

Healthwatch Sheffield briefing on Urgent Care Consultation.

Background

NHS Sheffield CCG ran an 18 week consultation into the future of urgent care in the city between 6th September 2017 and 31st January 2018.

Consultation proposals aimed to:

- Improve the way people access services
- Change the way people get urgent GP appointments
- Change where people would go for minor illness and injuries
- Change where people go for urgent eye care

Local residents were presented with three different options. The [process by which the options were identified](#) is explained on the CCG website, alongside the public documents, frequently asked questions and equality impact assessments.

All options included the closure of the Minor Injuries Unit at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital and the Walk In Centre on Broad Lane.

Funding would then be redistributed to create more capacity to offer urgent appointments in primary care. GP surgeries would work in local networks (neighbourhoods) to offer urgent appointments within 24 hours.

In addition, two Urgent Treatment Centres would be introduced - at the Northern General Hospital for adults, for minor illness and minor injuries, and at Sheffield Children’s Hospital for children - for minor illness, with minor injuries continuing to be treated at the Children’s Emergency Department.

National guidance requires the introduction of [Urgent Treatment Centres](#).

In all options, the first point of contact is your own GP practice or NHS 111 (phone line).

The three options

	Adults	Children
Option 1	Both minor illnesses and minor injuries at UTC at Northern General Hospital	Minor illnesses - UTC at Sheffield Children’s Hospital Minor injuries - Emergency dept at Sheffield Children’s Hospital
Option 2	Both minor illnesses and minor injuries at UTC at Northern General Hospital	Minor illnesses – UTC at Northern General Hospital Minor injuries – Emergency dept at Sheffield Children’s Hospital
Option 3	Minor illnesses – UTC at Northern General Hospital Minor injuries – Emergency dept at Northern General Hospital,	Minor illnesses – UTC at Sheffield Children’s Hospital Minor injuries - Emergency dept at Sheffield Children’s Hospital

Responses

At the close of the consultation period, the CCG had received:

- 2,290 completed consultation surveys,
- 2106 responses to the telephone surveys,
- 5 petitions with a total of 10,392 signatures,
- in addition, letters and comments from 30 public meetings and through social media.

A [summary document](#) and the [full independent analysis](#) were received by the Urgent Care Programme Board and the Primary Care Commissioning Committee in March. The committee noted that further work needed to be undertaken, including a review of the significant number of alternative options that were suggested by the local residents in their responses.

The majority of people who responded to the consultation survey did not feel that the proposals would make accessing urgent care easier. Furthermore, throughout the consultation period, there was a evident confusion amongst the public and some professionals about the content of the consultation. Although there was a strength of feeling from local residents that the changes should not go ahead, less than half the number who signed a petition engaged with the consultation itself.

At Healthwatch we noted frustration that the options included in the consultation were limited to those that included the closure of the Minor Injuries Unit and the Walk in Centre.

Next steps

The CCG is in the process of considering the responses against the initial three options and considering the alternative options put forward by respondents.

Workshops have been held for CCG Governing Body members, Clinical Directors and Commissioning Managers and for potential and current providers. The purpose of the workshops was to consider the alternative suggestions and any possible actions to mitigate the issues raised regarding the proposed options. A further workshop for members of the public will be held on Monday 11th June.

The Urgent Care Programme Board will review the outcomes of the workshops and make recommendations which will be presented back to the Primary Care Commissioning Committee.

Healthwatch Sheffield's position

Healthwatch Sheffield is represented at the CCG Primary Care Commissioning Committee, the Programme Board and the Strategic Patient Engagement, Experience and Equality Committee. Our role is as a conduit to and from local communities, bringing wider perspectives and the views of local people; and as a 'critical friend', offering strategic advice from an independent perspective.

With regard to the Urgent Care consultation, representatives will advocate for the following concerns to be addressed:

- **The communication and inclusivity of the consultation proposals.**
The public and non-statutory stakeholders were involved at a late stage and with limited opportunities to share their views. We recommend that the CCG considers further engagement/consultation, collaborating with local voice organisations, to involve the public and stakeholders throughout, using plain English and a variety of engagement methods.

- **The ability of primary care services to provide urgent appointments.**

Although respondents said they would prefer to receive urgent care in their community, the lack of information about how GP networks (neighbourhoods) would work (e.g. how far people would be expected to travel, appointment booking systems) prevented people from making an informed choice. There was also a lack of confidence that this would be possible due to local and national recruitment challenges (particularly in more deprived areas of the city). This information needs to be available to local people.

- **Transparency.**

Be open with the public and allow stakeholders such as Healthwatch to share this openness with local people. There is strong support for the NHS and a wide awareness of the challenges facing public services. Local people want to be part of the solution and they can only do this if they are well informed, for example about the national implementation requirements for Urgent Treatment Centres, and how these influence where they can be sited.

Open and two way communication needs to continue beyond the end of the consultation, including how the views and experiences of the public have influenced decisions.

- **Access for people in the South of the city and vulnerable people in the city centre.**

The consultation proposals disadvantage people in the South of the city - their access to urgent care will be reduced and travel time and costs increased. The proposals also remove sit and wait options in the city centre, which disadvantage those who are unable to travel or to pay for transport.

There are also well founded concerns about putting greater pressure on the Northern General Hospital site, when access and parking for cars is already a problem for many patients and their families/carers.

We recommend that the CCG seeks to better understand how the proposals will impact on people who are less able to travel, such as some older people, people with limited mobility, physical and learning disabilities and sensory impairments, those on a low income and people who are homeless. We also recommend that action to mitigate these impacts are considered by the CCG, such as enhanced services in the South and the centre.

5th June 2018.