



 **What you told us about the
GP Extended Access Service** 

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Report Summary

What this report is about

This report looks at access to GP services across Sunderland with a focus on evaluating the GP Extended Access Service. This is a service that involves GP practices across Sunderland working together to provide routine appointments for patients in the evenings, weekends and bank holidays.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to support Sunderland Clinical Commission Group (CCG) and Sunderland GP Alliance's understanding of the patient experience and help to provide a safe and accessible service.

What we did

The work involved several ways of gathering the information needed to evaluate the service, these included;

- We visited the five locations where the service is offered on an evening and weekend
- We carried out a social media campaign inviting people to complete a survey
- We called for feedback via our e-newsletter
- We collected feedback via our regular community based information stands and group work.

What were the key findings?

- The people who gave feedback on the service reported high levels of satisfaction on the treatment they received at their appointment
- Access to appointment venues was well received by patients
- Some patients required further primary care appointments after they visited the service
- People's experience of accessing the service varied depending upon whether they made an appointment through 111 or their GP practice.
- Much of the population of Sunderland are still unaware of the service and how to access it.

Introduction

What is Healthwatch Sunderland?

Healthwatch Sunderland is the independent local champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to make sure that those running services put people at the heart of care.

By speaking to Sunderland residents we aim to understand their needs, experiences and concerns of accessing and using local health and social care services. We can then speak out on their behalf to local service providers, focusing on people's concerns about current services and ensuring they are listened to and addressed by those who are running services.

We encourage and work with local services to involve Sunderland residents in the changes to health and social care provision. The ultimate aim is to get things right for the future, with health and social care services which meet the needs of the local community.



Background and rational

We regularly hear from members of the public about their experiences of NHS Primary Care services. In general, most people are happy with the quality of their appointments and treatment they receive but often add that they struggle to gain a GP appointment in a timely manner.

As a result of this, coupled with the introduction of the out of hours GP appointments across the City of Sunderland, we made an evaluation of the GP Alliance Extended Access Service one of our priority areas.

Sunderland GP Alliance Extended Access Service

We asked the Sunderland GP Alliance to provide a summary of the service, here is what they told us;

Following new standards of GP access published by NHS England in 2016/17, Sunderland GP Alliance took the task of developing a city wide model which delivered the requirements of the national specification.

As Sunderland is made up of 5 distinct localities, (two or three of which had previously operated locality based services), it was decided that the city wide model would be based in these 5 localities. The service now operates out of;

- Washington Primary Care Centre
- Houghton Primary Care Centre
- Riverview Health Centre
- Bunnyhill Primary Care Centre
- Pallion Health Centre

The service is a centrally managed hub based service, meaning that the service has been developed consistently across the entire city.

In 2018 the CCG started to develop its urgent care strategy and GP Extended Access was seen as a key service within the development of a safe and effective integrated urgent care service across the city. Innovations have evolved during this time in terms of direct booking of triaged patients from the Emergency Department and the Urgent Treatment Centre, further innovations are planned for 2020 including onward referrals, digital patient consultations and new staff types.

Our approach

Engagement with patients at the Sunderland Extended Access Service

We designed a survey for patients attending extended access appointments which was designed to gain feedback on patient's experiences of using the service (see appendix 1). We asked a series of questions, 11 in total, which included questions on their experience of booking appointments, ease of getting to available venues, options to choose appointment venue and the overall quality of the appointment.

To gain a representative view of those patients who were accessing the service it was decided that we would cover each of the five locations, carrying out a visit once on a weekday evening and once on a Saturday day time.

We aimed to complete the surveys as a one to one interview with patients, as this provided the opportunity to have discussions around people's views and opinions further. The majority of surveys completed were done in this way, although some patients preferred to complete them individually. Patients were also given the option to take the survey away to complete in their own time. These individuals were given a self-addressed envelope to return on completion of their survey.

Promotions

We promoted the work via social media (Facebook and Twitter) and our e-newsletter, where we invited members of the public to share their views on the service. People could either do this by completing a Survey Monkey survey, which replicated the survey used face to face with patients, or they could call the Healthwatch Sunderland office, where a staff member could support them in the completion of the survey.

Our findings

Overall we received 101 completed surveys in total. The results of these surveys are given below.

1. What did patients tell us?

Where were people attending their appointment?

The breakdown of where patients had attended their appointment is given below;

- Houghton Primary Care Centre - 27 (16 on an evening, 11 on a Saturday)
- Riverview Health Centre - 10 (2 on an evening, 8 on a Saturday)
- Bunnyhill Primary Care Centre - 16 (5 on an evening, 11 on a Saturday)
- Pallion Health Centre - 29 (20 on an evening, 9 on a Saturday)
- Washington Primary Care Centre - 17 (10 on an evening, 7 on a Saturday)

We also received two surveys back from patients who had attended the service when it had previously operated out of Southwick Health Centre.

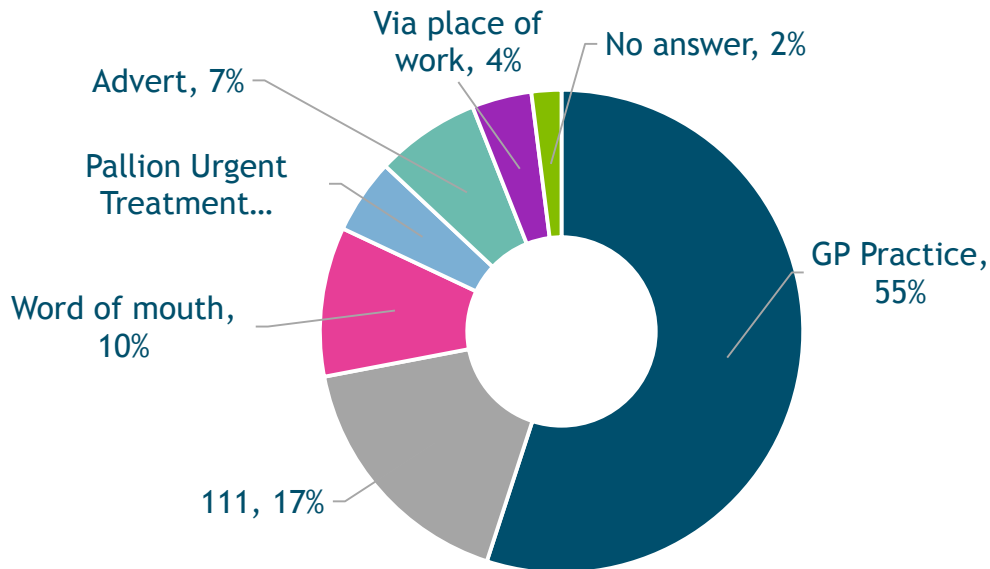
Who had informed them of the service?

We asked patients where they had heard about the service. The purpose of asking this question was to gain a picture of how the service is promoted across the city, as during our engagement work with patients in the community, the Healthwatch Team continually hears from members of the public about the difficulties they have in accessing appointments GP appointments in a timely manner (people often quote waiting times of 2-3 weeks) or at a time that is convenient to fit their working hours etc. At the same time the majority of these individuals, when asked, have not been made aware that the GP Extended Access Service is available to them. Many after being informed of this service by the Healthwatch Team are grateful for the information and often state they wish they had been aware of this earlier.

During 2019 over 850 patients were informed of the service by a member of the Healthwatch Team

Where did you hear about the service?

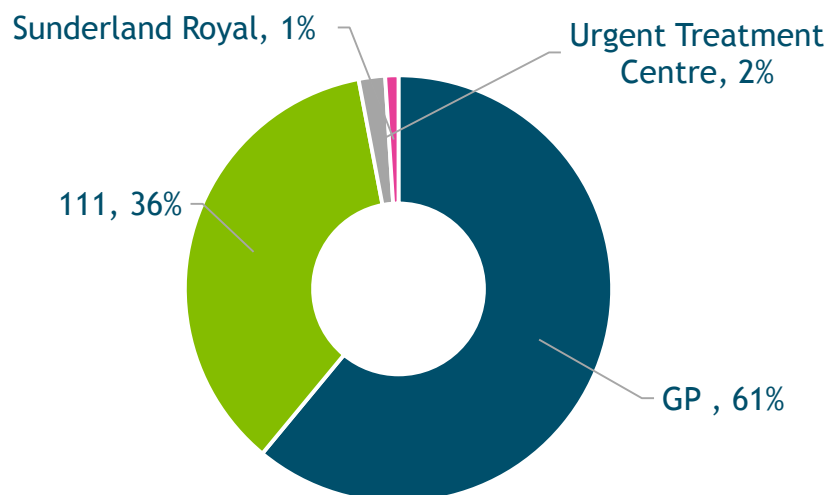
As we are aware that local people aren't aware that the service exists we were keen to find out how people had been informed about the availability of these type of appointments. The graph below demonstrates the findings from this question:



The result highlighted that the majority of patients had been informed of the service either via their **GP practice (55%)** or by **111 (17%)**.

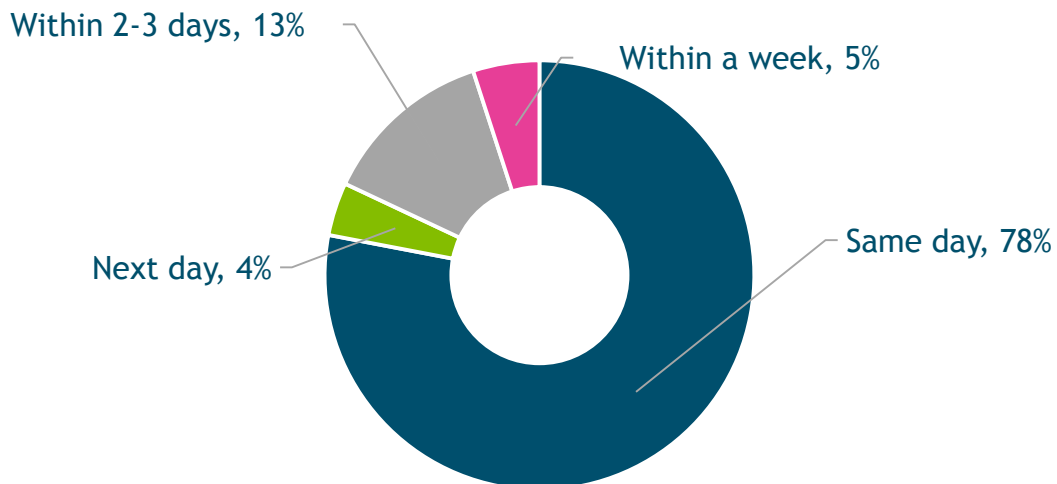
How did you make your appointment today?

When asked how they had made their appointment, one person failed to answer the question and the remainder answered as follows:



How quickly did you get your appointment?

As the introduction of the service was to support people to access appointments we wanted to know how quickly people were able to gain an appointment. Patients gave the following responses;



Did you get offered a choice of venue for your appointment?

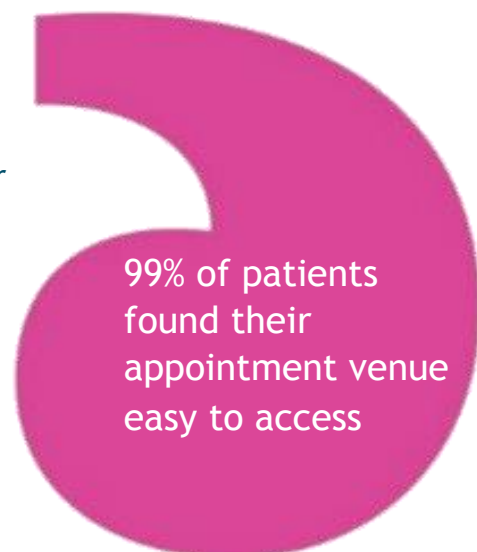
We asked patients whether they were offered a choice of where they attended their appointment. We aimed to get a picture of how the appointments were allocated when made and whether the patients could choose a location that was convenient for them.

Of those patients surveyed, 52 patients were not offered a choice of where their appointment would take place (this may have been because their venue was closest to their home address) and 49 were given a choice.

Was this venue easy to get to?

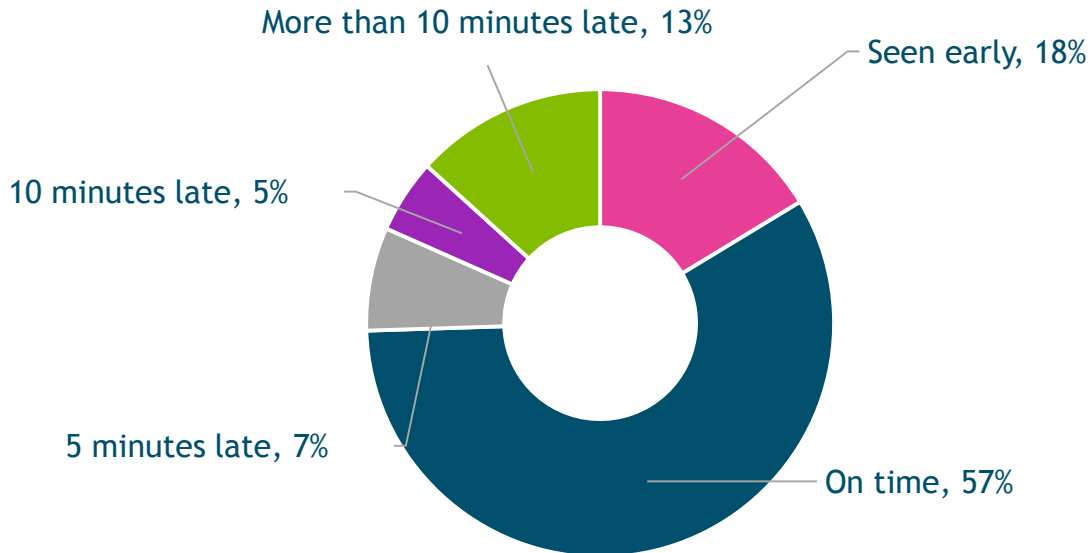
As patients wouldn't be attending appointments at their local GP practice we wished to discover if they found it easy to access the venue where their appointment was held.

Of those who answered the survey, all but one patient agreed that the venue was easy to get to.



Were you seen at your appointment on time?

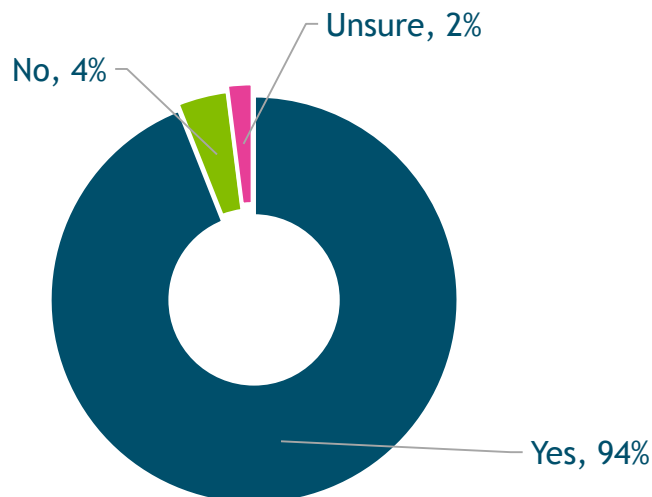
Two patients failed to answer this question and the remaining patients gave the following answers;



The majority of patients were either seen on time or early, 75% in total. Of those patients who were seen late (18%) 1 had to wait 20 minutes, 4 patients had to wait 30 minutes, 1 patient waited 40 minutes and 1 patient had to wait 1 and half hours.

Were you happy with the quality of your appointment?

We wished to understand patients overall satisfaction levels of how their appointment had gone. The results from this are shown below:



The majority of patients 94% agreed that they were happy with their appointment.

Some of the comments we received included;

- “Yes, very happy with the service. I work full time and work was very busy with people on annual leave, so I couldn't get out for an appointment at my GP practice. I was seen at 7.30pm and was very happy with the diagnosis.”
- “Yes, free car parking, easy access. Friendly staff, extremely amenable. GP was very thorough and very clear with his diagnosis and treatment.”
- “Yes, Dr took us in 10 mins early, before receptionist had arrived. I think he could see how poorly my daughter was and saved us sitting waiting in the waiting room as we were early.”
- “Yes, there was a very quick response. I am extremely happy. They are very professional. I do like to see a Dr and not a Nurse and this is possible.”
- “OK, I still needed to make appointment with GP as a referral couldn't be made by the Nurse Practitioner that I had appointment with.”

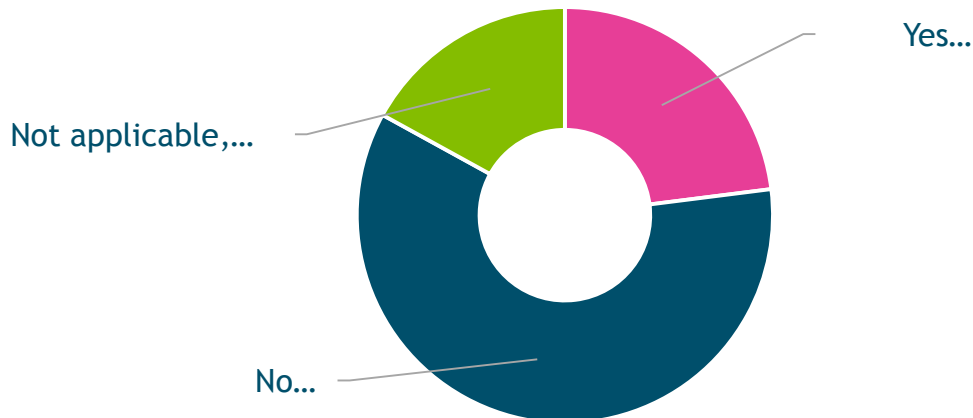


After this appointment do you still need to see your own GP?

We wanted to know if the service was able to offer the patients a complete service or if they would still need to follow up with their own GP with another appointment. 67% of patients stated that they didn't need any additional appointments and 33% still needed to make another appointment to see their own Doctor or a Nurse.

Were you informed of your nearest open pharmacy?

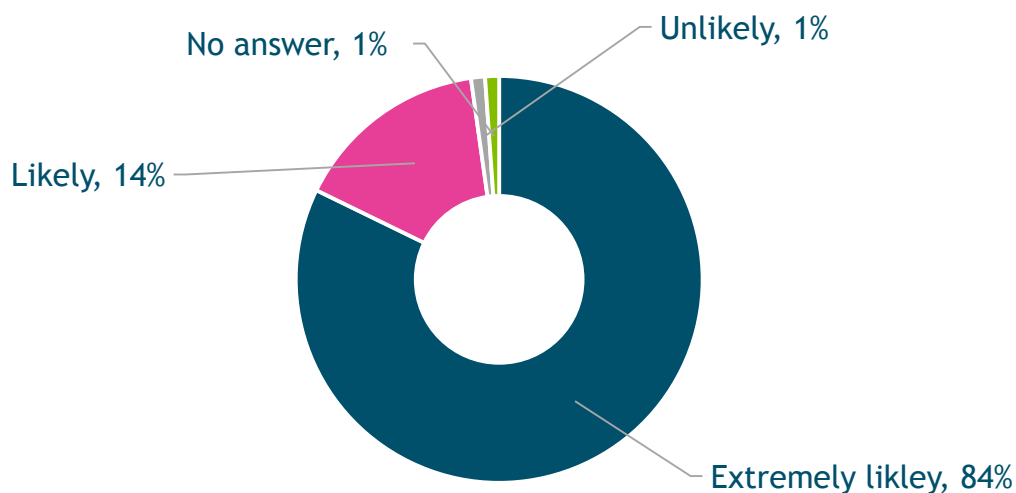
As people wouldn't be attending their normal GP practice and their appointment could be late on an evening when local pharmacies would be closed, we wanted to know for those patients given a prescription, if the patient was given information on the nearest open pharmacy.



The findings show that the majority of patients 60% were not offered information on the nearest pharmacy. It was noted that some of these patients did ask the Healthwatch Team if they could offer this information and others stated that they didn't need this information as they were local and familiar to the area.

Would you recommend the GP Extended Access Service to others?

We wanted to discover patients overall satisfaction of the service and whether they would be likely to recommend the service to others.



The majority of patients 84% would recommend the service to others.

Additional comments

People were invited to offer additional comments they wished to make. The following comments were received;

- “It's been very good.”
- “This is an ideal service for people who work. For me as a mother of two small children I would rather see my GP during the day as I don't like bringing the children out late or not being at home to put them to bed. I used the service for my daughter previously and called the surgery at 8am and had to wait until 9.15pm for her to see a doctor - she was in pain.”
- “Everyone was very friendly and helpful.”
- “I was seen as soon as I got there, earlier than my appointment time.”
- “We waited one and a half hours, they did tell us that they were running late.”
- “Rang for an extended access appointment and was given one 20 minutes later.”
- “I work full time so GP offered this service. I think this would be beneficial for all people who work!”
- “I rang my GP at 4.45pm, no appointment for Extended Access was offered. Told to ring the next day or use 111. Waited on the line for 20 minutes to speak to 111 but the call handler was lovely and very helpful when I got through. Initial appointment offered was too late as going away on holiday on Friday. 111 called back a few minutes later with this appointment.”
- “111 generally give good advice, but the call handler's questions can be annoying. They ask a broad area of questions, could there not be options at the beginning of the call e.g. minor illness, minor injury etc. to save all the inappropriate questions?”
- “Went to GPs at 2pm was told to ring 111 from home and was offered an appointment for 6.15pm.”
- “Took 20 minutes to get through to 111.”
- “I had a 20 minutes wait as I arrived at venue and wasn't on the list. The Receptionist phoned 111 and have an appointment with Doctor but later.”
- “15 minute wait on the phone to get through to the 111 service.”
- “Rang 111 at 8am as my 82 year old mother was ill. No answer for 30 minutes. So we came to Bunnyhill, receptionist was lovely but she said I would have to ring 111 for an appointment, tried again waited 20 minutes before phone was answered. Explained my mother was ill, they said I would have to wait for a paramedic, GP or Nurse to ring me back and that could take up to 6 hours as there were more urgent cases than ours. I was disgusted with this response and took my mother to Pallion Urgent Care and was told there was a 4 hour wait. Eventually GP from 111 rang me to say my mother should get an Extended Access appointment within half an hour. After that we got an appointment within 20 minutes. Happy with Extended Access appointment but not happy with 111 service.”



- “I needed to see a GP before my holidays as I had a UTI, I did and it was brilliant.”
- “I had recently had a stroke and got UTI shortly afterwards. The Extended Access service was very good.”
- “I got seen at 23:30. The Nurse or GP I seen said I could have hung on and used the extended access service on Sunday. I explained I asked 111 for an appointment on Sunday on the extended access service. But the woman on the phone told me to go to Pallion at 21:30 which I did.”
- “Dr was grumpy but reassured me.”
- “I was examined with a suspected chest infection. I am very happy with the outcome.”
- “I was given medication and advised next steps. Good advice and good appointment. I may need to come back.”
- “GP gave 2 recommendations and a script. Gave branded meds on script, then rang me to back to and changed script to generic version. Urine sample - told me to take it to GP next day which was Saturday but the GP surgery is closed. Rang 111 again made another appointment to hand in urine sample. First GP said I could not hand it in there. Then I was told to come back today (Saturday) to hand in sample.”

Additional observations and comments

In addition to the feedback collected during the visits captured via the surveys, the Healthwatch Team also made some observations and captured some qualitative feedback on patient experiences of using the service, these included;

- A patient arrived a little late and obviously distressed as their GP surgery had given him the postcode for the Washington venue (appointment was at Houghton Primary Care Centre). The Receptionist reassured him that this was not a problem and he would still be seen. She apologised for his inconvenience.
- Patient had arrived at Houghton Primary Care Centre earlier in the day as they didn't know the walk-in centre had closed. The Primary Care Centre Receptionist stated that the walk-in had closed and said she couldn't help. No information or signposting was given to the patient, who later called 111. The patient's mother stated she felt there is a lack of communication about the service at GP Receptionist level.
- Lady walked in with her baby who was unwell thinking the walk in was still open. Reception staff informed the lady to go home and call 111 or go to Pallion Urgent Treatment Care.
- The patient works full time and needed daily dressings after a recent operation. They were unable to get out of work so went every day to Queen Elizabeth Accident & Emergency for 2 weeks, as no one told him about this service. This patient stated that everyone he has seen have been lovely but

shared his frustration about the lack of support to get to the right place for treatment.

- A dad brought in 2 year old son who was unwell. The gentleman explained that earlier in the day (Saturday morning), he had phoned 111 for the little boy who had been poorly for a couple of days. 111 advised him to go to his Pharmacist, he took the little boy to his local Pharmacist based at Shiney Row who was unable to help and suggested that the gentleman go to Washington walk in centre. At the Washington Primary Care Centre the Receptionist informed the gentleman there was nothing they could do and suggested he go home and phone 111. He returned home, rang 111 who then made him an appointment at Houghton Primary Care Centre. It took him several hours before he received the correct information.
- Lady received a prescription for their young child and wasn't sure of the nearest pharmacy. The Healthwatch staff member had to direct the patient to pharmacy and asked her if her son's prescription needed to be stamped.



Conclusions

Appointments that are offered to patients at an evening and weekend are clearly valued. The overall feedback we received from patients regarding the offer of an appointment on an evening and weekend was very positive.

The quality and treatment received by patients and overall satisfaction levels of their appointment was very positive.

People found it easy to access their appointments at venues that differed from their normal GP practice and were happy to travel around the city to access the service.

People's experiences of booking their appointments differs. Some people expressed their concerns when booking an Extended Access appointment through 111. Most people booking through their GP were satisfied with the process.

Our general public engagement work has highlighted that local people's awareness of the offer of these appointments is still limited and many local people we speak to still cite access to GP appointments as one of their main concerns. In addition many of those patients we engaged with at appointment venues during this work, were unaware of the name of the service they were accessing and how to access it again. People in general know of the service as the out of hours GP service/appointments.



Recommendations

Based on these findings we would like to make the following recommendations:

- **Increase patients awareness of the Extended Access Service**
To help raise people's awareness of the service and the availability of GP appointments out of hours, Sunderland GP Alliance should further promote, advertise and market the service across the city.
- **Provide clear information on the Extended Access Service to patients at the time of their appointment**
To assist with peoples understanding of what the Extended Access Service has to offer and how they can access it again, Sunderland GP Alliance should ensure that patients are provided with this information at the time of their appointment.
- **Improve patients access to Extended Access Service appointments**
To help improve patients current experiences of accessing the service, the Sunderland GP Alliance needs to work with GP practices and in particular the 111 service and review the current appointment booking processes and practices in place.
- **Signpost patients to appropriate service**
To support those patients who may turn up to venues without a pre booked appointment, the Sunderland GP Alliance needs to provide its staff with the relevant information so that they can correctly signpost patients to the correct available services.

Thank you

Thank you to all the individuals who shared their honest thoughts and experiences that contributed to this work. Thanks also to the Sunderland GP Alliance who worked with us on this project and supported us by facilitating our visits.

Appendices

Appendix 1



Sunderland Extended Access
Service Survey

1. Where did your appointment for the Sunderland Extended Access Service take place?

2. Where did you hear about the service? (if relevant please state your GP practice name)

3. How did you make your appointment at The Sunderland Extended Access Service?

Through my GP Practice

Other health professional

Through 111

4. How quickly did you get your appointment?

Same day

Within a week

Within 2-3 days

5. Were you offered a choice of venue for this appointment?

Yes

No

6. Was this venue easy to get to?

Yes

No

7. Were you seen at your appointment time?

I was seen early

On time

5 minutes late

10 minutes late

Longer than 10 minutes late



8. Were you happy with the quality of your appointment? Yes No

Please explain:

9. After this appointment, do you still need to see your own GP?

Yes No

10. Did anyone signpost you to the nearest, open pharmacy?

Yes No

11. Overall, how likely are you to recommend this service to friends and family?

Extremely likely	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unlikely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Likely	<input type="checkbox"/>	Extremely unlikely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unsure	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Thank you

Your feedback will be shared with the Sunderland Extended Access Service and be used to improve services. If you have any queries or need support to complete this form please call us on 0191 514 7145

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