

Hammersmith Hospital Enter & View Report



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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 Hammersmith 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 Dr Martina Opara-Evoeme, the Nurse Manager for Outpatient Services at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust on behalf of the Hammersmith Hospital.

Healthwatch Hammersmith & Fulham			
Departments Visited	Main Outpatient Department		
Date & Time of Visit	9am-12.30pm, 4 th October 2024		
Status of Visit	Announced		
Authorised Volunteer Representative	Eunice Boahene		
Healthwatch Hammersmith & Fulham Representatives	Yee Phyo: Patient Experience 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.
- The main outpatient department is located on the ground floor making it accessible for people with mobility issues.

Signage

What works well

- There is a large sign at the main entrance directing patients to the Main Outpatient Department
- There was a volunteer near the main reception and they appeared helpful.

What could be improved

Moving from the main entrance to the corridor, the signage directing
patients to the outpatient department is implemented amongst other
signage and is small making it less visible.

Environment and Facilities

What works well

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

Information

What works well

- We observed information on McMillan Cancer Support, an introduction to the staff team, and a patient experience board displayed at the department.
- Friends and Family test is available for patients to provide feedback and information was displayed on the wall.

What could be improved

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.
- They were sent reminders of their appointment

What could be improved

- Despite the generally positive experiences, we did hear about some issues with appointment letters and two people had missed an appointment in the last 12 months due to an administrative error.
- One person mentioned having their appointment rescheduled but then received a letter saying they had missed their appointment.
- Two patients mentioned they had not received a reminder closer to their appointment time.

Travelling and Arriving at the Hospital

What works well

- The majority of patients who had interacted with staff at the main entrance found them approachable and helpful.
- The two patients who had used the patient transport rated the punctuality, reliability and communication with the service as positive.

What could be improved

- 4 out of 7 patients who had arrived by car did not think that the parking and the drop-off points were clearly signposted.
- One patient stated that they are not always able to get a disabled parking space as it often fills up quickly.

Signposting

What works well

- 13 out of 23 patients found the signage around the hospital accurate and up to date.
- The majority also found the staff and volunteers approachable and helpful.

What could be improved

- Some patients suggested that the signage should be bigger because the signs are not obvious. It was also suggested that the signs should be improved because they only include the zones (A, B, C etc.) making it difficult for patients to find the right department.
- One patient said that the signage in the lift is not accurate as it stated that cardiology is on the 1st floor when it is on the ground floor.

Waiting Experience

What works well

- The majority of the patients we spoke with reported having a positive waiting experience at the outpatient department.
- Most reported having waited less than 30 minutes past their allocated appointment time.

What could be improved

- Some reported poor waiting experience with 4 out of 19 patients reporting waiting times of more than an hour.
- In addition, some patients were not aware of facilities such as WiFi.

Staff feedback

Appointments

What works well

 Most staff members feel they have enough time to deal with appointment-related enquiries.

What could be improved

 Staff said improvements should be made to reduce waiting times for incoming calls, patients should be provided with regular updates of their appointments, and notifications on changes to appointment times and cancellations should be sent by email or text because appointment letters are often delayed which means that patients are not notified of changes to their appointments on time.

Travel

What works well

- Staff assist patients with arriving at their appointments by working together with the transport team.
- Staff also provide advance communication to patients and any reasonable adjustments according to patient needs, for example, by calling patients to assist them in arriving at the hospital on time.

Navigation and Signage

What works well

• Some staff members feel the signage and guidance around the hospital is clear for patients to find their way around.

What could be improved

- However, most staff members do not feel it is always clear. One staff member explained that the current signage is not enough considering the size of the hospital and sometimes it is not that visible.
- Staff told us the size of the signage and the writing on them should be larger, it should be more visible, and the instructions should be clearer.

Patient Experience and Interactions

What works well

 All staff told us they have positive interactions with patients and the general feedback about the main outpatient department is positive.

What could be improved

- Staff reported that the key concerns and complaints raised by patients in the outpatient department relate to waiting times, clinic delays, transport delays and the cold temperature in the department.
- The main barriers staff experience in dealing with patient concerns are clinic delays and language barriers.

Staff Experience

What works well

- All staff members described their working experience as positive or very positive.
- Staff also told us they enjoy their job and working with their colleagues and receive support from senior staff members and management.

What could be improved

 When asked how staff could be better supported, staff mentioned consideration for their wellbeing, good listening skills and compassion, and working as a team.

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 25 patients and 6 staff members 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 a 5-minute walk from East Acton and White City Stations
- The hospital's main entrance has step-free access.
- Parking, including free parking for blue-badge holders, is available.
- The main outpatient department is located on the ground floor making it accessible for people with mobility issues.

Signage

- At the main entrance there is a large sign directing patients to the main outpatient department.
 Moving from the main entrance to the corridor, the signage directing patients to the outpatient department is implemented amongst other signage and is small making it less visible.
- There is also a site map available in the main corridor.
- There was a volunteer near the main reception and they appeared helpful.

Environment and Facilities





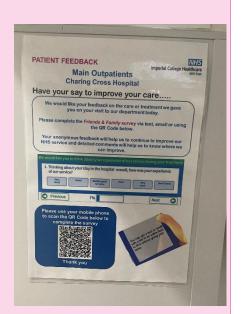
- The general environment at the outpatient department is spacious, clean and well-lit.
- There is a water dispenser.
- There are accessible toilets.
- The waiting area has enough seats for patients.
- There are wheelchairs available at the main reception and the waiting area is spacious enough for wheelchair users.
- There is a hearing loop at the reception.
- Interpreters and translation services are booked in advance.

Information

- Information is available in Braille upon request.
- We observed information on McMillan Cancer Support, an introduction to the staff team, and a patient experience board.
- Friends and Family test is available for patients to provide feedback and information was displayed.
- We did not see a complaints policy displayed.

Anything else

 Email communication is available for those who prefer this method.



Patient Feedback

We spoke with 25 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.
- They had also been sent reminders of their appointment closer to the appointment time.
- Only 3 out of 25 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 two people had missed an appointment in the last 12 months due to an administrative error.
- One person mentioned having their appointment rescheduled but then received a letter saying they had missed their appointment.
- A few people mentioned delays in receiving their appointment letter in the post and that they would prefer to receive both a physical letter as well as a digital version of the letter.
- Two people suggested that the letter should specify what the appointment is for and who they are there to see, a doctor or a nurse.
- Two patients mentioned they had not received a reminder closer to their appointment time.

Selected comment:

"I received a text 2 weeks before my appointment. My first appointment was cancelled, I only received a text message, the letter did not come. Delays in appointment letters need to be improved."

Travelling and Arriving at the Hospital

- The majority of patients had travelled to the hospital by either public transport or car. Only two people we spoke with had arrived via the patient transport service.
- The majority of patients who had interacted with staff at the main entrance found them approachable and helpful.
- The two patients who had used the patient transport rated the punctuality, reliability and communication with the service as positive.
- However, they did mention that sometimes they have to wait for the service for quite some time and one patient had to call them a few times to find out if they were coming to pick them up.

- 4 out of 7 patients who had arrived by car did not think that the parking and the drop-off points were clearly signposted.
- One patient stated that they are not always able to get a disabled parking space as it often fills up quickly and that there should be signs to say that you do not need to pay for parking if you are a blue badge holder.
- Another person told us that there were no parking spaces available when bringing their mother to the hospital for an appointment which made it difficult for their mother who uses a walking stick.
- One person suggested that the hospital should have a secure bicycle shed and another said that patients should be sent a map of the hospital before their appointment.

Selected comment:

"I got a disabled space today but not always, they should have a sign that says you don't have to pay."

Signposting

- 13 out of 23 patients found the signage around the hospital accurate and up to date.
- The majority also found the staff and volunteers approachable and helpful.
- Some patients suggested that the signage should be bigger because the signs are not obvious. It was also suggested that the signs should be improved because they only include the zones (A, B, C etc.) making it difficult for patients to find the right department.
- One patient said that the signage in the lift is not accurate as it stated that cardiology is on the 1st floor when it is on the ground floor.

Selected comment:

"In the lift, it says the cardiology is on the 1st floor but it's on the ground floor. The staff did not answer my question, they said: "speak to the nurse". "

Waiting experience

- The majority of the patients we spoke with reported having a positive waiting experience at the outpatient department.
- Most reported having waited less than 30 minutes past their allocated appointment time.
- 9 out of 19 patients were given updates regarding wait times and the majority were aware of facilities such as Wi-Fi being available.
- However, some reported poor waiting experience with 4 out of 19 patients reporting waiting times of more than an hour.
- In addition, some patients were not aware of facilities such as WiFi.
- Patients suggested having more doctors to reduce waiting times and avoid overbooking appointments.
- Some patients also mentioned that it would be useful to have a sign with updated waiting times and information regarding any delays and to have a board displaying the appointments rather than staff coming in to announce them.

Selected comment:

"The car park is expensive so if the waiting time increases, you need to pay more."

Staff Feedback

We collected feedback from 6 staff members who completed our online staff feedback form. The respondents' job titles included a Healthcare Assistant, a Registered Nurse, a Staff Nurse and a Nurse Manager.

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 message, email, letter, and online system.
- For enquiries about appointments, patients can contact the hospital department over the phone or by email.

- The majority of staff members feel that they have enough time to deal with appointment-related enquiries, however, one staff member said they were not sure.
- Staff said improvements should be made to reduce waiting times for incoming calls, patients should be provided with regular updates to their appointments, and notifications on changes to appointment times and cancellations should be sent by email or text because appointment letters are often delayed which means that patients are not notified of changes to their appointments on time.

Travel

- To assist patients in travelling to and from the hospital, staff assess their needs and give appropriate assistance such as booking patient transport, checking in with the transport service regarding arrival times, and providing relevant travel information and wheelchairs to those who require them. In addition, patients receive a map of the location of the hospital in their appointment letters.
- To ensure that patients arrive at their appointments safely, comfortably and on time, staff work with the transport team to ensure patients who use patient transport service arrive on time. Staff also provide advance communication to patients and any reasonable adjustments according to patient needs, for example, by calling patients to assist them in arriving at the hospital on time.

Navigation and Signage

- 2 out of 6 staff members told us they think the signage and guidance in the hospital are clear for patients to find their way around.
- However, the other four staff members do not feel it is always clear. One staff member explained that the current signage is not enough considering the size of the hospital and sometimes it is not that visible.
- Most staff members said that they are asked for directions multiple times.
- When asked how the signage and navigation around the hospital could be improved, staff suggested the size of the signage and the writing on it should be larger, the signage should be more visible and the instructions should be clearer.

Patient Experience and Interactions

- All staff told us they have positive interactions with patients, but when asked if they feel they have enough time to address patients' needs and concerns the responses were mixed.
- Overall, 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 waiting times, clinic delays, transport delays and the cold temperature in the department.
- The main barriers staff experience in dealing with patient concerns are clinic delays and language barriers.
- Staff would improve the patient experience by increasing the capacity at the clinics, making communication with patients more accurate and effective, encouraging patients to leave feedback, and resolving the cold temperature issue.
- To improve patient interactions, staff told us communication needs to be more effective and staff should have more time to check on patients.

Staff Experience

- All staff members described their working experience as positive or very positive.
- Staff told us they adhere to the trust's values of being kind, caring, aspiring and an expert.
- Staff also told us they enjoy their job and working with their colleagues and receive support from senior staff members and management.
- When asked how staff could be better supported, staff mentioned consideration for their wellbeing, good listening skills and compassion, and working as a team.
- One staff member mentioned that due to a change to their shift start time, they find it difficult to interact with staff and patients.

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.

Signage

There is a large sign at the main entrance directing patients to the Main Outpatient Department. Moving from the main entrance to the corridor, the signage directing patients to the outpatient department is implemented amongst other signage and is small making it less visible.

In addition, both patients and staff members suggested that the signage should be bigger because the signs are not always visible and there should be more signage.

Recommendation 1: Install larger and more visible signage to help provide clear directions for patients and enable them to navigate the hospital more easily.

One patient said that the signage in the lift is not accurate as it stated that cardiology is on the 1st floor when it is on the ground floor.

Recommendation 2: The signage in the lifts should be updated to help direct patients to the correct floor.

Appointment Letter

One person mentioned having their appointment rescheduled but then received a letter saying they had missed their appointment.

Staff said patients should be provided with regular updates of their appointments, and notifications on changes to appointment times and cancellations should be sent by email or text because appointment letters are often delayed which means that patients are not notified of changes to their appointments on time.

Recommendation 3: A review of the administration process around sending appointment letters should be reviewed to find out the specific problems that cause letters to be sent out late causing patients to be notified of changes to their appointments too late.

Recommendation 4: Encourage more patients who have the equipment and the skills to sign up for digital communication methods which means that they will be notified of any changes to their appointments via a text, email or online system.

Travelling and Arriving at the Hospital

4 out of 7 patients who had arrived by car did not think that the parking and the drop-off points were clearly signposted.

Recommendation 5: Implement more visible signage to direct patients arriving at the hospital to car parking and drop-off points.

One patient stated that they are not always able to get a disabled parking space as it often fills up quickly.

Recommendation 6: Consider assigning more disabled parking spaces to enable all blue-badge holders to access free parking.

Information

We did not see a complaints policy displayed.

Recommendation 7: Complaints policy should be displayed near the reception where it is visible to patients.

Waiting Experience

Some reported poor waiting experience with 4 out of 19 patients reporting waiting times of more than an hour.

Recommendation 8: Implementing a queuing system with a digital display would provide better information on waiting times and help to manage patient expectations.

In addition, some patients were not aware of facilities such as WiFi.

Recommendation 9: Ensure information about facilities such as Wifi is clearly displayed where patients can see it as this can improve the patient experience for those who are having to wait a long time for their appointment.

Patient Experience and Interactions

Staff reported that the key concerns and complaints raised by patients in the outpatient department relate to waiting times, clinic delays, transport delays and the cold temperature in the department.

The main barriers staff experience in dealing with patient concerns are clinic delays and language barriers.

Recommendation 10: Access to telephone interpreters should be made available to all staff dealing with patient concerns. In addition, recruiting staff members from the local community would also help with language barriers.

Recommendation 11: Implement a more efficient appointment management system to minimise cancellations and reduce waiting times for patients. This could include better coordination between departments and proactive communication with patients about any changes to their appointments.

Staff Experience

When asked how staff could be better supported, staff mentioned consideration for their wellbeing, good listening skills and compassion, and working as a team.

Recommendation 12: Implement a staff wellbeing programme that offers access to counselling and other wellbeing services to help them destress outside of work.

Recommendation 13: 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

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.

healthwatch Hammersmith and Fulham

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