



South Tees
Clinical Commissioning Group

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Natasha Judge
Healthwatch Development & Delivery Manager
Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Healthwatch Redcar & Cleveland
St Marys Centre
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Sent by email

Dear Natasha

Re: Patient awareness and referral to the GP Extended Hours Service

Thank you for sharing the report on Healthwatch's work to seek people's awareness of and referral to the GP Extended Hours Service delivered by ELM Alliance. It was a useful report and it was good to read that patients using the service had an extremely positive experience and were very satisfied with their care and treatment.

With regards to the recommendations made our response is as follows:

Recommendation 1: 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.

As part of the pre-engagement and consultation work that informed the development of the extended hours service, intelligence suggested that older groups were most likely to use in hours GP services. For example, there was greater use of Walk in Centres by younger groups. We know that generally older groups prefer to access their own GP practice, and that many practices prioritise urgent appointments for older patients.

We will however continue to encourage ELM Alliance to ensure GP practices make all patients aware of the service and will ask that this report is shared with all Practice Managers. We also noted that you have had a great deal of interest from groups that support the older generation to supply them with information regarding the STAR scheme. The service is currently working with its communications team to develop new patient information to promote the service and we, or the service, will share this with you when published for distribution to your networks.

Recommendation 2: Increase awareness that the service can be accessed by patients who find it more convenient to be seen on an evening or on a weekend.

Whilst leaflets were distributed to every household in the South Tees area at the launch of the service, we do appreciate that people may not retain this information. In addition, the posters which are displayed in every GP practice may still not be reaching all of the population. As mentioned previously, we will ask ELM Alliance to ensure GP practices make all patients aware of the service and that they share this report is shared with all Practice Managers.

Recommendation 3: Information is promoted in other languages and formats for those who require it.

The CCG agrees that it is important to ensure information relating to the service is distributed in languages other than English along with access to other formats. We will work with the service to identify key languages for proactive dissemination; however, as always information is available in other languages and formats on request.

Recommendation 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.

GP surgeries do already make appointments on patients' behalf with the STAR Scheme; however, as recommended previously we will encourage practices to continue to make all patients aware of the service including evening and weekend services for those patients who may find this more convenient.

Thank you again for sharing this report with us.

Yours sincerely



Dr Ali Tahmassebi
CCG Governing Body GP

CC Julie Stevens, Strategic Planning Manager, South Tees CCG
Andrew McMinn, Senior Commissioning and Delivery Manager, South Tees CCG
Mandy Headland, Director of Operations, ELM Alliance Ltd