

Using Urgent Care Services in Leicester City

The patient experience of getting to and using the SSAFA Walk in 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.

As part of this project to gather the patient experience Healthwatch has previously visited the Urgent Care Centre, based at the Leicester Royal Infirmary. To complete gathering the patient experience we approached patients using the SSAFA Walk in Centre, asking them to complete a patient survey.

A report on the findings from the Urgent Care Centre can be found at - <http://www.healthwatchleicester.co.uk/?q=about/docs> or requested from the Healthwatch office.

161 patients were surveyed over three days (Saturday 14th November 8am - 8pm/Wednesday 18th November 2pm - 8pm and Thursday 19th November 2pm - 8pm) at the SSAFA Walk in Centre.

Key findings

- Parents using the Walk in Centre seeking reassurance - A high percentage of the patients surveyed, were parents with young children, seeking reassurance about their child's health.
- Greater consideration of patient options if GP appointments unavailable - When patients are contacting their GP for an appointment, our findings suggest they are advised to try another day, if no appointments are available more often than not.
- Lack of local awareness of new GP services - Most patients were unaware of the new GP service, offering GP appointments "out of hours".
- Patients were very happy with the service provided by SSAFA - Patient satisfaction with the SSAFA Walk in Centre was very high.

Introduction

In August and September of 2015, Healthwatch Leicester City completed a number of surveys with patients presenting (150) at the Urgent Care Centre which is located in the Leicester Royal Infirmary. This was a part of a larger project looking to capture the patient experience of using Urgent Care services in Leicester City.

Our initial reason for looking to capture the patient experience of Urgent Care services in Leicester City was because until then, we felt there was not a significant amount of evidence captured on what reasons the public had for using these services, rather than accessing primary care services, such as GP's and other primary care support.

Going to the SSAFA Walk in Centre, was the second step in capturing the patient experience between Primary Care Services and the Acute Emergency Services based in Leicester.

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. - Exert from "Using Urgent Care Services in Leicester City" -Healthwatch Leicester Nov 2015.

The SSAFA Walk In centre is located within the Merlyn Vaz Health and Social Care Centre, which is situated in the East of the City. Members of the public are able to walk into the centre and receive treatment for minor illnesses and minor injury. The contract for the Walk in Centre (as part of the Urgent Care Services contract) is commissioned on behalf of the three Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Methodology

As this is a continuation of our visit to the Urgent Care Centre at Leicester Royal Infirmary, the format of completing patient surveys was largely kept the same.

Planning

When reviewing our visit to Urgent Care Centre, there was a need to look at how we could capture the patient feedback of the service better. By separating our survey into two distinct parts and asking the patient to come back to see us after their treatment, we felt we would be able to capture the patient feedback on the Walk in Centre more effectively.

We also felt it was important to reflect on the questions we had asked in the Urgent Care Centre, looking to highlight the questions where the feedback captured had not been as usable as we had hoped. Whilst some questions were removed due to only being relevant for the time of our visit, we wanted to ask a question about the new pilot of “Health Hubs”, which had recently been launched in four GP practices in Leicester City, under the Prime Minister’s challenge fund.

When considering when we wanted to visit the SSAFA Walk in Centre this was decided in a very similar way to when our visit to the Urgent Care Centre was agreed. It was decided to visit the Walk in Centre when we would be able to observe the impact of GP protected learning time, as this would mean GP practices would be closed, which is on a Wednesday afternoon. We also wanted to capture patient feedback on a Saturday given the recent national agenda of 7 days a week service. It was decided to visit the SSAFA Walk in Centre on a Thursday afternoon, when a significant number of GP practices close, with telephone calls directed to the out of hours telephone service or NHS 111. This led to our visit being held on Saturday 14th November (8am - 8pm), Wednesday 18th November (2pm - 8pm) GP Protected Learning Time and Thursday 19th November (2pm - 8pm).

Each day of the visit was broken down into three hour shifts for each volunteer and staff member, with one member of staff and two volunteers (Board member or Authorised Representative) being present.

Results

Overall results

Over the three days at the Walk in Centre we surveyed 161(153 walk in patients) members of the public. Over the three days the Walk in Centre saw 205 walk in patients. So over the 3 days we spoke to 74.6% of walk in patients, who presented to the Walk in Centre.

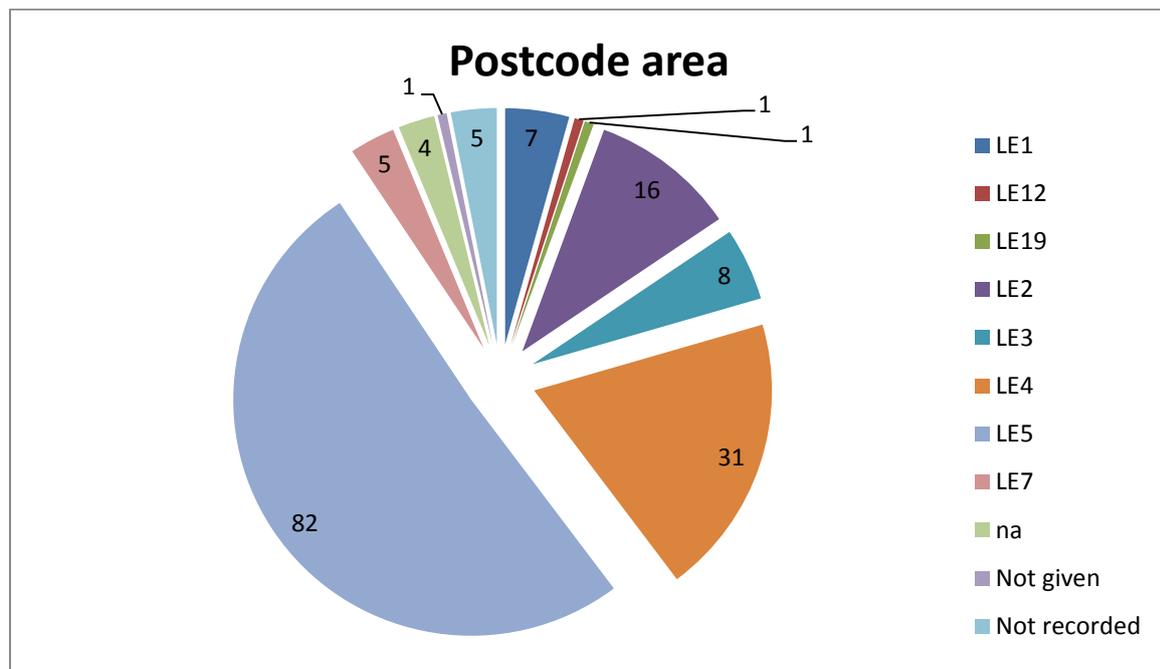
In total 161 surveys were completed however not every survey was fully completed. All figures quoted are based on the total responses collected for each survey question and may not total 161.

Survey Results

Q1 - Do you live in Leicester City?

Response given	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	151	93.8%
No	10	6.2%
Total	161	100%

Q1 a - Postcode area patient was from.



Q2 - Registered with a City GP

Response given	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	143	88.8%
No	16	9.9%
NA	2	1.2%

Q2 a - Registered at which GP practice?

In total we were advised of Forty Seven different GP practices (A full list of all the GP practices can be found in Appendix B) below is the Eleven GP practices with the most patients attending the Walk in Centre.

Response given	Number of responses	% of responses
SSAFA registered GP Practice	22	18.1%
Spinney Hill Medical Centre	10	6.3%
East Leicester Medical Practice	8	5.0%
Charnwood Practice	7	4.4%
St Elizabeth Medical Centre	7	4.4%
St Matthews Medical Centre	7	4.4%
Humberstone Medical Centre	6	3.8%
Downing Drive Surgery	5	3.1%
St Peters Health Centre	5	3.1%
East Park Medical Centre	4	2.5%
Highfield Medical Centre	4	2.5%

Seven patients responded that they were registered to the Merlyn Vaz Health Centre, however we have been unable to assign these to one of the three specific GP practices located in the Merlyn Vaz Centre.

Q3 - Had you tried GP before coming to the Walk in Centre today?

Response given	Number of responses	Percentage of response
Yes	73	45.3%
No	77	47.8%
Na	11	6.8%

Eight responses of Na were recorded due to being registered patients of the SSAFA GP practice

Q3 a - If you had contacted GP before coming to the Walk in Centre, when were you offered an appointment for? (Out of the 73 Yes responses received)

Response given	Number of responses	% of response
No appointment available - Not offered another time	39	53.4%
GP Closed	10	13.7%
Unable to contact GP	7	9.6%
Next Week	6	8.2%
Already seen GP	4	5.5%
Next Day	2	2.7%
Not able to book appointment - have tried for several days	1	1.4%

Was offered a walk in appointment but refused	1	1.4%
Offered appointment	1	1.4%
New to the area	1	1.4%

Q4 - Why did you come down to the Walk in Centre today?

Reason given	Number of responses	% of responses (of the 160 responses)
GP not available	71	44.4%
Used it before	31	19.4%
I'll be seen quicker	21	13.1%
My practice advised me to go to Walk in Centre	12	7.5%
Na	8	5%
Other	5	3.1%
Visiting area	4	2.5%
Referred by NHS 111	4	2.5%
New to the area	2	1.3%
Internet search	1	0.6%
Tried Health Hub but no answer	1	0.6%

Q5 - Before coming to the Walk in Centre had you heard of the "Health Hubs"?

Response given	Number of responses	% of responses (of the 160 responses)
Yes	18	11.3%
No	135	84.4%
Na	7	4.4%

Q5 a - Would you have used the "Health Hubs" rather than the Walk in Centre, had you known before?

Response given	Number of responses	% of responses
Yes	73	47.1%
No	66	42.6%
Na	16	10.3%

Q6 - After being seen by the Walk in Centre reception, did you understand what would happen?

Response given	Number of responses	% of responses
Yes	128	97.7%
No	3	2.3%

Q7 - After being seen by a clinician, did you feel involved in the discussion about your treatment?

Response given	Number of responses	% of responses
Yes	117	97.5%
No	2	1.7%
Na	1	0.8%

Q8 - Do you have any special requirements, which were supported whilst at the Walk in?

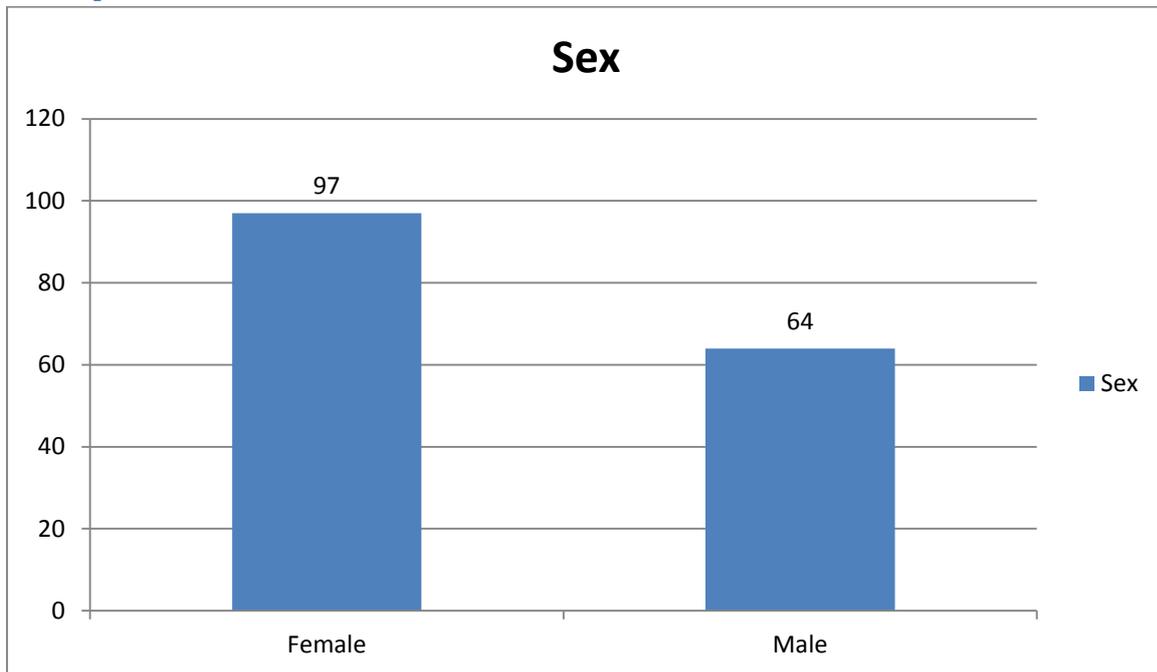
Response given	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	11	8.5%
No	1	0.8%
Na	117	90.7%

Q9 - How would you rate your experience of the Walk in Centre today?

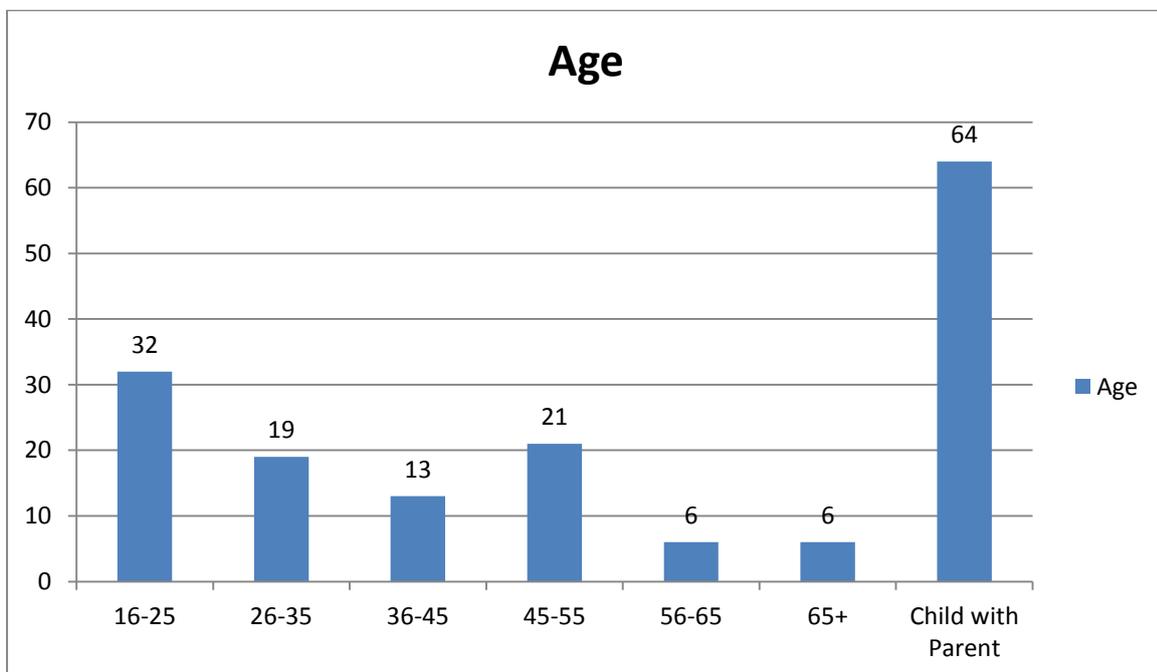
Response given	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Very Good	67	55.8%
Good	40	33.3%
OK	12	10%
Poor	1	0.8%

Demographic information

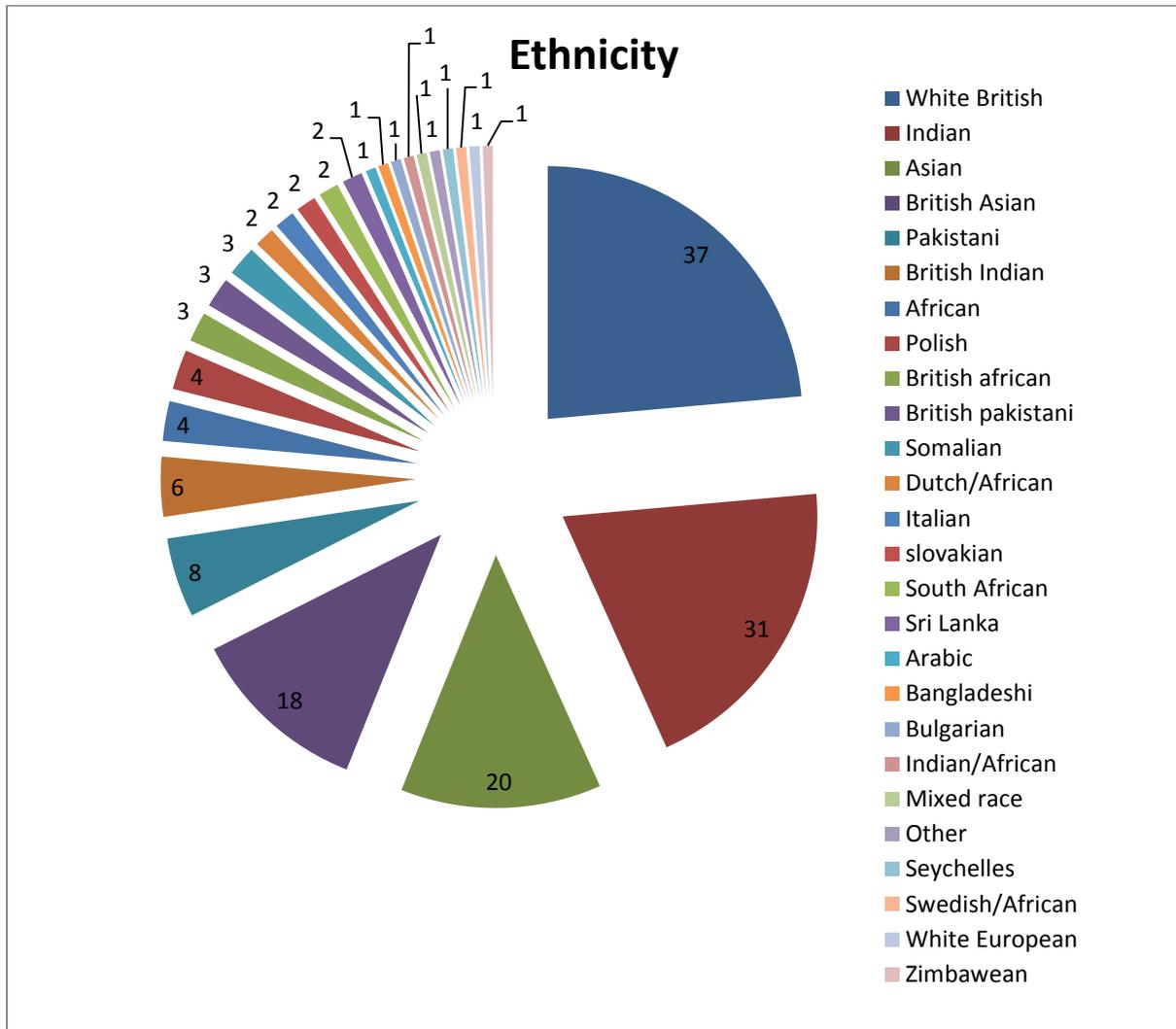
Sex of patient



Age of patient



Ethnicity of patient



Analysis

The patients

In reviewing the information captured over the three days in the Walk in Centre there are a number of factors which jump out at you, some expected and some not so much.

- Parents and Children. - There were a significantly higher number of young children brought in by their parents to the Walk in Centre, than any other age group.
- From nearby. – The postcode areas of LE5 and LE4 were the most common postcode for patients presenting to the Walk in Centre. This would be expected as the Walk in Centre is in the LE5 area. But patients were not exclusively from this area.
- Registered with a GP – With only a few exceptions, nearly all of those who presented to the Walk in Centre were registered with a GP. You can also observe that the GP practices with higher patient numbers presenting to the Walk in Centre, are quite geographically close to the Walk in Centre.
- Highly Diverse Ethnicity – There is clearly a very wide spectrum of Ethnicity of those using the Walk in Centre, but with a few ethnic groups making up a significant percentage of those surveyed.

Accessing Health care

Whilst it is important to note that our visits to the Walk in Centre were conducted during times when a lot of GPs would not be open. Nearly half of the respondents to the survey had, at least, tried to use their GP for treatment. Over half of those respondents were not able or not offered the chance to book an appointment at a future date.

When patients were asked about the new Primary Care service “Health Hubs”, a significant number had not heard of them before coming to the Walk in Centre. When asked if it would have changed their decision to use the Walk in Centre, if they had known about it before hand, 47.1% of the respondents would have tried the “Health Hub” first. At times when the Walk in Centre was busy, reception staff would inform patients of the “Health Hub”, this resulted in a number patients leaving the centre, presumably to attempt to access the “Health Hub” service. However, in one case, a young mother tried to access the nearest “Health Hub” through the telephone number given on the leaflet but was not able to get through.

In a couple of instances, patients explained being passed back and forth between GP services and the Urgent Care Centre at Leicester Royal Infirmary.

“I’ve been to the GP with illness but was advised to go to Urgent Care Centre (at LRI). They advised me to go back to GP practice. Had problems for several weeks but don’t know where to go, so came here”

An observation made by Healthwatch volunteers and staff was in relation to 3 respondents, who were attending the Walk in Centre with a friend, who were acting as an advocate on their behalf. In

one case a patient who spoke no English had lived in Leicester for 2 years and had yet to register with a GP.

Using the Walk in Centre

From the initial greeting from the reception staff to the treatment by the clinical staff, the patient feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Patient felt, mostly, they understood how to use the service, that any special needs were taken into account and that they were involved in the discussion about their treatment with the clinician.

89.2% of the patients who rated their experience of the Walk in Centre said it was either Good or Very Good. For the 10% of patients who rated their experience as OK, their feedback mentions the length of waiting time at the Walk in Centre but is also largely positive.

Waiting time was an issue but overall grateful the service is available as I would have been worrying/anxious

The feedback captured through our survey, evidences a service that patients appreciate. Whilst for some the wait was an issue, there was a lot more patients who felt they were seen very quickly. Some of the most common comments about why they rated their experience either Good or Very Good were:

I felt reassured

Very helpful

Dealt with quickly

Helpful and efficient

Fast and efficient

Conclusions

Parents seeking reassurance

During our visits to the Walk in Centre, a significant portion of the patients we surveyed were parents bringing their children in with a wide variety of chest infections, coughs, rashes and other ailments. They came looking for reassurance, as a common comment after being seen was feeling reassured. Given the responses from parents about their treatment by the clinician (i.e. “Was hoping for prescription but advised to use Calpol”), we can conclude that not every child needed to be brought to the Walk in Centre.

The problems accessing GP services are well known and this is no different if a parent is ringing for an appointment for their child.

In our previous report about the Urgent Care Centre, we discussed a possible lack of knowledge for self-care in younger people. It is only logical to extend the lack of knowledge of self-care in younger people to any children they have.

From feedback from parents who attended the Walk-in Centre, there is an awareness of being seen as a priority patient, if you are a small child. If parents are seeking medical assurance about their child, they know they’ll be seen quickly at the Walk-in Centre.

Accessing GP services

As previously mentioned, our visits to the Walk in Centre, took place at times we know GP practices would not be open but that did not mean a patient would not have tried to access their GP before going to the Walk in Centre. Of the 73 Walk-in Patients who had tried to access their GP’s before going to the Walk in Centre, 39 were not offered an appointment at another time. Most commonly they were advised to ring back or try another day. Rather than try again they came to the Walk in Centre. We are aware of the problems accessing the GP appointment systems, with criticism of only being able to get through early in the morning. If patients have to experience this and then to be told to go through it again, another day, it is not difficult to believe they would look to another service for assistance.

Given that a number of patients brought friends to translate and support their appointment, we thought to ask their knowledge of translation support available in the NHS. None questioned were aware of this.

Health Hubs

Very few people knew about the four out of hours “Health Hubs” but this was not surprising as this is a service which was only launched a short time ago and we are aware of the current media campaign.

Whilst we saw a number of patients leave the Walk in Centre, once they were aware of the service, we did observe one individual, who was not able to access their local “Hub”, when they rang through to the next nearest, they were signposted back to the “Hub” they had been unable to access, advised to go as a walk in patient.

A key reason patients would have used the “Health Hub” rather than the Walk-in Centre was getting an appointment, this was seen as a key difference.

The Walk in Centre

Patient feedback on all the questions asked about the SSAFA walk in centre, was overwhelming positive. However there are some areas which we would like to highlight to the Centre as “food for thought”.

Whilst there, we became aware of the priority given to children and young people and those presenting with serious illnesses. In conversation with some patients, they were not aware of this happening, but could quite see why when it was explained to them.

We noticed a lack of understanding on the part of some patients attending the walk in centre, that other people with appointments, were regular patients of the SSAFA GP practice

Again, whilst a patient gave positive feedback of their experience, a possible area for improvement was around language. As our results show the Centre would not be able to support all the languages spoken by those using it but some patients did comment that language was an issue.

Recommendations

- 1. Greater focus on self-care education and support** - Clearly many parents with young children are worried when their children become poorly and want to seek reassurance that all is well. Whereas in earlier generations, there may have been Mum or Grandma on hand to give advice, without the confidence to know what to do with a poorly child, seeking professional help is a first option.

Whilst it will do little to ease the current pressure on primary care or the Emergency Department, even greater support for self-care education programme for parents is worthy of consideration. We are not being presumptuous in suggesting that none of this is taking place just that it requires even greater emphasis going forward. Utilising such services as Children's Centres, Sure Start or Home start.

- 2. Greater signposting to Urgent Care services, if GP appointments unavailable** - So much has already been written about the problems some patients have in getting appointments at their GP practice. Our visit to the SSAFA Walk in Centre is further confirmation. It becomes, daily, harder to break the perception that this is the case. It might certainly help during normal working practice opening hours (i.e. 8am - 6.30pm) if, when there are no available appointments, patients could be positively made aware that they could use the SSAFA Walk in Centre.
- 3. Review of planned periods of GP practice closures** - Clearly, two times when some GP practices currently close or offer skeleton service i.e. every week on Thursday afternoons and once a month on a Wednesday afternoon, when protected learning time takes place, should be reviewed.
- 4. Raise awareness of NHS Language support** - Whilst there have been great strides in offering patients the support they require to access health services, it is important to ensure patient (and staff) awareness of those support services are maintained. It is not enough to assume a patient will bring a family member or a friend to translate for them. We would recommend that a campaign informing patients of translation services be considered.

Next steps

As reported in our first report *“Using Urgent Care Services in Leicester City - The patient experience of getting to and using the Urgent Care Centre in Leicester City”* the next steps remain: -

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.

In addition to this we will:

- g) Identify and review local, current parent education programmes focused on child health and care.

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



Survey Number: _____ Time: _____

To be able to examine who is using the Walk in Centre today, we would like to begin with a few questions about you.

Patient Questions

1. Do you live in Leicester City? Yes No
 - a. If yes what are the first 4 digits of your postcode : _____
2. Are you registered with a GP? Yes No
Name of Practice: _____

Next, we want to ask about why you came to the Walk in Centre today.

3. Before you came to the Walk in Centre, Did you try and get an appointment at your GP?
 Yes No

If Yes, when was the appointment for? _____

4. If you didn't see or speak to your GP before coming to the Walk in Centre, why did you decide to come here?
 Used it before I'll be seen quicker GP not available
 Prefer to use New to the area had to fit around Work
 Visiting area Other: _____

5. Have you heard about the Health Hubs?
 Yes No (Answer question a.)
(If No, please refer to leaflet)

- a. If you had known about a Health Hub near you would that have changed your decision to come here today?
 Yes No

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 16 16 - 25 26 - 35
 36 - 45 45 - 55 56 - 65
 65+

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 251838

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Survey Number: _____

As a second part to our survey we would like to know about your experience at the Walk in Centre today.

6. After being seen by the reception staff at the Walk in Centre, did you understand what was going to happen next?

Yes No

7. Did the clinician (Dr/Nurse/HCA) involve you in deciding your treatment today?

Yes No

8. Did the Walk in Centre, support you with any special needs you have? (Translation, Physical or Sensory Disability)

Yes No

9. How would you rate your experience at the Walk in Centre today?

Very Good Good OK Poor

Why did you give this rating?

Appendix B - Full list of Which GP practice patients presenting to the Walk in Centre were registered to.

SSAFA registered GP practice	29
Spinney Hill Medical Centre	10
East Leicester Medical Practice	8
Charnwood Practice	7
na	7
St Elizabeth Medical Centre	7
St Matthews Medical Centre	7
Humberstone Medical Centre	6
Downing Drive Surgery	5
St Peters Health Centre	5
East Park Medical Centre	4
Highfield Medical Centre	4
Ar-Razi Medical Centre	3
Beaumont Leys Health Centre	3
Belgrave Medical Centre	3
Canon Street Medical Centre	3
Evington Medical Centre	3
Johnson Medical Practice	3
Parker Drive Medical Centre	3
Willows Medical Centre	3
Melbourne Road Medical Centre	3
Manor Medical Centre	2
Merridale Health Centre	2
Rushey Mead	2
The Maples Surgery	2
Al-Waqas Medical Practice	2
Thurmaston Health Centre	2
Applying to SSAFA	1
Birstall Medical Centre	1
Border Drive	1
Brandon Street Surgery	1
Fosse Medical Centre	1
Grobby Road Medical Centre	1
Jubilee Practice, Syston	1
Kingsway Surgery	1
Loughborough Road Medical Centre	1
Not recorded	1
Not registered	1
Oakmeadow Surgery	1
Sayed Medical Centre	1

Shefa Medical Practice	1
Silverdale Medical Centre	1
The Banks	1
The Parks Medical Centre	1
Willowbrook Medical Centre	1
Greengate Medical Centre	1
Beaumont Lodge Medical Practice	1
Heatherbrook Surgery	1
The Limes Medical Centre	1
Westcotes Medical Practice	1