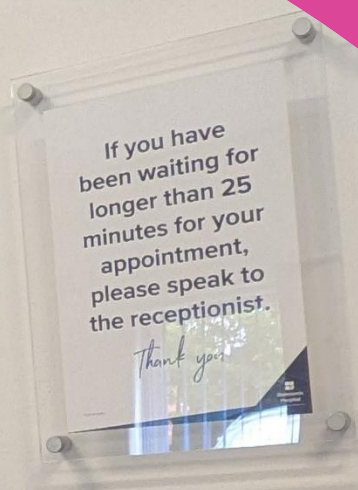


Enter and View

Blakelands Hospital, Ramsay Health

24th June 2025



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2 Introduction

Name of home	Blakelands Hospital
Service provider	Ramsey Hospitals
Date and time	Tuesday 24 th June between 9.30am and 4pm
Authorised representative (s)	Helen Browse, Sarah Hibble and John Southall

2.1 Details of visit

2.2 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Milton Keynes would like to thank the service provider, staff, service users and their families for contributing to this Enter and View visit, notably for their helpfulness, hospitality, and courtesy.

2.3 How we gathered the data

This report is based on our observations and the experiences of the patients, relatives and staff we spoke to on the day of the visit.

3 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 run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families, and carers 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.

Healthwatch Enter and Views are not intended to identify safeguarding issues specifically. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch 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 staff member wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to the Care Quality Commission, where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

3.1 Purpose of visit

HealthWatch Milton Keynes were invited to carry out an Enter and View at Blakelands Hospital Milton Keynes by the Clinical Lead at the Hospital because they have not had a CQC visit since 2017 but have had a recent internal 'peer review' from the Ramsey corporate team. We had visited in January of 2023 and, following that visit, the Hospital had taken onboard our suggestions and felt that a further person-centred visit would complement the hospitals ethos of patient and staff first engagement.

We used question prompts to encourage discussion about the referral process, booking appointments and checking in along with the general cleanliness and quality of consultant care.

3.2 Strategic drivers

We undertake Enter and View functions for patient experiences in settings where publicly funded Health or Social Care services are provided.

- Visiting this setting meets our criteria for Enter and View:
- Understanding the needs of patients in a Healthcare setting
- Empowering the community to evaluate and change services offered.
- Using evidence to help providers better understand the needs of the community.
- Impartial feedback at point of delivery.

4 Overall summary

Blakelands Hospital is a purpose-built day surgery unit also offering outpatient facilities for the assessment and treatment of patients. Treatments offered at the Hospital include Cataract surgery, Hernia repairs, Arthroscopic procedures of shoulders and knees, Hand, Ankle and foot surgery, anal procedures, spinal injections and Endoscopy. Joint replacement surgery is undertaken at The Cherwell Hospital (in Banbury) and all other aspects of the patient pathway can be conducted at Blakelands.

Whilst Blakelands treat privately insured and self-funding patients, a high proportion of their patients (90.23%) are referred from the NHS.

Blakelands Hospital is situated in a quiet residential area, and the grounds are pleasant and well-maintained. Ample free car parking spaces are situated directly outside the main entrance which is on level ground and there are no steps or long walks needed to access the building which has automatic doors giving direct access to the main reception.



5 Methodology

The Authorised Representatives (ARs) arrived at 9.30AM and actively engaged with patients between 10:00 AM and 3.30PM. They left at 4PM.

On arrival, the AR(s) introduced themselves to the Clinical Lead, who had invited HealthWatch Milton Keynes to carry out this Enter and View, and the visit details were discussed and agreed. The Clinical Lead provided the ARs with a thorough tour of the facility and introduced them to staff along the way. The ARs were subsequently afforded access to all non-sterile parts of the hospital for the duration of the visit.

The ARs used a semi-structured conversation approach in meeting patients on a one-to-one basis, mainly in the reception area of the hospital and some in the recovery/post operative area of the hospital. Additionally, the ARs spent time observing routine activity. The ARs recorded the conversations and observations via hand-written notes. Posters of our visit were visible throughout the hospital in all waiting areas and our ARs gave an explanation to each patient, in the main reception area a private area was available if a patient preferred to use this for conversations.

Patients and staff were approached and asked if they would be willing to discuss their experiences. It was made clear that they could withdraw from the conversation at any time.

A total of Twenty-nine patients took part in these conversations the majority of whom were NHS referrals.

In respect of demographics the patients engaged with on the day of our visit: -

- Sixteen patients were male, and thirteen patients were female.
- Ages range between 25 and 90 years of age with an average age of 61yrs.

At the end of the visit, the Manager was verbally briefed on the overall outcome.

6 Summary of findings

6.1 Overview

Blakelands is a purpose-built day care unit and is about to undergo a major refurbishment program, it has already had technology upgrades and an unexpected refurbishment to the front entrance (due to an accident), but all works are planned for completion by January 2026. This will give Blakelands additional parking, fresh new consulting rooms, Gym for Physio amongst other new facilities.

Blakelands is paired with Cherwell Banbury if an emergency overnight stay should be required by a patient.

6.2 Appointments and arrival

As a purpose-built hospital, access is easy, with no level changes and reception situated just inside the main doors with friendly and professional staff to greet patients on arrival.

Accessibility of reception directly in front of the main, automatic, doors was appreciated by patients regardless of the reason for their visit. They felt it made their journey to their appointment much calmer. The carpark was commented on, but this should be resolved by the new year.

The simplicity of booking in at reception and making follow up appointments was appreciated. Patients who were attending follow up appointments said they found the system easy to use and staff helpful if they called to change appointment times/dates.

Refreshments and clear signage were welcomed by family members and by patients who were not nil-by-mouth.

We noted that the signage was clear, simple, and uncluttered including one informing patients **'If you have been waiting for 25 minutes, please go to Reception'**.

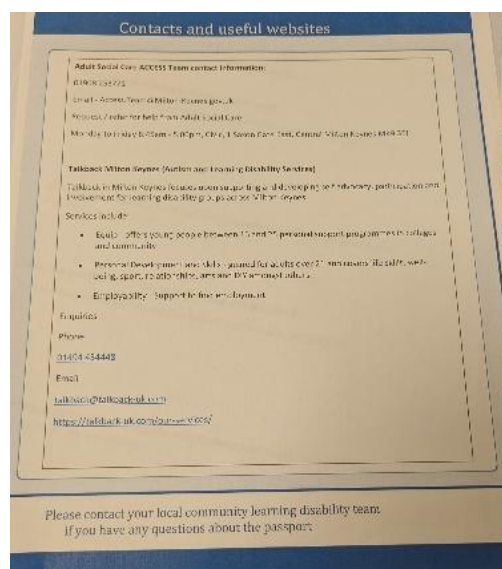
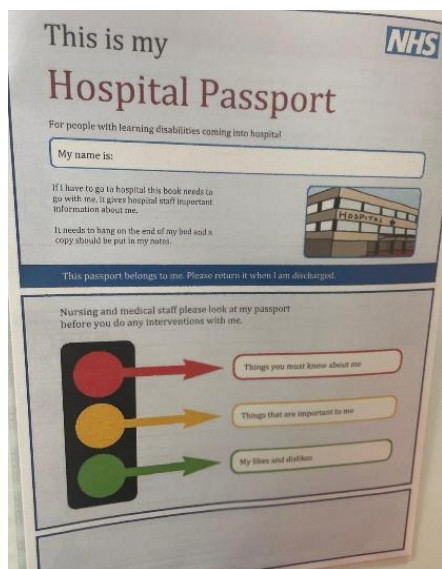
The waiting area was well lit and spacious. The area did get busy at times throughout the day before ebbing back to very quiet depending on appointment schedules. It has well-spaced comfortable seating with space for wheelchairs, some magazines available without being cluttered with them and the area was kept neat all day. Useful information available such as **'Out of Hours Contact Numbers'** cards for patients to take away.

A positive mentioned by several patients was the neutrality of smells/odours in the waiting area; it doesn't smell like a hospital, so for those of a nervous disposition it does not make the wait any more difficult than it needs to be.

6.3 Staff interaction and quality of care

We received many positive comments from patients about staff at Blakelands Hospital.

During our visit staff were observed to be caring, proactive, positive, and professional at all times ensuring patients received a positive and relaxed experience. In the 'ward' there are examples of patient feedback for staff to see and a sample Patient Passport. This is a comprehensive 12-page document which is completed for patients with neurodivergence (or any additional requirements), and the information travels with the patient throughout the building.



The Clinical Lead spends time in all areas of the hospital during the day taking time to see that everything is running as planned and chatting with staff. Staff are also looked after with bowls of fresh fruit brought in weekly rather than bowls of sweets.

When we asked people their thoughts on staff, we were told:

'They were really kind, put me at ease'

'Just lovely'

'The Best'

'Good, they are great here'

'Friendly and good'

Everyone we spoke to said they couldn't fault any member of staff. The only issues that we heard about all day were nothing to do with staff, rather, they were related to insufficient parking, a system issue with an online form, and the speed of postal appointments which could be more of a Royal Mail issue than a Blakelands issue.

Overall, the staff were very highly rated by all patients we spoke with.

6.4 Environment

First impressions are of a clean, light, well organised operation with a friendly face to welcome patients and a waiting area with comfortable seating and good lighting. There is no 'Hospital' smell in the waiting area which makes for a more welcoming environment for those who may be feeling nervous about their appointments.

There are no steps or doors to open, and the reception desk is directly in front of the automatic doors and there is seating should you need to wait before checking in at the reception desk. There is a small drinks station with clear signage. A small private room is available in the reception area should patients need a private conversation prior to going through to their consultation or operation.

The patients we spoke to told us they were happy with both the waiting area and the facilities that Blakelands Hospital had to offer.

6.5 Additional Findings

Continuity of Care

Patients all said they felt there was easy access to information, follow-up appointments were timely even if they had to travel to other sites for physio.

Some of the words used by patients to describe the care received at Blakelands were:

'Fantastic'

'Great'

'Really happy'

'Would recommend to anyone'

Online form

People told us they had a few issues with the online Health Form. Some people said they found it difficult because of the length of the document, while others had no issue with the length and completed the form online. These people told us that, on arrival it, had not been received by the hospital and were asked to complete again in hard copy. Almost all patients asked that document was reviewed to resolve these issues.

Appointments

Generally, the time from referral to receipt of appointments is appreciated by the majority of patients spoken to. However there seems to be a minor issue in the process where postal appointments are sent second class postage; when these appointments are close to the date letters are posted on, the letters arrive on, or sometimes after, the date of appointments. Adjusting postage fees, or phoning patients, for close appointments might resolve this issue.

6.6 Choice

Choice of Hospital for appointment is dependent on clinical need. Those requiring eye appointments were referred directly by opticians and contacted by Blakelands to confirm their appointments, with most appointments within six weeks of referral.

For people requiring consultations with other specialties, the process was a combination of methods, from online booking to GP referral, but all were well organised.

Eye appointments are made by referral from opticians, most appointments are within 6-8weeks.

Interpreters are booked at the time of an appointment should this service be required.

People tended to choose Blakelands through their GP referral, or because friends or family had recommended them.

7 Recommendations

- While the public toilets were clean, fresh and well stocked with the necessary products, the handle was faulty and needs to be repaired or replaced.
- We received several comments regarding the small carpark, but we understand this should be resolved in the renovations.
- Patients who had colonoscopy appointments found Blakelands own information about the procedure was good, but the medication information was less clear. It is suggested that Blakelands rewrite the information to simplify the instructions to make it easier to understand and follow.
- The online Health Questionnaire seems to present difficulties with several patients believing they had completed it online but were subsequently asked to complete a hard copy document on arrival. As this may be a system issue, we would recommend looking at the form and the instructions and/ or interface to smooth out these minor snags.
- As a number of patients said they had missed calls and voice messages regarding rescheduled appointment times, we recommend you consider an alternative such as using a text system where people can reply yes/ no to confirm receipt or agreement of the changed time.
- Letters are posted 2nd class but as some appointments are made so quickly the letters arrive on the day or after the appointments. We suggest using first class post, or an alternative method, when booking appointments within a 10 day timeframe.

7.1 Examples of Best Practice

- Patient care, notice in reception: If you have been waiting more than 25 minutes please go to reception.
- Environmental Care: ensuring neighbouring residents are not disturbed by parking or deliveries, asking delivery drivers not to park on residential roads for their breaks but to park in staff parking area.
- Patient Care: Out of hours contact Number, this is a day unit so having a contact number for out of hours is good customer service and provides peace of mind.

8 Service provider response

Response to HealthWatch Milton Keynes Enter and View Report – Blakelands Hospital, June 2025

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to HealthWatch Milton Keynes and the authorised representatives—Helen Browse, Sarah Hibble, and John Southall—for conducting the Enter and View visit on 24th June 2025. We appreciate the thoughtful observations and constructive feedback provided throughout the report.

Acknowledgement of Findings

We are pleased to see that the report reflects the positive experiences of our patients and highlights the professionalism and compassion of our staff. The comments shared—such as “They were really kind, put me at ease” and “The Best”—are a testament to our team’s commitment to delivering high-quality, patient-centred care.

We are also encouraged by the recognition of our clean and welcoming environment, the ease of access to our facilities, and the clarity of our signage and appointment processes. These elements are central to our ethos of reducing patient anxiety and improving overall experience.

Response to Recommendations

We take all recommendations seriously and have already begun addressing several of the points raised:

- **Toilet Handle Repair:** This has been logged with our maintenance team and will be resolved promptly.
- **Carpark Capacity:** As noted, this is being addressed as part of our ongoing refurbishment programme, with completion expected by calendar quarter one 2026.
- **Colonoscopy Medication Information:** We are reviewing and revising our patient information leaflets to ensure clarity and ease of understanding.
- **Online Health Questionnaire:** We are investigating the technical issues reported and will work with our IT provider to improve the interface and confirmation process.
- **Communication of Appointment Changes:** We are exploring the implementation of a text-based confirmation system to enhance reliability and responsiveness.
- **Postal Delays:** We have started to implement digital communication for appointments and have a phased approach to digitising all of our patient communication, where it is appropriate and led by patient preferences. This will be complete by calendar Q1 2026.

Recognition of Best Practice

We are grateful for the recognition of our best practices, including:

- Clear signage for patients waiting over 25 minutes.
- Consideration for neighbouring residents regarding deliveries and parking.
- Provision of out-of-hours contact information for patient reassurance.

Final Remarks

We remain committed to continuous improvement and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with HealthWatch Milton Keynes to ensure our services meet the highest standards. The insights from this visit will inform our ongoing efforts to enhance patient care and operational efficiency. Thank you once again for your time, diligence, and support.

