

Healthwatch North Tyneside
Parkside House
Elton Street East
Wallsend
Tyne and Wear
NE28 8QU



Contact:
Phone 0191 263 5321
info@healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk
www.healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk

21 August 2015

Dear Maurya

Urgent Care in North Tyneside

As you are aware Healthwatch North Tyneside (HWNT) published its report entitled, “**Parent and Carer views of urgent care in North Tyneside**” in March 2015. This report sets out the experiences of parents of children under 4 who had used urgent care services with their children. A number of recommendations were presented to the Health and Wellbeing board at its meeting on 19 March and latterly at the Urgent Care Working Group.

As part of our commitment to the participants of the study and in the context of the CCGs ‘**Right care, time and place**’ initiative, we are writing to reaffirm the key messages from our report and to request a formal response from North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group stating how it intends to act upon the recommendations made in relation to the issues outlined below.

1. Access to GP appointments

Local participants informed HWNT that they had difficulty accessing GP appointments within a reasonable timescale or were being offered only telephone appointments. They reported that this led them to use urgent care services such as walk in centres.

These experiences are echoed in patient reporting data which we have obtained from NHS Choices (where reviews are posted online). NHS Choices data from 186 patients who rated their North Tyneside GP surgeries in the last 2 years indicates that on average respondents are ‘rarely’ able to access GP appointments when they want one and are ‘rarely’ able to get through to their GP surgery by telephone. Furthermore, on average they reported that their surgery ‘rarely’ provides accurate up to date data on opening hours. This is further evidenced in the recent findings from Community and Health Care Forum’s (CHCF) consultation on urgent care, which states that ‘convenience’ is the most popular reason given for using a walk in centre.

What the HWNT report recommended:

HWNT asked North Tyneside CCG to audit the availability and accessibility to GP appointments across local practices and to report this back to HWNT.

HWNT are aware that there are no longer national timescales within which GPs should operate. However HWNT asked that the CCG set out best practice standards for access to GP appointments and communicate these locally.

Although we understand that this is an important factor in the review of urgent care provision locally, HWNT is unaware of any progress on this recommendation to date.

HWNT request that the CCG provide our board with recent data on GP appointment availability and accessibility within the borough with explanatory information about actions planned to set out local standards for best practice and to improve areas of underperformance.

2. Patient experience

People reported positive experiences of accessing services at Battle Hill Walk-in Centre and felt it has a culture of respect and treating parents' concerns seriously. Conversely others reported a less positive experience at their GP surgery. For example some people felt that subjective assessments made by staff at reception were leading to barriers to accessing to GP appointments or how serious an issue was perceived to be. Some people stated that they had a greater degree of confidence in services accessed through the urgent care provision, which led some to choose that route to access care as opposed to their GP.

Again data obtained by HWNT from NHS choices indicates that this experience resonates with other residents. 186 contributors to NHS choices on average rated their treatment by staff in GP surgeries as 'rarely' when asked about being treated with dignity and respect by surgery staff.

What the HWNT report recommended:

HWNT requested that the CCG look at sharing of good practice across settings where patient experience is positive. Furthermore, HWNT requested that the CCG engage with practices to explore and remove barriers to consistent respectful experience.

We understand that Dr Shaun Lackey has emailed North Tyneside practices to highlight the importance of good practice on reception. However, we feel that this does not address fully the concerns raised by residents.

HWNT request that the CCG provides information about how patient experience is monitored at GP practices and how early remedial action is taken where there are concerns.

Furthermore, we would like information about how patient experience will feature in the contracting and monitoring of GP practices in the context of co-commissioning.

3. Local knowledge of urgent care provision

It was evident through our engagement that people in North Tyneside with children under 4 were unclear about what urgent care services are most appropriate to access. This was a particular problem for people in the North West of the borough.

What the HWNT report recommended:

HWNT asked the CCG to consider how this challenge can be addressed across the borough and in the North West to ensure that people are accessing urgent care in the most appropriate settings for their needs.

HWNT was informed by the CCG that a recent refresh of the 'Choose well to get the right treatment' leaflet was carried out in 2013.

We are also aware that further communications around the opening of Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital have been distributed detailing what urgent care services are available. Unfortunately as this excludes the Newcastle Hospitals, HWNT are concerned that this will precipitate confusion in the North West of the Borough.

HWNT would like to request that the CCG provide information about its plans for on-going communications about the Urgent Care provision across the borough and in particular the North West of the borough.

4. Self-Care and Prevention:

Parents and carers valued reliable information and training on paediatric first aid, which was easy to access in an urgent situation and in their view avoided unnecessary use of urgent care services. This is supported by the findings of the recent CHCF consultation on urgent care: CHCF found 80% of respondents chose lack of knowledge as the main reason people would fail to self-care.

What the HWNT report recommended:

HWNT asked the CCG to consider how to provide easy access to reliable information about self-care for parents and carers of babies and young children. Furthermore a request was made to establish more first aid provision to parents of young children.

Although we are aware that the Acting Director of Public Health has agreed to address this through the development of integrated teams within children's centres, we would benefit from further information about how this recommendation will be addressed.

HWNT would like to request that the CCG provide information about how working with partners, it plans to provide self-care information and training for parents and carers of babies and young children?

I would like to state formally that we are grateful for the ongoing work that the CCG has committed to date in carrying out work in response to the information that HWNT provided in this report. We are glad for the opportunity for our report and this letter to be incorporated as part of the CCG listening exercise and review of Urgent Care.

This letter is written by HWNT to you as a 'responsible person' as set out in the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities Regulations 2012 (Part 6, S.44). As such you are required to acknowledge receipt to HWNT; and provide a written explanation of any action which you intend to take in respect of the report or recommendations or an explanation of why you do not intend to take any action in respect of that report or recommendation within 20 working days of receipt of this letter. ¹

We would be happy to meet to discuss further the requests that we have made above and the nature of the issues that people have shared with us in support of your response. For your information, we plan to feedback responses to those who gave their views to HWNT and therefore. We can discuss the format for this further once we have received your response.

Yours sincerely



Peter Kenrick
Chair
Healthwatch North Tyneside

cc. John Matthews
cc. Wendy Burke
cc. Cllr Lesley Spillard

¹ For more details of the relevant legislation please visit the following web page:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/3094/regulation/44/made>