



Blakelands Hospital

(Ramsay Health Care)



Patient Experience Review

Published 20th December 2019

healthwatch
Milton Keynes

Introduction

Details of visit

Service Address	Blakelands Hospital Smeaton Close, Blakelands, Milton Keynes MK14 5HR
Service Provider	Ramsay Health Care UK
Dates and Times of visits	18 September 2019, 10:00 - 13:00
Authorised Representatives (ARs)	Nadine Lynch and John Southall
Contact details	01908 698800
Participants engaged with	15

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Milton Keynes would like to thank Blakelands Hospital and its staff, for their contribution to this Enter and View visit and for their helpfulness and hospitality. We would also like to thank the patients and family members who participated in this visit for their valuable contributions to this report.

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 patients and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time of this visit.

Background

What is Enter & 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 (ARs) 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 specifically identify safeguarding issues. 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 member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to the CQC where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

If you are interested in finding out more about Healthwatch Milton Keynes, becoming a member or would like to get involved by volunteering with us, please visit www.healthwatchmiltonkeynes.co.uk.

Strategic drivers

While Healthwatch Milton Keynes (HWMK) have a planned programme of visits for the year, we ensure that we leave room to respond to local needs. Blakelands Hospital were keen to find ways to involve their PPG and sought advice from HWMK. It was through these discussions that the function of Enter & View and its benefits to the provider, as well as the service user, was introduced and Blakelands management team asked HWMK to provide an independent review of the patient experience.

We agreed to undertake this project, which fulfils our strategic objectives of:

- Engaging with the people of Milton Keynes around matters relating to their health and social care needs and experiences
- Empowering the community to evaluate and shape services
- Using local experiences to influence how services are designed and delivered
- Using evidence to help providers understand what local people need from their health and care services

Purpose of Visit

The purpose of this Enter and View visit was to engage with patients to explore their overall experience at Blakelands Hospital. We used question prompts to encourage discussion about experiences of the booking-in process, thoughts on comfort and cleanliness and quality of consultant care.

About Blakelands Hospital

Blakelands Hospital is a purpose-built day case unit, designed to provide outpatient facilities for the assessment and treatment of patients. Treatments at the centre include Inguinal, umbilical or femoral hernia repairs, Knee Arthroscopy, Hand Surgery, anal procedures, haemorrhoids banding and injection. Lumps and bumps and minor skin procedures as well as upper and lower limb outpatient appointments (hip, knee and shoulder replacement).

The treatment centre has an x-ray department, outpatient consultation rooms, pre assessment facilities, two operating theatres and a four bedded recovery bay.

Whilst Blakelands treat privately insured and self-funding patients, a high proportion of their patients (97%)¹ are referred from the NHS.

Blakelands Hospital is situated in a quiet residential area, the grounds are pleasant and well-maintained and car parking spaces are situated close to the entrance providing same level access.

¹ Blakelands Hospital Quality Account 2018/19 (<https://assets.nhs.uk/prod/documents/Blakelands-Hospital-qa-2019.pdf>)

Methodology

Healthwatch Milton Keynes met in advance with the management team at Blakelands Hospital to discuss the purpose of Enter and View and the objectives of the visit. Healthwatch posters publicising the visit were provided to Blakelands ahead of the visit and were clearly displayed in the waiting area on the day.

The visit took place between 10:00 and 13:00 on Wednesday 18th September. This day and time were selected on the basis that Blakelands operate several clinics on a Wednesday and would therefore offer the best opportunity to engage with people in the waiting area.

On arrival the Authorised Representatives (ARs) introduced themselves to the staff at the reception desk and provided them with a letter detailing the purpose of the visit. The ARs were subsequently afforded access to the public waiting area but did not enter any private consultations.

To ensure consistency in the analysis of the findings, the ARs used a set of pre-agreed conversation prompts (see Appendix A) specifically designed for this project. The ARs recorded the conversations and observations via hand-written notes.

The ARs approached each patient with an introduction and gained their consent for interview. Some patients were accompanied by family members and their comments have also been included. All participants that were approached were happy to share their experiences.

In respect of demographics, a total of 15 participants took part. However, 3 patients were called in for their appointment whilst speaking to us and the conversations were therefore cut short. Out of the 15 participants: -

- 8 were female
- 7 were male
- 5 were aged between 25 - 49
- 6 were aged between 50 - 65
- 4 were aged 65+

Summary of findings

On the basis of this visit, Blakelands Hospital is found to be a well-run service based within a pleasant, clean and modern facility, which is easily accessible. The patient experience is very positive, and convenience plays a huge factor in making the choice to use the service. All the people we spoke to reported positive experience in terms of quality of care and the majority of patients said they could not think of anything they would change about the service.

During the visit, the following aspects were considered:

- Why people are choosing Blakelands
- Booking-in at Reception
- Staff and quality of care
- Environment

Notable positive findings

- Patients find the service easy to access and like the short waiting times, both for referrals and whilst waiting to be seen.
- The hospital and reception area are well managed by friendly, professional staff and incidents are dealt with sensitively.
- Patients report being involved in making choices about their care and feel that they are listened to by consultants.
- The hospital feels welcoming; it is bright, clean and tidy with fresh décor and comfortable seating.

Opportunities for improvement

- Explore ways to actively involve the Blakelands Hospital Patient Participation Group (PPG).
- Ensure patients are made aware of the facilities available to them in the waiting area.

Main Findings

Why Blakelands?

We were keen to find out why people were choosing to use Blakelands Hospital and whether alternative choices had been offered.

- All those we spoke to had been referred through the NHS.
- 5 said they had not been given a choice.
- 5 chose Blakelands because they could be seen here sooner than the other providers offered.

It was evident that convenience played a large part in the appeal of Blakelands. The consensus among those who had been offered a choice was that Blakelands were able to offer them the soonest appointment, but the ease of access from the car park to the small building was also mentioned.

“I was given the choice between [Milton Keynes] hospital and Blakelands. I chose here because I could get an appointment sooner here.”

“I like the short waiting time and that it’s so close to the car park. You can park your car and you haven’t got to pay.”

One patient was pleased to be offered Blakelands based on previous positive experience of the service.

“I was given two choices but can’t remember what the other option was. I chose here as I’ve been before and it’s close to where I live... Much better than going to [Milton Keynes] hospital. You come to place like this, get seen on time. Came here years ago and they were great.”

Booking-in at Reception

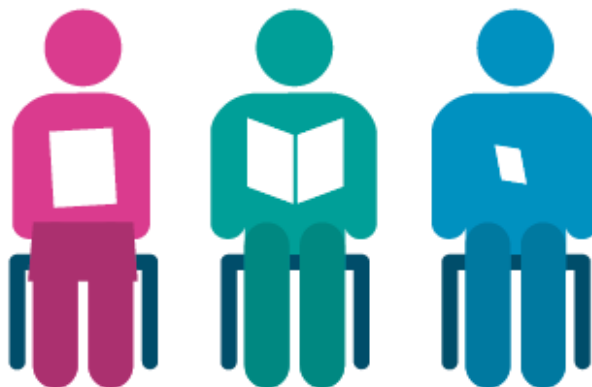
- All patients found the booking in experience positive.
- 4 patients were impressed with the efficiency of the process.
- The majority felt their privacy was respected.

Feedback relating to the booking in process was extremely positive, with praise from all 12 patients who were able to participate fully.

Whilst none of the participants raised any major concerns about confidentiality, one patient felt sensitive conversations could be difficult with people waiting close behind at the desk, however another patient told us they were taken to a private consulting room for an update from the receptionist, which suggests staff are mindful of this.

There is a large sign in front of the reception desk instructing those waiting to see the receptionist to wait by the sign in order respect the privacy of other patients. However, the ARs found that, due to the close proximity of the reception desk to the seating, conversations held at the desk can be overheard by those sitting nearby.

The ARs observed that patients were called for their appointments in a timely manner and nobody was kept waiting for long.



Staff

Although half of those we spoke to had not yet met their consultant, we did not receive any negative comments or complaints about the clinicians or support staff. When asked about their experiences with the clinical staff, participants gave very positive feedback and were also quick to praise the reception staff.

“[Consultant] was a very nice man. He explained everything to me and what was going on. He listened to me and we decided on the best course of action together.”

“Can’t remember the name but he was really good and did lots of investigation and was honest about not knowing a definite answer. Really nice.”

“The receptionist was wonderful!”

“[Consultant] is very nice and very thorough.”

“Very good receptionists here.”

“I felt well looked after. Surgeon was excellent.”

During the visit, a patient became unwell whilst in the waiting area and needed medical assistance. The reception staff were alerted and within a minute the patient was tended to by clinical staff. The seating area around the patient was cleared by reception staff efficiently, in a calm and sensitive manner. The other patients were discreetly directed to sit in a separate area of the waiting room to offer privacy whilst clinical staff were tending to the patient. The atmosphere throughout this incident was notably calm and ARs were impressed at how sensitively and efficiently the situation was managed.

During our conversations, we asked participants about their experience of communications with Blakelands, particularly around appointment planning and heard only positive feedback:

“They rang me to give me the choice of an earlier appointment.”

“Had to phone to change my appointment and they were really helpful. They answer the phone quicker than my GP.”



Environment

On observation, the ARs found the premises bright, airy and spotlessly clean with décor fresh and in good repair. The entrance feels welcoming and the waiting area is modern with plenty of natural light.

Upon walking through the entrance, there is a well-placed hand-sanitising station encouraging all visitors and patients to sanitise their hands before entering.

The waiting area is split into 3 seating 'bays'. There is plenty of quality padded seating, wipeable for infection control which patients found reassuring.

There is a large television screen mounted to the wall at the entrance displaying information about the hospital; latest news, how to provide feedback or complain, CQC rating and the names and roles of all the Clinicians at Blakelands, accompanied by a photo.

Toilet facilities are situated at the far end of the seating area, which ARs found to be accessible, very clean and adequately stocked with hand soap, toilet roll and disposable paper towels for hand drying. There is also a wall mounted baby changing table.

There did not appear to be a dedicated breastfeeding area and, whilst the main seating area is comfortable and adequate, it may be helpful to display a poster offering a separate space to those who would feel more comfortable nursing in private.

Patients were impressed with the comfort and cleanliness at Blakelands and all gave positive feedback:

"This [décor] is really nice."

"It's clean and comfortable."

"Suitably airy."

"Really calm, beautifully clean and welcoming. And lots to read!"

"Really clean, bright... lovely."

"Very nice and clean - not tatty or horrible."

In addition to the high standard of cleanliness and furnishings, patients also appreciated the quiet and relaxed atmosphere:

"It's nice. Seems a lot more relaxed than [MK Hospital]. No-one rushing around. There's a steady flow of people all the time."

"It's spot on... calm."

One interviewee commented that they felt the refreshments weren't visible enough and perhaps a suggestion may be to point these out to patients on arrival.

Additional Findings

Other providers

Whilst the main objectives of the visit were to collect thoughts and experiences relating to this visit to Blakelands, some patients we spoke to told us about issues they had encountered in accessing other health and social care services.

We heard from four patients who had been referred from a particular healthcare provider in Milton Keynes; two of these patients reported that they had received unsatisfactory service at this provider. Healthwatch Milton Keynes are grateful for this valuable feedback and continue to gather intelligence relating to the stories heard to influence the work we carry out in future.

Car park

The day of the visit had been specifically set for a day that several clinics were running, to ensure that we could speak to as many patients as possible. However, this did result in a higher volume of cars filling the car park to capacity. Whilst some commented on the ease and convenience of parking, one person said that there was not enough parking and they had not been able to find a space. Whilst they reported their overall experience as very positive, they felt that more parking spaces were needed.

Concerns about privatisation

Whilst Blakelands is a private hospital, the fact remains that the vast majority of their patients (97% between 2018 and 2019), come via NHS referrals. One participant, whilst complimentary of the Blakelands service, spoke of their concern about the expense to the NHS for these referrals - “It’s nice, but at what cost? Is this the start of privatisation?”.

Recommendations

On the basis of the conversations and observations made at this visit, no significant issues were identified in relation to the care received by patients at Blakelands.

We recommend that, in order to enhance the excellent service currently enjoyed by patients, that Blakelands consider the following:

- Take steps to actively involve the Blakelands Hospital Patient Participation Group (PPG) in meaningful co-produced activities and to make the information about the PPG and the work they are doing easily accessible on the service website.
- Ensure there is a private space available for breastfeeding mothers who do not wish to use the waiting area and that this is clearly publicised within the waiting area.
- Ensure all patients are made aware of the refreshments that are available; this could be done verbally at reception when patients are instructed to sit in the waiting area and may add to the welcoming feel of the booking-in experience.

Blakelands Hospital Response

Blakelands Hospital were very pleased to invite Healthwatch Milton Keynes to visit with a view to providing an open and honest report of what patients and visitors thought of their visit or patient journey to the Day Case centre.

The findings of the report appeared to be very positive both from a patient perspective and also from a clinically working environment. We, at Blakelands, are grateful for the comments and observations which will support our aim to continue to provide excellent care.

Blakelands Hospital has taken on board the recommendations made in the report and again, thank the Healthwatch Milton Keynes team for pointing these out.

- **Patient Participation Group.**

Steps were taken to actively involve the PPG team members and requests were made for them to assist in the running of a MacMillan coffee 'morning'. Members definitely set the bar high with their cookery skills and their organisation skills. Amazing cakes were donated, coffee and cake was served and their ability to convince the public to buy raffle tickets was impressive. A total of £300.00 was raised. Members get involved in carrying out the annual PLACE audit which inspects the building.

A new notice board has been erected and an area of it has been dedicated to let patients know that the PPG exists, the role of being a member and how to join the group.

- **Area for Breastfeeding Mums.**

A sign is being raised and placed in the reception area to confirm that we could arrange for a private space to be available for breastfeeding Mums if they so wish.

- **Refreshments.**

A notice is currently been put together by the reception team to advise that liquid refreshments are available however, we are aware that some of our patients could accept a drink when they should be 'nil by mouth' and which would result in their procedure being delayed or cancelled.

Appendix A

Prompts for semi-structured interviews with service users

Why have you come to Blakelands today? (planned surgery / pre-assessment / follow-up / physiotherapy)

Did you have a choice whether to come to Blakelands or go elsewhere? Why choose Blakelands?

How did you find the booking in process at Reception?

(Did you feel welcomed? Do you feel that your privacy was respected?)

How did you find communications with Blakelands? Have you been able to contact them by telephone?

(follow-ups only) How was your consultation? Who did you see? Did you receive good care?

(follow-ups only) Discharge - Did you receive aftercare information? Were there any delays?

If there was one thing you could change about this service, what would it be?

Comments on environment. Comfort / cleanliness etc:

