

Enter & View Visit Report

Toddington Medical Centre

21st May 2026

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Details of visit

Service address:	Toddington Medical Centre, Luton Road, Toddington, Bedfordshire, LU5 6DE
Service Provider:	Titan Primary Care Network
Date and Time:	21st May 2026, 10am – 1pm
Authorised Representatives:	Victoria Bloxham, Alan Jackson, Linda Grant
	Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
Contact details:	Capability House, Wrest Park, Silsoe, Bedfordshire, MK45 4HR Tel: 0300 303 8554

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) would like to thank the service provider, service users, visitors and staff for their contribution to the Enter and View visit.

Disclaimer

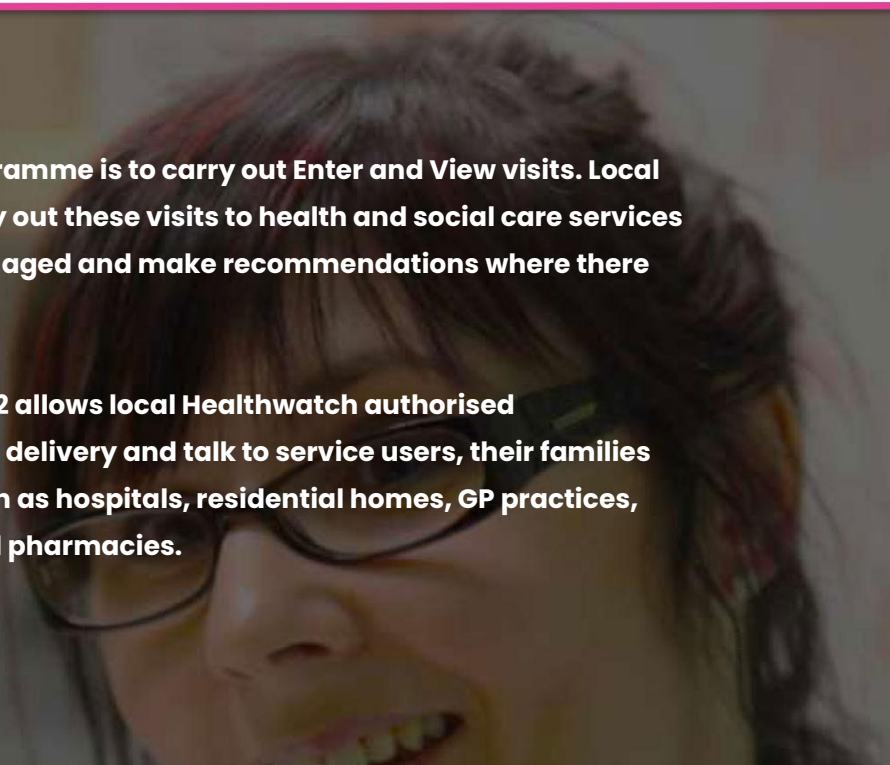
Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above.

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.

What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being managed and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and care workers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies.



Purpose of the visit

- To engage with service users and understand how dignity is being respected in a GP Surgery environment.
- Identify examples of good working practice.
- Observe patients engaging with the staff and their surroundings.
- Consult with patients and staff about their experience of the environment within the surgery and how care is delivered.
- Engage with the clinical and administrative practice team to gather insight into resource, working culture and staff experience, with feedback regarding their view of service provision.

Strategic drivers

- **In response to patient feedback:**
To review and address patient feedback relating to access and service experience, including difficulties obtaining timely appointments, challenges navigating the online triage system, perceived inconsistencies in service delivery, and concerns that some consultations feel rushed.
- **Gathering Current Patient Experiences:**
To collect current feedback from patients regarding their experiences of quality of care and overall satisfaction, thereby identifying any persistent, new or ongoing concerns.
- **Evaluating Patient Engagement:**
To review the effectiveness of the surgery's patient engagement strategies, including the handling of complaints and the operation of the Patient Participation Group (PPG), ensuring that patient voices are heard, and their feedback is acted upon.
- **Supporting Continuous Improvement:**
To provide constructive feedback and recommendations that assist Toddington Medical Centre in enhancing service delivery, patient satisfaction and compliance with regulatory standards.

Methodology

This was an announced Enter and View Visit.

The visit to Toddington Medical Centre was undertaken to gain insight into the experiences of both patients and staff, assess the surgery environment and service provision, and identify opportunities for improvement. Particular focus was placed on patient access and experience, including timely access to appointments, the effectiveness of online triage processes, and patients' perceptions of inconsistencies in service delivery.

The most recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection took place in September 2021, when the practice received an overall rating of 'Good'.

[Toddington Medical Centre - Care Quality Commission](#)

A formal letter of intent was sent to the practice on 7th May 2026, together with Healthwatch promotional materials, a pre-visit questionnaire for the Practice Manager, and information leaflets to notify patients of the forthcoming visit.

To maximise patient participation and gather a broad range of feedback, patient questionnaires and a feedback collection box were delivered to the surgery on 13th May 2026, one week prior to the visit.

Upon arrival, representatives experienced some initial uncertainty regarding the arrangements for the visit and encountered differing expectations about the purpose and scope of the Enter and View process. Although these issues were subsequently clarified and resolved, they resulted in a degree of confusion at the outset and suggested that information relating to the visit may not have been fully communicated across all staff groups.

This observation was reinforced by discussions with members of the reception and administrative teams, some of whom appeared unaware of the planned visit and the associated request to encourage completion of patient feedback questionnaires. While Healthwatch materials, including the poster and feedback box, were displayed at reception, no completed questionnaires had been received by the date of the visit. The limited awareness of the visit among some staff members may have contributed to the low level of patient engagement and survey completion.

The Practice Manager acknowledged this issue and advised that additional efforts would be made to encourage patients to complete the questionnaires following the visit. Consequently, the feedback period was extended to allow further opportunities for patient participation.

During the visit, the Practice Manager provided an introductory tour of the premises and facilitated access to staff and patients. Structured interviews were conducted with the Practice Manager, Operations Manager, GP, Nurse, two members of the administrative team, and several patients. In addition, representatives observed the environment and interactions between patients and staff throughout the visit to gain a broader understanding of day-to-day service delivery and patient experience.

At the conclusion of the visit, a summary of the key findings was shared with the Practice Manager to enable immediate discussion, clarification, and feedback.

Summary of findings

Toddington Medical Centre is a General Medical Services (GMS) practice based in Toddington, Bedfordshire, and forms part of the Titan Primary Care Network (PCN). The practice delivers primary healthcare services to approximately 7,500 registered patients across the local community.

Toddington Medical Centre is supported by a multidisciplinary workforce comprising approximately three General Practitioners (GPs), alongside one Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP) one Nurse Practitioner, one Paramedic and two Health Care Assistants (HCA's).

The practice also includes a Wellbeing Team consisting of a Social Prescriber and Care Coordinator shared across the Primary Care Network (PCN). The surgery is also supported by administrative and reception staff to ensure the effective delivery of practice operations and patient services.

Additionally, the practice benefits from direct access to a specialist healthcare team providing dermatology, ear, nose and throat (ENT), and audiology services. These clinics are delivered by Health Harmony, who attend the practice each Sunday and on occasional Tuesdays, depending on service demand and uptake.

A weekly musculoskeletal (MSK) clinic is provided on-site by two external clinicians from Circle Integrated Care. In addition, the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT), provided by East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT), offers a session at the practice one day per week.

Toddington Medical Centre is a modern, purpose-built GP surgery (circa 2000) located on Luton Road, Toddington, positioned centrally within the village, making it easy to locate for both patients and visitors. The building is designed specifically for healthcare delivery and accommodates a range of clinical services including GP consultations, nursing care, and additional specialist clinics.

The medical centre shares its site with a local pharmacy, which operates as an independent service. While the two services function separately, their co-location provides patients with convenient access to pharmacy services and supports a more streamlined patient journey when collecting prescribed medication.

Medication reviews are undertaken annually, usually around each patient's birthday, with the majority conducted face-to-face. Patients can request repeat prescriptions via a dedicated prescription box at reception, through reception staff, or online. Prescriptions are typically processed within two to three working days, with some available sooner for collection from the pharmacy located opposite the surgery.

However, patient feedback highlighted concerns regarding frequent medication shortages at the local pharmacy. Patients reported that these shortages can result in delays in obtaining medication, additional journeys to alternative pharmacies, and increased inconvenience, particularly for those with ongoing or complex medication needs. Such issues may also generate additional contacts with the practice, including enquiries about prescriptions and requests for alternative medications, potentially increasing administrative workload and demand on staff resources.

HWCB representatives discussed these concerns with the Practice Manager during the visit. The discussion explored the impact of pharmacy stock shortages on patient experience and considered opportunities for improved communication and signposting to help minimise disruption for patients when shortages occur.

The building provides step free wheelchair access for those patients with additional mobility needs. The second floor is used for staff only, as a meeting room, office space and storage. Access to this area is via stairs only.

A good provision of on-site parking is available for patients, including disabled and cycle spaces. However, during peak times, demand from both the surgery and the pharmacy may affect overall availability.

Externally, the building is well maintained, with clear access to the main entrance situated opposite the pharmacy. The surrounding gardens require some attention and would benefit from routine tidying and weed removal. The appearance of the external grounds plays an important role in shaping the first impressions of patients and visitors, and well-maintained outdoor areas contribute to a welcoming, professional environment that promotes confidence in the service provided.

Core opening times for the surgery are displayed as Monday to Friday from 8am to 6.30pm. However, during our visit we were advised of the following extended access, supporting patients with appointments outside of the standard working day:

Tuesday	8am to 7.45pm
Thursday	8am to 8pm
Friday	8am to 8.30pm
Saturday	Clinic every 5 weeks

Although the practice advises that these hours are communicated to patients through reception and online booking systems, clearer promotion of this information is needed to better support patients by helping to reduce barriers to accessing appointments with clinicians.

The main entrance is located opposite the local pharmacy. Patients access the building via a narrow pathway leading from the car park, entering through a set of automatic doors into a lobby area before passing through a second set of automatic doors which leads directly into reception and the waiting room.

One patient raised concerns regarding pedestrian safety at the entrance to the surgery, commenting that ***"the entrance to the surgery is dangerous for pedestrians due to the narrow pathway and vehicles***

parking right next to it." While no incidents were reported during the visit, this feedback highlights a potential safety risk that may warrant ongoing monitoring and consideration by the practice management team, particularly in relation to pedestrian access and vehicle parking arrangements.

On arrival, patients are required to report to reception to check in for their appointments. A sign displayed at the reception desk directs patients to use a self-check-in screen located in the lobby area; however, this facility was not immediately visible to HWCB representatives during the visit. Consideration may therefore be given to the visibility and positioning of the self-check-in system and associated signage to ensure it can be easily identified and accessed by patients.

The reception desk is situated within a large, open-plan waiting area with a vaulted ceiling, creating a bright and welcoming environment.

Approximately twenty patient chairs of varying heights, including some with armrests, were arranged centrally within the room to accommodate a range of patient needs. The waiting area benefits from good natural light and provides sufficient space for wheelchair users, mobility aids, and parents with prams to move around comfortably.

At the rear of the waiting area is a screened "Wellness" space designed to support patient privacy. This area provides access to a wheelchair, blood pressure monitor, weighing scales, and a stadiometer for height measurement. It also contains a range of health promotion materials and information about local services available to patients. The provision of this dedicated space is a positive feature that supports self-care and patient wellbeing. However, representatives noted that the area would benefit from some tidying and organisation to enhance its overall appearance, accessibility, and ease of use.

The site has an 'H'-shaped layout, with some clinical and treatment rooms located directly off the waiting area and others situated nearby along a short corridor. Administrative offices are also located on the ground floor.

Accessible toilets including baby change facilities are available directly off the waiting room area. Staff have separate toilet facilities to patients.

Reception also displays information about the availability of a hearing loop and the forthcoming introduction of 'EMMA', an AI-powered reception assistant designed to support patient contact and administrative enquiries. While the system is intended to improve efficiency and accessibility, representatives noted that its introduction had generated some concern among patients. Prior to its launch, a number of patients expressed dissatisfaction on social media, with some questioning the appropriateness of using artificial intelligence within primary care and expressing a preference for direct interaction with practice staff. The impact of the system on patient experience and access may therefore warrant ongoing monitoring following implementation.

An NHS Friends and Family Test (FFT) collection box is located on the reception desk, providing patients with an opportunity to share feedback about their experience of using the practice's services. The FFT is an important mechanism for gathering patient views and can help identify areas of good practice as well as opportunities for service improvement.

Patients wishing to raise a formal complaint, however, are required to do so through the practice's established complaints procedure.

Representatives were advised that complaint forms are available from reception, although information about the complaints process is not prominently displayed within the practice. Ensuring that details of how to make a complaint are clearly visible and easily accessible is important in promoting openness, encouraging patient engagement, and enabling concerns to be raised and addressed appropriately. Limited visibility of the complaints procedure may result in some patients being unaware of the channels available to provide feedback or raise concerns directly with the practice.

The Practice Manager advised that patient complaints and feedback are reviewed on a weekly basis and discussed with relevant staff members as appropriate. This regular review process demonstrates a commitment to

monitoring patient experience and identifying opportunities to improve service delivery and patient satisfaction.

Information boards were seen to be tidy and appeared to contain up to date and relevant details. A notice advertising the Patient Participation Group (PPG) was also seen clearly displayed.

Overall, the waiting room was bright, clean, tidy, and uncluttered. Furniture and flooring were in good condition with no visible signs of wear and tear. However, due to the large open space, it did not feel particularly welcoming. Adding softening features such as plants and calming artwork could help create a more relaxed atmosphere and may benefit some patients by reducing anxiety and making the environment feel less clinical. Improved ventilation could additionally help patients feel less stressed and more comfortable whilst supporting infection control. Tissues and hand sanitiser was seen to be available.

Baby changing facilities were available within the accessible toilet located adjacent to the waiting area and were clearly signposted for patients. While these facilities support the needs of families attending the practice, there may be opportunities to further enhance the environment for parents, carers, and young children.

Consideration could be given to creating a small, clearly defined child-friendly area within the waiting room, incorporating age-appropriate books, activities, and visual displays to help occupy children and improve their experience while waiting for appointments. In addition, although breastfeeding is welcomed in all public areas, the provision of a clean, quiet, and private space for mothers who would prefer greater privacy could further support patient choice and comfort. Such enhancements would contribute to a more inclusive, family-friendly environment and help ensure that the needs of patients with young children are fully considered.

Reception staff were observed to be polite, approachable, and attentive in their interactions with patients. During discussions with a member of the reception team, HWCB representatives found the staff member to be

knowledgeable about practice procedures and able to provide clear, accurate, and helpful information. The staff member also demonstrated an ability to manage challenging and potentially sensitive situations with professionalism, empathy, and discretion, contributing positively to the patient experience.

Appointment lengths vary according to the clinician and the nature of the consultation. Standard appointments with a GP or Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP) are typically between 10 and 15 minutes in duration, while appointments with nursing staff may be considerably longer, particularly where treatments such as wound care and dressing changes are required.

The practice also provides home visits for patients who are housebound or whose medical condition prevents them from attending the surgery. This service helps ensure that vulnerable patients can continue to access appropriate care and clinical support.

To support effective communication and reduce missed appointments, the practice operates a text messaging reminder service. The practice reported a relatively low rate of Did Not Attend (DNA) appointments, which it attributes in part to the availability of same-day or next-day appointments for patients requiring timely clinical assessment. The text reminder service further supports attendance by providing patients with advance notification of upcoming appointments, helping to reduce avoidable non-attendance and maximise the efficient use of clinical capacity.

Appointments can be booked in person, by telephone, or through the practice's online triage system. Toddington Medical Centre operates a well-established triage model involving both administrative staff and two GPs, enabling patients to be directed to the most appropriate service based on clinical need. This approach supports the provision of urgent appointments, which are typically available on the same day or the next working day (Monday to Friday), while also allowing routine appointments to be booked in advance. The system is designed to balance timely access to care with the effective management of clinical demand.

Results of Visit

Patients

Nine patients were interviewed as part of the visit. Despite advance publicity and the provision of opportunities for patients to submit feedback via surveys and a designated feedback box, no survey responses were received prior to the visit. In response, HWCB extended the feedback period by a further week to encourage additional patient participation, and with support from the Practice Manager, a further four responses were received. Consequently, the patient feedback obtained was limited in scope and may not fully reflect the wider patient population's views and experiences.

Patient feedback gathered during the visit reflected a range of experiences; however, the majority of those interviewed reported positive views of the practice and rated their overall experience between **'neutral'** and **'very satisfied'**. Most patients advised that it took up to one hour to secure an appointment, and many expressed satisfaction with the practice's ability to provide timely access to care.

Patients' experiences of booking appointments, either by telephone or in person at reception, were mixed. While some patients reported a straightforward process, others described difficulties accessing appointments and stated that they were frequently redirected to the online e-consult system. Some patients commented, **'If you are an older person, you can make an appointment on the telephone, but everyone else is asked to use e-consult'**.

Views on the e-consult system were similarly divided. Most patients interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the system, describing it as **'difficult to use, time consuming and impersonal'**. However, a smaller number of patients reported positive experiences and stated that they preferred using this method of access.

Despite concerns regarding the booking process, all patients interviewed reported that they were generally offered an appointment on the same day or the following day. Nevertheless, some patients felt that **'GP appointments are often difficult to access'**, explaining that they were frequently offered appointments with a nurse instead. Many patients expressed a preference to see a GP and, where possible, the same GP on an ongoing basis to support continuity of care. Patients recognised, however, that this was not always achievable due to service demand and appointment availability.

Patients also raised concerns regarding communication and continuity of care. One patient told us, **'When I do get to see the GP, I find it difficult to understand what they are saying'**. This feedback suggests that the practice may wish to consider additional measures to support effective communication, such as checking patient understanding, encouraging questions, and providing written information where appropriate.

A small number of patients also reported that appointment dates and times were occasionally changed by the surgery without explanation, which they found frustrating and inconvenient. In addition, several patients expressed a desire for regular Saturday morning clinics to better accommodate individuals who work full-time or unsocial hours.

Patients attending appointments at the surgery generally reported acceptable waiting times, with most being seen within 10–15 minutes of their scheduled appointment time. The majority described their consultations as **'collaborative and communicative'**, stating that they **'felt involved in decisions about their care'** and that **'their views were listened to'**. These responses suggest that, for most patients, clinicians foster a positive and inclusive approach to shared decision-making. However, a small number of patients reported feeling less involved in decisions relating to their care and stated that **'their concerns were not fully heard'**. Notably, these individuals also described difficulties understanding information provided during consultations, indicating that communication challenges may have affected their ability to participate fully in discussions and decision-making about their treatment and care.

The ability for patients to raise concerns and provide feedback is an important aspect of service quality, supporting transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. During the visit, both observations and patient feedback suggested that awareness of the practice's complaints procedure was limited. All but one patient interviewed stated that they were '**unaware of how to make a complaint**', indicating that information about the process may not be sufficiently visible or well communicated. Improving the accessibility and promotion of the complaints procedure could help ensure that patients are aware of the routes available to raise concerns and provide feedback when required.

Overall, patients spoke positively about the staff working at the practice and consistently described them as '**polite, professional, and supportive**'. These positive experiences contributed to generally high levels of patient satisfaction and reflect a caring, respectful, and patient-centred culture within the practice.

Staff

Toddington Medical Centre is staffed by a small but multidisciplinary team of clinical and administrative professionals who work collaboratively to provide primary healthcare services to approximately 7,500 registered patients. During the visit, HWCB representatives interviewed six members of staff representing a range of roles within the practice, including a GP, a Nurse, the Practice Manager, the Operations Manager, and two members of the Administration Team.

Leadership within the practice appeared strong and proactive. The Practice Manager, who joined the surgery just over a year ago, brings considerable experience from a large city-based practice and has overseen a number of developments aimed at strengthening service quality and governance. Earlier this year, the practice voluntarily invited the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to undertake a 'mock inspection' to assess the service against CQC standards. This proactive approach demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement, enabling the

practice to identify areas of good practice as well as opportunities for further development. The findings are expected to support ongoing quality assurance, strengthen governance arrangements, and inform future service improvements.

Feedback from staff consistently reflected a positive organisational culture and supportive working environment. Staff members demonstrated a strong understanding of their individual roles and responsibilities and spoke positively about working as part of a close-knit team with a shared commitment to delivering high-quality patient care. Many described high levels of job satisfaction and expressed pride in both their work and their colleagues, factors that can contribute positively to staff wellbeing, retention, and the overall patient experience.

One staff member told us, *'I love working here and I love our team.'* Another expressed, *"It's a great team, I like it here a lot'*. These views were echoed by a long-standing member of staff who reported that *'the past year has seen improvements following the arrival of the current Practice Manager.'* Collectively, these comments suggest that recent leadership changes have had a positive impact on team morale and workplace culture.

When asked about the support available to staff, interviewees consistently described the practice as *'very supportive'*. Staff reported feeling comfortable seeking advice and assistance from colleagues and advised that, in addition to the Practice Manager, the GPs are accessible and approachable when guidance is required. This reflects a culture of openness and collaboration, where staff feel able to raise concerns and seek support when needed.

Whilst overall staff feedback regarding teamwork and support was positive, representatives identified some inconsistencies in the communication of operational information across the practice. During the visit, it became apparent that not all staff members were aware of the forthcoming Enter and View visit or the arrangements relating to patient feedback collection. Effective internal communication is essential to ensure that all staff understand key activities, organisational priorities,

and opportunities for patient engagement. Strengthening communication mechanisms may help improve consistency of awareness across the wider practice team.

Administrative staff advised that staffing levels are generally sufficient to meet day-to-day operational demands. However, periods of annual leave or sickness absence can place significant pressure on the team, increasing workload and creating stressful working conditions. Staff noted that reduced capacity during these periods can also contribute to patient dissatisfaction and lead to more challenging interactions at reception. To help address these pressures, the practice is in the process of implementing 'EMMA', an AI Reception Assistant, which is intended to support the management of telephone enquiries and release administrative capacity for other tasks. Given the concerns expressed by both staff and some patients regarding access and communication, the impact of this initiative should be monitored closely to ensure that it delivers the intended benefits without adversely affecting patient experience.

The need for additional clinical capacity was also identified during discussions with staff, particularly in relation to nursing provision. Representatives discussed this with the Practice Manager, who confirmed that an additional nurse is scheduled to join the practice in July. This recruitment is expected to strengthen clinical capacity, support service resilience, and help meet patient demand more effectively.

Discussions with both the Practice Manager and Operations Manager highlighted the need to further develop the practice's Patient Participation Group (PPG). Although the group currently comprises approximately 11 members, engagement, communication, and meeting arrangements were reported to be inconsistent.

A well-functioning PPG plays an important role in fostering meaningful engagement between patients and the practice, providing a forum through which patient experiences, concerns, and suggestions can help inform service development. An active and representative PPG can also strengthen communication with the wider patient population, improve

understanding of local needs, and support the delivery of more responsive and patient-centred services.

Recognising the value of effective patient engagement, HWCB has offered to support the practice in strengthening its PPG by providing a Patient Participation Group toolkit together with advice and guidance drawn from previous experience of establishing and developing successful groups. This support will help the practice build a more sustainable and effective mechanism for patient involvement and feedback.

Environment and Facilities

Environmental Observations

Toddington Medical Centre occupies a modern, purpose-built facility that is well suited to the delivery of primary healthcare services. Throughout the visit, the premises were observed to be clean, orderly, and maintained to a good standard, creating a professional and welcoming environment for patients, visitors, and staff. The surgery's central location within the village contributes positively to accessibility and supports its role as a key healthcare resource within the local community.

Building and Internal Facilities

The building appeared well maintained throughout, with flooring, fixtures, furnishings, and communal areas all found to be in good condition. The internal layout is logical and easy to navigate, supported by clear signage that helps patients locate services and facilities with minimal difficulty.

The reception and waiting areas provide a bright and spacious environment, benefiting from good natural light and a range of seating options designed to accommodate differing patient needs. Accessibility has been carefully considered, with step-free access throughout the building and appropriately equipped accessible toilet facilities available for both patients and staff.

Additional facilities available to patients include baby changing provision within the accessible toilet and a dedicated wellness area containing a blood pressure monitor, weighing scales, a stadiometer for height measurement, and a wheelchair for patient use. These resources support patient independence and encourage engagement in personal health monitoring.

Accessibility

The practice demonstrates a strong commitment to accessibility. Level access is provided via automatic entrance doors, supporting patients with mobility difficulties, wheelchair users, and those attending with prams or pushchairs. The surgery's location directly opposite the local pharmacy further enhances convenience and supports joined-up access to healthcare services.

Within the entrance lobby, internal access is controlled through an electronic sensor system activated by hand movement. While the system functioned effectively during the visit, representatives noted that the sensor's location may not be immediately apparent to first-time visitors or those unfamiliar with the building. Consideration could therefore be given to additional signage or visual prompts to improve ease of use.

Location and Access

Toddington Medical Centre serves a predominantly rural and semi-rural population across Toddington and the surrounding areas of Central Bedfordshire.

While the village benefits from local bus services, transport options may be more limited for patients travelling from smaller neighbouring communities, particularly where service frequency is reduced. As a result, some patients may be reliant on private transport to attend appointments.

The practice benefits from ample on-site parking for patients and visitors, which supports accessibility and convenience. Its proximity to the local pharmacy enables patients to access medical and pharmaceutical

services within a single location, reducing the need for additional journeys and supporting a more streamlined patient experience.

External Environment

The external grounds generally provide a pleasant setting; however, representatives identified opportunities for improvement in relation to routine maintenance, including regular weeding and general tidying of landscaped areas. While these observations do not affect the delivery of care, the appearance of external spaces contributes to first impressions and can influence perceptions of the overall environment.

Representatives were advised that the practice has future plans to develop the substantial grassed area located to the rear of the building for staff use. The creation of a dedicated outdoor space would provide staff with opportunities to take breaks away from the clinical environment and access fresh air during the working day. Such provision could contribute positively to staff wellbeing, morale, and workplace satisfaction.

Overall Assessment

Toddington Medical Centre provides a clean, modern, and accessible environment that is well suited to the delivery of primary healthcare services. The premises are well maintained, easy to navigate, and equipped with facilities that support a wide range of patient needs. The practice benefits from good accessibility features, convenient parking, and close proximity to pharmacy services, all of which contribute positively to the patient experience.

Although some minor improvements could be made to the presentation of the external grounds and the visibility of the lobby access sensor, these observations do not detract from what is otherwise a well-maintained and patient-focused environment. Overall, the practice provides a safe, welcoming, and functional setting that supports both effective service delivery and positive patient experiences.

Summary Overview

Toddington Medical Centre is a modern, purpose-built General Medical Services (GMS) practice serving approximately 7,500 patients across Toddington and the surrounding rural communities. As part of the Titan Primary Care Network (PCN), the practice delivers a comprehensive range of primary care services supported by a multidisciplinary team, including GPs, Advanced Clinical Practitioners, nurses, healthcare assistants, paramedics, and specialist wellbeing staff. Additional services, including dermatology, audiology, ENT, musculoskeletal clinics, and community mental health support, are provided through partner organisations.

The practice operates from a well-maintained and accessible premises that provides a professional and welcoming environment for patients, visitors, and staff. The building benefits from step-free access, automatic doors, on-site parking, and close proximity to the local pharmacy, supporting ease of access to healthcare services. Internal facilities are well organised and include a dedicated wellness area, accessible toilet facilities, and spacious waiting areas designed to accommodate a wide range of patient needs.

Feedback gathered during the visit indicated generally positive patient experiences, particularly regarding staff attitudes, the quality of consultations, and the availability of same-day or next-day appointments. Patients consistently described staff as professional, supportive, and respectful, while staff themselves reported a positive workplace culture characterised by strong teamwork and supportive leadership.

However, several areas for improvement were identified. These included patient understanding and acceptance of the online triage process, access to preferred clinicians and continuity of care, communication regarding appointment changes, awareness of the complaints procedure, and opportunities to strengthen patient engagement through the Patient Participation Group. Minor environmental improvements were also identified, including the presentation of external areas, the organisation of the wellness space, and aspects of wayfinding within the building.

Overall, Toddington Medical Centre demonstrates a clear commitment to providing accessible, patient-centred care and appears well placed to build upon its existing strengths through continued focus on communication, engagement, accessibility, and service development.

Recommendations

1. Patient Access and Continuity of Care

Priority: High

- Review patient access pathways to ensure appointment booking processes are clear, consistent, and easy to navigate, regardless of whether patients access services online, by telephone, or in person.
- Provide additional support for patients who may lack confidence or experience in using digital services, helping to reduce barriers associated with the online triage system.
- Continue to explore opportunities to improve continuity of care by enabling patients to see their preferred clinician where clinically appropriate and operationally feasible.
- Improve communication regarding the roles of different clinical professionals to help patients better understand why they may be offered appointments with members of the wider multidisciplinary team.
- Review arrangements for communicating appointment changes to ensure patients receive timely explanations when appointments are altered or rescheduled.
- Consider patient feedback regarding the potential demand for additional appointment availability outside standard working hours.

2. Communication and Patient Information

Priority: High

- Improve the visibility and accessibility of key patient information, including appointment booking options, complaints procedures, and available support services.
- Review signage and wayfinding throughout the practice to ensure facilities such as self-check-in systems and entry controls can be easily identified by all patients.
- Continue to promote communication approaches that support patient understanding during consultations, particularly where complex clinical information is discussed.
- Strengthen internal communication processes to ensure that important operational information, service developments, external visits, and patient engagement activities are consistently communicated to all members of staff. This will help promote organisational awareness, support effective participation in quality improvement activities, and maximise opportunities for patient feedback.

3. Patient Feedback and Complaints

Priority: High

- Increase awareness of the complaints procedure through more prominent signage and communication materials.
- Continue to encourage patient feedback through a range of channels, including surveys, feedback forms, and the NHS Friends and Family Test.
- Maintain regular review of patient feedback and complaints to ensure learning and service improvements are shared across the practice team.

4. Accessibility and Patient Experience

Priority: High

- Review pedestrian safety at the main entrance, particularly in relation to the narrow pathway and nearby vehicle parking.
- Ensure accessibility features, including hearing support systems and self-check-in facilities, remain clearly promoted and easy to use.
- Consider opportunities to further enhance the experience of families attending the practice, including child-friendly resources and facilities that support parents and carers.

5. Environment and Facilities

Priority: Medium

- Improve the presentation of external grounds through routine maintenance and landscaping.
- Enhance the organisation and presentation of the wellness area to maximise its visibility, accessibility, and usefulness to patients.
- Continue to review the comfort and suitability of waiting areas to ensure they provide a welcoming environment for patients and visitors.

6. Workforce Capacity and Staff Wellbeing

Priority: High

- Continue to monitor staffing resilience during periods of annual leave and sickness absence to minimise operational pressures and maintain service quality.
- Evaluate the impact of the AI Reception Assistant (“EMMA”) following implementation to ensure it supports both staff efficiency and patient experience.
- Monitor the impact of planned nursing recruitment on service capacity, appointment availability, and patient access.

7. Patient Participation and Community Engagement

Priority: Medium

- Strengthen the Patient Participation Group by improving the consistency of meetings, communication, and opportunities for involvement.
- Promote wider awareness of PPG membership opportunities to encourage participation from a broader cross-section of the patient population.
- Utilise available Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire resources and guidance to support the ongoing development of an active and representative Patient Participation Group.

Finally:

It is recommended that this report be shared with all relevant stakeholders. Toddington Medical Centre should continue to encourage patients to share feedback directly with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire if they wish to provide further comments about the practice or this report –

Contact:

 **0300 303 8554**

 info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

Service Provider response

On behalf of the Partners and the entire team at Toddington Medical Centre, I would like to thank Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire for undertaking the Enter & View visit on 21 May 2026 and for providing such a comprehensive and balanced report. I apologise for the delay in response which was due to my AL arrangements, and I also wanted to share the content of the report with our team which we did in a number of huddles During June 2026.

We appreciate the time taken by your representatives to meet with our staff and patients, observe our services, and produce a thoughtful assessment of the practice. We are particularly pleased that the report recognises the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the positive culture within the practice, our commitment to accessible patient-centred care, and the improvements that have been made over the past year.

We also welcome the constructive observations and recommendations contained within the report. Independent patient and stakeholder feedback is invaluable in helping us understand how our services are experienced and where further improvements can be made.

Whilst many of the issues identified are relatively minor and relate to communication, accessibility and patient engagement rather than fundamental concerns regarding quality or safety, they nevertheless provide an excellent opportunity to further enhance the patient experience.

The report has been shared with the GP Partners, the wider practice team and will also be shared with the Patient Participation Group. We will incorporate the recommendations into our quality improvement programme and governance framework, with actions monitored through our regular management and clinical governance meetings.

Several of the recommendations align with developments already underway, including strengthening patient communication, enhancing our Patient Participation Group, reviewing signage and accessibility, improving the patient environment, monitoring the implementation of our new AI-supported telephone system, and expanding clinical capacity.

We particularly value the report as a practical planning tool that will help inform future service developments, prioritise improvement initiatives and support our ongoing commitment to delivering safe, responsive and patient-focused care for our community.

Thank you once again for your constructive engagement and for recognising the many strengths of the practice whilst providing clear and helpful recommendations for future development. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and to sharing progress as our improvement programme develops.

Kan (Ruban) Sivasoruban

Practice Manager

Toddington Medical Centre

On behalf of the GP Partners and the Practice Team



Action Plan

TODDINGTON MEDICAL CENTRE



Toddington Medical Centre
Luton Road
TODDINGTON
LU5 6DE

Proposed Toddington Medical Centre Action Plan
Toddington Medical Centre
Healthwatch Enter & View Action Plan
Following Visit Report – 21 May 2026

Priority	Area	Action Plan	Lead	Target Date	Success Measure
High	Patient Access	Review patient access pathways and produce clear guidance for telephone, online and face-to-face access, including updated website and patient leaflet.	Practice Manager / Operations Manager	July 2026	New access guidance published and staff briefed.
High	Digital Inclusion	Introduce reception support for patients requiring assistance with online services and produce a simple "Using eConsult" guide.	Reception Lead	July 2026	Leaflet available; reception staff trained to assist patients.
High	Appointment Changes	Introduce a standard procedure for notifying patients of appointment changes, including SMS templates explaining reasons for alterations.	Operations Manager	July 2026	Standard operating procedure implemented.
High	Complaints Awareness	Improve visibility of the complaints procedure through reception displays, waiting room posters, website and patient information leaflets.	Practice Manager	July 2026	Complaints information visible throughout the practice and online.
High	Internal Communication	Introduce a structured internal communication	Practice Manager	July 2026	Weekly briefing system

Priority	Area	Action Plan	Lead	Target Date	Success Measure
		process including weekly operational updates and staff briefing arrangements.			established and evidenced.
High	Consultation Communication	Reinforce shared decision-making and "checking patient understanding" during clinician meetings and clinical governance sessions.	Clinical Lead	July 2026	Topic discussed at clinical meeting and incorporated into clinical standards.
High	Patient Participation Group	Convene a Patient Participation Group meeting, recruit additional members and agree a programme of quarterly meetings.	Practice Manager / Operations Manager	End of July 2026	PPG meeting held with agreed Terms of Reference and annual meeting schedule.
Medium	Patient Information	Improve signage for self-check-in facilities, hearing loop, complaints information and entrance wayfinding.	Operations Manager	August 2026	New signage installed and patient feedback reviewed.
High	Continuity of Care	Review appointment book configuration to maximise continuity with preferred clinicians where clinically and operationally appropriate.	GP Partners	August 2026	Appointment templates reviewed and agreed.
Medium	Wellness Area	Reorganise the Wellness Area to improve presentation, accessibility and patient information resources.	Reception / HCA Team	August 2026	Wellness area refreshed and fully stocked.
Medium	Waiting Area	Enhance waiting room environment with plants, artwork and improved patient information to create a more	Management Team	August 2026	Environmental improvements completed.

Priority	Area	Action Plan	Lead	Target Date	Success Measure
		welcoming atmosphere.			
Medium	Extended Access Awareness	Improve promotion of evening and Saturday appointments through website, SMS messaging, digital screens and posters.	Reception Team	August 2026	Increased awareness demonstrated through patient feedback.
Medium	External Grounds	Introduce a scheduled grounds maintenance programme, including landscaping, weed removal and external presentation.	Premises Lead	September 2026	Grounds maintenance schedule operational.
High	Pedestrian Safety	Review pedestrian access from the car park, including parking arrangements, signage and potential safety improvements with the landlord.	Practice Manager / Landlord	September 2026	Risk assessment completed and improvement actions agreed.
High	Nursing Capacity	Review the impact of the additional nurse on appointment availability, waiting times and patient access.	Clinical Lead	September 2026	Capacity review presented to Partners.
High	Workforce Resilience	Review staffing resilience during annual leave and sickness, including cross-cover arrangements and contingency planning.	Practice Manager	September 2026	Revised resilience plan approved.
High	AI Reception Assistant (EMMA)	Evaluate patient feedback, call handling data and staff experience following implementation of EMMA, identifying any improvements required.	Practice Manager	September 2026	Evaluation report completed and actions agreed.

Priority	Area	Action Plan	Lead	Target Date	Success Measure
Medium	Family Facilities	Review opportunities to improve facilities for children and parents, including a small children's area and private breastfeeding space where feasible.	Management Team	October 2026	Feasibility review completed and improvements implemented where practical.
Medium	Pharmacy Communication	Work collaboratively with local pharmacies to improve patient information regarding medication shortages and alternative collection arrangements.	Prescribing Team	October 2026	Communication protocol agreed and patient information updated.

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