

The Slimming Clinic

Inspection report

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<https://theslimmingclinic.com/weight-loss-clinics/plymouth/>

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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

Good 

Are services safe?

Good 

Are services effective?

Good 

Are services caring?

Good 

Are services responsive?

Good 

Are services well-led?

Good 

Overall summary

This service is rated as Good overall. (Previous inspection June 2017 – Not Rated)

The key questions are rated as:

Are services safe? – Good

Are services effective? – Good

Are services caring? – Good

Are services responsive? – Good

Are services well-led? – Good

We carried out an announced comprehensive inspection at The Slimming Clinic, Plymouth to rate the service for the provision of safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led services as part of our current inspection programme.

The Slimming Clinic, Plymouth provides weight loss services, including prescribed medicines, dietary and lifestyle advice to support weight reduction.

The clinic manager is in the process of making an application to be the registered manager. The previous registered manager left the service within the last 6 months. A registered manager is a person who is registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Like registered providers, they are 'registered persons'. Registered persons have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the service is run.

15 people provided feedback about the service via comment cards. The comments were all positive. Comments about the staff included being polite, helpful and encouraging. The comments about the clinic included providing a non-judgemental service, encouraging and being delivered in a clean, tidy and organised environment. Other comments received included being provided with lots of relevant information and being supportive during difficult phases of treatment.

Our key findings were :

- Prescribing and record keeping were in line with the parent company's policies.
- The clinic was in a good state of repair, clean and tidy.
- Staff provided information and a supportive service to make patients feel comfortable with their treatment.
- Learning from other services within the parent company was shared and implemented.

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

- Only supply unlicensed medicines against valid special clinical needs of an individual patient where there is no suitable licensed medicine available.
- To review the current policy around transfer of information from old style record cards to the new style record cards for existing patients.

Dr Rosie Benneyworth BM BS BMedSci MRCGP Chief Inspector of Primary Medical Services and Integrated Care

Our inspection team

Our inspection team was led by a CQC Pharmacist Specialist. The team included another member of the CQC medicines team.

Background to The Slimming Clinic, Plymouth

The Slimming Clinic provides weight loss treatment and services, including prescribed medicines, dietary and lifestyle advice, to support weight reduction. The clinic is located on the ground floor of a unit in Plymouth city centre. Staff include a clinic manager and two part-time doctors. The clinic is open on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

How we inspected this service

Prior to the inspection we reviewed information about this service and other services operated by this provider, including the previous inspection report and information from the provider. We spoke to the clinic manager, a member of the clinical staff and reviewed a range of documents.

To get to the heart of patients' experiences of care and treatment, we always ask the following five questions:

- Is it safe?
- Is it effective?
- Is it caring?
- Is it responsive to people's needs?
- Is it well-led?

These questions therefore formed the framework for the areas we looked at during the inspection.

Are services safe?

We rated safe as Good because:

Safety systems and processes

The service had clear systems to keep people safe and safeguarded from abuse.

- The provider conducted safety risk assessments. They had appropriate safety policies, which were regularly reviewed and communicated to staff. These outlined clearly who to go to for further guidance. Staff received safety information from the service as part of their induction and refresher training. The service had systems to safeguard children and vulnerable adults from abuse.
- The service worked with other agencies to support patients and protect them from neglect and abuse. Staff took steps to protect patients from abuse, neglect, harassment, discrimination and breaches of their dignity and respect.
- The provider carried out staff checks at the time of recruitment and on an ongoing basis where appropriate. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks were undertaken where required. (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).
- All staff received up-to-date safeguarding and safety training appropriate to their role. They knew how to identify and report concerns. Chaperone training was currently being developed by the provider. Once this was completed by staff and a DBS check completed a chaperone service would be offered.
- There was an effective system to manage infection prevention and control. The service had undertaken a Legionella risk assessment and implemented any necessary actions.
- The provider ensured that facilities and equipment were safe, and that equipment was maintained according to manufacturers' instructions. There were systems for safely managing healthcare waste.
- The provider carried out appropriate environmental risk assessments, which considered the profile of people using the service and those who may be accompanying them.

Risks to patients

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

- There were arrangements for planning and monitoring the number and mix of staff needed.
- There was an effective induction system for agency staff tailored to their role.
- Staff understood their responsibilities to manage emergencies and to recognise those in need of urgent medical attention. They could tell us the actions that they would take in a medical emergency.
- There were suitable medicines and equipment to deal with medical emergencies which were stored appropriately and checked regularly. The provider identified the location of emergency equipment local to the clinic and included this in the risk assessment.
- When there were changes to services or staff the service assessed and monitored the impact on safety.
- We saw that the provider had made suitable insurance arrangements for both professional practice and for public liability cover.

Information to deliver safe care and treatment

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

- Individual care records were written and managed in a way that kept patients safe. The care records we saw showed that information needed to deliver safe care and treatment was available to relevant staff in an accessible way.
- The service had systems for sharing information with staff and other agencies to enable them to deliver safe care and treatment.
- The parent company had introduced a revised patient medical record card. This was an improvement to the original card as it provided more space for the prescriber to document their decisions and rationale for prescribing. However, we found that there was no formal procedure to show when all the patient personal and medical information would be transferred from the old-style card to a new card.
- The service had a system in place to retain medical records in line with Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) guidance in the event that they cease trading.

Safe and appropriate use of medicines

Are services safe?

The service had reliable systems for appropriate and safe handling of medicines.

- The systems and arrangements for managing medicines, controlled drugs, emergency medicines and equipment minimised risks.
- The service carried out regular medicines audit to ensure prescribing was in line with best practice guidelines for safe prescribing.
- The service did prescribe Schedule 3 controlled drugs (medicines that have additional level of control due to their risk of misuse and dependence).
- Staff prescribed, administered or supplied medicines to patients and gave advice on medicines in line with legal requirements and current national guidance. Processes were in place for checking medicines and staff kept accurate records of medicines. Where there was a different approach taken from national guidance there was a clear rationale for this that protected patient safety.
- There were effective protocols for verifying the identity and age of patients to exclude children.
- Some of the medicines this service prescribes for weight loss are unlicensed. Treating patients with unlicensed medicines is higher risk than treating patients with licensed medicines, because unlicensed medicines may not have been assessed for safety, quality and efficacy. These medicines are no longer recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) or the Royal College of Physicians for the treatment of obesity. The British National Formulary states that 'Drug treatment should never be used as the sole element of treatment (for obesity) and should be used as part of an overall weight management plan'.

Track record on safety and incidents

The service had a good safety record.

- There were comprehensive risk assessments in relation to safety issues.
- The service monitored and reviewed activity. This helped it to understand risks and gave a clear, accurate and current picture that led to safety improvements.

Lessons learned, and improvements made

The service learned and made improvements when things went wrong.

- There was a system for recording and acting on significant events. 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. The service learned, and shared lessons, identified themes and acted to improve safety in the service. The clinic manager showed us the local service incident log, and how learning was shared locally. This also included learning across the provider's other services shared via a weekly managers group telephone call.
- The provider was aware of and complied with the requirements of the Duty of Candour. The provider encouraged a culture of openness and honesty. The service had systems in place for knowing about notifiable safety incidents.
- The service acted on and learned from external safety events as well as patient and medicine safety alerts. The service had an effective mechanism in place to disseminate alerts to all members of the team.

Are services effective?

We rated effective as Good because:

Effective needs assessment, care and treatment

The provider had systems to keep clinicians up to date with current evidence-based practice. We saw evidence that clinicians assessed needs and delivered care and treatment in line with current legislation, standards and guidance (relevant to their service).

- Patients' immediate and ongoing needs were fully assessed. Where appropriate this included their clinical needs and their mental and physical wellbeing. We saw that during initial consultations a medical and medicines history was taken. We also saw that physical measurements of height, weight and blood pressure were taken. We checked 12 patient records and confirmed that this information was present
- Clinicians had enough information to make or confirm a diagnosis
- We saw no evidence of discrimination when making care and treatment decisions.
- Arrangements were in place to deal with repeat patients. We saw from the records that patients were given appropriate treatment breaks after 12 weeks of treatment and that a rationale was available if this was not followed. This was not always recorded on the old-style record cards. From discussion with the clinician it was clear that this was taken into account when prescribing.
- The service provided patients with access to a self-support app for their mobile phone in addition to patient information leaflets.

Monitoring care and treatment

The service was actively involved in quality improvement activity.

- The service used information about care and treatment to make improvements. For example, the service sampled patient records to review the levels of weight loss achieved and to review the quality of completion of the patient records. The service made improvements using clinical reviews. Clinical reviews had a positive impact on quality of care and outcomes for patients. There was clear evidence of action to resolve concerns and improve quality. Where the clinical review

highlighted patients not achieving the targeted weight loss, these patients were identified and provided with additional support prior to the completion of the 12-week treatment course.

Effective staffing

Staff had the skills, knowledge and experience to carry out their roles.

- All staff were appropriately qualified. The provider had an induction programme for all newly appointed staff.
- Relevant professionals (medical) were registered with the General Medical Council (GMC) and were up to date with revalidation
- The provider understood the learning needs of staff and provided protected time and training to meet them. Up to date records of skills, qualifications and training were maintained. Staff were encouraged and given opportunities to develop.

Coordinating patient care and information sharing

Staff worked together, and worked well with other organisations, to deliver effective care and treatment.

- Patients received coordinated and person-centred care. Staff referred to, and communicated effectively with, other services when appropriate. For example, we saw that they had referred a patient back to their GP when a concern had been identified at the initial consultation.
- Before providing treatment, doctors at the service ensured they had adequate knowledge of the patient's health, any relevant test results and their medicines history. We saw examples of patients being signposted to more suitable sources of treatment where this information was not available to ensure safe care and treatment.
- All patients were asked for consent to share details of their consultation and any medicines prescribed with their registered GP on each occasion they used the service. We saw that where consent had been given that a letter had been sent to the patient's GP informing them of the treatment supplied. Where a patient had not consented to share information, we saw that a record was made, to show that they had been given a letter about the treatment which they were encouraged to share with their GP.
- The provider had risk assessed the treatments they offered.

Are services effective?

Supporting patients to live healthier lives

Staff were consistent and proactive in empowering patients and supporting them to manage their own health and maximise their independence.

- Where appropriate, staff gave people advice, so they could self-care. This included dietary and lifestyle advice.
- Risk factors were identified, highlighted to patients and where appropriate highlighted to their normal care provider for additional support. We saw from the patient records an example where a patient's blood pressure was not well controlled, and they had been referred back to their GP prior to any treatment being offered.
- Where patients need's could not be met by the service, staff redirected them to the appropriate service for their needs.

Consent to care and treatment

The service obtained consent to care and treatment in line with legislation and guidance .

- Staff understood the requirements of legislation and guidance when considering consent and decision making.
- Staff supported patients to make decisions. The provider supplied patients with information leaflets for the medicines which included information about these being unlicensed, specially manufactured medicines.
- The service monitored the process for seeking consent appropriately.
- The provider offered full and clear information about the cost of the consultation and treatment including the cost of the medicine.

Are services caring?

We rated caring as Good because:

Staff treated patients with kindness, respect and compassion.

- The service sought feedback on customer satisfaction.
- Feedback from patients was positive about the way staff treat people. 15 people provided us with feedback via comment cards. This feedback was all positive. Comments about the staff included being polite, helpful and encouraging. The comments about the clinic included providing a non-judgemental service, encouraging and being delivered in a clean, tidy and organised environment. Other comments received included being provided with lots of relevant information and being supportive during difficult phases of treatment.
- Staff understood patients' personal, cultural, social and religious needs. They displayed an understanding and non-judgmental attitude to all patients.
- The service gave patients timely support and information.

Involvement in decisions about care and treatment

Staff helped patients to be involved in decisions about care and treatment.

- Information leaflets were available in easy read formats and other languages including Welsh, Polish, Urdu and Punjabi, to help patients be involved in decisions about their care.
- The provider was working to introduce interpretation services including sign language for patients who did not have English as a first language.
- Patients told us through comment cards, that they felt listened to and supported by staff and had enough time during consultations to make an informed decision about the choice of treatment available to them.

Privacy and Dignity

The service respected patients' privacy and dignity.

- Staff recognised the importance of people's dignity and respect.
- Staff knew that if patients wanted to discuss sensitive issues or appeared distressed they could offer them a private room to discuss their needs.

Are services responsive to people's needs?

We rated responsive as Good because:

Responding to and meeting people's needs

The service organised and delivered services to meet patients' needs. It took account of patient needs and preferences.

- The provider understood the needs of their patients and improved services in response to those needs. The parent company has reviewed and developed a new range of patient information leaflets and a mobile phone app to support patients.
- The facilities and premises were appropriate for the services delivered.
- Reasonable adjustments had been made so that people in vulnerable circumstances could access and use services on an equal basis to others. The parent company was developing an on-line language translation service to include video calling for sign language

Timely access to the service

Patients were able to access care and treatment from the service within an appropriate timescale for their needs.

- Patients had timely access to initial assessment, test results, diagnosis and treatment.
- Waiting times, delays and cancellations were minimal and managed appropriately.
- Patients with the most urgent needs had their care and treatment prioritised.
- Patients reported that the appointment system was easy to use.

Listening and learning from concerns and complaints

The service took complaints and concerns seriously and responded to them appropriately to improve the quality of care.

- Information about how to make a complaint or raise concerns was available. Staff treated patients who made complaints compassionately.
- The service informed patients of any further action that may be available to them should they not be satisfied with the response to their complaint.
- The service had a complaints policy and procedures in place. The service learned lessons from individual concerns, complaints and from analysis of trends. It acted as a result to improve the quality of the service.

Are services well-led?

We rated well-led as Good because:

Leadership capacity and capability;

Leaders had the capacity and skills to deliver high-quality, sustainable care.

- Leaders were knowledgeable about issues and priorities relating to the quality and future of services. They understood the challenges and were addressing them.
- Leaders at all levels were visible and approachable. They worked closely with staff and others to make sure they prioritised compassionate and inclusive leadership.
- The provider had effective processes to develop leadership capacity and skills, including planning for the future leadership of the service.

Vision and strategy

The service had a clear vision and credible strategy to deliver high quality care and promote good outcomes for patients.

- There was a clear vision and set of values. The service had a realistic strategy and supporting business plans to achieve priorities.
- The service developed its vision, values and strategy jointly with staff.
- Staff were aware of and understood the vision, values and strategy and their role in achieving them
- The service monitored progress against delivery of the strategy.

Culture

The service had a culture of high-quality sustainable care.

- Staff felt respected, supported and valued. They were proud to work for the service.
- The service focused on the needs of patients.
- Leaders and managers acted on behaviour and performance inconsistent with the vision and values.
- Openness, honesty and transparency were demonstrated when responding to incidents and complaints. The provider was aware of and had systems to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Duty of Candour.
- Staff told us they could raise concerns and were encouraged to do so. They had confidence that these would be addressed.

- There were processes for providing all staff with the development they need. This included appraisal and career development conversations. All staff received regular annual appraisals in the last year. Staff were supported to meet the requirements of professional revalidation where necessary. Clinical staff were considered valued members of the team. They were given protected time for professional development and evaluation of their clinical work.
- There was a strong emphasis on the safety and well-being of all staff.
- The service actively promoted equality and diversity. Staff had received equality and diversity training. Staff felt they were treated equally.
- There were positive relationships between staff and teams.

Governance arrangements

There were clear responsibilities, roles and systems of accountability to support good governance and management.

- Structures, processes and systems to support good governance and management were clearly set out, understood and effective. The governance and management of partnerships, joint working arrangements and shared services promoted interactive and co-ordinated person-centred care.
- Staff were clear on their roles and accountabilities
- Leaders had established proper policies, procedures and activities to ensure safety and assured themselves that they were operating as intended.

Managing risks, issues and performance

There were clear and effective processes for managing risks, issues and performance.

- There was an effective process to identify, understand, monitor and address current and future risks including risks to patient safety.
- The service had processes to manage current and future performance. Performance of clinical staff could be demonstrated through audit of their consultations, prescribing and referral decisions. Leaders had oversight of safety alerts, incidents, and complaints.
- Clinical audit had a positive impact on quality of care and outcomes for patients. There was clear evidence of action to change services to improve quality.

Are services well-led?

- The provider had plans in place and had trained staff for major incidents.

Appropriate and accurate information

The service acted on appropriate and accurate information.

- Quality and operational information was used to ensure and improve performance. Performance information was combined with the views of patients.
- Quality and sustainability were discussed in relevant meetings where all staff had sufficient access to information.
- The service used performance information which was reported and monitored, and management and staff were held to account
- The information used to monitor performance and the delivery of quality care was accurate and useful. There were plans to address any identified weaknesses. We saw that where discrepancies were found in the patient records that these were followed up in a timely manner and processes changed where appropriate.
- The service submitted data or notifications to external organisations as required.
- There were robust arrangements in line with data security standards for the availability, integrity and confidentiality of patient identifiable data, records and data management systems.

Engagement with patients, the public, staff and external partners

The service involved patients, the public, and staff and to support high-quality sustainable services.

- The service encouraged and heard views and concerns from the public, patients, staff and external partners and acted on them to shape services and culture.
- Staff could describe to us the systems in place to give feedback. We saw evidence of feedback opportunities for staff and how the findings were fed back to staff. We saw that regular staff meetings are held at all levels and the minutes of these were available to all staff. We also saw staff engagement in responding to these findings.
- The service was transparent, collaborative and open with stakeholders about performance.

Continuous improvement and innovation

There were systems and processes for learning, continuous improvement and innovation.

- There was a focus on continuous learning and improvement.
- The service made use of internal and external reviews of incidents and complaints. Learning was shared and used to make improvements.
- Leaders and managers encouraged staff to take time out to review individual and team objectives, processes and performance.
- There were systems to support improvement and innovation work. The parent company are in the process of introducing a video translation service for people who use sign language. Also they have revised and developed their range of information leaflets and introduced a mobile phone app to support patients.