

*Observations made during the visit of Healthwatch volunteers to the PRH Children's Unit on the 23/04/2014.*

## Introduction

The new Children's Unit which has been commissioned at the Princess Royal Hospital is due to become fully operational in September 2014 and will amalgamate both Shrewsbury and Telford hospitals into a large Specialist Children's Unit. This will necessitate the relocation of staff from Shropshire into one unified service. It is planned to move some children into the new unit at the end of May and a request was made by the hospital Authorities to invite Healthwatch to visit the Children's ward to make observations through the eyes of potential users (parents and relatives)

When we arrived at the new setting we were met by three senior members of staff who had been involved in the commissioning of the service. After introductions we were given an overview of the service and the design of the building which is partly refurbished and additional new build. We were informed that there was a mixture of four bedded units and two bedded together with single high dependency units for very poorly children. These were strategically located near the nurses' station and consultants' treatment rooms. All bays have been developed to include a bed for parents/ relatives to sleep next to their children.

After our briefing we were given the opportunity to ask further questions and then shown around the building. We stated that any observations made could only be made on the building and that we hoped our constructive comments would be of assistance to the commissioning staff. They welcomed our participation and stated that they thought it would be useful if we could arrange a further visit when the unit became fully operational and when children were present. We thanked our hosts for their introduction and then proceeded to go around the building.

Our overall impression during the visit was that the integrated unit has been developed to a very high standard and a great deal of thought has been given to the needs of children of different ages in the design of the building. This was evident in the care given to ensure that parents could be with their children during their stay and the parent's room offers excellent resources.

Children's recreational areas have been well-designed to ensure that facilities are available for the different ages of children. This includes a room for the older children with facilities for computers and other technical equipment. The younger person's educational/ recreational area is the most colourful room in the whole complex and is to be used by the visiting education teachers. Directly adjacent to this is a large external play area which is currently being refurbished.

A great deal of thought has been given to providing facilities for staff, which includes interview rooms, staff rooms, and visual screens which are strategically positioned to enable staff to respond immediately to any call made from individuals.

The consultant/treatment rooms have been designed by consultants. Another feature which will greatly enhance efficiency of the unit is the direct link with the pharmacy unit by means of a chute which will provide urgent medical supplies that will be required by the consultants and nursing staff.

A major emphasis has been placed on the safety and security of children within the unit and this includes monitoring cameras above all entry and exit doors which are directly linked to nurse's station. Swipe cards will be used by all staff for access to the premises

### Observations made during the visit

- The first impression on entering the building was that the decor in the corridors was all white and rather sterile in appearance and did not provide a warm, homely and welcoming environment which would put young children at ease. The staff stated that it is intended to make this more child friendly in the future by painting murals on these walls.
- There was no evidence within the bays for TV facilities for the children. We were informed that this would be provided by the hospital's TV service.
- In the en-suite facilities within the bays, there was no evidence of any form of seating for children with disabilities who required showers. It was also observed that in some toilet areas grab rails had only been provided on one side. Assurances was given to us that these would be provided.
- The younger children's educational / recreational area was bright and child friendly throughout with lots of room for play. This area leads directly onto the external play area by means of two Large Glazed doors. These could be potentially hazardous to children. Perhaps something could be fixed to glazed doors to prevent children from inadvertently running into them.
- It was noted with concern that all electrical sockets are unprotected and potentially hazardous to very young children. When this point was raised an assurance was given that all sockets throughout the building would be fitted with blanking plates as a matter of priority. From a wheelchair user's perspective, this could inhibit independence.
- It was observed that ceiling hoists are only provided in certain areas. We were informed that these bays would be allocated on a priority basis.
- In the older children's educational room there was no evidence of any facilities. We were assured that this will be fully equipped by September with computers and other appropriately age related furniture and equipment.

- Excellent observation screens have been fitted to allow staff to monitor children at all times.
- There is a large bathroom provided, which we were informed would be fitted with a hoist. Our initial observations are that the space is rather limited in this room particularly when accommodating wheelchairs and staff. We were informed that this was built in line with the specifications provided.

## Summary

We were informed that plans are in place to induct all staff into the unit and orientation training will be provided for all staff transferring from Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. This will be required to ensure streamlining of procedures and to allow for staff team building and a smooth transition of the service.

He concluded our visit by thanking the senior staff for the support they had given us. They in turn stated that they welcomed Healthwatch involvement and hope we could undertake a follow up visit after September. We stated that we would relate this request back to our Team Manager.