



**University Hospital of North Tees A&E and
Urgent Care Enter and View Report
October 2019**

What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch England is the national consumer champion in health and social care. It was set up by the government to ensure that people's views about health and social care services are listened to and fed back to service providers, commissioners and to local and national government with a view to improving services.

Each Local Authority in England has its own Local Healthwatch. Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees aims to be a strong local consumer champion working with our partners to support:

- People to shape health and social care delivery.
- People to influence the services they receive personally.
- People to hold services to account.

We achieve this by:

- Listening to people, especially the most vulnerable, to help us understand their experiences and what matters most to them.
- Influencing those who have the power to change services so that they better meet people's needs now and into the future.
- Empowering and informing people to get the most from their health and social care services and encouraging other organisations to do the same.

What is Enter & View?

Under Healthwatch regulations there is a statutory duty on the providers of publically funded health and social care services to allow Healthwatch authorised representatives to enter their premises.

The role of the Healthwatch authorised representatives is to conduct visits to such services in order to capture the patient/customer experience and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement or to capture best practice which can then be shared.

Enter & View is the opportunity for Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees to:

- Enter publicly funded health and social care premises to see and hear first-hand experiences about the service.
- Observe how the service is delivered, often by using a themed approach.
- Collect the views of service users at the point of service delivery.
- Collect the views of carers and relatives and those of staff members working in the service.
- Observe the nature and quality of services.

- Report to providers, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the Local Authority, Commissioners, Healthwatch England and other relevant agencies.

Enter & View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service, but equally they can occur when services have a good reputation, so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

It should be noted that Enter & View is not the only way in which information can be obtained. The use of questionnaires, surveys and themed focus groups are other examples of ways in which Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is able to gather relevant information.

The purpose of this report

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees gathers feedback from the public about their views and experience of local health and social care services via the Information and Signposting service and engagement activities. Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees identified that a number of complaints had been received via the Stockton Independent Complaints Service about the care and treatment received at the Accident and Emergency (A&E) and Urgent Care departments at the University Hospital of North Tees.

Aim

To carry out an Enter and View to gather patient and staff feedback regarding provision of services at the University Hospital of North Tees in the A&E and Urgent Care department to determine if any recommendations can be made to improve patient experience.

Objectives

- Arrange a convenient date with the hospital to carry out the Enter and View visits.
- Analyse results to determine any issues arising and to identify common themes.
- Feedback information gathered to the University Hospital of North Tees with suggested recommendations (if required) to help improve patient experience.

Methodology

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees carried out Enter and View visits to the A&E and Urgent Care departments at the University Hospital of North Tees on Friday 11th October 2019 and Monday 14th October 2019. Healthwatch staff and volunteers gathered patient feedback using questionnaires. One questionnaire was given to patients to fill out whilst they were waiting to be seen and a second questionnaire was given to the patients with a freepost envelope to complete and return after their treatment. (Please see Appendix 1 & 2 for a copy of the patient questionnaires).

Healthwatch staff left 100 questionnaires with the reception staff in the A&E and Urgent Care department so they could hand them out to patients during the weekend of the 12th and 13th October 2019. When Healthwatch staff returned to the hospital on Monday 14th October we found that very few of these questionnaires had been handed out over the week-end.

Results - Questionnaire One

Healthwatch gathered feedback from 77 patients, 30% of whom were in A&E and 70% were in Urgent Care.

Healthwatch asked patients ‘Why are you attending A&E / Urgent Care today?’ The following themes were identified:

- Pain or injury in back / chest / knee
- Stomach ache
- Pregnancy
- Vomiting and Diarrhoea
- Water / kidney / ear / chest infection
- Injury after a fall
- Broken bone / Dislocation
- Tonsillitis / Sinusitis
- Rash on body
- Overdose
- High temperature
- Dizziness
- Abnormal ECG / palpitations

Patients were asked if they had contacted another service prior to attending A&E / Urgent Care. The feedback is shown in the table below:

Service Contacted	Percentage of patients
GP Practice	21%
Pharmacy	0%

NHS 111	32%
Urgent Care (for those in A&E)	1%
No I did not contact any other service	42%
Other (Ambulance / Crisis Team)	4%

Patients were asked ‘If you didn’t contact another service prior to coming to A&E, what are the reasons for this?’ The feedback is shown in the table below:

Answers	Percentage of patients
It was an emergency	29%
I’ve been here before	4%
It’s more convenient	8%
I looked up my symptoms online and thought I needed to come	2%
A friend / family member thought I should come	22%
Couldn’t get an appointment at my GP Practice	18%
I was advised to come here by A&E / Urgent Care staff if my problem continued	0%
Not applicable	16%

Patients were asked how they had travelled to A&E, the results can be found in the table below:

Method of transport	Percentage of patients
Ambulance / Paramedics	9%
I drove myself	31%
Somebody else drove me	53%
Public Transport	0%
Taxi	7%
I walked here	0%

Healthwatch spoke to 10 patients who had arrived by ambulance, all of whom rated the service as ‘Excellent’. The following comments were received:

‘Ambulance service was quick and prompt’

‘Within minutes they had arrived’

‘Both staff were polite and excellent’

‘Great crew but no backup at the hospital - left in chair in A&E’

‘Could not ask for better’

Patients were asked how long they had been waiting to be seen. The results were as follows:

Waiting time	Percentage of patients
0-1 hour	62%
1-2 hours	22%
2-3 hours	10%
3-4 hours	3%
4-5 hours	1%
5+ hours	1%

Patients were asked if they had been kept informed about timings or delays. 64% of patients said 'No', 28% said 'Yes' and 8% did not answer. The following comments were received:

- 'On screen TV says delay between 1-2 hours'
- 'It would be nice if we were kept informed while waiting'
- 'Only by TV screen, not by staff'
- 'Asked on arrival and they said up to two hours'
- 'They don't inform you how long it will be due to priorities'
- 'Only by the strapline on the TV'

Patients were then asked how they rated their experience of using A&E/Urgent Care Services. 63% of those who responded rated the service as 'excellent' or 'good', with a further 30% rating it as 'OK'. 7% rated their experience as 'poor' or 'very poor'. The following comments were received:

- 'I was treated by Dr (N). She fully explained the procedures and treatment and was very attentive. I could not have asked for more.'
- '(N) - a doctor looking after me was excellent. Thoroughly checked everything but also made me feel like a friend which was needed when alone, scared and in pain'
- 'Doctor doing diagnostic questions called away three times over 20 minutes at one point'
- 'Very quick, efficient and friendly'
- 'Very interesting. Other patients made the night more interesting'
- 'Pleasant staff'
- 'Not enough staff or beds. Appalling - 86 years old, disabled, confused, just left'

‘Occasionally there are issues with my service users (I am a support worker) and it is a struggle to explain this to the doctors/nurses’

‘On arrival I went to A&E where I was told I had to go to urgent care. This was down a ramp and back outside. I could not walk and my Mum who is 70 could not push me and there were no porters available’

‘Certainly better than South Tees (James Cook). Two recent experiences there and both horrific and upsetting for all of us’

‘Staff really friendly and kind’

‘Very friendly and informative staff at reception’

‘I wish it to be quicker to save time’

‘A long queue standing in to be registered at reception’

‘Self-check in should be fixed to speed things up’

‘You are never aware of how long the wait is. People come in and get seen before you. A&E seems dead now as everyone gets sent to urgent care. Sometimes you wait hours to be told there is nothing they can do. I find urgent care the worst experience’

‘They are very busy and doing the best they can’

‘Could not ask for better’

‘Whenever I attend you cannot fault this department’

‘Contacted 111 for advice. When said I needed to be seen by a Dr. Appointment made and when I arrived I was seen by the nurse practitioner who couldn’t see me because I am pregnant and I would have to wait to see the GP. Despite informing 111 of pregnancy I was still booked with the wrong professional. Whilst waiting the pain has gotten worse’

Patients were then asked ‘what is most important to you?’ from the following options:

Answer Choices	Percentage of patients
Time you have to wait to be seen.	21.21%
Quality of service provided.	46.9%
Being kept safe.	4.55%
Experience and knowledge of staff.	19.7%
Facilities	0%
Being kept informed.	7.58%

The quality of the service was the most important factor to the majority of patients, followed some way behind by the length of time they had to wait to be seen.

Patients were asked how any delays/waiting times should be communicated to them. Most, 65.67% felt that this should be done via announcement boards/monitors in the waiting area. A further 14.9% felt this should be done by staff at reception when booking in, and a further 14.9% of patients felt they should be informed by staff whilst they are waiting to be seen. Other comments received included:

‘Staff informing you at point of booking in and staff informing you while you are waiting’

‘When booking’

‘All top three’

‘It’s hard as urgent and more important cases come in’

‘And then being kept updated’

Patients were also asked ‘What is your main concern while you are waiting?’ The following options were given:

Answer Choices	Percentage of patients
Treatment	48.48%
Parking	1.52%
Length of wait	40.91%
Transport home	0%
Other (please specify)	9.09%

Other responses included:

‘Treatment, length of wait and transport home’

‘Not being kept up to date’

‘Domestic chores needing to be done’

‘Seen very quickly but a long 45 minute wait for ambulance home’

‘Transport home also a concern whilst waiting’

‘Monitor in waiting room. i.e. “we are experiencing a high volume of patients at present so the current waiting time is approx. ..”

‘My service user group (LD) can become quite distressed if they have a long wait and become quite anxious’

‘Main concern while waiting is parking AND length of wait’

‘Safety also important due to bad experience at James Cook’

‘Length of wait and then not getting the treatment needed’

‘By the time I had got through to 111 we had already driven to the hospital’

‘Concerned that the length of time I have waited due to 111’s mistake my pregnancy could be affected and treatment affected’

Results - Questionnaire Two

These questionnaires were handed to patients (along with a freepost envelope) following their completion of Questionnaire One. They were designed to gather feedback once treatment had been provided and patients had left/were leaving the hospital.

Only 15 questionnaires were returned. As a result we have sought further feedback, via our social media platforms, from people who had recently visited A&E and/or Urgent Care. However this has only resulted in the completion of a further 2 questionnaires.

The first question asked patients how long it took from their arrival at A&E/Urgent Care to being treated and sent home.

Time	Percentage of patients
0 - 1 hour	47%
1 - 2 hours	20%
2 - 3 hours	6.6%
3 - 4 hours	6.6%
4 - 5 hours	13.3%
5 + hours	6.6%

At the beginning of our visit the Urgent Care Department was busy, but people were moving through quite quickly. A&E was much less busy and remained so throughout our time there on both the Friday evening and Monday morning.

Question two asked people “What did you find positive about your experience of using A&E/Urgent Care?”

The following responses were received:

‘The nurses we saw were very good and friendly. They were very good at talking to my autistic son and explained everything in a way he could understand’

‘The professionalism of the staff’

‘Very friendly. Kept me informed’

‘Nothing after 5 hours got some toast’

‘Was checked for every possible problem that could have been causing my pain. The doctor (N) was very thorough’

‘Staff under pressure but still kind and helpful, even though kept being called away’

‘Great advice’

‘Friendly receptionists’

‘Pleasant staff’

‘Good waiting times’

‘Professional staff clean facility. Short wait time’

‘Very professional very good’

‘All that I was in contact with seemed fine’

‘The advice given’

‘Efficient process. Friendly staff’

‘When you got seen there were lovely and a good help’

Patients were then asked if they felt that any improvements could be made to their experience of using A&E/Urgent Care. Although the majority of respondents answered ‘no’, the following other responses were received:

‘An idea of waiting times would have been helpful’

‘I felt that the depth of investigation at triage was missing’

‘As I suffer from anxiety, a nurse was slightly abrupt on arrival which I found intimidating. She could have been more sympathetic with patients who are feeling vulnerable’

‘Too much pressure on the hospital department. We were transported from Hartlepool when there was a hospital less than a mile away’

‘There is always room for improvements. I did not see any on my short visit’

‘Not really’

‘Yes, try and make waiting times shorter’

Question 4 asked if patients felt they had been treated with courtesy and respect. 15 of those who responded to this questions said ‘yes’, whilst one respondent answered ‘no’.

Patients were then asked ‘How would you rate your overall experience of A&E/Urgent Care?’ The overwhelming majority felt they had received either an ‘excellent’ or a ‘good’ experience although not everyone was of this opinion.

Rating	Percentage of patients
Excellent	7 (46.6%)
Good	5 (33.3%)
OK	1 (6.6%)
Poor	1 (6.6%)
Very Poor	1 (6/6%)

The following responses were received:

‘As stated in Part 1 I was treated by Dr (N) whose care and attention to detail was exceptional’

‘Very good’

‘Useless, didn’t do their job, would not be coming again’

‘The time taken and resources used to transport staff and patients (ambulance took us to hospital) and pressure on North Tees A&E department seems uneconomical and an unnecessary risk to treatment delay’

The final question asked ‘Do you have any feedback you would like to share about your experience of A&E/Urgent Care at the University Hospital of North Tees?’ The following responses were received to this question:

‘There is no need for the way people treat you in here, not good at all’

‘More hand sanitisers’

‘We feel the staff do an amazing job to keep up morale and remain professional in a diminishing service. We are from Peterlee 16 miles away and after the closure of Peterlee A&E, Hartlepool A&E we worry with fitting a 64 year old the travel is too far endangering life’

‘Very satisfied with the courteous manner despite it being apparent that my GP receptionist should have advised me to make an appointment rather than suggesting a visit to urgent care’

‘They look after you when you get seen’

Conclusion and Observations

Staff and volunteers from Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees visited the A&E/Urgent Care departments on the evening of Friday 11th October 2019 between the hours of 6.30pm and 9.30pm, and again on Monday 14th 9 October 2019 between the hours of 9.00am and 12.30pm.

On the Friday evening the Urgent Care department was initially very busy and there were few spare seats available. People were queuing for up to 30 minutes to book in at reception and this included one lady who was carrying a baby. After an hour or so things quietened down and generally patients were being attended to quite quickly. However the room was very warm on the Friday evening and certainly when the room was busy it felt quite oppressive. There was no water fountain available. A member of the Healthwatch team asked reception if they could turn on the air conditioning and provide water. Bottled water was provided along with disposable cups.

We observed one elderly wheelchair user who had been brought in by ambulance. There is little space in the waiting room for wheelchair users and she was placed where she could not see the screen to inform her when she was to be seen. She also required assistance to be taken to a side room to be attended to and needed the help of another patient to get there.

We also observed that there was no audio patient call for anyone who may have sight impairment.

Another gentleman was seen to apparently be having a seizure and it took a long time for someone to come to attend to him. Help only arrived when a member of the public alerted medical staff.

Signage was generally quite poor in urgent care and we observed that posters on the way in to the department were actually facing away from patients and as a consequence could not be read by patients in the waiting room.

There was no TV monitor in urgent care and no visible/audible indication of the anticipated time it may take to be seen.

We observed that generally speaking patients appeared quite happy to be re-directed to urgent care when presenting themselves at the A&E reception.

The A&E waiting area is much more spacious than the waiting area in the Urgent Care department, despite being much less busy whilst we were present. A separate paediatric waiting area is available for parents and children in A&E.

There was a TV monitor, which was a very “busy” screen with a lot of adverts. The visual aid showing the patient journey through A&E was very informative. There was a sign advising patients of the likely waiting time but we did not observe there to be a clock in the A&E department.

Staff on reception commented that although some GP practices now offer a “walk-in” service patients often prefer to present themselves at A&E/Urgent Care. Staff also told us that patients often become annoyed when they see people who arrived after them being attended to first. Many do not seem to be aware that appointments can be made using the NHS 111 service.

The majority of people who we spoke to were happy with the service being provided and most were very complimentary about the staff on duty. However there were exceptions to this. Over the course of the weekend most patients were attended to within 2 hours of their arrival at the hospital and were generally accepting of the time they had to wait to be seen although several did tell us that they would like to be given more information about anticipated waiting times and to be kept updated whilst waiting to be seen.

Recommendations

1. Consideration should be given to improving the time taken to check in at the reception desk, especially in Urgent Care, thus avoiding the need for patients to stand in a long queue. For example, patients could take a ticket on arrival and then register at reception when their number is called.
2. The seating arrangements in Urgent Care should be improved to take into account the needs of wheelchair users.
3. The temperature in Urgent Care should be controlled so as not to be oppressive when the room is busy, and there should be access to water for those who require it.
4. The needs of people who may have sensory or visual impairments should be taken into account with regard to the patient call systems. An audible and visual call system should be put in place.
5. There needs to be a better way of communicating approximate waiting times to patients both at the time of registering at reception and during their wait to be seen. Staff on reception could provide an indicative waiting time, and patients could be updated whilst waiting to be seen.
6. Staff should be more readily available to support those who require assistance whilst waiting to be seen. This would include any patients who may have a disability or may be living with dementia.

7. Posters need to be positioned where they are most beneficial to patients and where they can be easily seen whilst patients are in the waiting area.
8. Consideration should be given to the provision of a TV monitor in Urgent Care, providing patients with up to date information. It should be positioned where it is accessible to all patients.
9. The safety of all patients is of paramount importance. Given the small scale of the Urgent Care waiting area, in particular, consideration should be given to providing a separate waiting area for anyone deemed to be posing a risk to other patients.

Response from University Hospital of North Tees



North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust

University Hospital of North Tees

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12th February 2020

Health Watch, Stockton on Tees

Dear Geoff

Following your visit to A&E and Urgent Care on Friday 11th October 2019 and Monday 14th October 2019 at the University Hospital of North Tees, we have reviewed your report and acknowledge some recommendations that require addressing.

From the visit it was highlighted that consideration should be given to improving the time taken to check in at the reception desk, especially in Urgent Care. It is highly unusual for there to be a long wait for registration but should there be a delay the Patient Process Facilitator (PPF) would support and help with the process of booking patients into the department, this can also be supplemented by Health Care Assistants in times of escalation. We also have a self-booking screen which supports registration for patients arriving via 111 appointments but unfortunately this is broken and we are in the process of replacing it. The queue can be due to independent patients returning from x-ray to notify the practitioner of their return and also patients who are waiting to make follow up appointments.

You noted on your visit that there was insufficient room in the Urgent Care Centre for wheelchair users to manoeuvre or see the screen. We acknowledge this concern and have configured the seating to support this as much as possible within the constraints of the existing space. We endeavour to leave the area adjacent to the reception desk as clear as possible for patients with disabilities, wheelchair users and their families.

At your visit you noted the temperature in the Urgent Care Centre as being oppressive. Temperature control is difficult to regulate especially as the area has an automatic door. There are health and safety concerns regarding a water fountain in the waiting area, for example infection control. There is a sign to encourage service users to ask reception staff if they would like some water to support good hydration. Work is ongoing to open up the area between the Outpatient Department Café and the Urgent Care Centre, making this area more accessible for patients and visitors.

There was some discussion regarding call systems and it is felt was slightly more confidential using the screen rather than a verbal/tannoy system. Reception staff will use the instant message facility on SystmOne to notify the triage nurse should a service user require more assistance or be unable to see the screens. Should a patient not respond to the visual prompt, the nurse/doctor will go into the waiting area and locate the patient.

You noted on your visit a lack of communication with regards to waiting times. Unfortunately, it can sometimes be difficult to give an accurate waiting time in A&E or Urgent Care, however staff are advised that when it is busy they should ensure announcements are made to the patients in the waiting areas regarding waiting times and the use of the triage/priority system. We do have a facility to do this on the electronic systems and have asked staff to ensure that these are updated with a realistic waiting time.

You suggested in your recommendations more staff being readily available to support those who required additional assistance. All staff where possible, prioritise clients with learning difficulties, dementia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and any other complex needs. There is a quiet area in A&E and Urgent Care and a quiet area in the Outpatients Department that we can utilise out of hours. There is also a small feeding room in Urgent Care which is often used if a patient is distressed.

Literature and posters are constantly reviewed and health promotion displays adapted for accident prevention, safeguarding, smoking and other areas of health promotion. Up to date information for all patients is a priority and ongoing discussions are taking place to balance the environmental issues and communications.

It would be difficult within A&E and the Urgent Care Centre to have a separate area for patients posing a risk to others as they would require to be visible at all times with supportive measures in place including the use of the security team if required.

Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to contact myself for any further information.

Yours sincerely

Debbie Hall
Lead Nurse Emergency Department

APPENDIX 1

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees A&E and Urgent Care Questionnaire Part 1

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees would like to hear about your experience of attending A&E and Urgent Care at the University Hospital of North Tees. All feedback is anonymous and will be used to help identify if the service is working well and if any improvements are needed.

1. What is the first half of your postcode? (E.g. TS18)

2. Which GP surgery are you registered with?

3. Are you attending A&E or Urgent Care?

- A&E
- Urgent Care

4. Why are you attending A&E / Urgent Care today?

5. Had you contacted another service prior to attending A&E / Urgent Care?

- GP Practice
- Pharmacy
- NHS 111
- Urgent Care
- No I did not contact any other service
- Other (Please give details)

6. If you didn't contact another service prior to coming to A&E, what is the reason for this?

- It was an emergency
- I've been here before
- It's more convenient
- I'd looked up my symptoms online and thought I needed to come
- A friend / family member thought I should come
- Couldn't get an appointment at my GP Practice
- I was advised to come back here by A&E staff if my problem continued
- Not Applicable

7. How did you travel to A&E / Urgent Care?

- Ambulance / Paramedics
- I drove myself

- Somebody else drove me
- Public Transport
- Taxi
- Patient Transport
- I walked here
- Other (please give details)

8. If you arrived by ambulance how would you rate the service you received?

- Excellent
- Good
- Ok
- Poor
- Very Poor

Comments:

9. Roughly how long have you been waiting?

- 0-1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 4-5 hours
- 5+ hours

10. Have you been kept informed about timings or delays?

- Yes
- No

Comments:

11. How would you rate your experience of A&E /Urgent Care so far?

- Excellent
- Good
- Ok
- Poor
- Very Poor

Comments:

12. What is most important to you? (Please tick one box)

- Time you have to wait to be seen
- Quality of service provided
- Being kept safe
- Experience and knowledge of staff
- Facilities
- Being kept informed

13. How do you think delays/waiting times should be communicated?

- Announcement Board / Monitor in waiting area
- Staff informing you at point of booking in
- Staff informing you whilst you are waiting
- Text

- Other (please specify)

14. What is your main concern while you are waiting?

- Treatment
- Parking
- Length of wait
- Transport home
- Other (please specify)

Thank you for completing the first part of the questionnaire, please return to a member of Healthwatch staff or return in the Freepost envelope with the second part of this questionnaire.

APPENDIX 2

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees A&E and Urgent Care Questionnaire Part 2

Thank you for completing the first part of the questionnaire. We would appreciate if you could complete this second part of questionnaire AFTER your visit to A&E or Urgent Care and return to a member of staff or in the FREEPOST envelope provided.

1. How long did it taken from your arrival at A&E / Urgent Care to being treated and sent home?
 - 0-1 hour
 - 1-2 hours
 - 2-3 hours
 - 3-4 hours
 - 4-5 hours
 - 5+ hours

2. What did you find positive about your experience of A&E / Urgent Care?

3. Do you feel any improvements could be made to your experience of A&E / Urgent Care?

4. Do you feel you were treated with courtesy and respect?

- Yes
- No

Comments:

5. How would you rate your overall experience of A&E / Urgent Care?

- Excellent
- Good
- Ok
- Poor
- Very Poor

Comments:

6. Do you have any other feedback you would like to share about your experience of A&E / Urgent Care at the University Hospital of North Tees?

Thank you for sharing your feedback about A&E / Urgent Care. Your feedback will be used to determine if the service is meeting patients'

needs and if any improvements are required. If you wish to discuss your experience in more detail with a member of the Healthwatch team then please get in touch on 01642 688312 or email healthwatchstockton@pcp.uk.net.

Please return your completed questionnaire to a member of the team or in the FREEPOST envelope provided.