

# Patient Awareness of Urgent Care and Out of Hours Services

June 2017





Working for you,

across South Tees

## What is Healthwatch?

There is a local Healthwatch in every area of England. We are the independent champion for people using local health and social care services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved and share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also share them with Healthwatch England, the national body, to help improve the quality of services across the country. People can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

In summary - local Healthwatch is here to:

- Help people find out about local health and social care services.
- Listen to what people think of services.
- Help improve the quality of services by letting those running services and the government know what people want from care.

**As of 1 April 2017 Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland are working together to deliver Healthwatch activities across South Tees.**

## Background

In April 2015 Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland each produced a report titled 'Access to GP Services'<sup>1</sup> in response to intelligence received that people were experiencing difficulties when making appointments at their GP surgeries.

One of the recommendations within the reports was that patients have a greater understanding of the pathways available to them, as it may not always be appropriate or necessary to see a GP. It was also recommended that appointments were available at different times and that patients should also be made aware of alternatives such as the pharmacy or NHS 111 phone number for advice.

We have continued to receive feedback that access to GP services is still an issue with patients. However, since the reports were published in 2015, there have been changes to the provision of urgent care and out of hours services in the South Tees area.

These changes were implemented in response to the government's announcement in 2013 for a comprehensive review of the NHS urgent and emergency care system in England. The overall objective of the review was to consider how to improve services for patients and identify potential solutions. For more information please see: [www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/keogh-review/Pages/urgent-and-emergency-care-review](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/keogh-review/Pages/urgent-and-emergency-care-review)

1. [www.healthwatchredcarandcleveland.co.uk/sites/default/files/report\\_on\\_access\\_to\\_gp\\_services.pdf](http://www.healthwatchredcarandcleveland.co.uk/sites/default/files/report_on_access_to_gp_services.pdf)  
[www.healthwatchmiddlesbrough.co.uk/sites/default/files/access\\_to\\_gp\\_report\\_1.pdf](http://www.healthwatchmiddlesbrough.co.uk/sites/default/files/access_to_gp_report_1.pdf)

**Access to GP Services**  
Healthwatch Redcar & Cleveland report

**Access to GP Services**  
Healthwatch Middlesbrough report

In September 2015 the STAR Scheme<sup>2</sup> was launched in South Tees, funded by the Prime Minister's Challenge Fund, providing GP access in the evenings and at weekends. We carried out an independent evaluation of the STAR Scheme in August 2016. This service was accessed through the NHS 111 non-emergency phone number and the majority of patients who we spoke to had nothing but praise about the service and the care they had received. However, it was brought to our attention that around half of the patients accessing the service had simply walked into one of the hubs without making an appointment via the NHS 111 phone line.

Also in 2015, NHS South Tees Clinical Commissioning Group commenced an Urgent Care Service Review to establish a new model of urgent care throughout South Tees. The aims of the proposed new model were to:

- Encourage patients to seek advice and signposting to the most appropriate system, enabling the patient to attend the right place, first time.
- Support primary care and local GP practices in offering enhanced accessibility over seven days alleviating the need for walk in centres, reducing duplication and increasing affordability in the system.
- Signpost patients to the correct service by placing a GP at the front of A&E. This will also support patient education and enable the emergency service to focus more on people with more serious illness and injury.

From 1 April 2017, changes to urgent care services were implemented across South Tees. Patients are now able to access GP appointments seven days a week from four GP centres based in: East Cleveland Hospital in Brotton, North Ormesby Health Village, One Life Centre in Linthorpe and Redcar Primary Care Hospital. The centres operate an appointment based system only.

NHS South Tees Clinical Commissioning Group told us that all households in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland should have received a copy of the leaflet below<sup>3</sup>, informing the public about the changes.

**IMPORTANT CHANGES TO URGENT CARE SERVICES IN SOUTH TEES FROM 1 APRIL 2017**

**Local GP extended hours centres**

After listening to local people, we are now making it easier and more convenient for you to access general practice (GP) appointments 7 days a week.

From 1 April 2017, four GP centres will be open from 6pm to 9.30pm - Monday to Friday - and 8am to 9.30pm on weekends and Bank Holidays.

These will be based in North Ormesby Health Village, One Life Centre in Linthorpe, Redcar Primary Care Hospital and East Cleveland Hospital in Brotton.

**How do I access one of the new GP centres?**

The centres operate an appointment based system - you won't be able to just walk-in.

Having four centres means you will be offered a choice of where to go and an appointment time which may be better for you. It also means that you are seen promptly and shouldn't have to wait in a queue.

The service will be operated by local doctors and nurses from the South Tees area with access to your patient records.

There are a number of ways to make an appointment:

- **Telephone your own GP surgery** which has access to appointments in the extended hours GP centres.
- **Your own surgery will always try to meet your needs first** but if you require an appointment urgently and they can't fit you in - or if it is more convenient for you to be seen in the evening or at the weekend, they will make an appointment for you at one of the centres.
- **Telephone NHS 111** (free phone number) - NHS 111 has access to appointments in normal hours or in the extended hours GP centres. If you need to be seen, they will be able to make you an appointment.
- **Access online** - if your practice offers online appointment booking, this will be extended to include access to the centres. If you are not sure whether your practice offers online booking, please contact them directly.

**What if I have an urgent need after 9.30pm when the GP centres are closed?**

- Simply call 111 and they will direct you to the most appropriate service.

**CALL 111 when it's less urgent than 999**

**PLEASE KEEP IN A SAFE PLACE**

2. [www.healthwatchredcarandcleveland.co.uk/sites/default/files/starschemereportfinal2\\_0.pdf](http://www.healthwatchredcarandcleveland.co.uk/sites/default/files/starschemereportfinal2_0.pdf)  
3. [www.southteescg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Door-drop-FINAL.pdf](http://www.southteescg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Door-drop-FINAL.pdf)

# We spoke to over 300 members of the public about the urgent care changes

## Method

Our report seeks to evaluate patient and public awareness of urgent care and out of hours services within South Tees and to determine if people are aware of alternative pathways available to them. We determined that a survey would be the easiest and most efficient way of obtaining this information. In order to speak to people who use services regularly, we arranged to complete these surveys within GP surgeries throughout South Tees. This work was carried out with the support of our volunteers.

### GP surgeries which supported us with this work were:

Bentley Surgery, Redcar

Borough Road Surgery, Middlesbrough

Cambridge Medical Group, Middlesbrough

Garth Surgery, Guisborough

Hillside Practice, Skelton

Manor House Surgery, Normanby

Martonside Medical Centre, Middlesbrough

Woodside surgery, Loftus

Zetland Practice, Marske

Following feedback from GP surgeries we also visited the Accident and Emergency Department at James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough.

## Observations

In all of the GP surgeries we visited, banners explaining the changes to urgent care services were displayed. Although there were some differences in how visible these were, the majority of the banners were well placed. However, it should be noted that a banner was not present at the A&E Department in James Cook University Hospital.

Copies of the urgent care leaflet were also

available in most surgeries. Positioning of the leaflets varied which determined their effectiveness. For example, in one surgery the leaflets were placed on the chairs in the waiting room and were highly visible to patients. In other surgeries the leaflets were placed on the counter at the reception desk which we observed to be ineffective. One surgery only had one leaflet on a notice board and two surgeries did not have any at all.



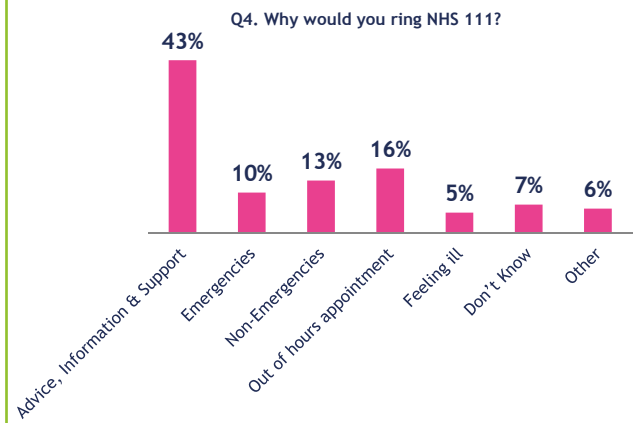
## Results

A total of 308 surveys were completed. All responses were collated via survey monkey in order that they could be analysed. Please see the Appendix for a copy of the questionnaire. Also, whilst we were carrying out this engagement activity, people also gave additional feedback. This data provides a deeper insight into people's understanding of the options that are available to them.

According to the results, 83% of respondents knew what do if they needed to see a GP out of normal hours. A total of 94% of respondents knew about the NHS non emergency number.

Although 94% of those questioned had heard of the NHS 111 non emergency number, there were a number of respondents with a limited understanding of under what circumstances it would be used for. The most common reasons for contacting 111 are highlighted below.

59% of the people that we spoke to had heard about the new GP Hubs. When we carried out this survey, the leaflet explaining the changes had already been delivered to homes throughout the South Tees. Many patients informed us that they had not, or did not, realise they had received the information through the door. Those patients who had received and read the leaflet informed us that it had been placed within a free magazine or newspaper.



**43%** of people stated they would ring 111 for advice, information or support and **had a good understanding of 111**

A few examples of individual's reasons for ringing 111 are:

*'Non urgent medical matters that would not require A&E or 999'*

*'If I was ill and required advice or call out after GP closing hours'*

*'To get advice and potentially be referred to a GP Hub appointment or A&E if required'*

Some people were unsure when to ring this number and 10% of respondents said they would use it in an emergency.

*'Only in need of an emergency'*

*'If I was dying'*

*'Something we feel is an emergency'*

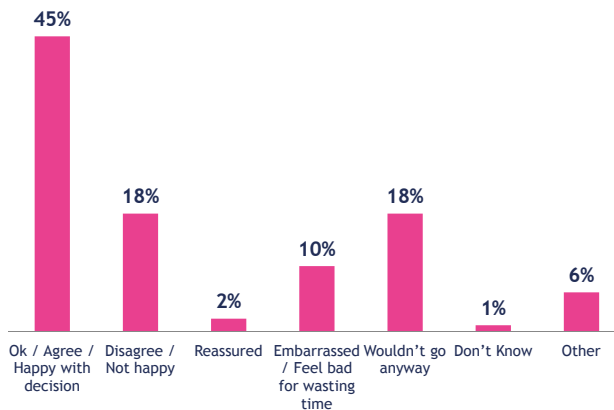
*'Just for emergency'*

**73%** of people that we spoke to said that they **would not go to A&E if they were unable to get a GP appointment**

Of those that we spoke to in A&E, the majority of them informed us that they had self referred and had not been directed by other services.

**82% of those questioned said they would go to the pharmacist for healthcare advice. It seems that for the majority of these people it would be for minor issues only.**

Q6. How would you feel if you attended A&E but after an assessment you were told to see your GP?



From 1 April 2017 when patients arrive in the A&E Department, a nurse is triaging patients to identify the most appropriate service for them. This means that at times, patients will be referred back to their GP or pharmacy for treatment rather than using A&E resources. We asked patients how they would feel if, after an assessment, they were informed that their condition was not serious and that they should visit a pharmacy or their own GP rather than wait to see one of the emergency doctors.

There were varying responses to this question, 45% said that they would be happy and agree with this decision:

*'I would take their advice as they are medically trained to make them decisions on my health'*

*'As long as I was assessed, no problem'*

*'I would accept the assessment and do what was appropriate'*

*'I would be fine with it knowing I wasn't too ill'*

*'Totally understandable would appreciate their advice and take relevant action'*

*'Not too bad as I would know it was not serious and someone else could need seeing to more'*

Some people expressed that they would have felt embarrassed for wasting resources:

*'Guilty for wasting time'*

*'I would feel disappointed with myself for wasting emergency doctor's time'*

*'Stupid and embarrassed that I could get some advice without taking a doctor away from someone else'*

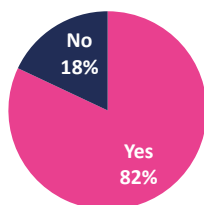
18% of people clearly expressed that they would not be happy with this decision:

*'I would be unhappy with the decision'*

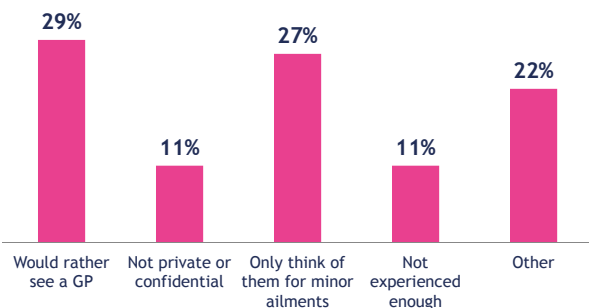
*'I would be annoyed, I would feel I would only go to A&E in an emergency, so would feel that if I had to go somewhere else, I hadn't received enough information upfront about where I should be going instead'*

*'If I had travelled from Redcar to James Cook in Middlesbrough and was turned away I would be annoyed'*

Q7. Would you go to your pharmacist for healthcare advice?



Q8. What stops you from asking a pharmacist for advice?



**18%** of people who completed the survey **said they would not seek advice from a pharmacist**

When asked what stops you asking a pharmacist for advice, people gave varying answers. Some comments explaining their answers are below:

*'I would only ask them for minor complaints. I do feel the environment is not professional or private enough to discuss more serious issues'*

*'They are too cautious and recommend going to a GP. You get interrogated about what you want from them'*

*'When advice is required I would prefer to have a doctor's advice'*

*'Not aware that they are qualified'*

*'They are just a pharmacist'*

**Read our  
Urgent Care Survey  
in full**



## Additional Comments

Many of the surgeries that we visited have patients whose first language is not English. We encountered difficulties in engaging with these patients and they were unable to complete the survey. Although the leaflet does say that it is available in other languages and formats, we were unsure how other communities who do not speak English get informed about these changes to services.

Whilst carrying out this work, we spoke to staff at the GP surgeries. It was noted that there were differences in knowledge of the urgent care changes. This could have an impact on directing patients to the appropriate services.

## Conclusion

From the results of the survey we conclude that there seems to be a greater patient awareness, since our previous survey carried out in 2015, regarding the NHS 111 non-emergency number and how to access services out of hours. Considering that the GP Hubs are relatively new, patient awareness of these services is good and is well promoted within GP surgeries.

## Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support and assistance of the GP surgeries and their staff in helping us to complete this piece of work. We would also like to thank the members of the public who completed this survey.



### Recommendations

To further increase patient awareness and access to appropriate services across South Tees, our recommendations are:

1	Many patients who we spoke to could not recall having the urgent care information posted through the door. One of the main reasons for this was that the leaflet was included in free magazines or papers, which patients immediately discarded. We recommend that in future, any important information to be communicated to the public be more visible to ensure that that the information is read.
2	We observed that in some GP surgeries, information regarding the changes was not always placed in the most visible locations. Most surgeries usually display a lot of useful information to patients and therefore sometimes important information does not stand out. We recommend that important information regarding changes are placed in direct view of patients who are waiting to see the GP to ensure they are well informed.
3	We feel it is important that A&E fully utilise the triage nurse and if patients have been informed that they should seek help from a GP or a pharmacist, this is fully implemented. This will ensure patients are educated to use the Department for emergency treatment only.
4	It was encouraging that a large percentage of those questioned were aware of the NHS non emergency number 111. However, due to the varying responses on why people should ring this number, work is required to increase promotion of why and when to call 111.
5	Members of the public requiring this information in other formats and languages will not be aware of the urgent care changes, due to the only leaflets in circulation being in English and small print. We feel that the information on the leaflet needs to be promoted widely in other languages and formats for those who require it.
6	GP surgery staff are in frequent contact with patients on a day to day basis. We feel that it is vital for them to play a key role in ensuring that the patients are informed through conversation or handing out leaflets to those who attend the practice.





☎ 0800 989 0080 / 01642 955605

@ general@healthwatchsouthtees.org.uk

[www.healthwatchmiddlesbrough.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchmiddlesbrough.co.uk)

[www.healthwatchredcarandcleveland.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchredcarandcleveland.co.uk)