



# Patient's Experience at Slough Urgent Care Centre

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# Background

When we attend meetings and engage with the public, we heard that there was a need to better understand people's decision making and choices when seeking urgent care. We wanted to find out more and to share people's experiences to help the system learn and plan, accordingly, ensuring people can get the best possible care in the most efficient and accessible way.

Patients can be given an appointment at Slough urgent care centre in Priors Close when they need a same day appointment with a GP. Their GP care navigator or 111 can make the appointment. Patients attending at A&E who would be better served by a GP can also be re-directed.

Additionally, patients can walk-in and wait to be triaged. They will then be offered an appointment to return on the same day.

Slough Urgent Care Centre does not offer a minor injuries service.

The service has been running at Priors Close since November 2023 following the closure of the previous walk-in centre at Upton Park in April 2020.

The Slough Urgent Care Centre in Priors Close is open 8am-8pm seven days a week.

Healthwatch in Slough have received 4 pieces of negative feedback about Priors Close Urgent Care Centre in the previous 12 Months. This feedback related to communication, access and choice, staffing and waiting for appointments.

## What we did

We visited Priors Close Urgent Care Centre in November 2024, talking to patients and distributing a survey for completion. In total we spoke to 30 patients and received 12 completed surveys.

We also made observations and completed an accessibility check with a volunteer who has a visual impairment and uses a walking stick on a second visit.

Disclaimer, please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users. It is only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

# Summary of findings

Patient feedback on accessing the urgent care centre was generally good, with suggestions for improvement, including outdated street signage still directing patients to the closed walk-in centre. The walk-in waiting room and reception area were crowded during the visit. This setup was especially challenging for wheelchair users. In contrast, the waiting room for booked appointments was quieter, with shorter wait times.

Despite these issues, 100% of patients who saw a GP were satisfied with their care.

Patients reported that physically accessing the site was difficult. Some had been told that parking was free, and others struggled to walk from the paid car parks.

There were some accessibility issues identified including improvements needed to signage in the exterior and interior of the building and the need for improved communication with patients who do not speak English.

## Recommendations with response from provider

| Recommendations  | Response from provider   |
|--|--|
| Improve exterior signage to highlight direction to Priors Close urgent care center and disabled parking.   | We will review signage on site, we will feedback to the council on signage opportunities. Within the car park at Priors Close there are no official disabled bays.   |
| Consider solutions to improving patient flow in the reception area– possible suggestion of employing a second floating receptionist to check people in using a tablet. | Capacity is very limited we do operate an additional receptionist at the weekend to support this due to the level of work in activity which is not booked. Regarding the tablet, we can explore this again, however due to the walk in level of activity, we operate a model where the second receptionist is required for the input of walk in patients. We will also explore other options to streamline the flow through reception.<br><br>Signs are being produced and will reinforce about capacity due to size of waiting rooms, only space for patient + carer (if needed). |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Produce a printed, accessible step by step guide using pictures and multiple languages to help patients who do not speak English navigate the Urgent Care Centre. Healthwatch could help with this. | Support would be appreciated on the production of these please.   |
| Ensure local GPs are aware of patient parking arrangements and do not give incorrect information to patients.   | We will update the directory of services for 111/999. Regular communications are sent to practices regarding parking, we will continue to do so.  |
| Urgently remove street signage around the Upton Park site, which is still in place incorrectly directing walk-in patients there.  | We will engage with the council regarding these.  |
| Replace silver signage with more accessible signage directing patients to the toilets, exit and waiting areas.  | Toilet signs have been replaced and are the same as those at St Marks Hospital. Exit, consulting rooms and waiting room signs have been ordered and will be applied in due course.  |
| Check and re-furbish toilets including a disabled alarm cord, lighting, contrasting coloured toilet seats and repairing locks.  | The locks have been repaired and are functioning.<br><br>We have a number of challenges with the building and also the contract of the service and lease, as a result we need to be mindful of investment until the commissioners decide on the future of the service.<br><br>We are exploring the alarm cords, and the lighting will need to be fully reviewed as there are three different fittings throughout. |
| Conduct a full review of accessibility with a local disabled patients' group.   | This was undertaken end of 2024, which was instigated by the council, no report produced as of yet.   |

## NHS Frimley response to Healthwatch EB reports

NHS Frimley appreciates receiving feedback about the services which it is responsible for commissioning. The three reports for Brants Bridge Urgent Care Centre, Slough Urgent Care Centre and St Marks Urgent Care Centre highlight the positive work of our provider colleagues as well as some areas for improvement.

Two of the sites hosting these services are co-located in shared buildings, demonstrating NHS Frimley's commitment to ensuring services are joined up and accessible within the community. These services support patients where appropriate to be seen more quickly, dependent on their clinical needs after triaging, this ensures patients who require continuity of care can access this. The Slough Urgent Care Centre was developed as a pilot, the feedback provided through this report will be utilised as part of evaluating its effectiveness.

The responses from patients demonstrate they are accessing these services using the routes promoted by the NHS locally, in turn supporting them to be triaged to the most appropriate service.

The feedback highlights areas where we can continue to support development, including working with the landlords to improve accessibility and ease of navigation, as well as ensuring patients have clearer expectations of the sites and why they have been booked into them.”

# Patient Feedback

12 patients completed surveys at Priors Close. 11 people were there for treatment of an illness while 1 person was there with a minor injury. In total we spoke to 30 patients.

7 patients who filled in a survey had a booked appointment

5 patients who filled in a survey walked in

## Access

We asked patients for feedback about how easy it was to access the urgent care centre. We received generally good feedback with some suggestions for improvement. Following feedback about a patient directed to Upton Park, Healthwatch noted that street signage still shows this as the walk-in centre location despite it being closed 4 years ago.



Examples of street signage currently outside Upton Park Hospital. (December 2024)

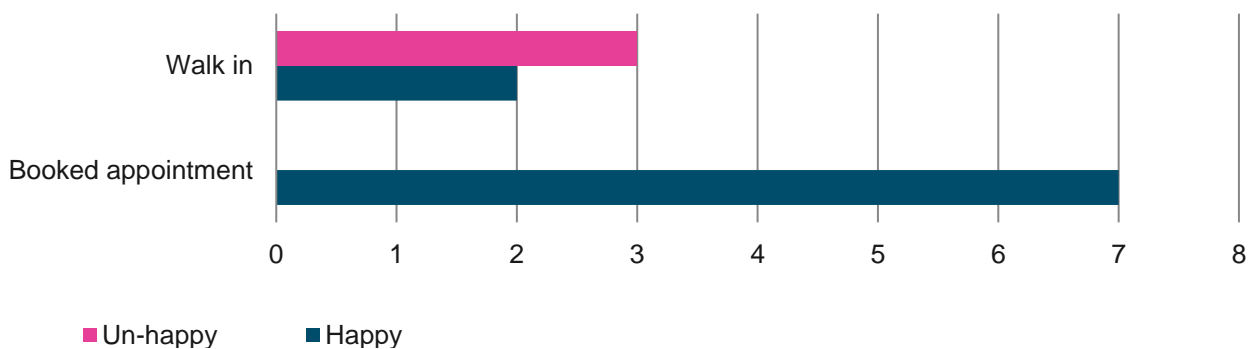
- Long wait, so glad we can do this though.
- I was sent by my GP from Bracknell without a booked appointment. It is a long way to go when you are feeling poorly.
- First, I went to Upton, there was no sign to direct here. Google still shows the old place. Kindly update for easier access.

## Waiting for appointments

We asked about the experience of waiting. The walk-in waiting room was busy on the day we visited. Although there was a seat for everyone, it was difficult to move past buggies. We noted that many patients had a friend or supporter with them which made it more over-crowded. In situations such as these waiting can become stressful as the environment can exacerbate anxiety. We could see that it would be difficult for a person in a wheelchair to navigate in this space.

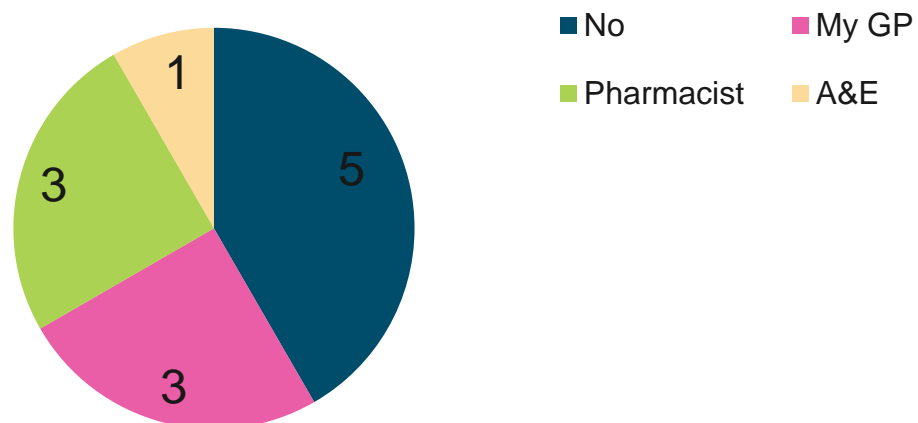
In contrast the waiting room for booked appointments had few people and the waiting times were kept to a minimum, so people moved quickly through.

Patients walking in will fill in a form and then wait to be triaged. They will then be given an appointment to return to see the doctor. We were told that people often prefer to sit and wait for the doctor as it can be difficult to fill an hour or so with no time to go home. This explains the large number of patients waiting.



I need to get back home and had to wait for triage and am now waiting again to see the doctor. I hope it's not too much longer.

## Before coming here today, had you used any other health service for this issue?



## Satisfaction with treatment and care

100% of people who had seen a health professional were happy with the care they received.

Very happy with this service, before we had to wait for hours at the old walk in. Plus, the GP is able to offer more appointments

## Parking

Patients reported that physically accessing the site was difficult. Some had been told or assumed that parking was free, and others struggled to walk from the paid car parks.

My GP practice lied about the parking, they said there was free parking here. When I arrived, I was tight for time so I had to park in a resident's area and will probably get a ticket. If they had told me that I would have to use the public car park and walk I would have allowed more time

We observed multiple patients arriving by car turning into the residents parking area, confused about where to go next. When the Healthwatch staff member was leaving we spoke to a woman with 2 young children in the car who asked for directions to parking but had not brought any money with her so could not use the public car park.

We were told that there are some disabled parking spaces behind the barrier but there was no signage to indicate this.

We also observed sit and wait patients needing to return to the paid car parks to top up their parking which would be an issue if they were absent when called by the GP. This caused some anxiety.

We did not speak to any patients who had used public transport, but the closest bus stop is St Laurence Way which is 0.04 miles away from Priors Close.



# Accessibility

## Exterior of the building

From the street there was a large sign indicating directions to parking but no sign directing people on foot towards the building which is hidden behind garages. There was no sign indicating where the disabled parking was located.

This needs to be improved.

There is a ramp and a self-opening door on the access route which were easy to use.



## Reception Area

Upon observation of the reception area, it became evident that the setup poses significant challenges.

There is a lack of privacy for patients when discussing symptoms with the receptionist at the window, which can feel uncomfortable. Additionally, a bottleneck is created as new patients arrive while others are still filling out forms or completing the registration process.

This issue is further compounded by the presence of pushchairs or wheelchairs, which create obstacles and slow down movement.

Further delays were observed when patients who spoke limited English required additional time for the receptionist to communicate instructions slowly and clearly. These patients appeared confused when asked to describe their symptoms and had difficulty understanding how to complete the form or follow instructions to wait for triage in the waiting room.



## Waiting Rooms

The chairs were comfortable but there wasn't much space in the sit and wait waiting room with pushchairs and wheelchairs taking up available space. Patients were very close to each other, and some would be contagious

We were told that sometimes people walk in and sit down without checking in and we noticed that there was no signage in the reception area or in the waiting rooms to indicate the need to check in before waiting to see the doctor.



The lighting in the waiting rooms was good, it was bright enough for our partially sighted volunteer to see as clearly as possible and the flooring was good. There are no steps, it's a flat floor plan which made navigating around the space easy for disabled patients.

The announcement PA system for calling patients into the GP was good and loud enough. It would be helpful to have patient/ room information displayed on the screen too for deaf patients.

There was a chair without arms, suitable for bariatric patients available in each waiting room.

There was no visible signage in the waiting rooms to direct people to the toilet.

## Signage

The direction signage for the toilets, exit and waiting areas consisted of shiny silver metal with black writing, which posed readability challenges, particularly for individuals with sight loss.

The reflective background and small lettering made it difficult for our volunteer to read. To improve accessibility, these signs should be replaced with clearer, more visible direction-finding signage.



An example of effective bathroom signage can be seen at Saint Marks Hospital, where the design ensures better visibility and ease of reading for people with sight loss, who do not read English or with dementia.



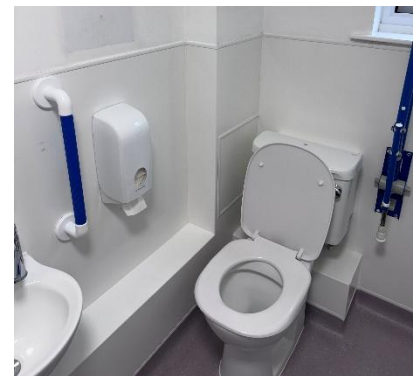
Toilet signage at St Mark's Hospital

## Toilets

There were two toilets both with grab rails, accessible height toilet and sink. Neither of these bathrooms had a disabled alarm pull cord. We were told that the lock on one of these toilets is not functional at times and somebody has been locked in the bathroom before. This needs to be addressed urgently.

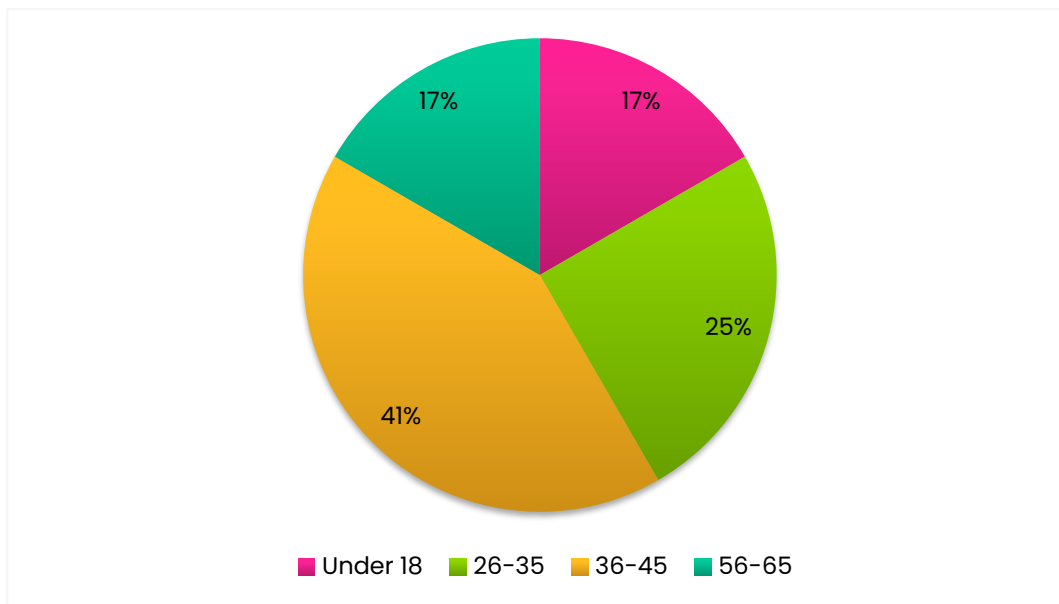
A contrasting-coloured toilet seat would help people with dementia.

In one of the bathrooms next to the sit and wait waiting area the light was not working and our volunteer with sight loss would have found it difficult to use the facilities without the light. The light switch also needs to be highlighted for people with sight loss.

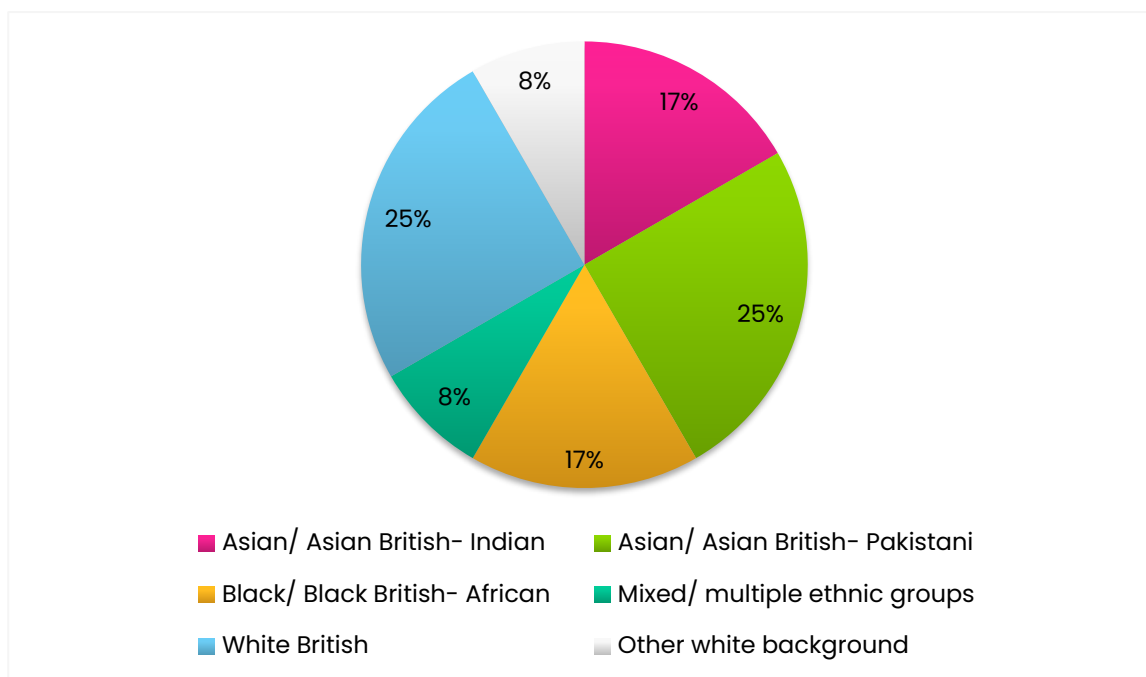


# Appendix 1 – Demographics

## Age



## Ethnicity



### Please tell us your sex recorded at birth

9 people were female, 3 people were male.

### Please tell us if you are an unpaid carer

8 people told us they were not an unpaid carer, 4 people preferred not to say.

**Please tell us if you have a disability**

11 people did not have a disability, 1 person did.

**Please tell us if you have a long-term health condition**

12 people did not have a long-term health condition

**Please tell us if you consider yourself to be neurodiverse**

11 people did not consider themselves to be neuro-diverse, 1 person did.

**Please tell us your sexual orientation**

9 people were heterosexual/ straight, 3 people preferred not to say

**Is your gender identity the same as your sex recorded at birth?**

11 people had the same gender identity recorded at birth; 1 person preferred not to say.



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