



Healthwatch Bristol
and The Hive
visit
Birchwood Medical
Practice





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Summary

Healthwatch Bristol and The Hive (a local organisation working with people with Learning Disabilities) visited Birchwood Medical Practice on 15 March 2016 to work with the Practice staff to make their services even more accessible to people with Learning Disabilities.

Healthwatch Bristol had heard from people with Learning Disabilities that they sometimes find it hard to access GP services and/or rely on a family member or carer to support them.

Birchwood Medical Practice had responded to feedback in a Healthwatch Bristol quarter report and were open to working with other organisations to improve the experiences of people with Learning Disabilities who use their services.

Healthwatch Bristol brought The Hive and Birchwood Medical Practice together via the visit as an example of what can be achieved when members of the public, voluntary and community sector organisations and statutory services work together to improve service accessibility and quality. Lots of examples of things health services can do to help people with Learning Disabilities were identified. Healthwatch will share these examples via this report and encourage other GP Practices and health services to follow our example!



Tell me more!

Who was involved?

The 'inspectors':

Will and Ali are members of The Hive. They are Healthwatch Champions and have been involved in a range of activities at The Hive including Wellbeing Days and Self-Advocacy courses. They both identify as having Learning Disabilities.





The inspectors' team:

Dominic is the Advice and Advocacy Manager at **The Hive**. Dominic prepared the easy read 'GP Inspection form' which was used to guide the visit. Dominic also facilitated two training workshops with the 'inspectors'.



Ellen is the Project Coordinator at **Healthwatch Bristol**. Ellen arranged the visit to respond to feedback received by Healthwatch from people with Learning Disabilities.

Birchwood Medical Practice team:

Hilary is a Senior GP partner at the Practice.

Debra is the Practice Manager.





What did we do?

Carrying out the assessment

Dominic had adapted information used for Patient-Led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE) assessments into an easy read form which the inspectors and their team used to assess the following themes and areas:

- Outside of the building
- Inside of the building
- Reception area
- Booking appointments
- Waiting room
- Information

The easy read inspection form is in the appendix of this report.





Giving our feedback

After the inspectors had completed their assessment, Dominic, Ellen, Will and Ali met with Debra and Hilary share our findings.

Debra and Hilary also told us about what they have already done to make the Practice accessible for everyone.

Everyone also shared a lunch together.



to



What did we find out?

Key findings and recommendations:

Key findings	Recommendations
The inspectors and Healthwatch really liked the easy read appointment reminder slip .	All GP practices develop an appointment slip in easy read which will be given to patients.
Birchwood has developed an easy read Patient Leaflet .	Learning from the development of the Birchwood easy read patient leaflet is shared with all GP Practices in Bristol and a template is created in partnership with Bristol City Council, Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS England.
People with Learning Disabilities may need additional support finding their way around the GP Practice or understanding signs. Birchwood are considering developing an easy read map to help patients find places	GP Practices appreciate that people with Learning Disabilities may need additional support. Easy read information and a map of the building is a helpful resource for patients to use to enable them to be independent.



<p>including: the appropriate touch screen to sign in, the toilets, doctors rooms.</p>	
<p>People with Learning Disabilities may need additional support in appointments or longer appointments. Our inspectors said that they attend GP appointments with a family member because they are worried about not being able to find the correct doctor's room or that they will not understand what the doctor said to them.</p>	<p>GP practices make people aware that they can book double appointments to allow them more time to speak to the GP and ensure they are understood by the GP and understand what the GP is saying to them.</p>
<p>Birchwood staff asked what terminology, Learning Disability or Learning Difficulty, they should use or whether they should use these terms at all.</p>	<p>The Hive volunteers and Dominic said that in their experiences, people with Learning Disabilities would prefer not to have a label. It is, however, understood that in order to get the best from their GP visit it is sometimes appropriate for GPs and other staff to ask. Where necessary this could include asking someone if they have difficulty communicating, remembering information and if needs be if they have a learning disability. In</p>



	<p>answer to whether the term learning disability or learning difficulty should be used, it was the inspectors' view that different organisations used different terms and in their opinion either terms were acceptable.</p>
<p>Having a Learning Disability may mean you need to ask for help more often than other people. It can be difficult to ask for help and frustrating if you have to ask for the same thing over and over again. A friendly receptionist who is 'looking out' for people who may need help and offering help without having to be asked, is of utmost importance.</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: A card could be developed that people with Learning Disabilities could show to health professionals and would indicate what additional support they need. <u>First Bus</u> has already developed a card for people to use when travelling. The card would need to be a Bristol wide initiative and health and social care staff would need to be aware of how to respond to the card.</p> <p>Recommendation 2: GP patient record systems should flag that the person requires additional support. This support should be offered or provided automatically to avoid the patient</p>



	<p>having to ask every time. (This is a stage in the Accessible Information Standard.)</p> <p>Recommendation 3: receptionist are given training in supporting people with additional needs and are able to view the waiting area so that they can observe if people may require support.</p>
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All of the comments, findings and discussion points are included in the appendices of this report.



What will Healthwatch do next?

Healthwatch Bristol will share our learning and recommendations with:

- [Bristol Clinical Commissioning Groups](#)
- NHS England (including the [Learning Disabilities team](#))
- [One Care Consortium](#)
- [Bristol Learning Disabilities Partnership Board](#)
- [Bristol City Council Learning Disabilities Team](#)

Healthwatch will work with the above organisations to improve the experiences of people with Learning Disabilities when using health and social care services.

Healthwatch Bristol will also promote the format of the visit to service providers and commissioners and emphasise its value with regards to health and social care organisations' responsibility to implement the NHS England Accessible Information Standard.



Our comments on the visit:

Birchwood Medical Practice team said:

“It was a real pleasure meeting The Hive members and Healthwatch. Will and Ali from the Hive gave us real life feedback during their inspection of our services on how we can make changes that will improve the experience for patients. They also gave us great feedback on the changes we had already made. It is good to know that we are making a difference by listening and taking action and listening again. We look forward to having them come back again to see what else we have done as we have found the time spent with them very rewarding and there are more things we can do!”

Dominic, Advice and Advocacy Manager at The Hive, said:

"Undertaking the inspection has been an extremely valuable experience for us at The Hive. Will and Ali took great pleasure and pride in knowing they were there to improve the experiences of future patients using Birchwood Surgery. There are also wider benefits of such inspections in demonstrating to Will, Ali and others with a Learning Disabilities that their opinions are important, they have a voice and that when they speak out they will



be listened to. Thank you Birchwood for allowing us to inspect your surgery and for taking on board what our inspectors had to say."

Will and Ali said:

After the visit Will and Ali commented that they had “really enjoyed” the day and that they felt more confident about using their own GP Practice. Will wanted to do a follow up inspection at his GPs!

Healthwatch Bristol said:

“It has been great to work with The Hive and Birchwood Medical Practice who have both been so enthusiastic about making services more accessible and user friendly. We are keen for other services to use the learning from the visit - please get in touch with us!”



Appendix:

1. Our findings in detail
2. Background information on The Hive, Birchwood and Healthwatch Bristol's work together
3. [Birchwood Medical Practice easy read patient leaflet](#)
4. [Birchwood Medical Practice easy read appointment card](#)
5. [Birchwood Medical Practice easy read contact request letter](#)
6. [Birchwood Medical Practice easy read patient questionnaire](#)
7. First Bus Safe Journey and Better Journey cards: <http://bit.ly/1XjvRI2>
8. Healthwatch Bristol briefing on the [Accessible Information Standard](#). W: <http://bit.ly/1Urplkl>

Appendix 1: our findings in detail

Outside the building:

- There were two disabled parking bays and Birchwood are hoping that the site managers can increase this to three bays.
- The doors into the building were accessible for people in wheelchairs.
- There was a pedestrian passage which was clearly signed and made it safe for people to walk through the car park.



- The main sign for the site says ‘Brooklea Health Centre’ and this may be confusing for people looking for ‘Birchwood Medical Practice’. (Brooklea Health Centre has two GP Practices, Birchwood and Nightingale and many community health services also work out of the Centre.) We discussed with Debra that new patients could be made aware that the sign at the front of the site says ‘Brooklea Health Centre’.

Inside the building:

- The inside of the building was clean and tidy with good lighting.
- There were a lot of signs and it was confusing knowing where to go for Birchwood Medical Practice, as opposed to Nightingale.
- The hand sanitiser dispenser allocated for people who had used the Nightingale sign in screens was empty. The hand sanitiser dispenser for Birchwood patients was also empty. When the receptionist saw us looking at the hand gel dispenser, he told us there was hand gel behind the reception desk. The inspectors thought it was very good that the receptionist was aware of what was going on and called us over to him to help us. There was a sign telling people to ask at reception for hand gel, but this was very small and not read by our inspectors.

Reception area:

- At first our inspectors thought they needed to sign in using the touch screens located just inside the main entrance. These touch screens were only for Nightingale patients. There



was a sign above the touch screens directing people to the Birchwood reception, but this was confusing for our inspectors. We suggested that a large sign saying 'Nightingale' was put immediately above the touch screens.

- The receptionist called us over when he saw us come in and offered us help which was brilliant. The receptionist, Mark, was very friendly.
- Debra suggested that Birchwood could develop a simple map that patients could use to help them find their way around the building. This map could include signs for the Birchwood reception.

Booking appointments:

- Our inspectors said that they would speak to the receptionist to book an appointment or would ask a family member to book the appointment.
- The group discussed how it is important that staff, including the receptionist, know to explain things clearly to the patient, inform the patient that they can book a double appointment, they can choose to see a male or female doctor and to offer the patient extra help (for example someone to accompany them into an appointment). The group discussed how many people, including people with Learning Disabilities, may be reluctant to repeatedly ask for the same thing (for example a double appointment) or may not realise that they are entitled to certain types of support.
- Birchwood has developed an easy read appointment slip to help people remember their appointment and provide extra information. The group liked the appointment slip and suggested that it could be made slightly bigger (A5) so that the font could be size 16 and



information about asking for someone to accompany you into appointments could be added.

Waiting room:

- The inspectors liked the layout of the waiting room as there was space to move around, including space for people in wheelchairs and people with pushchairs.
- The inspectors had sat in the one place in the waiting room where the signs for the toilets were not visible! There was a sign for the disabled level and privacy reception and one of our inspectors thought that that was the sign for the disabled toilet. We discussed with Debra that the map she suggested developing could have signs for the toilets on it and that this would be helpful.
- Birchwood uses a screen to alert people that the doctor is ready for them. A beep is sounded when the message is first displayed on the screen. A loud speaker announcement is also made to alert the person to their appointment. If the person does not arrive at the doctor's room, the doctor comes to the waiting room to call them into their appointment. The inspectors commented that it was good to have multiple methods of telling people the doctor was ready for them.
- The screen telling people the doctor is ready for them also displays the room number. Our inspectors decided they would imagine they had an appointment in room 17. At first the inspectors were unsure which way to go to find room 17. They did not see the signs indicating that rooms 13-22 were located down one side of the waiting room and rooms 1-



12 were along the opposite side. This may have been because the signs were quite high up. The inspectors did, however, see the numbers on the doors nearest the waiting room and work out that if they could see room 19, then room 17 would be close to that. One of the inspectors commented: “I can’t do the signs”. The map suggested by Debra would be helpful in showing people where the rooms are.

Information:

- There was a lot of information on display on the waiting room notice boards and leaflet areas. One of the inspectors commented that there was “too much” information and that they were “a bit scared of it”. We all, however, acknowledged that it was hard to reduce the amount of information and that it was important this information was available to patients. We discussed the importance of staff giving extra support to people with Learning Disabilities to find out information about health in more accessible ways, for example through conversations with staff, longer appointments or easy read leaflets.
- The inspectors said that if they needed any information, they would ask the receptionist. This emphasises the importance of receptionist being trained to offer people with additional needs support.



Appendix 7: Background information

What have Healthwatch Bristol and The Hive heard from people with Learning Disabilities?

The Hive is a local voluntary organisation working in Bristol and South Gloucestershire supporting adults and young people with Learning Disabilities. Since April 2015 The Hive has been working with Healthwatch Bristol to gather feedback from its members and others who use its services about their experiences with health and social care services.

GPs:

- Lots of people said they asked a family member or carer to book their appointments at the GP rather than booking the appointment themselves.
- Most people had never received a letter from their GP in an Easy Read format.
- People wanted to be able to always see the same GP; those people who did always see the same GP said that this was good.
- Most people who had received an annual health check had had a positive experience.
- Most people liked using touch screens to sign in at their GP Practice. Those people who did not use touch screens were happy to talk to the receptionist.

General:



- Some people said that they get confused about what health staff say or worry that they will not remember what they have been told by a health professional.
- Lots of people said that doctors and nurses were generally friendly.
- People said that doctors do listen to patients.
- Some people said that doctors and nurses speak to their support workers or family members rather than speaking to them as the patient.
- People said that they found it difficult to speak to health and social care staff on the telephone as it was difficult to make themselves understood and to understand the member of staff.

Cancer:

- Very few people knew about cancer screening checks.

Mental Health:

- There was mixed knowledge of mental health and where to get support for mental health issues.

Pharmacies:

- Everyone who had used a pharmacy service said they were very happy with that service.
- Drop ins and support services:
- People really valued the support they received from drop in groups and carers.



W: <http://healthwatchbristol.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Healthwatch-and-The-Hive-Summary-Report.pdf>

Birchwood Medical Practice

- Healthwatch Bristol listened to people with Learning Disabilities to find out what they think about the health and social care services they use.
- Lots of people told us that it was difficult to register with a GP Practice as the forms were not in an easy read format.
- Birchwood Medical Practice read this feedback in one of Healthwatch Bristol's quarter reports.
- Birchwood Medical Practice contacted Healthwatch Bristol to tell us that they wanted to create an easy read form to make their Practice accessible to everyone.
- Healthwatch Bristol linked Birchwood Medical Practice with Bristol City Council's Learning Disabilities Health Trainers and together they created two easy read documents.
- Birchwood Medical Practice also contacted NHS England to find out if there was a template easy read form for all GP Practices to use, but they said there was not a template which could be used.
- Healthwatch Bristol contacted Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group and Healthwatch England to share the easy read forms created by Birchwood Medical Practice and asked for a template to be created for all GP Practices to use.