



Southend Hospital Signs and Maps Mystery Shopping



A follow-up report

June 2024

Why did we do the follow-up?

Whenever we write recommendations for the NHS or City Council to improve services, it is really important that we go back to see if these have been implemented.

We wanted to see if any changes had been made based on our observations following our September 2023 report [*Mystery shopper experience of using signage at Southend University Hospital*](#). During our previous visit, we looked at signs and maps around several hospital car parks and multiple out-patient and in-patient departments to see how easy it was for patients to find their way around, and to check whether the signs were clear and matched printed literature.

This was the Trust's response to our report

"Thank you for this report – it is very useful.

I have forwarded this to our Southend site manager and new wayfinding lead – I can confirm the findings have been escalated and there will be a wayfinding working group set up to tackle the wayfinding and signage issues at Southend and across our other sites."

So, what did we do this time?

On the 2nd May 2024, two of our Healthwatch Southend staff visited Southend Hospital to repeat our journey around the site and record any changes.

What did we discover on-site?

We were pleased to see improved, clearer signage in several places.

The disabled car user (blue badge) information regarding payment exemption is now clearly displayed in all car parks and prominently displayed in the front glass entrance to the Tower Block.



The Hospital website car park information has been updated:

<https://www.mse.nhs.uk/parking-at-our-hospitals>

A local contact number for car park queries is displayed on the signage in Car Park 'F' (near the Tower Block). We hope to see this sign replicated across all the car parks.

We noticed the introduction of more prominently displayed QR codes¹ on notices at various points across the Trust car parks and entrance areas. This allows visitors to access car park information and to pay any car park fees via an online method. For those who cannot or do not wish to use a QR code, there are various pay and display machines to use.

We chatted with two Hospital volunteers who recognised us from our previous visit. They explained there had been no changes in providing volunteers with department/service locality updates, however, they have a dedicated volunteer who continues with their weekly walk-around to keep the team up to date.

Our recommendations

It is good to see progress, and we fully appreciate there is ongoing improvement work generally around the Hospital estate, which prevents permanent signage change in some areas at this time.

However, because of our re-visit, we would recommend the Trust actively considers:

- updating the Trust website with ward/department moves and current building works internally and externally.
- signage at the car park entrances informing visitors about temporary reduced capacity so they are aware of possible delays. Building work start

¹ A **QR code** is a [pattern](#) of [black](#) and white [squares](#) that can be read by a [smartphone](#), allowing the [phone user](#) to [get](#) more information about something. **QR code** is an [abbreviation](#) for ' [Quick Response](#) code'.

dates and expected completion dates would be very helpful for visitors and staff particularly when the car park capacity is reduced.

- Providing telephone numbers for parking queries in each car park
- site maps being displayed in all car parks.
- producing temporary up-to-date paper maps making them accessible to hospital visitors at hospital entrances.
- additional support for Hospital volunteers by briefing them on any locality changes.
- directing patients on the best entrance to use for their visit; the most direct route needs to be considered including accessibility.
- checking existing signage height, and size for accessibility. Of note the increasing the font size on the key code at the bottom of the large display maps on hospital walls.
- permanent signage placement for the urgent blood test locality.
- adding the GP Unit location to all maps.
- temporary access signage internally and externally including car parks.

What are we doing to ensure these are achieved?

We appreciate the pressures of working within the Hospital, but it is essential that patients and their families or carers are able to find their way around the site without too much difficulty.

We have sent this report to Mid & South Essex NHS Foundation Trust for their consideration. We will ask them what they are doing to address our concerns.

If you require this information in an alternative format, please contact our office via the details below:

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