



**Evaluation of Patient  
Experience at the South Tees  
Access & Response (STAR)  
Scheme**

**August 2016**

## Introduction

### Healthwatch Middlesbrough & Redcar and Cleveland

Local Healthwatches have been set up across England to create a strong, independent consumer champion with the aim to:

- Strengthen the collective voice of citizens and communities in influencing local health and social care services to better meet their needs.
- Support people to find the right health and social care services for them by providing appropriate information, advice and signposting.

Healthwatch works with local people, patients, service users, carers, community groups, organisations, service providers and commissioners to get the best out of local health and social care services. This doesn't just mean improving services today but influencing and shaping services to meet the needs of the local communities tomorrow.

Healthwatch is steered by a Board of volunteers, commissioned by the Local Authority and accountable to the public. Healthwatch are the only non-statutory body whose sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak-out on their behalf.

Healthwatch has:

- The statutory right to be listened to; Providers and commissioners must respond to Healthwatch within 20 days of submission of requests for information or reports.
- The statutory power to Enter & View publicly funded health and social care services.
- A statutory seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

### What is the STAR Scheme?

In October 2013, the Prime Minister announced a new £50 million Challenge Fund to help improve access to general practice and stimulate innovative ways of providing primary care services, of which NHS England were asked to lead the process of inviting practices to submit innovative bids and oversee the programme. The first wave of twenty pilots was announced in April 2014 and further funding was announced by the Prime Minister for a second wave on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014. This second wave of thirty seven schemes was announced in

April 2015, one of which was The South Tees Access and Response (STAR) scheme. The STAR scheme was submitted as a bid for GPs across South Tees to help improve access to their services outside the current core hours for patients needing urgent care or advice.

The STAR pilot extends evening and weekend opening times for patients from 6.30pm to 9.30pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 8pm on weekends and bank holidays to ensure patients get the right care, first time through a single point of access.

It is open to all patients registered to GP practices across Redcar, East Cleveland and Middlesbrough. You simply need to call NHS 111 to access the service at Bentley Medical Practice in Redcar Primary Care Hospital or Linthorpe Surgery.

### Aim

- To evaluate patient experience of the STAR Scheme.

### Objectives

- Design a questionnaire to be used to gather patient feedback from individuals who are using the STAR scheme.
- Distribute the questionnaire and carry out patients interviews with individuals who are using the STAR scheme.
- Analyse questionnaire responses and feedback to determine what, if any recommendations can be made to improve patient experience of the STAR scheme.

### Methods

Healthwatch designed a questionnaire which was used when conducting visits to the STAR scheme locations; Bentley Medical Practice & Linthorpe Surgery (see Appendix 1). Healthwatch visited the STAR scheme locations on different days of the week and at varying times of the day to ensure a fair distribution of data was collected.

The Healthwatch teams visited the STAR scheme during the months of April and May, speaking patients using the service and asking them to complete the questionnaire and provide any other additional feedback about the scheme.

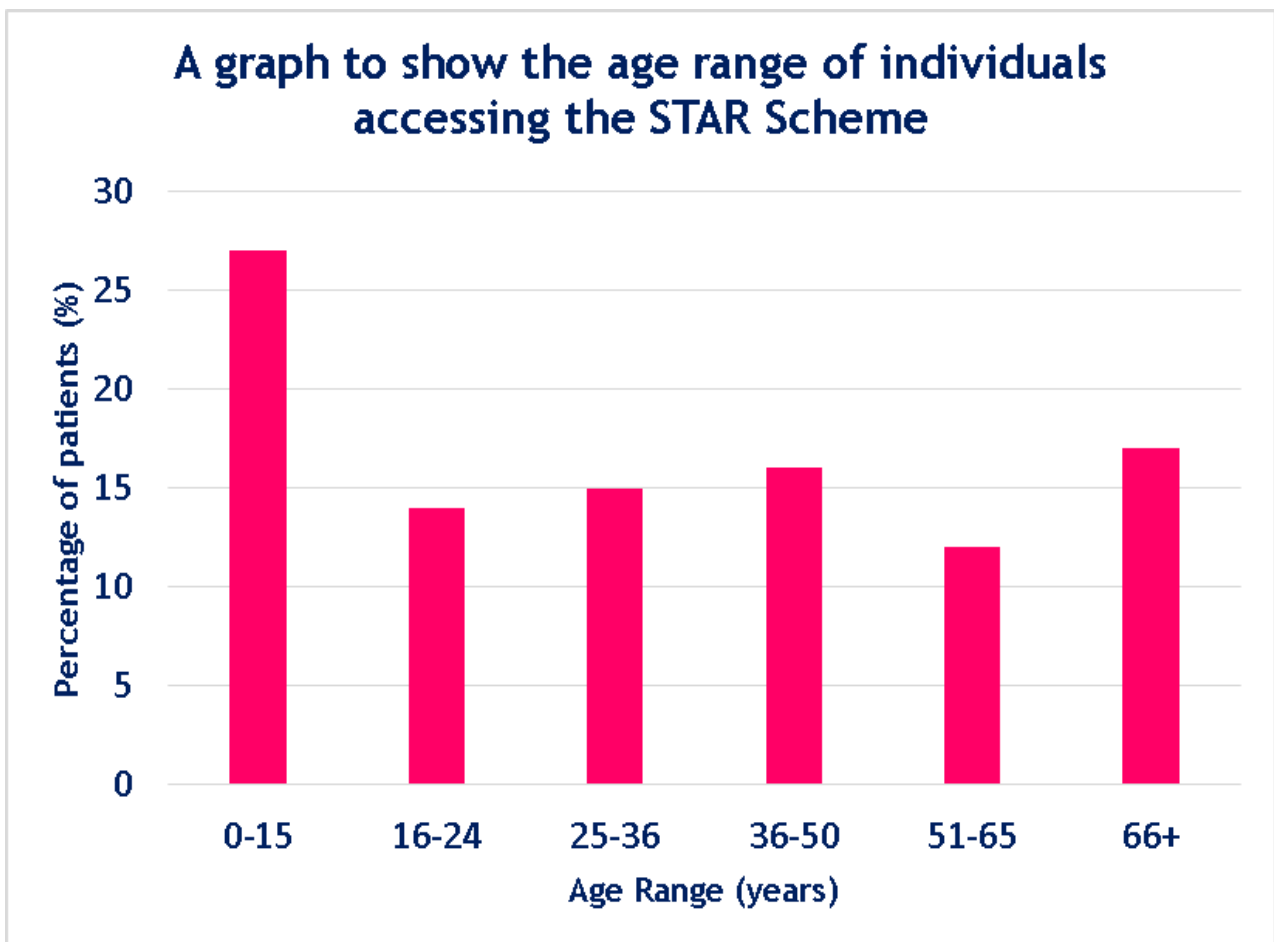
Follow up phone calls were also conducted with a select number of patients, approximately 2/3 weeks following their visit. These calls were made to

determine if the patient had needed to access any other services following their visit to the STAR scheme and if their problem had been resolved.

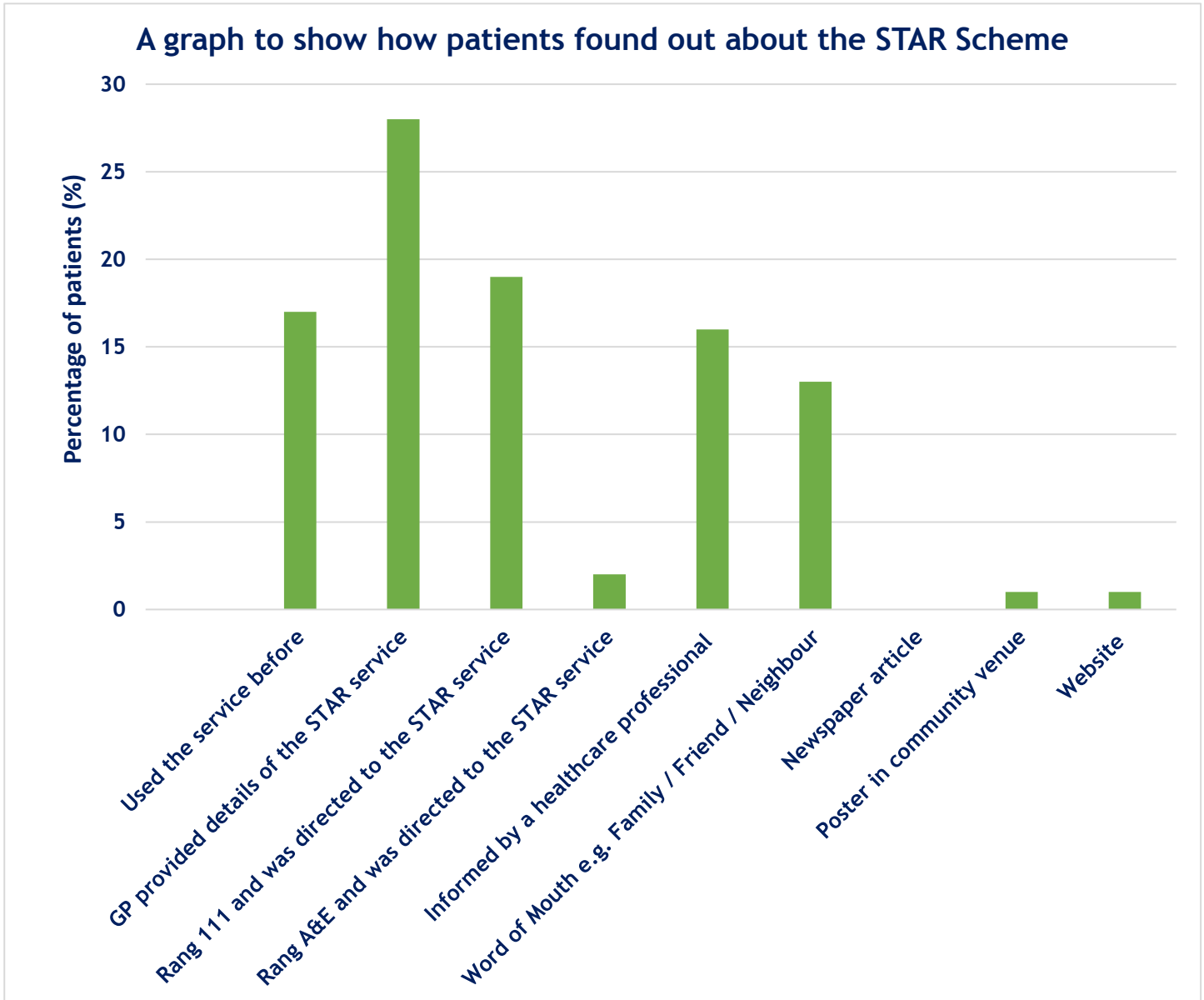
### Results

A total of 95 questionnaires were completed, 38 at Linthorpe Surgery and 57 at Bentley Medical Practice. 70 out of the 95 patients engaged with had not used the STAR scheme before and 58 of which completed the questionnaire themselves with 37 completing it on behalf of a family member or friend. The majority of patients accessing the service were from a TS10, TS5 or TS11 postcode.

### Age of Patients accessing the STAR Scheme

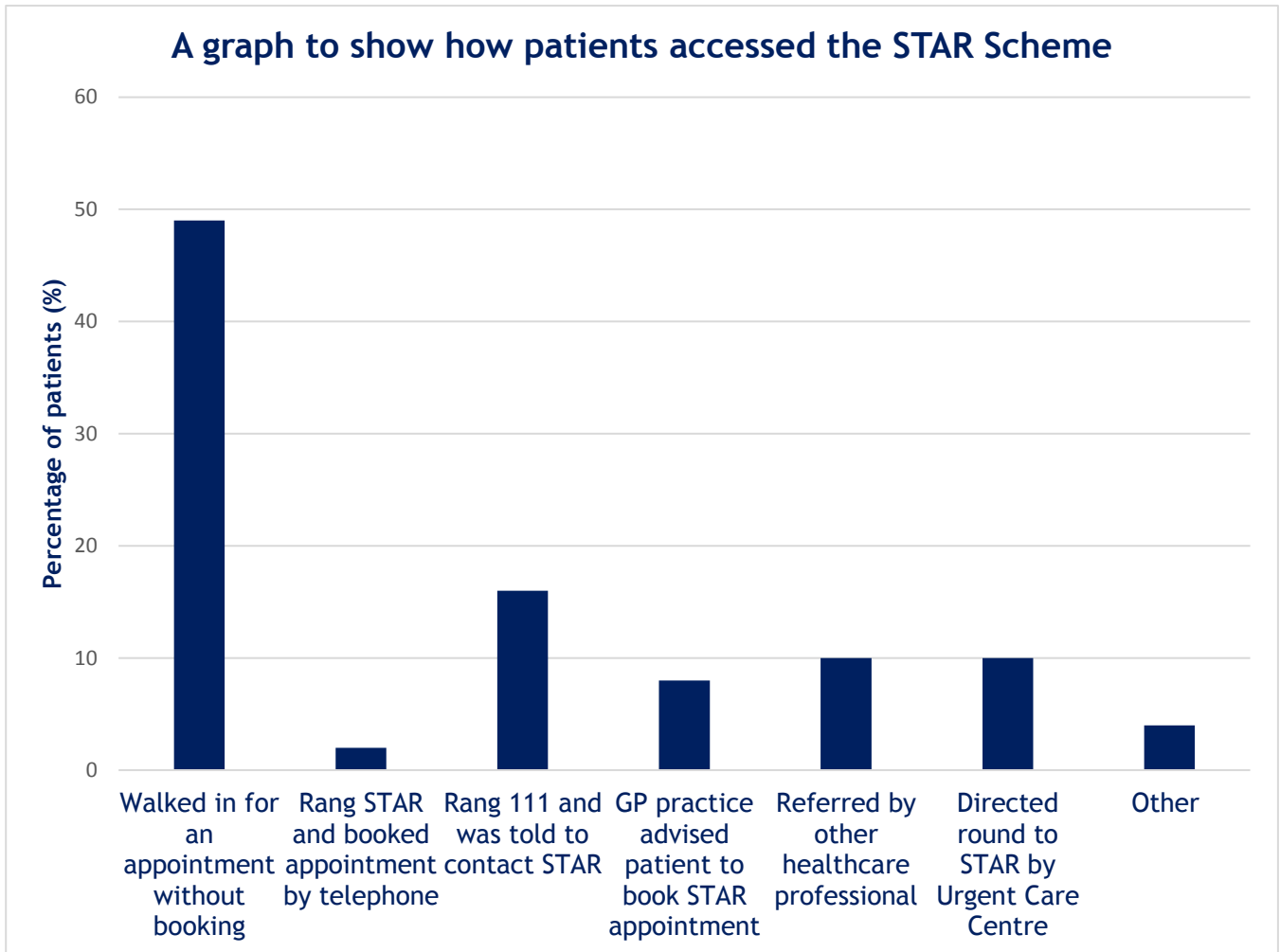


How patients found out about the STAR Scheme



A large proportion of patients accessing the STAR Scheme at Bentley Medical Practice in Redcar had been directed to the service from Urgent Care which is on the same premises whereas the majority of patients accessing the service at Linthorpe Surgery in Middlesbrough had been directed to the STAR Scheme by their GP surgery if they were unable to get an appointment.

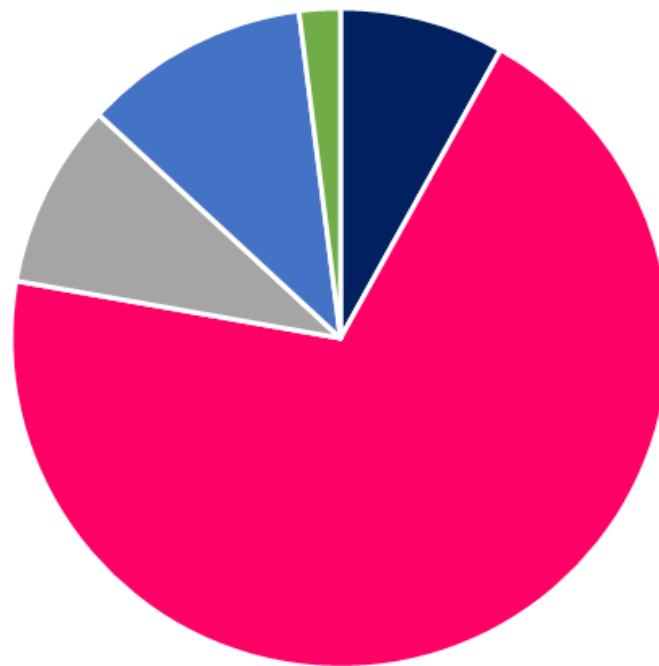
How patients accessed the STAR Scheme



To access the STAR Scheme between 6.30pm and 9.30pm Monday to Friday or 8am to 8pm weekends and bank holidays patients are told to ring NHS 111 to ask for an appointment. The patient's details are then passed to one of the GPs or a nurse practitioner who will ring the patient back and carry out an initial assessment over the telephone. If required, the clinician will either consult over the telephone or offer a face-to-face appointment at a dedicated STAR hub. The majority of patients Healthwatch spoke to had simply walked in to the hubs without calling NHS 111 and booking an appointment. Despite this, no one was ever turned away from the service and they received an appointment that day.

Mode of Transport used to access the STAR Scheme






**A graph to show the mode of transport used to access the STAR Scheme**



■ Walked ■ Car ■ Taxi ■ Bus ■ Lift from family member / friend ■ Other

Out of the 96 patients Healthwatch spoke to, 66 accessed the STAR scheme by car. Other modes of transport included travelling by bike or by ambulance. None of the patients who Healthwatch spoke to had used the bus to get to their appointment.

Patient Rating of Location, Access, Parking and Hours of Opening

	Very Poor 	Poor 	OK 	Good 	Excellent 
Location of STAR Service	0%	0%	5%	29%	65%
Ease of Access	0%	0%	5%	21%	74%
Parking	0%	1%	9%	26%	63%
Hours of opening	0%	0%	4%	24%	71%

The majority of patients who accessed the STAR Scheme found the location, ease of access, parking and opening hours to be 'good' or 'excellent'.

Additional patient comments received:

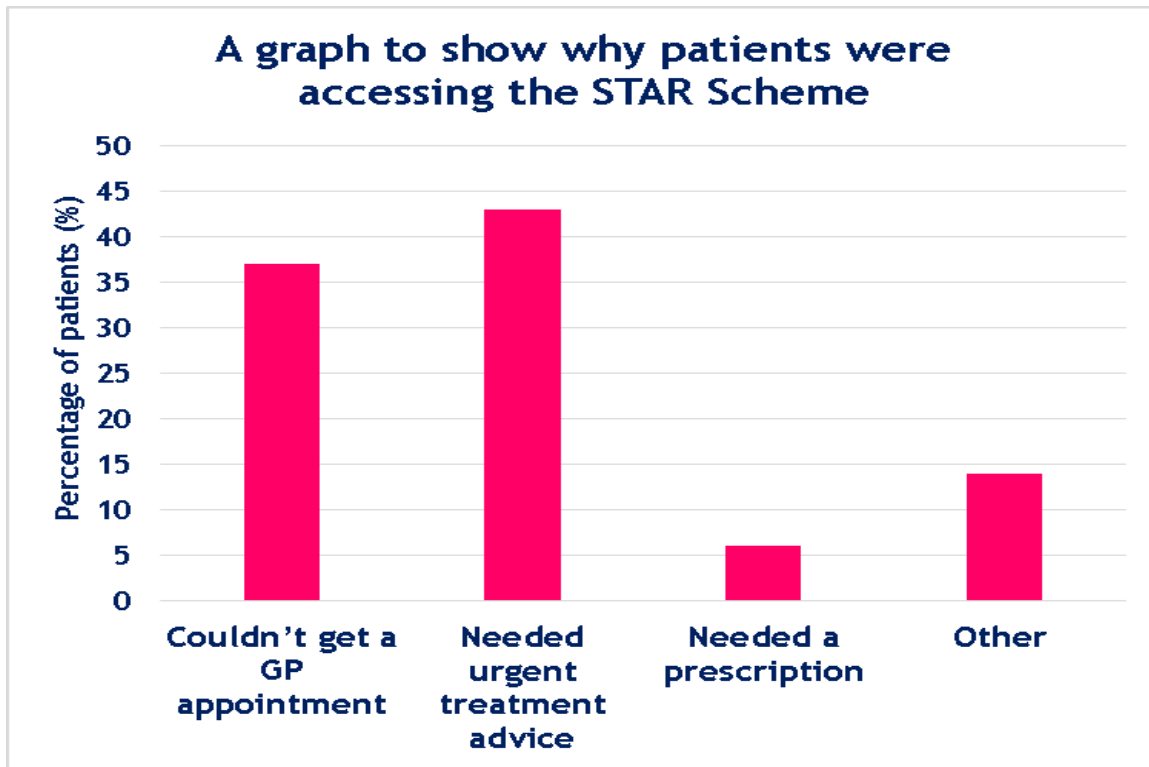
'I think it is vital to have care at this time. I was desperate tonight and would not of been able to cope without this STAR service.'

'The service is fab, it is very difficult to get a doctors appointment when we all work, we cannot ring by 8am. If this service was not available we would have gone to A&E.'

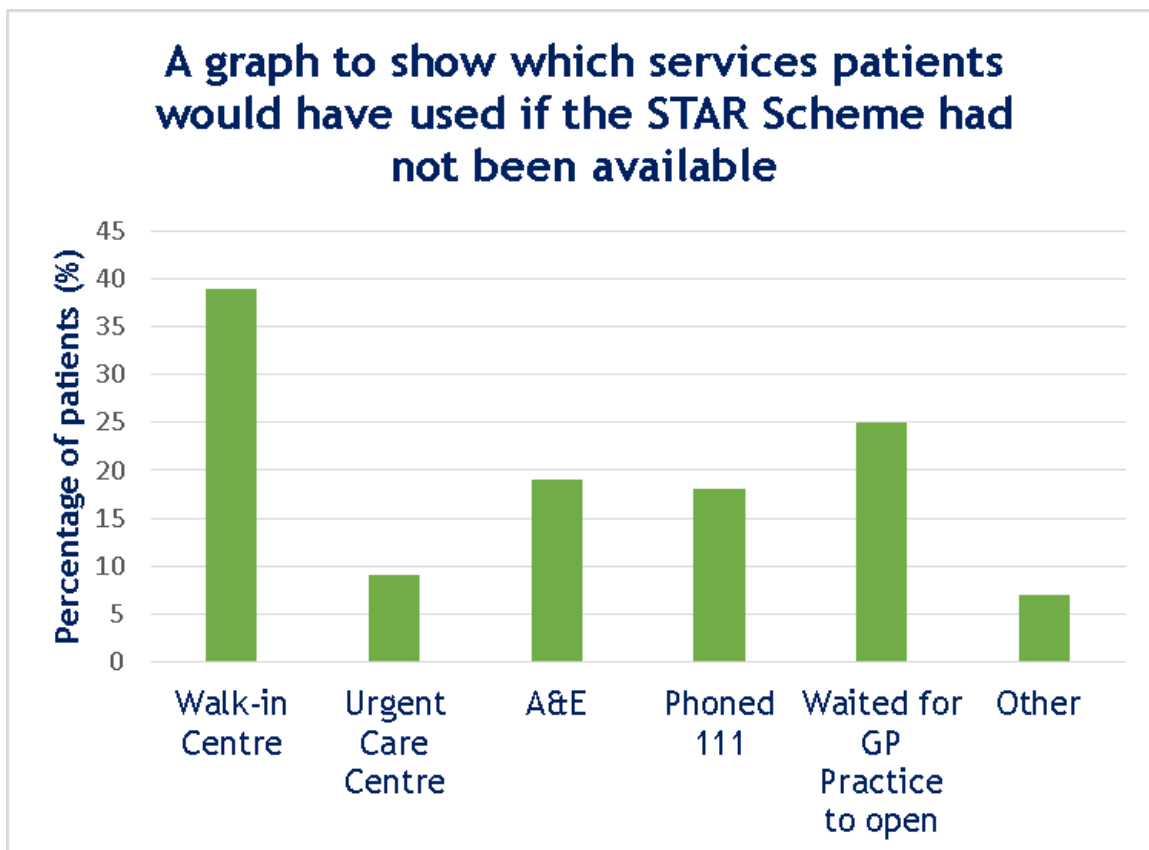
'Happy with this service and it would be a shame if this was discontinued. It is a benefit to the community.'



Reasons for accessing STAR Scheme



Services which patients would have accessed if the STAR Scheme was not available



### Booking of Appointments

A total of 95% of patients who accessed the STAR scheme did not experience any problems booking their appointment and 85% of patients thought that the information given to them prior to their appointment was 'fairly good' or 'very good'.

### Consultation Feedback

85% of patients felt that their consultation with the Doctor or Nurse Practitioner was 'fairly useful' or 'very useful'.

Comments received from patients included:

'Very useful - friendly and explained clearly what was necessary.'

'Helped with all our problems.'

'The explanation I was given on what I need to do was clear and precise.'

'Meant we were able to get access to professional services and also a prescription.'

### Reception

A total of 99% of patient rated the reception staff's manner and communication as 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent' (76% of patients rated it as 'excellent').

Feedback received regarding the reception staff's manner included:

'Staff professional and friendly - very welcoming.'

'Accommodating and explained procedure in good manner.'

'All staff were pleasant when arriving and polite as we left.'

'Polite and friendly'

'Very friendly and put us at ease.'

### Recommending the STAR Scheme to friends and family

99% of patients stated that they were 'likely' or 'very likely' to recommend the STAR Scheme to family and friends if they needed similar care or treatment.

When asking patients why they would recommend this service to others, reasons given were:

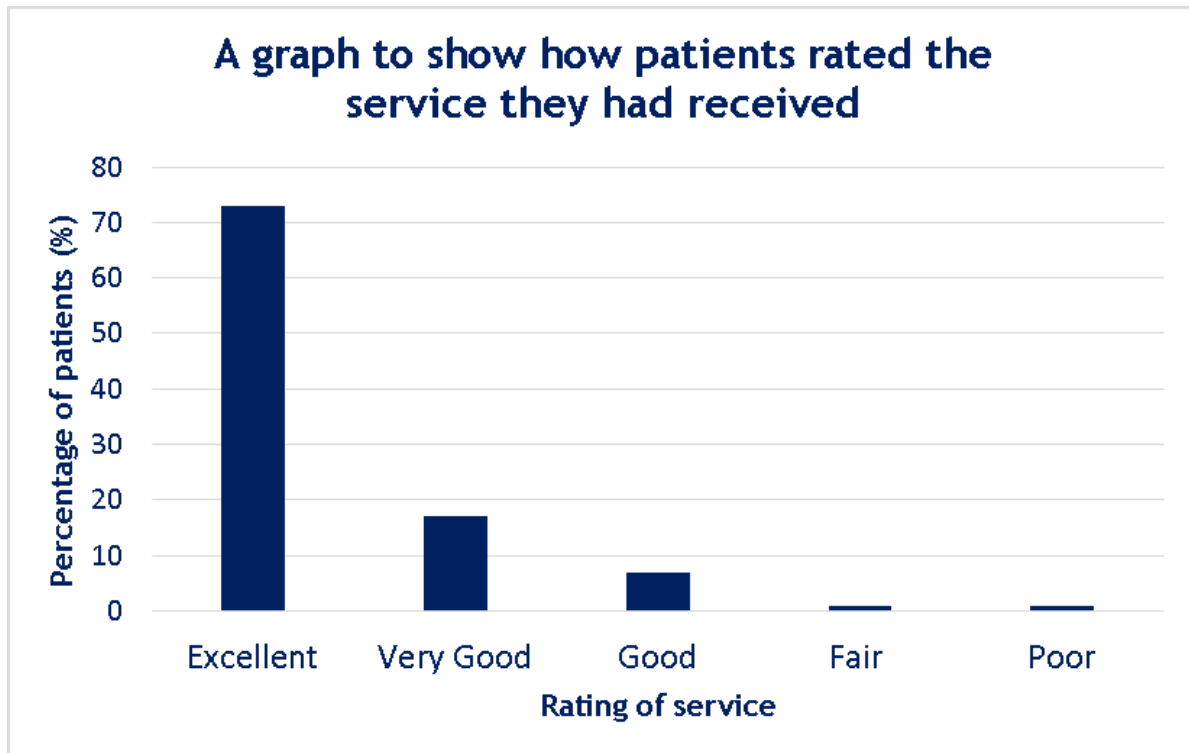
'Easy, fast, very good service out of hours.'

'Because of excellent care and consideration.'

'Got an appointment straight away and didn't have to wait long.'

'I will inform people that the service is available as most don't know.'

Rating of STAR Scheme service



Additional feedback from patients when asked reasons for their rating:

'Better service than what my GP gives.'

'Every visit has been excellent'

'It is good to know there is an out of hours GP always available.'

'This is a marvellous service - would have had to wait days for an appointment.'

'Always had a 1st class service.'

'Without it my son would not have received the professional involvement he did. very valuable service.'

'Very helpful, polite and quick.'

Additional comments received about the STAR Scheme

‘Friendly environment’

‘All round excellent service and communication.’

‘This service needs to be more communicated to everyone.’

‘This service is excellent especially when GP's surgeries cannot give an appointment within a reasonable timeline. Children deteriorate quickly and access to medical support is vital - the STAR service provides this support.’

‘It was very helpful and useful being able to talk to a Doctor out of normal work hours.’

‘Very valuable service for those who work and do not have time to call GP at 8am due to travelling or work.’

‘Much needed service for workers.’

‘It is very beneficial to live within this area (pilot area), the service's access experience has been very good. It would be a shame if this was discontinued and would cause more issues in other areas ie. A&E, Walk-ins etc.’

‘Cannot be improved.’

Follow Ups

Following Healthwatch's visits to the STAR Scheme, 12 follow up phone calls were made to find out some additional information from the patients who had accessed the service.

When asked what their reasons were for accessing the service, patients responded explaining:

‘Went to A&E then referred to STAR.’

‘Work commitments and availability - used STAR service before and phoned to arrange visit.’

‘Convenience - didn't want to go to James Cook University Hospital.’

‘Saturday I visited the surgery, just went on the off-chance.’

10 out of the 12 patients explained that their health issue had been resolved following their visit to the STAR Scheme. 2 patients were referred to another service following their visit e.g. James Cook University Hospital Eye Casualty.

All of the 12 patients spoken to during the follow ups explained that they would recommended the service to friends and family. When asked one patient explained 'yes - very useful for people who work - current system is not helpful for people who work but OK for those who don't work.'

### Case Studies

#### Linthorpe Surgery Patient

'I am registered with Linthorpe GP surgery and when I was unable to get an appointment they provided me with details of the STAR service so I was able to be seen on the evening that same day. When I arrived, I also noticed a poster in the practice advertising the STAR service. Although I walked in for an appointment without booking I was seen quickly and the Nurse Practitioner who saw me that day was excellent. She was friendly and informative when examining me and giving advice. As I live in Acklam, I was able to access the service easily and I found it reassuring that access to my medical records can be sought prior to my consultation. If this service had not been available I would have gone to the walk-in centre. Overall, I think it is an excellent service.'

#### Bentley Surgery Patient

'I was already aware of the STAR service as my son and husband have both previously accessed it. I feel the STAR service is invaluable particularly as a full time working mother registered with a very busy GP practice where appointments are difficult to get and I have a son with complex long term health needs. Although I walked in without booking an appointment I was seen within 30 minutes. If this service was not available today or on previous occasions particularly with my son, we would have ended up at A&E or Urgent Care. I will be recommending this service to family and friends should they need similar treatment and care in the future.'

### Conclusion

Healthwatch gathered a wide range of feedback from the 95 patients who completed the questionnaire and patient interviews in the STAR hubs at Bentley Medical Practice and Linthorpe Surgery. Most patients who Healthwatch spoke to had nothing but praise about the service and the care they had received. However, it was brought to Healthwatch's attention that around half of the patients accessing the service had simply walked into one of the hubs without making an appointment via the NHS 111 phone line. Healthwatch were pleased to see that all patients were given an appointment at the service even when they had not made an appointment but feel this issue will need to be addressed. Healthwatch's overall impression of the STAR service was very positive with patients highly recommending it to their family and friends and the majority of whom rated the location, ease of access, parking, and opening hours as 'excellent'.

### Recommendations

Although the majority of patient have had a good experience, Healthwatch would like to provide 2 recommendations:

1. To reinforce to patients that appointments need to be made via the NHS 111 helpline prior to accessing the service. As the majority of patients spoken to had not made an appointment, problems may arise during busy periods creating difficulties in accommodating these patients.
2. Increase advertising and promotion of the service to ensure a wide reach to the communities. Quite a few people had not heard about this service until informed by their GP, if patients are made more aware then this will generate a better use of the service.

### Acknowledgements

Healthwatch would like to thank all staff from the STAR Scheme who have been involved in this piece of work, in particular those working in Bentley Medical Practice and Linthorpe Surgery. The Healthwatch team were met with a friendly and professional staff team, who have been extremely accommodating and co-operative during our visits.

Healthwatch would also like to thank all of the patients, relatives, friends and carers who have given their time to speak to Healthwatch staff and complete the questionnaires, providing information about their experience of the STAR Scheme.

Appendix 1 - Patient Questionnaire

**STAR Service Evaluation: Patient Experience**

**Patient Details**

**Age:**

**Sex:**

**Home Postcode:**

**Pre-consultation questionnaire:**

Date:

Time:

**1. Are you completing this survey on behalf of yourself or a family member? If other, please provide details.**

- Myself**
- Family Member**
- Other .....**

**2. Which STAR Hub are you visiting today?**

- Redcar Primary Care Hospital**
- Linthorpe Medical Centre**

**3. Have you used the STAR service before?**

- No, this is my first visit.**
- Yes, this is my ..... visit.**

**4. How did you find out about the STAR service?**

- Used the service before
- GP provided details of the STAR service
- Rang 111 and was directed to the STAR service
- Rang A&E and was directed to the STAR service
- Informed by a healthcare professional e.g. Community Matron / Ambulance / District Nurse / Pharmacist / Other .....
- Word of Mouth e.g. Family / Friend / Neighbour
- Newspaper article
- Poster in community venue .....
- Website .....
- Other .....

**5. How did you access the service today?**






- Walked in for an appointment without booking
- Rang STAR and booked appointment by telephone
- Rang 111 and was told to contact STAR
- GP practice advised patient to book STAR appointment
- Referred by other healthcare professional
- Directed round to STAR by Urgent Care Centre
- Other .....



**6. How did you access the service today?**

- Walked
- Car
- Taxi
- Bus
- Lift from family member / friend
- Other .....

**7. How would you rate the following:**

	Very Poor 	Poor 	OK 	Good 	Excellent 
Location of STAR Service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ease of Access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hours of opening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Additional Comments:**

8. Why are you using the STAR service today?

- Couldn't get a GP appointment
- Needed urgent treatment advice
- Needed a prescription
- Other .....

9. If this service had not been available, where else would you have gone?

- Walk-in Centre
- Urgent Care Centre
- A&E
- Phoned 111
- Waited for GP Practice to open
- Other .....

Post-consultation questionnaire:

Date:

Time:

1. Did you experience any problems booking your appointment today?

No

Yes

If yes, please explain:

2. How good was the information given to you prior to you being seen today?

Very Good

Fairly Good

OK

Fairly poor

Very Poor

If fairly poor or very poor, please explain why:

3. How useful did you find the consultation with the Doctor or Nurse Practitioner today?

- Very useful
- Fairly useful
- OK
- Poor
- Useless

Please explain why:

4. How would you rate the reception staffs manner and communication during your contact today?

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Additional Comments:

5. What was your overall impression of the service that you have received here today?

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

**Additional Comments:**

6. How likely are you to recommend this clinic to family and friends if they need similar care or treatment?

- Extremely likely
- Likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

**Please explain why:**

7. Which Doctor or Nurse Practitioner did you see today?

8. Do you have any further comments, compliments or suggestions regarding your consultation today?

Do you consent to a follow-up phone call in approximately 2 weeks to provide additional information regarding what happened following your visit to the STAR scheme today?

Yes

No

Patients Name:

Contact Phone Number:

Signature:

Date:

\*All information provided will be made anonymous.