

Environmental audits of the Brighton
and Sussex University Hospitals Trust
(April 2019- March 2020)

An annual Healthwatch report

Published: July 2020

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Contents

Item	Title	Page(s)
1	About us	3
2	Acknowledgements	3
3	Executive summary	4
4	Key findings and recommendations	5-7
5	Methodology	7-8
6	Detailed findings	9-11
7	Annex A - Dates and locations of Healthwatch visits	12-13
8	Annex B -NHS 15-step challenge scores awarded	14
9	Annex C - Patient-Led Assessment of the Care Environment (PLACE)	15
10	Healthwatch contact details	16

1. About us

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Brighton and Hove.

Our job is to make sure that those who run local health and care services understand and act on what really matters to people. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share what people tell us with those with the power to make change happen. We encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area.

2. Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove would like to thank the following volunteers who have supported this project in the last year:

Nick Gorvett
Nick Goslett
Sylvia New
Dave Romaine
Sue Seymour
Lynne Shields
Maureen Smalldridge
Roger Squier
Angelika Wydra

We would also like to thank Terece Walters, Karon Goodman, Emil Pacan, Carolyn Morrice Caroline Davies, Clare Williams, Jane Carmody, and all the staff of the Brighton and Sussex University Hospital Trust who facilitated our visits.

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3. Executive summary

Background

Since December 2016, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove (Healthwatch) has worked in partnership with Brighton and Sussex University Hospital Trust (BSUH) to conduct monthly visits across the estate. These monthly visits are called Environmental Care Audits (“audits”). This is the third Healthwatch annual report which summarises the findings from these audits, and specifically those undertaken from April 2019 to January 2020. Earlier annual reports from [2017/18](#) and [2018/19](#) are available on the Healthwatch [website](#).

Purpose of visits

Supported by our local Trust, Environmental Care Audits:

- provide a valuable insight into the work of BSUH
- allow us to see first-hand the many positive aspects of our local hospitals
- provide an opportunity to raise any concerns directly with senior Trust staff
- build on the national ‘Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment’ programme which provides a framework for assessing what good quality hospital environments look like.

Objectives

The Environmental Care Audits are intended:

- to provide a regular, independent supply of information about the physical environment of our hospitals to the BSUH Trust which empowers them to act on emerging issues
- to ensure that patients and staff benefit from an ever-improving hospital environment which in turn supports the delivery of high standards of care, dignity, and safety
- to provide Healthwatch with an audit trail of intelligence and evidence which it can use to assess how our recommendations are helping to improve hospital environments
- to enable Healthwatch to share our findings with interested partners such as the Care Quality Commission and the public.

Summary of findings

Between April 2019 to March 2020:

- Healthwatch volunteers undertook seven audits (Annex A provides more detail). All visits were to sites previously audited by Healthwatch which allowed us to compare outcomes with earlier results, and to see what changes had been made.
- Several visits were cancelled in 2019/20 due to the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19). This had the impact of reducing the number of visits we made. For example, 11 audits were completed in 2017/18, and 10 in 2019/20.
- We provided BSUH with 129 recommendations to improve the environments of our hospitals and by December 2019, the Trust had implemented 60 or 47% of these. This is a reduction on the 220 recommendations made and 74% actioned in the previous year, however we believe that many more of our recommendations have been implemented.
- We awarded scores based on the NHS 15 steps challenge and all of these were higher than in previous years. During all our visits we observed tangible improvements across many wards. The lowest score awarded was a 7 out of 10 which is ‘good’. (see Annex B).
- In December 2020, we added food tastings to our monthly audits. This welcome addition to our work allowed volunteers to sample the variety of food which is available to inpatients. We conducted two separate tastings and on both occasions the feedback was positive.

In addition to our environmental audits, in October 2019, Healthwatch volunteers took part in the annual Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment or [PLACE](#) (see Annex C). The findings from PLACE are available in a separate Healthwatch report.

4. Key findings and recommendations

Table A gives details of the sites audited by Healthwatch volunteers in 2019/20 and includes a summary of our positive findings and key recommendations made following each visit. We have also indicated the number of Healthwatch recommendations which the Trust notified us that they had implemented. The outbreak of the coronavirus meant that the Trust had to cease reporting back to Healthwatch on the outcomes of our audits in January 2020. This means that a number of our recommendations may have been implemented without our knowledge. Based on previous years, we believe that the final number of Healthwatch recommendations which the Trust acted on is far higher than is shown below.

Table A. summary of audit outcomes undertaken by Healthwatch

Location	Positive observations	Key recommendations made	Numbers of recommendations made by Healthwatch and implemented by Trust
April 2019 Courtyard extension (near Barry building)	Good notice boards, with improved signage. Good patient privacy was observed. Equipment was maintained well and stored safely. The environment was clean, tidy, welcoming, calm.	Declutter the nurses' station and improve storage for patients. Improve reception - the buzzer entry does not always work and reception is not always staffed.	9 recommendations 7 implemented 2 under review
May 2019 Digestive Diseases and endoscopy	Clean, tidy, airy, light, and welcoming. Patients stations were uncluttered. Lots of good, up to date leaflets available. A 'hub' system allows staff to post suggestions about improving facilities.	Signage needs to be improved. Bathrooms need to be in dementia-friendly colours and emergency pull cords need to be made accessible and be in working order. Staff to be reminded not to leave patient notes out.	17 recommendations 11 implemented
June 2019 Physiotherapy, Rheumatology and Nuclear Medicine	Good signage and patient literature. Clean, well-lit, and welcoming with water and tea/coffee facilities. Notices advising people to wash your hands were provided in different languages. All toilets have working emergency cords.	Some bathrooms could be improved to be fully accessible. Several areas require cleaning. Fire doors were propped open for ventilation. Install an automatic door.	19 recommendations 13 implemented 3 under review

July 2019 Newhaven Ward	An excellent environment, very clean, welcoming, well-lit, and clearly well-managed. Good space around beds for access. Excellent storage. Good range of patient information.	Improve external directions to ward. Some privacy curtains could be longer. Double check safety procedures displayed.	6 minor recommendations 0 implemented
August 2019 Eye Hospital	Good patient information, improved signage; and a good system advising patients about waiting times. The Accident & Emergency area has been improved, is clean, and well-lit.	The main entrance is poorly maintained. Outpatients requires maintenance, improved lighting & ventilation. Privacy remains a concern as patient /doctor conversations can be overheard in the treatment rooms.	20 recommendations 5 implemented 10 under review
September to November	No visits made as we focussed efforts on supporting BSUH to complete annual PLACE assessments		
December 2019 Cardiac wards and discharge lounge	Wide range of patient information available. Evidence of improved decoration and earlier maintenance issues dealt with. Good linen storage.	Various maintenance issues need addressing. Patient notes were observed being left unattended. Better storage facilities for equipment is needed.	38 recommendations 29 implemented 10 under review
	Food tasting 16 different options were tasted, and the overwhelming majority were rated as 'good'	Chips were undercooked and baked beans were deemed to be of poor quality.	
January 2020 Renal and Haematology	Clean, calm, tidy. Patient privacy was observed being respected. Storage is limited but well-utilised. Signage is new and clear.	Various maintenance issues need addressing, particularly improved décor and lighting. Fire door needs fixing urgently. Redesign the unit to improve storage.	20 recommendations 0 implemented (coronavirus meant the Trust were unable to notify us of their actions)
	Food tasting Everything was impressive. All items tasted were hot and full of taste. A very personal service was given by the food service staff.	Nursing staff appeared not to be involved in the food service and this was noted for action. A few patient's table tops required tidying immediately prior to the service.	
February and March	No visits due to COVID-19		

Healthwatch audits conducted throughout 2019/20 revealed the considerable amount of work being undertaken by the Trust to maintain and improve the environments of its wards and clinics across the BSUH estate. As might be expected of any large, busy hospital we identified areas which we felt could be improved and several issues were observed during more than one audit. These included the need to:

- **Improve storage facilities**
- **Improve signage**
- **Improve bathrooms (ensuring these are all in dementia-friendly colours, and that emergency cords are working and easily accessible)**
- **Ensure that patient notes and records were not left unattended by staff at any time**
- **Improve lighting or ventilation**
- **Carry out general maintenance issues.**

These issues have all been raised by Healthwatch in previous years, but sometimes for different sites, though largely for wards based on the older Barry Building. The Trust has a rolling programme of maintenance to address the above issues. The new hospital site development (planned to open from 2021) will see several wards relocating from the Barry building and we would expect many of these issues to disappear.

Healthwatch has been impressed by how quickly the Trust acted on many of our recommendations and suggestions. The Trust reports back to Healthwatch at monthly Patient Engagement and Experience Panels (PEEGs). This process is now well established and Healthwatch receives regular feedback and action plans following each of our visits which detail what the Trust proposes to do about the issues and concerns raised. The Trust introduced a tracker system this year to monitor our findings and follow them through to their conclusion.

5. Methodology

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out 'Enter and View' visits. Our volunteers are all trained Authorised Representatives and the Health and Social Care Act 2012 permits them to carry out visits to local health and social care services on behalf of Healthwatch. Their role is to find out how these services are being delivered, to promote positive experiences, and make recommendations for improvement. They can do this by talking to patients and their relatives or carers, and by recording their observations.

Healthwatch use these powers to conduct our Environmental Care Audits of the BSUH estate. Each month, Healthwatch determines a site (ward, department or clinic) to visit, and sends two volunteers to tour the designated area accompanied by one or two members of BSUH staff. The focus of our audits is always the patient experience and how this might be improved through better environments.

Environmental Care Audits build on the annual Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment, or PLACE (see Annex C for more detail). PLACE audits are carried out once a year with results published annually. PLACE shows how hospitals are performing both nationally and in relation to other hospitals providing similar services. They provide motivation for improvement by offering a clear message, directly from patients, about how the environment or services might be enhanced. The monthly Healthwatch audits allow Healthwatch to undertake a more regular review of the areas covered by PLACE.

Our volunteers record their observations of the physical environment by completing a narrative feedback form and a checklist. This is designed to capture positive findings, challenges and concerns, anything staff told us and our recommendations to the Trust.

The checklist Healthwatch used is based on the NHS publication “[The Fifteen Steps Challenge: Quality from a patient’s perspective](#)” which uses a qualitative observation approach “to explore what good care looks like from a patient/carer perspective”. The toolkit is designed to look into “clinical areas and explore them through a patient’s eyes”. The toolkit aligns with the Care Quality Commission, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the Picker International Institute standards. When completing the checklist volunteers are asked to say whether certain criteria have been met in full, partially or not at all and to award a suitable score out of ten. Volunteers are provided with the opportunity to record any positive findings and make recommendations under four headings:

- (i) is the environment welcoming?
- (ii) is the environment safe?
- (iii) is the environment caring and involving?
- (iv) is the environment well-organised?

In awarding scores Healthwatch volunteers are asked to consider the following question “As a patient what score would I give this ward under each heading?” Indicatively, Healthwatch considers that a score of 9 or 10 shows that the ward in question is performing strongly with little or no room for improvement; a score of 7 or 8 suggests there are a number of areas which require attention in order to improve the physical environment, and a score of 6 or less indicates there are significant changes required to the physical environment to bring it up to the standard which patients and staff are entitled to expect.

After they have completed an audit volunteers submit their feedback to Healthwatch who shares this with BSUH staff in charge of facilities and estates. In turn, Healthwatch attends the Trust’s monthly Patient Engagement and Experience Panels (PEEGs) where we receive feedback and a tracker log is updated.

6. Detailed findings

Observations and findings from Healthwatch audits

We have used the checklist described above to calculate average scores across the 7 audits completed in 2019/20 under the four assessment headings (see Table B below). This has also allowed us to compare these scores with the averages seen in previous since 2017. The average scores for all four standards increased in 2019/20, although these scores are based on a smaller number of visits made by Healthwatch. Despite this, the increases are welcomed and are testimony to the hard work of the Trust and its staff to drive up standards

Table B: Average scores by assessment heading

Assessment heading	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
The environment was welcoming	8.4 ↑	7.6 ↑	7
The environment was safe	8.4 ↑	8 ↑	7.8
The environment was caring	8.9 ↑	7.9 ←	8
The environment was organised	8.7 ↑	7.8 ↓	8.3

Individually, the highest audit scores were awarded to Newhaven Ward, Physiotherapy, Rheumatology and Nuclear Medicine departments, and Digestive Diseases and endoscopy. All the sites we visited scored well in 2019/20 with the lowest score awarded being a 7 out of 10. In previous years, one or two sites had scored a 5 or 6 for at least one of the four standards we assess. These increases in scores reflect extremely well on the Trust and we congratulate them for their hard work over the last year.

Are environments welcoming

Under the ‘*Is the environment welcoming?*’ heading, volunteers were asked to observe whether the ward made them feel welcomed by looking out for clear ward information, useful and accurate notice boards and information about staff on duty. Over 2019/20, we observed improvements in the welcoming nature of the wards that we visited.

Findings from 2019/2020

- The score for welcoming environment showed a huge improved, increasing to an average of 8.4 (up from 7.6). Newhaven ward score 10, and renal, Albion and Lewes wards scored 9. All remaining wards scored 8. Digestive Diseases and Endoscopy showed a significant improvement with their score increasing from 6 in 2017 to 8 in 2019. Renal also showed an improvement from 7 in 2018 to 9 in 2020.
- Most wards had improved their patient information displays and notice boards, and signage had been updated. That said, almost all wards, even those which scored well, can do more to improve these features as we also saw poorly stocked patient information racks, out of date staff boards and misleading or out of date information about meal times and visiting hours.

Findings from previous years

- Our [2017/18 report](#) showed that this heading received the lowest score out of the four headings, with only two sites being given a score of 9 out of 10 (the Eye Hospital and Children’s A&E (Accident & Emergency)); whilst three sites scored only 5 or 6 (Claude Nicol, Digestive Diseases and Stroke wards). Where low scores were given some of the main reasons included poor signage and a lack of, or poor quality, patient-targeted information which was also sometimes out of date. Some sites had poor ventilation and air-conditioning (Maternity and Respiratory wards); whilst it was felt that the decor of some wards could be improved.
- In 2018/19 the average scores for ‘welcoming environments’ increased with four wards or sites receiving 9 out of 10 (Maternity, Sussex Cancer Centre, Jowers ward and Lawson Unit) and only two wards receiving 6 or less (Donald & Solomon wards and Claude Nicol). On average most wards scored 7 or 8 out of 10. Our findings showed that the Trust had taken action to improve the welcoming nature of many of its wards.

Are environments safe?

Under the ‘*Is the environment safe?*’ heading, volunteers were asked to observe the overall cleanliness of the environment; the use and availability of hand gels; whether medical items were safely stored/disposed of and if safety information was clearly displayed. In 2019/20 the average score for ‘safe’ increased.

Findings from 2019/2020

- The score for safe environment showed a further improvement on 2018/19, increasing to an average of 8.4 (up from 8). Only Newhaven ward score 10, but the Courtyard extension, Digestive Diseases, Physiotherapy, Rheumatology and Nuclear Medicine all scored 9. Two sites scored one point lower than on our previous visits although scores remained good overall (the Eye Hospital went down from 9 to 8, and Haematology reduced from 8 to 7).

- We saw increased availability of hand gel on the wards we visited, as well as evidence of colour coded notices for infection control, clear fire safety signs, and signs reminding people to wash their hands in different languages. In addition, we saw cleaner wards, which in previous years had sometimes been an area of concern. In previous years we had observed that a number of secure rooms had been left open or unlocked including sluice and IV rooms, staff toilets and linen cupboards, but in 2019/20 this issue had largely been addressed by the Trust.
- Some areas which continue to require the Trust's attention are:
 - reminding staff not to leave patient notes out unattended
 - that fire doors should never be propped open for ventilation purposes or blocked in order to store equipment, even if this is only temporary
 - the absence of good storage for both staff and patients - this was apparent on our visit to the Courtyard extension and cardiac wards
 - These issues affected six separate areas audited by Healthwatch volunteers.

Findings from previous years

- In 2017/18, most sites audited scored a 7 or 8 under this heading. The exceptions were the Eye Hospital and Children's A&E which both received a 9, and the 6 which was awarded to the Respiratory wards. Sites which scored well had common features such as clear fire exit signage; good lighting; plenty of hand gels and notices encouraging their use, and dedicated rooms containing medical or cleaning items that were locked. Where sites scored less well some of the main observations were that hand gel usage by the public was poor and/or notices did not encourage their usage; and most sites had several maintenance issues, some of which were long-standing.
- In 2018/19 the average scores for 'welcoming environments' increased with most wards receiving a score of 8 out of 10. Four of our audits saw wards receive a 9 (Jowers ward twice, Chichester and the Respiratory wards) and one ward a 10 (the Sussex Cancer Centre. Only one ward received less than 7 (Vallance ward which scored a 6). The Respiratory wards in particular were congratulated for improving their score from a 6 in 2017/18 to a 9 in 2018/19. And special recognition was given to Chichester ward which received a 7 following our first visit to them in July 2018 but who increased their score to a 9 by February 2019.

Are environments caring (respecting privacy and dignity)?

This assessment does not relate to the standard of nursing or doctor care, rather it considers whether the environment recognises the privacy and dignity of patients e.g. issues such as whether patients are dressed to protect their dignity, and whether cubicle curtains are long enough to provide privacy and do they fully close, etc? It also looks at whether wards were equipped to meet the needs of people living with dementia or with a disability. In 2019/20 the average score for 'caring environments' increased.

Findings from 2019/2020

- The score for caring environment showed a huge improvement on 2018/19, increasing to an average of 8.9 (up from 7.9). This was the highest scoring of the four categories. Physiotherapy, Rheumatology and Nuclear Medicine, and Haematology scored 10. Five other sites scored 9. The lowest score was 7 achieved by the Eye Hospital but this related to the fact that private consultant to patient conversations could be overheard in treatment rooms which is an issue we raised back in 2017. Despite this, volunteers largely saw good recognition by staff of patients' privacy, dignity and wellbeing and observed several private conversations taking place. Many privacy curtains had also been replaced by the Trust.

- As previously highlighted in this report, we observed patient notes being left unattended and potentially accessible to members of the public. We also continued to observe patient bathrooms that were not completely dementia-friendly i.e. with contrasting colours. Healthwatch has previously recommended that the Trust should seek a firm policy on colours for equipment / bathrooms to fully support dementia patients and implement this across the estate which they have started to do.

Findings from previous years

- **During 2017/18**, only four sites were assessed under this heading, but all audits saw wards score between 7-9 points (out of 10). Where concerns were identified these related to whether more could be done to ensure patient privacy was protected e.g. the walls of some consulting cubicles did not always extend all the way to the ceiling which potentially allowed for private conversations to be overheard.
- **In 2018/19**, all 10 audits were assessed under this heading and the scores were mixed ranging from 4 to 10. We did however observe some sizeable improvements in the scores for wards that we re-audited during the year, for example Chichester ward received a 4 in July 2018 but increased their score to an 8 by February 2019.

Are environments well-organised?

Under the *'Is the environment well-organised?'* heading, volunteers were asked to observe the overall organisation of the ward and look out for things such as whether equipment was being stored safely and if environments were uncluttered. In 2019/20 the average score for 'well-organised environments' increased.

Findings from 2019/2020

- The score for well-organised environments showed a huge improvement on 2018/19 increasing to an average of 8.7 (up from 7.8). This was the second highest scoring category. Digestive Diseases and Endoscopy, and Newhaven Ward scored 10. Four other sites scored 9. Albion & Lewes and cardiac wards both scored 7, which was the lowest score awarded. As already described in this report, the absence of good storage for both staff and patients was apparent on our visit to the Courtyard extension and cardiac wards.

Findings from previous years

- **In 2017/18**, this heading received the highest score out of the four standards. Several high-performing wards were reported to be calm, organised and generally uncluttered. However, in 2017/18 we also observed that equipment could sometimes be stored better.
- **In 2018/19**, four separate audits saw wards achieve 10 out of 10 (Sussex Cancer Centre, Maternity wards, Main Outpatients and Jowers wards). A further five audits saw wards receive 9 out of 10 (Haematology, Claude Nicol, Jowers ward [first visit], Lawson unit, Bristol ward [second visit]). However, we also saw three wards receive a score of 6, and a further three wards score just 5 (Chichester and Bristol wards [first visits], and Gynaecology Outpatients). This showed the wide variation in how well wards were organised across the BSUH site.

7. Annex A: Dates and locations of visits

Date of 2018/19 visit	Location	Previous Healthwatch visits (if applicable)
4 April 2019	Courtyard (Hanbury) extension, Levels 6 and 7 The Courtyard extension was opened in 2016 and houses several wards and clinics including physiotherapy and clinical infection services that are based on Levels 6 and 7.	April 2019
2 May 2019	Digestive diseases and endoscopy Digestive Diseases Centre comprising Medical and Surgical Wards, Millennium Building, Level 9, and Digestive Diseases Outpatient Clinic and Endoscopy Unit, Thomas Kemp Building. Level 9.	October 2017
6 June 2019	Physiotherapy, Rheumatology and Nuclear Medicine These units are based in the Hanbury Extension, Entry to the Hanbury Building is on Level 2. Nuclear Medicine Reception is on Level 2 and the main treatment area is on Level 3. Rheumatology and Physio Reception is on Level 5 as is Rheumatology Treatment. Physio Treatment is on Level 6	February 2017
11 July 2019	Newhaven Ward The ward itself is situated on the first floor of a building owned by Sussex Partnership. There are currently 16 beds, but plans exist to increase this number to 32. The ward is a "step-down" ward of BSUH, and receives most of its patients from the Royal Sussex	May 2017
8 August 2019	Eye Hospital Located on Eastern Road and Sudeley Terrace. The publicly accessible sections on the ground floor (Eastern Road entrance) include the Orthoptics department, and the lower ground floor (Sudeley Terrace entrance), which consists of the Eye Hospital Outpatients and Accident and Emergency Departments.	2014, 2016 and most recently in November 2017
September to November 2019	No visits as we focussed our attention on supporting the Trust to complete its annual PLACE assessment	

6 December 2019	<p>Thomas Kemp Tower - Albion and Lewes Wards Level 10</p> <p>Millennium Building - Level 7, Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (CICU, 8 beds) and Cardiac Stepdown Unit (11 beds); Level 6, Cardiac Day Case Unit - (CDCU, 14 beds)</p> <p>Barry Building - Discharge Unit</p>	March 2017
January 2020	<p>Renal and Haematology</p> <p>The renal unit forms part of the Sussex Kidney Unit which provides treatment and support for patients with kidney disease.</p> <p>The Haematology Ward is located on level 9 of the Sussex kidney unit.</p>	September 2018
February and March 2020	No visits undertaken due to the coronavirus	

8. Annex B: NHS 15-step scores

Date of visit	Ward or department		Scores awarded using the NHS 15 step challenge principles (any previous scores are shown in brackets)			
			Welcoming	Safe	Caring	Organised
April 2019	Courtyard extension Revisit		8	9	9	9
May 2019	Digestive diseases and endoscopy Revisit		8 (6)	9	9	10 (9)
June 2019	Physiotherapy, Rheumatology and Nuclear Medicine Revisit		8	9	8	10
July 2019	Newhaven Ward Revisit		10	10	8	10
August 2019	Eye Hospital Revisit		8 (9)	8 (9)	7	8
September - November 2019	No visits (Healthwatch and our volunteers were involved in preparing for and conducting PLACE visits across BSUH. It was not therefore necessary to undertake our environmental audits as well)					
December 2019	Cancer and stroke services + discharge Revisit	Albion and Lewes wards	9	8	9	7
		CICU, CDCU, Cardiac step down	8	8	9	7
		Discharge lounge, Barry building	Scores were not awarded as the unit is too small and the four standards not all relevant			
January 2020	Sussex Kidney Unit Revisit	Renal	9 (7)	8 (8)	9 (8)	9 (8)
		Haematology	8 (7)	7 (8)	10 (9)	9 (9)
February and March 2019	No visits (due to outbreak of coronavirus)					

9. Annex C: Patient-led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE)

Environmental Care Audits are monthly audits which were established in conjunction with BSUH Trust and designed to replicate aspects of the Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment, or [PLACE](#). PLACE is delivered by NHS Digital (previously NHS Improvement, or NHSi) which is an NHS organisation responsible for overseeing foundation trusts and NHS trusts, as well as independent providers that provide NHS-funded care. It supports providers to give patients consistently safe, high quality, compassionate care within local health systems that are financially sustainable.

The PLACE programme is a voluntary scheme that was introduced in April 2013. It provides an annual appraisal of the non-clinical aspects of NHS and independent or private healthcare settings. PLACE aims to promote the principles established by the [NHS Constitution](#) that focus on areas that matter to patients, families and carers:

- Putting patients first
- Capturing active feedback from the public, patients, and staff
- Adhering to basics of quality care
- Ensuring services are provided in environments that are fit for purpose.

The PLACE assessment tool provides a framework for assessing quality against common guidelines and standards. The environment is assessed using a number of question forms depending on the services provided by the facility. These can be viewed [here](#).

The six standards that are used to quantify how good the environment is are as follows:

1. cleanliness
2. food and hydration provision
3. the extent to which the provision of care with privacy and dignity is supported
4. overall condition, appearance and maintenance
5. whether the premises are equipped to meet the needs of people living with dementia and,
6. whether the premises are equipped to meet the needs of people living with a disability.

PLACE and its scores and findings provide a useful snapshot of what our healthcare settings are like. As PLACE happens only once a year over a series of weeks, with results published several months later, then they do not always reflect what things might 'look like today'. It is also not possible to compare the scores achieved by different Trusts, as our Acute, Mental health and Community Trusts all provide hugely different services and healthcare settings.

In 2019, NHS Digital reviewed the PLACE programme to ensure it remained fit for purpose. The review had two main impacts: it delayed the timing of PLACE visits which were carried out in October 2019, rather than in the spring; and the changes made means that the 2019 results cannot be compared to those from previous years; although they do provide a baseline for future years

PLACE encourages the involvement of patients, the public, and both national and local organisations that have an interest in healthcare in assessing providers. Assessments are therefore undertaken by teams made up of hospital staff and members of the public (or patient assessors). As in previous years, Healthwatch volunteers provided invaluable support in undertaking a number of PLACE visits across two local Trusts. Results from the 2019 PLACE visit are available in our separate report.

Contact information

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