

# Healthwatch Islington Report



Urgent Care: Why patients are using these services.



November 2013

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# 1. Introduction

## About Healthwatch Islington

- 1.1 Healthwatch Islington is a user-led independent organisation that is part of the community, led by local volunteers. Healthwatch Islington is part of a national network of Healthwatch organisations that involve people of all ages and from all sections of the community in local health and social care services.
- 1.2 Healthwatch Islington will build on the knowledge and experience of Islington LINK (Local Involvement Network). It will continue to; gather views from the local community; report these views to the people responsible for local services; engage local people in decisions about services, and monitor services. As part of its work to gather views it has the right to visit services.
- 1.3 Healthwatch Islington will also have a new role. It will give local people information about local health, care and related complaints services.
- 1.4 In some areas Healthwatch will provide complaints advocacy for people making a complaint about NHS services. For Islington residents, this service will be provided by VoiceAbility, details are at the end of the report.



Local Healthwatch gather views on people's experiences of health and social care services, one of the ways they can do this is by visiting local services.



## About Enter and View

- 1.5 Under Section 225 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Healthwatch (formerly LINKs) have a right to 'Enter and View' publicly funded health and social care services. This right enables Healthwatch to observe service delivery and to gather the views and experiences of service users and staff. The Enter and View team members hold a current, enhanced level Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) police check. They have undertaken a specific training course, including guided visits, in Enter and View. Healthwatch Islington has developed a protocol for visits which can be seen on our website: [healthwatchislington.co.uk](http://healthwatchislington.co.uk)

## What we mean by Urgent Care

- 1.6 The Department of Health definition of urgent care is of '...the range of responses that health and care services provide to people who require-or who perceive the need for-urgent advice, care, treatment or diagnosis. People using services and carers should expect 24/7 consistent and rigorous

assessment of the urgency of their care need and an appropriate and prompt response to that need'. The Royal College of General Practitioners distinguishes Urgent Care from other forms of emergency care by describing it as needing 'a response before the next in-hours or routine (primary care) service is available' as opposed to emergency healthcare which would require 'an immediate response to time critical healthcare need'.

- 1.7 HWI met with ICCG's urgent care commissioner to find out more about urgent care in Islington who explained that with the implementation of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 from 1st April 2013, Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are now the cornerstone of the new health system. CCGs will commission the majority of health services, including planned hospital care, maternity services, community health services, mental health services and urgent emergency care (including A&E, urgent care, ambulance services, and NHS 111 etc). In Islington urgent care services include the Out of Hours GP services provider (Harmoni), the NHS 111 service, the Urgent Care Centre (based at Whittington Hospital, part of Whittington Health) and the Angel Medical Centre based at Ritchie Street, near Angel. The Angel Medical Centre, described as a GP-led Health Centre is listed as offering a walk-in service on NHS Choices.

#### **The GP-led health centre:**

- 1.8 Under the 2008/09 "Equitable Access" Programme to improve access to primary medical care, each Primary Care Trust (PCT) was required to commission a GP-led Health Centre. Islington PCT then commissioned this service provided by Angel Medical Service (co-located with Ritchie Street Group Practice and Angel Pharmacy at Ritchie Street Neighbourhood Health Centre). This was commissioned with a 5 year contract which started in April 2010. The service is contracted to be open 8am-8pm weekdays; 9am-6pm weekends and bank holidays excluding Christmas Day.
- 1.9 Patients now book on the day of appointment in person. . There is a cap on total number of appointments available daily and appointments usually run out by 4pm (as mapped by the 111 service).
- 1.10 The service is commissioned for around 50 consultations per day, or 1533 consultations per month (18,408 annually). It delivered 21,950 in 2011 and 21,761 in 2012. These extra consultations partly reflect a policy of seeing children under 5, elderly and other vulnerable patients even if the service has reached commissioned capacity (provided there is no compromise to patient safety). This service has no access to patient records though the service is required to provide relevant clinical information to the registering GP within 48 hours (excluding Bank Holidays) for patients who are registered in Islington.

## **The Urgent Care Centre**

- 1.11 The Urgent Care Centre opened at the end of March 2011. The centre operates seven days a week from 8am to 10pm. It is situated within the A&E department. It provides enhanced primary care services with links to; community services, GP Out-of-Hours and the A&E department.
- 1.12 An Emergency Nurse Practitioner-led triage system assesses patients. There are sub-contracts with local GPs where required and limited redirection towards Primary Care. The service has no access to GP records but the service can give support to unregistered patients to register with local practices.
- 1.13 Islington Clinical Commissioning Group, which inherited the current contracts from Islington Primary Care Trust, is currently reviewing its strategy on Urgent Care to ensure a “whole system approach” in order to; remove duplication in the system, improve quality, move to proactive care management to reactive, and to reduce the costs of unscheduled care in A&E. The findings of this report will be fed in to that process.

## **Why Healthwatch Islington decided to visit Urgent Care centres**

- 1.14 Through its work in the local community HWI had received some concerns from the local community about accessing appointments at the local GP-led health centre. This had made Healthwatch consider carrying out some work in this area. The local Overview Scrutiny Committee’s Health Review Committee has also been considering GP provision.
- 1.15 HWI knew that Islington Clinical Commissioning Group had partnered with Camden Clinical Commissioning Group to review the current provision of urgent care services, and HWI had been invited to take part in this review. Members therefore felt that visits to collect users’ experiences of these service would be useful in both gathering a picture of the services being delivered but also in informing that review.

## **2. Methodology**

- 2.1 The Healthwatch Islington Enter and View team has delegated authority from the Steering Group to plan and agree visits. Members met to plan the visits and agreed on a survey to use with patients. There were two parts to the survey, one to be completed face-to-face with attendees at both centres and one for respondents to take away to complete after their visit in which they could tell us whether their issue was resolved and how long they had had to wait.
- 2.2 Although Healthwatch has the right to make unannounced visits, members agreed that there was no advantage to unannounced visits on this occasion. Healthwatch liaised with the Clinical Commissioning Group and providers at

both centres to co-ordinate the visits. Visits were carried out on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September from midday to 19:00 at the Urgent Care Centre and on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September from 09:00 to 20:00 as we were advised that these would be good times to visit.

### **3. Findings**

- 3.1 Across the two visits to Angel Medical Centre and Whittington Health's Urgent Care Centre, Healthwatch Islington spoke to 48 patients. Of those respondents, 30 lived in Islington, and 43 were registered with a GP.

### **4. Urgent Care Centre, Whittington Health**

- 4.1 Healthwatch Islington spoke to 35 respondents between midday and 7:00pm. Of those respondents, 21 lived in Islington, nine lived in Haringey and five were from other London boroughs. The service is located at the Whittington Hospital within the Accident and Emergency Department.
- 4.2 14 respondents were male, 10 were female and one did not answer this question. Six were aged between 16 and 24, 19 were aged between 25 and 44, six were 45 - 64, three were 65 - 80 and one was over 80.
- 4.3 17 respondents described themselves as White British, three as Irish, two as Caribbean, one as Indian, one as Ghanaian, one as Turkish, and ten as 'other'.
- 4.4 Healthwatch Islington is not in a position to make clinical judgements on attendance at the Centre. Therefore we did not ask what medical condition had brought them to the service nor try to assess whether they were at the correct place for treatment.
- 4.5 However, Healthwatch Islington was keen to learn why people were using the service. We asked patients why they had attended the Urgent Care Centre instead of any other NHS Service. Some respondents gave more than one reason.
- 4.6 Eight respondents had been referred to the service for urgent treatment by their GP, 111 (1) or some other channel including two respondents had been brought to the centre, one who had fallen on public transport and one who had had an accident at work. For these respondents the centre was the most convenient hospital for them. Seven respondents had felt that the centre (or the Accident and Emergency department) was the right place for their treatment, that their treatment was very urgent, or that the hospital had a better understanding of their condition and was better able to manage it than their GP.

- 4.7 Nine respondents said that they had come to the service because it was quicker than being seen by their GP. Some stated that the GP could not see them for at least two weeks. One respondent had come to the centre because their GP practice was closed for lunch, they complained that the GP could not see them until 5.00pm that day (the respondent had been interviewed between 12:00 and 15:00 the same day). Another who had come because they felt the treatment required could only be given in hospital was concerned about being required to wait two days for a GP appointment.
- 4.8 Nine respondents stated that they had come because this service was the 'nearest', the 'easiest place to get to', or 'their local hospital'. One respondent explained that they came regularly because they liked the hospital, another who gave 'knowing and liking the hospital' as their reason for attending had not used the Urgent Care Centre at the hospital before.
- 4.9 HWI was keen to learn whether there was any link between visiting the service and not being registered with a GP. Of 35 respondents, 32 were registered with a GP and three were not. Of those who were not registered, all three were in the process of registering. One was from Islington, one from Haringey and one from Barnet. For these three respondents, their reason for attending the centre was because they were not registered.
- 4.10 When asked how easy it had been to find the centre, 27 had found it 'very easy', four had found it 'easy', three had found it 'OK' and one person had not answered. No-one had found it difficult to locate the service. Most respondents knew the location from living, having lived, or working in the area. Several respondents noted the convenient transport links, including those for whom the service was not their nearest. Two respondents commented that signage outside the hospital was good, though two stated that signage inside was lacking.
- 4.11 19 respondents had not used the service before. Of the 16 that had used it before, three had used it 'once', three had used it 'twice', one had used it '3 - 4 times' and four had used it '5 times or more'. Five respondents who stated that they had used the service before had not used it for many years, suggesting that they had not distinguished between the Urgent Care Centre, established in 2011, and the Accident and Emergency department.
- 4.12 Respondents were asked for any other views on the service and many commented on the friendly staff and efficient service, though one pregnant respondent felt that pregnant patients should be given priority over others. One respondent felt that a ninety minute wait to see a doctor was not bad, whilst another felt that two hours was a long time to be kept waiting.

4.13 Visiting members also noted that whilst there was no visible water fountain there a huge machine full of fizzy drinks, crisps and chocolate snacks.

4.14 Only one respondent completed the follow up form. They had found doctors to be 'very helpful once I was seen', but felt that a one and half hour wait 'seemed quite long to be seen'.

### **Summary of findings**

- Nine out of 35 respondents visited the centre because they could be seen quicker here than at their GP.
- Nine out of 35 respondents came to the centre because its location was convenient. Of these we are not able to suggest whether their visits were necessary or not.
- Seven out of 35 respondents had come because they believed this to be the right place for treatment because of their condition and what was perceived as an urgent need for treatment.
- There seems to be a difference between how quickly patients expect to be seen and how quickly services see them.
- Generally respondents found the centre easy to locate, though two respondents found that interior signage from the main reception was less clear than exterior signage.
- Some respondents were not registered with a GP, but 32 out of 35 were registered.
- Generally respondents found the service to be friendly and efficient.

## **5. Angel Medical Centre**

5.1 Healthwatch Islington spoke to 13 respondents between 09:00am and 7:00pm. There was one doctor and one nurse practitioner on duty during this time, though the service is commissioned to provide a GP only. The practice informed us that 58 patients were seen on that day.

5.2 It seemed that patients were given an appointment time and then went away from the centre, returning when their appointment was due, The practice informed us that the GP running the open access service is notified each time a child under 2 or an elderly or vulnerable patient attends, in order to minimise their waiting time.

- 5.3 Of those respondents, nine lived in Islington, none lived in Camden and four were from other London boroughs or temporary residents. The service shares premises with the Ritchie Street Group Practice.
- 5.4 Three respondents were male, nine were female and one did not answer this question. Four were aged between 16 and 24, four were aged between 25 and 44, one was aged 45 - 64, and four did not answer this question.
- 5.5 Three respondents described themselves as White British, one as Black African, four as other and five did not answer.
- 5.6 As mentioned above Healthwatch Islington is not in a position to make clinical judgements on attendance at the Centre. However, we asked respondents why they had attended the Angel Medical Centre instead of any other NHS Service.
- 5.7 Nine respondents stated that they had come because they could not get an appointment with their own practice (eight wanted an appointment with their GP and in one case an appointment with the practice nurse).
- 5.8 Of the nine respondents who could not get an appointment at their own practice, eight were registered with the Ritchie Street Group Practice the GP practice that shares the premises with Angel Medical Centre, though we are not able to state whether these patients actually registered at Ritchie Street on the day of their visit to the Angel Medical Centre. During the 17:00 - 20:00 visit respondents using the service were not being referred from Ritchie Street Neighbourhood Group Practice. The practice informed us that across the full day, 12 out of 50 patients using the service were registered with the Ritchie Street Group Practice or 24% which is within the 25% target.
- 5.9 One respondent had been referred to the service by 111, another by a nearby pharmacist, one by both a pharmacist and the Soho Walk-In Centre and one by their language school in Holborn.

Of 13 respondents, 11 were registered with a GP, the two respondents who were not registered were visiting the UK. Of those 11 that were registered, eight were registered at the neighbouring practice, Ritchie Street Group Practice. All of the consultations were for problems which were seemed entirely appropriate for a GP/primary care setting 3 of the consultations (6%) were for post operative dressings in patients who could not get an appointment with their Islington GP and 1 consultation was for a smear test in a patient registered with a local Islington GP.

- 5.10 When asked how easy it had been to find the centre, 10 had found it 'very easy', many of those were registered at the neighbouring practice or had been directed to the centre by another healthcare professional. One had found it 'easy', one had found it 'OK' and one person had found it 'quite difficult'.

- 5.11 Respondents were asked whether they had used the Angel Medical Centre (not including the Ritchie Street Group Practice) before. Eight respondents had used the service before and five had not. Of the eight that had used the service before, two had used it 'once', one had used it 'twice', four had used it '3 - 4 times' and one had used it '5 times or more'. Of those eight respondents who had used the service before all of them were registered with the Ritchie Street Group Practice.
- 5.12 Generally people seemed satisfied with the service. One even commented that using this service had meant that they did not now need to use A&E.
- 5.13 During the three hours of the morning visit two respondents had called the Ritchie Street Group Practice, and not being able to get through in time to get an appointment appeared to have booked an appointment to be seen at the walk-in centre.
- 5.14 In the three hours of the evening visit, Healthwatch was informed that respondents would come in at ten minute intervals for their appointments, with two staff on duty (around 18 appointment slots). The centre told Healthwatch that they had 10 - 12 people booked in for appointments during that time period.
- 5.15 Respondents who could not be seen were offered details for NHS Direct, a service which no longer exists. This has since been updated to advertise the 111 service that replaced NHS Direct and the practice confirmed that they have disposed of the obsolete signage. Other leaflets and information were made available to those who had to be turned away.
- 5.16 Visiting members noted that there was no hand cleaning gel visible and that the waiting area was quite stuffy, which may not be ideal where people have potential infections. The seating layout could have also been arranged differently.
- 5.17 Three respondents completed the follow up form. Two had waited 'less than 30 minutes' for treatment and one had waited 'more than four hours' though still described the experience as positive because they had been treated. (see 5.14)

### Summary of findings

- Eight respondents out of 13 came from the Ritchie Group Practice (although it is not clear how many of these respondents registered on the day of our visit and used the open access service for their urgent care. These respondents were more likely than others to have used the service more than once.
- The walk-in service was fully booked by 2.45pm on the day of the visit.

- 11 out of 13 respondents were registered with a GP. The two that were not were in the UK temporarily.
- Respondents were generally satisfied with the service.

## **6. Next steps**

This was only a small sample of self-selected respondents who took part in our survey. Although respondents seemed fairly happy with these two centres, it wasn't clear that the services were serving the borough in the way intended.

This report will be shared with the service providers and with Islington Clinical Commissioning Group as well as with the Health Review Committee as part of their review of GP access. It will be in the public domain. HWI will submit this feedback to the Camden and Islington Urgent Care Review, to inform that piece of work.

## Appendix A: Survey questions

### Introduction

Thank you for answering our questions on your recent visit to the Urgent Care Centre at Whittington Health.

We are from Healthwatch Islington. We collect people's views and experiences of local health and social care services. This survey is confidential but we will report the findings of the survey to the people responsible for the service with the aim of improving the service for patients.

Please complete the survey below and send your answers back to us in the freepost envelope provided (or you can scan and email your answers or we can email you a form that you can return to us). If you gave us your telephone number you can throw away this form and we will call you soon.

1. Are you registered with a GP?

Yes  No

a. If 'no', were you given help in registering with a GP at the centre?

Yes  No  Not sure

2. Were you referred for any further treatment that you needed?

Yes  No  Some of the treatment

3. How long did you have to wait between arriving at the centre and seeing someone who could deal with your problem?

Less than 30 minutes  30 minutes to 1 hour

1 to 2 hours  2 - 3 hours  3 - 4

hours  More than 4 hours

Was not seen

If you answered 'was not seen', please explain why and what you did next...

Why.....

What you did next .....

4. Were you admitted to the hospital?

Yes

No

5. Please add any other comments, good or bad, about your experience in the centre on this occasion.

Please send us your responses in the freepost envelope attached or you can email your answers to [info@healthwatchislington.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchislington.co.uk) or call us to give your views over the phone 020 7832 5814. Thank you.

# Healthwatch Islington Membership Form

## Contact details

Title  First name  Surname

Organisation (if applicable)

Address

Post code  Email

Telephone Number

Mobile Number

## My areas of interest / expertise in health and social care are:

Primary Care (eg doctors, dentists, podiatry, eye tests)

Secondary Care (eg hospitals, specialist clinics)

Social / Community Care (eg Meals on Wheels/Home Help/District nurse)

Residential Care and Nursing Homes

Emergency services (e.g. ambulance service)

Other (Please state)

## I am interested in services for:

Children & Young People

Older People

Carers

Disabled People

People with learning difficulties

People with mental health issues

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)

Other

## Data Protection

Any information you have given us here will be treated as confidential.  
We will not share your contact details unless indicated below.

Please tick the box to **share** your contact details with other LINK members

## Equality monitoring form

We would like to gather monitoring information so that we can understand the diversity of the people involved with the LINK to make sure that we are reaching out to the whole community. We are required by the Department of Health to record this data. You do not have to complete this form.

Please help us by answering these questions:

### 1. Are you?

Male       Female       Transgender       Transsexual

### 2. Would you describe yourself as?

- White British  
 White Irish  
 White Other: please specify   
 Black British  
 Black - African  
 Black – Caribbean  
 Black – other: please specify   
 British Asian  
 Indian  
 Pakistani  
 Bangladeshi  
 Chinese  
 Other – please specify

### 3. Would you describe yourself as having a disability?

- No  
 Yes – please describe in your own words:

### 4. Would you describe yourself as:

Gay man       Lesbian woman       Bisexual       Heterosexual

### 5. Which age group do you belong to?

Under 18 years     18 to 30 years     31 to 45 years     46 to 60 years  
 61 to 75 years     76 years & over

### 6. Do you have a religion or belief?

No  
 Yes – please specify:

