

Victoria - Vauxhall Bridge Road

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		Good	
Are services safe?		Good	
Are services effective?		Good	
Are services caring?		Good	
Are services responsive to people's needs?		Good	
Are services well-led?		Good	

Overall summary

This service is rated as Good overall.

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 Victoria - Vauxhall Bridge Road under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act (HSCA) 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This was part of our inspection programme to check whether the service was meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and to rate the service.

Victoria - Vauxhall Bridge Road provides weight loss services, including prescribing medicines and dietary advice to support weight reduction. The Nurse Director is the registered manager. 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.

Our key findings were:

- The provider had implemented additional infection control measures in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Staff treated patients with kindness, respect and compassion.
- The service took complaints and concerns seriously and responded them appropriately to improve the quality of care.

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.
- Make a clear record of the rationale when a different approach to national guidance is taken in order to protect patient safety.
- Review how patient medical records are kept up to date.
- Clarify action taken to safeguard medicines supplies.
- Review the system for sharing treatment plans with patient's own GPs to ensure they are sent consistently.

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Chief Inspector of Primary Medical Services and Integrated Care

Our inspection team

Our inspection team was led by a member of the CQC medicines team and included another member of the CQC medicines team.

Background to Victoria - Vauxhall Bridge Road

Victoria - Vauxhall Bridge Road is a slimming clinic located in Victoria, London. It is part of the Weightmedics chain of clinics. There are a total of four registered locations. Three locations have been previously inspected and rated. The previous inspection report for this location was reviewed in preparation for this inspection.

The clinic consists of a reception area, a ground floor consulting room and a basement level consulting room. It is close to Victoria rail and tube station, and local bus stops. Parking in the local area is very limited. The clinic is wheelchair accessible.

Victoria - Vauxhall Bridge Road is open for face to face consultations seven days a week. People can also access video consultations with a doctor or a patient care manager. The clinic is staffed by a receptionist, and a doctor. A patient care manager and a nutritionist can work remotely or from a clinic office to see patients via video link. Staff based at other locations can also cover shifts at this clinic. If for any reason a shift is not filled by one of the regular doctors, there are a number of locum doctors familiar with the clinic that can be contacted. In addition, staff work closely with other staff based at the other locations.

How we inspected this service

We gathered a number of documents from the registered manager prior to our site visit and reviewed them for this inspection. During this inspection, we interviewed staff, made observations and reviewed additional 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

Safety systems and processes

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

- The provider conducted safety risk assessments. It had appropriate safety policies, which were regularly reviewed and communicated to all staff. They outlined clearly who to go to within the organisation 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 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 according to the organisation's own policy. (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. Staff knew how to identify and report concerns. Staff who acted as chaperones were trained for the role and had received a DBS check.
- There was an effective system to manage infection prevention and control. A legionella risk assessment had also been conducted. (Legionella is a term for a particular bacterium which can contaminate water systems in buildings).
- Additional infection control measures were put place in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. This included plastic screens at reception, floor stickers to encourage social distancing and hand-gel at reception.
- The provider ensured that facilities and equipment were safe and that equipment was maintained according to the manufacturers' instructions. The clinic did not dispose of any healthcare waste. Any unwanted medicines were denatured on site and returned to the wholesaler. The clinic had the appropriate certificate for this activity.
- The provider carried out appropriate environmental risk assessments, which took into account the profile of people using the service and those who may be accompanying them.
- There was an effective system to manage infection prevention and control. Records were maintained to show that cleaning was carried out and checked before each clinic session.

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 staff tailored to their role.
- Staff understood their responsibilities to manage emergencies and to recognise those in need of urgent medical attention. They were aware that the clinic policy was to call the emergency services if needed. All staff had first aid training. In addition, the doctors and the registered manager were trained in basic life support.
- The service had carried out a risk assessment and determined that it was not necessary to keep the emergency medicines recommended in national guidance. This is a service where the risk of a medical emergency is low.
- When there were changes to services or staff the service assessed and monitored the impact on safety.
- There were appropriate indemnity arrangements.

Information to deliver safe care and treatment

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

Are services safe?

- 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.
- All records were updated during the consultation or within a reasonable time after the consultation, in line with guidance.
- The service had systems for sharing information with staff and other agencies to enable them to deliver safe care and treatment.
- The service had a formal 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

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

- The systems and arrangements for managing medicines (including controlled drugs) and equipment minimised risks. When the medicines fridge temperature was recorded out of range, staff followed policy to highlight concerns to managers. However, it was not clear if the provider took adequate action to follow the manufacturer's instructions and safeguard medicines supplies.
- The service carried out regular medicines audits to ensure prescribing was in line with best practice guidelines for safe prescribing. As the service had electronic records, they could be accessed remotely. Doctors within the service were able to conduct prescribing peer reviews.
- The services prescribed and supplied Schedule 3 Controlled Drugs (medicines that have a higher level of control due to their risk of misuse and dependence). The service maintained a full audit trail of prescribing and supply. Staff prescribed and 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.
- There were effective protocols for verifying the identity of patients, including for patients accessing treatment via video consultations.
- 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'. We saw evidence that all medicines prescribed by the clinic were included 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.

Are services safe?

- 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 took action to improve safety in the service. For example, on one occasion, staff forgot to call a patient to let them know that the clinic was running behind schedule. This resulted in a patient complaint. As a result, staff were reminded to keep patients informed of any issues with the running of the clinic.
- The provider was aware of and complied with the requirements of the Duty of Candour. The provider encouraged a culture of openness and honesty.

Are services effective?

We rated Effective as Good

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).

- At the last inspection, out of 11 records we saw one occasion where treatment deviated from the clinic's own policy. During this inspection, out of seven records, we saw two occasions with no rationale recorded when treatment deviated from policy.
- The provider assessed patients' needs in line with relevant standards and only prescribed medicines as part of a holistic weight management programme.
- Clinicians always had access to information to make or confirm a diagnosis. Patients were asked for information on their medical history and any medicines that they were taking. However, we saw that this information was not always up to date. Whilst we were told that doctors verbally confirmed that there were no changes, this was not recorded.
- The provider recently updated their guidance and now asked for GP details for all new patients.
- Patients were weighed at each face to face consultation, and were required to have their blood pressure (BP) checked periodically.
- We saw no evidence of discrimination when making care and treatment decisions.
- Arrangements were in place to deal with repeat patients. The medical records clearly showed that people received appropriate treatment breaks.
- The provider had developed a mobile phone application that enabled patients to access information to aid weight management. This application was being piloted at the time of this inspection and included information on nutrition and exercise. Patients were also able to use it to track their own weight.

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, an audit was carried out to review treatment dropout rate. Doctors also conducted peer reviews of medical notes to ensure that prescribing was in line with clinic policy.
- The service made improvements through the use of completed audits. Clinical audit had a positive impact on quality of care and outcomes for patients. There was clear evidence of action to resolve concerns and improve quality. For example, staff conducted a weight loss audit. Any patients who were not on track to reach their goal weight were offered further support and advice.

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 were registered with the General Medical Council and the Nursing and Midwifery Council. They were up to date with revalidation.

Are services effective?

- 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 person-centred and holistic care and the importance of not relying on medicines alone was discussed. Staff referred to, and communicated effectively with, other services when appropriate. For example, GPs were contacted for information on renal and cardiovascular impairment when existing patients reached 65 years.
- During initial registration, patients were asked for basic details of their health. On arrival to the clinic, patients were asked to complete a more detailed form. This captured information relating to their health, and their medical history. During the consultation with the doctor, this information was discussed in detail and patients were weighed.
- Patients accessing the clinic via video consultation were asked to submit identification documents, height, weight, and a validated blood pressure reading.
- All patients were asked to consent to the sharing of their treatment details with their own GP. This happened during the initial clinic registration process. During this inspection, we did not see that consent was always revisited during the consultation with the clinic doctor. This meant that patients were not always informed of the risks of not sharing information as per current guidance. Patients should be informed of the risks of not sharing information with their own GPs prior to consenting to treatment. We have made a recommendation to the provider to consider revisiting how and when consent to information sharing is obtained.
- If patients consented to information sharing, letters were supposed to be sent to their own GPs informing them of the treatment being provided. However, due to a system glitch, letters were not always sent. We made a recommendation to the provider to review the system for sharing information with patients own GPs.
- The provider's policy was recently updated to make information sharing with GPs in patients over 65 years mandatory for certain medicines. If permission was not granted, treatment could not be provided with certain medicines due to the increased risk in this age group. However, those patients could still access weight management support services.
- Where patients did not give consent to information sharing, we saw that the risks of this were discussed.

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. For example, patients were emailed information on healthy living including links to videos for support.
- Some patients were provided with a consultation with a nutritionist to discuss healthy eating.
- The provider had developed a mobile phone application to support weight management. At the time of this inspection, this application was being piloted.
- We saw evidence that dietary, physical and holistic needs were discussed with patients and documented in their records. We also saw that patients were encouraged to monitor body composition so that they could track muscle and fat.
- Where patients' needs could not be met by the service, staff redirected them to the appropriate service for their needs.

Consent to care and treatment

Are services effective?

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. Where appropriate, they assessed and recorded a patient's mental capacity to make a decision.
- The service monitored the process for seeking consent appropriately.

Are services caring?

We rated Caring as Good

Kindness, respect and compassion

Staff treated patients with kindness, respect and compassion.

- The service sought feedback from patients on how satisfied they were with the service provided. All patients were sent a text message asking for feedback after each consultation. If anyone gave a score lower than the maximum, they were contacted to find out how the service could be improved. This information was used to monitor and improve the service.
- Feedback from patients was positive about the way staff treat people. One patient told us that the service was 'fantastic' they were 'very happy' and that staff were 'very friendly'. They would recommend the clinic to other people.
- 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.

- Interpretation services were not available for patients who did not have English as a first language. However, people were encouraged to bring an interpreter with them to their consultation if needed. Patients were also told about multi-lingual staff who might be able to support them. One patient told us that if they needed any clarity, they knew that they could ask the doctor to write information down for them.
- All patients were encouraged to take a holistic approach to their weight loss. This was reflected in the contents of the mobile phone application and in the language used on the provider's website. Diet and exercise were also discussed and patients were made aware not to rely on the use of medicines alone.

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.
- Consultations with the doctor were held in a private room in the clinic. It was not possible to hear the consultations from the waiting area. Patients were advised to go somewhere private and quiet whilst they were having video consultations.

Are services responsive to people's needs?

We rated Responsive as Good

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. For example, people had asked for the service to increase the opening hours. As a result, patients could now access appointments on Sundays.
- The facilities and premises were appropriate for the services delivered. If a patient was unable to access the basement for a consultation with the doctor, there was a consultation room on the ground floor that could be used instead.
- Reasonable adjustments were made so that people in vulnerable circumstances could access and use services on an equal basis to others. For example, people could make the text larger on the tablet screen whilst completing the pre-assessment forms in reception. Staff were also able to provide magnifying glasses to people with poor eyesight. A hearing aid loop was available.
- Patients said they preferred to have shorter sessions with the nutritionist but more regularly. As a result of this feedback, appointments offered with the nutritionist were amended.

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, diagnosis and treatment.
- Waiting times, delays and cancellations were minimal and managed appropriately. If for any reason the doctor could not attend, other doctors who could cover would be contacted.
- Doctors were able to conduct video consultations for patients who did not wish to attend clinic in person.

Listening and learning from concerns and complaints

The service took complaints and concerns seriously and responded 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 complaint policy and procedure in place. The service learned lessons from individual concerns, complaints and from the analysis of trends. It acted on these to improve the quality of care.

Are services well-led?

We rated Well-led as Good

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 and external partners. Staff gave examples of how their advice was listened to and helped the development of the business.
- Staff were aware of and understood the vision, values and strategy and their role in achieving them. The vision and strategy was communicated to staff at team meetings.
- 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. For example, action was taken when a member of staff's behaviour fell short of the values of the organisation.
- Openness, honesty and transparency were demonstrated when responding to incidents and complaints. For example, due to issues with medication deliveries, the provider contracted a new courier company.
- 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 needed. This included appraisal and career development conversations. All staff received regular annual appraisals in the last year. The provider had moved to an electronic system to manage all their human resources processes. This empowered staff with the ability to keep track of their own progress, training and their appraisals.
- Staff were supported to meet the requirements of professional revalidation where necessary.
- There was a strong emphasis on the safety and well-being of all staff.
- The service actively promoted equality and diversity. It identified and addressed the causes of any workforce inequality. Staff had received equality and diversity training. Staff felt they were treated equally.

Are services well-led?

- 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. Staff knew where to access the providers' policy documents.
- The information used to monitor performance and the delivery of quality care was accurate and useful. There were plans to address any identified weaknesses.
- 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.

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. Risk assessments were regularly reviewed and updated.
- The service had processes to manage current and future performance. Performance of clinical staff could be demonstrated through audit of their prescribing 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. We saw that there was a clinical governance meeting where this was discussed.

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.

Engagement with patients, the public, staff and external partners

The service involved patients, the public, staff and external partners 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. For example, patients said that they needed help with taking BP readings at home. As a result, the provider put detailed information to assist patients with taking accurate BP readings on their website.

Are services well-led?

- Staff could describe to us the systems in place to give feedback. For example, they told us that they were in constant communication with managers and felt confident to raise any issues. We saw evidence of feedback opportunities for staff and how the findings were fed back to staff.
- The service was transparent, collaborative and open with stakeholders about performance.

Continuous improvement and innovation

There was evidence of systems and processes for learning, continuous improvement and innovation.

- There was a focus on continuous learning and improvement. For example, staff attended numerous online events that were of interest or relevant to the development of the service.
- The service made use of internal reviews of incidents and complaints. Learning was shared with the whole team and used to make improvements.
- There were systems to support improvement and innovation work. For example, audit results were discussed in staff meetings. Staff discussed career development during appraisals and were encouraged to attend relevant learning events.