these reports** to those involved in the planning and commissioning of the health and social care services.

What is Enter and View?

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 allows local Healthwatch Authorised Representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, care homes, GP practices, and pharmacies. We also interview management and staff regarding their views of the service provided. The aim is to get an impartial view of how the service is operated and being experienced.

Enter and View visits can be arranged if people tell us there's a problem with a service, but equally, they can also 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.

Following the visits, our official 'Enter and View Report', will be shared with the service provider, local commissioners and regulators outlining what has worked well, and give recommendations on what could have worked better. All reports are available to view on our website.

Disclaimer

Please note, this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets would like to thank the service provider and service users for their contribution and hospitality in enabling this Enter and View visit to take place. We would also like to thank our volunteers Zainab Amusa, Sruthi MS and Sam Jarada, and our intern Casey Granahan, who assisting in conducting the visit and contributed to the writing-up process.

2. About This Visit

Barkantine Practice

On 11th April 2024, Healthwatch Tower Hamlets visited Barkantine Practice, located in Isle of Dogs area, within Primary Care Network 8. The practice is commissioned by the Tower Hamlets GP Care Group and has approximately 19,000 registered patients.

We interviewed a total of 6 staff members, 8 patients and the practice manager.

A promotional poster and questionnaires were emailed to the practice manager one week prior to the Enter and View visit. This was to ensure staff and patients who were interested but not available on the day of the visit had the opportunity to share their experience with Healthwatch Tower Hamlets. However, the practice had not distributed the questionnaires and displayed the respective posters throughout the premises, reducing the total staff and patient participation. Staff were also unaware of the Enter and View visit.



CQC Rating

The CQC (Care Quality Commission) are the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. They make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care and encourage care services to improve.

At the time of the visit, Barkantine Practice had been inspected by CQC in 2017 and the report was reviewed in 2019, providing the practice with a rating of "Overall Good".

Online Feedback

The [NHS review page](#) contains a total of 34 reviews: nine 1-star ratings, three 2-star ratings, one 4-star ratings and seven 5-star ratings, spanning from 2022 to 2023.

Feedback is also available on [Google Reviews](#); Barkantine Practice received 330 reviews prior to our visit on 11th April 2024, averaging at 1 star out of 5.

The comments mention issues such as inaccessibility to appointments, long waits on the phone and dissatisfaction with the complaints management.

Further concerns referred to poorly trained reception staff, unprofessional behaviour, poor communication within the team and towards patients, losing prescriptions and long waits.

However, there were also compliments for the staff such as the Women's Health Doctor and related to the professional service provided by the practice and the e-consultation service

The reviews also praised the staff at Barkantine Practice for their physio advice and compassionate staff.

Focus of the Visit

The rationale for conducting the Enter and View visit to Barkantine Practice was based on the data sourced from engagement, surveys and comments posted online (NHS Reviews and Google Reviews). In comparison to other GP practices in the area, Barkantine Practice had a high volume of feedback which happened to be significantly negative.

The feedback indicated that the GP practice performed well in specific areas such as Women's Health but performed poorly when it came to professionalism and communication within the team and with patients.

The main aim of the visit was to observe how Barkantine Practice operates and how they have acquired such a large volume of feedback from their patients. We also wanted to observe the areas of concern that were raised in patient feedback, therefore questions for staff and patients were formulated in a way to address these concerns, alongside the standard Enter & View observations.

3. Summary of Findings

During the visit to Barkantine Practice, Authorised Representatives were able to have a staff-led tour of the premises, taking notes of their observations during the tour and taking photographs when appropriate.

There are seven categories of observation. These categories include Outside and Entrance, Environment, Safety, Information Displayed, Accessibility, Reception and Waiting Area, and Staff.

Barkantine Practice is located on a main road near the Isle of Dogs, London. This makes it easily accessible via car, bus and tube. The area is moderately busy with pedestrians but not particularly noisy.

What worked well?

- **Accessibility:** Doors are easily accessible and step-free. The corridors at the practice were wide enough for those using wheelchairs, push chairs or walking frames (see Appendix A). There were also lifts available at the premises.
- **Environment:** The waiting room was overall clean; waste bins were available and walls were decorated with art and informative posters. The chairs were neatly arranged in rows of approximately seven and the atmosphere was quiet. There is hand-sanitiser available in multiple locations, including one near the entrance. The atmosphere upon entry is welcoming, brightly lit by natural light entering from the floor-to-ceiling windows. The staff at the premises were friendly, polite and occasionally communicating with members of the public in Bengali. There was a public washroom available for use at the waiting area. It was fitted with all the necessary accessibility features (see Appendix A).
- **Safety:** Fire extinguishers are available at the premises, alongside fire exits that are clearly labelled.



Figure 1: Public washroom available at Barkantine Practice



Figure 2: There was a monitor looping through informative posters

- **Displayed Information:** There were several noticeboards located in the waiting room, displaying information regarding flu jabs, prenatal yoga classes, financial advice services and useful information for new parents. They also had a display dedicated to community run activities in the local area – such as ‘Walk & Talk’ group, the ‘Bereavement Support Group’ and ‘Coffee Mornings’. There was a functioning digital board and a tv monitor looping through health informational videos and posters – for example, consequences of smoking.
- **Staffing:** During interviews, staff mentioned that management were supportive, valued the mental wellness of staff and had implemented a zero-tolerance policy at the practice to protect staff.

What could be improved?

- **Entrance:** The main entrance into the practice is not clearly labelled with signage, only the entrance for the pharmacy was clearly indicated. This can be slightly confusing to first-time visitors (see Appendix B).
- **Waiting Area:** There was only one hand sanitiser located at the reception area and the check-in was particularly slow, the Healthwatch Tower Hamlets team waited 15 minutes to be seen. The waiting area could be cleaner.
- **Premises:** The Healthwatch Tower Hamlets team found it tricky to navigate through the premises due to poorly printed maps and signage (see Appendix C).
- **Fire Safety:** Although there was an effort to display fire procedures throughout the premises, some posters did not state the location of the nearest first aid kit (Appendix C), the assembly point information had worn off, making it difficult to read or were placed in obscure, poorly lit areas.
- **Displayed Information:** Some noticeboards were overfilled with posters pinned over others, obstructing patients from reading the information. In contrast, the noticeboard dedicated to PPG was left completely blank. One of the plaques accompanying artwork was secured onto the wall upside-down. The leaflet display did not appear to be regularly maintained (Appendix C).



Figure 3: The fire safety information was worn and required maintenance.

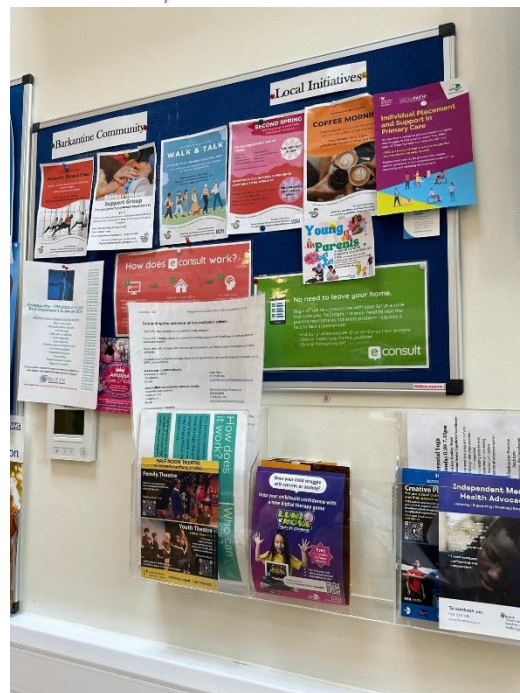


Figure 4: Noticeboards had posters placed on top of each other on display.

- **Feedback box:** The Healthwatch Tower Hamlets team did not observe a feedback box located in the waiting area after a thorough search. When enquired, the practice manager guided the team to a small space behind the self-service point display, where the feedback box was located, tucked away from direct view (see Appendix D).
- **Accessibility:** It was observed that patients required a pin code to access consultation rooms in specific areas, which was perceived as a concern as it led to confusion and waiting for reception staff to be free to let patients in.
- **Working conditions:** Some staff mentioned that they would like more flexibility in working hours for those with children or someone to take care of, recognising and appreciating nurses and taking better care of general staff morale.

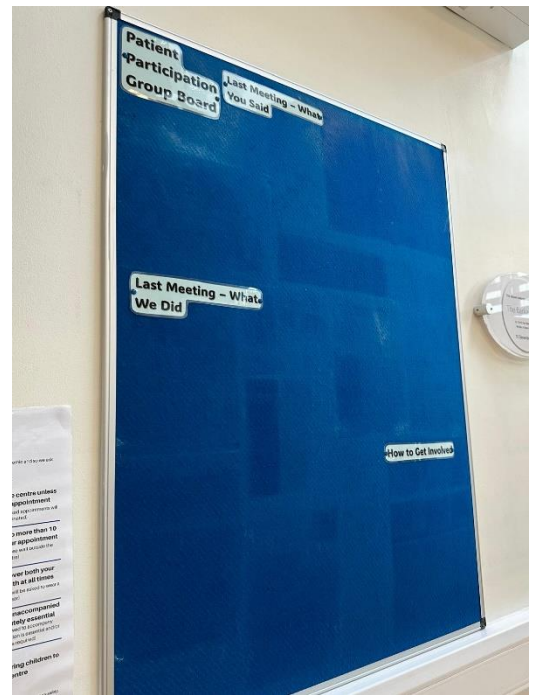


Figure 5: PPG noticeboard was left blank.

Summary of recommendations:

1. **Clearer signage for the practice entrance.**
2. **Various improvements to the reception and waiting area, including more efficiency-based training for the Patient Advisors (reception staff).**
3. **Implement regular maintenance and management of fire safety displays, premise maps, noticeboards and leaflet stands.**
4. **At the time of the visit, Barkantine Practice had recently implemented a new booking system – monitoring patient feedback at this stage is vital.**

4. Interviews

During the visit on 11th April 2024, we had the opportunity to interview a few patients and staff members, along with the practice manager at Barkantine Practice. Selected comments from patient interviews have been shared. We asked a total of 20 questions divided into the following categories: Appointment Booking, Consultations, Engagement and Feedback, and Staffing.

4.1 Appointment Booking

It was confirmed that patients do have various ways of booking appointments, including telephone, walk-ins and e-consultations. It was shared that there can be a short queue for telephone appointment bookings. During a live-call demonstration around 12pm, the caller was placed second in queue. If the caller is six or above in queue, there is a call back system in place. A new appointment booking system was introduced on 25th March 2024, which incorporated a triage process. Barkantine provides appointments on the same day however these are fully booked-up by 3pm.

Selected Patient Feedback



"I tried to book an appointment online but couldn't go through with it, was later sent a text to book the appointment directly on phone."



"Yes, it was easy to book the appointment using the E-consultation system, they called me back within 48 hours."

The staff were asked about special provisions in place for people known to have difficulties such as disabled people, those without computers/phones, or foreign language speakers. They have language line in place for those with a language barriers and occasionally bilingual staff members assist. Those with long term conditions get booked in for an appointment on a priority basis. There is an alert for special assistance which is put into place at the point of registration.

Both staff and management felt that the new booking system was promising and has improved the booking system process. It increases the likelihood of patients receiving same day appointments and had reduced the number of patients that didn't show up to the appointment.

To further improve the booking system, a staff suggested cutting down telephone booking hours to 8am-3pm, which would encourage patients to use the new e-consultation system. A difficulty faced by the practice has been patients wanting to change the consultation method too close to the consultation date. It was also mentioned that expanding their patient capacity could be worth looking into as it doesn't meet demands.

4.2 Consultations

Patients are always asked if they have a preference between face-to-face, or telephone appointments. Most patients do prefer face-to-face appointments. The practice is open from 8am – 8pm and provides appointments on Saturdays 9am – 5pm, both of which allows for greater flexibility for those who work or look after school-aged children. On Saturdays, patients can have appointments with nurses, GPs, HCAs (Health Care Assistants) and Physiotherapists.

If remote appointments are running late, messages are sent out to patients to keep them informed. There is usually good communication between the GP and patients, based on comments made by staff. In the case where patients have missed a call for a telephone appointment, they are called back twice. Then they are texted to call in an hour. If that is also missed, then patients are told to contact the practice again. Both staff and management felt like the e-consultation system worked effectively, meaning that patients rarely left the practice without an appointment.

Selected Patient Feedback



"The quality of my consultation has been good – lasted 5 minutes."



"My scheduled appointments are sometimes late but usually on time."

4.3 Engagement and Feedback

At Barkantine Practice, patients are advised to share their feedback via the Friends and Family survey that is texted monthly. Patients are also directed to the feedback box located in the waiting area, however, it's not very popular. There are also monthly PPG meetings in which patients can share their feedback.

When asked whether the complaints policy is on display within the waiting area, staff briefly agreed and shared that patients are often directed to an email address or a complaints box. Most complaints are received on the website and are acknowledged within 3 working days. It can take up to 2 weeks, or longer, to respond appropriately based on the complexity of the complaint. The team try to resolve it within 1 month.

Selected Patient Feedback



"I am not aware of the feedback and complaints procedures available at the practice."



"I haven't paid attention to the noticeboards so I'm not sure if the complaints policy is on display."

4.4 Staffing

Staff recall receiving an induction for their role, which was either one-week long for admin staff and two-weeks long for clinicians, during which they shadow staff within various departments. However, one staff member shared that their induction only lasted for their first day.

Staff receive regular training on top of the mandatory training due to system changes. Staff are allocated dedicated Protected Learning Time (PLT) for training purposes. Recent training sessions attended by staff included Fire Exit Drills and a workshop on what to do if a patient is behaving poorly.

Most staff members were aware of the Accessible Information Standard (AIS), which aims to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss are provided with information that they can easily read or understand, so they can communicate easily with Health and Social Care services. Staff at Barkantine Practice shared that they do accommodate for specific needs – for example, they send out text messages to patients if they need additional support.

When asked about whether management is supportive towards staff, all responses were positive, claiming that the mental wellness of staff is valued and a zero-tolerance policy was implemented to protect the staff at the frontlines.

Regarding their work conditions, the sentiments were generally positive but some staff shared they would like more flexible working hours for those with children or someone to take care of, recognising and appreciating nurses and support staff morale. The most difficult aspect of their role was managing patient expectations, demand and capacity efficiencies, along with staff retention. Staff shared that the most enjoyable aspect of their role was patient interaction, helping and working for the community, working with colleagues and learning new things.

Selected Patient Feedback



“Some reception staff require better training, there have been miscommunication and a lack of professionalism. I have been waiting for referrals from October [April 2024 at the time of interview].”



“The staff at Barkantine Practice are good and friendly.”

“Based on my experience of Barkantine Practice, they need more doctors.”

“I want the service to improve, the appointments need to be more accessible. The staff can be more helpful and should trust patients more if they're in pain.”

5. Conclusion

Overall, our visit to Barkantine Practice was positive with some areas for improvement identified. We have highlighted our recommendations for improvement based on the observations and the feedback received from both staff and patients.

Summary of recommendations:

- 1. Clearer signage for the practice entrance.**
- 2. Various improvements to the reception and waiting area, including more efficiency-based training for the Patient Advisors (reception staff).**
- 3. Implement regular maintenance and management of fire safety displays, premise maps, noticeboards and leaflet stands.**
- 4. At the time of the visit, Barkantine Practice had recently implemented a new booking system – monitoring patient feedback at this stage is vital.**

Recommendations

The Practice Manager at Barkantine Practice was requested to respond to the following recommendations:

1. Practice Entrance

The main entrance into the practice is not clearly labelled with signage, only the entrance for the pharmacy was clearly indicated. This can be slightly confusing to first-time visitors.

- We recommend placing a small placard above the entrance, which may set a positive impression on new patients (see Appendix B for reference). The sign in front of the pharmacy may misdirect patients.

Practice Response:

The Barkantine Practice is located within a health center that houses various other healthcare providers and services. The entire building is managed by the Community Health Partnership (CHP). We will submit your recommendation to the CHP for approval to install signage at the entrance of the practice.

2. Reception and Waiting Area

The Healthwatch Tower Hamlets team noticed that only one bottle of hand sanitiser was available for patient use within the waiting area. The ambience in the waiting area was very quiet and sombre. Furthermore, the feedback box was located behind the self-check in screen which was not visible for patient use. Patients were often seen waiting to access corridors leading to consultation rooms as they required a pin code.

There was only one hand sanitiser located at the reception area and the check-in was particularly slow, the Healthwatch Tower Hamlets team waited 15 minutes to be seen.

The Healthwatch Tower Hamlets team did not observe a feedback box located in the waiting area after a thorough search. When enquired, the practice manager guided the team to a small space behind the self-service point display, where the feedback box was located, tucked away from direct view.

Patients are also directed to the feedback box located in the waiting area, however, it's not very popular.

It was observed that patients required a pin code to access consultation rooms in specific areas, which was perceived as a concern as it led to confusion and waiting for reception staff to be free to let them in.

- We recommend increasing the number of hand sanitiser units available at the waiting area to accommodate for the large number of patients that visit the practice.
- Healthwatch Tower Hamlets strongly suggests Barkantine Practice relocates and invests in a feedback box that is visible and inviting. This could increase the quantity of feedback the practice receives from their patients.
- During the Enter and View Visit, it was noted that patients had to wait for reception staff to be available to access specific areas of the practice that required pin code access. This led to some delays in patients being greeted and seen at the reception desk. Healthwatch Tower Hamlets recommends that Barkantine Practice reconsiders the use of pin codes to access consultation rooms, and implementing more efficiency-based training for the Patient Advisors (reception staff), so that delays in the queue can be reduced.

Practice Response:

- We will work with the CHP to increase the number of hand sanitiser.
- A feedback box has been setup.
- We will review the recommendation regarding the access to the consultation room to implement any necessary changes.

3. Displayed Information

We noticed that multiple displays, such as fire safety information, premise maps, posters on notice boards, were not regularly maintained. This also applied to leaflet stands. When asked about complaints policy, most patients had not seen it displayed in the waiting area, contrasting the response from staff.

Although there was an effort to display fire procedures throughout the premises, some posters did not state the location of the nearest first aid kit, the assembly point information had worn off, making it difficult to read or were located in obscure, poorly lit areas.

The team found it tricky to navigate through the premises due to poorly printed maps and signage.

Some noticeboards were overfilled with posters pinned over others, obstructing patients from reading the information. In contrast, the noticeboard dedicated to PPG was left completely blank. One of the plaques accompanying artwork was secured onto the wall upside-down. The leaflet display did not appear to be regularly maintained.

"I haven't paid attention to the noticeboards so I'm not sure if the complaints policy is on display."

- To address these concerns, Barkantine Practice should implement a regular maintenance and monitoring schedule for all information displayed throughout the premises. It is a fire safety concern for information on fire evacuation posters to be blank, not in a visible location or worn-off to the point of illegibility.
- We recommend that Barkantine Practice considers updating their premise maps and signage to make navigation easier for patients.
- Lastly, whilst it's important to display as many posters as possible for patient awareness, it is equally important for the noticeboards to appear inviting. Layering posters on top of each other prevents patients from reading the information and the appearance can be discouraging to patients. The same applies for leaflet displays. This may have contributed to poor patient awareness of the complaints policy and procedures. We recommend that the information displayed is regularly reviewed so that posters appear neat and engaging.

Practice Response:

We will also address your suggestions concerning display boards. Recommendations about premise maps and signage will be shared with the CHP, and we will request their implementation.

4. Patient Feedback

At the time of the visit, Barkantine Practice had recently implemented a new booking system – monitoring patient feedback at this stage is vital. During the visit, many patients raised concerns about appointment accessibility and the availability of doctors.

“Need more doctors”

“They should make online appointments available for patients. Also give patients the ability to pick their own time. The waiting period is also too long.”

“Wants service to improve; appointments more accessible. They can be more helpful. Should trust patients more if they're in pain.”

“Useful to book appointments online; should be implemented again. Patient access app doesn't allow for appointments yet. But could see all available appointments and liked that. Has to manually input all info for E-Consult”.

It was also mentioned that expanding their patient capacity could be worth looking into as it doesn't meet demands. Some staff shared they would like more flexible working hours for those with children or someone to take care of, recognising and appreciating nurses and looking after staff morale. The most difficult aspect of their role was managing patient expectations, demands and capacity efficiently, along with staff retention.

- Healthwatch Tower Hamlets recommends that Barkantine Practice regularly reviews feedback received from their patients to see if the newly implemented appointment system has been effective in addressing patient concerns regarding appointment accessibility.
- There were some concerns surrounding the availability of doctors at Barkantine Practice and whether the practice can meet patient demands. The practice should consider the recruitment of more clinical professionals to meet the demands and spread the workload more evenly across the staff. This can create a better work environment for the existing staff.
- Management at Barkantine Practice should consider organising a regular staff meetings to discuss staff concerns and feedback regarding their work environment and any further training they would like to participate in.

Practice Response:

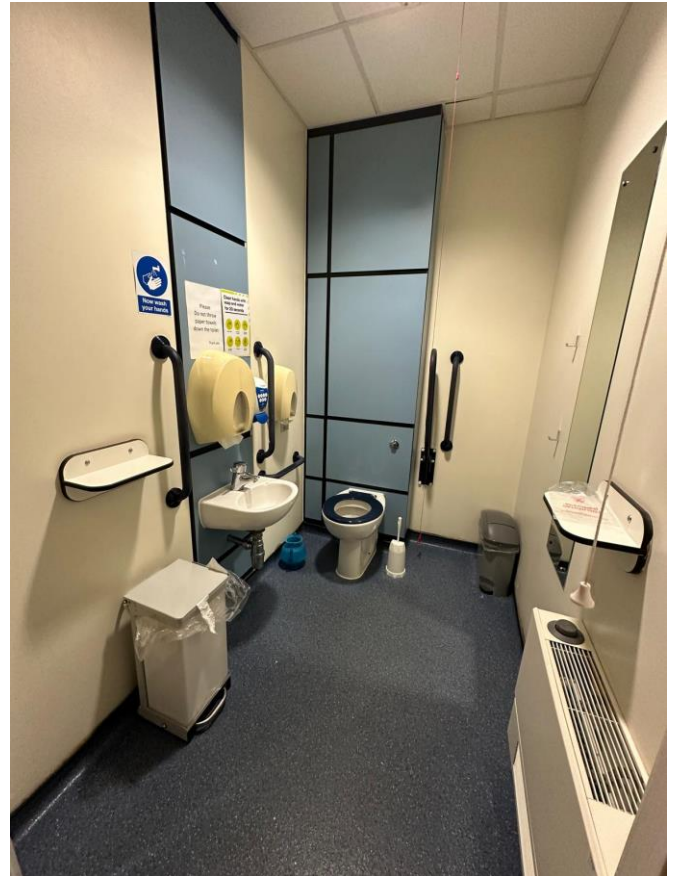
- We do review our appointment system on regular basis. We do whole team meeting bi-monthly.
- We are actively working to recruit more clinicians, although we face financial constraints that limit our ability to meet appointment demands.

5. Appendix

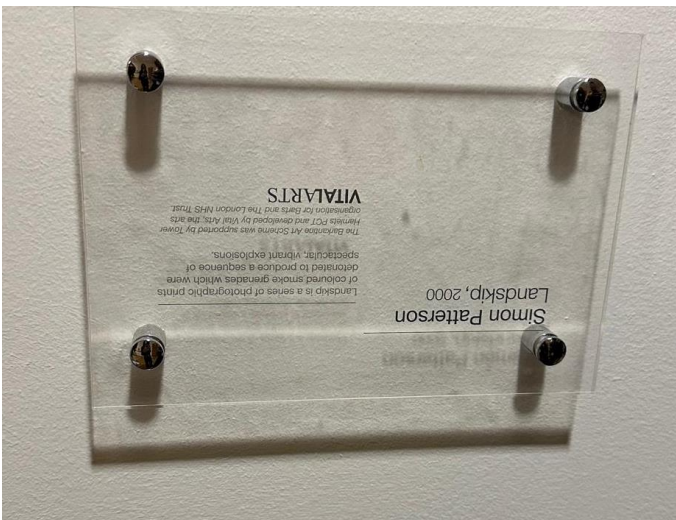
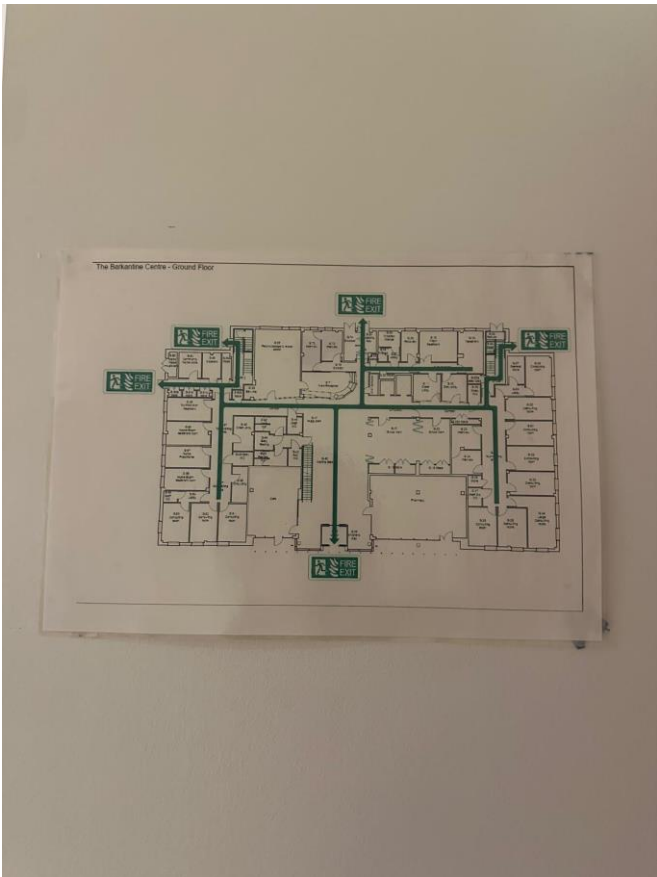
This section displays additional photos taken during the Enter and View Visit to Barkantine Practice on 11th April 2024.



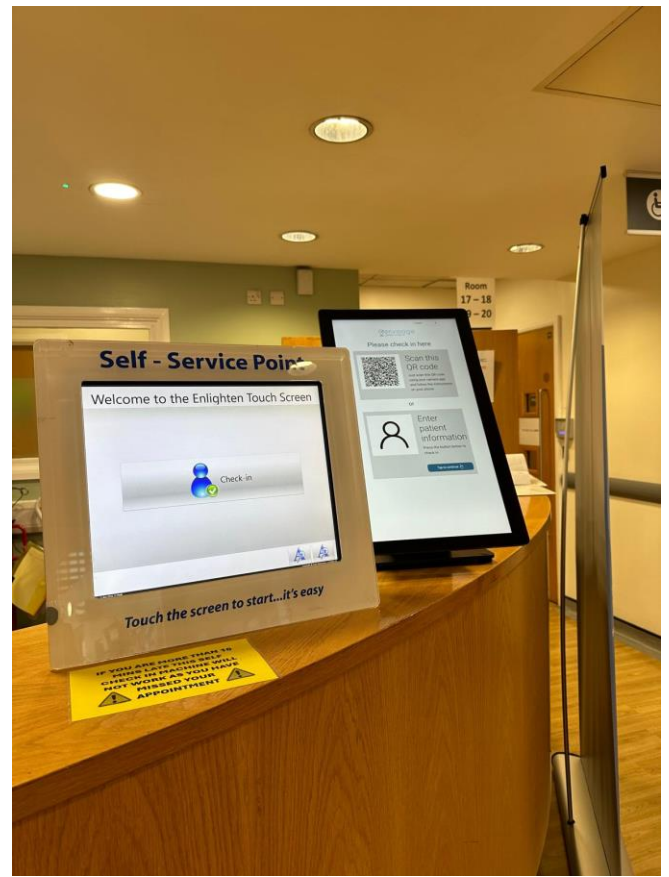
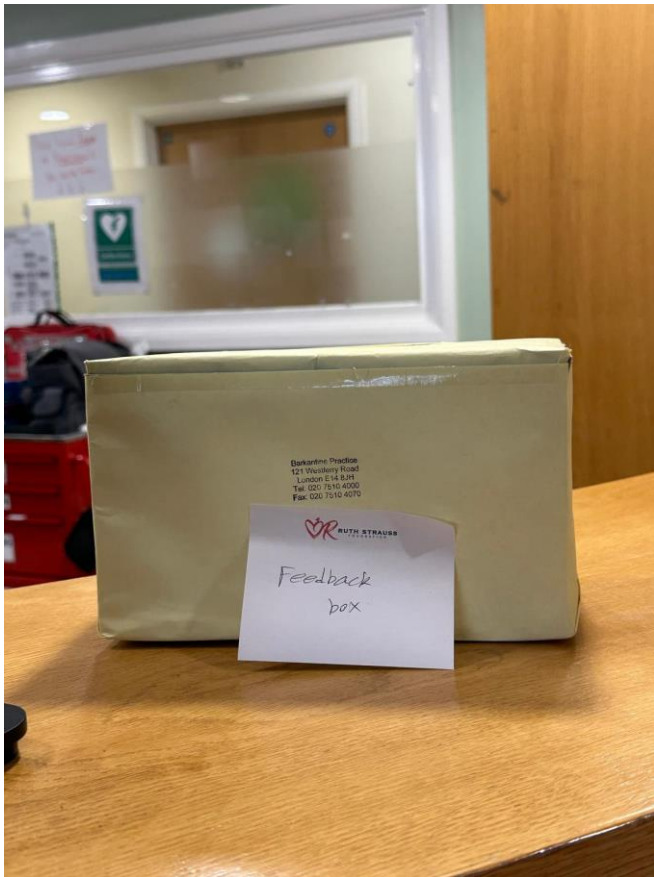
Appendix A: The Barkantine Practice had spacious corridors and a public washroom featuring all the appropriate safety features, making it accessible for those using wheelchairs, pushchairs or walking frames.



Appendix B: The main entrance of the GP practice was not clearly labelled. The photo on the left was sourced from the Barkantine Practice Facebook Page, dated 24th July 2020. It shows where a placard could be placed in place of the temporary signage (which was not present at the time of the Enter and View visit).



Appendix C: The Healthwatch Tower Hamlets team found it tricky to navigate independently through the premises due to the poorly printed maps located in dimly lit areas. The team also found a few display features that required maintenance, such as the poster highlighting the location of the nearest first aid box, a poorly affixed artwork plaque and the leaflet display.



Appendix D: The feedback box at the Barkantine Practice was located behind the self-service point display, tucked away from direct view.



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