

Using Urgent Care Services in Leicester City

The patient experience of getting to and using the Urgent Care Centre in Leicester City



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Summary

The pressures on the NHS are well known particularly in urgent care which is a particular cause for concern for patients. This survey was undertaken to support and understand the patient experience and the cause of any points of pressure and perhaps find indications of where improvements might be needed around Urgent Care Services.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that often people go to an Urgent Care Centre(UCC) because they don't know of other services they could access; they are not able to access other services; or they want to shortcut a route to medical attention rather than go to a GP first. Also anecdotally people complained of long waits, complicated procedures, and not always understanding staff.

To test these assumptions 150 patients in the UCC at Leicester Royal infirmary were interviewed over 2 days at the start and end of the August bank holiday weekend. (It is also intended to do a similar survey at the Merlyn Vaz centre in November.)

Key findings

- Greater use of Urgent Care by Younger people - UCC is used more by those aged between 16-25 years old and 26-35 years old.
- Use of the Urgent Care Centre is not due to lack of patient education - Most patients know that there are other services they can access before going to the Urgent Care Centre but they are not fully aware of the full range of support available.
- Problems with accessing other NHS services is increasing demand on UCC - Half of patients surveyed had used or tried to use other NHS services before going to the Urgent Care Centre.

Overall the service offered by the Urgent Care Centre is seen as very positive, quick and efficient and to some is a quick route into acute services.

Introduction

Leicester has one of busiest Accident and Emergency Departments in the United Kingdom which, increasingly over the last couple of years, has struggled to cope with the numbers of people coming through its doors. Over that time there have been a number of significant measures taken to address both the immediate situation and to plan for an effective, patient centred Urgent and Emergency Care service for the future.

There have been a number of initiatives taken in 2014 and earlier this year to capture the experiences of people who come to the Emergency Department (ED) and we supported our colleagues in Healthwatch Leicestershire when they undertook “A Week in LRI”, including time in the Adult and Children’s Accident & Emergency Department. Their interviews with patients made a valuable contribution to our knowledge of why people come directly to the hospital, however we wanted to specifically understand the UC service experience. This would help complete a picture of all the emergency and urgent care services.

The Urgent Care Centre (UCC) originally alongside but now inside the Balmoral Building, at Leicester Royal Infirmary is run by George Elliott NHS Trust which is commissioned respond to patients who present with minor illnesses or injuries. They carry out an initial triage of patients to determine if they need an ED intervention or can be dealt with in different ways, which might include treatment in the UCC or a referral back into community services for example a GP or Practice Nurse or a Chemist.

As with the Accident & Emergency Department of the hospital, there has been a steady increase in the numbers of people presenting to the UCC. In considering this matter, Healthwatch Leicester City realised that, to date, there had not been a systematic attempt to find out why people were coming to the UCC as against the ED.

Whilst we initially considered undertaking an Enter and View visit to the UCC, discussions with colleagues in the NHS and the City Clinical Commissioning Group suggested that a patient survey would be a better way in which to capture the evidence we were seeking.

This report is a part of a larger project looking at the main Urgent Care services in Leicester City. We will conduct a similar survey at the SSAFA Walk in Centre, based at the Merlyn Vaz Centre, later in 2015.

Methodology

Planning

An early consideration was when would be the most appropriate time to visit the UCC; again after taking advice, we decided on doing so either side of the August Bank Holiday weekend to look at the impact on the service and how the availability of different health services would impact on patient decisions (For example if they go the UCC or where to try before doing so).

We decided not to go on the Bank holiday itself as apart from 111 and the Out of Hours Service there were few other self-referral NHS services available. Through our planning discussions internally and with stakeholders it was identified that, given our available resources (of volunteers and staff), Thursday afternoon and evening (due to the fact that it was known that a number of GP practices in the City and County close at lunchtime on a Thursday and hand over to the Out of Hours Service) would offer a good time to observe. By going to the UCC from 2pm - 11pm which would span the time when during the afternoon some GP practices would be closed and almost all GP practices would do so at 6.30pm and when the SSAFA Walk in Centre at Merlyn Vaz H&SC Centre would close at 8pm.

It was also decided to question patients in the UCC on 1st September (Tuesday after the Bank Holiday) from 8am - 2pm, as this would capture patient's reasons for coming as GP practices would be open as usual after the Bank Holiday weekend.

Each day was broken into 3 hour shifts, with one member of Healthwatch staff and two volunteer members (either authorised representatives or board members)

Results

Overall results

Surveys completed = 150. A total of 249 patients were in the UCC whilst Healthwatch were there. This means 60% of patients presenting to UCC were interviewed.

In total 150 surveys were completed however not every survey was fully completed, figures quoted are based on the total responses collected for each question and may not total 150.

Over the Two days we saw:

Survey Response	Number of responses	% of responses
From Leicester City	96	64%
From Leicestershire	45	30%
Outside of County	9	6%

Patients registered with a GP

Survey Response	Number of responses	% of responses
Registered with GP	134	89.3%
Not registered with GP	7	4.7%
Not applicable	9	6%

All the responses of “Not applicable” were due to being from outside of the County.

Of the 7 responses of “Not Registered”, 3 were due to just having moved to the area.

Seeking help before coming to the Urgent Care Centre today?

Survey Response	Number of responses	% of responses
Yes	73	48.7%
No	77	51.3%

Seeking support or not seeking support whilst GPs are open.

If we assume that the GP core opening times are 8am - 6.30pm (Source - Leicester City CCG)

	Number of patients who sought support	Number of patients who didn't seek support
Within GP core Hours (27th August)	34	21
Outside of GP core Hours (27th August)	15	26

If you sought help, where was it from?

Top three responses:

1. **GP but unable to be seen on the day -38%**
2. **Advised to come to the UCC by NHS 111 - 21%**
3. **Advised to come by GP - 15%**

“I rang my GP twice after being in a road traffic collision. I was unable to see my GP today and was advised to come here”

“I was advised to come by 111. They were good because my mum was in severe pain. They sent an ambulance car for mum to take her to Urgent Care.”

If no support sought, why did you come to UCC?

Top three responses:

1. **Self-Referral due to Injury - 24%**
2. **Self-Referral - 23%**
3. **Previously Ill - 9%**

“I’ve been at work today. I had problems with one eye 2 weeks ago which was dealt with by Eye Casualty at LRI. Thought it had clearer up but it returned today. I came to UCC because I thought I’d have a better chance of being referred.”

“I hurt my wrist playing football. I just came straight here”

“I’m visiting in Leicester from London and have come to get a wound dressed”

How informed are you about different ways to get NHS support?

Survey response	Number of responses	% of responses
Very Informed	43	31.9%
Quite Informed	62	45.9%
Not Very Informed	23	17%
Not at all	7	5.2%

What different ways did patients know?



Word map - www.wordle.net.

Have you been ill over the Bank Holiday Weekend?

(Question only asked on 1st September)

Survey response	Number of responses	% of responses
Yes	29	52.7%
No	26	47.3%

Of those who answered they were poorly over the Bank Holiday weekend - 72.4% did not seek prior medical help.

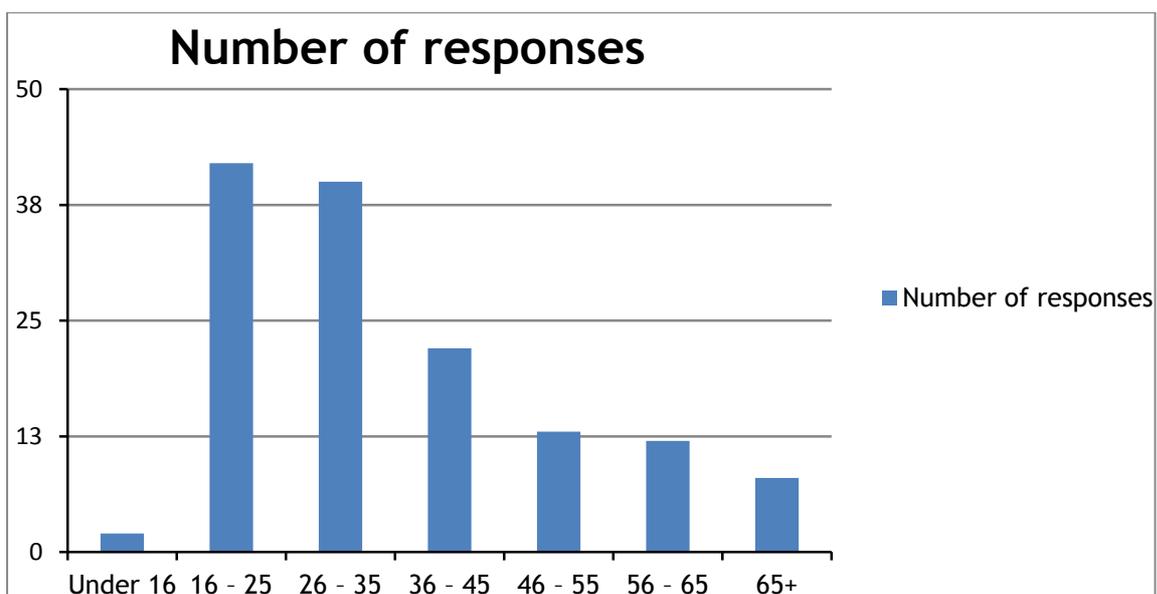
Overall Satisfaction with the UCC service?

Survey response	Number of responses	% of responses
Very Good	47	38.2%
Good	54	43.9%
OK	17	13.8%
Poor	5	4.1%

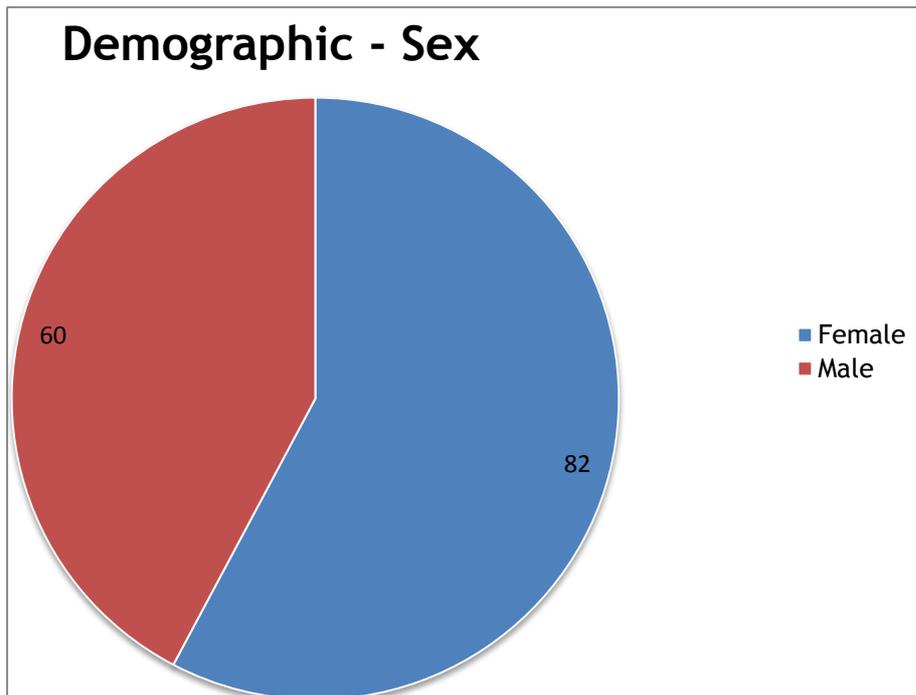
Demographics of patients surveyed

Age range of patients presenting at Urgent Care Centre

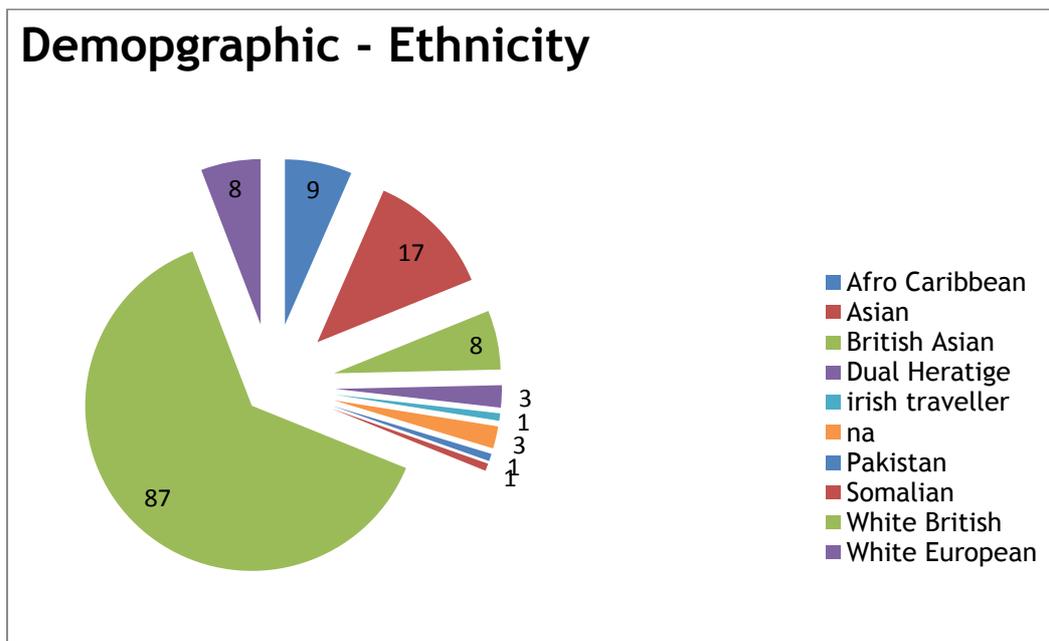
Survey Response	Number of responses	% of responses
Under 16	2	1.4%
16 - 25	42	30.2%
26 - 35	40	28.8%
36 - 45	22	15.8%
46 - 55	13	9.4%
56 - 65	12	8.6%
65+	8	5.8%



Sex of patients surveyed



Ethnicity of patients surveyed



Analysis

The patients

Being situated in the centre of Leicester City, it is not surprising that 64% of the patients surveyed were from Leicester City but what was not entirely expected was the predominant age groups of those using the Urgent Care Centre being 16-24 years old and those between 26-35; the use steadily decreases as the age of the patient increases.

There is no significant faith or religion identified of the patients surveyed but a wide number of religions were identified by patients surveyed however more than 50% of the patients surveyed (50.8%) did practice a faith or religion.

Perhaps surprisingly most of the patients surveyed were registered with a GP (89.3%) and of those who were not registered (4.7%) half of them (2.35%) had only recently moved to the area.

A high percentage of the patients surveyed would rate themselves as either “Quite Informed” or “Very Informed” (77.8%) about the different types of NHS support. The most common services mentioned were the NHS 111 service and GP’s, with Walk in Centres and Chemists also being cited. This suggests that whilst the public is aware of the different NHS support services available many choose to come to the UCC as a conscious first choice. It is worth noting that in discussion with patients, many were not aware of the range of support available at their local Chemist.

Using the Urgent Care services

When asked about seeking help from other NHS services before coming to the Urgent Care Centre, there is almost a 50/50 split of patients.

Of the patients who had sought support before attending the Urgent Care Centre, the majority were advised to go to the Centre by other NHS services for treatment:

- 20.6% (Of those who sought support) advised by NHS 111
- 14.8% (Of those who sought support) advised by GP
- 19.2% (Of those who sought support) advised by another Health professional

Whilst the time of day when we spoke to the patients did play a part, it is clear that not being able to be seen by a GP as promptly as he or she wanted was a significant reason (38% of patients who sought support) for patients going to the Urgent Care Centre.

Of the patients who did not seek support before attending the Urgent Care Centre, the biggest reason was due to Injury or self-referral.

Some reasons given for attending are worth noting :

- 8% of patients attended to fit around work, citing they could not afford to take the time off work to see a GP.

- 2.5% had been in a car accident

The patient feedback on the overall experience at the Urgent Care Centre was very positive. 96% of the survey responses received, rated the service as OK, Good or Very Good. This is reflected in the comments given, with being “Quick and Efficient” the most common comment. Some of the patients also spoke positively of the improvements in the service, since it had moved location.

Conclusions

What is the significance of the age trend presenting to UCC?

Patients between the ages of 16 - 25 and 26 - 35 are more likely to use the UCC than patients from older age ranges and there is a clear pattern of decline in use of the service as a patient gets older.

What can be concluded is that the younger community (more than the aging community) of Leicester City either need to access the UCC for NHS support they are not able to get elsewhere or they **feel** they need to access the UCC for NHS support they are not getting elsewhere.

Why this may be is difficult to conclude from our findings, further research to better understand this would be needed.

The different types of NHS support available

Our results can show that there is a level of understanding of some of the different NHS services available to the public, however there is not an understanding of all of them. NHS 111 and GP's were most commonly cited for where to go for help but there was a lack of knowledge of the additional support Chemists are able to offer. Even fewer responses talked about self-help through the NHS Choices website.

Most of the patients surveyed were registered with a GP and so have access to primary care services. Our findings show that on numerous occasions, even if a member of the public tries to use the primary care services appropriately, they were unable to do so. The Primary Care services in Leicester City are due to undergo big changes soon, establishing Health Needs Neighbourhoods. With this upcoming change, Healthwatch will keep a watching brief on these changes and review at a later date, how this has impacted on the use of the Urgent Care Centre.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 - Greater patient education and engagement on the support from their local Chemist and self-diagnosis through NHS Choices, with a special focus on the age range of 16 - 35s

From our findings the patients surveyed were aware of the different services available to access NHS support but there were still those who did not know about NHS 111 and the support they are able to access at their local Chemist. As the age range most likely to use the UCC, targeting the 16 - 35s will likely have the biggest impact.

Recommendation 2 - Supporting better use of GP services.

The difficulty in obtaining timely appointments with GPs is encouraging patients to use the Urgent Care Centre. Whilst this is not a new issue to be identified, indeed it echoes the work undertaken earlier this year, there needs to be a greater awareness by the public of the pressures this places on the urgent & Emergency Care Services. Already there is evidence from our visits that patients are already seeing the UCC as their first port of call.

Our report compliments the audit undertaken by Leicester City Clinical Commissioning Group (LCCCG) recently. The joint findings and recommendations will be implemented and reviewed in conjunction with LCCCG.

The key findings from the LCCCG report concluded:

- The demographics of patients attending the Urgent Care Centre included:
 - Young people between the ages of 18-25, some of whom are presumed to be students registered in their home city but not in Leicester.
 - This also applied to the working /commuting population registered in their home city but not in Leicester.
- The recording of ethnicity or spoken language indicates a minority are migrants from EU countries.
 - Some members of newly arrived communities are unfamiliar with primary care systems which differ from those in their home countries.
 - Some patients felt there is little local translated information available about using NHS services appropriately and some therefore attended ED or UCC because they are not aware of primary care options.
- There is consensus among patients that they struggle to contact their GP and subsequently attempt to make appointments at convenient times.
 - Patients require assurances attempts to make an appointments will results in contact with a health professional the same day. Often the waiting time is not a hindrance but the unavailability of same day appointments.
 - Lack of capacity and availability of appointments consequently leads to greater demand within UCC and ED.
- Additional services have become available within Primary Care but patients continue to rely on UCC and ED services based on previous experiences. These scenarios generate additional demand in equal measure but at a higher cost.
 - Patients perceive time restrictions at GP practices as a hindrance to patient care and prefer the services provided at UCC.
 - Patients often feel the severity of their symptoms necessitates urgent care their beliefs determine their use of urgent care services.
 - Services like walk-in centres and UCC provide additional capacity for unregistered patients and convenience to those working locally; providing greater choice.

Next Steps

Healthwatch is keen to support any measures taken to encourage patients and the public to use other services before defaulting to the UCC or the Emergency Department.

To support our recommendations we would take the following steps, with help and support from our NHS partners locally:

- a) Repeat targeted direct communication to every household in the city articulating -
 - I. Range of services available
 - II. When they are available
 - III. How to access them
 - IV. What they can provide/ what they can't provide
- b) Suggest this is targeted (supported) with NHS logo
- c) As the National winter pressure/"look after yourself" campaign incorporates local messages too there needs to be a link with local leads in - UHL, LPT, CCG. To ensure the general messaging is right.
- d) Support the above with :
 - I. An action plan with clear objectives/dates
 - II. Circulate to all stakeholders
 - III. Review actions/publish in 1 month
- e) Monitor and review the changes to Primary Care Services in Leicester City - Health Needs Neighbourhoods and its impact on Urgent Care Services
- f) Report findings to: CCG, LPT, UHL and HWB Board.

Primary Care and Urgent Care services are undergoing significant development, locally, and Healthwatch will continue to work with our NHS partners to highlight the patient experience.

Appendix A - Patient Survey - 27th August

Survey Number: _____ Time: _____

Patient Survey - 1st September ONLY Use of Urgent Care Services in Leicester City

To be able to examine who is using the Urgent Care services today, we would like to begin with a few questions about you.

Patient Questions

1. Do you live in Leicester City, Leicestershire County or from outside of Leicestershire?

City County Outside

2. (If a City or County resident) Are you registered with a GP? Yes No

Name of GP Surgery : _____

Next, we want to ask about why you came to the Urgent Care Centre today.

3. Before you came to the Urgent Care Centre, had you tried to be seen /spoken to any other NHS Service? (For Example NHS 111, your GP....etc.)?

Yes No If Yes, where? _____

- a. What was your experience with them?

4. If you didn't see or speak to another NHS service before coming to the Urgent Care Centre, why did you decide to come here?

5. Have you been ill over the Bank Holiday weekend?

Yes No

- a. If Yes, have you tried to get help over the weekend?

Yes No

6. How informed do you feel about the different ways you can get medical support/advice?

Very Informed Quite informed Not very informed Not at all

- a. If your answer is Very or Quite, what ways are you aware of?

Finally, we want to know about your experience at the Urgent Care Centre today.

7. After being seen by the reception staff at the Urgent Care Centre, did you feel you understood what was going to happen next?

Yes No Partially

8. If you were given printed information from the Urgent Care Centre, did you understand it?

Yes No

9. Did the Urgent Care Centre take any special needs you require, into account?
(Language, Physical or Sensory disability... etc.)

Yes No

10. How would you rate your experience at the Urgent Care Centre today?

Very Good Good OK Poor

Why did you give this rating?

Demographic questions

To allow us to see how the patient experience might be different for different communities, please let us know the following personal information. All responses to the survey will be anonymised.

Do you identify as: Male Female Neither

Which age band are you? Under 16yrs 16 – 25 26 – 35 36 – 45
45 - 55 56 - 65 65+

Do you have a Faith, Religion or Belief? _____

What is your Ethnicity? _____

Thank you for taking your time to complete this survey, if you would like to be informed of our results please leave your contact information: _____

Contact us at : Healthwatch Leicester, Clarence House, 46 Humberstone Gate, Leicester. LE1 3PJ Tel No. – 0116 2518381

Appendix B - Patient Survey 1st September

Survey Number: _____ Time: _____

Patient Survey - 1st September ONLY Use of Urgent Care Services in Leicester City

To be able to examine who is using the Urgent Care services today, we would like to begin with a few questions about you.

Patient Questions

11. Do you live in Leicester City, Leicestershire County or from outside of Leicestershire?

City County Outside

12. (If a City or County resident) Are you registered with a GP? Yes No

Name of GP Surgery : _____

Next, we want to ask about why you came to the Urgent Care Centre today.

13. Before you came to the Urgent Care Centre, had you tried to be seen /spoken to any other NHS Service? (For Example NHS 111, your GP....etc.)?

Yes No If Yes, where? _____

a. What was your experience with them?

14. If you didn't see or speak to another NHS service before coming to the Urgent Care Centre, why did you decide to come here?

15. Have you been ill over the Bank Holiday weekend?

Yes No

a. If Yes, have you tried to get help over the weekend?

Yes No

16. How informed do you feel about the different ways you can get medical support/advice?

Very Informed Quite informed Not very informed Not at all

a. If your answer is Very or Quite, what ways are you aware of?

Finally, we want to know about your experience at the Urgent Care Centre today.

17. After being seen by the reception staff at the Urgent Care Centre, did you feel you understood what was going to happen next?

Yes No Partially

18. If you were given printed information from the Urgent Care Centre, did you understand it?

Yes No

19. Did the Urgent Care Centre take any special needs you require, into account?
(Language, Physical or Sensory disability... etc.)

Yes No

20. How would you rate your experience at the Urgent Care Centre today?

Very Good Good OK Poor

Why did you give this rating?

Demographic questions

To allow us to see how the patient experience might be different for different communities, please let us know the following personal information. All responses to the survey will be anonymised.

Do you identify as: Male Female Neither

Which age band are you? Under 16yrs 16 – 25 26 – 35 36 – 45
45 - 55 56 - 65 65+

Do you have a Faith, Religion or Belief? _____

What is your Ethnicity? _____

Thank you for taking your time to complete this survey, if you would like to be informed of our results please leave your contact information: _____

Contact us at : Healthwatch Leicester, Clarence House, 46 Humberstone Gate, Leicester. LE1 3PJ Tel No. – 0116 2518381