

Walsall Urgent Treatment Centre Report

March 2022

healthwatch
Walsall



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Introduction

Healthwatch Walsall is the independent voice of the public in health and social care services. We collect feedback from the public about their experiences of accessing and using health and social care services and use that feedback to work with service providers and commissioners to identify service improvements.

Each year we carry out a number of focused projects that look at particular services or groups and these are based on feedback that we receive from the public. On this occasion we have carried out a project that looks in more depth at people's experiences of using the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) based at Walsall Manor Hospital.

The project was chosen due to feedback that had been received by Healthwatch Walsall on experiences of the UTC. There were fifteen pieces of feedback and it was generally quite negative with main areas raised being the length of time that people had to wait and the perceived poor attitudes of the staff there. However, there was also positive feedback about the service, particularly in relation to the staff.

NHS England define an Urgent Treatment Centre as being 'GP led, open at least 12 hours a day, every day, offer appointments that can be booked through NHS 111 or through a GP referral, and are equipped to diagnose and deal with many of the common ailments people attend A &E for.'

The UTC in Walsall is located at Walsall Manor Hospital which is near to the A&E department in Walsall. NHS England say that 'co-location of services offers the opportunity for streaming at the front door' which means that pressure can be reduced on A&E services by enabling people to be directed to the suitable service when they first arrive at either department.

Acronym(s):

Urgent Treatment Centre - UTC

Methodology

We undertook a survey with people who have used the UTC at Walsall Manor Hospital.

The survey was available online, as well as paper copies. Which were available at the Walsall UTC for patients to complete whilst they waited to be seen/ treated.

We also discussed the UTC at one of our 'Friday Focus Meeting...' and have had discussions with the manager of the UTC around set up including resources and current facilities and delivery.

As part of this project we invited the Manager of Walsall Urgent Treatment Centre to present the service online via a Zoom meeting to members of the public and professionals if they wished to join.

The presentation is summarised below in word. It offers insight into the set up and delivery of services.

What is an Urgent Treatment Centre?

- Urgent treatment centres (UTCs) are GP-led
- Open at least 12 hours a day, every day
- Offer appointments that can be booked through 111 or through a GP referral
- And are equipped to diagnose and deal with many of the most common ailments people attend A&E for

UTCs will also ease the pressure on hospitals, leaving other parts of the system free to treat the most serious cases. The UTC results in decreased attendance at A&E, or, in co-located services and offer the opportunity for streaming at the front door.

UTCs will work alongside other parts of the urgent care network including primary care, community pharmacists, ambulance and other community-based services to provide a locally accessible and convenient alternative to A&E for patients who do not need to attend hospital.

The patient always comes first, and as outlined in the [NHS Long Term Plan \(LTP\)](#) the NHS aim is to ensure patients get the care they need, fast, and to relieve pressure on A&E departments.

The reasons for this are simple.

We all know where to go when life is in danger - A&E, but estimates suggest up to 3 million people who come to A&E each year could have their needs addressed elsewhere in the urgent care system.

However patients have told us the range of alternatives available can be confusing - Walk in Centres, Urgent Care Centres, Minor Injury Units and others with local names and all with differing levels of service.

So A&E is understandably the default choice for many people unsure where to turn when they need urgent care or advice.

About Walsall UTC

Walsall Urgent Treatment Centre is open from 0700 - 0300hrs daily (including weekends and Bank Holidays)

The service is Commissioned (paid for) by Black Country & West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and is provided by Malling Health.

Malling Health is a National organisation that has UTCs in Sandwell, City Hospital, Dudley, Telford and Shrewsbury along with General Practice sites throughout the UK.

The UTC is staffed by GP's, Advanced Nurse Prescribers, Triage Nurses (RGN, RSCN) and Health Care Assistants. We have recently welcomed Paramedics and Pharmacists into our workforce. Numbers of staff vary from day to day and dependant on time of day.

Access to Walsall UTC services by:

- NHS111
- Referred from Emergency Department
- GP referral
- Pharmacy
- Ambulance
- Self-referral/ Walk in

Services it offers:

- Minor illness/Minor injury
- Speciality Referral (for Same Day Emergency Care)
- Tests/Investigations for Admission avoidance (not routine tests - via GP)
- Urine tests/ECG/Bloods/X-rays (dependent upon other services)

Exclusions:

- Life Threatening issues
- Long term chronic conditions
- Dental (No dentists on site)
- Routine blood tests/investigations usually arranged by a GP

Link to PowerPoint presentation on our website: <https://tinyurl.com/4yknrndy>

Findings from the survey

There were only 71 surveys completed by people who had used the UTC at Walsall Manor Hospital. Then taking into account the fact that up to 234 people use the service per day this is a small sample and cannot be seen as being representative of all those who use the UTC.

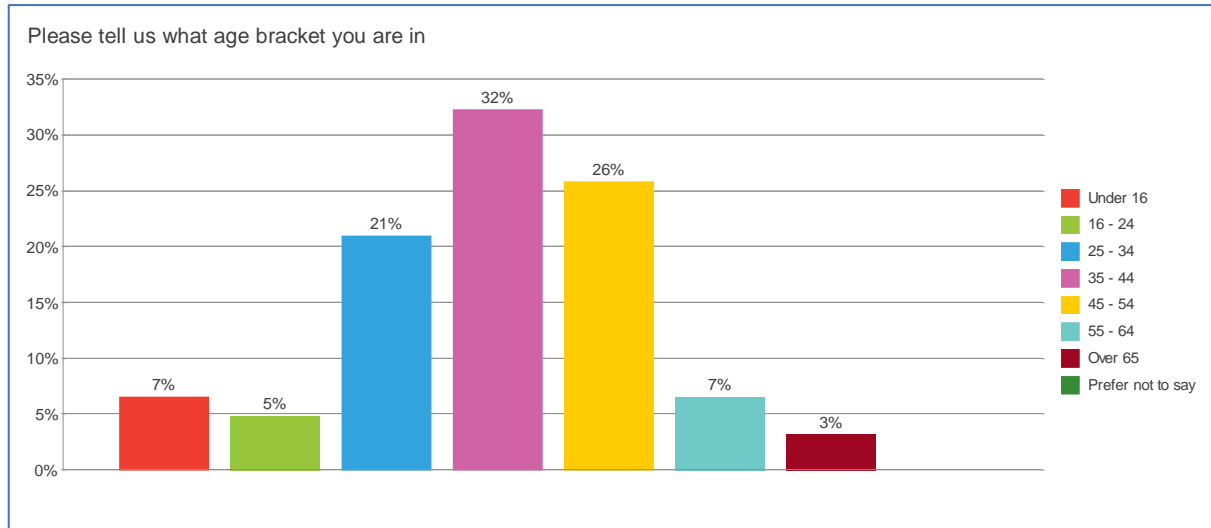
Therefore, the findings provide a snapshot of the experiences of those people who took part in the survey.

Not all of the people who answered the survey were from Walsall but they had all accessed the service in Walsall. 72% of the people who took part in the survey said that they lived in Walsall; 12% were from Wolverhampton; 8% were from Staffordshire; 3% from Sandwell and 2% from

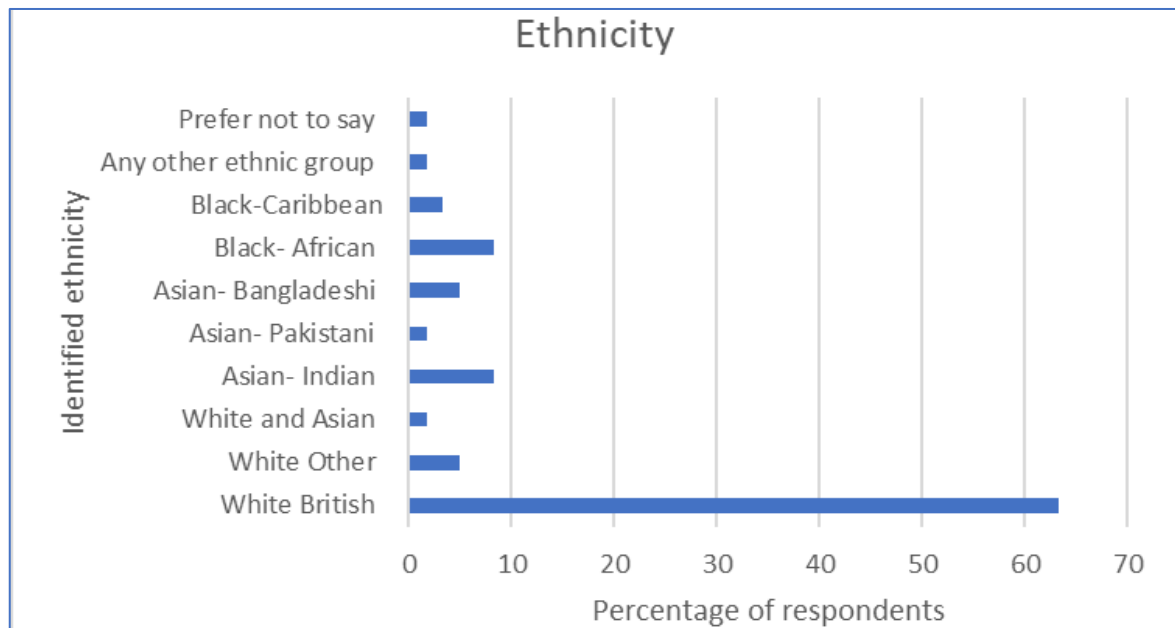
Birmingham. None of the people who took part were from Dudley and 3% said that they came from an area not specified in the survey.

Demographics of those who took part in the survey

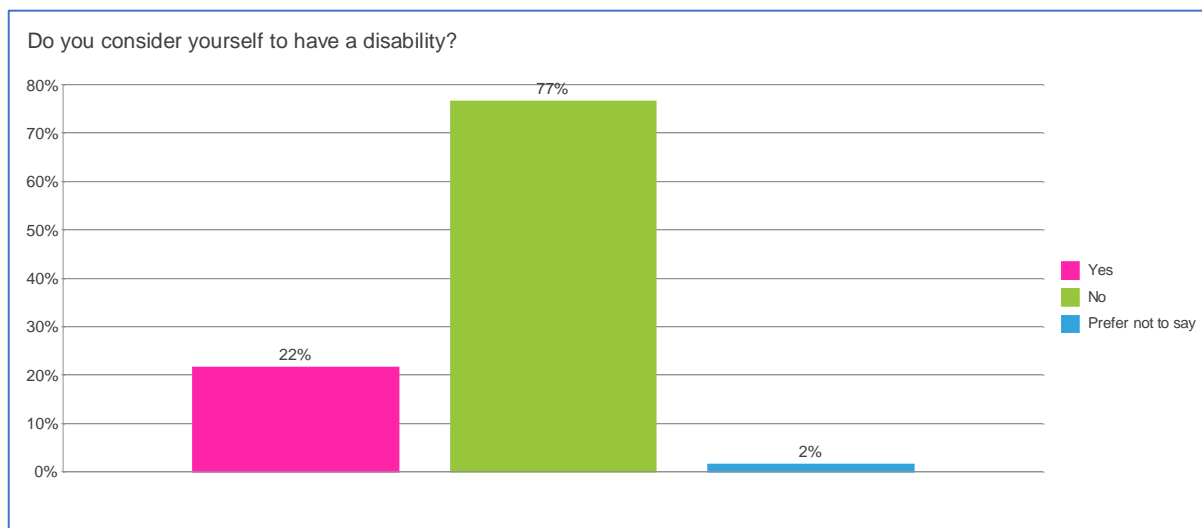
People taking part in the survey ranged in age from under 16 to over 65 with the largest group being aged 35-44 years of age.



People were asked about their ethnic origin. The largest group were people who identified as White British (63%); 8% said that they were from a Black African ethnic background and 8% said that they were from an Asian Indian background; 5% were from an Asian- Bangladeshi background and 5% were from a White-Other background. The chart below shows only those groups where respondents identified as being from those backgrounds. No respondents identified as being from an Arab, Chinese, Irish or Gypsy/Irish Traveller ethnic background.



77% of the people taking part in the survey said that they did not consider themselves to have a disability whilst 22% said that they did consider themselves to have a disability.

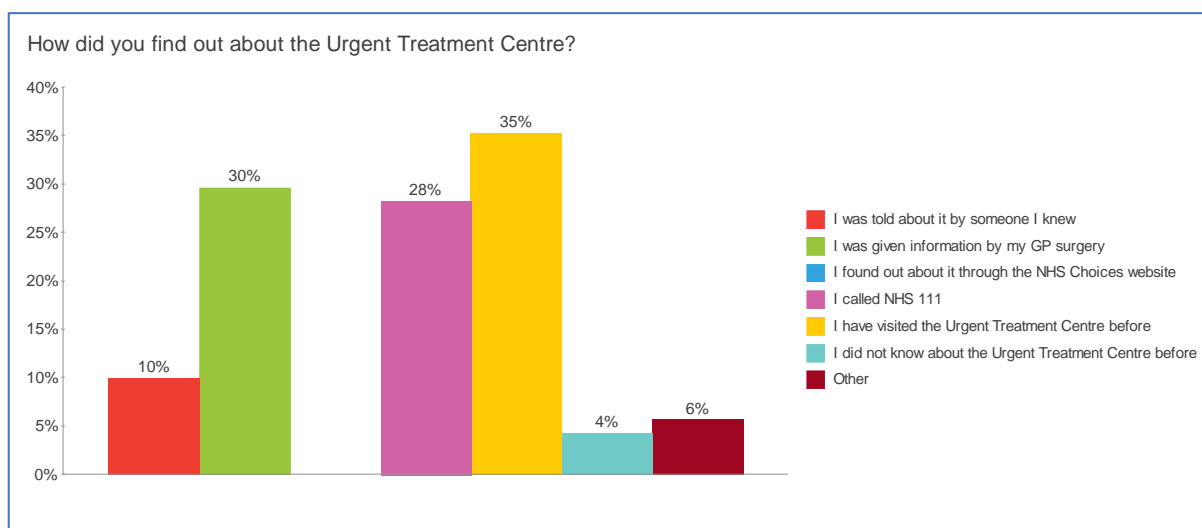


The sample size is small and so is not representative of the number of people who use the UTC on a daily basis. Therefore, the findings should be seen as a snapshot of the experiences and views of the people who took part.

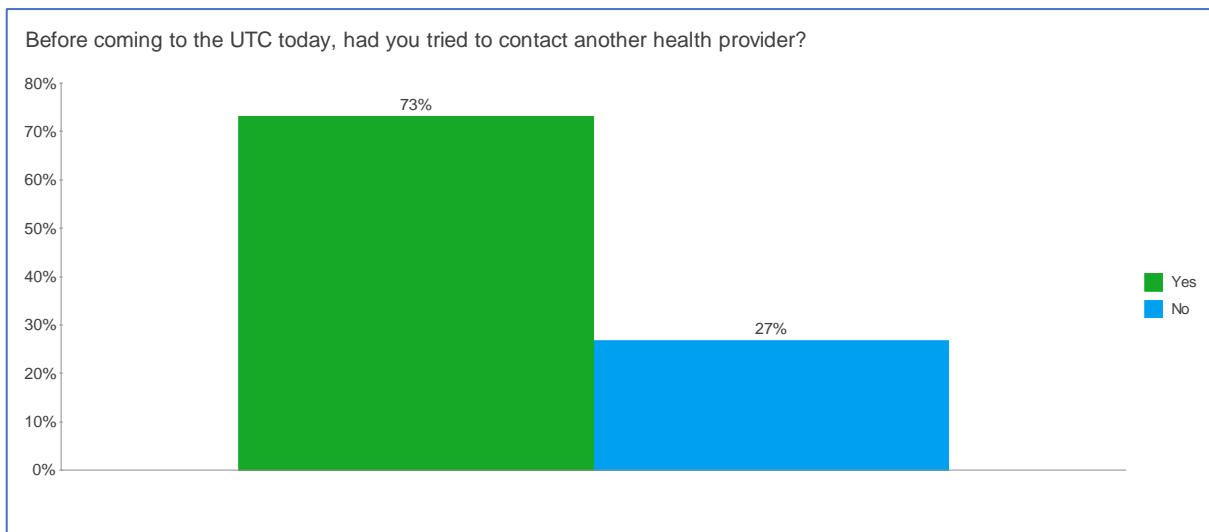
Knowledge and use of the UTC

People were asked how they had found out about the UTC prior to using the service. 35% said that they had used the service on another occasion; 30 % said that they had been told about it by their GP practice; and 28% said that they had called NHS 111 before attending the UTC.

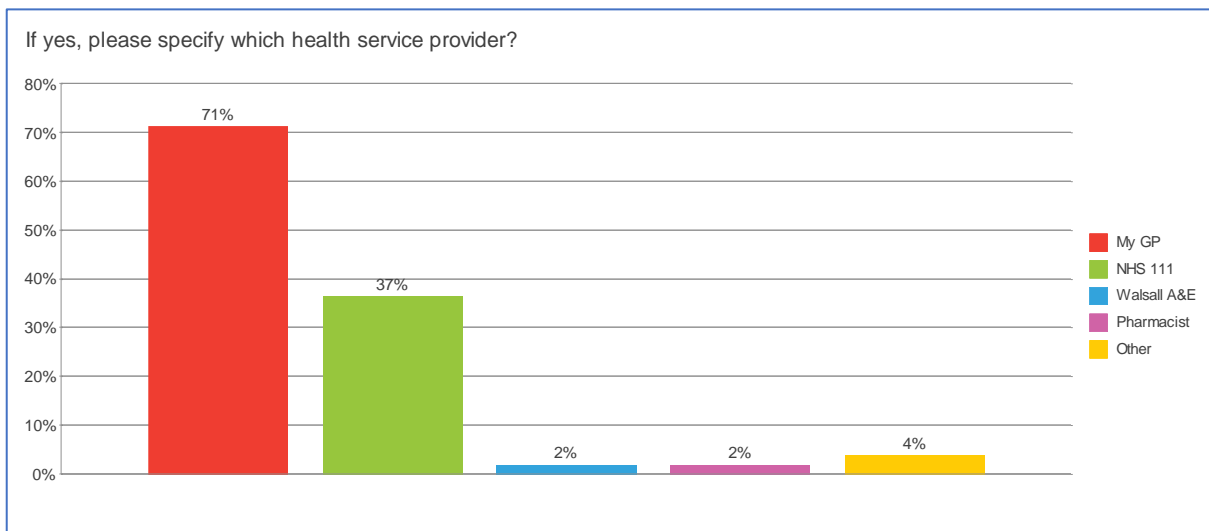
None of the people who answered the question said that they had found out about the UTC through the NHS Choices website. People who answered other mentioned their GP lacking appointments, another that they had been to A&E and two said that they were employed by the NHS.



We were interested to know if people who attended the UTC had made contact with another health provider first. 73% said that they had contacted another health provider before they attended the UTC.



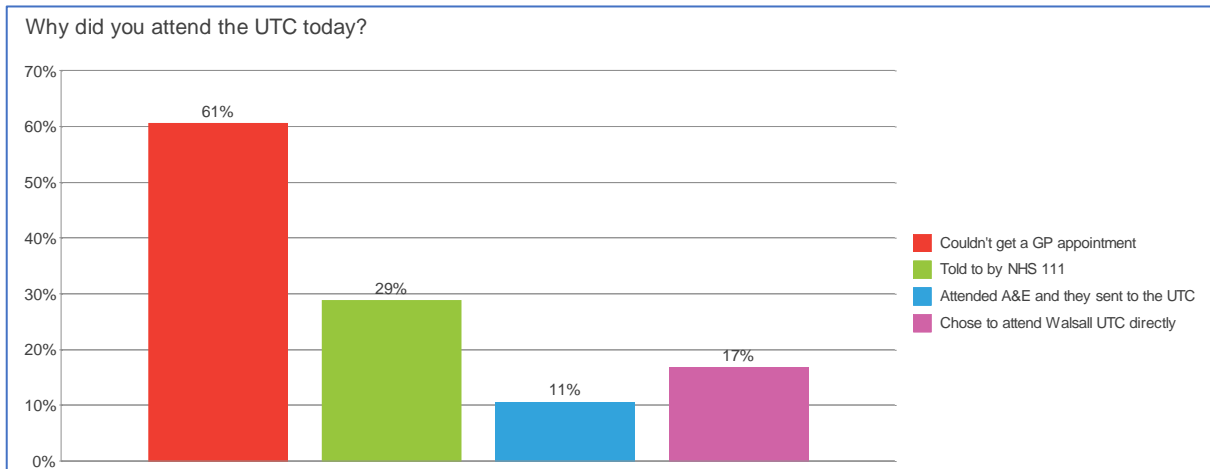
Those that said that they had been in contact with another health provider before attending the UTC were asked what service they had been in contact with first. 71% of the people who answered the question said that they had been in contact with their GP practice before attending the UTC. 37% said that they have been in touch with NHS 111; 2% said that they had been in touch with A&E first and 2% that they had been in touch with a pharmacist before attending the UTC. One person said that they had been in contact with a hospital that was outside Walsall before attending the UTC.



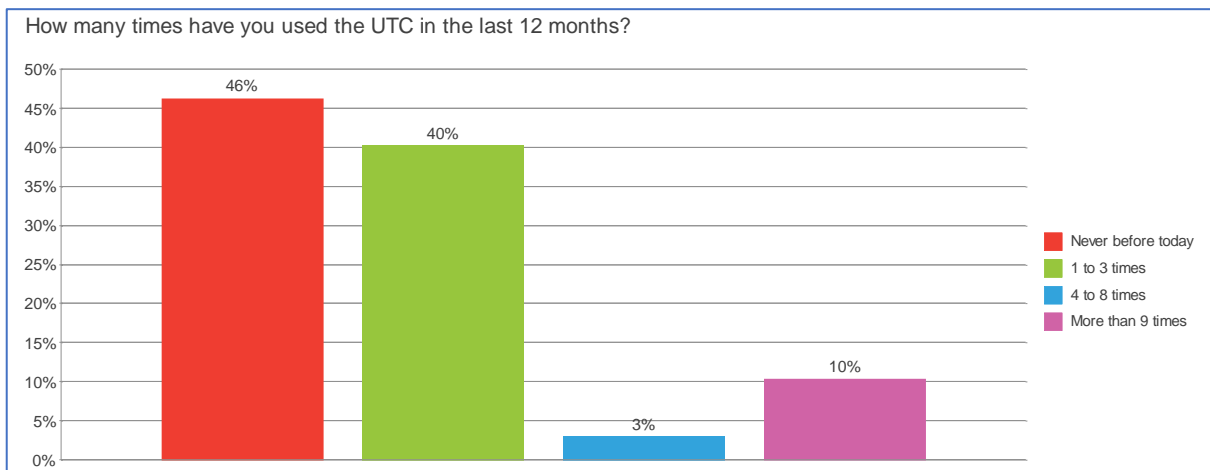
People were asked the reason that they had attended the UTC on this occasion. They were asked to give all of the reasons that they had attended and so may have given more than one reason. 61% said that they had not been able to get a GP appointment and 29% said that they had been told to attend the UTC by NHS 111; 11% said that they had attended A&E first and then been sent to the UTC; and 17% chose to go directly to the UTC.

Those that chose to comment on their reasons for attending the UTC gave a range of answers but most commonly it was because they were unable to get a GP appointment.

With one participant commenting that 'the surgery never had appointments' and another saying that they 'needed to be seen for a long-term condition [and] GP appointments unavailable.' The second most common reason for attending was in order to have dressings changed. One person said that they had opted for the UTC because they had been sent there in the past by NHS 111.

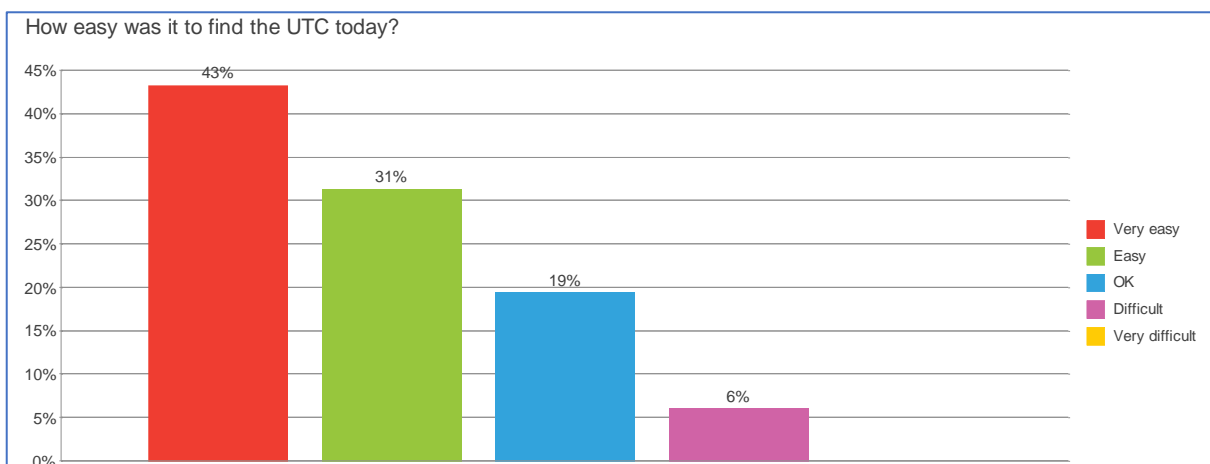


When asked how often they had attended the UTC in the last 12 months 46% said that they had never attended before that occasion and 40% said that they had attended between one and three times before. 10% said that they had attended the UTC more than 9 times in the last 12 months.



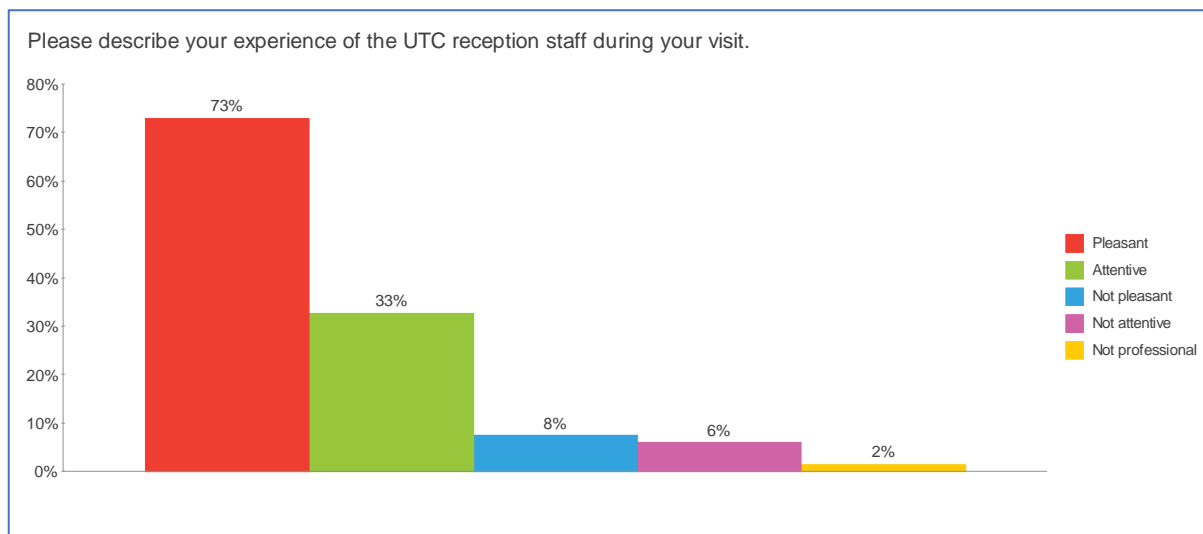
Accessing the UTC

People were asked how easy it had been to find the UTC. 74% of people who answered the question said that it had either been very easy or easy to find; 6% said that it had been difficult and none of the people who answered the question said that it had been very difficult to find.



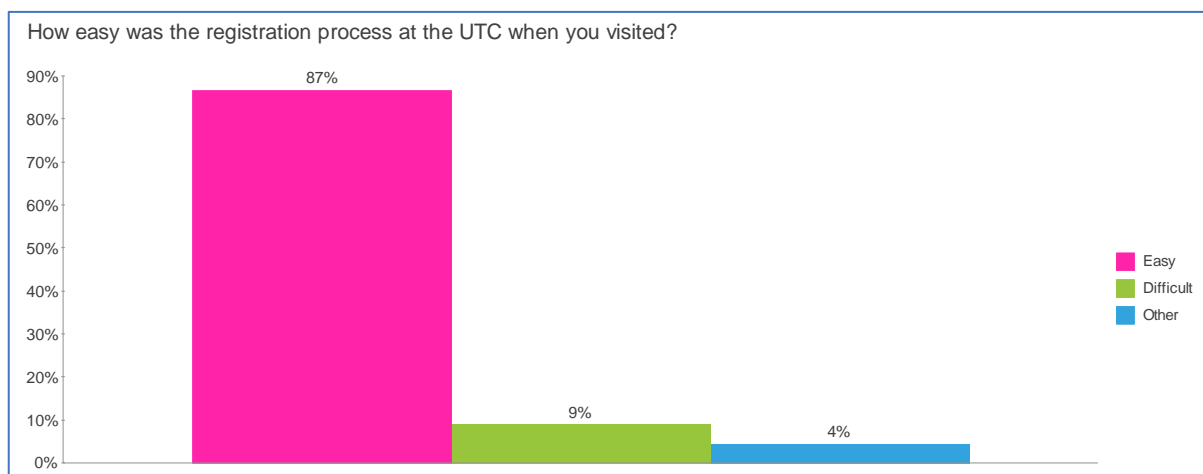
People were asked about their experience of the reception staff at the UTC during their visit. People were able to choose more than one option to describe their experience.

73% of people who answered the question said that the reception staff had been pleasant, and 33% said that they had been attentive. 8% said that they had not been pleasant and 6% said that they are not attentive. 2% said that the reception staff were not professional.



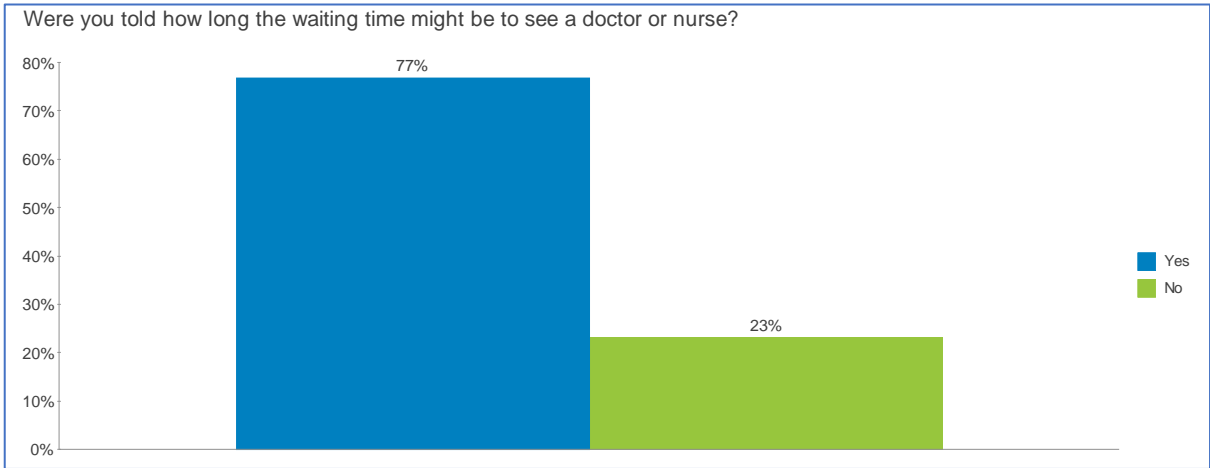
Some people chose to comment on their answers and they were generally positive about the staff saying that they were 'very pleasant' or 'very polite and informative.' It was commented by one person that 'more often than not patients can be rude.' Only one person made a negative comment about the reception staff saying that they 'could hear the staff talking about patients (and their medical conditions).'

87% of the people who answered the question said that the registration process had been easy and 9% said that it has been difficult. The remainder gave other as an answer.

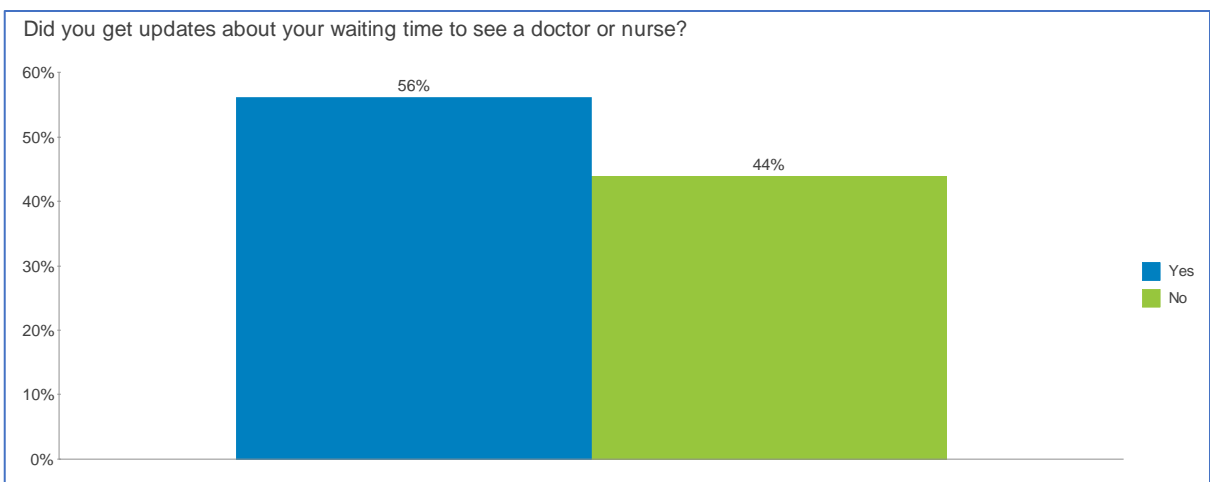


Waiting times

People were asked if they had been told how long they might be waiting to be seen when they registered and 77% of people who answered the question said that they had been told. 23% said that they had not been told how long they might be waiting to be seen.

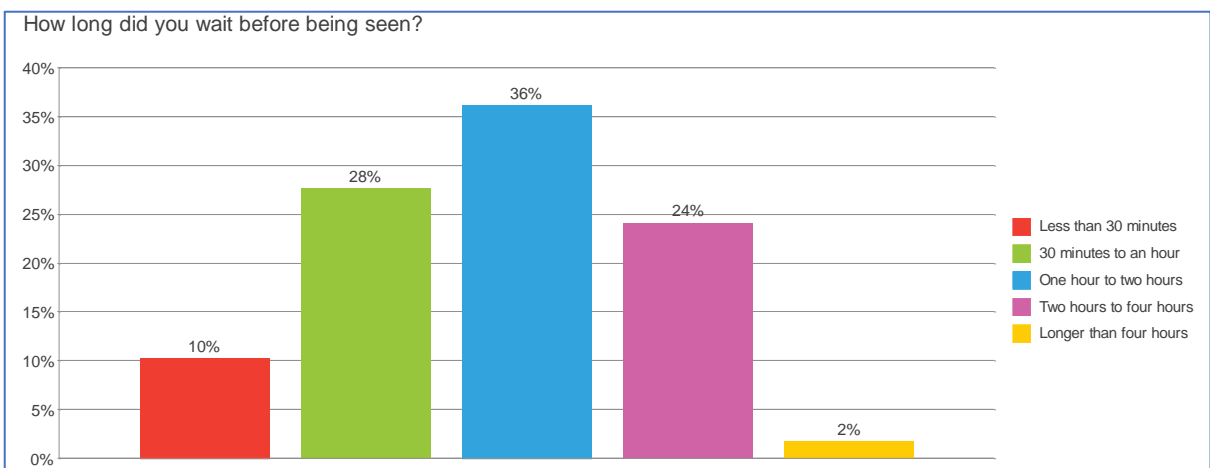


When asked if they had had updates on their waiting time 56% of people who answered the question said that they had been given updates but 44% said that they had not been updated.



People were asked how long they waited before they were seen. 36% of people who answered the question said that they had waited for one to two hours; 28% said that they had waited between 30 minutes and an hour; and 24% said that they had waited between two and four hours. 10% said that they had waited for less than 30 minutes and 2% said that they had waited for more than four hours before they were seen.

We did not ask people to comment on their waiting time specifically but some people had mentioned their waiting times in other parts of the survey. Comments related to long waiting times and one person commented that there were 'long waits with only four people in here at the time' asking 'why always is there a long wait time with no people here?'



Medical treatment

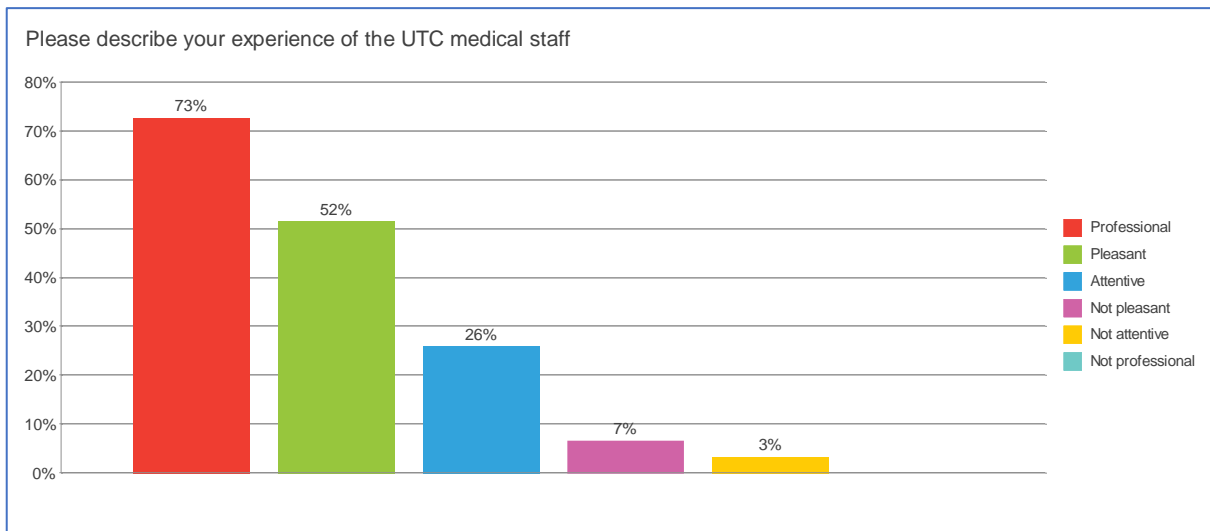
People were asked to describe their experience of the UTC medical staff. They were able to choose more than one option to describe their experience.

73% of the people who answered the question rated the medical staff as being professional and nobody said that they were unprofessional.

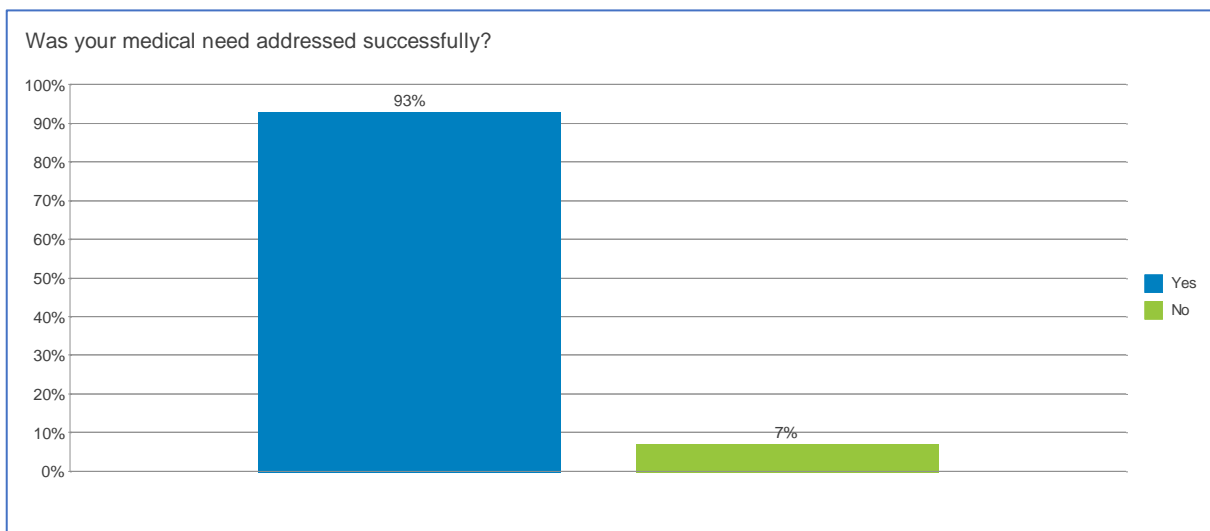
52% said that they were pleasant but 7% said that they were not pleasant.

26% said that they were attentive but 3% said that they were not attentive.

People who chose to comment further on their answers were positive in their feedback with examples such as 'made you feel at ease' and 'staff were friendly- felt at ease when I was with the doctor.' One person said that they would 'recommend to friends and family.'



93% of the people who answered the question said that their medical need was addressed successfully and 7% said that it was not.



Overall rating

People were asked to use their most recent visit to the UTC to give an overall rating for the service.

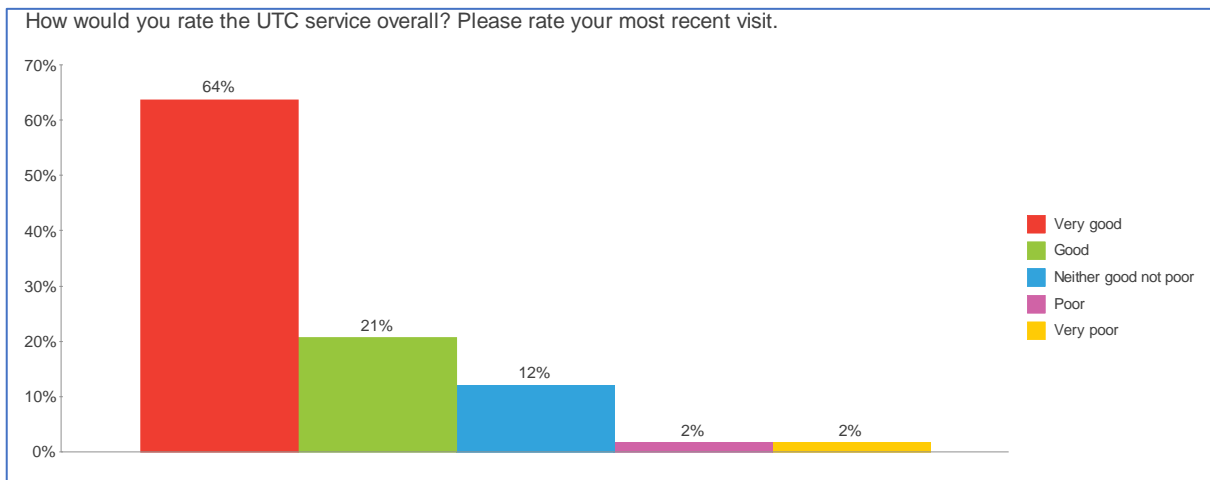
85% of the people who answered the question said that the service was either very good or good. 12% said that it was neither good nor poor. 4% said that it was either poor or very poor.

Those that commented on the reasons for their answers commented on the staff and how they were 'helpful' or 'friendly' with one person commenting that 'all the staff looked after me from the moment that I arrived.' One person commented that the service 'need more staff' but generally people gave positive answers.

There were some comments about the service being an alternative to the GP and appointments at surgeries not being available with one person saying that the service was 'excellent as I cannot see my own GP.'

Note:

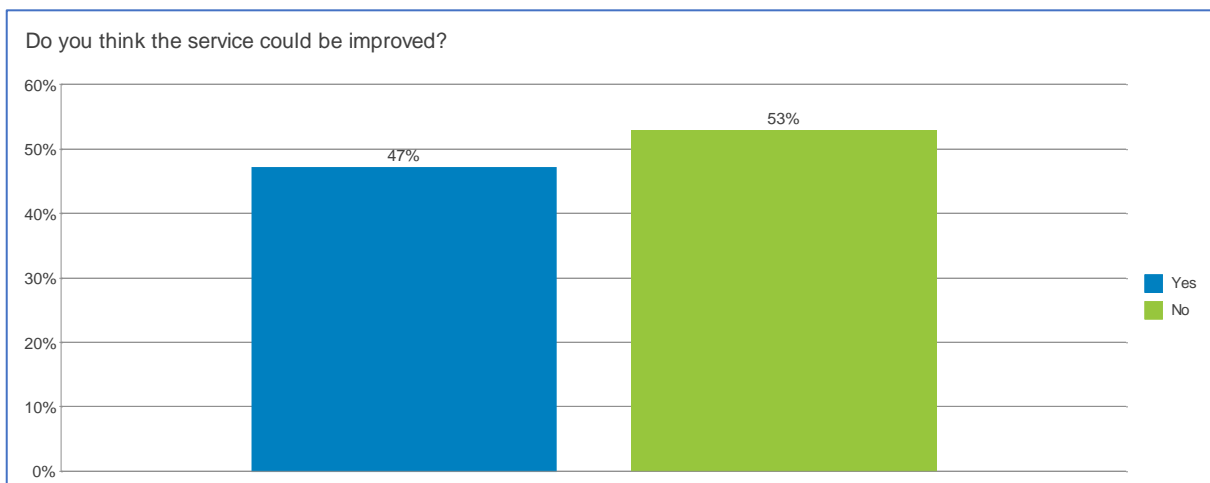
People who do wish to see their own GP: This time could vary from the same day (within hours) up to three weeks (504 hours) to see their own GP.



When asked if they thought that the service could be improved 47% of the respondents said that they thought that it could be improved and 53% said that they did not think that it could be improved.

Those that said that they thought it could be improved were asked in what ways it could be improved. Some of the comments related to waiting times and the need for them to be reduced.

One person suggested that there needed to be the 'ability to initially book appointments' and another felt that 'patients should be seen only with appointments and speaking to NHS 111 first' in order to reduce waiting times. There were suggestions that there needed to be 'more clinical staff'. One person felt that the reception staff could be more attentive, updates to be given on times.'

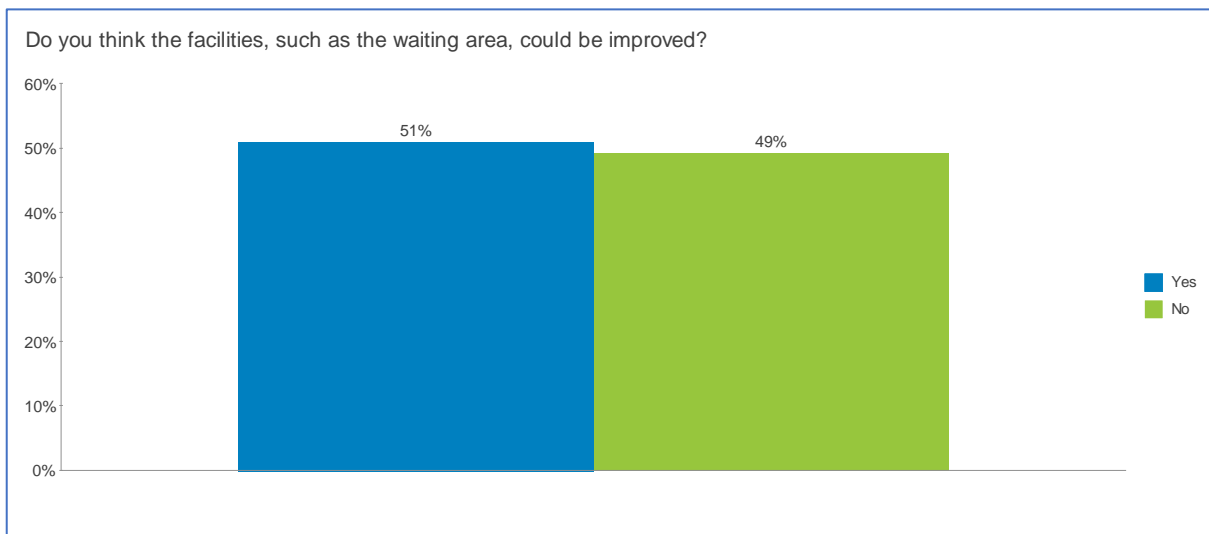


Facilities

We asked people if they thought that the facilities at the UTC could be improved. 51% of the people who answered the question said that they thought that the facilities could be improved and 49% said they did not think that the facilities could be improved.

Suggestions for improvements to the facilities included the location of the UTC in relation to the car park with it being nearer to the main entrance; the availability of water or other refreshments; improved cleanliness; and entertainment for children or music as a distraction from the waiting time.

Increasing the size of the waiting room was also suggested as an improvement or restricting who could be in the waiting room to just the patient and not their families too.



Note:

The water drinks machine was removed due to impact of COVID19 and the possibility of patient cross contamination of the virus to anyone using the water fountain.

A drinks vending machine has remained near the waiting area and a Spar shop and two coffee and cafes are located in the main reception area of the hospital.

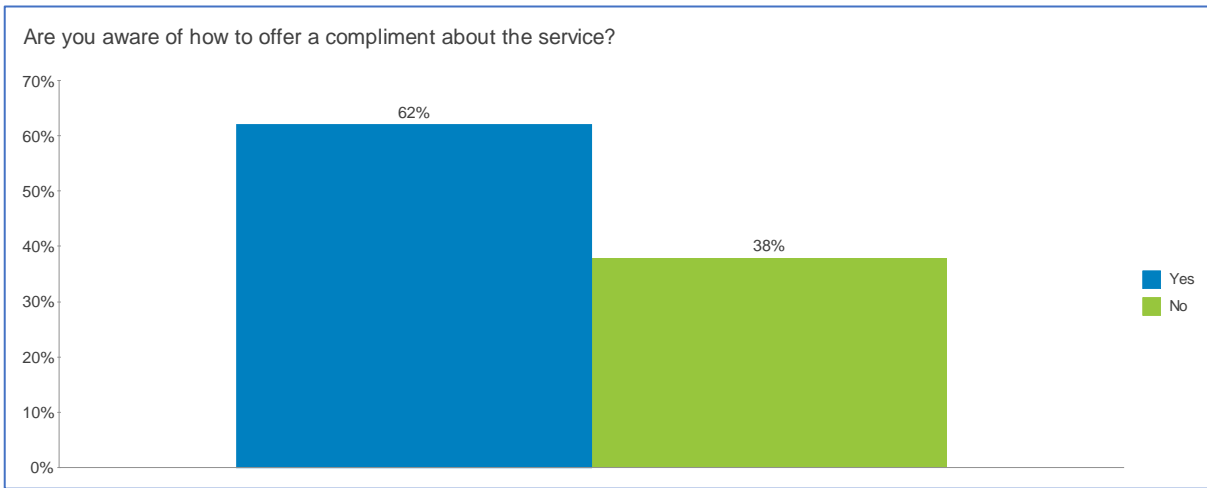
23/03/22 We have been made aware that the water drinks machine has returned and available to waiting patients and signs have been put up informing patients of water availability

Project Impact

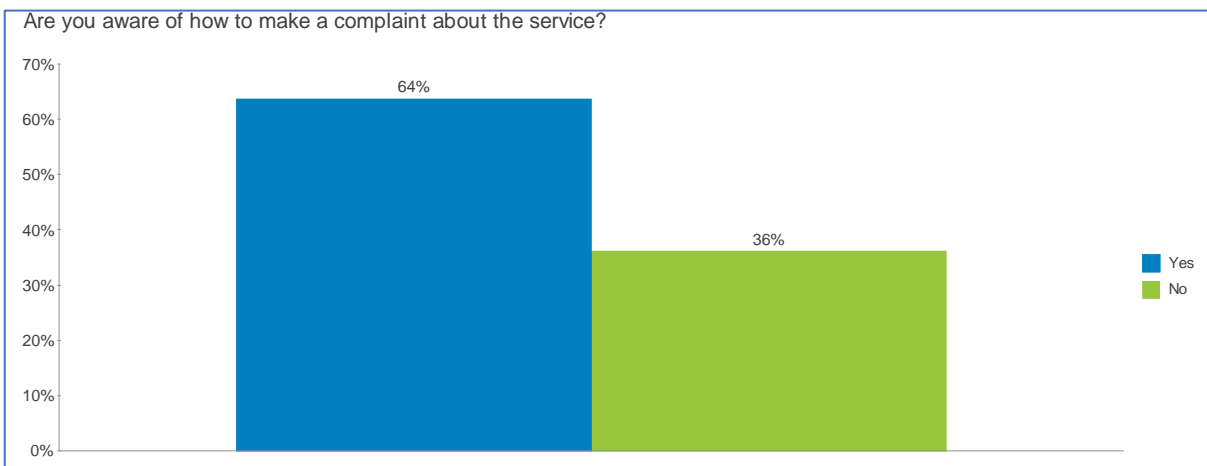
The cleanliness of the waiting room was raised as a concern at our 'Friday Focus Forum meeting...' This was addressed by the Walsall UTC manager and Walsall Manor Hospital Trust and an increased cleaning schedule has been put in place to service the UTC area.

Complaints and compliments

People were asked if they were aware how to offer a compliment about the service and 62% of the people who answered the question said that they were aware how to do so. 38% of people said that they were not aware how to offer a compliment about the service.



When asked if they were aware of how to make a complaint about the service there were slightly more people who knew how to do this than knew how to give a compliment. 64% of the people who answered the question said that they were aware of how to make a complaint and 36% said that they were not aware.



Conclusion

Whilst feedback received by Healthwatch Walsall over the last 12 months suggested that people were having some negative experiences of the Urgent Treatment Centre in relation to waiting times and staff attitudes the feedback from the surveys was somewhat less negative.

Most people who took part in the survey viewed the reception and medical staff positively with only a very small number saying that they were unhelpful or unprofessional. This is at odds with the feedback that has been received by Healthwatch Walsall.

The survey sample was small and not representative of the numbers using the UTC but the feedback received by Healthwatch Walsall was smaller still. Therefore, it is suggested that staff were indeed generally viewed positively and considered to be helpful and professional.

Whilst there were a range of waiting times reported by the people who took part in the survey most people said that they were seen in less than four hours with the largest number being seen within one to two hours of waiting. Although Healthwatch Walsall had received feedback directly no waiting times of up to six hours these do not appear to be the norm from the survey feedback.

When people were asked whether they had tried to access another health service before the UTC most people said that they had done so with most of them saying that they had tried to access their own GP practice before the UTC. Almost two thirds of the people who took part in the survey said that they had gone to the UTC because they were unable to get an appointment with their GP practice. Only 2% of people said that they had tried A&E before going to the UTC suggesting that for the people taking part in the survey their first port of call was their primary care provider rather than A&E.

When people were asked about the facilities there were mixed views on whether they could be improved upon but those that said that they could were most likely to suggest that there was a need for access to refreshments because of the potential time that they could be waiting to be seen, or that there needed to be something provided that could occupy children whilst they were waiting.

The feedback received by Healthwatch Walsall over the previous twelve months that was used to inform the project suggested that the overall views of the UTC were negative with people saying that they would not recommend the UTC to friends and family and giving low ratings to the service. However, this is not borne out by the feedback from the people who completed the survey with most people rating the service as either being very good or good.

Recommendations

- Service users/ patients should contact NHS111 to seek the appropriate treatment pathway. And request appointments if available with their own GP or with the Walsall UTC or similar services appropriate to their medical need.
- Service users/ patients should consider the need of attending with members of their family/ friends if they are not in need of medical attention or parent of the child needing medical attention.
- A structure of waiting time information that patients can see to ascertain a possible individual wait time could be investigated. It is appreciated that service users/ patients are seen on medical/ urgency need and that this may push back wait times.
- Whilst there is a vending machine near the service entrance, information if not already done so clearly, could be signed more clearly for waiting patients.
- Although it was suggested facilities/ resources to keep children occupied it should be noted that this a medical treatment facility.
- A pathway to offer compliments about the service could be clearer so that service users/ patients can offer them.

Note

These recommendations apply to the current service and facilities. A new A&E area that incorporates a NEW and larger UTC service will be available late 2022. Some of the recommendations may be addressed as part of this NEW facility and work practices.

The NEW UTC

- New move to A&E site and new facilities late 2022.
- Increased Capacity from 32 to 90 patients in the waiting area, to be shared with A&E waiting patients.
- Increased staff levels to see patients
- Increased consultancy rooms to see patients
- Access to Wi-Fi for waiting patients and or some children useable resources

- Own use of X-ray machine reducing waiting times to patients who would have gone to the Trusts X-ray department in another part of the hospital for imaging.
- Additional services such as blood tests and Point Of Care Testing

A recent news update on the new A&E building that incorporates the NEW UTC is available on the Trust website: <https://tinyurl.com/mtbkt9xu>

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