

Best Life Clinic

Inspection report

27 Norton Road
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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

We carried out an announced comprehensive inspection on 26 May 2021 to ask the service the following key questions;
Are services safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led?

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 this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This inspection was planned to check whether the service was meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

We saw the following outstanding practice:

The clinic was extremely patient focused and provided a holistic service to them. Feedback through 31 surveys and 58 reviews commented that staff offered excellent care in a clean and welcoming environment and were supportive and responsive to questions and that they had confidence in the service provided.

The clinic had introduced systems to reduce the level of patient anxiety and the level of pain relief needed.

Best Life Clinic is a specialist clinic offering private urology services and reversal of vasectomies. The clinic is led by a Consultant Urologist. They also offer aesthetic services such as anti-wrinkle treatments, but these treatments are not regulated by the Care Quality Commission and were not inspected. This service had been inspected in 2018. The service was registered with the Care Quality Commission in August 2016.

There is a 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.

We found the service had met the regulations and had systems and protocols in place for staff to follow which kept patients safe.

Our key findings were;

There was an open and transparent approach to safety and a system in place for reporting and recording incidents.

- Patients reported they were involved in their care and decisions about their treatment.
- Information about services was available and easy to understand.

Overall summary

- All consultation rooms were well organised and equipped, with good light and ventilation.
- Staff maintained the necessary skills and competence to support the needs of patients.
- Staff were up to date with current guidelines.
- Staff were kind, caring, competent and put patients at their ease.
- The provider was aware of, and complied with, the requirements of the Duty of Candour.

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Chief Inspector of Primary Medical Services and Integrated Care

Our inspection team

Our inspection team was led by a CQC inspector and included a second CQC inspector.

Background to Best Life Clinic

Best Life Healthcare Ltd is a provider registered with the Care Quality Commission. The provider delivers regulated activities from Best Life Clinic, a location at 27 Norton Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2BW <http://bestlifeclinic.org/>. There are two Directors, one Nurse Practitioner and a range of support staff.

Best Life Clinic is registered with the Care Quality Commission for the following regulated activities;

Treatment of disease, disorder or injury,

Surgical procedures,

Diagnostic and screening procedures.

Best Life Clinic provides a fee charging service consisting of consultations, examinations and treatment for patients with urological problems. Consultations and treatment are available for both children and adults. Urology is a surgical speciality, covering the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and disorders affecting the urinary system starting from kidneys to urethra (water tube). The consultant at the clinic has special interests in bladder dysfunction, female incontinence, benign prostatic diseases, inflammatory diseases of urinary tract (urinary tract infections, prostatitis and painful bladder syndrome). Services offered are; Urodynamic Service to assess Bladder function and Incontinence, Catheter Care Service: Provided by an experienced Nurse practitioner including a trial without a catheter, reversal of vasectomy, Circumcision,

The practice provides services locally, nationally and internationally.

The opening times for the clinic are Monday - Saturday: 8:30am - 12:30pm. Evening appointments between 4.30pm and 8.30pm on request.

Prior to the inspection we reviewed information provided by the Provider. We also asked Healthwatch and the Clinical Commissioning Group whether they had any information regarding the provider. We did not receive any information of concern from them. We also looked at any notifications that we had received.

During the inspection we interviewed staff and made observations and reviews of documents and the environment.

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 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 staff. 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. Policies were regularly reviewed and were accessible to all staff. They outlined clearly who to go to for further guidance.
- 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. 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 (IPC). The practice had undertaken several IPC audits. We saw that all equipment had been cleaned and cleaning labels showing the date of the last clean were in place. We spoke with the person providing cleaning of the clinic. They had a clear cleaning rota in place and evidence to show the duties had been completed. They confirmed they had sufficient time and equipment to carry out their job role. We spoke with the lead nurse responsible for IPC and were shown around the clinic. Good systems were in place with a clear clean and dirty flow for the operating theatre. Where surgical instruments were not single use items the clinic had a contract in place with the local NHS Trust for cleaning of the equipment.
- 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. We looked at a sample of equipment within the clinic and found they had been recently portable appliance test tested and calibrated ensuring they were safe to use. Supporting certification was also seen.

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.
- Staff understood their responsibilities to manage emergencies and to recognise those in need of urgent medical attention. They knew how to identify and manage patients with severe infections, for example sepsis.
- When there were changes to services or staff the service assessed and monitored the impact on safety.
- There were appropriate indemnity arrangements in place to cover all potential liabilities.

Information to deliver safe care and treatment

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

Are services safe?

- We were shown the patient pathway from initial referral, consent, completion of the procedure, explanation of risks and information provided to patients following any of the procedures completed.
- The service had systems for sharing information with staff and other agencies to enable them to deliver safe care and treatment. This included direction to local fertility clinics for checking the patency of the patient's sperm.
- The service had a system in place to retain medical records in line with department of health and social care (DHSC) guidance
- Clinicians made appropriate and timely referrals in line with protocols and up to date evidence-based guidance.

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, controlled drugs, emergency medicines and equipment to minimised risks. The service kept prescription stationery securely and monitored its use.
- 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.

Track record on safety

The service had had a good safety record.

- There were comprehensive risk assessments in relation to safety issues. We saw up to date fire equipment checks, gas landlord certification and fire risk assessment.
- 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 took action to improve safety in the service.
- 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 would give affected people reasonable support, truthful information and a verbal and written apology
- They would have written records of verbal interactions as well as written correspondence.
- 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 including sessional and agency staff.

Are services effective?

We rated effective as Good because:

Effective needs assessment, care and treatment

- The service assessed needs and delivered care in line with relevant and current evidence-based guidance and standards. This included National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) best practice guidelines, evidence-based research papers and up to date research articles. The clinicians in the service also worked in other roles in the NHS and ensured that they were up to date with training and guidance. The service had systems in place to keep all clinical staff up to date. Staff had access to best practice guidelines and used this information to deliver care and treatment that met patients' needs.
- Patients' immediate and ongoing needs were fully assessed. Where appropriate this included their clinical needs and their mental and physical wellbeing. We looked at the patient pathway which included a full assessment.
- We were provided with information of an audit undertaken showing the outcomes in the effect of non-pharmacological interventions on pain perception and anxiety during vasectomy reversals. This led to beneficial clinical outcomes. There was a reduction in the dose of medication used for sedation and local anaesthesia. The audit showed an improvement in anxiety and pain perception scores. The data for this audit had been collected in 2018 and comprised of 30 patients. The most recent data of March 2021 again comprised of 30 patients. The data showed the average amount of pain relief medication used in 2018 was 6% compared to 2021 when this had reduced to 1%. Information showed there had been significant reduction in patients and their partners anxiety levels although there was no actual comparable data for anxiety levels. Information was however available that showed reductions in anxiety scores on first arrival from 2.2% with a continual reduction throughout to discharge when the score was less than 0.5%.
- Patients commented on their levels of anxiety. Comments included that patients and partners were put at ease immediately which helped in reducing their anxiety. This was echoed numerous times.
- We saw that staff were very well equipped to offer emotional support to patients, one member of the nursing team was a trained counsellor.
- Clinicians had enough information to make or confirm a diagnosis.
- We saw no evidence of discrimination when making care and treatment decisions.
- Staff assessed and managed patients' pain where appropriate.
- The service offered a multi-layer micro surgical vaso-vasectomy reversal service by an advanced microsurgery technique. In selected patients, where there was a blockage of the tiny tube called epididymis the service could offer vasoepididymostomy a complex procedure not routinely offered in the National Health Service.

Monitoring care and treatment

The service was actively involved in quality improvement activity. Patients were encouraged to provide feedback that was analysed to improve the service and look for trends and themes.

- The service used information about care and treatment to make improvements. For example, the service had improved information given to patients regarding post procedure semen testing to avoid confusion and ease the process. The service made improvements using 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. The service had completed audits on the decontamination of equipment and waste management to help ensure safe care for patients.

Are services effective?

- We saw that a vasectomy reversal audit had been completed in March 2021. The purpose of the audit was to review the quality of the service provided and outcome assessments for patency rates and pregnancies. The conclusion indicated positive results in regard to the procedure in relation to patency rates and a number of pregnancies. Full data for all the procedures was not available due to lack of responders for which several reasons were detailed. The clinic plans to repeat the audit in three months.
- We saw that feedback had been received via Doctify with there being 58 reviews. The data showed that a score of 4.99 out of 5 for overall patient trust. Comments included that patients received full and detailed explanations of the procedures and the likely success rates. Without exception the reviews detailed how positive the bedside manner was of all staff.

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 and nursing) were registered with the General Medical Council (GMC)/ Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) 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. Any new clinical staff appointed underwent a period of supervision and observed practice prior to working independently. We discussed a formal competency framework and assessment. Both the registered manager and lead nurse confirmed this was an area they were looking 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. Many comments included that from initial consultation to discharge the staff were very professional. They also commented about the support not offered to themselves as patients but also to their partners. They commented that the whole process was explained, kept well informed and cared for.
- Staff referred to, and communicated effectively with other services when appropriate, such as, fertility clinics and patients GP if needed.
- 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.
- 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.
- The provider had risk assessed the treatments they offered.
- Patient information was shared appropriately (this included when patients moved to other professional services), and the information needed to plan and deliver care and treatment was available to relevant staff in a timely and accessible way. There were clear and effective arrangements for following up on people who had been referred to other services.
- Post-operative support was offered either by visiting the clinic or the hospitals where the patients had had their surgery, or by telephone or video reviews for patients coming from further afield.
- The service monitored the process for seeking consent appropriately.

Supporting patients to live healthier lives

Are services effective?

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 after care leaflets.
- Risk factors were identified, highlighted to patients and where appropriate highlighted to their normal care provider for additional support.
- 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

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.

Are services caring?

We rated caring as Good because:

Kindness, respect and compassion

Staff treated patients with kindness, respect and compassion.

- The reviews given by patients relating to the clinician and his team were without exception very positive.
- Patients said they found the whole process professional and the staff friendly and kind. They commented that they were given all the information they needed right through the process with the emphasis on reducing anxiety levels.
- 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.
- The service provided a holistic approach to the care and treatment it delivered to people who used the service and their families. They had consciously taken account of people's emotional and supportive needs. They provided a family/relative/friends room that could be used while the person was undergoing their procedure. Within the room were tea and coffee making facilities, access to relaxing music and DVD's.
- Staff had also contacted a local hotel and negotiated reduced rates for patients who had travelled a distance and needed to stay over.
- Staff had also negotiated reduced rates for patients when using the fertility laboratory. We saw that where suggestions for improvement had been made, in the main these had been actioned. For example, the development of patient car parking facilities.

Involvement in decisions about care and treatment

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

- Patients told us through direct feedback to the service that they felt listened to and supported by staff and had sufficient time during consultations to make an informed decision about the choice of treatment available to them. Numerous comments were received which reflected this both from the 58 reviews and 31 surveys which had been completed since January 2021. They commented that staff offered excellent care in a clean and welcoming environment and were supportive and responsive to questions. They had confidence in the service provided and would highly recommend it.
- Staff communicated with people in a way that they could understand, for example, communication aids and easy read materials were available.

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. For example, the service was very mindful of the emotional effect the patients may experience due to the nature of the treatment delivered. They provided holistic care which included emotional support, reassurance and clear involvement of their 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 clinic was situated on the ground floor and had wheelchair access and accessible toilet facilities..

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.
- Due to the nature of the services provided, 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.
- Referrals and transfers to other services were undertaken in a timely way.

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 said they would treat patients who made complaints compassionately.
- There was also information about further action that may be available to them should they not be satisfied with the response to their complaint.
- The service had complaint policy and procedures in place.
- Since the last inspection there had not been any complaints.

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.
- 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.
- We saw that the provider had reviewed the current service provision and had plans in place for further development. These included amongst others, succession planning. There were also plans to expand the services on offer and the clinic had started a small dermatology 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 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.
- We saw if it was necessary that openness, honesty and transparency would be 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 we spoke with told us they were able to 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, including nurses, 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. It identified and addressed the causes of any workforce inequality. Staff had received equality and diversity training. Staff felt they were treated equally.
- There were positive relationships between staff.

Are services well-led?

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.
- 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.
- 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.

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.
- 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 enough access to information.

Engagement with patients, the public, staff and external partners

The service involved patients, staff and external partners to support high-quality sustainable services.

- The patients', staff and external partners' views and concerns were encouraged, heard and acted on to shape services and culture. From patient feedback we reviewed
- There were systems to support improvement and innovation work. This can be demonstrated by the type of procedures on offer and the work undertaken in respect of pain management and anxiety.

Are services well-led?

- Staff were able to 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 also saw staff engagement in responding to these findings. It was confirmed that regular meetings took place including nurses meetings and governance meetings. Staff we spoke with felt valued and talked of an open and inclusive culture.
- 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.
- The service made use of internal and external reviews of incidents and complaints. Learning was shared and used to make improvements. There was a culture of life-long learning to ensure the most up to date techniques for their patients.
- Leaders and managers encouraged staff to take time out to review individual and team objectives, processes and performance.