

Patient Experience Report

Compiled by Knowsley, Sefton & St Helens Healthwatch, for
presentation to
NHS England Quality Surveillance Group



March 2014

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About Local Healthwatch

Healthwatch gives people a powerful voice locally and nationally. Within the Borough, Local Healthwatch works to help our community to get the best out of their health and social care services. Whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow. Local Healthwatch is all about residents voices being able to influence the delivery and design of local services. Not just people who use them, but anyone who might need to in future.

What is Healthwatch?

Local Healthwatch was established in April 2013 as the new independent community champion created to gather and represent the views of our community. Healthwatch plays a role at both national and local level and makes sure that the views of the public and people who use services are taken into account.

What we do

Local Healthwatch took over the role of The Local Involvement Networks (LINK) and also represents the views of people who use services, carers and the public to the people who commission plan and provide services.. Healthwatch provides a signposting service for people who are unsure where to go for help and also a complaints advocacy service to support people who make a complaint about services. Healthwatch can also report concerns about the quality of health care to Healthwatch England, which can then recommend that the Care Quality Commission take action.

Our Values

Inclusive

We start with people first.

We work for children, young people and adults.

We work across health and care.

We work for everyone, not just those who shout the loudest.

Influential

We set the agenda and make change happen.

We are responsive. We take what we learn and translate it into action.

We are innovative and creative. We know that we can't fix things by sticking to the status quo.

We work with our network of local Healthwatch to make an impact both locally and nationally.

Independent

We are independent and act on behalf of all consumers.

We listen to consumers and speak loudly on their behalf.

We challenge those in power to design and deliver better health and care services.
We are not afraid to point out when things have gone wrong.

Credible

We value knowledge.

We seek out data and intelligence to challenge assumptions with facts.

We celebrate and share good practice in health and care.

We hold ourselves to the highest standards.

Collaborative

We keep the debate positive and we get things done.

We work in partnership with the public, health and care sector, voluntary and community sector.

We learn from specialists and experts', building on what is already known, not going over old ground

How this report was compiled

To effectively capture the views of community members in terms of the Health and Social Care services Healthwatch ensures that the following routes into community members are maintained;

- Community 'word of mouth' through existing community involvement avenues developed under LINK.
- Roadshow activities
- Community Based Activities/Partner Events
- Working closely with existing networks in Knowsley
- Community Focus Groups
- Coffee Mornings
- Social Media including Facebook/Twitter and Website activities
- Healthwatch Information stands
- Healthwatch Signposting Service
- Healthwatch Community Champion Networks

Local Healthwatch are committed to providing quarterly formal reports detailing the views captured from community members to commissioners, service providers, Healthwatch and the Care Quality Commission and specific interest groups such as the Quality Surveillance group.

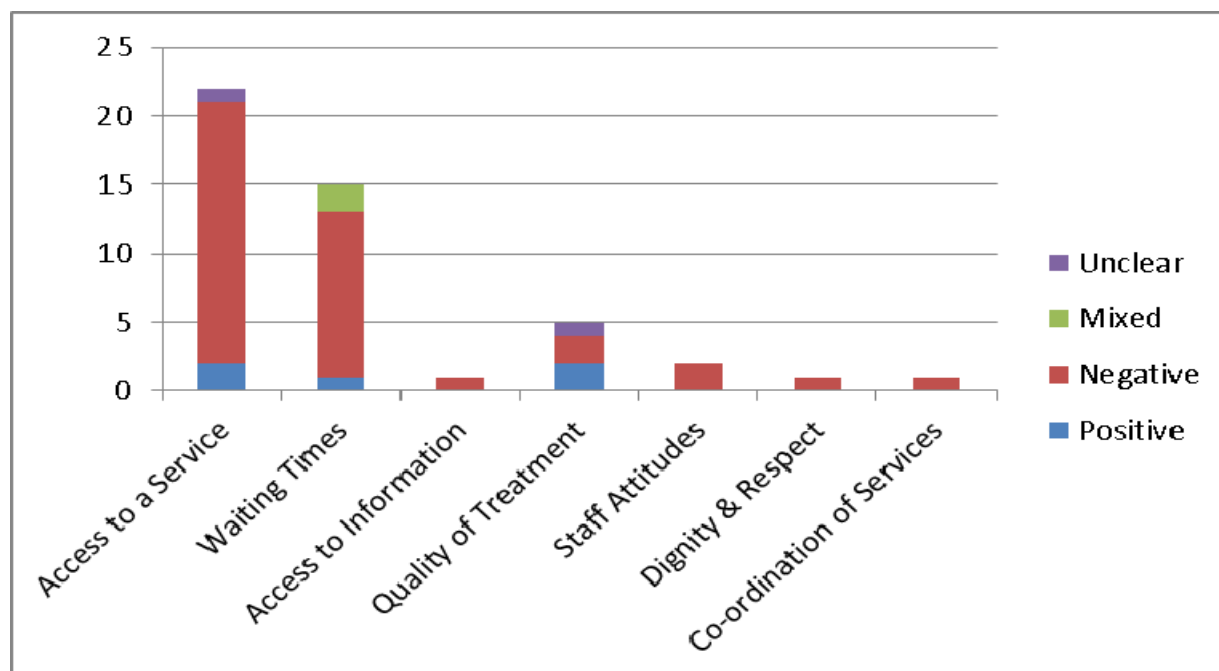
Currently Local Healthwatch organisations are using the Healthwatch England Hub to record anonymised patient and community based experiences. Using this database, specific reports can be compiled providing information around a service area or trend raised by community members.

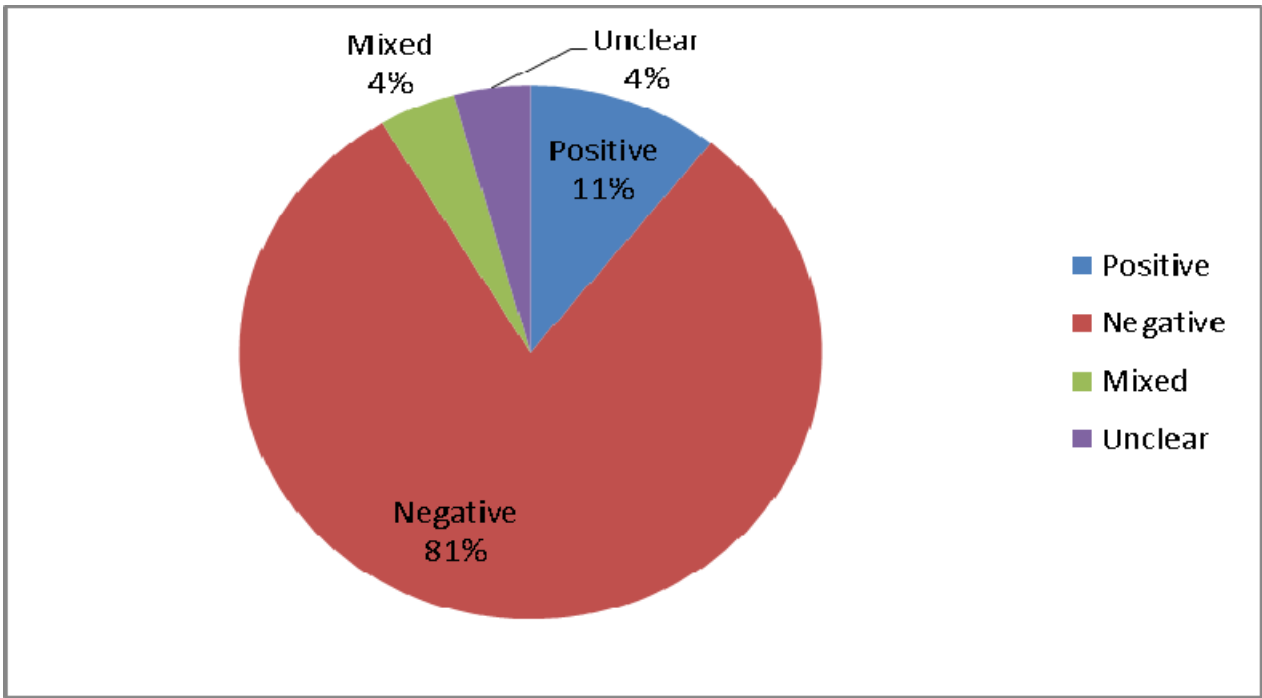
Due to the method of capturing information utilised by Healthwatch often comments relating to services are provided anonymously. In some cases unfortunately the person providing information can be reluctant to provide contact information as it is perceived that in doing so this may affect their future care. With this in mind it may be unclear if these comments have been duplicated via the hospitals own complaints system or PALS data.

Summary of Comments

During the period for which the report relates to 43 comments were captured, which contain a combination of positive and negative comments.

Trust Scores





Good Practice

Local Healthwatch are pleased to note the following areas of good practice

- Some patients noted that they were informed if there was going to be a delay and were made comfortable. This is excellent practice that should be carried out with all patients
- There is a very reassuring comment about the way a call handler supported a family whilst someone was having a heart attack. This is to be commended.

Recommendations

Unsurprisingly the two most negative areas of comments are Access to the Service and Waiting times.

Patient Transport Service

- Access to the Service:
Whilst Local Healthwatch appreciates that this is a commissioned service the current criteria and system for booking is still causing a lot of frustration and confusion to patients. **Further community engagement should be carried out to ensure that the community are aware of the criteria and system for using the Patient Transport Service**
- Waiting Times:
Patients are prepared to wait if they are aware of the time and are made comfortable. **Patients should always be kept informed of the length of the wait for transport home and made as comfortable as possible during that wait.**

Emergency Service

- Access to the Service:
There are some concerning reports of long waits for an emergency ambulance and the criteria and for using this service is causing a lot of frustration and confusion to patients. **Further community engagement should be carried out to ensure that the community are aware of the criteria and system for using the emergency ambulance**
- Waiting Times:
There are some concerning reports of long waits for an emergency ambulance. **Patients should always be kept informed of the length of the wait for an emergency ambulance, and given information as to what to do if the patient's condition deteriorates. Reassurance should be offered to patients who are facing a long wait as to their safety.**

Liaison with Local Healthwatch.

- NWAS agreed after our initial meeting in June 2013 regarding patient transport that an additional officer would be put in place to liaise with all the Healthwatch organisations across Merseyside, however this has only resulted in a small amount of contact being made. There appears to be a need for more liaison and advance notice of any specific changes to services to be highlighted to Healthwatch. In the past (as LINKs) there was a quarterly Communications bulletin issued from NWAS which was useful, this does not appear to be in circulation any more.

Appendix One - Comments

Healthwatch Knowsley Comments

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	When you live in a bungalow, they will always just send an ambulance not a GP. This is if you use the care line service.
KNO16560	Access to a Service
Unclear	03/02/2014

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	I find that working in a club environment we often have emergencies. When I have rang for an ambulance in the past, I find that they cannot find the place and the waiting time can be long. Also, the waiting times have gone up.
KNO16557	Waiting times (Access to Services)
Negative	03/02/2014

Provider Details	Aintree University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Service Type	Accident and Emergency
Comments	I rang for an ambulance for my husband, it took 3 hours to arrive so in the end we drove him there. When we got to the hospital, he was rushed in and told that he only had a pint of blood left in him. The hospital kept him in for 4 days. When he got home he got an appointment for 2nd September and he has had no word since.
KNO15214	Access to Information
Negative	15/01/2014

Provider Details	The Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust
Service Type	Outpatients
Comments	Very helpful. We were very early due to the ambulance service. They saw us quickly and were sensitive to my husband's condition. Unfortunately, we had to wait 2 hours for the ambulance to bring us home but we were informed of this at booking stage so were not concerned.
KNO15205	Quality of treatment Waiting times (Access to Services)
Mixed	14/01/2014

Provider Details	Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust
Service Type	Inpatient Care
Comments	A patient from Southport Hospital was transferred to Broadgreen for an operation by ambulance, but when they were discharged their family had to get the patient back home by themselves without support from the hospital.
KNO10590	Access to a service Discharges
Negative	26/11/2013

Provider Details	5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Service Type	Outpatients
Comments	Unfortunately, there was a mix up, when I arrived, in their files, the appointment was down for my husband who had passed away 2 years ago and had never been to that particular clinic - Falls Clinic. Also, there was a mix up, I had to wait until everyone booked on the ambulance came back, but they did make me a nice cup of tea, it wasn't their fault and the staff on duty were like a breath of fresh air, I was very impressed. Wonderful staff.
KNO9511	Records Management Quality of treatment Waiting times (Access to Services)
Mixed	22/11/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	When at bowling club, a fellow member collapsed. We waited 20 minutes for an ambulance. While waiting, two of us performed CPR. When the fast response arrived I was still helping him while he put an oxygen mask on and gave injections by keeping on with the compressions. The ambulance arrived and they took over. Post mortem said it was a heart attack so unfortunately, he died.
KNO9474	Quality of treatment
Unclear	21/11/2013

Provider Details	Aintree University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Service Type	Outpatients
Comments	Very good service. I cannot walk very far and they always arrange an ambulance for me.
KNO5354	Patient Transport
Positive	21/10/2013

Provider Details	St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
Service Type	Inpatient Care
Comments	Care was excellent. Staff great. Only problem, I waited 1 hour 30 minutes on cold floor for severely broke with dislocated ankle for ambulance. My operation was cancelled 4 times on my ankle.
KNO3348	Patient Transport Quality of treatment Waiting times (Access to Services)
Mixed	16/10/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	I waited 12 hours for an ambulance to take me to Whiston Hospital.
KNO1986	Waiting times (Access to Services)
Negative	02/10/2013 13:26:35

Provider Details	
Service Type	Accident and Emergency
Comments	I went to hospital as I thought that I had broken my leg. The ambulance came and brought a stretcher. The doctor was nice. I had to have x-rays and wait a long time. The carer asked the nurse about the waiting time and then a doctor came to see me.
KNO1762	Quality of treatment Waiting times (Access to Services)
Positive	25/09/2013

Provider Details	
Service Type	Ambulance Services Outpatients
Comments	I don't like the hospital and I don't like the ambulances.
KNO1426	Access for people with a disability
Unclear	10/09/2013

Provider Details	Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust
Service Type	Accident and Emergency Primary Care/GPs
Comments	My son has a condition called Fibro dysplasia Ossipicans Progressive Osteopenia. He was complaining of a pain in his groin. The emergency doctor never came out to see him even though I explained his condition (out of hours service for doctors took 4 hours to get through). They said that they would send a taxi for him to go to the walk in centre. The staff at the walk in centre told him to go home and rest. When I saw him I phoned our GP and explained that he needed an appointment. He was then sent to The Royal Liverpool Hospital and had to make his own way with no ambulance. When he got to the hospital, he was operated on as he had appendicitis and ended up in intensive care for approximately 1 week. I was very disappointed as no house calls were made and they did not take his condition seriously. The Royal Hospital were excellent, they did not know about my son's condition but got information and worked well with Aintree hospital.
KNO1210	Coordination of Services Access to a Service Access to Information Quality of treatment
Mixed	27/08/2013

Provider Details	St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
Service Type	Accident and Emergency
Comments	Spoke to GP about concerns that my son had a blood clot. We were referred to the walk in centre for a blood test and then referred to Whiston Hospital for treatment. We had to wait for over 2 hours (issue as son has learning disability and couldn't understand). The hospital didn't adapt or make reasonable adjustments for his disability at A&E. An ambulance was not arranged to take us to A&E, we had to make our own way. We were sent a nurse to explain what would happen to my son, this was arranged through the speech therapist at Whiston Hospital.
KNO465	Waiting times (Access to Services) Access for people with a disability
Negative	27/06/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	I broke my shoulder and was told by North West Ambulance Service that I was ineligible for patient transport and was told to get a taxi.
KNO431	Patient Transport Access to a Service
Negative	26/06/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	I suffer from angina and one evening 2 years ago I had angina pains. I rang for an ambulance and a paramedic came out in a car. By the time the paramedic arrived, my angina pain had subsided. When he arrived he said I could have walked to hospital over the road and had wasted his time. He had driven from Widnes on a blue light. I was a bit taken aback from the comment. Very poor.
KNO427	Ambulance Staff Quality of treatment Staff attitudes
Negative	26/06/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	83 year old patient with a stoma who walks with a stick but needs to be accompanied by another person as she experiences dizzy spells. Had to attend St Helens hospital because her colostomy was leaking. Had always used the patient transport service in the past. When she phoned to book her transport she said she was asked a lot of questions which she found very upsetting as they were of a personal nature. When she had finished answering the questions she was told that she was not eligible for the service and would have to make her own way to the hospital. As a result she missed her appointment. Healthwatch Knowsley advised her to contact the clinic to make a new appointment to ask her doctor to book the ambulance for her. She was successful in getting both the new appointment and her GP booking her transport
KNO220	Patient Transport

	Access to a Service Appointment booking service Access for people with a disability
Negative	11/06/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Outpatients
Comments	GP surgery not impressed with medical cars to pick you up for appointments. They got the dates wrong on the appointment, ask them to knock on the door, have also put a note on the door with instructions to knock, did not knock on the door.
KNO172	Equality Access to a Service Ambulance Staff
Negative	07/06/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	Have to phone up each time to book transport to go to the hospital - information is not held on records. Ask personal questions. Some problems getting husband transport as he needs to come along due to caring committments. Everytime I have to call and constantly repeat the information - told that this is due to changes in circumstances.
KNO283	Patient Transport
Negative	14/06/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	Can't understand why it can't be accessed through GP. Quite intrusive questions asked when I have to call up.
KNO287	Patient Transport Access to a Service Access for people with a disability
Negative	14/06/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	Some concerns that taxi's are going to be used in the future for patient transport. Concerns over the number of questions and they can be quite intrusive with the questioning, make you think you have to answer questions.
KNO402	Patient Transport Access for people with a disability
Negative	25/06/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	The patient transport service stops at 5pm. One resident had an appointment at 6pm and so had to get a taxi home.
KNO429	Patient Transport Access to a Service
Negative	26/06/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	No problems with the service. I am partially sighted. I am asked everytime the same questions which are searching but had no problems. Really helpful, great service.
KNO442	Patient Transport Access to a Service Access for people with a disability
Positive	26/06/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	Some issues with patient transport services. I used the transport service regularly until March 2013 when I was told that I was no longer eligible to use the service.
KNO463	Patient Transport Access to a Service
Negative	27/06/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	I was assaulted in work at a childrens care home. I had injured my lower back. A female crew member was telling me to get myself up. I was visibly shaking with the pain. I asked her and her colleague for assistance and she said No I or my colleague are not going to injure our backs you are a heavy built man. We will possibly call the fire brigade. I said I am not 22 stone, I am in severe pain. They gave me gas and air and although in a lot of pain for a long period was unaided trying to get myself up. I had to try for a considerable time to get into a wheelchair. I feel that the crew had no empathy nor did they demonstrate any care about my wellbeing I am disgusted with how I was treated and felt that they could have been more helpful. A young girl tried to give me water but she spilt it around my trousers. I felt they either thought I had wet myself or had a problem about helping Black people. In ether case it was wrong not to assist me properly.
KNO1479	Ambulance Staff Dignity and Respect Quality of treatment Staff attitudes
Negative	12/09/2013

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	I rang for an ambulance for my husband, it took 3 hours to arrive so in the end we drove him there. When we got to the hospital, he was rushed in and told that he only had a pint of blood left in him. The hospital kept him in for 4 days. When he got home he got an appointment for 2nd September and he has had no word since.
KNO15215	Waiting times (Access to Services)
Negative	15/01/2014

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	When I had my heart attack they were brilliant. They kept my son's girlfriend on the phone. They were very supportive telling me what to do.
KNO16561	Quality of treatment
Positive	03/02/2014

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	My Dad used it twice but didn't use it again. The first time they left him sitting around for ages waiting to come home. The second time they didn't show up, but argued blind it hadn't been booked, but my dad had watched the person who took the booking write it in the book!
KNO16628	Access to a Service Waiting times (Patient Pathway)
Negative	05/02/2014

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Service Type	Ambulance Services
Comments	My husband uses the ambulance service regularly and I wonder why I have to answer the same questions every time I call to book an ambulance to check for eligibility. Is there a way that they can just ask if anything has changed since the last contact? I was told by a member of staff on the phone that by going with my husband as an escort, I was taking up a space in the ambulance that could be used for someone else. I have made a complaint about this and this has been resolved. The Walton Centre has no ambulance centre so you can wait between 2.5 and 3 hours to go home as "they forget about you". Co-ordination of times – If my husband has an appointment at 3.30pm, he is told to be ready for 12.30. As he suffers from confusion and agoraphobia, he can get het up waiting for the ambulance to arrive. I have to stress that I have never had a problem with the ambulance crews, they are always happy.
KNO16629	Coordination of Services Access to a Service Waiting times (Patient Pathway)
Mixed	05/02/2014

Healthwatch Sefton Comments.

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust Ambulance transport - Aintree hospital Patient Transport Waiting times (Patient Pathway) Captured from: Elective Care Centre - Aln tree
Comments	The only negative comment about coming to the Elective Care Centre is you can wait between 3 1/2 hours to 5 hours for an ambulance. This i would say is 80% of the time. You are stuck away here. The ambulance staff are nice its just that we are out of sight. If you miss the ambulance leaving the cancer place about 11.10am then you know you will be waiting until after 2pm to get back to Southport.
19/08/2013	Waiting times (Patient Pathway) Ambulance Staff Staff attitudes
Sentiment	Mixed

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust Elective Care Centre - ambulance service Patient Transport Waiting times (Patient Pathway) Captured from: Elective Care Centre - Aintree
Comments 19/08/2013	The appointment went well at Clinic 6 in the Elective Care Centre. But i am waiting for an ambulance and wish they could be quicker. I have been waiting here since 10.15am and it is now 11am. I have no idea when it will come. Waiting times (Patient Pathway) Quality of treatment
Sentiment	Mixed

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust Elective Care centre ambulance service Patient Transport Waiting times (Patient Pathway) Captured from: Elective Care Centre
Comments 19/08/2013	Appointment has gone well but it is just the wait for the ambulance. Sometimes the wait is up to 2 hours. Waiting times (Patient Pathway) Quality of treatment
Sentiment	Mixed

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust Transport to hospital Patient Transport Captured from: Phone call re: Ambulance service
Comments 25/07/2013	Phone call taken re person refused transport to hospital. Details taken by Healthwatch Liverpool.
Sentiment	Negative

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust transport to hospital Patient Transport Captured from: Phone call - re ambulance service.
Comments 26/07/2013	Call received from a person living in Southport who had been refused ambulance transport for a hospital appointment when they called booking line today. They have used this service for 6 years and was taken to an appointment today having booked this 10 weeks ago. They were not told why they had been refused and their situation had not changed since the last time she made a booking. Follow up call 30th July - they rang the patient transport again and this time spoke with a man rather than a woman. He asked the same questions the woman asked but not all and they were offered transport. They don't know why and answered the questions the same.
Sentiment	Negative

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust Patient Transport Captured from:
Comments 01/07/2013	Turned down by NWAS PTS - was told rules have changed and he now does not fit criteria.
Sentiment	Negative

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust Patient Transport Coordination of Services Captured from: Aintree hospital - Hotel entrance
Comments 27/01/2014	Have you shared your experience? Yes - the Service Provider. If you have a specific experience or issue - have you made a formal complaint? Yes. The new booking system is unfair and it is discriminatory. Older people are being refused hospital transportation and patients being put in taxis. The new eligibility criteria is putting patients health & safety and wellbeing at risk. Staff are over worked and under valued. Poor communications between hospitals and ambulance service. Coordination of Services Safety of Care and Treatment Staffing Levels
Sentiment	Negative

Provider Details	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust Patient Transport Waiting times (Patient Pathway) Captured from: Meeting
Comments 23/10/2013	Overall experience rated as 1 - very poor. Date of experience: 25th Sept 2013. My cousin lives in a nursing home and on 25th Sept 2013 an ambulance was called to take her to Southport hospital at 1.30pm. It did not arrive until 8.30pm Waiting times (Patient Pathway)
Sentiment	Negative

Healthwatch St Helens Comments

Patient had great difficulty getting the right number!

After ringing the usual telephone number to book her patient transport and pressed option No. 2, this reached 0800 073 1106 (Healthwatch Liverpool) – was told this was the wrong number and to redial...

0800 032 3240 (Patient Transport Service) – this was answered and suggested she rang Primary Care, then

0151 261 2580 (also Patient Transport Service?) – and she was then given Healthwatch St. Helens number (but not the freephone, instead she was given 01744 457119)

3 years ago she fell whilst on holiday and broke femur at age 82, she was 6 weeks in hospital, then discharged and lived at her sisters with stair lift, but now has improved can manage one step,. However the public buses have two steps therefore she has to use taxis some of the time, this costs £20 to get to Whiston from St Helens.

She had an appointment for a CT scan Friday 14th June (2013) and also there was soon to be a referral for St. Paul's hospital. When she previously used patient transport for January 2013 eye clinic, she was eligible, so didn't realise things had changed.

So she phoned back this time (May 2013) and argued that she had various adaptations at home and cannot use public transport and cost of taxis too prohibitive.

October 2013, she had a fall at home, ended up needing an emergency ambulance because she also hit her head and had variable blood pressure.

Then she got the grab rails fitted she had been waiting for!

Left hospital but was still getting dizzy so was seen by the consultant again December 2013 and medication is now balance.

Requested and obtained patient transport for January eye clinic at St. Paul's and all was fine except it took 2 hours to get there before the appointment and 30 mins to return home. Due for another appointment in September 2014.

She has Healthwatch's telephone number in case any problems.

Emergency ambulance services – issue with criteria being too rigid

Female Aged 89 –

My neighbour Mrs X fell in one of the side roads off Gorsey Lane on Friday 10th January 2014 mid-afternoon, a passing motorist managed to get her in his car and took her home, and her husband alerted the next door neighbour (Mr Y) and he and the motorist managed to carry Mrs X into the kitchen of her home.

Mrs X who is 89 was in tremendous pain and complained she had hurt her hip so Mr Y rang 999 and requested an ambulance but after giving all the details and despite him stressing how much pain she was in and her advanced age an ambulance call was refused as she didn't meet the criteria.

Mr Y – who himself has a heart complaint – was becoming very anxious about the situation and felt very stressed and under pressure, eventually he asked the operator what was the criteria and was told ‘that unless Mrs X was bleeding or unconscious she didn’t fit the criteria and that the operator would arrange for a paramedic to call him back to discuss Mrs X’s condition’. They waited for almost 10 minutes but didn’t receive any such call during which time Mrs X became very distressed in obvious pain and was very pale, her husband was also very distressed and agitated and in desperation Mr Y rang his wife at work.

Mrs Y told her husband to call 999 again and tell them that Mrs X had passed out with the pain and although he wasn’t medically trained her pulse appeared erratic – Mr Y called and explained that he had called previously and had been refused an ambulance but Mrs X had since passed out with the pain but had now come round, this was a lie on the part of Mr & Mrs Y and something they were not comfortable with but felt that was the only option available to get an ambulance response.

[later on, through the formal complaint process, we learned that] Mr Y’s his first call was logged at 3.12pm and his request for an ambulance refused (code green) and he was told someone would ring him back to discuss what was happening. NWAS states that a call handler tried to call him back at 3.32pm but found his line engaged, this was because Mr Y was ringing 999 again to say our neighbour had passed out once, she hadn’t but he felt telling them this was necessary – they then changed it to a code red. Therefore the paramedic took 20 minutes to return the call.

A paramedic and an ambulance came to the house within minutes, Mrs X’s condition was so serious that she had to be given 2 injections of morphine to bring the pain under enough control for her to be moved. Mr Y’s wife & daughter had both left their workplaces early and arrived separately as they were concerned for Mr Y and the stress he was under as well as Mrs X’s wellbeing.

The staff in attendance were very good and very diligent and attentive throughout but did struggle somewhat as they only had 1 blanket on the ambulance and were overheard saying to each other that they hadn’t been left with very much on the ambulance with the ‘handover’ and later on they also couldn’t find the correct ‘board’ to enable Mrs X’s legs to be secured and moved and had to use another one in its place.

While Mrs Y was in the ambulance with Mrs X preparing to leave, Mrs X’s hip was next to the wall of the vehicle and the paramedic asked if she was ok, as he was obviously concerned her hip could be jarred on the journey. Mrs X said she was ok and the paramedic was overheard by Mrs Y to say to his colleague that they ‘could do with another blanket to roll up but they had only got the one’.

Mrs X was admitted to Whiston Hospital and after checks and X-rays it was confirmed that she had broken her hip just below the ‘ball & socket’ joint, the family were informed that the head surgeon wasn’t on duty until Monday morning (this took place on a Friday evening) and the doctor treating her was going to seek advice from another surgeon as to whether only the ball needed to be replaced – in which case they could operate the next day (Saturday) but if a full hip replacement was needed she would have to wait to see the Head Surgeon on Monday and it could take up to 5 days for her to be operated on. Thankfully they were able to operate on the Saturday but this is another reason why more specialist medical staff should operate on a 7-day a week basis.

Complainee's observations?

He finds it appalling that 'the criteria' you need to fulfil regarding a ambulance being called is so rigid that neither 'advanced age' or a severe fall and pain to the hip (or any other apart of the body) is taken into consideration. Some common sense should be applied to individual cases especially when it was so apparent that the caller is extremely anxious and concerned and just by listening to the tone of voice and information given, a call handler could form some sort of mental picture of how serious the incident is. Instead of this I had to ring back and tell a lie in order to be believed and my neighbour obtain the emergency treatment she obviously needed. Also it appears that the criteria of 'bleeding' is also being applied without enough common sense.

On Christmas Eve 2013, an ambulance was called by my wife (to the same address) as Mrs X's husband – also 89 – had fallen quite badly in the garden and cut his chin and hand. Although he was very shaken and distressed, his injuries were far less serious than his wife's last Friday but because he was 'bleeding', an ambulance was dispatched immediately and yet his bleeding was not significant and the extent of the bleeding was not debated by the call handler.

Update - February 2014

He has lodged my concerns above as a formal complaint and, as the complainee has been contacted to be advised of the next steps, and was told that the patient would need to sign something to enable the complaint to proceed. The husband of the patient expressed concern that the patient might not give consent for that because she has received her operation and is recuperating well.

Does this mean that someone cannot complain about a system that is perceived as wrong, even if to avoid this happening to other people, because it has happened to someone else, who we know is unlikely to complain, either because of her own fears about retaliation or because of family/carers concerns about the same (however unlikely this is in reality). That creates a potential barrier for anyone complaining, when it is common knowledge most people are reluctant to do so in general.

ON 12th February, Mr Y received a telephone call (from someone called Debbie) re. his complaint, however this was basically to repeat to him what the criteria was and why our neighbour didn't qualify and that being 89 years old or having a suspected broken bone didn't fit the criteria needed for an emergency ambulance. He is confused as to why any fracture would not be an emergency, due to the damage that could be done transferring someone in a car with a compound fracture. On reflection and in discussion with his wife, Mr Y contacted Debbie the next day again to say he was still unhappy with the outcome. He fully understood the criteria but it is the criteria that he is complaining about and how it is so rigid that old age and frailty isn't taken account, nor was the suspected broken hip by the call handlers.

Debbie fully sympathised with what he was saying but that was the criteria that had been set basically by management of the Trust. Mr Y requested at the very least he wanted to ensure that his letter of complaint would be given to the Chief Executive / Board responsible for making these decisions and Debbie agreed she would. It would be nice to receive a response from the Chief Executive or a similar level of personnel at NWS on whether the criteria will be reviewed in light of this case study.

[The complainee has since been supported by Healthwatch St. Helens to escalate this to the CCG responsible for commissioning the service and has been assured that a response will be requested from the Chief Executive of NWAS]

Appendix Two - Data

Category	Positive	Negative	Mixed	Unclear
Access to a Service	2	19		1
Waiting Times	1	12	2	
Access to Information		1		
Quality of Treatment	2	2		1
Staff Attitudes		2		
Dignity & Respect		1		
Co-ordination of Services		1		
Totals	5	38	2	2

Control Sheet

Date Submitted	
Date Response due	
Date Response Received	
Follow up actions	

Submitted To:

Trust	
CCG Lead Nurse	
CCG Lay Advisor	
CCG Accountable Officer	
Patient Engagement Manager	
Local Authority Commissioner	
Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care	
NHS England Quality Surveillance Group	
Local Healthwatch Website	