

Teddington Memorial  
Hospital  
Walk-In Centre  
Executive Summary of  
Enter & View report

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**healthwatch**  
Richmond upon  
Thames

## Introduction

In May 2018, Healthwatch Richmond conducted four Enter & View visits to the Walk-in Centre at Teddington Memorial Hospital. This document summarises the feedback we received from patients, as well as the observations made by our team.

## Background

The Walk-in Centre is a nurse-led service that provides care to patients with minor injuries or illnesses that are urgent but not life threatening.

At the time of our visits, the service was operating under the title of 'Walk-in Centre'. However, as of July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018, the service provided by the Walk-in Centre was combined with the collocated extended hours GP service - the 'GP Hub' - and redefined as an 'Urgent Treatment Centre'. Importantly, these changes do not invalidate the feedback we received as the walk-in element of the service is still operating as before.

## Method

In total, we gathered feedback from 75 patients. Seven of these patients were waiting for appointments at the co-located GP Hub, but provided feedback relevant to the Walk-in Centre. We decided to base our conversations with patients around a list of pre-set questions, whilst also allowing them to raise other topics according to their individual experiences of the service.

## Quality of care

We received a lot of positive general feedback about the service provided by the Walk-in Centre, especially from patients who had used the service before. It was clear that many local people not only value the Walk-in Centre but feel very protective towards the Hospital as a whole.

48 patients gave positive feedback about staff, consistently describing them as '*very friendly*', '*very nice*' and '*welcoming*'. We also observed a number of examples of staff being friendly and helpful to patients in the waiting area.

We only received two slightly negative pieces of feedback, both of which related to reception staff. We also observed a couple of instances where a receptionist - although not rude - could have been a bit warmer and more informative to patients who had just arrived.

## Triage

Patients were not consistently being checked by a nurse within the Hospital's 15 minute target, with some patients having to wait significantly longer than this. Delays were more likely to occur when the service was busier and subsequent demands on the nursing team were higher. Delays in triage increase the risk of patients with serious conditions not

receiving the swift diagnosis and treatment that they require. Three patients also commented on the lack of privacy when talking to nurses in the waiting area.

## Wait times to receive treatment

Across our visits, the average wait time to receive treatment was approximately one and a half hours from arrival. Some patients were waiting for two hours or more on the first and busiest of our afternoon visits. During our 8 - 10pm visit, one patient had been waiting for two and a half hours and another for nearly three hours. Four patients commented that the service could be improved by having more staff on duty to reduce wait times.

## Communication with patients

Communication with patients was inconsistent. Whilst 24 patients were content with the information they had been provided, approximately 20 patients had not been told the expected wait time to be treated and would have benefited from knowing. Other issues raised by patients included:

- Reception staff not explaining who patients were going to be seen by.
- Lack of information on the triage process and the criteria used to prioritise patients.
- Lack of information on the opening hours for x-ray and what to do when the facility was closed.

These communication issues are likely to relate to the inconsistency of the triage process; if nurses do not have time to carry out their initial checks in a timely manner, patients are more likely to miss out on helpful updates.

## Reasons for visiting

Approximately 35 patients - almost half of all the patients we spoke to - commented on the general difficulties they have accessing GP appointments when they need them.

21 patients (31%) had initially contacted an NHS professional, who then advised them to attend the Walk-in Centre.

16 patients said that they had attended because they thought the Walk-in Centre was the most appropriate service available to meet their health needs.

Overall, the feedback we received suggests that most patients are attending the Walk-in Centre because they are either: struggling to access appointments soon enough at their own GP Surgery, or are being advised to attend by an NHS professional. It is important to note that we detected no widespread evidence to suggest that patients were inappropriately attending the Walk-in Centre when another service was clearly better suited to meet their needs.

## Environment

The waiting area was clean and contained sufficient, comfortable seating for the number of patients using the service. However, two patients commented that the waiting area felt cramped: one said that patients are *'packed in close together'*, the other that *'you're all on top of one another'*. Two patients also noted the poor state of the children's play area, commenting that there should be *'more for kids'* and that it would be good to *'brighten up the kid's space'*. This area was in need of renovating as it was run down and lacked any nice books or toys for children to play with.

## Signage

Across our four visits, we noticed nine patients who were visibly uncertain about where to go upon arrival at the Walk-in Centre. Most of these patients initially went to the Outpatients reception, before realising or being directed to the correct queue.

## Toilets

The toilets were tidy on some occasions and messy on others, with paper towels strewn over the floor and radiator and overflowing from the bins. It appeared that people were putting tissues into the bin designated for sanitary products instead of the correct bin provided.

## Parking

The hospital car park is very small and was consistently full during our visits; it was rare to see a free space. A number of patients commented that they were lucky to find a space, either in the hospital car park or nearby - one had parked in the out-of-bounds deliveries area as there was nowhere else to go. However, one patient did comment that they *'really appreciate'* that parking is free for 4 hours.

## Service information

A small but significant proportion of patients did not fully understand the service provided at the Walk-in Centre. Further information resources could help patients to better understand the Walk-in Centre, as well as other local services (e.g. access to extended hour GP services in different boroughs).

## Booking option

The Walk-in Centre has recently started offering patients arriving at the service the option of booking an appointment for later that day. This allows patients to choose between coming back at a set time or the typical sit-and-wait until a clinician is available.

We asked patients whether this would affect the way that they use the Walk-in Centre. Whilst the majority of patients were open to using the new booking option, bookable appointments are unlikely to suit patients with more urgent needs who want to be seen as

soon as possible. In addition to this, a number of other factors - such as the distance patients had travelled, the likely wait times and availability of parking - may influence whether patients decide to book or to wait.

## Recommendations & Response from the Hospital

It is clear that the Walk-in Centre is greatly valued by local patients. Patients were consistently positive about staff and the care they provided, despite the clear demands that staff were facing. Nevertheless, there were a number of different areas we felt could be improved.

We made initial recommendations to the Hospital regarding the following service areas: the triage process, communication with patients, signage, service information, the children's play area, toilets and parking.

The Hospital provided a response outlining their plans to address the points we raised. Their main actions are listed as follows:

- The processes for initial contact/triage are currently under review. The Hospital is also considering options to improve the environment that triage is carried out in.
- The requirements of reception staff are being reviewed. The Hospital are working to ensure that all patients are provided with consistent information regarding their initial check-in and who they will be seen by.
- The children's play area has been repainted and a new table and chairs have been installed.
- Hand driers are being installed in the patient toilets to reduce the usage of disposable paper towels. Furthermore, as part of the wider work taking place across the Hospital, toilet facilities will be reviewed.
- A piece of work across all the Hospital's buildings is being undertaken to standardise and review signage.
- Information regarding x-ray provision has been updated; a poster explaining the x-ray booking process has been produced for patients.
- Electronic information on the new service provided at the Urgent Treatment Centre has been updated. Information for out-of-area services is being developed.
- Parking information will be made more easily available from the Urgent Treatment Centre's webpage.

Following our initial recommendations and the Hospital's response, we raised two further points with the Hospital.

- 1) If the TV screen is to be the primary means by which updates on wait times are provided to patients, we recommended the Hospital make it much clearer for patients.
- 2) We encouraged the Hospital to work further with local stakeholders to ensure that patients clearly understand the service provided at the Urgent Treatment Centre compared to that of other local services (e.g. by social media campaigns, leaflet distribution onsite and elsewhere).