



Patient awareness and referral to the GP Extended Hours Service

April 2018

Join today, freephone
0800 989 0080

Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland are delivered by MVDA in partnership with RCVDA. Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency registered charity no: 1094112. Company limited by guarantee. Registered in England no: 4509224. Registered office: St Mary's Centre, 82-90 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough TS1 2RW.

healthwatch
Middlesbrough

healthwatch
Redcar and Cleveland

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 & Cleveland are working together to deliver Healthwatch activities across South Tees.

Background

From 1 April 2017 the South Tees Access Response (STAR) Scheme has been operating an extended hours GP service from four centres across South Tees. The centres based in North Ormesby Health Village, One Life Centre in Linthorpe¹, Redcar Primary Care Hospital and East Cleveland Hospital in Brotton are open from 6 pm to 9.30 pm Monday to Friday and 8 am to 9.30 pm on weekends and Bank Holidays. If you are unable to get an urgent appointment at your GP surgery or if it is more convenient for you to be seen in the evening or at the weekend, an appointment can be made at one of the centres. The service is by appointment only which can be made either through your GP surgery or through the NHS 111 service.

In June 2017 we produced a report evaluating [Patient awareness of urgent care and out of hours service](#) within South Tees which can be found on Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland's website.

At the time of publication, we concluded from those that we spoke to that general awareness of the service was good and that it was being well promoted within the surgeries.

¹ From 8 July 2018 the out of hours centre located in Park Surgery, One Life will be moving to the Bluebell Medical Centre in Acklam.

Earlier this year however, we received feedback that patients who were unable to make an urgent appointment were not being referred to the extended hours service.

What we did

During March 2018 we devised a survey to ask people if they were aware of the extended hours service and if they had used the service, how they had been referred and their appointment made. In our initial engagement detailed in our [Community Engagement & Intelligence Report for Middlesbrough U3A](#), 48% of those that we spoke to were still not aware of the service. We carried out further activities and spoke to 104 people in total across South Tees.

The results echoed our initial findings from the intelligence gathered at the U3A and showed:-

47% of respondents were not aware of the GP extended hours service

19% of those we spoke to had used the service

45% of those who had used the service did so as they were unable to make an urgent appointment at their GP

55% of those who had used the service did so as they needed to see a GP but their surgery was closed

23% said their GP surgery had informed them about the extended hours service

30% said their GP surgery had offered to book an appointment for them at the extended hours service

65% said they had made their own appointment through 111

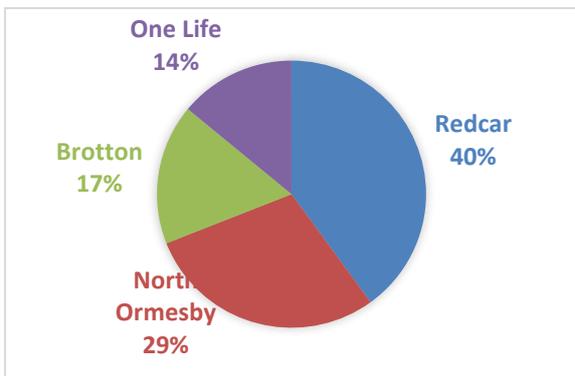
50% of those who had used the service had been given a choice of which centre to attend

The lack of awareness is cause for concern, particularly as most of those we engaged with were of the older generation. As our primary aim was to find out how people were being referred to the service, we conducted an Enter and View activity at each of the four local GP Extended Hours Centres to speak to patients directly who were using the service.

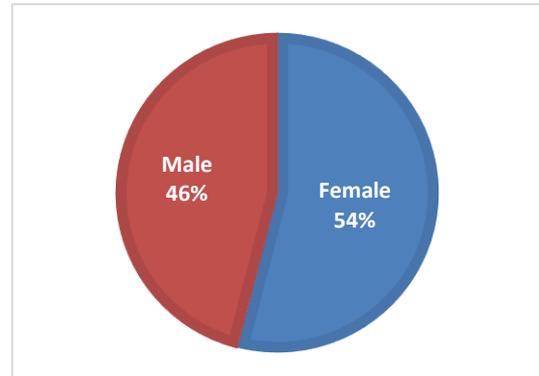
Hub Visits

We liaised with the ELM Alliance, the Federation that manages the [STAR Scheme](#) and drafted a survey for patients to complete, detailing how they were referred to the service. We initially carried out two visits to each centre - one on a weekday evening and a second over the weekend period. These visits however, were not as successful as we hoped as they were not well attended and didn't produce a sufficient response to gather meaningful intelligence. To increase our sample size we requested that that staff at each of the centres distribute surveys to patients who attended over a week period. In total 78 people completed the surveys and the results are as follows:

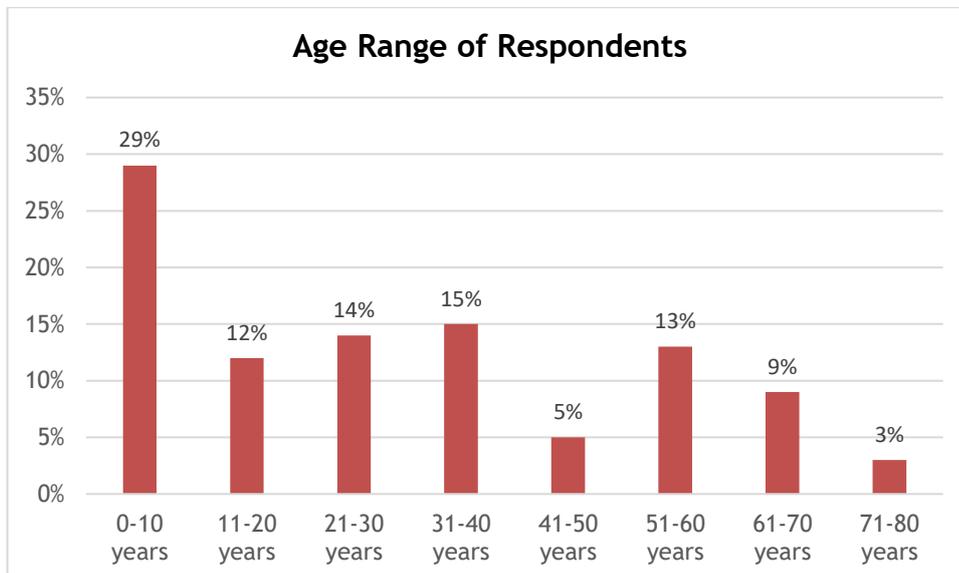
Centre Attended

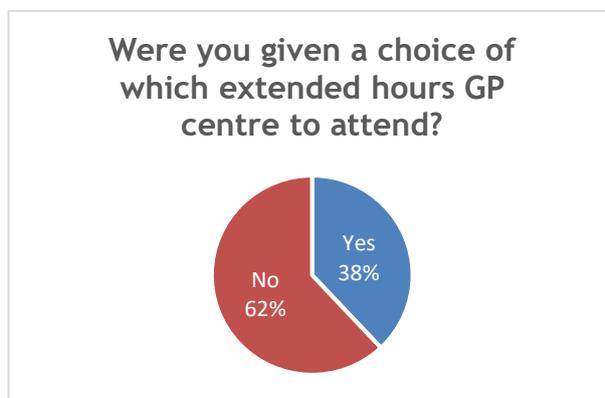
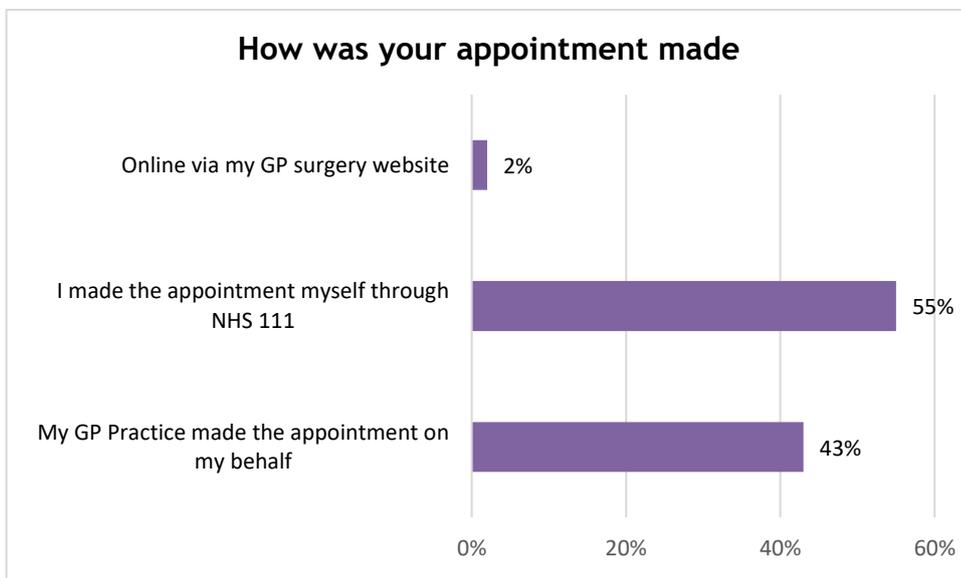
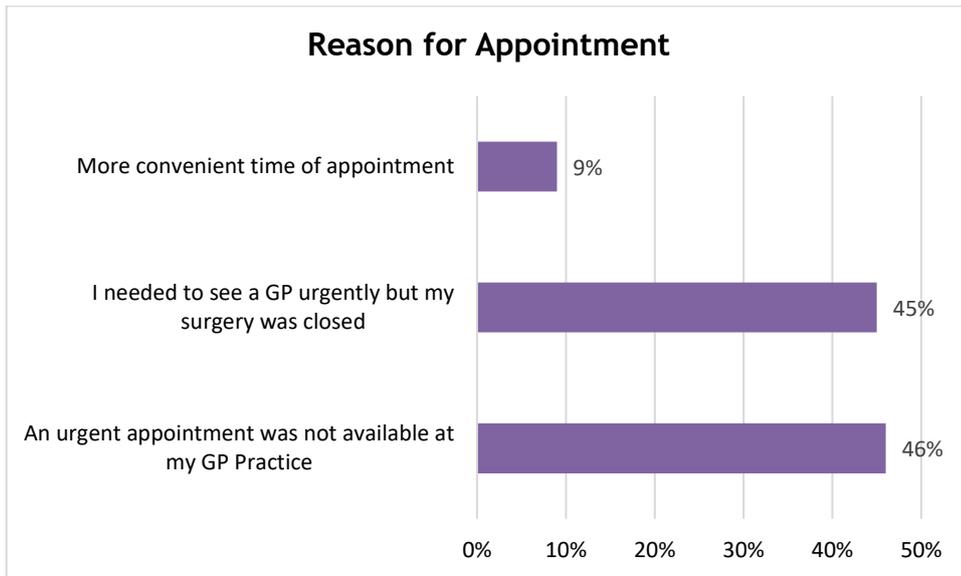


Gender of Respondents



Age Range of Respondents





Summary of Findings

1. We received the greatest response from the extended hours centre at Redcar Primary Care Hospital.
2. Patients in the 0-10 years age bracket were the greatest users of the service whilst those aged 71-80 were the lowest. Our initial engagement with the older population indicated poor awareness of the service and this is reflected in the number of patients using the service.
3. 91% of patients used the service because they needed to see a GP urgently but their surgery was closed or an urgent appointment was not available at their GP Practice. Only 9% of patients used it as it was more convenient although the service is available to people who would prefer to see a GP out of hours.
4. 55% of patients made their own appointments via NHS 111.
5. 53% of patients were aware of the service prior to their appointment.
6. Only 37% of patients were given a choice of which centre to attend. Although most patients may have been given an appointment in a centre closest to their home a choice should always be given and patients asked if this is the most convenient location.
7. Patients were also asked to provide feedback after their appointment and 50 out of the 78 patients who used the service left a comment. The feedback was extremely positive and a selection of the comments left are detailed below.

Happy with service

Receptionist was very pleasant and helpful. Excellent service

Crossfell booked my daughter on the wrong day. Thankfully the receptionist was really helpful and found us an appointment.

It is very difficult to get seen at my doctors and I did not want to use A&E for a non-emergency. Great to get same day appointment to fit in around work.

Very happy with the service provided by the centre

Very good doctor

I am very happy with the appointment, it put my mind at rest and how to treat my daughter properly.

Quick service lovely lady

I was happy with my appointment, thank you for your help

Fantastic service, very happy friendly staff

Happy with the service today.

Polite member of staff.

Doctor explained well.

Happy with the service put my mind at rest about my baby.

Very good, quick efficient.

Fab service, really looked after my daughter well.

Very happy, good advice.

Very happy, nurse practitioner was lovely.

Great service, very happy.

Very happy with the prompt service I received today.

I am always happy with the service as I come every weekend and see the same nurses regularly.

Provided reassurance and advice.

Yes, could I register here?

The doctor was very informative and helpful.

Really easy and convenient.

Called, very quick for an appointment, only sat for 2 mins. Happy with the appointment, would use again.

Very happy, quick and helpful.

Very happy with the service and very helpful for patients that are working late hours.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Patients who have had the opportunity to use the STAR Scheme find it an extremely positive experience and are very satisfied with their care and treatment. As the extended hours service has been operational for over a year it is concerning that in our initial engagement 47% of respondents had not heard of the service and in our Enter and View visits, 47% of patients had not been aware of the service before their appointment. During our visits to the hubs we observed that they were not being utilised to full capacity and our responses showed a distinct difference in activity between the Centres, Redcar Primary Care Hospital was the busiest of the four centres.

Our findings showed that the service is used mostly by patients under the age of 40 years old, with young people aged 0-10 being the highest. Parents of young children were more aware of the service, with those aged over 40 having less awareness of the service.

Most of the patients used the service for urgent appointments and only 9% used it as it was more convenient. Promotional material on the STAR Scheme does state that an appointment can be made if it is more convenient for you to see a GP in the evening or at the weekend. This is particularly useful for people who work full-time and find it difficult to see visit during the day.

To ensure greater awareness and access to the service we recommend the following:

1. There is continued promotion of the service, particularly amongst older groups as our findings show that they had the least awareness and used the service less than other age groups. We have also had a great deal of interest from groups that support the older generation to supply them with information regarding the STAR scheme.
2. There is an increase in awareness that the service can be accessed by patients who find it more convenient to be seen on an evening or on a weekend. The majority of patients who completed our questionnaires had made their own appointment through 111 and feedback from patients has been that appointments are only booked through 111 if, after a triage assessment, they are found to be necessary.
3. Information is promoted in other languages and formats for those who require it. In our [Community Engagement & Intelligence Report with Aapna Services](#) we found that there was a lack of provision of information in an accessible format for BAME communities. Service users are not being made aware of changes to services as they are not receiving this information.
4. GP surgeries inform patients of the service where appropriate and if an appointment is not available within the surgery make appointments on their behalf with the STAR Scheme.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the ELM Alliance for supporting us with this piece of work, the staff who distributed surveys and all those who gave their time to complete them.



☎ 0800 989 0080 / 01642 955605

@ general@healthwatchsouthtees.org.uk

www.healthwatchmiddlesbrough.co.uk

www.healthwatchredcarandcleveland.co.uk

Healthwatch South Tees is the name in which Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland is operating. Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland are delivered by MVDA in partnership with RCVDA. Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency registered charity no: 1094112. Company limited by guarantee. Registered in England no: 4509224. Registered office: St Mary's Centre, 82-90 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough TS1 2RW.