



Children's Ward at The Horton General Hospital
Enter and View Report
December 2025

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Acknowledgements



Healthwatch Oxfordshire would like to thank all the patients/parents we heard from, and the staff of the Children's Ward at the Horton General Hospital in Banbury for their support and contribution to our Enter and View visits.



Visit details

Service	
Service Name	Children's Ward at The Horton General Hospital
Service Address	Oxford Road, Banbury, OX16 9AL
Service Provider	Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH)
Date and Time of Visit	9th Sept 2025 10am-1pm
Authorised Representatives	Amier Alagab Jaz Kundi
Visit Status	Announced visit
Contact details	Healthwatch Oxfordshire Office F20 Elmfield House New Yatt Road Witney Oxfordshire OX28 1GT T: 01865 520520

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; it is merely an account of observations and contributions made at the time of the visit.

About Healthwatch Oxfordshire

Healthwatch Oxfordshire works to make sure NHS and social care leaders, and other decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve health and social care services. We can also provide you with reliable and trustworthy information and advice about local health and care services. We are an independent charity.

What is Enter and View?



Healthwatch Oxfordshire gathers information on people's experiences of using health and care services. One of the ways we do this is by visiting places where publicly funded health and care services are being delivered. This enables us to see and hear how those services are being provided.

These visits are called **Enter and View visits** and can be announced or unannounced. In an announced visit we will work with the service provider to agree the visit. As the local Healthwatch for Oxfordshire, we have statutory powers under the Health and Care Act 2012, and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to carry out Enter and View visits to local health and care services.

Enter and View visits are carried out by a team of trained and DBS checked volunteers and staff. We call these our authorised representatives. We use what we hear and see on the day of our visit to report to providers and others with recommendations to inform change for the health and care services we visit. Enter and View visits are not an inspection and will always have a purpose.

Purpose of the visit

- To observe how the Children's Ward operates and provides its services.
- To collect views from patients/parents and staff on the service.
- To identify 'Best Practice' and highlight any areas of concern.
- To report what we observe and hear about the quality of the services.

Strategic drivers

- This Healthwatch Oxfordshire Enter and View visit was part of a programme of visits to a range of services within Oxfordshire.
- These visits were planned and implemented in 2025 – 2026 with full support of OUH.

Summary of findings

During our visit to the Children's Ward at the Horton General Hospital in Banbury we heard from four children and family members and four staff members and one student on the day.

Signage and information















Clear and prominent signage was visible from the main reception to the ward entrance, including a large welcome sign positioned directly in front of visitors as they entered. Additionally, several smaller, thoughtfully placed welcome signs throughout the ward helped create a warm and inviting atmospheres for all visitors





The Children's Ward visiting hours were on display which indicate:

“there is open visiting on our children's ward. One parent can stay overnight. Other visitors should leave by 8pm please unless previously discussed with the nurse in charge”.

The following information was on display:

-  Parent information
-  Your future Nurses
-  Link Nurses
-  Team information
-  What to expect during your time on the Horton Children's Ward
-  Who is looking after you
-  Children's Health Information
-  Pants and Tops board
-  Leaflets related to patients' conditions
-  Family feedback
-  Staff pictures
-  Healthwatch Oxfordshire leaflet

On the day of the visit, we noticed some of the information not on display:

-  There were no translated materials or leaflets in other languages on display, and no information about how to access an interpreting service, despite most of the staff being aware they could use the online service.
-  The Children's Ward has no hearing loop.
-  We did not see the Care Quality Commission (CQC) report on display.
-  There was no suggestion box, but feedback from patients is received online and patients' feedback is on display.

The general environment



A welcome sign was facing visitors on entering the ward which was very clear. The ward was well equipped with all the required facilities; toilets were clean and tidy.

On the day we visited, two administration staff were at the reception desk supporting patients and guiding visitors.

At the entrance, face masks and hand sanitiser machines were available.

The staff were warmly welcoming and greeted patients with genuine friendliness and were always smiling, fostering a truly inviting and comforting atmosphere throughout the ward.

A staff rest room was available, thoughtfully designed with boards that provided a wide range of information including details about the team, health and wellbeing initiatives, educational resources, student information, clinical governance, the shared decision-making council and feedback from families.

Additionally, a parents waiting room was also provided, with a television, a selection of library books, and various informational materials specifically for parents, and a selection of children's toys.

Clearly visible within the facility was a poster outlining the patient's journey titled 'What to Expect During Your Time on the Horton Children's Ward,' which effectively explained the process patients would experience.

The entire building was airy and spacious, and nicely decorated contributing to a comfortable and welcoming environment.

The ward offered both indoor and outdoor children's play areas, featuring a toy table with colouring pens and paper, a variety of activities, and numerous seating areas in different colours.

It consists of 16 beds, all designed to accommodate children from birth up to 17 years old.

Patient and staff feedback



Patients appreciated the support and help they received from the children's ward team, describing staff as supportive, caring and friendly.

Parents told us how thankful they were that staff were creating a great atmosphere and providing support for them and their children.

The car parking has been an ongoing issue, which we have heard about on previous visits, with patients raising issues with the old car park payment machine and lack of spaces, leading to them attending late or missing their appointment.

Parents recommended better chairs in the parents waiting room, noting at present some of the chairs were uncomfortable.

The staff team demonstrated a strong dedication, and those we spoke to told us they feel well-supported in their career development and professional training, which helped boost their skills and confidence, fostering job satisfaction and improved staff retention.

Staff expressed their satisfaction with their work environment, which enabled them to perform their duties effectively and with confidence.

This sense of satisfaction contributes positively to teamwork, morale, and overall quality of patient care.

Recommendations

- Provide translated materials to ensure all patients, regardless of their primary language, can access important information.
- Clearly display information on how to access interpreting services.
- Install hearing loops in the ward to enhance accessibility for patients with hearing impairments.
- Provide more comfortable chairs for parents staying overnight to improve their comfort and support during their stay with their children.
- Continue to focus on addressing parking and transport issues to help alleviate patient and staff concerns and to ensure that there are sufficient, accessible spaces available for everyone who needs to visit the hospital.
- The Care Quality Commission report should be displayed as per [the Health and Social Care Act 2028 regulations](#).

Service response to recommendations



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NHS Foundation Trust

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Enter and View Draft Report – Children’s Ward, Horton Hospital

Dear Healthwatch Team,

Thank you for visiting the children’s ward at the Horton Hospital and providing us with your report and recommendations. We are pleased to hear that you felt welcomed by staff across the department.

We are grateful for the recommendations you have made, and the department have reflected on your feedback to celebrate the excellent work already being done, and to identify areas for improvement. As a result, we are committed to developing a clear and concise action plan to ensure the required improvements are made, whilst continuing to deliver high standards of care for our patients.

Kindly find our response to your recommendations below:

Recommendation: Provide translated materials to ensure all patients, regardless of their primary language, can access important information.

Response: We recognise that it is imperative that patient information is available in translated format. Patients can request information to be translated into the required language. We will ensure that the team is reminded of the importance of checking with patients whether they require translated materials.

Recommendation: Clearly display information on how to access interpreting services.

Response: There is a Trust-wide interpreting service available for patients/ families. This service is either pre-booked or arranged on the day. The team identify with children and families whether an interpreter is required, and this is then coordinated by nursing staff. We will further enhance visibility by placing signage in appropriate locations.

Recommendation: Install hearing loops in the ward to enhance accessibility for patients with hearing impairments.

Response: The department will work with the patient experience team to source a hearing loop for the ward.

Recommendation: Provide more comfortable chairs for parents staying overnight to improve their comfort and support during their stay with their children.

Response: For any chairs on the replacement cycle, the team will look to ensure these are replaced with suitable, more comfortable alternatives.

Recommendation: Continue to focus on addressing parking and transport issues.

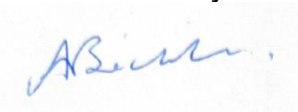
Response: Parking remains an ongoing Trust-wide challenge, and the Trust is actively working to manage this issue.

We continue to escalate all patient transport-related issues to our current service providers and concerns are logged via the Ulysses system and followed up by email correspondence with the relevant teams.

Recommendation: Ensure the Care Quality Commission report is displayed in line with the Health and Social Care Act 2008 regulations.

Response: At the time of your visit this was not in place. This will be displayed in the clinical area.

Yours sincerely



Aletha Bicknell

Head of Patient Experience

Report

Methodology

When organising an announced Enter and View visit we follow the steps below:

- **Plan:**
 - Appoint an Enter and View lead for the visit.
- **Communicate:**
 - Inform the provider of the visit, and relevant details including the purpose, date, time, estimation of how long it will take, how many people will be carrying out the visit and the name of the lead person.
 - Prepare visit posters including the purpose of the visit, time and date, and dispatch these to the provider for display, so that people using the service are clear why the visit is taking place.
 - Include information about how members of the public can contact Healthwatch Oxfordshire if they are not able to when the visit is taking place.
- **Prepare:**
 - Prepare resources such as surveys and questionnaires.
 - Identify any requirements for special support necessary to facilitate the visit such as access or security. This must be done before the visit, as you may be refused entry.
 - Meet with the service provider before the visit.
- **Report:**
 - On completion of the visit a draft report is shared with the service provider requesting comments on factual accuracy and responses to any recommendations within 7 – 20 working days.
- **Follow up:**
 - The final report is published on Healthwatch Oxfordshire's website and shared with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and service provider.

The visit took place from 10am to 1pm on 9th September 2025, with two trained Enter and View representatives.

During the visit, the team were able to spend time observing the daily work of the Children's Ward, noting the general environment, such as cleanliness, comfort and information displays, and to speak to both patients/parents and staff.

We used short survey questions when speaking with people but also encouraged them to fill in the survey themselves.

Three bespoke question sheets aimed at children and young people, parents and carers, and at staff were given for people to complete. FREEPOST envelopes were provided for return.

A children and young people's survey was designed with accessibility in mind.

Use this space to write or draw anything else you'd like to tell us about The Children's Ward

TELL US ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S Ward

We want to hear what **YOU** think!

What's the best thing for you about the hospital?

Write your answer here...

What's hard for you at the hospital?

We are Healthwatch Oxfordshire.
What you tell us will help the hospital learn what works well and what could be better. Your ideas are important!

healthwatch
Oxfordshire
01865 520520

How do you think the hospital could be better for you?
Tell us your ideas!

I WISH FOR...

School work?
Activities?
Family visits?
My bed?
Things to do?
Night times?
Food?
Noise?

Listening to you

Tick which face fits your answer!

Does your nurse or doctor listen to any worries you have?

Always listens	Listens most of the time	Sometimes listens	Could listen more	Not sure

Does your nurse or doctor explain things in a way you understand?

I understand everything	I understand most things	I understand some things	I could not understand much	Not sure

Are you happy to talk about your worries with a nurse or doctor?

	Yes	No	Not sure	

We don't need to know your name, but it would be great to know your age - please write it in this box

Years

Children's and young people's survey

About Children's Ward

The Children's Ward is run by Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH) and located in Banbury at the Horton General Hospital main building, on the ground floor on the right immediately after the main entrance.

Our visit



During our visit, we were welcomed by all members of staff with smiles. We were then taken for a tour around the ward to observe the facilities available and the general environment. The staff explained about the service offered. After the tour we undertook our Enter and View visit. On the day we engaged with four patients and their parents and five members of staff, including one student.

Access and signage

The signage to Children's Ward via the lifts was clear and accessible, with colour-coded floors and walls to support navigation. Within the ward, again signage is clear. Most of the signage was adapted to suit children and young people, with colourful, visual, image-based and accessible displays and signs.

The signs were clearly visible from the entrance, making it easy for patients to navigate directly to the reception. A welcome sign was displayed at the entrance facing visitors when entering the ward.

The unit environment

The ward was clean, tidy and well organised, creating a safe and welcoming environment for young patients and their families. The ward's bright and orderly design supports comfort, and promotes recovery, reflecting the hospital's commitment to quality care and child-friendly healing spaces.

The atmosphere of the Children's Ward was very calm. Staff were welcoming and interactions between staff and patients/parents seemed friendly.



There was a well-equipped staff rest room as well as a parents waiting room with table, chairs, small library, television and information for parents about childcare and safety.

The ward in general was well decorated.

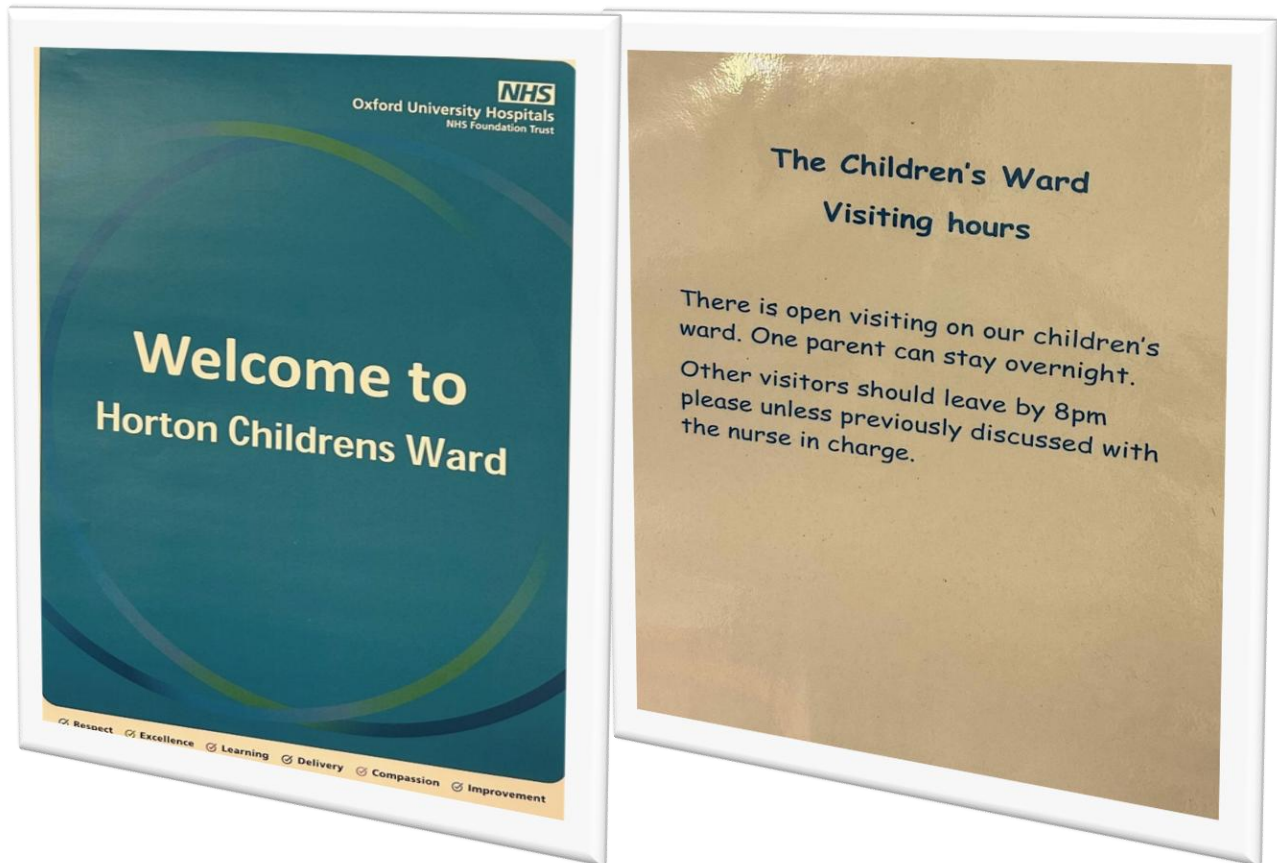


Child friendly signage



Ward entrance

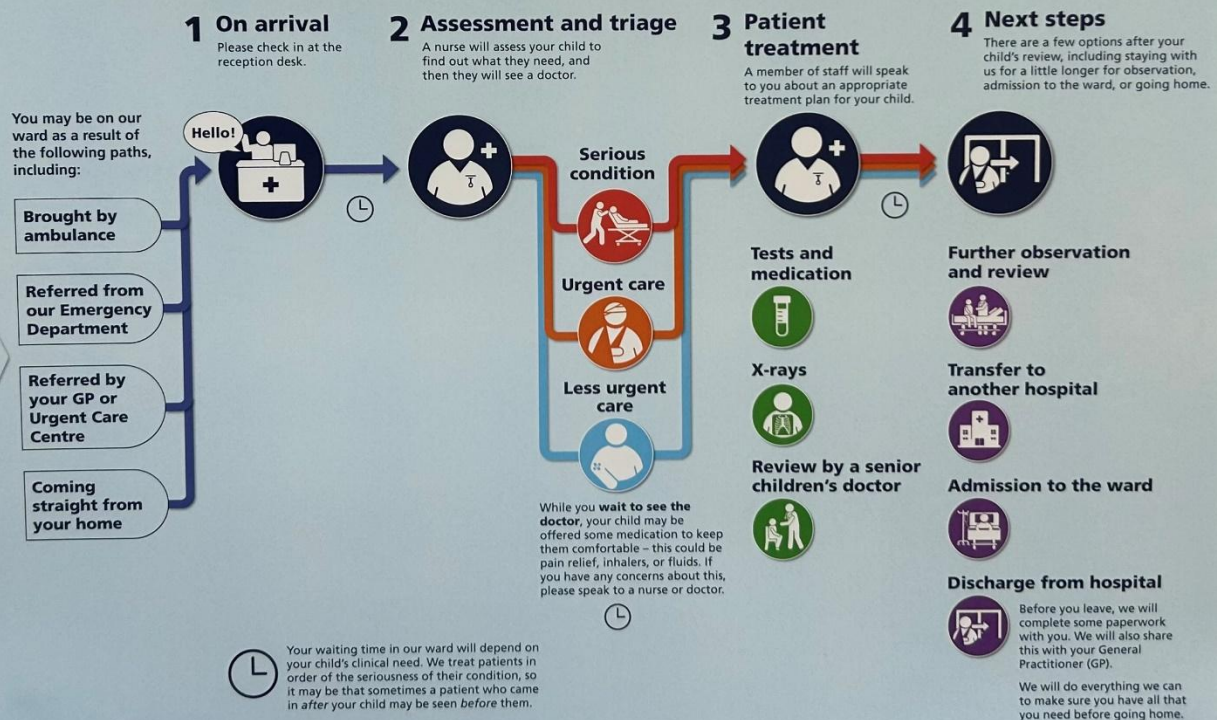
The entrance to the Children's Ward was nicely decorated, clean with signs on the floor.



Welcome sign and visiting policy

The presence of welcoming signs and images placed in various locations throughout the ward reflects a thoughtful approach to accompanying patients and visitors, creating an inviting and reassuring atmosphere that helps everyone feel acknowledged and comfortable during their time there. The visiting hours and the ward policy were on display indicating only one parent can stay overnight.

What to expect during your time on the Horton Children's Ward



What to expect during your time on the Children's Ward

The ward clearly outlines the steps patients/parents will follow from their arrival to discharge in a professional manner, helping to keep them informed throughout their stay. This approach helps to reduce uncertainty and minimises patient anxiety by letting them know what to expect at each stage.

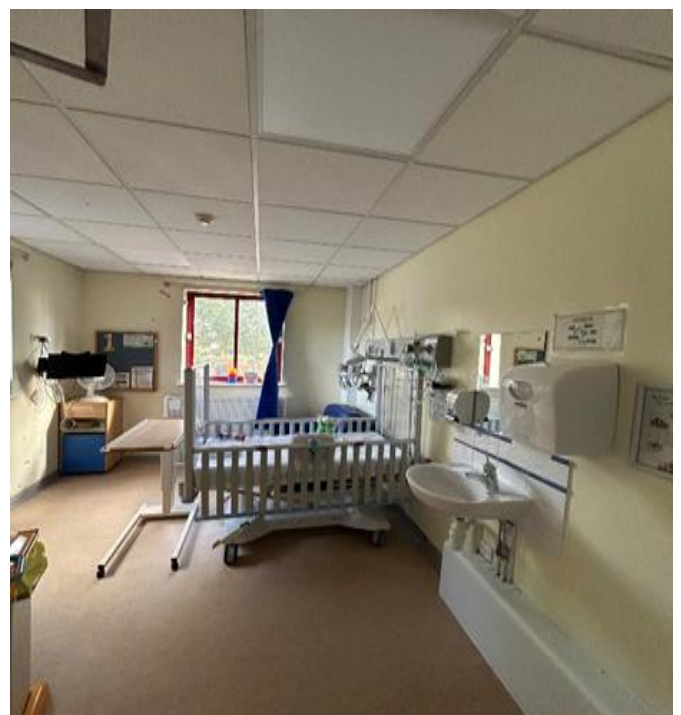
The patients expressed satisfaction with the care they received, and everyone we spoke to appreciated the friendly attitude of the staff, who were consistently smiling, welcoming and supportive.

The patients have the opportunity to complain and to give feedback on the Pants and Tops notice board, which is updated monthly. Leaflets for feedback are available on the reception desk.



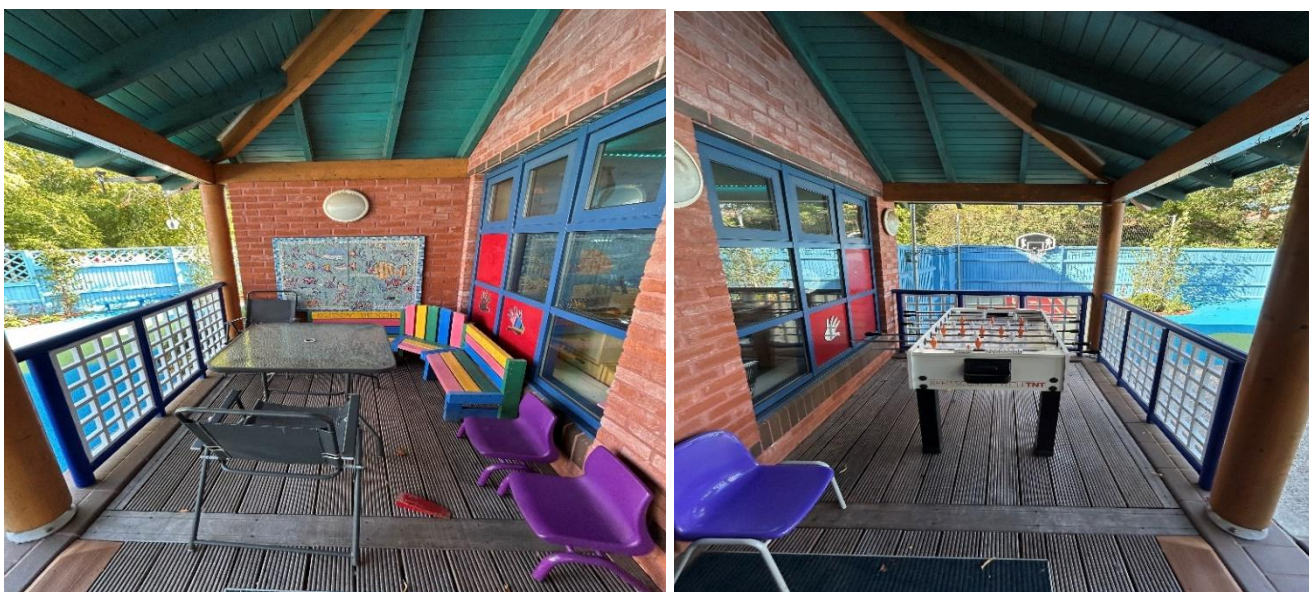


The rooms are designed with bright colours, nature themes and cheerful decorations which positively influence children's recovery. Such environments reduce fear and anxiety, encourage play and relaxation, and create a welcoming atmosphere that supports emotional well being. A few rooms were plain which also provide a calmer environment for a child that may need less stimulation.



Children's room

There were many playing areas for children to engage and pass their time, table and chairs for drawing, papers and coloured pencils available, toys. In particular there is a spacious outdoor play area and covered outdoor space which was well maintained and looked after. This enables children to have exercise and fresh air in all weathers.



Covered outdoor space.

There was big playroom with art and craft materials and games, and on the day of the visit we noticed children playing and drawing pictures.



Playroom

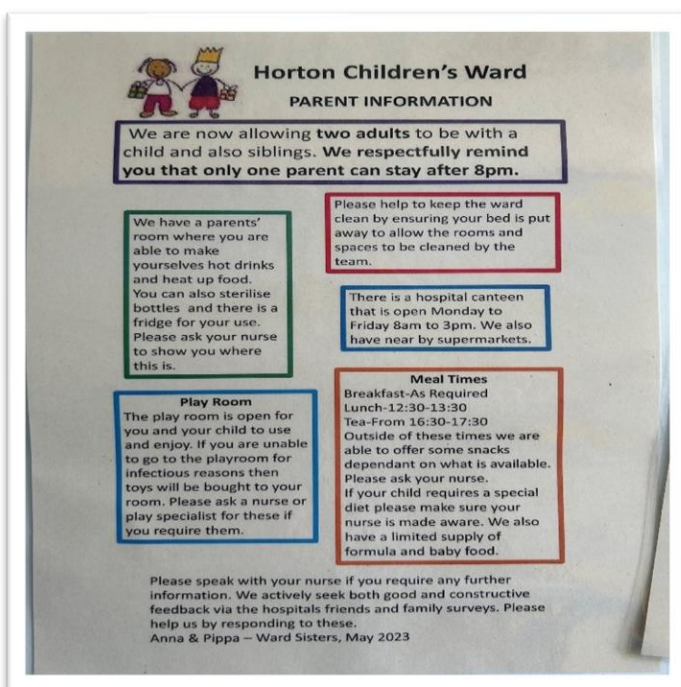
The pictures made by children were on display in the playroom, the room was clean well organised and tidy, airy and colourful, and windows were open. The presence of the playrooms in the children's ward are crucial for the wellbeing of children and teenagers receiving treatment, offering a dedicated space where play supports their health and wellbeing. Engaging in play helps to alleviate anxiety, creates a more familiar and comforting hospital environment, and contributes to a more positive and supportive experience throughout their treatment journey.

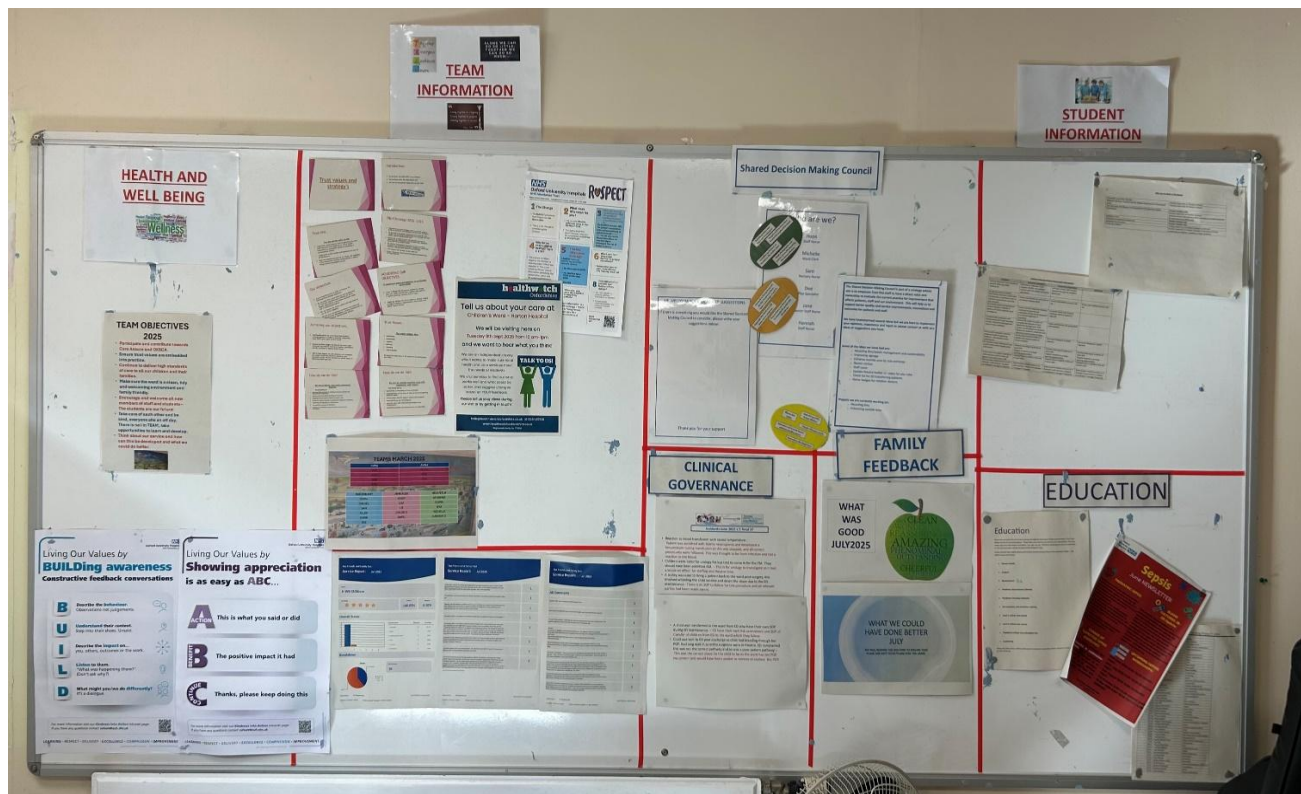
Younger children told us they loved the toys and games, and '*Playing with the lovely doctors and nurses*'.



Leaflets

There were many leaflets on display. The building was fully decorated with attractive pictures, photos and staff photos were also on display.





Team information board



Staff photos

There were staff photos on display which helps patients feel more comfortable and secure during their hospital experience.

Visible staff identification enhances patient satisfaction and supports a more welcoming, patient-centered environment.



Parents room

The parents room featured informative boards covering topics such as the ABCs of safer sleep, what babies need, patient safety, nutrition, patient feedback, play and learning, pain management, managing your child's health and keeping babies smoke-free.

In the staff room, a variety of materials were on display, including information on health and wellbeing, student education, family feedback and a Healthwatch Oxfordshire leaflet.

Summary of patient and staff feedback

Patients feedback

During our visit, we spoke to four patients/parents. The children we spoke to ranged between one and seven years old. Additionally, all identified as White British / English / Northern Irish / Scottish / Welsh.

We asked patients to tell us about accessing the department.

Most parents/patients were aware of the services available. We heard praise for the efficiency of the service provided, but that many patients had experienced challenges and delays with parking. What we heard from patients included:

'Parking is a big issue, as it very expensive, the parking payment machine need upgrade.'

'The signage was clear and sometimes getting advice from reception.'

'The staff have been fantastic and very caring, a lot of people spoke to me when I first came in as my child was struggling with this breathing.'

We asked patients/parents to tell us about their care and the information they received during their visit.

Patients appreciated the care and support provided by the team members, the patients we spoke to said:



'It's been all good, staff are great and very caring.'

'The nurses are great and very kind.'

'The playroom and garden are lovely the nurses and staff are very kind.'

'Everybody's been polite and always smiling. They gave me good advice and information.'

'The reception staff here are very pleasant and always have been great.'



We asked 'does your doctor or nurse listen to any worries you have?' We heard:

'Always listens.'

'My injury – it was shock of being in hospital, but nurses are very kind, caring and offered all support.'

We asked the patients if they knew about how to give feedback, comment or complaint. We heard:

Most people we spoke to were happy about the service and told us they wouldn't have any need to complain.

'Yes, how to complain and give feedback leaflets are on the reception desk, the sister informed us that patient feedback is very important, and they always want to improve things at ward for the children and families.'

'Could speak to staff, but nothing to complain about.'

We asked the patients if any improvements were required in the ward. We heard:

'Better parking for patients and better chairs for parents staying overnight.'

'Better room for parents as only one parent can stay.'

We asked the children about what's hard for them at the hospital? We heard:

'Having to stay in hospital on my own.'

'Everything is lovely about the Children's Ward.'

'Being away from my toys.'

Staff feedback

We received feedback and comments from four staff members and one student, representing a diverse range of roles. The positive attitudes they expressed towards their work, their interactions with patients and parents, and the care they provide contributed to a supportive atmosphere in the children's ward. All staff confirmed that they had received the essential training necessary to effectively manage their roles.

What is the best thing staff said about the job?

Staff indicated that they are satisfied with their jobs.

We heard:

'Coming to work on a friendly, efficient ward.'

'Talking with parents/patients and making a difference to their day even if a small way.'

'I work with an amazing supportive team. I always feel supported with everything nothing is ever too small. Ward sisters are always approachable and supportive. I really enjoy doing clinical things like bloods and cannulas.'

'Gaining more knowledge.'

What are the challenges staff raised?

We asked about any frustrations or challenges that staff might experience in their work and the service they provide. Comments we heard included:



'Staffing shortages – this can potentially cancel surgery lists, and puts a lot of pressure on the nurses and closes beds.'

'Staffing levels and managing expectations.'

'Sometimes as a ward sister being pulled in all directions clinical versus admin.'



We asked staff if they felt comfortable to raise concerns? They said:

'Yes, both senior sisters are very approachable. I feel any concerns I had could be aired with them and remain confidential if necessary.'

'Yes, managers are available to listen – although based in Oxford.'

'Yes, very supportive ward managers.'

We asked how staff thought the ward and service they provide could be improved?

We heard suggestions including a need for more staff, as well as changes to facilities and better links to and communication with the John Radcliffe Hospital and ways of working to improve patient experience and staff wellbeing:

'A child friendly hot food menu. (I believe this is being looked at).'

'Recruit new nurses, be allowed to use extra staff from NHSP.'

'No massive amount of link with JR Hospital for patients care.'



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