

# **healthwatch**

## South Tyneside



## **Check the Pulse**

**South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub Review**  
**January 2019**

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## Healthwatch South Tyneside - who we are, what we do:

Healthwatch South Tyneside (HWST) is one of 148 local Healthwatch organisations across England launched in April 2013 to give users of health and social care services a powerful voice.

As set out in the Health and Social Care Act of 2012, HWST has the following statutory activities:

- Promoting and supporting the involvement of local people in the commissioning, the provision and scrutiny of local care services
- Enabling local people to monitor the standard of provision of local care services and whether and how local care services could and ought to be improved
- Obtaining the views of local people regarding their need for, and experiences of, local care services and importantly to make these views known
- Making reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved
- Providing advice and information about access to local care services so choices can be made about local care services
- Formulating views on the standard of provision and whether and how the local care services could and ought to be improved

As an independent Community Interest Company (CIC), it is your dedicated consumer champion, working with users of local National Health Service (NHS) and social care services to hear about your experiences, identify any issues or problems and help generate improvements.

HWST has the power to enter and view services; can influence how services are set up and commissioned by having a seat on the local Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB); and provide information, advice and support about local services. It also produces reports which influence the way services are designed and delivered and can share information and recommendations to Healthwatch England (HWE) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

## Introduction:

**Check the Pulse** is a HWST initiative through which we take a “snap shot” of a service; that helps us to develop an understanding of the strength and heartbeat of service delivery.

By engaging with service users, their family, friends and staff members we aim to capture their views and experience of the service they are accessing or providing.

The evidence we gather is generated from observations, questionnaires and qualitative comments. This evidence forms the basis of a report that is published on our website and shared with the service provider, commissioner and South Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board.

## Rationale:

In 2015 The Jarrow Walk-in Centre was relocated to South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub alongside the Minor Injuries and Accident and Emergency Department; this did not prove to be a popular decision and appeared to be met with consternation by some local residents who valued this provision.

In December 2017 and January 2018 HWST volunteers and staff conducted a Check the Pulse visit and spoke to members of the public and staff at the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub. A report followed with our findings and recommendations, which was published and shared with the public, service providers and commissioner.

In January 2019 HWST returned to South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub to review the service and observe if the recommendations highlighted in the report following our first visit had been addressed.

We aimed to:

- Conduct the visit over three sessions:

<b>2019</b>	January 22 <sup>nd</sup>	10am - 12noon
	January 24 <sup>th</sup>	4pm - 6pm
	January 25 <sup>th</sup>	6pm - 8pm

- Produce a final report identifying overarching themes, findings and good practice and from this present, if relevant, further recommendations.
- Share the findings and recommendations with the general public, service provider, commissioner and South Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board to influence service improvements.

## Summary:

On arrival we were greeted by reception staff and introduced to the manager of the Minor Injuries unit where the GP office is placed within the same vicinity.

The unit had been and was coming to the end of some refurbishment, the GP office was not quite finished but another room was being used to enable patients to be in one area whilst waiting to be seen.

Staff and patients were visible to each other and during the day the coffee bar was available for light refreshments.

Due to the refurbishment, very little signage was on display, however, safety tape was in place to help keep patients safe and the seating area was tidy.

The manager and clinicians we spoke to shared with us how they were very proud of how much change has taken place over the last 12months.

- a system that works where patients see a streaming nurse to be directed to the appropriate service
- always an appropriate practitioner on duty during operational times, be that a GP or Advanced Practitioner
- Minor Injuries and GP based in the same area with safety alerts in place
- staff and patients visible to each other
- the flow of patients runs smoothly with minimum waiting times
- communication between 111 and Vocare could be better when updating the system with information from the Urgent Care in relation to a GP being on duty

## Findings:

During our review visit we felt the recommendations that Healthwatch South Tyneside put forward in January 2018 had been addressed. The refurbishment of the Minor Injuries and GP area was well presented providing a welcoming experience for patients.

The wellbeing of the patients coming through who we observed was positive and the patient streaming enabled patients to be directed to the appropriate treatment.

We felt that the communication of the system in place to meet the needs of the patient should be shared with all staff teams to avoid double booking of appointments. The concerns staff shared with us were; “patients don’t understand they will still be seen by an Advanced Practitioner qualified to diagnose and prescribe when a GP is not on duty”.

The manager shared with us copies of the previous three months information indicating when a GP was on duty. But no gaps were evident as an Advanced Practitioner was on duty to cover the session in the GP’s absence.

## Sessions covered at the Urgent Care Hub from November 2018 - January 2019

2018 -19	GP	Advanced Practitioner
November	16 Days	14 Days
December	20 Days	11 Days
January	20 Days	10 Days

<b><i>Recommendations from our visit in January 2018</i></b>	<b><i>Findings from our visit in January 2019</i></b>
<p>The Urgent Care Patient Pathway is not available to staff; HWST recommend that this is provided to South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub staff; and they become familiar with it. This would help ensure that South Tyneside residents receive the right treatment, at the right time, in the right place as was promised by the STCCG in their consultation that resulted in the relocation of The Jarrow Walk-in Centre.</p>	<p>Healthwatch was informed the staff had devised their own pathway within the unit to help patients.</p> <p>We were told from management level that Vocare have been very supportive in the changes implemented and are working closely with the Trust. However, clinical staff shared with us they don't see any physical presence of Vocare.</p>
<p>NHS 111 continue to refer residents to the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub despite having been informed when this service is not available; HWST recommend that the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub and NHS 111 develop a protocol for when the service is closed during commissioned hours and that adherence to this is monitored.</p>	<p>Urgent Care Hub contact Vocare, 111 and North East Ambulance Service when no GP is on duty. Vocare are unable to manually override the system as it doesn't recognise when no GP is on duty but Urgent Care can do this themselves. Urgent Care informed us they can't.</p>
<p>HWST is unclear what options are available to people should the service be unavailable during commissioned hours; and would like some clarity from the commissioners regarding what alternative provision is available to meet the needs of South Tyneside residents. People contacting NHS111 should be informed if the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub is unavailable and what options are open to them to meet their urgent care and treatment needs.</p>	<p>We were told GP surgeries are sending patients to Urgent Care. This causes distress to patients when they find no GP is on duty although an Advanced Practitioner will be able to treat them during normal opening hours between 8am -10pm. It also causes confusion when patients are streamed on arrival and given an appointment to be seen within 2hrs</p> <p>It was shared with us the public need more information on a 'pathway' on what to do when they need medical attention.</p>
<p>HWST was disappointed that only one person we spoke to had visited their pharmacy prior to using the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub and consider that this is disappointing in terms of the STCCG initiative to "Think Pharmacy First".</p>	<p>Staff informed us that the public don't appear to know about 'Pharmacy First' as they try for a GP appointment then turn to Urgent Care or A&amp;E.</p>



<p>The physical layout of the building increases risk to those who visit and work in the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub; HWST recommends that risk assessment and management is tightened by operational management in terms of multiple building access point to meet Health and Safety legislation and this is reflected in the operational manual.</p>	<p>Security is now tighter and the Minor Injuries and GP service do not work in isolation. Emergency green buttons on computer systems and in their office are in place to alert security. This, we were told has been tested, and works. Everyone must register at the main reception to be streamed; those that haven't will be asked to do so.</p>
<p>Staff reported that they considered the service was not adequately staffed. HWST has significant concerns in relation to the times when the service is "unavailable". To reiterate this was 35% of the time over the period that HWST visited. HWST would like to know what steps South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group, as commissioner, is going to take to improve the availability of the service. HWST would like to know who is responsible for and how the service is audited for quality and safety; and would like to see a risk analysis undertaken in terms of when the service is unavailable. HWST is hugely disappointed for the people of South Tyneside in terms of the availability of the South Tyneside Urgent Care Hub.</p>	<p>The manager informed us the staff team has increased from 6 to 10 and now runs very smoothly with a General Snr Nurse, Streaming Nurse and Advanced Practitioner on duty.</p> <p>If no GP is on duty an Advanced Practitioner will be on duty so the patients coming through will always be treated and if appropriate medication prescribed.</p> <p>The GP we spoke to has worked for over 3years within South Tyneside and commented on "how things have greatly improved in the last 12months". "More patients are coming through Urgent Care which is reducing the number of patients using A&amp;E"</p> <p>Internal audits are conducted by the team through family and friend's system.</p>
<p>Waiting times varied depending on whether the service was available; HWST would like to know how waiting times compare to those experienced by South Tyneside residents at The Jarrow Walk-in Centre and what can be done to improve these</p>	<p>After a patient has been seen by the streaming nurse, they are directed to reception for a GP appointment. This we were told can and has caused double bookings being made when 111 direct patients to Urgent Care.</p> <p>If a GP is running late this can impact on waiting times as patients have to receive an appointment within 2hrs of attending Urgent Care.</p> <p>During our visit patients attending Urgent Care for Minor Injuries or to see a GP were seen on time without having to wait. This we were told by the clinical staff is due to the</p>

	<p>streaming and booking system working smoothly and increased staffing to make sure the patient is seen and discharged promptly. The impact on this not working smoothly is the Vocare system that enables 111 to make appointments which can then be double booked when patients come straight to Urgent Care.</p>
<p>Doors within the service do not appear to meet the needs of disabled and otherwise vulnerable people; HWST recommends that these are assessed for access for disabled people and upgraded.</p>	<p>Nobody was able to comment if there were any plans to change the access of these doors.</p>

## **Recommendations:**

### *Communication:*

A clearer understanding is required of how the booking system works to avoid double bookings of GP appointments. This is in relation to the Urgent Care Staff informing Vocare to alert the 111 service that no GP is on duty.

### *The Service Available to Patients:*

The contract is to provide a GP service for the times specified at the Urgent Care Hub. How does this compare with the level of service currently provided, in terms of treatment and care available, to patients attending the facility.

### *Internal access point from main reception to A&E:*

Access into the A&E department from the main reception proves difficult for individuals using walking aids or in a wheelchair. Healthwatch would like to know if the current access has to be retained due to regulation or could it be changed to make access easier for patients who need to use walking aids and wheelchairs.

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