

# healthwatch

South Tyneside



—**Check the Pulse**—

South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub

January 2018

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## Healthwatch South Tyneside - who we are, what we do:

Healthwatch South Tyneside (HWST) is one of 148 local Healthwatch organisations across England launched in April 2013 to give users of health and social care services a powerful voice.

As set out in the Health and Social Care Act of 2012, HWST has the following statutory activities: Promoting and supporting the involvement of local people in the commissioning, the provision and scrutiny of local care services,

- Enabling local people to monitor the standard of provision of local care services and whether and how local care services could and ought to be improved,
- Obtaining the views of local people regarding their need for, and experiences of, local care services and importantly to make these views known,
- Making reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved,
- Providing advice and information about access to local care services so choices can be made about local care services; and
- Formulating views on the standard of provision and whether and how the local care services could and ought to be improved.

As an independent Community Interest Company (CIC), it is your dedicated consumer champion, working with users of local National Health Service (NHS) and social care services to hear about your experiences identify any issues or problems and helps generate improvements. HWST has the power to enter and view services; can influence how services are set up and commissioned by having a seat on the local Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB); and provide information, advice and support about local services. It also produces reports which influence the way services are designed and delivered and can share information and recommendations to Healthwatch England (HWE) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

## Introduction:

**Check the Pulse** is a HWST initiative through which we take a “snap shot” of a service; that helps us to develop an understanding of the strength and heartbeat of service delivery.

By engaging with service users, their family, friends and staff members we aim to capture their views and experience of the service they are accessing or providing.

The evidence we gather is generated from questionnaires, observations and qualitative comments. This evidence forms the basis of a report that is published on our website and shared with the service provider, commissioner and South Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board.

## Context:

In October 2014 South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) stated in their Urgent Care Public Consultation Report:



*“To tackle the increasing demand on the walk-in centre and Accident and Emergency, NHS South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group set out a vision to work with local people and partners to improve the way urgent and emergency care is delivered for the people of South Tyneside. Their proposal includes creating an urgent care hub (or ‘one stop shop’) at South Tyneside District Hospital that will provide universal access to a high quality urgent and emergency care service 24/7, so that whatever the need and whatever the location, people get the best care from the best person, in the best place and at the best time”.*

Source: NHS South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group: Urgent Care Public Consultation Report - 2014.

Currently South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub is managed by the Vocare Group who promote that they are: *“providing innovative, high quality healthcare services to patients and commissioners, delivered through effective partnerships. Vocare provides urgent care services to ten million patients across the UK through urgent care centres, GP out-of-hours services, integrated urgent care centres and the NHS 111 service”*

Source: <http://www.vocare.nhs.uk/index.php> - 2017

Some South Tyneside residents have over the last two years expressed to HWST that, in their experience, the Urgent Care Hub could be improved following the relocation of The Jarrow Walk-in Centre.

HWST considered that as South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub had been operational since October 2015 and should be firmly embedded at the hospital site; it would be of value to  **Check the Pulse**  and gather a snapshot of the service.

## Rationale:

In 2015 The Jarrow Walk-in Centre was relocated to South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub alongside the Minor Injuries and Accident and Emergency Department; this did not prove to be a popular decision and appeared to be met with consternation by some local residents who valued this provision.

In December 2017 and January 2018 HWST volunteers and staff spoke to members of the public at the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub capturing their experience of the service through a questionnaire (at Appendix 1). The team also spoke with hospital staff.

We aimed to:

- Check the strength of the service being delivered and capture the views and experiences of the public accessing the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub.
- Conduct the visit over three weeks with three separate time slots:

### 2017

December 11<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> 10am - 12noon

### 2018

January 8<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> 2pm - 4pm

January 15<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> 8pm - 10pm

- Produce a final report identifying overarching themes, findings and good practice and from these draw up recommendations.
- Share the findings and recommendations with the general public, service provider, commissioner and South Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board to influence service improvements.

## Summary:

Prior to HWST conducting this piece of work we asked South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust for a copy of the Urgent Care Patient Pathway; we were not provided with this. During our visits staff informed us they were unsure what the Patient Pathway was.

We engaged with 41 patients and some staff who, in part, talked about the “confusion” and sometimes “inaccurate” information patients could experience when accessing the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub.

*“Patients contacting NHS 111 are told to attend South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub where they would be seen within an hour. Patients on arrival would then be told that there is no GP available and they will need to be seen in Accident and Emergency by the nurse.”*

Patients’ responses to the survey highlighted that most had been referred by the NHS 111 service and only one person we spoke to had thought about going to their pharmacy before contacting NHS 111.

The published opening times of South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub are Monday to Sunday 8am - 10pm. During our visits we observed the service was available 53% of week 1, 74% of week 2 and 69% of week 3; and unavailable 47% of week 1, 26% of week 2 and 31% of week 3. This equates to the service being available 65% and unavailable 35% over the period we visited. (at Appendix 2).

Concern was raised around the number of physical access points and owing to this that reception staff were unable to monitor patients’ movements. Staff informed us of their concerns that GP’s sometimes work alone as reception staff are only in place at the main entrance.

The people we spoke to appeared to understand and appreciate the workload and staffing levels within the service. Patients informed us of the frustration of being referred to South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub only to arrive and find no GP was available; and they would have to wait in Accident and Emergency to be seen by a nurse. However they reported that once they were registered at reception the process for being seen by a nurse was clear and easy to follow. Waiting times appeared to differ depending on whether South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub was operating or patients were waiting in Accident and Emergency to be seen by a nurse owing to the service being closed.

**Public Comments:**



*“Staff very vocal about no GP’s and shortage of staff”*

*“Left mum to get a sandwich, when I returned staff did not know where she had been taken to”*

*“Very good seen straight away”*

*“Service is great”*

*“Staff really good, working very hard to move things along quickly”*



*“Very helpful and kind”*

*“Staff are good, but one nurse on her own doing everything”*



*“Long wait but understandable”*

*“Staff are lovely”*

*“Long wait but good service”*



## Findings:

- A GP was not always present at the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub during published opening times.
- The service was available 65% and unavailable 35% of the published opening times over the period we visited.
- GPs are working alone away from the main reception and Accident and Emergency area.
- Staff considered there were not enough staff to support the service.
- Staff told us patients contacting NHS 111 are told to attend South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub where they would be seen within an hour. Patients on arrival would then be told that there is no GP available and they will need to be seen in Accident and Emergency by the nurse.
- Staff said they inform NHS 111 if there is no GP available and the session is blocked out, but, they said, NHS 111 would override this and patients would still be sent to South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub.
- HWST were told by staff that some GPs felt unsafe working in South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub alone as the reception desk in that area is no longer staffed.
- There are three physical access points for the public to enter South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub building; staff felt this is a safety issue in terms of monitoring who is in the building. Owing to this, receptionists are unable to monitor patients' whereabouts and are unaware when a patient is with the GP. Receptionists informed us that there have been times that the GP has rung reception for patient's notes, because patients have entered through a different entrance and the receptionist has not booked them in. HWST did not become aware of the additional access points until near the end of this piece of work.
- Only one of the patients we spoke to had visited a pharmacy before attending South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub.
- We observed issues with the doors leading into the waiting area for those in a wheelchair or unable to open them. Reception staff did not always

appear to be helpful or able to help patients struggling to get through the doors.

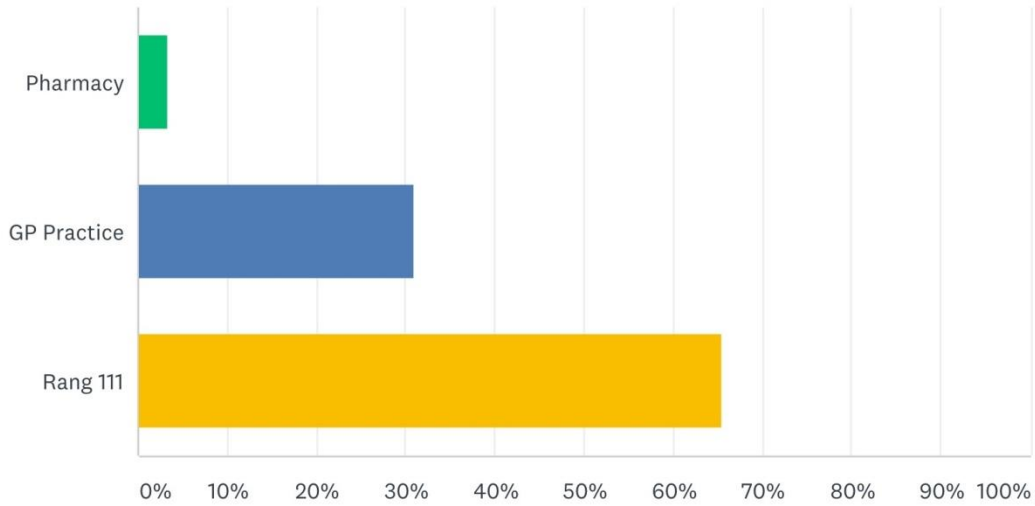
- Patients shared with Healthwatch South Tyneside their understanding of staff shortages and how they continued to look after patients with a “kind and helpful” manner. With waiting times sometimes lengthy; patients were complimentary on the dedication shown by staff to move things along quickly and smoothly as best they could when limited staff were on duty.

## Survey Results:

### Question 1

Have you been anywhere else before coming to the Urgent Care Hub?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 12

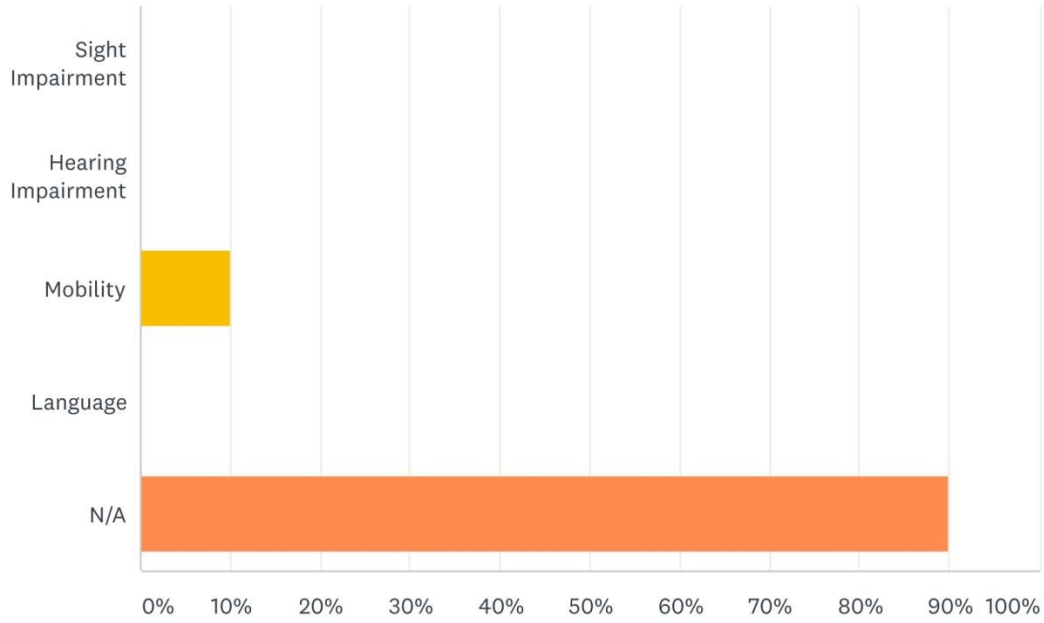


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Pharmacy	3.45% 1
▼ GP Practice	31.03% 9
▼ Rang 111	65.52% 19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>

## Question 2

If you require additional support, have you been offered it?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 1

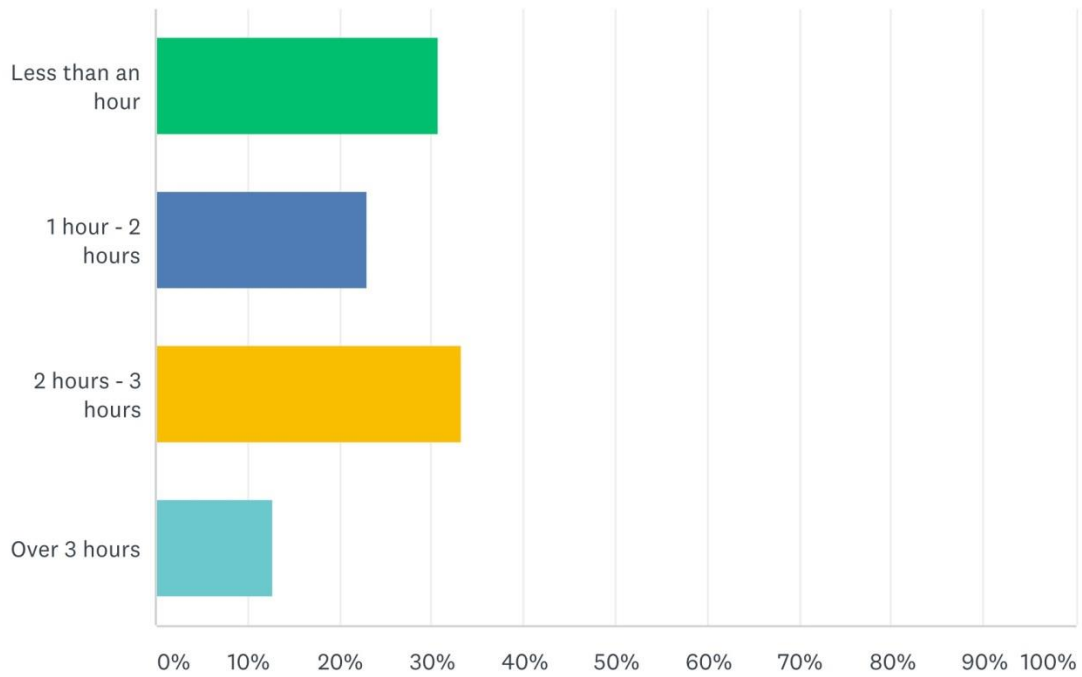


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Sight Impairment	0.00% 0
▼ Hearing Impairment	0.00% 0
▼ Mobility	10.00% 4
▼ Language	0.00% 0
▼ N/A	90.00% 36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>

### Question 3

How long have you been here?

Answered: 39 Skipped: 2

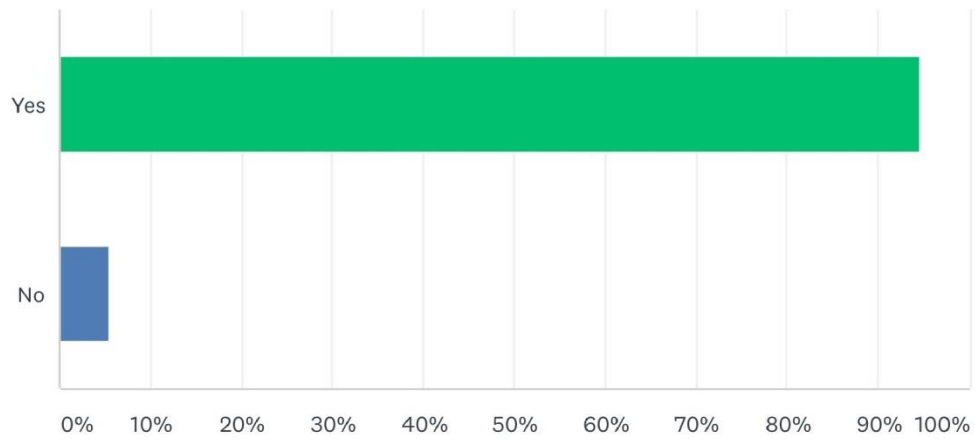


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Less than an hour	30.77% 12
1 hour - 2 hours	23.08% 9
2 hours - 3 hours	33.33% 13
Over 3 hours	12.82% 5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>

### Question 4

Was the reception and direction process efficient and clear?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	94.59% 35
▼ No	5.41% 2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37</b>

## Conclusions and Recommendations:

- The Urgent Care Patient Pathway is not available to staff; HWST recommend that this is provided to South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub staff; and they become familiar with it. This would help ensure that South Tyneside residents receive the right treatment, at the right time, in the right place as was promised by the STCCG in their consultation that resulted in the relocation of The Jarrow Walk-in Centre.
- NHS 111 continue to refer residents to the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub despite having been informed when this service is not available; HWST recommend that the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub and NHS 111 develop a protocol for when the service is closed during commissioned hours and that adherence to this is monitored.
- HWST is unclear what options are available to people should the service be unavailable during commissioned hours; and would like some clarity from the commissioners regarding what alternative provision is available to meet the needs of South Tyneside residents. People contacting NHS111 should be informed if the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub is unavailable and what options are open to them to meet their urgent care and treatment needs.
- HWST was disappointed that only one person we spoke to had visited their pharmacy prior to using the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub and consider that this is disappointing in terms of the STCCG initiative to “Think Pharmacy First”.
- The physical layout of the building increases risk to those who visit and work in the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub; HWST recommends that risk assessment and management is tightened by operational management in terms of multiple building access points to meet Health and Safety legislation and this is reflected in the operational manual.
- Staff reported that they considered the service was not adequately staffed. HWST has significant concerns in relation to the times when the service is “unavailable”. To reiterate this was 35% of the time over the period that HWST visited. HWST would like to know what steps South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group, as commissioner, is going to take to improve the availability of the service. HWST would like to know who is responsible for and how the service is audited for quality and safety; and would like to see a risk analysis undertaken in terms of when the service is unavailable.

HWST is hugely disappointed for the people of South Tyneside in terms of the availability of the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub.

- Waiting times varied depending on whether the service was available; HWST would like to know how waiting times compare to those experienced by South Tyneside residents at The Jarrow Walk-in Centre and what can be done to improve these.
- Doors within the service do not appear to meet the needs of disabled and otherwise vulnerable people; HWST recommends that these are assessed for access for disabled people and upgraded.



## Questions

1. Have you been anywhere else before coming to the Urgent Care Hub?

- Pharmacy
- GP Practice
- Rang 111

2. If you require additional support have you been offered this?

- Sight Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- Mobility
- Language

3. How long have you been here?

- Less than an hour
- 1 hour - 2 hours
- 2 hours - 3 hours
- Over 3 hours

4. Was the reception and direction process efficient and clear?

- Yes
- No

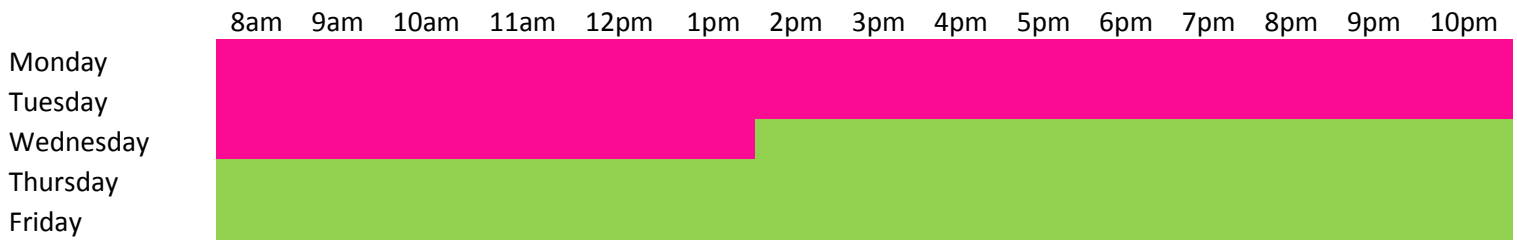
5. Tell us about your experience attending the Urgent Care Hub.

Area .....Postcode.....

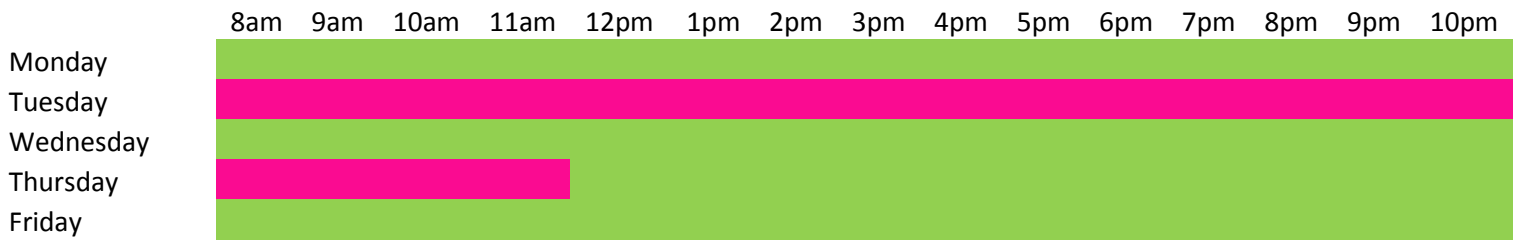
**South Tyneside Urgent Care - Monday - Sunday 8am - 10pm.**

During our visits the graphs below show when the service was **available** and **unavailable**

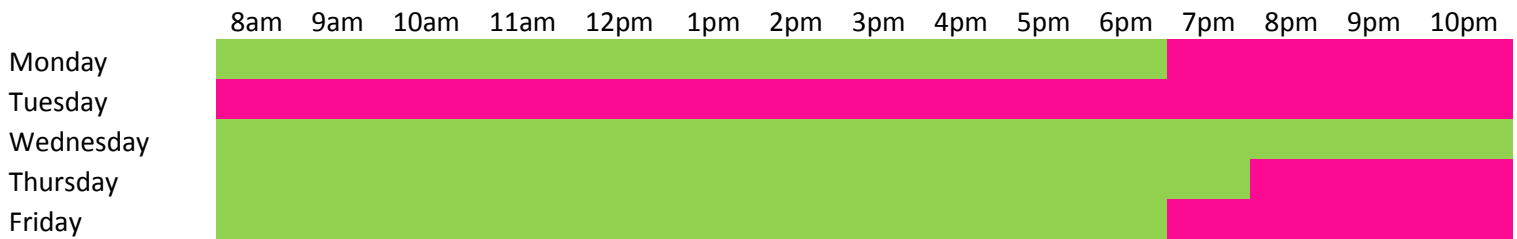
**Week 1**



**Week 2**



**Week 3**



Available



Unavailable

