



Community Engagement & Intelligence

U3A Middlesbrough
7 February 2018

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U3A, St Barnabas Church, Linthorpe, Middlesbrough - 7 February 2018

We attended the monthly meeting of the U3A, which is a UK movement of retired and semi-retired people who come together to continue their educational, social and creative interests in a friendly and informal environment.

The purpose of our visit was to deliver a presentation about local Healthwatch, raising awareness of our role and giving the opportunity to attendees to share their experiences of local health and social care services. The meeting was attended by approximately 100 people.

As we are currently looking at referrals into the STAR Scheme (local GP Extended hours centres), we used this as an opportunity to assess people's awareness and experiences of the service.

We gave details about the extended hours service to ensure that all those attending could participate in our feedback activity. We promoted the service by providing printed off information with details about the service which could be taken away, this was greatly received by all. We distributed a questionnaire to all those attending, 79 people completed them.

52% were aware of the local GP extended hours centres

18% had used the extended hours GP service

57% used the service as they needed to see a GP, but their surgery was closed

43% used the service as they were unable to make an urgent appointment at their GP

25% said their GP surgery had informed them about the extended hours service

23% said their GP surgery had offered to book an appointment for them at the extended hours service

54% said they had made their own appointment through 111

67% had not been given a choice of which centre to attend

Comments received

- *Information was sent out to me in the post.*
- *I am aware of this information and of the service from the information that was sent to me. I know people who have accessed this service and found it efficient.*
- *I saw a poster in the surgery about extended hours centres.*
- *No offer of an appointment - I booked myself. My allocated appointment was the nearest centre.*
- *I did not know about the 111 service.*
- *I did not know about the extended hours centres, I have always managed to get an appointment with my GP.*
- *I had no knowledge of the hubs, I had not seen any information about it.*
- *I was not informed about the centres but sent to hospital.*
- *I only knew about the extended hours from 111 doctors - I have never been told. I attended A&E 3 times because I was unable to get to see a doctor. They told me about 111 who were very good. The GP didn't offer anything helpful. Not given a choice about which centre to attend, each time I attended it was an appointment at the nearest one to me and within 2 hours of phoning.*
- *I was unaware that the walk-in centres had closed. I found it very interesting to find out what the GP should do if needed.*
- *I need to know where the nearest centre is to Linthorpe and how to access.*
- *Trying to make a recent doctor's appointment, I was not given any of this information. I was just told to ring back tomorrow.*

Summary of intelligence

The GP extended hours service has been operational since 1 April 2017. From the information we received while visiting the U3A, it seems that there is a lack of awareness of the service and how to access it. According to the literature distributed by NHS South Tees CCG, patients will be offered a choice of centre to attend, however the replies from this group does not support this.

From the information we received, GP surgeries do not seem to be offering this service to their patients. The extended hours service can alleviate pressures at surgeries and reduce the need for patients to call back the next day.

We recommend:

- Continued promotion of the service
- GP surgeries to inform patients of the service where appropriate and make appointments on their behalf

We will share this intelligence with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the views of the people we spoke to are included in the decision making to improve patient experience and access to services.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the U3A in Middlesbrough for giving us the opportunity to carry out this engagement. In addition, we would also like to thank the attendees who completed our questionnaires and provided this feedback.