

# Cross Plain Health Centre

### **Inspection report**

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This report describes our judgement of the quality of care at this service. It is based on a combination of what we found when we inspected, information from our ongoing monitoring of data about services and information given to us from the provider, patients, the public and other organisations.

### Ratings

Overall rating for this location	
Are services safe?	
Are services effective?	
Are services caring?	
Are services well-led?	

# Overall summary

We carried out an announced focused inspection at Cross Plain Health Centre on 11 June 2018 in response to concerns that were reported to us. We did not rate the practice as part of this inspection.

At this inspection we found:

- The practice had a long-term plan to develop the role of Physician Assistants (PA) within the practice and an interim strategy to develop the role and competence of non-qualified staff to enable them to take on duties previously done by qualified and registered clinicians. However, this was not supported by evidence found on inspection.
- The practice vision was in line with national strategies and priorities. They had engaged with other external stakeholders and received financial support for the development work from Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
- We found the practice had employed staff in a number of different roles who they called GP Assistants. It was not clear to patients what these different roles were or the competency of staff performing these roles.

- We looked at the clinical work of a number of staff working in the role of GP Assistant and found evidence they were working within their areas of skills and experience, and there had been some appropriate oversight and support from a GP.
- We saw evidence the practice monitored the work done by staff in the role of a GP Assistant.
- The practice governance arrangements for the employment, training, supervision and monitoring of staff working in the role a GP Assistant lacked clarity.

The areas where the provider **must** make improvements are:

- The practice must ensure staff employed receive such appropriate support, training, professional development, supervision and appraisal as is necessary to enable them to carry out the duties they are employed to perform.
- The practice must assess, monitor and improve the quality and safety of the services provided in the carrying on of the regulated activity (including the quality of the experience of service users in receiving those services).

**Professor Steve Field** CBE FRCP FFPH FRCGP Chief Inspector of General Practice

### Our inspection team

Our inspection team was led by a CQC lead inspector. The team included a GP specialist adviser and a second CQC Inspector.

### Background to Cross Plain Health Centre

Cross Plain Health Centre is a GP practice located on the southern edge of Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire. It is one of 47 practices within the Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) area and has around 6,440 patients. The practice is one of five in the locality area of Amesbury.

The practice premises includes two consulting rooms and one treatment room on the ground floor, and one consulting room on the first floor which is mainly used for counselling services.

The practice has branch surgeries in Tidworth and Shrewton.

The practice is registered to provide the following activities:

- Diagnostic and screening procedures;
- · Family planning;
- Maternity and midwifery services;
- Surgical procedures;
- Treatment of disease, disorder or injury.

The practice provides a number of services and clinics for its patients including childhood immunisations, family planning, minor surgery and a range of health lifestyle management and advice including asthma management, diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure management.

The practice has a dispensary offering pharmaceutical services to those patients on its practice list who live more than one mile (1.6km) from their nearest pharmacy premises.

The practice provides some services, such some services for the elderly, in partnership with the other practices in the Amesbury locality.

The practice served an area with a high number of military personel and their families. They have a lower than average number of patients who are over 75, a higher than average number of military veterans and a higher than average turnover of patients. Data available shows a measure of deprivation in the local area recorded a score of 9, on a scale of 1-10, where a higher score indicates a less deprived area. (Note that the circumstances and lifestyles of the people living in an area affect its deprivation score. Not everyone living in a

deprived area is deprived and not all deprived people live in deprived areas). The area the practice serves has relatively low numbers of patients from different cultural backgrounds. 96% of the practice population describes itself as white British. Average male and female life expectancy for patients at the practice is 82 years and 86 years respectively, which is similar to the Wiltshire average and in line with the national average of 79 and 83 years respectively.

The area has one of the highest population growth rates in the country and was anticipating a significant number of additional military families moving to the area next year as part of a military rebasing plan.

There are two GP partners, two salaried GPs, (one of whom was on maternity leave at the time of our inspection) and three retainer GPs, (one of whom was on maternity leave at the time of our inspection). (Retainer GPs are GPs who are receiving additional support to help them stay in the profession). Two of the GPs are male and five female. Some work part-time, making a full-time equivalent of 2.6 GPs. They are supported by a team of GP Assistants and a nursing team of one practice nurse, three healthcare assistant and two mental health support workers. There is a dispensing team and an administrative team led by the practice manager who is also a partner.

The practice surgeries at Durrington and Tidworth open from 8am to 1pm, and 2pm to 6.30pm. Monday to Friday. The surgery at Shrewton has more restricted opening hours and details are available in the surgery on the practice website. When the surgery is closed for lunch, there is an emergency number to get through to the practice.

The practice has opted out of providing a full Out Of Hours service to its own patients. Patients can access an Out Of Hours GP service by calling NHS 111. Information about how to access this service was available in the surgery and on their website.

The practice has a General Medical Services contract with NHS England (a locally agreed contract negotiated between NHS England and the practice).

The practice provides services from the following sites:

- Durrington Surgery, 84 Bulford Road, Durrington, Wiltshire, SP4 8DH.
- Tidworth Surgery, Beacon House, Station Road, Tidworth, Wiltshire, SP9 7NN.
- Shrewton Surgery, High Street, Shrewton, Salisbury, Wilts, SP3 4DB.

The practice has a website containing further information. It can be found here:

• www.crossplainhealthcentre.nhs.uk

#### Why we carried out this inspection

When we inspected the practice on 8 December 2016, we rated them as Requires Improvement due to breaches in the regulations relating to the provision of safe services. We also noted some areas of outstanding practice. We did a follow-up inspection in August 2017 to review in detail the actions taken by the practice to improve the quality of care and to confirm that the practice was now meeting legal requirements. Following this inspection the practice was rated as Good overall and in the key questions we look at. The full reports of these previous inspections can be found by selecting the 'all reports' link for Cross Plain Health Centre on our website at www.cqc.org.uk.

On both our previous inspections we noted that the practice was employing GP Assistants. We were told the practice was seeking to extend the role of the GP Assistants and to develop suitable training for them. Recently we received information of concern regarding these GP Assistants. The focus of this inspection was the training, competency, supervision, and clinical governance of staff, and the action taken by the practice to ensure they have the skills, knowledge and experience to carry out their roles.

# **Background to staffing at Cross Plains Health Centre**

On our previous inspections in December 2016 and August 2017 we noted that the practice was employing GP Assistants.

The practice told us that they had experienced significant difficulties in recruiting the number of clinical staff they required, particularly GPs. They assessed this difficulty was likely to remain or worsen in line with recognised national trends. They also assessed that their staffing requirements were going to increase due to:

- Significant increase in the local population over the coming years
- Planned retirement of GPs.

In order to meeting their staffing requirements the practice decided to recruit Physicians Assistants. However, they found they were unable to recruit qualified Physicians Assistants and decided to recruit staff as Physicians Assistants Apprenticies. They also decided to develop the role GP Assistants within the practice.

Physicians Assistants (PA) and GP Assistants (GPA) are recognised and developing roles within GP practices. The Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of General Practitioners define a PA as someone who is a new healthcare professional who, while not a doctor, works to the medical model, with the attitudes, skills and knowledge base to deliver holistic care and treatment within the general medical and/or general practice team under defined levels of supervision. There is a voluntary register for Physician Assistants managed by the Royal College of Physicians and universities courses are becoming increasing available which lead to the recognised qualification of Physicians Assistant. Physicians Assistants training enables them to work in any area of medicine, dependent on their skills and experience. The role of GP Assistants is more limited and at present there is no formally recognised qualification or professional register. Health Education England (HEE) is currently piloting this role together with a GP Assistant Certificate course. HEE define the GP Assistants role as support doctors in the smooth running of their surgery by handling the routine administration and some basic clinical duties enabling the GP to focus on the patient.

We saw evidence the practice was engaged with the national development of the PA and GPA roles.

- The practice had engaged and discussed their plans with Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Royal Colleges, Health Education England, the Local Medical Committee and local Universities.
- The practice had been awarded money to support the development work by the CCG using their Innovation Fund. They submitted a progress report to the CCG on a quarterly basis.

On the day of our inspection the practice told us they had developed a staffing structure for the practice which included GP Assistants. The practice used different staff roles under the umbrella term of categories of GP Assistants which included:

- Assistant Health Practitioners.
- Nursing Associates.
- Physicians Associates.
- Mental Health Support Workers.
- Front Line Practitioners.
- GP Assistants.

## Are services safe?

#### Safety systems and processes

The practice had clear systems to keep people safeguarded from abuse.

- The practice had appropriate systems to safeguard children and vulnerable adults from abuse. All staff received up-to-date safeguarding and safety training appropriate to their role. They knew how to identify and report concerns. Reports and learning from safeguarding incidents were available to staff. Staff who acted as chaperones were trained for their role and had received a DBS check. (DBS checks identify whether a person has a criminal record or is on an official list of people barred from working in roles where they may have contact with children or adults who may be vulnerable.)
- Staff took steps, including working with other agencies, to protect patients from abuse, neglect, harassment, discrimination and breaches of their dignity and respect.
- The practice carried out appropriate staff checks on GP assistants at the time of recruitment and on an ongoing basis.

#### Risks to patients

There were systems to assess, monitor and manage risks to patient safety.

- Arrangements were in place for planning and monitoring the number and mix of staff needed to meet patients' needs, including planning for holidays, sickness, busy periods and epidemics.
- There was an induction system for temporary staff tailored to their role.
- Staff understood their responsibilities to manage emergencies on the premises and to recognise those in need of urgent medical attention. Clinicians knew how to identify and manage patients with severe infections including sepsis.

#### Information to deliver safe care and treatment

Staff had the information they needed to deliver safe care and treatment to patients.

 The care records we saw showed that information needed to deliver safe care and treatment was available to staff. There was a documented approach to managing test results.

- The practice had systems for sharing information with staff and other agencies to enable them to deliver safe care and treatment.
- Clinicians made timely referrals in line with protocols.

#### Lessons learned and improvements made

There was evidence the practice did not take all opportunities to learn and make improvements when things went wrong.

- Staff understood their duty to raise concerns and report incidents and near misses. Leaders and managers supported them when they did so.
- There were adequate systems for reviewing and investigating when things went wrong.
- There had been 37 significant events logged in the year April 2017 to March 2018 and 12 so far this year. We saw that two of these involved GP Assistants and we reviewed these in more detail.
- The first related to an incident in which a GP's request for a patient referral to be made was not sent. The report of the investigation recognised this delay had been potentially life threatening and had been discussed at a Whole Team meeting attended by eight practice staff. We found that the report lacked clarity. It noted that the request had been passed from one staff member to another including a GPA, but was unclear as to the roles of these staff in completing actions or where the error lay. The practice sent a reminder to staff not to pass urgent tasks on to others, but there was no evidence they had reviewed the formal guidance or training given to staff in relation to managing referrals.
- The second significant event we looked at related to an incident in which the diagnosis of a fracture was delayed. The practice had written a detailed report of the incident which recognised that one of the root causes for the delayed diagnosis was an inexperienced clinician, (who the practice told us was a GPA). The report shows that the two substantive clinical assessment and treatment decisions were made by GP Assistants. The medicine recommendations were reviewed and signed by a GP. The practice's investigation identified that a more experienced clinical practitioner would likely have recognised the significance of the symptoms and taken more appropriate action. We note that:

On the day of our inspection we saw no evidence that following these two incident the practice had reviewed the

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skills and experience of the individual staff member, the training and competency framework they were working under, or the practice policies and procedures. Therefore, the practice could not demonstrate how a repeat incident could be prevented. When we shared our draft report with the practice, they sent us their telephone triage policy, which they told us had been amended following the second incident by the addition of a clause that said the duty GP should always be involved if, "This is a second call in about the same problem that is worsening." However, there was no evidence this amendment addressed the concerns raised by the incident, that it had been discussed by the practice partners or shared with staff working in the role of a GP Assistant.

• The practice's investigation lacked the necessary candour as to the staff members' job title and experience. The investigation stated the clinician was a staff member working in the role of a GP Assistant; it was unclear what the staff member's job title and role was.

- The evidence we saw shows that at the time of the incident, the practice did not have any staff employed as Physicians Assistants or GP Assistants, or as apprentices. At the time of the incident none of the practice staff were on any of the recognised training courses for these roles. It was therefore not clear how the competency of staff had been assessed prior to their involvement in making clinical decisions.
- At the time of the incident no staff had a job description or Contract of Employment which defined their role as a GP Assistant or physician assistant. We found the practice used the term 'GP Assistants', as a collective noun for a range of staff. There was limited evidence to support the scope and role of these individual roles.

# Are services effective?

#### **Effective staffing**

- As part of our inspection we reviewed the medical records of 13 patients who had received care from a staff member working in the role of GP Assistant. This included 13 face to face consultations and 14 telephone consultations. We found these records were written in appropriate detail and evidenced safe and compassionate care. The evidence we collected from looking at these medical records and talking to GPs and staff working in the role of a GPA, showed GP Assistants were working within their areas of skills and experience, and there had been appropriate oversight and support from a GP.
- We found the practice system for ensuring that unqualified staff working in the role of a GP Assistant were only allocated tasks within their area of competence to be inadequate. (Qualified clinicians who are on a recognised professional register, such as GPs, nurses, Paramedics, Physiotherapists and Physicians Assistants, are accountable for their own clinical practice and ensuring they only operate within the area of competence. Other staff working in a clinical role, such as health care assistants or GP assistants, require a system or structure that ensures they are directed to each activity and that this activity is within their area of competence.)
- The practice had a "Who Does What" chart which was available to receptionist and other staff who booked patients into appropriate appointment slots. This showed the range of clinical procedures that two of the GPs, two nurses (one being a regular locum nurse) and five staff working in the role of a GP Assistant could be assigned. However, this was not an accurate reflection of all staff areas of competency as there were many procedures GPs are expected to be competent in, such as taking a blood pressure, which the form showed should not be assigned to GP. Also, the form did not include six of the staff working in the role of a GP Assistant. Following our inspection, the practice told us this form was not intended to be a comprehensive list of competencies for every clinical member of staff.
- We were told that unqualified staff acting in the role of a GP Assistant worked on a duty rota to triage patient's appointment requests. This duty rota work was usually but not always, led by a GP. This meant that there were times when the duty triage rota was being dealt with just by GPAs. We were told that receptionists would

handle patients' phone calls and note down their reason for requesting an appointment before placing them on the triage list. A GP assistant would go through the list and select those on the list who's reason for requesting an appointment they felt was within their area of expertise. There was no regular oversight of this by a qualified clinician, prior to the patient being contacted. They would then ring the patient and take appropriate action based on that call. We saw an audit conducted by the practice which concluded that the GPAs were working with their competencies and without error. However, this system meant these staff were not working under the level of direction required as they were self assessing the tasks they were assigning to themselves and then carrying out these tasks without authorisation from a qualified clinician.

#### Effective needs assessment, care and treatment

The practice had systems to keep clinicians up to date with current evidence-based practice. We saw that qualified clinicians assessed needs and delivered care and treatment in line with current legislation, standards and guidance supported by clear clinical pathways and protocols.

- Patients' immediate and ongoing needs were assessed.
   This included their clinical needs and their mental and physical wellbeing.
- We saw no evidence of discrimination when making care and treatment decisions.
- Staff used appropriate tools to assess the level of pain and the level of anxiety in patients.
- Staff advised patients what to do if their condition got worse and where to seek further help and support.

#### **Monitoring care and treatment**

The practice routinely reviewed the effectiveness and appropriateness of the care provided by staff working in the role of GP Assistant (GPA). For example, in April 2018 they had conducted an audit of telephone calls triaged by a GPA. The audit covered 40 patient phones. Of these:

- Twenty-two were given a GP appointment, usually on the same day.
- Nine discussed their concerns with the GPA who then sought further advice from a GP, which was communicated back to the patient on the same day.
- Four were given an appointment with a GPA, where a duty GP was also in attendance.

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- Three discussed their concerns with the GPA and were subsequently given a prescription by the GP.
- Two discussed their concerns with the GPA who then asked the GP to call the patients to agree the appropriate action.

The audit concluded that GPA were working within their areas of competencies and without error.

# Are services caring?

As part of our inspection we spoke with four patients attending for an appointment at the Tidworth Surgery and Durrington Surgery. We reviewed the results from the national GP Patient Survey published in July 2017, and we looked at patients feedback provided by the practice.

- The four patients we spoke to told us they were happy with the service. They had previously been seen by a staff member working in the role of a GP Assistant (GPA) and felt comfortable with the service provided. The patients said that if they were unsure the GPA always sought advice from a GP. Two patients said they were not aware of the qualifications of the GPAs or of any difference in the qualifications of staff working as GPAs.
- The national GP Patient Survey published in July 2017, showed the practice scores were comparable to other practices. For instance,

- 94% of patients who responded said they had confidence and trust in the GP they saw or spoke to, compared to the national average of 96%.
- 70% of patients who responded said they would definitely or probably recommend their GP surgery to someone who has just moved to the local area, compared to the national average of 79%.
- 82% of patients who responded said last time they wanted to see or speak to a GP or nurse they were able to get an appointment, compared to the national average of 76%.
- The practice had recently requested feedback from patients about GP Assistants. Fiftyfour patients responded by email or on a paper form. 68% of patients said the service provided by the GP Assistants was very good or excellent, 28% said it was good or fair and 4% said it was poor.

# Are services well-led?

#### Vision and strategy

The practice had a vision to:

- Develop the role of Physicians Assistants (PA) and GP Assistants (GPA) in the practice.
- Employ staff as apprentices who were taking a recognised Physician's Assistant Apprentice course.
- Develop the role and competence of other non-qualified staff to enable them to take on duties previously done by qualified and registered clinicians.

The practice vision was in line with national strategies and priorities. We saw evidence the practice had engaged with outside bodies in the development and implementation of their strategy. For example:

- The practice had engaged and discussed their plans with Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) who had supported the development work through their Innovation Fund. The practice submitted a progress report to the CCG on a quarterly basis.
- The practice had engaged with the national development of these roles and had given a workshop presentation at the national BMA conference on this subject in Nov 2017.
- The practice had engaged with Royal Colleges, Health Education England, the Local Medical Committee and local Universities in their development plans.
- There was evidence that the practice had responded to changes in national strategies, the availability of qualified PAs and the availability of PA apprentice courses in the local areas.

#### **Governance arrangements**

We found the governance arrangements for the employment, training, supervision and monitoring of staff working in the role a GP Assistant lacked clarity and in some cases the information was incorrect or unclear.

- There was no clear system to ensure all non-qualified clinicians working in a clinical role were directed to each clinical task by a qualified clinician who ensured they were only assigned tasks within their areas of competence.
- The contractual arrangements for staff were not always up to date or clear. For example:

- On the day of our inspection the practice told us they had developed a staffing structure for the practice which included GP Assistants. There were a number of different categories of GP Assistants within in the practice which included:
- Assistant Health Practitioners
  - Nursing Associates
  - Physicians Associates
  - Mental Health Support Workers
  - Front Line Practitioners
  - GP Assistants
- This structure, which used the term GP Assistant, both as a general descriptor of a number of different roles and as one of those specific roles, lacked clarity and created a significant risk of confusion or misunderstanding. For example, the patients we spoke to did not understand the different skills or roles of staff called GP Assistants.
- There were two members of staff employed in the specific role of a GP Assistant. We were told that the role for one of these staff members had changed to Front Line Practitioner, although when we looked at their employment records there was no evidence this change had been formalised, such as a revised contract or letter to the employee confirming their change. We looked at the Job Description for the specific post of GP Assistant, which expected post-holders to commence the Foundation Degree in Health Assistant Practitioner. We saw no evidence that these two staff members either had this qualification or were enrolled on such a course. We were told one of these staff members was a qualified Paramedic which the practice considered to be equivalent to a Foundation Degree in Health Assistant Practitioner qualification and the other had a more limited role.
- We saw evidence that three members of staff had started an Open University BSc Healthcare Assistant Practitioner foundation degree course in January 2018 on an apprentice programme. We were told two of these staff had specific job titles of Assistant Practitioner Apprentice (APA) and the other of Mental Health Support Worker. We looked at the employment records for these staff and found no evidence that their Contract of Employment had been updated. One had a contract of employment as a Health Care Assistant and Medical Assistant, and the other as a Receptionist and

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Administrator. We saw a job description for the role of GP Assistant in one of these staff member's name. The role included, telephone triage, home visiting and history taking, examination, investigation and diagnosis of specified conditions. These documents did not make reference to this employee's current training position or competency to undertake these tasks.

- We saw evidence that two members of staff were seeking to enrol on a local university Physician's Assistant Apprentice course. The qualification would enable them to register as Physicians Assistants and they would be doing this course as an apprentice with Cross Plain Health Centre. However, this was a newly developed course which had been delayed and was currently scheduled to start in September 2018. Neither staff member had been accepted on this course on the day of our inspection. However, these two staff members were already working in the general category of roles the practice called GP Assistants with a title of Physicians Assistant Apprentice (PAA). We looked at the employment records for these staff and saw their Contract of Employment had not been updated. We were told there was not yet a job description for the role of PAA as the role had not started yet.
- We looked at the employment records of a member of staff who had joined the practice in February 2018. Their

Contract of Employment stated they were employed as a GP Assistant. However, the practice told us their role had since been revised and they now worked in a role the practice called a Front Line Practitioner.

#### **Appropriate and accurate information**

The practice did not provide appropriate and accurate information regarding staff acting in the role of GP Assistant. The information made available to patients and the general public was misleading. For example,

- The website stated they employed Physician Assistants and gave the names of seven staff in this role. However, this was incorrect as none of the staff were qualified Physician Assistants, none had a job title or role of Physician Assistants and at the time of our inspection none were attending a recognised training course for this qualification.
- There was no information easily visible either on the practice website or in the surgery waiting areas we looked at, about the roles of staff acting in the role of GP Assistant and the variety of roles this term included.
- There was no information easily visible either on the practice website or in the surgery waiting areas we looked at, which made it clear that all but two of the staff who were acting in the role of GP Assistants were unqualified clinicians.

# Requirement notices

# Action we have told the provider to take

The table below shows the legal requirements that the service provider was not meeting. The provider must send CQC a report that says what action it is going to take to meet these requirements.

#### Regulated activity Regulation Diagnostic and screening procedures Regulation 17 HSCA (RA) Regulations 2014 Good governance Family planning services How the regulation was not being met: The practice did Maternity and midwifery services not assess, monitor and improve the quality and safety Surgical procedures of the services provided in the carrying on of the regulated activity (including the quality of the Treatment of disease, disorder or injury experience of service users in receiving those services). Specifically: The practice systems did not ensure that information was accurate and up to date. Specifically: The practice website inaccurately said some staff where Physicians Assistants. The contractual arrangements for staff were not always up to date or clear. The practice staffing structure, which used the term GP Assistant, both as a general descriptor of a number of different roles and as one of those specific roles, lacked clarity and created a significant risk of confusion or misunderstanding. There was no information easily visible either on the practice website or in the surgery waiting areas we looked at, about the roles of staff acting in the role of GP Assistant, the variety of roles this term included. All but two of the staff who were acting in the role of GP Assistants where unqualified clinicians.

### **Enforcement actions**

## Action we have told the provider to take

The table below shows the legal requirements that the service provider was not meeting. The provider must send CQC a report that says what action it is going to take to meet these. We took enforcement action because the quality of healthcare required significant improvement.

### Regulated activity

Diagnostic and screening procedures

Family planning services

Maternity and midwifery services

Surgical procedures

Treatment of disease, disorder or injury

### Regulation

Regulation 18 HSCA (RA) Regulations 2014 Staffing

State enforcement action taken ...You are failing to ensure that persons employed by the practice receive such appropriate support, training, professional development, supervision and appraisal as is necessary to enable them to carry out the duties they are employed to perform. Specifically:We found the practice system for ensuring that staff working in the role of a GP Assistant were only allocated tasks within their area of competence was inadequate.There was no evidence that following an incident, which you determined was partly caused by a staff member working in the role of a GP Assistant, you reviewed the skills and experience of the individual staff member, the training and competency framework they were working under, or the practice policies and procedures.