

# **Enter & View Visit Report**

**Saffron Health Partnership**

**21<sup>st</sup> August 2025**

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## Details of visit

<b>Service address:</b>	<b>Saffron Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8DJ</b>
<b>Service Provider:</b>	<b>Saffron Health Partnership, Biggleswade Health Centre</b>
<b>Date and Time:</b>	<b>21st August 2025, 10am – 1pm</b>
<b>Authorised Representatives:</b>	Victoria Bloxham, Annette Brown, Alan Jackson Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
<b>Contact details:</b>	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.

Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can 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. Enter and Views are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies.

## 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, staff experience, with feedback regarding their view of service provision.

## Strategic drivers

- **In response to patient feedback:**

To examine patient feedback regarding issues gaining access to appointments either by telephone or via the on-line triage system. Additionally, patients advise that access to non-urgent or routine care (such as repeat prescription reviews and blood tests) is extremely difficult.

- **Gathering Current Patient Experiences:**

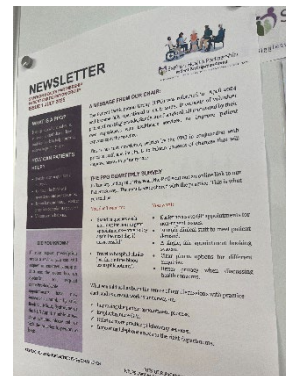
To collect current feedback from patients regarding their experiences accessing services, quality of care and overall satisfaction, thereby identifying any persistent, new or ongoing concerns.

- **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 Saffron Health Partnership in enhancing service delivery, patient satisfaction and compliance with regulatory standards.



## Methodology

### **This was an announced Enter and View Visit.**

The visit to Saffron Health Partnership, Biggleswade was conducted to gain insight into the experiences of patients and staff, assess the surgery environment, service provision, and identify opportunities for improvement.

The purpose of the visit was to explore patient access and experiences, with particular attention to telephone wait times, online booking processes, and access to non-urgent or routine care. The most recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection took place in May 2016.

A formal letter of intent was sent to the practice on 6 August 2025, including Healthwatch posters to notify patients of the upcoming visit, a pre-visit questionnaire for the Practice Manager (completed and returned prior to our arrival), and Your Voice Counts leaflets.

The posters were prominently displayed in the waiting area. One week before the visit, a patient survey box and accompanying forms were also delivered to the surgery; however, no feedback was received in advance.



On arrival, the visiting team was warmly welcomed by the Patient Services Manager, who provided an introductory tour of the premises. Structured interviews were then conducted with the Patient Services Manager, three GPs, three staff members, and several patients. The Practice Manager, who was on leave, had informed us of their absence beforehand.

The environment and patient–staff interactions were observed throughout the visit to gain a deeper understanding of daily service delivery.

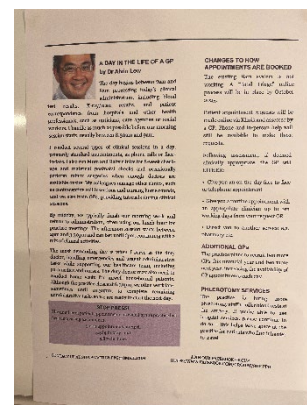


At the conclusion of the visit, a summary of key findings was shared with the Patient Services Manager to facilitate immediate discussion and feedback.

## Summary of findings

Biggleswade Health Centre provides care for a community of over 12,000 patients. However, the Saffron Health Partnership, which includes Biggleswade Health Centre, Langford Surgery, and Shannon Court Surgery, serves a combined total of nearly 22,000 patients. The practice is accredited as Armed Forces Veteran Friendly.

Saffron Health Partnership consists of nine doctors/partners, four Emergency Care Practitioners, one Practice Nurse Specialist, two Practice Nurses, one Practitioner, four Nurse Prescribers, a Healthcare Assistant, and a Phlebotomist. Resource is spread across the three surgery locations.



Additionally, the practice benefits from direct access to a healthcare team that includes a Midwife, MSK Practitioner, Mental Health Link Worker, and District Nurse.

The Practice Manager, Deputy Practice Manager, Patient Services Manager, Data Specialist Manager, and Finance Manager make up the practice management team.

A named GP is assigned to all new and existing patients, with a named accountable GP to oversee their care.

For patients aged 75 and over, the named accountable GP is responsible for:

- working with health and social care professionals to deliver a care package that meets the needs of the patient
- ensuring that these patients have access to a health check

Patients can still choose to see any GP in the surgery. The surgery promises to make reasonable efforts to accommodate patients' preference.

In order to facilitate patient access to their preferred clinician, the GP daily rota is accessible through the surgery's website.

Biggleswade Health Centre is a modern, purpose-built facility conveniently situated close to the town centre, with good access to public transport and local amenities. However, reaching the surgery car park by road can be challenging due to the surrounding one-way system.

The building is shared with other community health services, creating a multi-disciplinary environment that supports integrated care.



Externally, the site is well maintained, although signage for the surgery appeared faded and difficult to read.

Access to the main entrance is well lit and via an automatic door and on level ground.

Core opening times for the surgery are displayed as Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, closing for lunch between 1pm and 2pm.

Extended access is available two evenings per week and alternate Saturdays.

Opposite the main entrance, there is a covered area providing secure bicycle parking. The car park is of a reasonable size and includes designated disabled bays close to the entrance. However, several drivers reported difficulty finding available spaces, resulting in some vehicles being parked on the surrounding grass. Pathways are wide, level, and well-maintained, ensuring easy access for wheelchair users, prams, and those using mobility aids.

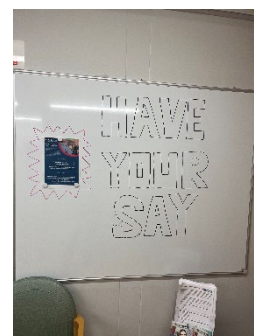
The spacious reception and waiting areas are located on the ground floor, allowing step-free access throughout. This area is split into two, with a waiting room both at the front and rear of the building.

Accessible toilets (separate for staff and patients) are available and were seen to be clean and well equipped. Additionally, a wheelchair was found available for patient use when required.

The surgery offers a range of clinics and services including asthma, diabetes, COPD, minor surgery, minor injuries, NHS health checks and counselling services. Many of these services can be seen advertised on various noticeboards in the waiting rooms.

Digital screen patient check-in is easily found at reception, with access available in multiple languages. Signage for hearing loop was also identified. However, HWCB representatives did not identify any signage or leaflets informing visitors of translation services.

A suggestions box was available in the reception area, but the complaints procedure was not clearly visible in an obvious position. When asked, most patients advised they knew how to make a complaint, however some did not.



Overall, the building presents as bright, clean, and welcoming. The layout is logical and easy to navigate, with clear internal directional signs to consulting rooms and treatment areas.

The waiting area is open and comfortably furnished, with a mixture of chairs (some with arms) to suit patients of different needs. Lighting is adequate, and there is natural light from front-facing windows. Display boards are tidy and include up-to-date information on clinics, staff, and the Patient Participation Group (PPG). The reception desk is accessible, with a lower section for wheelchair users and a clear privacy screen. Hand sanitizer was seen to be available.



Reception staff were observed to be polite, attentive, and proactive in assisting patients although HWCB Representatives noted that not all members of staff wore name badges.

The premises were observed to be clean, well maintained, and free of clutter. Furniture and flooring were in good condition, with no visible damage or wear. Overall presentation of the environment was professional and welcoming, supporting patient confidence and comfort.

Baby change facilities, clearly advertised, were seen to be provided within the disabled toilet. Additionally, a separate room was noted to be set aside as an isolation area. Posters were also visible offering a private room where patients can hold confidential conversations.

The standard length of appointment time is 10–15 minutes, depending on the clinician and type of appointment. Home visits by Doctors and Paramedics are available to those patients who are housebound or too ill to attend the surgery. However, a home visit must be requested by 10:30am. Out of hours care is advertised both in the surgery and on the website.

The surgery utilises a text reminder service, which provides patients with enhanced communication. The practice intends to conduct a project review of their 'Did Not Attend' (DNAs) statistics, to support resource, address inefficiencies and increase patient access.

Appointments can be booked in person at reception or by telephone, Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 1:00pm for morning sessions and 2:00pm to 6:00pm for afternoon sessions.

Patients can also make online bookings through Klinik, which enables them to submit enquiries about symptoms, appointment requests, or other care needs. Urgent appointments are available for the same or next day (Monday to Friday), while routine appointments can be scheduled up to 10 days in advance.

Patient feedback on obtaining appointments by telephone was mixed. Some individuals described their experience as ***“usually positive”***, with comments such as ***“If I can’t get through, I use the call-back facility”*** and ***“Generally, I am able to easily book via the phone.”*** However, others reported considerable frustration.

Several patients stated, ***“I can never get through,”*** while another noted that ***“As many as 20 people can be seen queuing up outside the surgery at 8am because they can’t get through on the phone.”*** One patient described ***“The telephone system is horrendous.”*** These difficulties can cause significant stress for patients needing timely care and may result in delays in accessing appointments or increased pressure on reception staff and on-site services.

Feedback on the online booking system, **Klinik**, was similarly varied. Some patients said the system worked well for them, while others found it less reliable. Comments included ***“It’s never usually a problem to get an appointment for a child, but for an adult it can be 3–4 weeks ahead,”*** and ***“It can take a few days to obtain an appointment, it depends on what is wrong with you.”*** Others reported being ***“often unable to see their GP of preference.”*** These experiences suggest that while Klinik can offer a convenient route for accessing care, inconsistent availability and limited continuity with preferred GPs may reduce patient satisfaction and confidence in the service.

In response to concern regarding access to the surgery when at full capacity, the Patient Participation Group (PPG) created a leaflet to support patients with alternative options. Many patients explained they would call NHS 111 for support.

When visiting the surgery, patients we approached told us they ***‘waited no more than 20 minutes’*** from arrival, to be seen for their appointment.

Once with a clinician, most patients reported feeling they ***“could discuss their needs, feel involved in decisions, listened to and considered.”*** This suggests that, overall, patients experience respectful and person-centred consultations, supporting trust and engagement in their care. However,

one patient shared that they felt the need to ***“push back to a male doctor regarding woman’s health issues,”*** indicating that individual communication styles or gender-sensitive awareness may occasionally impact how comfortable patients feel raising certain concerns.

The majority of patients also described staff as ***“always helpful and polite,”*** reinforcing a perception of professionalism and approachability across the surgery team. Positive interactions such as these can play an important role in improving patient confidence and satisfaction with the service.

Staff feedback reflected a strong organisational culture and positive working environment. Team members expressed high levels of job satisfaction, with one noting they ***“love it”*** and another saying, ***“I really enjoy working here and making a difference.”*** A motivated and content workforce contributes directly to the quality of patient care, supporting consistency, empathy, and effective communication across the practice.

A number of staff members have been employed at the practice for several years and have experienced significant developments during that time. They spoke favourably about the quality of services delivered and the overall performance of the practice.

Staff reported that the practice currently maintains an appropriate balance of clinical skillsets; however, they also noted that it would ***“benefit greatly from additional clinical staff.”*** This suggests that while the existing team is competent and well-coordinated, limited staffing capacity may place pressure on workload and appointment availability. Increasing clinical staffing levels could help reduce waiting times, enhance continuity of care, and support staff wellbeing, ultimately improving patient experience and access to timely treatment.



## Results of Visit

### Patients

A total of nine patients were interviewed during the visit. Although the visit was publicised in advance and opportunities for feedback were provided through surveys and a designated feedback box, no completed survey forms were received prior to the visit. This limited the breadth of patient input and may have reduced the opportunity to capture a wider range of views and experiences.

Feedback from those interviewed indicated mixed experiences in relation to access and overall satisfaction with services at Biggleswade Health Centre.

Patient views on accessing appointments by telephone were varied. Some reported that the system operated effectively and that the call-back facility supported timely contact. Others, however, identified ongoing difficulties in reaching the practice, particularly during peak times, which in some cases led to patients attending the surgery in person to request appointments. Such challenges can increase stress for patients seeking care and may create additional pressure on reception staff managing in-person requests.

Feedback regarding the online appointment system, Klinik, was similarly mixed. Patients said that while the system generally supported access to care, delays were often experienced when booking both routine and urgent appointments, especially for adults or when requesting a preferred GP. Access for children was reported to be more readily available. These inconsistencies can lead to frustration and potential delays in treatment, particularly for those requiring continuity of care. In response, the Patient Participation Group (PPG) has developed an information leaflet outlining alternative care options, including the use of NHS 111 when appointments are unavailable.

Patients who attended the surgery in person reported acceptable waiting times, typically being seen within 20 minutes of their scheduled appointment. The majority described consultations as collaborative and communicative, saying they felt involved in care decisions. A small number, however, expressed concern about the approach taken during specific consultations, which may affect patient confidence and willingness to raise sensitive issues in future.

Overall, patient feedback described staff as polite, professional, and supportive, contributing positively to the overall patient experience and reinforcing a culture of care and respect within the practice.

## Staff

Eight members of staff were interviewed during the visit, representing a range of roles within the practice team. This included two GPs, the Deputy Practice Manager, Patient Services Manager, a Nurse, and members of the Administration Team.

Feedback from staff reflected a positive organisational culture and a supportive working environment. Team members reported high levels of job satisfaction and expressed pride in contributing to the delivery of patient care, which is likely to enhance motivation, morale, and the overall quality of patient experience.

Several staff members had been employed at the practice for many years and had witnessed significant organisational change over time. A previously high staff turnover has reportedly now stabilised. Staff described the practice as a “**positive and collaborative workplace**” and spoke favourably about the quality of care and services delivered to patients. A stable and experienced workforce supports continuity of care and fosters stronger, more consistent patient–staff relationships.



Staff reported that the practice maintains an appropriate balance of clinical skills across its workforce and that multidisciplinary collaboration is well established. However, it was noted that the practice would benefit from the **“recruitment of additional nursing staff”** to further strengthen service capacity and support workload management. Increasing nursing provision could help reduce waiting times, expand appointment availability, and sustain high standards of care.

Overall, staff feedback indicated a **“committed and cohesive team”** who **“feel valued and engaged”** in their roles, with a shared focus on providing safe and effective patient care. This positive team culture directly contributes to the consistency and quality of services patients receive.

## Environment

### **Environmental Observations and Findings:**

The physical environment at Biggleswade Health Centre was observed to be of a high standard, supporting both patient comfort and accessibility. The premises are modern, purpose-built, and conveniently located near the town centre with good access to public transport and local amenities.

### **Building and Facilities:**

The building was well maintained, clean, and free from clutter. Flooring and furniture were in good condition, and the overall presentation created a professional and welcoming atmosphere. Internal layout and signage supported clear navigation, and the reception and waiting areas were bright, spacious, and provided step-free access throughout. Accessible toilets for staff and patients were available and found to be clean and well equipped. Additional facilities included baby changing provision within the accessible toilet and an isolation room for use when required. A wheelchair was also available for patient use.

### **Location:**

The location benefits from good public transport links and proximity to local amenities, supporting accessibility for the surrounding community.

### **Accessibility:**

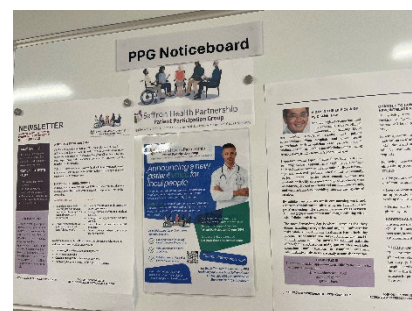
External access is well designed, with level entry through an automatic door, suitable for wheelchair users, prams, and individuals with mobility aids. The car park includes designated disabled bays near the main entrance, although parking availability was limited at peak times, occasionally resulting in overflow onto surrounding grassed areas. Pathways are wide and even, providing safe movement around the site.

### **Safety and Maintenance:**

External lighting is appropriate; however, it was noted that external signage appeared faded and would benefit from renewal to improve visibility. The reception area incorporated a lower counter section for wheelchair users and a privacy screen to maintain confidentiality.

### **Environment and Patient Experience:**

Waiting areas are comfortably furnished, offering a range of seating options to accommodate different needs. Lighting is adequate, with natural light contributing to a pleasant atmosphere. Information displays and noticeboards were tidy and contained up-to-date materials on clinics, services, and patient participation opportunities. Hand sanitiser was readily available, and hygiene standards were consistently maintained.



### **Staff**

Staff were observed to be professional, approachable, and courteous in their interactions with patients, contributing to a welcoming and respectful environment. However, not all team members were visibly wearing identification, such as name badges or lanyards. The absence of clear identification may cause uncertainty for patients, particularly those unfamiliar with the practice, about staff roles and accountability, potentially affecting confidence and ease of communication.

### **Overall Assessment:**

The environment was considered to be safe, clean, and well presented, supporting both the delivery of care and a positive patient experience.

## **Summary Overview**

Saffron Health Partnership provides care for a community of over 12,000 patients at Biggleswade Health Centre and nearly 22,000 patients across its three sites. The surgery is modern, clean, and accessible, featuring well-maintained facilities, step-free access, accessible toilets, a baby-changing area, and an isolation room. Reception and waiting areas are spacious, comfortable, and welcoming, with clear internal signage and patient information displays.

Staff were observed to be professional, polite, and supportive, contributing to a positive and reassuring environment for patients. Team members reported high job satisfaction and described a collaborative and cohesive working culture. This positive organisational climate is likely to enhance patient experience, as motivated and well-supported staff can deliver care that is both responsive and compassionate.

Patients generally reported feeling listened to, involved in decisions, and confident in the care they received. Waiting times were typically under 20 minutes, supporting timely access to clinicians. The practice offers a wide range of services, including specialist clinics, home visits for housebound patients, and extended access appointments, ensuring that care is responsive to varying needs within the community.

However, patient access remains inconsistent. Some individuals reported difficulties contacting the surgery by telephone or booking preferred GP appointments online, particularly for adult patients, resulting in potential delays and frustration when seeking care. Increasing clinical capacity, particularly through the recruitment of additional nursing staff, would help manage demand, reduce waiting times, and improve continuity of care.

Communication and visibility could be further enhanced through clearer external signage, consistent display of staff identification, and more accessible information on translation services and the complaints procedure. Strengthening these areas would promote inclusivity, transparency, and patient confidence.

Finally, continued monitoring of Did Not Attend (DNA) rates and addressing underlying causes would support more efficient use of appointment slots and ensure timely access for those in need.

## **Recommendations**

### **Improve Patient Access**

- Review and enhance the telephone booking system to reduce wait times, particularly during peak hours. Increasing call-handling capacity or further promoting the call-back facility could help patients reach the practice more easily and avoid unnecessary stress.
- Expand awareness and usability of the online booking system (Klinik) by providing clear, accessible guidance on how to request urgent or routine appointments. This would make it easier for patients to access care in a way that suits their needs.
- Increase availability of same-day or short-notice appointments for adults, particularly for those seeking continuity with a preferred GP. This would improve patient satisfaction and support more personalised care.

### **Strengthen Clinical Capacity**

- Recruit additional nursing staff to manage workload pressures, maintain continuity of care, and reduce waiting times. This would enhance service efficiency and ensure patients receive timely, high-quality support.

- Consider flexible or temporary staffing options during peak periods to sustain service levels and minimise disruption to patient access.

### **Enhance Communication and Visibility**

- Update external signage to improve visibility of the surgery from the street and car park, helping patients locate the site more easily.
- Ensure all staff consistently wear name badges or lanyards, supporting patient confidence, safety, and ease of communication.
- Increase visibility of the complaints procedure and translation services through well-positioned posters, leaflets, or digital screens. This would empower patients to raise concerns and access information in their preferred language.

### **Optimise Appointment Efficiency**

- Monitor and analyse 'Did Not Attend' (DNA) trends and introduce targeted strategies, such as SMS reminders or follow-up calls, to reduce missed appointments. Improving attendance would free up capacity for other patients in need.
- Provide clear information on alternative care options, including NHS 111 and local pharmacies, ensuring patients can access timely advice when appointments are unavailable.

### **Enhance Patient Information and Support**

- Review all patient-facing materials to ensure they are up to date, accessible, and clearly outline available services, clinics, and support resources.
- Promote extended access appointments and home visit options more widely to maximise uptake and ensure patients are aware of flexible care pathways.



### **Maintain Environmental Quality**

- Continue regular maintenance and cleanliness checks, particularly for external areas, car parks, and signage, to sustain a safe and welcoming environment.
- Ensure waiting areas remain comfortable and inclusive, with appropriate seating and attention to privacy for patients discussing sensitive matters.

### **Sustain Positive Organisational Culture**

- Maintain staff engagement and morale through regular communication, recognition of achievements, and ongoing professional development. A motivated workforce directly benefits patient experience and care quality.
- Encourage continued multidisciplinary collaboration to support coordinated, efficient, and person-centred service delivery.

### **Finally:**

It is recommended that this report be shared with all relevant stakeholders. Saffron Health Partnership 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](mailto:info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)**



## Service Provider response

It was a pleasure to meet the Healthwatch team during their recent visit to the surgery and the practice are grateful for their recommendations. We are pleased to be able to share some of the changes that have occurred since the Healthwatch visit:

### Improve Patient Access

- Since the full launch of the online triage system (Klinik), our telephone waiting times have drastically reduced, the average time that patients spent in the telephone queue during November was 7 minutes
- As all appointment requests are handled via the Klinik system, patients are no longer queuing at reception in the morning to book appointments
- We have been working hard to promote the Klinik system and have held several patient events to demonstrate how the system works. Our PPG have also created a step-by-step guide on how to complete a request using the Klinik system
- Since the full launch of Klinik we no longer provide online appointments for patients to book directly, instead these appointments are used to offer patients future appointments where same day care is not necessary
- Reception at our Biggleswade site is now open all day from 8am to 6.30pm to ensure equitable access to all our patients

### Strengthen Clinical Capacity

- Together with our primary care network the practice has introduced more minor illness nursing appointments, phlebotomy appointments and is providing practice nurse locum cover to compensate for practice nurse staff leave

### Enhance Communication and Visibility

- Together with the practice's landlord, we are in the process of reviewing the external lighting to the premises and car park in Biggleswade, with a view to improving premises visibility for patients and visitors
- All staff have been provided with name badges, and have been asked to always wear them
- Patient feedback and complaints posters have been displayed

### Optimise Appointment Efficiency

- The practice is undertaking a review of its patient DNA's with the support of a facilitator from the Modern General Practice Improvement Programme

### Enhance Patient Information and Support

- Copies of the leaflet produced by our patient participation group which provides information to patients on alternative care services, e.g. NHS111, pharmacies etc. have been placed more prominently in the waiting areas
- A receptionist has been appointed as a lead to regularly check patient noticeboards and to display monthly health campaign content, to ensure material is up to date and accessible

### Maintain Environmental Quality

- We will continue to provide regular maintenance and cleanliness checks, along with the practice landlord
- We will continue to ensure patients are aware that if they would like to speak to a receptionist in private, that this option is available to them

**Sustain Positive Organisational Culture**

- We will continue to foster an open, transparent, collaborative and supportive workplace culture

We will continue to encourage patient feedback via multiple channels, including Healthwatch.

**Patient Services Manager  
Saffron Health Partnership**



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