



Our findings of the patient experience of accessing the Emergency Department at QA Hospital, Portsmouth Hospital University Trust (PHUT)

September 2021

# Introduction

## About Healthwatch

Local Healthwatch organisations are independent champions for people who use health and social care services. We are here to find out what matters to people and make sure their views shape the development of and improve services they receive.

## What has changed?

NHS England advise that “through a single Clinical Assessment Service (CAS)..... clinicians will be able to make the best possible decision about how to support patients closer to home, potentially avoiding unnecessary trips to A&E. **In support of this, NHS 111 will maintain its place as the ‘first line of defence’ for Urgent and Emergency Care.**”

## Project background and development

NHS111 First is a nation-wide initiative introduced by NHS England in December 2020. The aim of 111First is to ensure that people who require NHS care urgently, but who do not have a life-threatening condition, are directed to the most appropriate service for their need once they have been triaged and assessed. NHS111 First is the recommended access route for patients to reach their local hospital Emergency Department (ED)

In July 2020, Healthwatch Portsmouth worked in partnership with QA Hospital to gather feedback on the public’s awareness of, and their experience of using NHS111 First. The survey ran until September 2021.

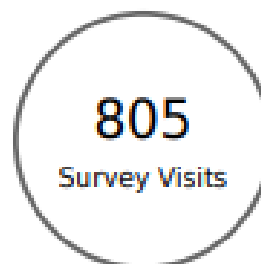
### We asked patients:

- **Did they know the way to access urgent non life-threatening services at QA Hospital emergency department had changed?**
- **What was their experience of NHS 111 First and arriving at QA hospital?**
- **How patients felt about being assessed over the phone and given an appointment at QA hospitals emergency department?**

Patients were able to tell us their views anonymously via an online survey, email, telephone or by letter.

The survey was also promoted by a range of stakeholders such as local councils, voluntary sector organisations, Healthwatch Portsmouth stakeholders, social media followers and NHS trusts.

The project was launched on the 20 July 2021. Since the survey was launched, we have had:



## Key findings

### Awareness of NHS 111 First

- 60% of respondents said that they knew the way to access QA Hospital Emergency Department had changed in 2020
- 35% of respondents stated that they had not been made aware previously of the need to contact 'NHS111 First' to access the emergency services at QA Hospital
- 39% of respondents stated that they would have contacted the 'NHS111 First' service instead of visiting QA Hospital's emergency department if you they had known that 'NHS111 First' is the new way of accessing urgent care services

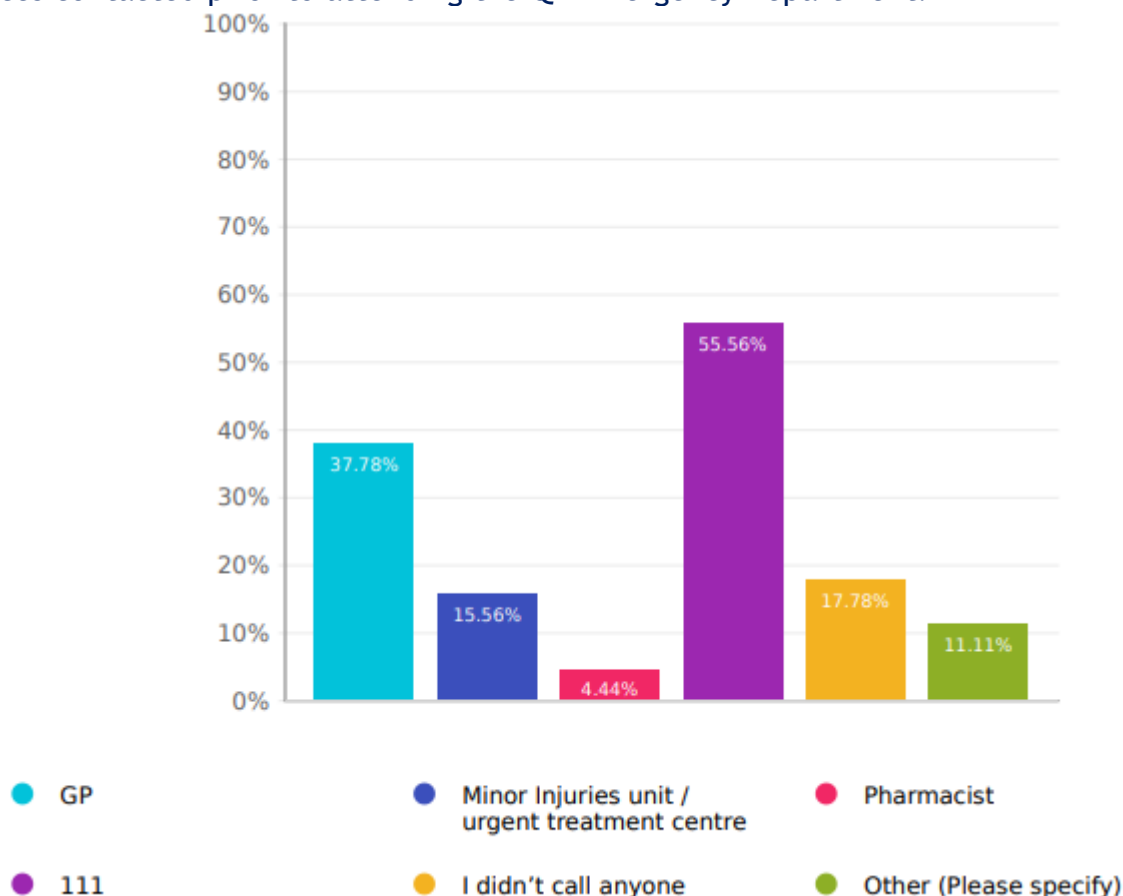
A range of comments received in our feedback survey:

- "Only if it ended up in not having an ambulance - their system is far too risk adverse, I really had to firmly tell the call handler that I was already at A&E and not to send an ambulance for me!"*
- "Appointment systems are ridiculous for ED - it's an emergency department, you cannot predict emergencies and therefore you cannot guarantee a time slot! It's ridiculous!!"*
- "I haven't heard of this service before or that I needed to access it. I do know now and will phone the service before accessing QA"*
- "I did. They didn't call back."*

# What is happening prior to attending the Emergency Department?

We asked whether patients contacted any other service before deciding to visit QA Hospital's emergency department?

Services contacted prior to attending the QA Emergency Department.



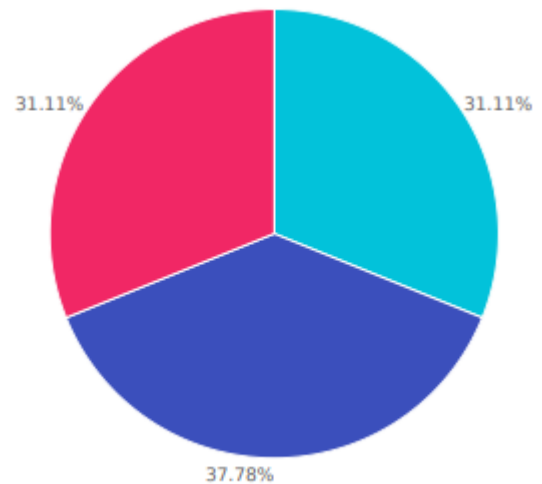
- 55% of respondents said that they contacted NHS 111 First before attending QA Hospital's emergency department
- 37% of respondents stated that they contacted their GP before accessing the emergency department at QA Hospital
- 17% of respondents stated that they did not contact any other services before attending QA Hospital's emergency department

- "Tried 111 in March for appendicitis, wasn't working, automated message saying call later. So had to just turn up at QA."*
- "It was NHS 111's decision to send us to QA A&E"*
- "NHS 111 default is to send an ambulance or attend ED"*

# Patients' experience of attending the Emergency Department.

We asked patients, If they had attended the Emergency Department at QA hospital after August 2020, if they were directed to contact 'NHS111 First' either online or by phone?

- 37% of respondents said that they were not directed to contact NHS 111 First once they arrived at QA hospital's emergency department
- 31% of respondents stated that they were directed to contact NHS 111 First once they arrived at QA hospital's emergency department



- "After being refused to be seen I was sent to drop-in centre."*
- "Had already contacted online, waited over an hour for a call back so attended QA. Then was directed to call 111 by phone."*
- "The nurse refused to believe the tablet had said I needed to attend A&E."*
- "Was not directed to 111 I just did it and got to speak to an out of hours GP an hour later who called the Ambulance."*
- "I declined to attend as it WAS NOT an EMERGENCY"*
- "I was told to go to Gosport because it was nearer only one mile away. I had a hard job explaining that I can't fly and the road trip takes ages"*

We asked if patients had to repeat their reason for calling to the doctors and/or nurses at QA Emergency Department after NHS 111 First triage?

- 71% of respondents said that they had to **repeat** their reason for attending the Emergency department to the doctors and/or nurses at QA Hospital after the NHS 111First triage process.
- 7% of respondents stated that they did not have to repeat their reason for attending ED to the doctors and/or nurses at QA Hospital after the NHS 111First triage process.

## We asked patients how they felt about being assessed over the phone, or tablet, by the 'NHS111 First' service for their non life-threatening urgent health care need?

 The about a third (35%) of patients answered that they felt 'not at all happy' with being assessed over the phone or tablet by NHS 111 First.



35%



7%



14%



28%




14%

- *"Too many irrelevant questions"*
- *"Very good service that worked well for me with little delay considering, to get me to hospital"*
- *"I'm a well-educated adult - I should be able to decide which medical services are appropriate for me or my family"*
- *"111 wasn't working automated message saying to try again later."*
- *"Feels like been given the run arounds always. GP never answers phone, 111 always screens you out. Default is always to get to A&E sorry."*
- *"A sensitive issue being discussed in an open area. No sensitivity by staff."*
- *"It felt pointless completing a form, to be told to go to A&E, for a nurse deny it was accurate."*
- *"My x-rays determined how bad my break was. Someone on the phone or a form can't do that."*
- *"Some time waiting for answers depending on the time of day"*
- *"I really felt cared for and safe. I was quickly contacted by a doctor and sent to QA"*
  - *"111 took the urgency of our situation very seriously and we received a call back from the on-call doctor within 5 minutes, who said we should go to St Mary's walk-in centre immediately, to be examined as an emergency"*

## We asked patients if after being assessed over the phone by 'NHS111 First' they were re-directed to a service other than the Emergency Department

 28% of respondents said that they had been re-directed to the Urgent Treatment Centre by NHS 111 First

 10% of respondents stated that they had been re-directed to their GP after being assessed by NHS 111 First

- *"Out of hours doctor."*
- *"No direct to ED."*
- *"Ambulance sent."*
- *"They told me they were sending a 999 ambulance, I declined, they then told me to go to ED, I declined!!! I needed an out of hours GP NOT ED!!!"*

**We asked patients how they felt about being given a time slot to attend the emergency department at QA hospital?**

- 32% of respondents were **neither happy or unhappy** about being given a time slot to attend the Emergency Department (ED) at QA Hospital.
- 21% of respondents stated that they were **happy** about being given a time slot to attend the Emergency Department (ED) at QA Hospital.
- 28% of respondents said that they were **very unhappy** about being given a time slot to attend the Emergency Department (ED) at QA Hospital.
- 21% of respondents stated that they were **very happy** about being given a time slot to attend the Emergency Department (ED) at QA Hospital.



21%



3%



32%



21%



21%

- *"Took myself to Urology dept at 8am following morning after waiting 10 hours for a call back. Got prescription and found Bladder cancer passing blood/clots. I did lodge a complaint and never got a response"*
- *"Referred to out of hours doctor - it didn't happen until 9am the following day. An apology for not making contact"*

For recommendations from Healthwatch Portsmouth based on the findings see next page.

## Recommendations from Healthwatch Portsmouth using feedback provided by patients:

1. Given that 35% of respondents stated that they had not been made aware previously of the need to contact 'NHS111 First' to access the emergency services at QA Hospital **suggests that public awareness of the new route to accessing the Emergency Department needs to be raised if congestion at both ED and GP Surgeries is to be alleviated:**
  - a. The 111First service needs a Communication and Information Campaign
  - b. The 111 First service needs to be promoted if members of the public, and patients who are unwell, but deemed not life threatening are to avoid being redirected from ED.
  - c. The 111 First service needs to be promoted if members of the public, patients, are to avoid having to repeat their stories having presented to QA Hospital ED.
2. Given that only 55% of respondents said that they contacted NHS 111 First before attending QA Hospital's emergency department we think this rate needs to increase to avoid unnecessary walk-ins to QA Hospital ED and congestion of patients accessing ED we **suggest an increased public awareness campaign to encourage more people to phone 111First.**
3. Given that 31% of respondents stated that they were directed to contact NHS 111 First once they arrived at QA hospital's emergency department one third of patients attending ED have either not used 111 or are observably in a non life-threatening condition. These figures **suggest an increased public awareness campaign (as above).**
4. Given that 71% of respondents said that they had to repeat their reason for attending the Emergency department to the doctors and/or nurses at QA Hospital after NHS 111 First triage. **The triage information held at 111 needs to be available on attending the ED.**
5. Given that 35% of patients said they felt 'not at all happy' with being assessed over the phone or tablet by NHS 111 First suggests that **improved accessibility and a more user-friendly approach by staff at 111 is needed.**
6. Given that only 24% of patients said they were unhappy about being given a time slot to attend the ED having contacted 111First we wonder why NHS England is not tapping into patients' willingness to engage with the new service structure more and **promote the convenience element of an appointments-based system as a in the public awareness campaign?**

Ends.

Healthwatch Portsmouth

April 2022