

Charing Cross Hospital Enter & View Report

Outpatient Departments
18th October 2024



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1. Visit Background

1.1 What is Enter & View

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to undertake 'Enter and View' visits.

Mandated by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the visits enable trained Healthwatch staff and volunteers (Authorised Representatives) to visit health and care services – such as hospitals, care homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, 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.

During the visits, we observe service delivery and talk with service users, their families, and carers. We also engage with management and staff. The aim is to get an impartial view of how the service is operated and being experienced.

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

1.2 Safeguarding

Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with safeguarding policies. If at any time an Authorised Representative observes anything that they feel uncomfortable about they need to inform their lead who will inform the service manager, ending the visit.

In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

1.3 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date(s) set out. The 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.

1.4 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Hammersmith & Fulham would like to thank the staff and patients at the Charing Cross Hospital for their contribution and hospitality in enabling this Enter and View visit to take place. We would also like to thank our Authorised Representatives, who assisted us in conducting the visit and putting together this report.

The Authorised Representatives spoke to patients and staff. Suggestions have been made on how to improve the service and good practice has been highlighted.

2. Focus of the Visit

Following our Enter & View visit to the outpatient departments at the Chelsea & Westminster Hospital in early 2024, Healthwatch Hammersmith & Fulham decided to carry out visits to Hammersmith and Charing Cross Hospitals to help improve the outpatient experience at these hospitals.

The focus of the visits was to collect feedback from **patients** about Appointment Letters, Travelling and Arriving at the Hospital, Signage, and the Waiting Experience.

Similarly, we asked **staff** about Appointments, Travel, Navigation and Signage, Patient Experience and Interactions, and Staff Experience.

During our visit, the Authorised Representatives also made **observations** about Accessibility, Signage, Environment and Facilities, and Information.

3. Visit Details

The visit was facilitated by Signs Ngwenya, the Manager of the Outpatient Services at the Charing Cross Hospital.

Healthwatch Hammersmith & Fulham	
Departments Visited	Main Outpatient Department
Date & Time of Visit	9.30am-12.30pm, 18 th October 2024
Status of Visit	Announced
Authorised Volunteer Representative	Eunice Boahene
Healthwatch Hammersmith & Fulham Representatives	Mari Tiitinen: Projects Officer

4.Executive Summary

This section of the report details the key findings from our observations and the patient and staff feedback collected during our visit

Observations

Accessibility

What works well

- The hospital's main entrance has step-free access.
- Parking, including free parking for blue-badge holders, is available.

What could be improved

- We did not observe any information about free parking for blue-badge holders at the main hospital entrance.
- The main outpatient department is located on the first floor and it is accessible by lift, escalator and stairs. However, the escalator was not in operation during our visit.

Signage

What works well

- At the main entrance there is a sign advising patients to access the outpatient department on the first floor via stairs or the escalator.
- There is also signage throughout the hospital to guide patients.

What could be improved

- At the main entrance there is a sign advising patients to access the outpatient department on the first floor via stairs or the escalator. It is not clear why patients are not advised that they can also use the lifts to access the outpatient department.
- The signage is quite small making it less visible.

Environment and Facilities

What works well

- The facilities at the outpatient department are good with accessible toilets, plenty of seating, enough space for wheelchair users and hearing loops at the reception.
- The general environment at the outpatient department is spacious, clean and well-lit.

What could be improved

- We did note that the overall décor was a little worn out. We also observed some incontinence pads on the floor in front of one of the water dispensers which we assume were there to soak up any water.

Information

What works well

- There were posters displaying information regarding chaperones, PALS, and quality improvements made to the outpatient department.
- Information on the approximate waiting times was written on two whiteboards.
- There were 'Have Your Say'- posters displayed in the waiting areas enabling patients to provide feedback.

What could be improved

- We did not observe any information available on interpretation and translation services.
- We did not observe any information available in Braille.
- We did not see a complaints policy displayed.

Patient Feedback

Appointment Letters

What works well

- The majority of the patients we spoke with told us their experience with the appointment letters was generally positive. Patients reported that they could access their appointment letters easily and rated the clarity and comprehensibility of the information letters very highly.

- Most patients had also been sent reminders of their appointment closer to the appointment time.

What could be improved

- There were a few patients who mentioned accessing the digital appointment letter should be made easier.
- Two patients mentioned that they struggled to read the letter because English is not their first language, and they had to ask someone to translate the letter for them.
- One patient, who is registered blind, also had to have someone read the information on the appointment letter for them.

Travelling and Arriving at the Hospital

What works well

- All patients who had interacted with staff at the main entrance found them approachable and helpful.

What could be improved

- Two patients rated the availability of the parking neutrally while one person rated it negatively.
- 2 out of 6 rated the cost of the parking negatively.
- Patients mentioned that more parking spaces should be made available and there should be free parking or the parking cost should be reduced.

Signposting

What works well

- The majority of the patients we spoke with were satisfied with the signage at the hospital.

What could be improved

- However, 7 out of 19 patients told us they did not find the signage around the hospital accurate and up to date.

Waiting Experience

What works well

- 7 out of 19 patients rated their waiting experience as positive.

What could be improved

- However, 5 out of 15 patients reported waiting times of up to an hour or more.
- In addition, half of the patients told us that they had not been or not always been provided updates regarding waiting times.
- One patient, who is registered blind, told us that they are unsure how long they have been waiting as they can't see the time, but that they felt they had been waiting for quite some time. They would have appreciated it if someone had let them know about the delay as they couldn't see the information on the whiteboard.
- 7 out of 17 patients were not aware of facilities such as WiFi.

Staff feedback

Appointments

What works well

- Staff told us that patients are notified of their appointments via text, email, and letter.

What could be improved

- Appointments and communication systems could be improved by enhancing communication channels, providing real-time appointment availability, and improving accessibility.

Travel

What works well

- To assist patients in travelling to and from the hospital, staff assess their needs and communicate and coordinate with the patient transport service.

What could be improved

- Patients should be sent appointment reminders and provided with detailed travel instructions.

Navigation and Signage

What could be improved

- The staff member told us they do not feel that the signage and guidance in the hospital are clear enough.

Patient Experience and Interactions

What works well

- Staff have positive interactions with patients and they have enough time to address patients' needs and concerns.
- We were told the patient feedback about the main outpatient department is positive.

What could be improved

- The key concerns and complaints raised by patients in the outpatient department relate to delays in appointment times and booking appointments over the capacity.
- The main barriers staff experience in dealing with patient concerns are time and communication

Staff Experience

What could be improved

- The staff member told us they would describe their working experience as negative due to their workload, staffing levels and lack of communication.

5.Full Findings

This section of the report presents detailed information on our observations and patient and staff feedback collected during our visit.

During the visit we collected responses from 20 patients and one staff member completed our online staff feedback form.

We would like to thank the staff and management for their time and their warm welcome and cooperation.

Observations

During our visit, our team of Authorised Representatives (ARs) made observations on Accessibility, General Environment and Facilities, and Safety.

Accessibility

- The hospital is close to bus stops and approximately 10-minute walk from Hammersmith Station.
- The hospital's main entrance has step-free access.
- Parking, including free parking for blue-badge holders, is available, although we did not observe any information about this at the main hospital entrance.
- The main outpatient department is located on the first floor and it is accessible by lift, escalator and stairs. However, the escalator was not in operation during our visit.

Signage

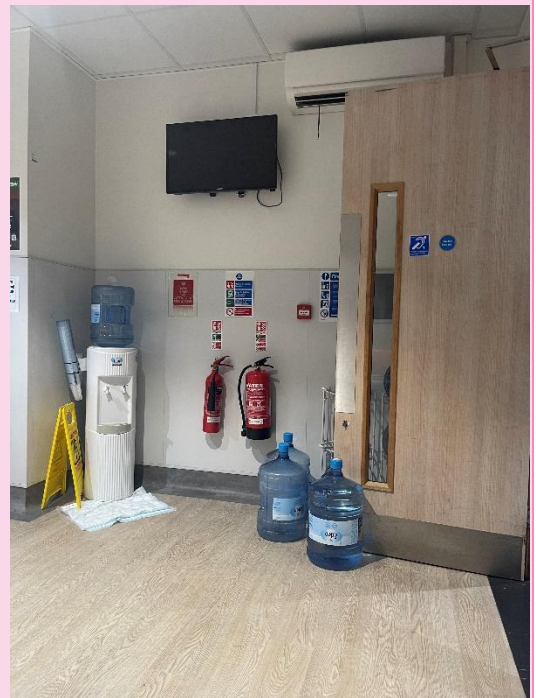
- At the main entrance there is a sign advising patients to access the outpatient department on the first floor via stairs or the escalator. It is not clear why patients are not advised that they can also use the lifts to access the outpatient department.
- There is also signage throughout the hospital to guide you but it is quite small making it less visible.
- There is also a directory of the hospital departments located at the main hospital entrance.
- There were two staff members at the main reception and we also observed a volunteer giving directions outside the main outpatient department. They all appeared approachable and helpful.



Environment and Facilities

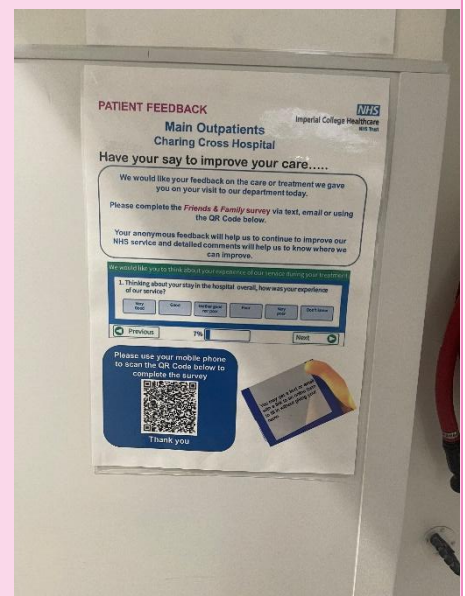
- There is a reception area where patients come to check in and four waiting areas (A-D).
- There is also another reception near the C & D waiting areas and although there was a staff member behind the desk, it seemed that no one was checking in at this reception.
- The general environment at the outpatient department is spacious, clean and well-lit.
- There are water dispensers.
- There are accessible toilets.
- The waiting areas have enough seats for patients.
- The waiting areas are spacious enough for wheelchair users.
- There are hearing loops at both receptions and signs to make people aware.
- The interactions between staff and patients seemed professional and friendly.

- There is a WiFi but it didn't seem to be working as we were unable to connect to it.
- There were TV screens in the waiting areas but they were switched off.
- We did note that the overall décor was a little worn out. We also observed some incontinence pads on the floor in front of one of the water dispensers which we assume were there to soak up any water.
- There were also empty water bottles next to the water dispenser and a full water bottle was placed to keep open the door to the outpatient department, possibly to let some air in, as we did observe that it was quite warm, particularly in the C & D waiting areas.



Information

- We did not observe any information available on interpretation and translation services.
- We did not observe any information available in Braille.
- There were posters displaying information regarding chaperones, PALS, and quality improvements made to the outpatient department.
- Information on the approximate waiting times was written on two whiteboards, one which was located in the A & B waiting areas and the other in the C & D areas. We observed the information being updated once during our visit.
- There was information displayed on McMillan Cancer Support and Parkinson's disease.
- There were 'Have Your Say'- posters displayed in the waiting areas enabling patients to provide feedback.
- We did not see a complaints policy displayed.



Patient Feedback

We spoke with 20 patients during our visit.

This section of the report contains a summary of the feedback received.

Appointment letter

- The majority of the patients we spoke with told us their experience with the appointment letters was generally positive. Patients reported that they could access their appointment letters easily and rated the clarity and comprehensibility of the information letters very highly.
- Most patients had also been sent reminders of their appointment closer to the appointment time.
- Only 4 out of 20 people said they had been given advice on how to manage emotions such as anxiety before their appointment. However, most people stated that they did not need such advice.
- Despite the generally positive experiences, we did hear about some issues with appointment letters and one person had missed an appointment in the last 12 months due to an administrative error.
- There were a few patients who mentioned accessing the digital appointment letter should be made easier.
- Two patients mentioned that they struggled to read the letter because English is not their first language, and they had to ask someone to translate the letter for them.
- One patient, who is registered blind, also had to have someone read the information on the appointment letter for them.
- Two people mentioned they would prefer to receive a physical letter but instead are sent the digital version.

Selected comment:

"It needs to be much easier to access and download on the app. Reminder needs to be sent closer to the appointment time."

Travelling and Arriving at the Hospital

- The majority of patients had travelled to the hospital by either public transport or car. Only one person we spoke with had arrived via the patient transport service.
- All patients who had interacted with staff at the main entrance found them approachable and helpful.
- The patient who had used the patient transport rated the reliability of the service as positive and the punctuality as neutral. They noted that although the transport service often runs late, they do always arrive eventually.
- 3 out of 6 patients who had arrived by car thought the parking and the drop-off points were clearly signposted.
- Two patients rated the availability of the parking neutrally while one person rated it negatively.
- 2 out of 6 rated the cost of the parking negatively.
- Patients mentioned that more parking spaces should be made available and there should be free parking or the parking cost should be reduced.
- One person suggested that the entrance from the street to the hospital should be improved as it is a bit 'grotty'.
- Another patient was very unhappy that the escalator to the first floor was non-operational.

Selected comment:

"Free parking and more parking spaces."

Signposting

- The majority of the patients we spoke with were satisfied with the signage at the hospital.
- However, 7 out of 19 patients told us they did not find the signage around the hospital accurate and up to date.
- All patients who had interactions with staff or volunteers found them approachable and helpful.
- Patients made the following suggestions to improve signage: implementing coloured lines around the hospital to help direct patients to the different departments, having separate signposting to the

outpatient department, introducing more signage and making it bigger and clearer to help make it more visible.

- One patient also suggested there should be signposting from the train station to the hospital.

Selected comment:

"It would be good if there were coloured lines on the floor leading you to the right department."

Waiting experience

- 7 out of 19 patients rated their waiting experience as positive.
- Most people reported having waited 30 minutes or less past their allocated appointment time.
- However, 5 out of 15 patients reported waiting times of up to an hour or more.
- In addition, half of the patients told us that they had not been or not always been provided updates regarding waiting times.
- 7 out of 17 patients were not aware of facilities such as WiFi.
- Patients suggested having more doctors to reduce waiting times, more information about the waiting times, informing patients about any delays with a text before their appointment, and giving patients the ability to leave the hospital and come back later if there are any delays.
- One patient, who is registered blind, told us that they are unsure how long they have been waiting as they can't see the time, but that they felt they had been waiting for quite some time. They would have appreciated it if someone had let them know about the delay as they couldn't see the information on the whiteboard.
- Another patient recalled an occasion when they had been waiting for about an hour but were then informed that their appointment had been cancelled.

Selected comment:

"When they are late or there are delays they need to come and inform patients about what is happening"

Staff Feedback

We collected feedback from one staff member who completed our online feedback form.

This section of the report contains a summary of the feedback received.

Appointments

- Staff told us that patients are notified of their appointments via text, email, and letter.
- Staff do not always have enough time to deal with appointment-related enquiries.
- Appointments and communication systems could be improved by enhancing communication channels, providing real-time appointment availability, and improving accessibility.

Travel

- To assist patients in travelling to and from the hospital, staff assess their needs and communicate and coordinate with the patient transport service.
- To ensure that patients arrive at their appointments safely, comfortably and on time, patients should be sent appointment reminders and provided with detailed travel instructions.

Navigation and Signage

- The staff member told us they do not feel that the signage and guidance in the hospital are clear enough.
- Staff are asked for directions by patients multiple times a day.
- Staff suggested improving the design of the signage and using clear and simple language.

Patient Experience and Interactions

- Staff have positive interactions with patients and they have enough time to address patients' needs and concerns.

- We were told the patient feedback about the main outpatient department is positive.
- Staff reported that the key concerns and complaints raised by patients in the outpatient department relate to delays in appointment times and booking appointments over the capacity.
- The main barriers staff experience in dealing with patient concerns are time and communication.
- Staff would improve patient experience by enhancing communication and care coordination and actively encouraging patients to provide feedback.
- To improve staff-patient interactions, staff told us they should be allocated adequate time for interactions and staff wellbeing should be ensured.

Staff Experience

- The staff member told us they would describe their working experience as negative due to their workload, staffing levels and lack of communication.
- Staff told us they could be better supported by strengthening the leadership and management support, improving communication and organisation, ensuring staff wellbeing, reducing workload and addressing staffing challenges.

6. Recommendations

Healthwatch Hammersmith & Fulham would like to thank the service for their support in arranging our E&V visit.

Based on all the feedback obtained, we would like to make the following recommendations.

Accessibility

The main outpatient department is located on the first floor and it is accessible by lift, escalator and stairs. However, the escalator was not in operation during our visit.

Recommendation 1: *Ensure the escalator is operational so patients with disabilities and reduced mobility can access the outpatient department on the first floor. The lifts can get busy and should be reserved for wheelchair users and patients who are not able to use the escalators.*

We did not observe any information about free parking for blue badge holders at the main hospital entrance.

Recommendation 2: *Information about free parking for blue badge holders should be displayed at the main hospital reception so that patients are aware of this.*

Signage

We observed that the signage around the hospital is quite small making it less visible.

7 out of 19 patients told us they did not find the signage around the hospital accurate and up to date.

Recommendation 3: *Install larger and more visible signage to help provide clear directions for patients and ensure all signage is up to date enabling patients to navigate the hospital more easily.*

Appointment Letter

There were a few patients who mentioned accessing the digital appointment letter should be made easier.

Two patients mentioned that they struggled to read the letter because English is not their first language, and they had to ask someone to translate the letter for them.

One patient, who is registered blind, also had to have someone read the information on the appointment letter for them.

Recommendation 4: *Patients' accessibility needs should be updated regularly in the hospital records to ensure information about appointments is communicated to them in a format that is accessible to them. Patients should not need to rely on other people to access this information as this can compromise their patient confidentiality. The Trust should consider improvements to communication methods with people with language barriers and sensory impairments.*

Environment and Facilities

We did note that the overall décor was a little worn out. We also observed some incontinence pads on the floor in front of one of the water dispensers which we assume were there to soak up any water.

Recommendation 5: *Consider implementing minor updates to the décor such as a fresh coat of paint to improve the general environment and a more permanent solution to soak up any dripping water from the water dispenser.*

Information

We did not observe any information available on interpretation and translation services.

We did not observe any information available in Braille.

Recommendation 6: *Information on interpretation and translation services should be provided to patients in their preferred language and leaflets or posters should be displayed at the outpatient department. [Migrants Organise](#) have produced a Good Practice Guide to Interpreting which includes detailed*

information on the importance of good interpreting in a health setting and it is provided in multiple languages such as Arabic and Bengali.

Recommendation 7: *As per Accessible Information Standards, people who are blind or have low vision should be supported to access information in a format such as audio, Braille or large print. Patients with these communication needs should be made aware that they can request information in their preferred format for example during their appointment or when checking in for their appointment at the reception.*

We did not see a complaints policy displayed.

Recommendation 8: *Complaints policy should be displayed near the reception where it is visible to patients and patients with communication needs should be made aware of it in their preferred format.*

Waiting Experience

5 out of 15 patients reported waiting times of up to an hour or more.

In addition, half of the patients told us that they had not always been provided updates regarding waiting times.

One patient, who is registered blind, told us that they are unsure how long they have been waiting as they can't see the time, but that they felt they had been waiting for quite some time. They would have appreciated it if someone had let them know about the delay as they couldn't see the information on the whiteboard.

Recommendation 9: *Implementing a queuing system with a digital display and audio would provide better information on waiting times for all patients and help manage their expectations. The reception staff should also accommodate patient needs and ensure patients are not left waiting for a long time without being given updates on their appointments.*

7 out of 17 patients were not aware of facilities such as WiFi.

Recommendation 10: *Ensure patients are made aware of facilities such as Wifi upon their arrival as this can improve the patient experience for those who are having to wait a long time for their appointment.*

Staff Experience

The staff member told us they would describe their working experience as negative due to their workload, staffing levels and lack of communication. They

told us they could be better supported by strengthening the leadership and management support, improving communication and organisation, ensuring staff wellbeing, reducing workload and addressing staffing challenges.

Recommendation 11: *Implement a staff wellbeing programme that offers access to counselling and other wellbeing services to help them destress outside of work.*

Recommendation 12: *Implementing regular staff meetings with regular performance updates and a space for staff to voice concerns. Actions from these meetings should be logged and followed up in the next meeting.*

Glossary of Terms

AR	Authorised Representative
CQC	Care Quality Commission
Enter & View	E&V
OP	Outpatient Clinics
PALS	Patient Advice and Liaison Service
PDR	Performance Development Review

Distribution and Comment

This report is available to the general public and is shared with our statutory and community partners. Accessible formats are available.

If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences, please contact us.



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