



*A day in the life of*  
**Widnes NHS Urgent Care Centre**  
3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015

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## Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank the management and staff at the Widnes NHS Urgent Care Centre for making us feel so welcome during our visit.

We'd also like to pass on thanks to Louise Wilson, Development Manager - Urgent and Integrated Care, at Halton Borough Council for her help in arranging our visit.

## Executive Summary

We spent a day at each of the two Urgent Care Centres (UCC) in Halton during December 2015. On December 3<sup>rd</sup> we visited Widnes NHS Urgent Care Centre and on December 8<sup>th</sup> we visited NHS Runcorn Urgent Care Centre. This report covers the visit to the Widnes UCC which is housed within the Widnes Health Care Resources Centre (HCRC). The building also houses a pharmacy and two GP Practices. During the day various clinics are also held within the HCRC.

While the main priority of our visit was to gather the experiences of patients visiting the UCC we also took the opportunity to speak with a large number of people visiting the HCRC to make use of the other services.

We carried out our visit on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015, arriving at 7.30am and staying through to close at 10.00pm.

Our survey consisted of two parts. Part one was completed with the patient while they were waiting to receive treatment. Part two was completed by the patient after treatment.

During our visit **46** people took part in the survey. Of these, **32** were receiving treatment themselves and **14** had brought a family member to receive treatment (mainly children).

For **54%** it was their first visit to the UCC in the previous 12 months. The **46%** of people who'd attended more than once had averaged almost **3.5 visits** each.

Exactly **50%** of the people we surveyed said they had tried to seek help elsewhere before visiting the UCC. The majority of these had tried to get an emergency appointment with their GP.

**13%** had been successful and were then referred on to the UCC by their GP practice. For many people though, it appears the UCC is seen as a simpler option for healthcare than trying to book an emergency appointment with their GP Practice.

As the day progressed we noted that the waiting times for triage and for treatment rose, reaching an average during mid-afternoon and early evening of approximately two and a half hours. As the waiting time grew we observed some growing frustration from patients at the lack of information available on the reasons for delays.

**38%** of people said they would have visited A&E if the Widnes UCC hadn't been available.

**50%**

**of people went straight to the UCC without seeking help elsewhere**

*"I know if I come to the UCC with my child I will get seen. I've stopped trying to get a GP appointment."*



The waiting area is a large open plan area which was very clean with plenty of seating available, including high back armchairs. This area is used for all services at the centre, there appeared to be no specific area for patients attending the UCC.

A small whiteboard, displayed on a wall just inside the entrance from Moor Lane, is used by staff to display the approximate waiting time for triage. We were surprised to find that there was no display screen / TV to keep

patients informed while waiting to be seen.

At the time of our visit there was no drinks vending machine available within the centre for people to use while waiting to be treated. Staff told us that there had been one in place prior to the opening of the UCC but it had been taken out during the building work and hadn't been replaced. There was a flask of water available at the side of the reception desk. Patients were able to request a drink of water from this if needed.

Throughout our time at the UCC we noted that the reception staff treated all patients in a professional yet friendly and reassuring manner.

Results from Part 2 of the survey showed a very high satisfaction rate with **97%** of people being '**Likely**' or '**Extremely Likely**' to recommend the service to friends or family. **92%** of people rated their experience of using the service as **4 or 5 star**, (out of a maximum rating of 5 stars).

Just under **83%** of people had arrived at the UCC by car, mainly using the Oaks Place car park attached to the Health Care Resource Centre. This car park serves the Pharmacy, both GP Practices and the other services based at the Centre and tends to be quite busy.

Difficulties in finding available parking spaces was raised as a concern by many of the people we spoke with. Most were unaware of the newly opened car park for the UCC on Moor Lane, immediately across the dual carriageway from the Centre. The car park has no obvious signage directing traffic to it, making it difficult for many people to realise they can actually use it.

## **Recommendations and observations**

The recommendations and observations from our visit to the Widnes NHS Urgent Care Centre are listed on page 13 of this report.

### **Summary**

Our survey gathered views from roughly **45%** of the patients attending the UCC on the day. The reception staff explained that the numbers of people attending on the day was fairly typical. The average daily attendance at the Widnes NHS UCC for December 2015 was 110.

As can be seen from the results, the vast majority of people we questioned felt the Widnes NHS Urgent Care Centre offers a very good and convenient service. The service was seen as offering a viable alternative to A&E for many patients, although on the downside it is also seen as an easier route to treatment than using GP Practices by some.

During the time we spent at the centre, we were able to observe the way the staff interacted with patients and we can't praise them highly enough for their professionalism.

The fact that **38%** of those surveyed said they would have attended A&E, if the Urgent Care Centre had not been in place, highlights the vital role the centre has to play in the local health system.

We are aware that the service already gets very busy at certain times. We would hope that it will continue to be properly resourced to ensure it can meet with any increase in patient numbers over the next few years. This will be vital if it is to meet its target of savings for the local health system as well as contributing to the reduction in A&E attendances and a year on year reduction in non-elective admissions through A&E during the next five years.

## **Introduction**

**During 2014 we carried out a piece of work looking at access to GP services across Halton. This report highlighted that a large percentage of people who couldn't get an appointment to see their own GP were then attending local A&E departments.**

We followed up this report by visiting our two local A&E departments (Warrington Hospital & Whiston Hospital), to ask people how they'd ended up in A&E and whether they had sought help elsewhere prior to attending A&E. Feedback gathered for these reports also pointed to the fact that many people said they would have accessed other local services if they had been available on the day.

The upgrading of the 'Walk-in Centre' in Widnes and the Minor Injuries unit at Halton Hospital to Urgent Care Centres, during 2015, was seen as a way to help provide local people with fast access to urgent care services much closer to home; reducing the need for many patients to travel to A&E and easing the pressures on local A&E units.

## **What is the Widnes NHS Urgent Care Centre?**

The Widnes NHS Urgent Care Centre is a new 'walk-in' service based at the Healthcare Resource Centre, Widnes. This service is for patients who have a minor injury or illness/condition that requires urgent attention but is not critical or life threatening such as:

- Minor Cuts or Wounds
- Sore Throats
- Bites or Stings
- Rashes and Allergic Reactions
- Prescribed Medication (subject to assessment)
- Minor Burns or Scalds
- Coughs and Colds
- Muscle or Joint Injuries (eg. sprains and strains)
- Asthma
- Shortness of breath

The service opens from 7.00am to 10.00pm, 365 days a year. During the 30 minutes before closing, patients will be assessed but might be referred to their GP, Out-of-Hours GP or the A&E departments at Whiston Hospital or Warrington General Hospital.



Clockwise (L-R) – Entrance to UCC on Moor Lane; Signage on Moor Lane; Oaks Place entrance; Signage inside Oaks Place entrance; Waiting area for UCC.

## Methodology

To capture patient feedback we carried out a survey in two parts. Part One was completed face to face with the patient while they were waiting to receive treatment. Part One focussed on asking how people had made the decision to visit the UCC and their initial views of the service.

Part Two consisted of three questions, to be completed after treatment, asking for people to rate their experience and add any comments they would like make about their experience.

A copy of the survey is included in Appendix 1.

SNAP survey software was used to collate the results and produce the data and charts included in this report.

Due to rounding, numbers presented throughout this and other documents may not add up precisely to the totals provided and percentages may not precisely reflect the absolute figures.

## Survey Results & Findings

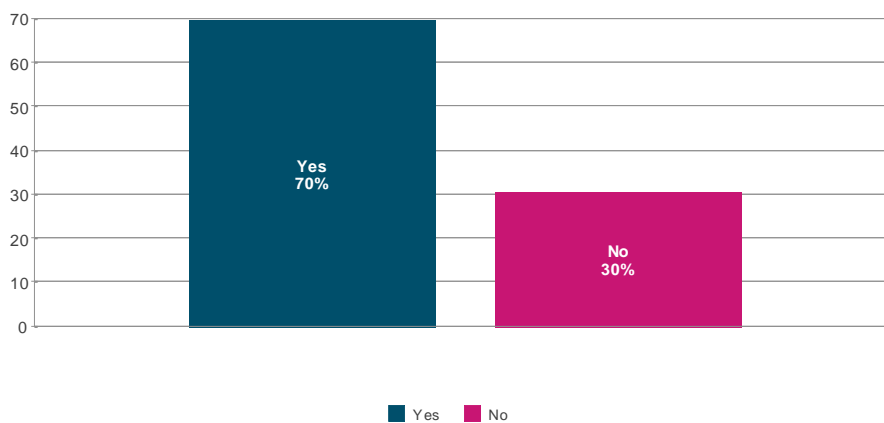
The Widnes NHS Urgent Care Centre (UCC) is housed within the Widnes Health Care Resource Centre (HCRC). This building also houses a pharmacy and two local GP Practices. During the day, various clinics are also held within the HCRC. While the main priority on the day of our visit was to gather the experiences of patients using the UCC we also spoke with a large number of people visiting the HCRC to make use of the other services.

The UCC is open 365 days of the year from 7.00am through to 10.00pm. We carried out our visit to the centre on 3rd December 2015 from 7.30am through to 10.00pm.

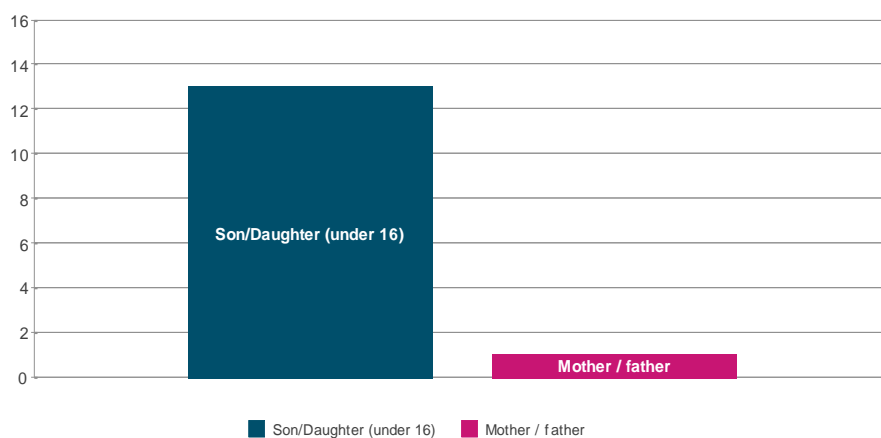
Our survey consisted of two parts. Part one being completed while the patient was waiting to receive treatment and part two to be completed following treatment.

During this time, **46** people took part in the survey. Of the **46** people, **32** were receiving treatment themselves and **14** had brought a family member to receive treatment.

Q1. Please tell us if it is you who is seeking help today?



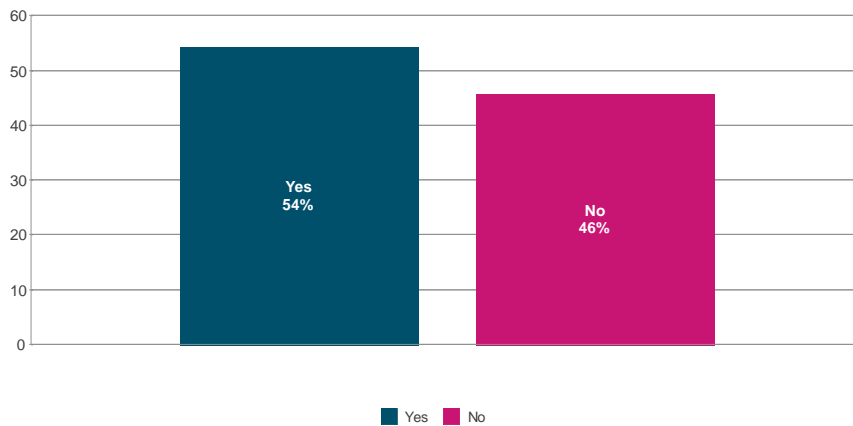
Q1b. What is the patient's relationship to you?





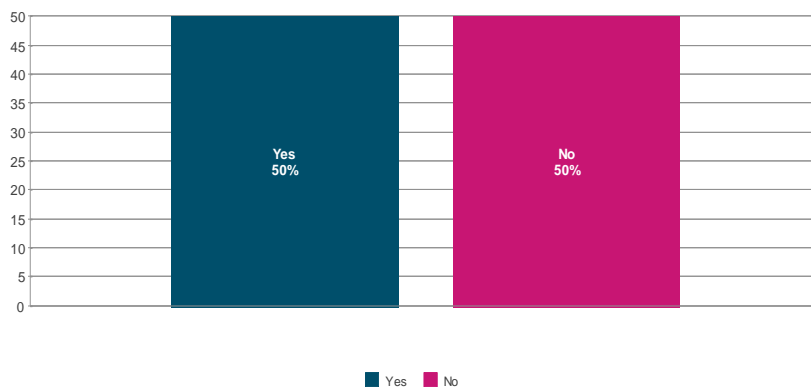
For **54%** of the people it was their first visit to the new UCC. The other **46%** had averaged **3.5 visits** to the UCC in the previous 12 months. *(This also covers a period when it was the Walk-in-Centre).*

Q2. Is this your first visit to the UCC in the past 12 months?

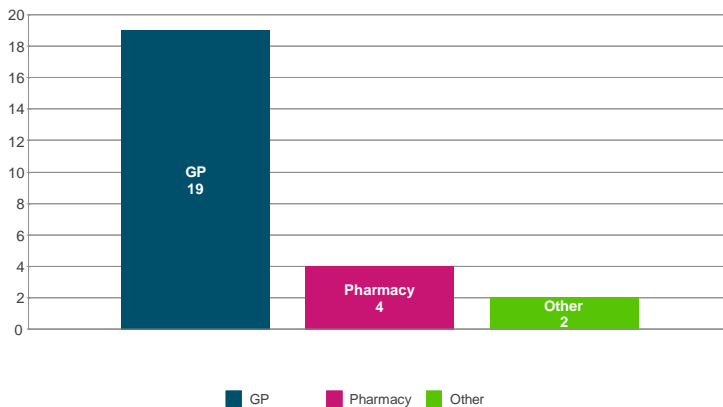


There was an equal split in the numbers of people who had tried to seek help elsewhere before visiting the UCC and those who'd come straight to the centre.

Q3 Did you seek help elsewhere before coming to the UCC?

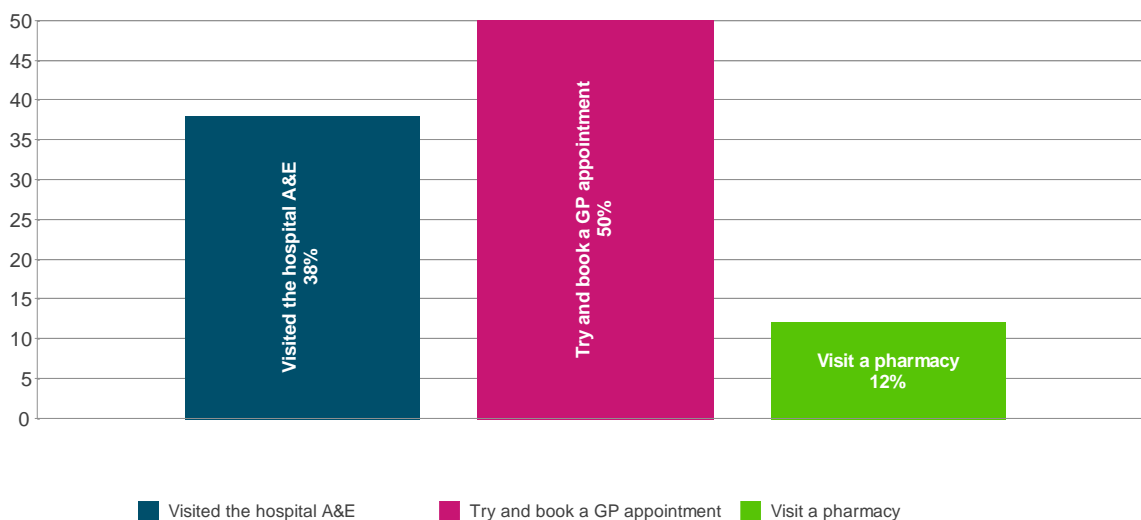


Q4. If you answered 'Yes' to Q3, please tell us where you sought help:



Of those who'd sought help elsewhere, **19** patients had tried their GP Practice. **6** of these had been advised to visit the UCC by their GP Practice. The other **13** had been unsuccessful in getting an appointment with their GP Practice. A couple of people had also sought help from a pharmacy in addition to their GP.

### Q5. What would you have done today if there wasn't an Urgent Care Centre?



According to NHS Halton CCG one of the main targets for the Urgent Care Centre is to help reduce A&E attendances locally by **15%** over the next 5 years<sup>1</sup>. We posed Question 5 to see what alternatives patients would have chosen if there hadn't have been a UCC to visit. It is interesting to note that **38%** of respondents said they would have visited A&E.

While our results are only a snapshot of one day they do highlight the potential benefits that a fully utilised UCC may offer to the local health economy.

**50%** of respondents replied that they would have attempted to book an appointment with their GP for another day. **12%** replied they would have visited their local pharmacy for advice.

***If I hadn't had the option of visiting the Urgent Care Centre I would have tried to get a GP appointment for another day. Not hopeful!***

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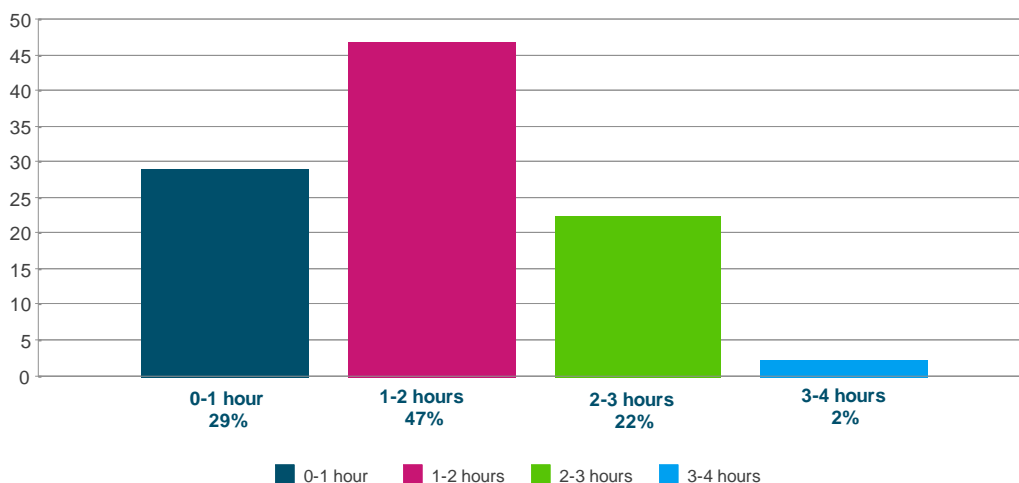
<sup>1</sup> *Bringing urgent care closer to patients' homes and unlocking potential system savings in Widnes* - <http://www.fabnhssstuff.net/2015/09/23/bringing-urgent-care-closer-to-patients-homes-and-unlocking-potential-system-savings-in-widnes/>

## Service & Satisfaction

38 people completed and returned Part 2 of the survey.

Of these, 29% of people were triaged and treated within one hour of attending the UCC, although most of these were at the quieter parts of the day.

Q12. How long has it taken from your arrival at the Urgent Care to be treated



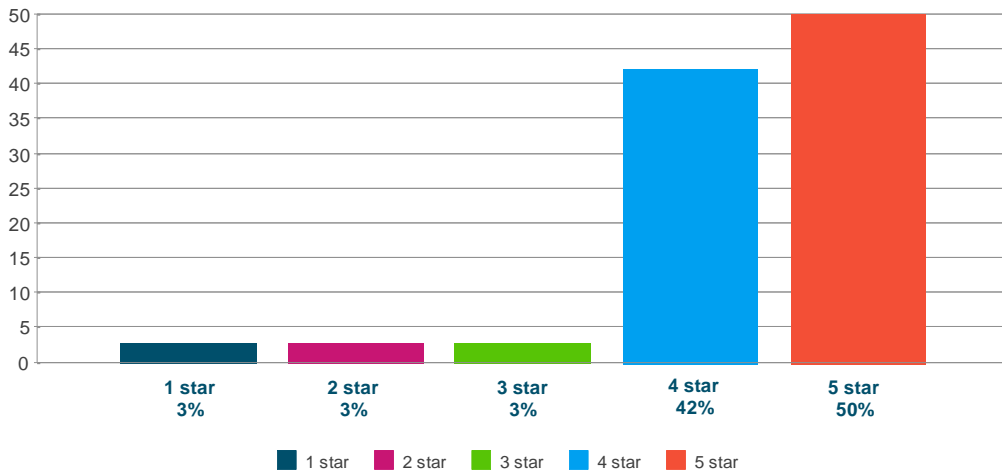
Up to early afternoon it took an average of between **1 and 2 hours** for people to be treated. For patients arriving from mid-afternoon onwards, this rose to an average treatment time of about **2 hours 30 minutes**.

One person recorded a total time of over **3 hours** to be treated, but still rated the service as **5 star**.

*'What I liked was that there were x-rays here. Seen quicker than I would have been at A&E.'*

*"There was a long wait but would have been longer in A&E I expect. Staff are pleasant, but there is not enough info given on the reason for long waits."*

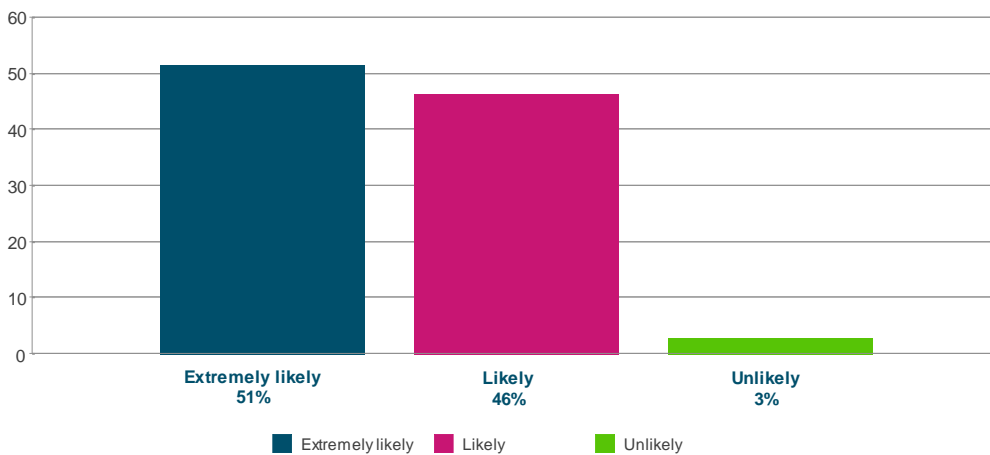
Q13. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being poor and 5 being excellent) how would you rate your experience?



We found that the overwhelming majority of people attending the UCC had a very good experience on the day with almost **92% rating it as 4 or 5 star**.

***“Quick Service, Brilliant Staff”***

Q14. How likely would you be to recommend this service to a friend or family member?



When asked how likely they would be to recommend this service to a friend or family member, if they needed similar care or treatment, **97% of people** replied they would be **‘Extremely Likely’ or ‘Likely’**, to recommend the service.

***“They should have more places like this!”***

## Sundry questions & comments

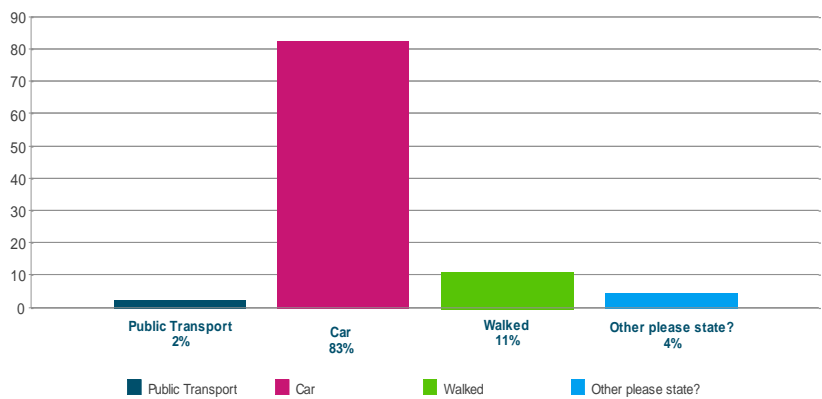
The vast majority of people, (83%), arrived at the UCC by car and parked in the small car park attached to the Health Care Resource Centre.

For those who arrived by car we asked for comments if they had any difficulties in parking. We also asked whether they were aware of the newly opened car park on Moor Lane

for users of the UCC. Only one person said they were aware and had used the new car park. Some people told us that they had seen the car park but were didn't realise that it was for the UCC due to lack of signage.

Parking at the Centre was raised as a difficulty by many people.

Q6. How did you arrive here today?



## Demographics

The 46 people surveyed gave the following post code areas :

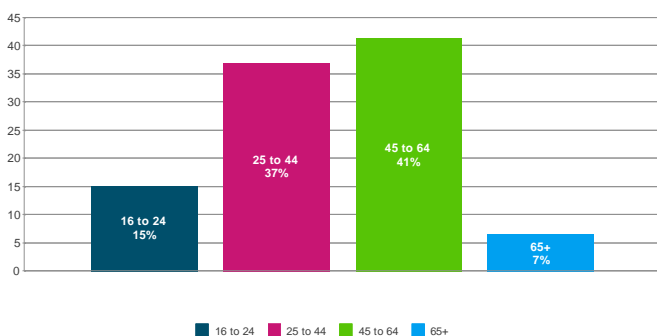
- 38 Widnes
- 4 Runcorn
- 3 Merseyside
- 1 Other

People gave their registered GP Practice as:

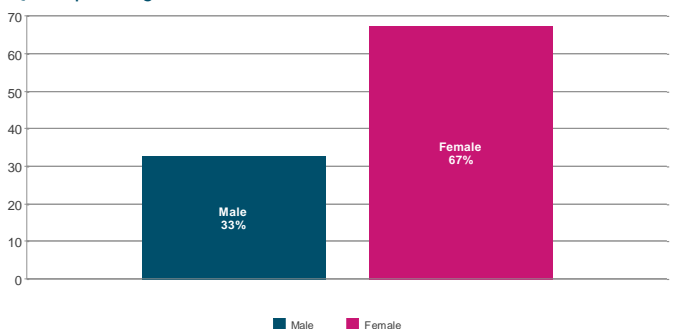


11 Beaconsfield	9 Peelhouse Plaza	4 Appleton Village
4 Newtown	3 The Beeches	2 Oaks Place
2 Brookvale	1 Tower House	1 Upton Rocks
1 West Bank	1 Grove House	7 Practices outside Halton

Q9 Age of respondent



Q10 Respondent gender



## Recommendations and observations

### 1. Pharmacy Information

- Our visit took place on Thursday, which was early closing day for the pharmacy at the centre. We would recommend that a poster listing all local pharmacies that are open late is displayed in the UCC waiting area.

### 2. Information Displays / TV

- Most of the services we visit provide some sort of flat screen TV or similar displaying health information, waiting times or even TV programmes to help patients pass the time and keep them informed on waiting times. While we realise the layout of the building and the large waiting area covering a number of different services may be a barrier we would recommend that this is looked in to.

### 3. GP Practices

- If not already happening, we would recommend that data on the number of patients attending the centre due to lack of available GP appointments is collected. This information may help highlight gaps in access to GP services or particularly GP Practices that may need support to improve patient access.

### 4. Choose Well

- Continue to promote campaigns, such as Choose Well, and promote the different healthcare services available across the Borough so that the public are clear where to go if they need advice for various conditions.

### 5. Drinks / Vending Machine

- A number of comments we received highlighted the lack of a vending machine. With possible waiting times of 2-3 hours plus for treatment we feel it would be beneficial for a drinks machine to be made available for patients visiting the UCC.

### 6. Car Parking

- We have been aware that car parking availability at the Health Care Resource Centre has been an on-going cause of concern for patients for quite a while. We are pleased to see the opening of the new car park on Moor Lane especially for people visiting the UCC, but we feel the signage to this car park is currently inadequate. We would recommend improved signage to direct people to the car park.

### 7. Zebra Crossing

- Concerns have been raised with Healthwatch Halton by staff and visitors to the Centre over the suitability and safety of the Zebra crossing across the dual carriageway on Moor Lane. We would hope that the suitability of this crossing is monitored to ensure the safety of those using it.

## Comments

Listed below are the comments received through the survey.

The main themes of the comments cover staff, waiting times, lack of refreshments and car parking.

### Staffing & Service, Waiting times

- Very friendly staff, no issues at all. They all deserve a bonus ☺
- All the staff are lovely and very caring. Thank you!
- Quick Service, Brilliant Staff
- First class service. No complaints whatsoever. In and out within 20 minutes!
- My first visit here, I was impressed.
- Service very good, given lots of information to take away.
- Seen very quickly. Reassurance give. Very grateful
- In and out within 20 minutes!
- Too long a wait, but good service. It would be useful for there to be a drinks machine and free wi-fi to help pass the time
- Because I work full time, this is more convenient to me than my GP. It would be useful to have a vending machine or drinks/water available while waiting.
- Visited here to save going to the GP later. I hope to get in to work in Runcorn later.
- I was shopping in Widnes and popped into a pharmacist for some advice. He suggested coming to the Urgent Care Centre in Widnes. I didn't want to take time out of school. This service is convenient.
- I came here as I've given up going to the GP as when I ring there are no appointments available.
- Fast - seen within 20 minutes. Triage treated me very good! The nurse solved my problem (fractured finger), strapped it up all good. Staff were very helpful
- What I liked was that there were x-rays here. Seen quicker than I would have been at A&E. Free car parking - more convenient and easier access. They should have more places like this.
- If I lived locally I would recommend the service to others
- They don't really speak to you to tell you where you're supposed to go. When they do speak they're a bit snotty. Hospital is so much quicker!
- It always seemed short staffed. The reception staff are friendly. Notice boards should be more visible & more advice should be given out regarding late night pharmacies etc. Vending machines need to be put in clinic. Waiting times are diabolical!! I will visit A&E if I need to be seen urgently or my children. On discharge - I'm happy with the care from the nurse.

- Waiting while I'm not well. Too warm! There's nothing to drink - no vending machine. At night the pharmacy is closed. It would be useful to have a poster saying what pharmacies are open to fill a prescription. A little map too.
- Could also benefit from a drinks machine or sandwiches or something. My husband is diabetic so it would be useful as the pharmacy was closed during lunch.
- A drinks machine would be good!
- Lots of people use this service so it's quite busy, but nurse was great and problem was sorted despite waiting time. It is better than hospital time.
- There was a long wait but would have been longer in A&E I expect. Staff are pleasant, but there is not enough info given on the reason for long waits. The board gives a time but no staff seem to be coming out of the care centre. Maybe put a list of how many staff are on duty?
- I was at my GP but they still told me to come down here. A waste of time and money, they should have checked me out as I was already there.
- I was waiting for an x-ray but as I didn't have a referral form from my GP I was not booked in for one. I had to be reassessed first; I have a heart condition and was expecting the X-ray to be quick.
- We came over from Warrington as this is the nearest walk in centre to us.

## **Car Parking**

- I didn't realise there was a new car park available (x12)
- Had lift from my mother as I don't drive. Coming here is more convenient than going to hospital A&E
- I had difficulty parking in the car park, I didn't know there was a new one available.
- I didn't know there was another car park opposite the entrance. There are no signs to make this clear!
- I parked in the pharmacy staff car park as the pharmacy was closed. I didn't know there was new additional car parking.
- I didn't know about the car park across the dual carriageway
- I didn't know about the new car park across the road. The roadworks don't help, I didn't notice any signs for the parking
- Didn't realise they had a new car park. They could do with more disabled car parking spaces.
- The free car parking is good!
- I arrived by motorbike
- I came on my bicycle





Clockwise - (L to R), Moor Lane, pelican crossing and entrance to new car park, Moor Lane car park, Moor Lane entrance to UCC, Oaks Place entrance to UCC.

## Urgent Care Survey - Questionnaire

Ref No:

**healthwatch**  
Halton

### Urgent Care Centre Survey - Part 1

Healthwatch Halton is the independent consumer champion created to gather and represent the views of the public and people who use the services are taken into account.

We would like to ask you some questions today about your visit to this UCC arrived.  
We would also like you to complete a short form after you have received your treatment, to let us know about your experience while at the UCC.

We are not asking you to divulge any medical or confidential information about your visit. The information you provide in this survey will be anonymised and will help us to provide a local picture of people's experiences of accessing urgent care.

Q1 Please tell us if it you who is seeking help today?

- Yes  No

Q1a If you answered 'No' to Q1, are you:

- Parent / family member  Friend / Work colleague  
 Partner/Spouse  Prefer not to say

Q2 Is this your first visit to the UCC in the last 12 months?

- Yes  No

Q2a If 'No', how many times have you visited in the past 12 months?

- 2  3  4  5  6  7+

Q3 Did you seek help elsewhere before coming to the UCC?

- Yes  No

Q4 If you answered 'Yes' to Q3a, please tell us where:

- NHS 111  GP  
 Pharmacy  Family member  
 Other

Other - please state

Q5 What would you have done today if there wasn't an Urgent Care Centre locally?

- Visited the hospital A&E  Try and book a GP appointment  Visit a pharmacy  Other

Other - Please state

Q6 How did you arrive here today?

Public Transport

Taxi

Car

Walked

Other please state?

Other

Q7 Approximately, what time did you arrive at the UCC?

Q8 To help us analyse these results and ensure the answers you have given help improve access to services, please could you tell us the following:

Your Postcode

Q8a Your Registered GP Practice

Q9 What age group are you?

16 to 24

45 to 64

25 to 44

65+

Q10 Are you male or female?

Male

Female

Transgender

Prefer not to say

Q11 Any comments?

*Thank you for taking part in this survey.*

Ref No:

## Urgent Care Centre Survey - Part 2

Thank you for taking part in the first part of our survey. We would appreciate it if you could now answer the three questions below and return the survey in the attached FREEPOST envelope.

1. How long has it taken from your arrival at the Urgent Care Centre to being treated and discharged?

- 0-1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 4-5 hours
- more than 5 hours

2. On a scale of 1 to 5, (1 being poor and 5 being excellent), please rate your experience today.

- ★
- ★ ★
- ★ ★ ★
- ★ ★ ★ ★
- ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

3. How likely would you be to recommend this service to a friend or family member if they needed similar care or treatment?

- Extremely likely
- Likely
- neither likely or unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Any other comments about your experience today?

Your postcode (1st 4 digits)

Name (optional)

Telephone or Email (optional)

- Please enter me into the next FREE Healthwatch Halton quarterly prize draw for a chance to win one of three £25 gift vouchers. (Please supply contact details above)

Return this slip using the attached FREEPOST envelope to:

FREEPOST - RTKC-YEJX-UEXR, Healthwatch Halton, St Marie's, Lugsdale Road, Widnes WA8 6DB

*Thank you for taking part in this survey*



# your **voice** counts

**We want to hear about the treatment and care you receive from our local health and care services**

Hospitals, GP's, Dentists  
Opticians, Social Care Services  
Non-emergency services

Whether you've had a positive experience or there is room for improvement, have your say on the Healthwatch Halton website today.

**You can even leave feedback anonymously!**



Leave feedback now:

**[www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk)**

Telephone: 0300 777 6543 Email: [enquiries@healthwatchhalton.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchhalton.co.uk)  
Healthwatch Halton, St Maries, Lugsdale Road, Widnes, WA8 6DB

