



New Urgent and Emergency Care Centre Report Walsall Manor Hospital

March 2024



Engaging
Communities
Solutions

healthwatch
Walsall

This report can be read aloud when using Word or by Google.

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Introduction

Healthwatch Walsall is the local, independent voice for patients and the public in health and social care. We gather feedback from the public about their experiences of accessing and using health and social care services and use that information to work with service providers and commissioners to improve services. The former A & E department at Walsall Manor Hospital has been relocated and renamed the Urgent and Emergency Care Centre, integrating both emergency care and the Urgent Treatment Centre in one place.

Last year Healthwatch Walsall was pleased to have been contacted by Walsall Manor Hospital Trust to invite two cohorts of service users from our sensory loss and disability groups to visit the new department during the latter stages of its construction. The purpose of this was for the Trust to hear first-hand the views of these groups with regards to the suitability of the facilities. Following on from this and six months after the opening of the new Urgent and Emergency Care Centre, Healthwatch Walsall wanted to hear from patients directly to find out about how the new facilities and services were working for them.

The project engagement ran from July 2023 to January 2024. No respondent asked for assistance in completing the survey or asked for the survey in a different format.

Key highlights

- Patients found signage confusing on arrival at the Emergency Department.
- Despite a new facility, difficulties are still prevalent with waiting times, especially around communication.

What we did

We developed a two-part survey that was available online and in hard copy format. The questions were developed to allow Healthwatch Walsall to hear the views of service users around their experience of using the Department.

Part 1 – This part was about how the patient arrived at the new Urgent & Emergency Care Centre, signage and the initial communication upon arrival, which included the following: need for an interpreter, initial triage, did the patient feel listened to and whether the patient felt treated with dignity and respect.

Part 2 – Healthwatch Walsall wanted to find out the patient experience of accessing and using services after they had left the waiting area to be seen by a clinician. We recognised that there would be a huge disparity in the return number of surveys for part 2 compared to part 1, however we believed that it would be useful to obtain these views.

We promoted the option of online surveys by placing posters with QR codes in various locations in the Centre so that waiting patients may take part at any time to suit themselves. We also promoted the surveys via our website and social media platforms.

The paper copies were used when engaging with patients during our visits to the new Urgent & Emergency Care Centre and whilst we were out on general engagement in the Borough. Paper copies and Freepost envelopes could also be sent out to service users who preferred this option.

Waiting patients were asked to take part and complete the survey whilst they were waiting in the Centre and once completed all responses were analysed in order to produce this report.

PART 1

Who took part

We received responses from **214** participants to part 1 of our survey. The demographic breakdown can be found on page 17.

Part 1

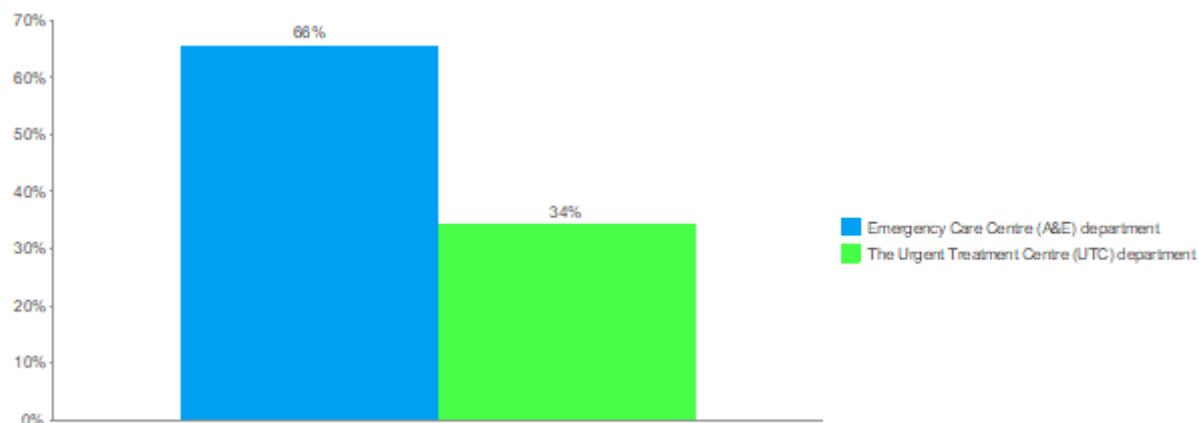
Our questions are presented below along with responses as percentages. We have broken down our findings into the following sections,

- Attending and accessing the new Urgent and Emergency Care Centre
- Communication
- Waiting Times
- Treatment and Care

Attending and Accessing the new Urgent and Emergency Care Centre

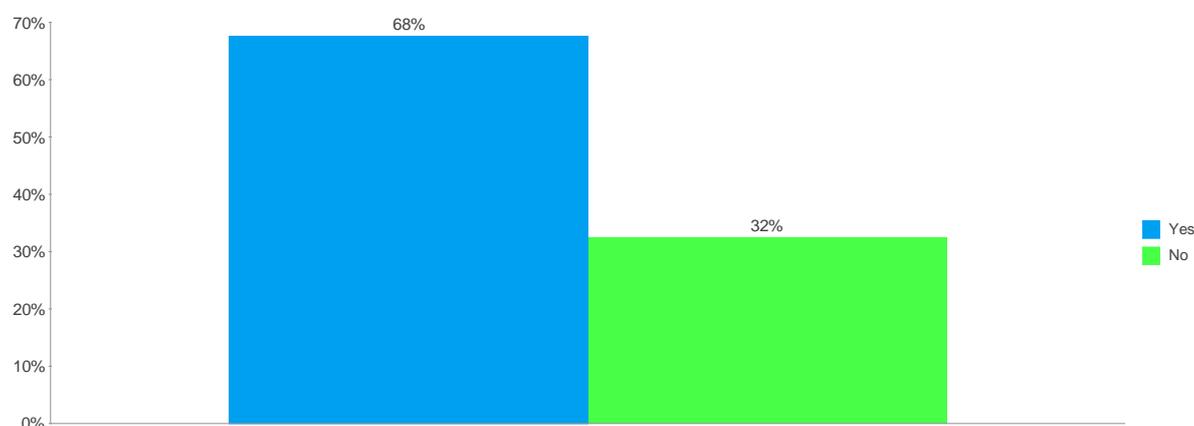
Are you attending the Emergency Care (A&E) or Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC)?

66% of people said that they were attending the Emergency Care Centre (A&E) department and 34% that they were attending the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC).



Did you contact any other service for help before you came to the new Urgent & Emergency Care Centre?

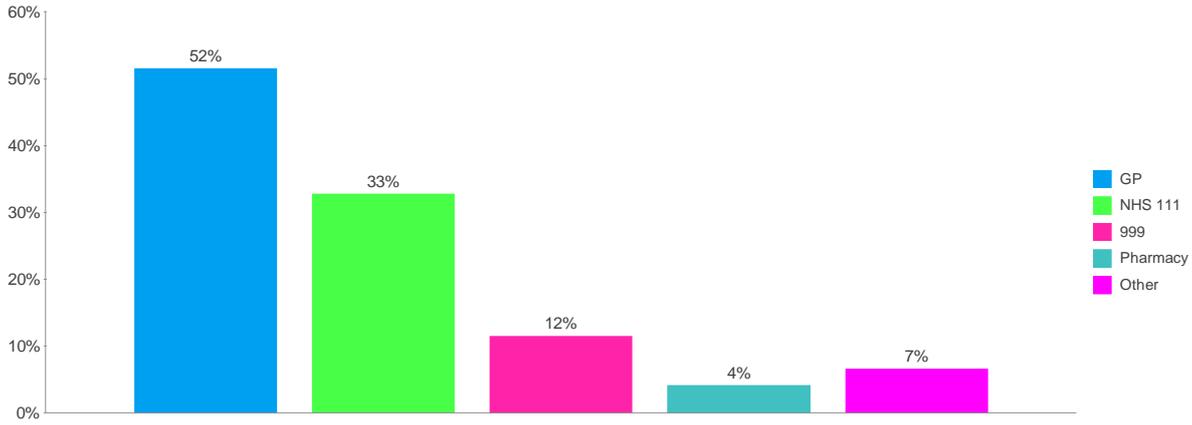
68% of people said that they had contacted another service for help before they came to the Urgent & Emergency Care Centre and 32% said that they had not contacted another service first.



Which service did you contact? (multiple choice question)

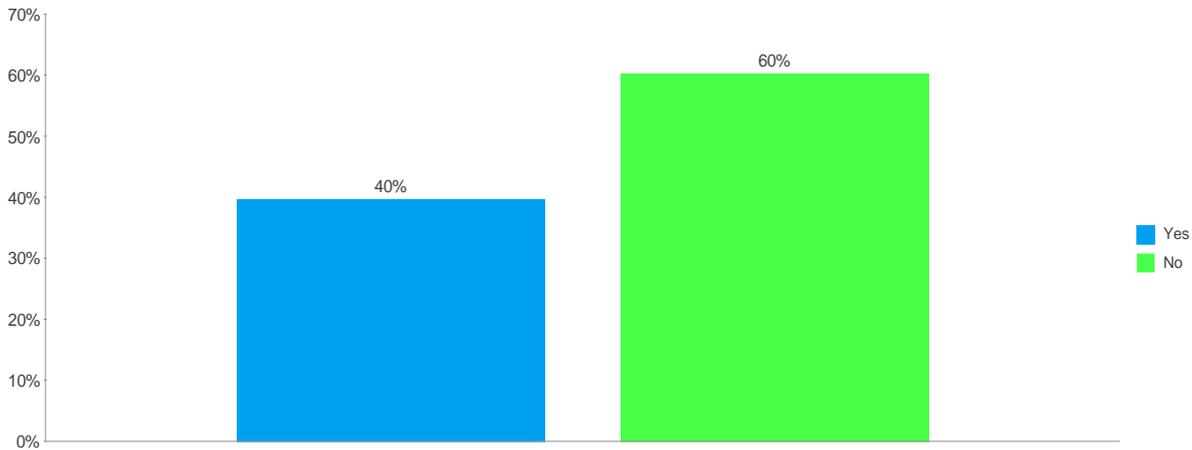
52% of people said that they had first contacted their GP; 33% said that they had contacted NHS 111 and 12% said that they had contacted 999; 4% said that they had contacted a Pharmacist before attending the Urgent & Emergency Care Centre. 7% gave 'other' as an answer.

One person said that they had contacted both their GP and A&E before attending. Another said that they had contacted Occupational Health before attending and another had contacted the Early Pregnancy Unit. Other responses suggested that people had not contacted any service and had simply attended the Urgent & Emergency Care Centre.



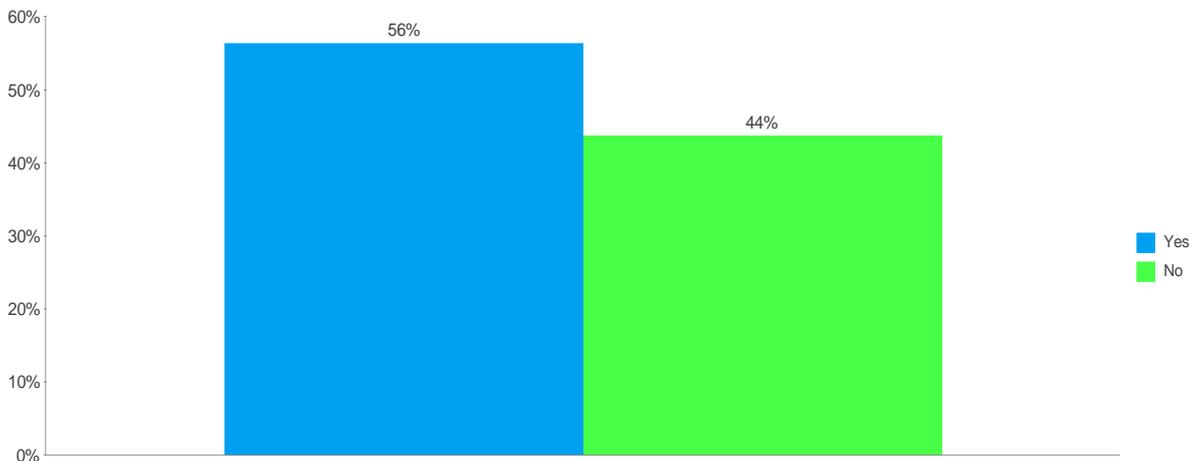
Did you have an appointment to be seen?

40% of people said that they had an appointment and 60% said that they did not have an appointment to be seen.



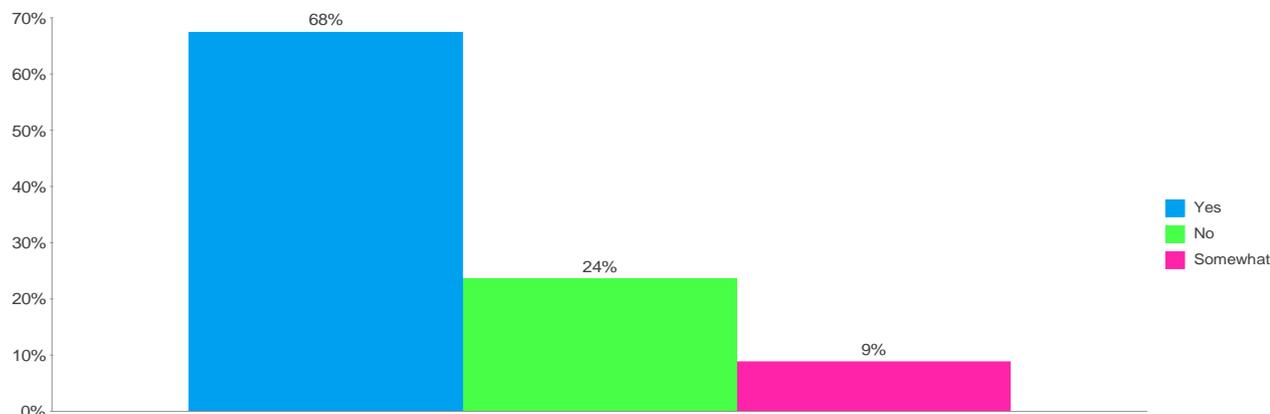
Is this your first time attending the new Urgent & Emergency Care Centre?

56% of people said that it was their first visit to the new Centre. 44% said they it was not.



On arrival at the Urgent & Emergency Care Centre, was signage clear where to go and what to do?

68% of people said that the signage at the Urgent & Emergency Care Centre was clear. 9% of people said that it was somewhat clear and 24% said that the signage was not clear.



Results

52% of people reported calling their GP before attending the new Urgent & Emergency Care Centre, suggesting that a considerable amount of people seek advice from their primary care provider before seeking emergency care. 33% of people told us they called NHS 111 first, highlighting the use of non-emergency medical advice/helplines as their initial point of contact for healthcare advice or assistance.

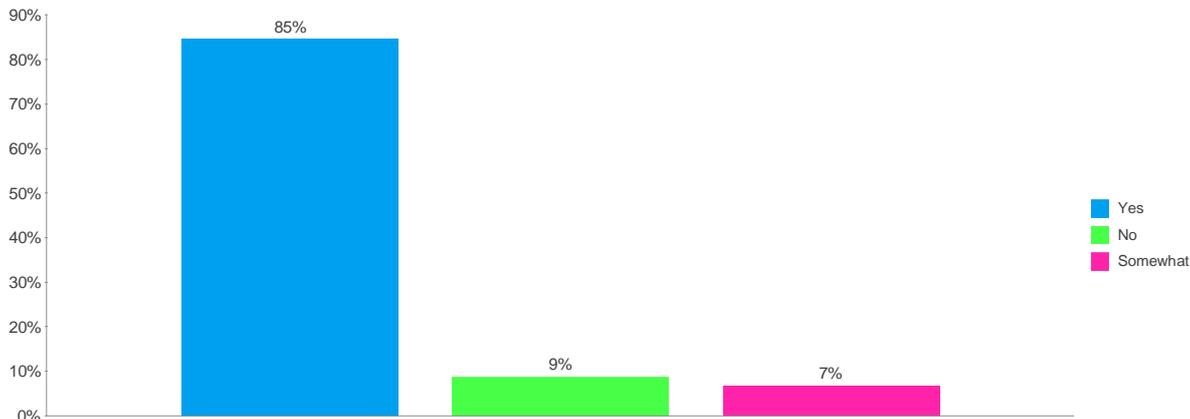
More information around the patient experience of NHS 111 services can be found in our recent report **NHS 111 patient feedback**

Despite 68% of people saying that signage was clear, feedback shows there are still concerns regarding the layout of the facility, which points to a need for improved communication and signage. It is also evident that there are issues with clarity regarding the reception desk's purpose, one person said that there were *"no signs above desks"* and another commented that there is *"no signage to advise where to book in, just says reception on the desk and actually went to the wrong window, only to be advised it's the other two."* We also heard *"I was looking for Urgent Treatment Centre in the old section of the hospital, only to find out that A&E and UTC have merged together."* Another person told us *"I was used to the old building and did not know it had moved. I looked at the signage for directions and I still got lost."*

Communication

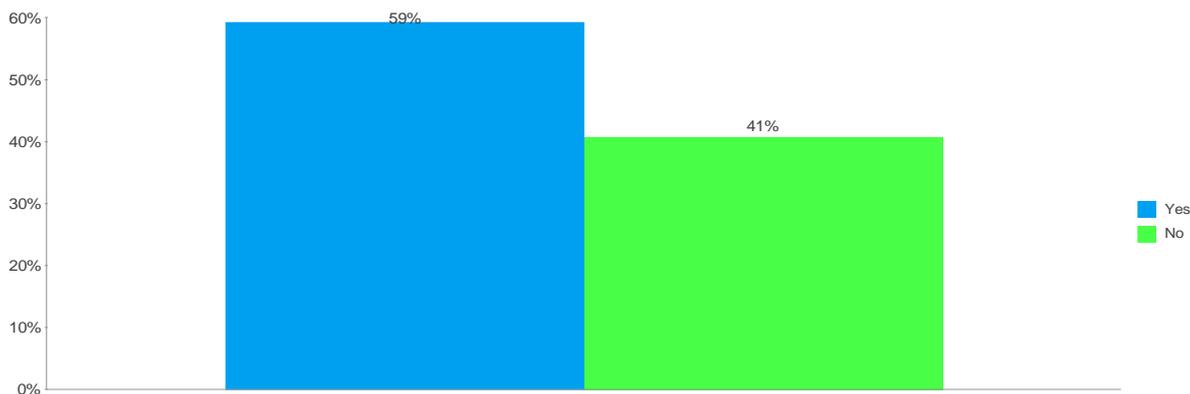
Were you communicated with in a way you could understand?

85% of people said that they were communicated with in a way that they could understand. 7% said that they were somewhat communicated with in a way that they could understand and 9% said that they were not communicated with in a way that they could understand.



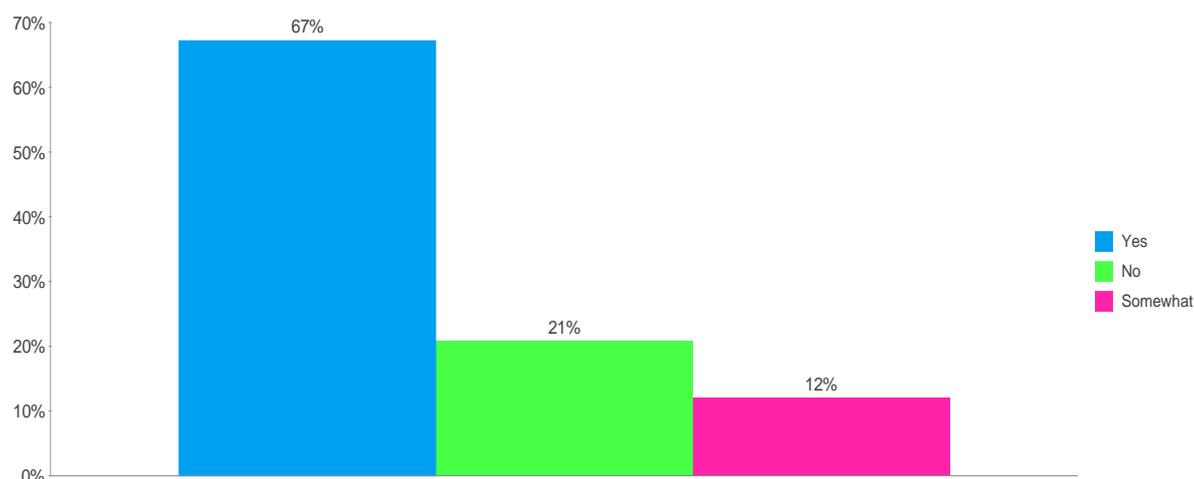
If you were not communicated with in a way you could understand, were you offered ways such as interpreter services?

59% of people said that they were offered other ways of communicating and 41% said that they were not. Only one person who said that they were not offered other ways of communicating provided further information on what would have helped them, saying that *"I needed the receptionists to be focused on me and to speak clearly."*



Do you feel that you were listened to during the visit to the new Urgent & Emergency Care Centre?

67% of people said that they felt that they were listened to during their visit to the Centre, and 12% said that they felt they were somewhat listened to. 21% of people said that they did not feel that they were listened to during their visit.



Results

The primary themes emerging from the responses is the difficulty in hearing and communicating with reception staff through the screens on the desk. We were told *"I couldn't hear what the receptionists were saying - no speaker"* and another said, *"couldn't hear as tiny slit in the window and little effort was made to direct her voice at us"* and *'attitude of the people behind the desk were very rude.'* This suggests that barriers are preventing effective communication between patients and staff. However, we did receive positive comments such as *"staff at reception are polite and sincere."*

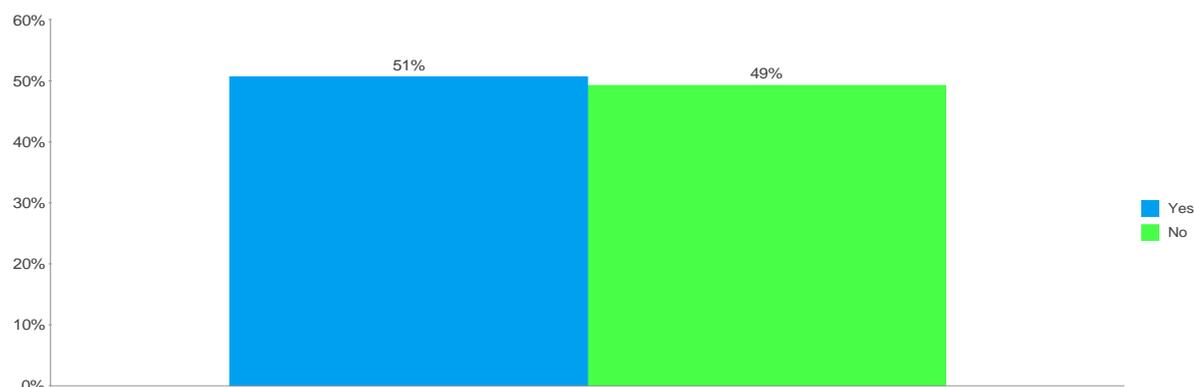
People shared with us that hearing their name being called during busier times was difficult. Patients suggested a visual call system could be implemented as *"there are lots of screens currently not in use. It would assist hearing impaired people if they had a visual call to attend the nurses/doctors."*

There was also a lack of communication from staff regarding what area patients were waiting for – A&E or UTC. One person told us that *"you're put in a waiting room and don't know if you're A&E or UTC."* Another person commented that in the old centre *"you knew if you were in A&E or UTC. There used to be waiting times given by A&E and UTC. There isn't in the new Emergency Centre."*

Waiting Times

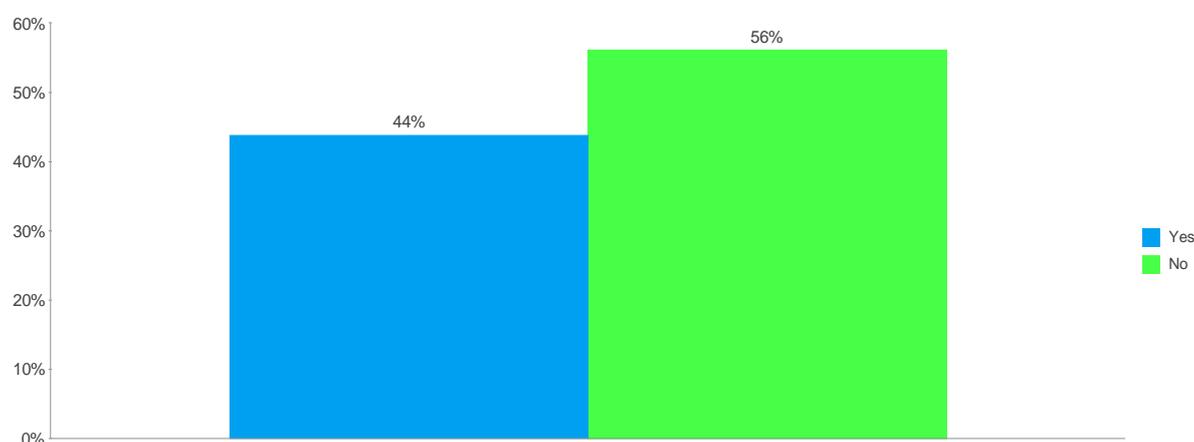
On arriving at reception were you told how long you may have to wait to initially see someone (triage for the right pathway)

51% said they were told how long they may have to wait to be initially triaged and 49% said they were not told.



During your time in the new Urgent and Emergency Care Centre, have/did you receive any updates around your care and discharge?

56% of people said that they had not received updates and 44% said that they had received updates.



Results

Contrasting views emerged regarding overall waiting times, some comments and feedback from participants suggest an improvement in waiting times compared to the previous Emergency Centre, and participants noting a quicker triage process, with one person saying *“we visited the old Urgent Care Centre and waited hours, and it also felt so unorganised. The new system is a lot better.”* And another saying *“it’s not very packed like the old one and it’s not red hot. I like that the kid’s area is separate from the adults, and it seems a lot smoother than the last place. The staff also seem calmer as they are not so rushed off their feet.”*

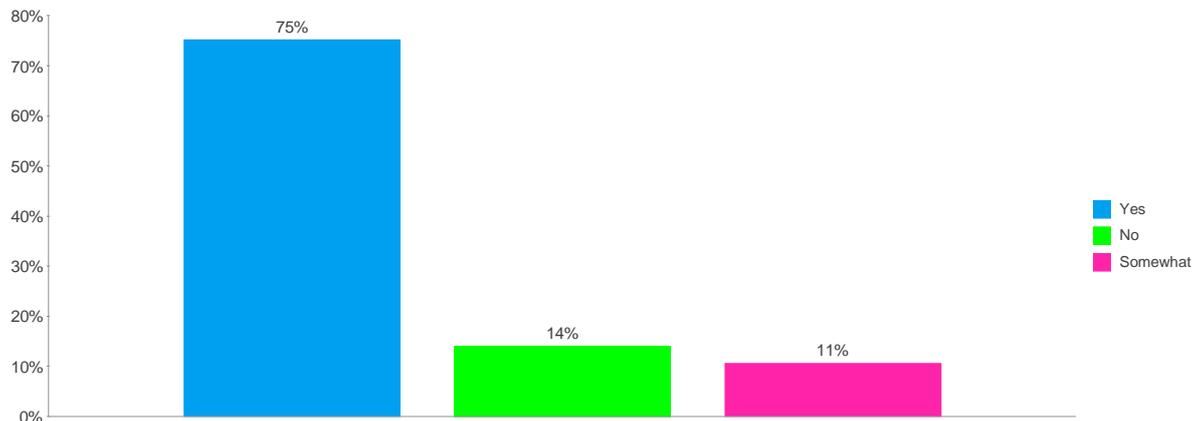
However, some participants expressed dissatisfaction or no improvement in waiting times, we received comments like *“waiting times are worse”, “wait times are still the same despite the new facility”, “just a bigger space to herd the human cattle”,* and *“new building is bigger and cleaner but being bigger just means it gets more full.”*

Although 44% of people told us they had received updates about their care, there was a strong response around the need for displaying waiting times, suggesting that better communication around this could enhance the patient experience and manage expectations. There was also suggestion for increased staff levels during busier times.

Treatment and Care

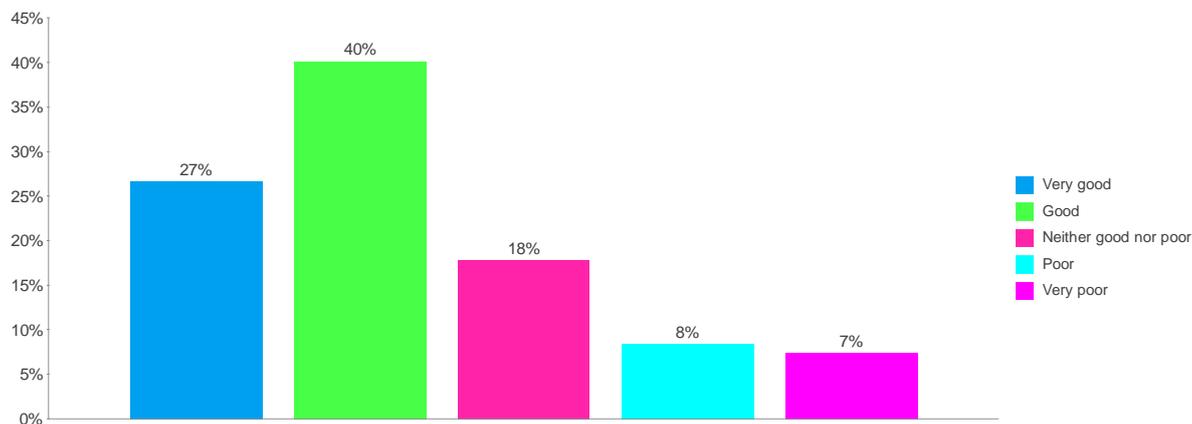
Were you treated with dignity and respect?

75% of people said that they were treated with dignity and respect and 11% said that they were somewhat treated with dignity and respect. 14% of people said that they were not treated with dignity and respect.



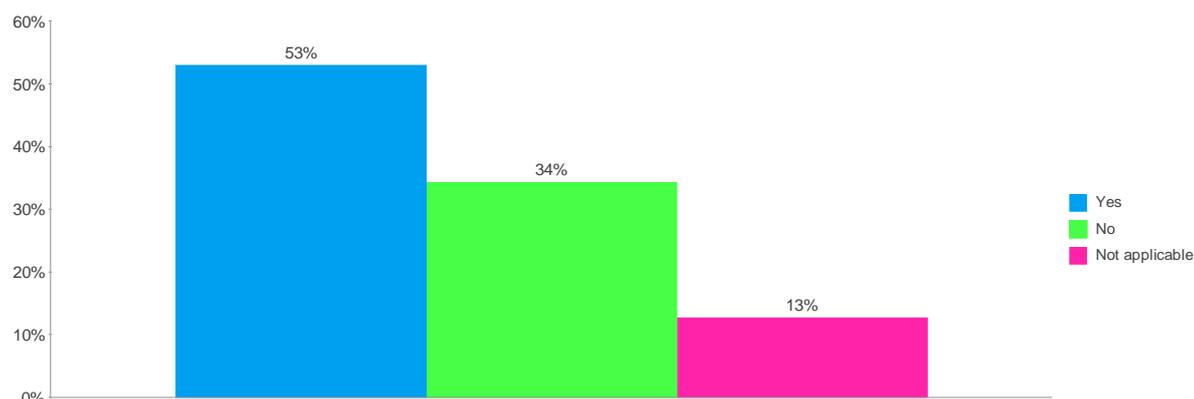
How would you rate your experience of the new Urgent & Emergency Care Centre?

67% of people rated their experience of the new Centre as being either very good or good and 15% said that it was poor or very poor. 18% of people gave a neutral answer.



Do you feel that the patient experience in the new Urgent & Emergency Care Centre has improved?

People were asked if they had used the old A&E and UTC and 75% of people said that they had done so. People were also asked if they felt that the patient experience at the new Centre has improved compared to the old Centre. 53% of people said that they felt that patient experience had improved and 34% said that they did not feel that patient experience had improved.



Results

Key findings from the feedback show a dissatisfaction with treatment and care, with some participants feeling dismissed, particularly regarding anxiety related issues, with one perceiving a lack of interest from the nurse, one person said *"I suffer with anxiety. I feel like the nurse thought I was wasting time."* Another person said the nurse they saw was *"rude and abrupt, telling the patient that they were "not her problem, you've been discharged from me"* and another patient saying the *"nurse was uninterested in my concerns."*

Additionally, instances in delays in receiving pain relief medication and of patients being discharged in pain without receiving medication. We heard comments like *"my wife was not asked her pain score, not given nor offered any analgesia"*, *"I was discharged in pain"* and *"took ages for pain relief"*. These findings highlight the importance of compassionate care to ensure a positive patient experience.

We asked participants if they felt their patient experience could be improved. Below is what people shared with us.

Key findings from feedback on the new Urgent and Emergency Care Centre suggest a general positive perception of its environment, with comments highlighting its larger and facility cleaner facility, people said the following: *"larger with more seats"* and *"cleaner than the previous centre."*

However, there were also negative comments regarding service levels, with one person saying *"a new building but service levels are still unacceptable"* and another person saying *"same old, same old."*

Providing access to food and drink was a greater theme than had been raised previously with one person commenting that *"it would be great to have a water fountain and a tea and coffee machine. Also, somewhere to buy sandwiches."* Another said that they should be able to *"arrange food and drink... 14 hours with no sleep, a lack of proper food and water supply... you are failing in duty of care for your customers."*

PART 2

Who took part

A total of **23** people answered the part 2 survey questions.

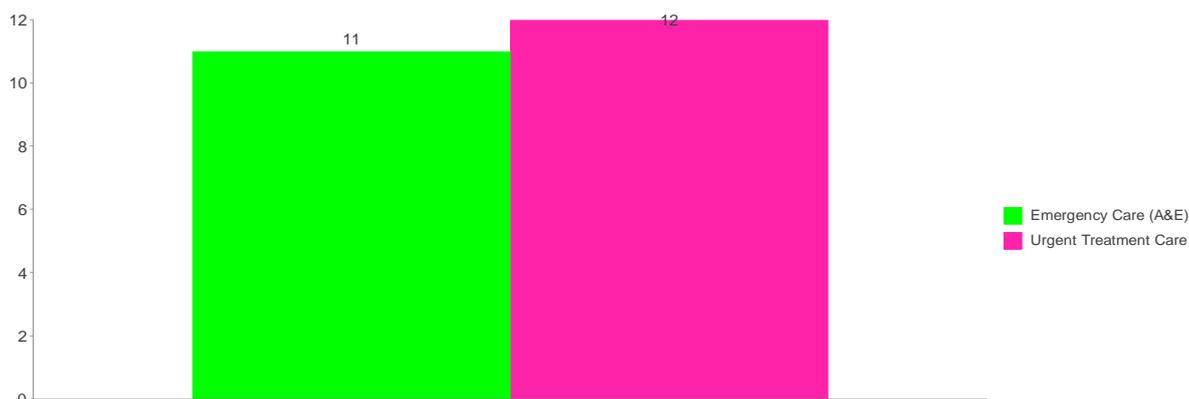
Our questions are presented below along with responses as percentages. We have broken down our findings into the following sections,

- Communication around Triage and Waiting Times
- Treatment and Care

Communication around Triage and Waiting Times

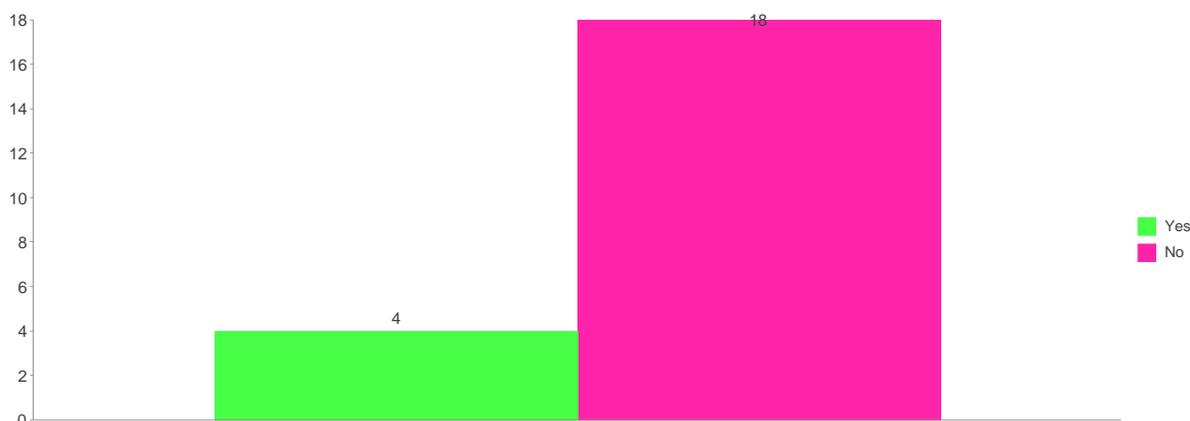
Which service were you triaged/sent to?

11 people said that they were triaged to A&E and 12 were triaged to UTC.



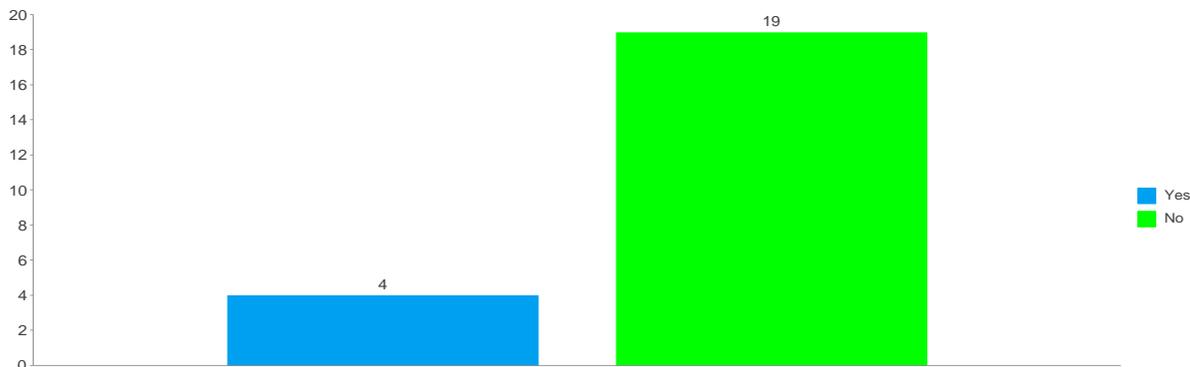
Did you receive any updates on the waiting times around being seen for diagnosis/treatment?

19 people said that they were not given any updates on the waiting times for being seen for diagnosis or treatment and 4 people said that they were given updates on waiting times.



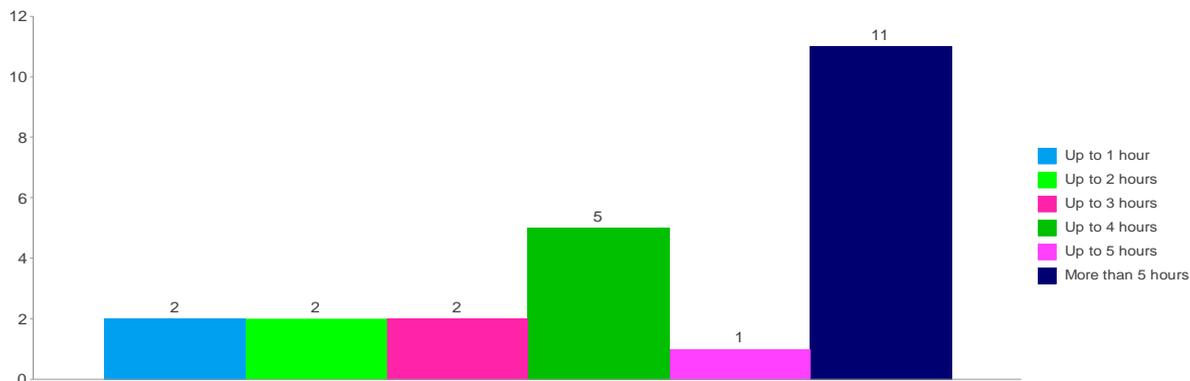
Were you told when you would likely be discharged?

19 people said that they were not told when they were likely to be discharged and 4 people said that they were told.



How long did it take from your arrival at the Urgent & Emergency Care Centre to being treated and discharged?

11 people said that it took longer than 5 hours from their arrival to being treated and discharged. 1 person said that it took up to 5 hours. 5 people said that it took up to 4 hours. 2 people said it took up to 3 hours. 2 people who said that it took up to 2 hours and 2 people said that it took up to an hour.



Results

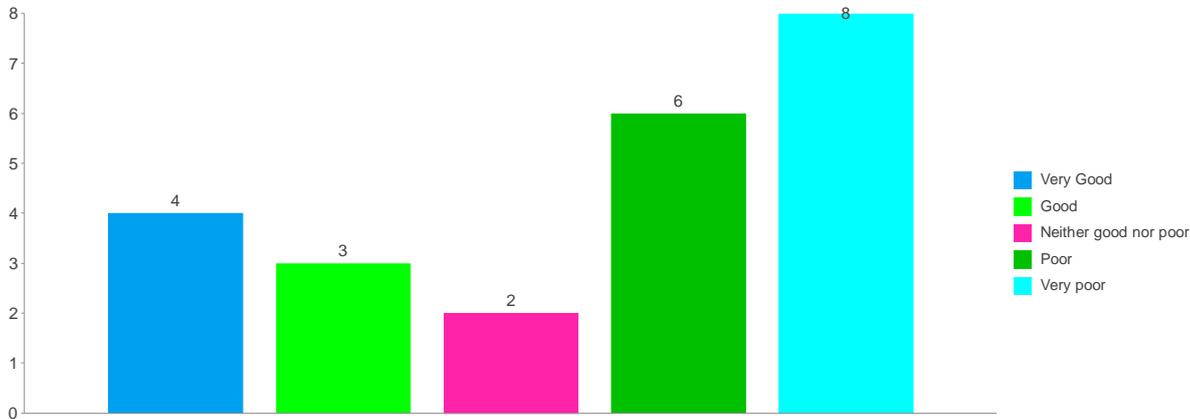
The majority of people shared they were not given information or times on when they were likely to be triaged or treated, similarly the majority of people also shared they had not been given information on when they were likely to be discharged.

The findings show some variations in waiting times, with 17 people saying it took up to 4 hours or longer to be treated and discharged. 6 people shared that they were treated and discharged within 1-3 hours.

Treatment and Care

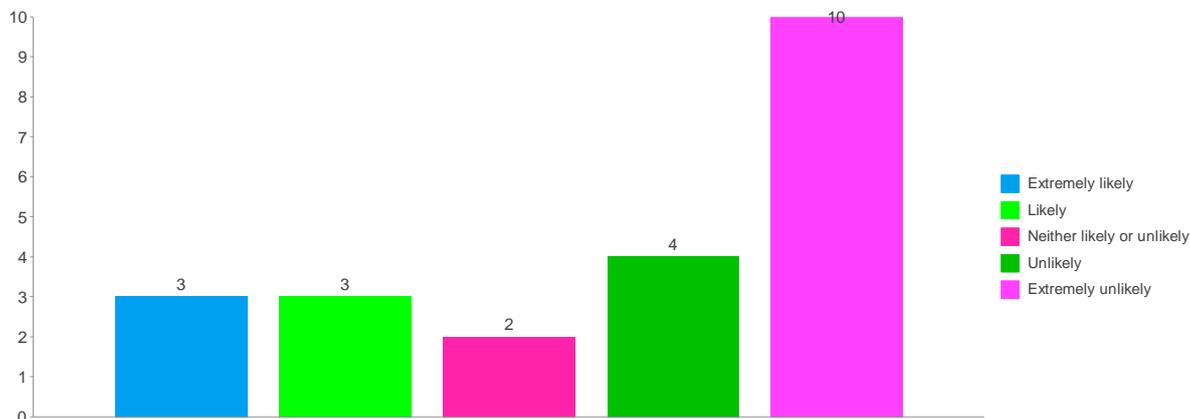
Please rate your experience of using the Urgent & Emergency Care Centre services.

When asked to rate their experience of the Centre, 14 people rated it as poor or very poor. 7 people rated it as good or very good and 2 people gave a neutral answer.



How likely would you be to recommend this service to a friend or a family member if they needed similar care or treatment?

10 people said that they were extremely unlikely, 4 people said that they were unlikely to recommend the service, 6 people said that they were either extremely likely or likely to recommend the service. 2 people gave a neutral answer.



Results

The majority of respondents said they would not recommend the service to their friends and family. Although 6 respondents would be likely to recommend the service to friends and family.

CONCLUSION

From arrival at the Centre considerably more people attended A&E than UTC and the majority had contacted another service for help before attending the Centre. The majority of these people had contacted their own GP first, followed by NHS 111. The majority of people attending the Centre did not have an appointment, suggesting that people had taken the decision to attend directly.

There were mixed views around whether the signage being adequate and there were a number of people who had difficulty finding the Centre or had been unaware that A&E and UTC had merged, causing confusion about which desk to go to on arrival.

A high percentage of people said they were communicated with in a way they could understand, and for those that were not communicated with in a way they could understand, over half were offered interpreter services. The biggest barrier to communication was audibility at the front desk.

There were contrasting views on waiting times and receiving updates around care and discharge. People told us there were still long waiting times and although the new Centre is larger, it still becomes overcrowded during busy periods.

Most people said they were listened to and treated with dignity and respect, however there were some comments about poor staff attitudes, and a lack of empathy towards patients.

People completing part 1 of the survey rated their experience of the new Centre higher than those who completed part 2. This could be attributed to the differing number of respondents in Part 2.

Whilst over half of those who completed Part 1 survey said that the new Centre was an improvement on the old Centre, there were a number of people who felt that the service had not improved. There were comments about the lack of food and drink options for those in the waiting room and with people waiting for long periods, there was a need for easily accessible refreshments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Healthwatch Walsall recommend that external and internal clear signage to the new Centre is provided. Clear signage internally for service users that are using either A&E or Urgent Treatment Centre.

Please see external photographs below.

Healthwatch Walsall recommended that information is provided to the public about the departments in the new Centre and what services it offers.

Healthwatch Walsall recommended that the Trust gives consideration to microphones being available at reception areas to improved audibility if this does not breach patient privacy and/or confidentiality. For the same reason, the Trust may consider a visual call system enabling patients with hearing difficulties to know when they are being called.

Healthwatch Walsall recommend visual waiting time information for both areas of the Centre are displayed in waiting rooms on the screens, this could also include a range of other patient information. Whilst not in the scope of the survey, we are aware there is no screen in the parent and children area, therefore the Trust may wish to consider this.

A numbered system could be considered.

General communication concerning patient updates around their individual waiting time should be reviewed.

Healthwatch Walsall recommend that information on refreshment options is provided to people requiring food and drinks that are not available from the vending machines during waiting times.

External photographs noted above.



Pedestrian signage and possibly the first sign from the road.



Pedestrian view when coming from the main Hospital.

Supporting Information from our Visits

Whilst attending the Urgent & Emergency Care Centre during the patient engagement element of this work, we would make the following points:

The seating area in the Centre was not clearly defined between A&E and UTC seating.

The children and parents waiting area could become full quickly.

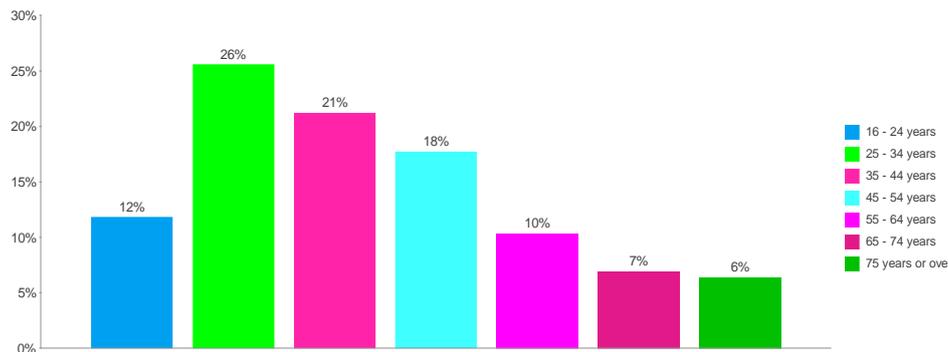
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank patients for taking part in this project and for staff who made us feel welcome on all occasions we were in the Centre.

DEMOGRAPHICS

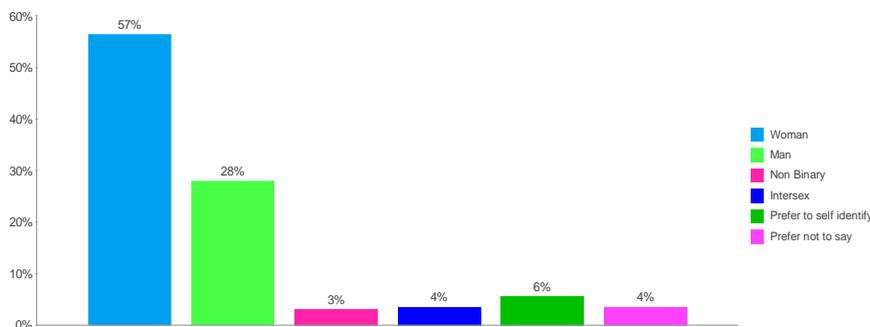
What is your age group?

16-24	12%
25-34	26%
35-44	21%
45-54	18%
55-64	10%
65-74	7%
75+	6%



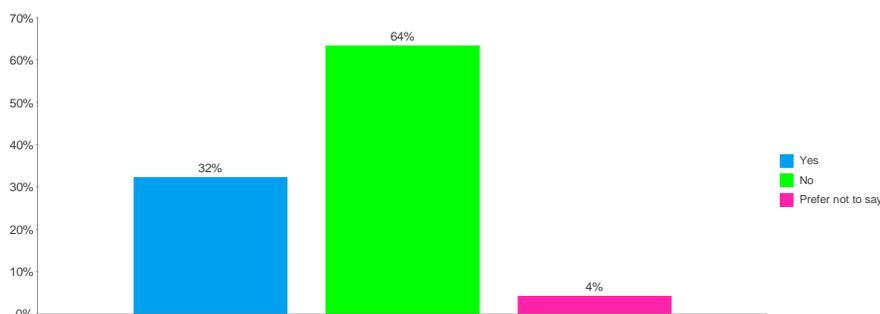
What gender/sex are you?

Women	57%
Men	28%
Non-Binary	3%
Intersex	4%
Prefer not to self-identify	6%
Prefer not to say	4%



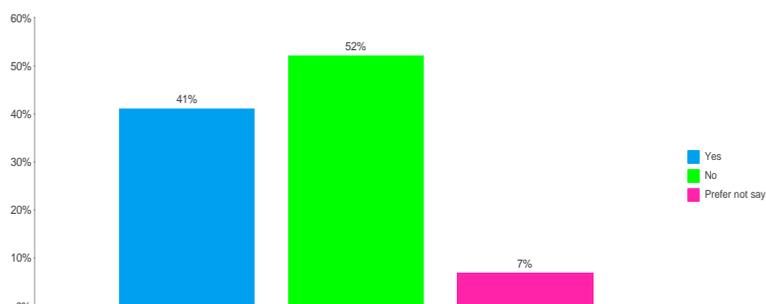
Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

No disability	64%
Disability	32%
Prefer not to say	4%



Do you have a long-term condition?

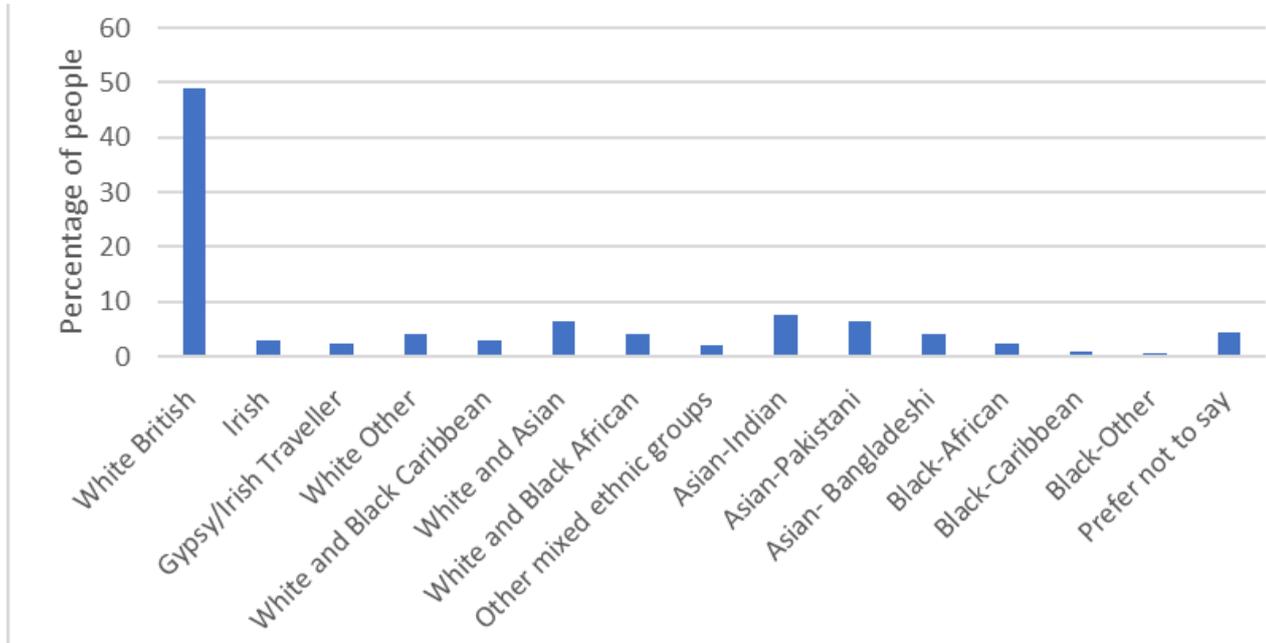
Long-term health condition	52%
No long-term health condition	41%
Prefer not to say	7%



What is your Ethnic background?

White British	48.8%
Asian-Indian	7.5%
Asian-Pakistani	6.5%

The full spread of ethnic groups is shown in the chart below.



APPENDIX 1 – CASE STUDIES

Case study I sent into us via our email account.

Following a number of weeks treatment of antibiotics for suspected UTI, female patient revisited GP who advised that, given previous history patient should attend A&E at Walsall Hospital Trust for further examination including bladder scan.

Patient was booked into A&E and was triaged around 50 minutes later, (note: waiting time displayed on triage screens was showing less than the 50 minutes actually waited).

Following triage, patient and spouse progressed several times with receptionist as to likely time to be seen. On all occasions, they were told *'sorry no information other than waiting for medical Doctor'*.

Patient's condition deteriorated progressively throughout this period, suffering increased abdominal pain pressure due to urine retention. Also, feeling lightheaded and sweaty.

At 16.30, spouse checked again with receptionist and alerted them to patient's worsening condition. Receptionist said they would check with staff. They came back and reported that they were still waiting for a medical Doctor to review patient's ECG. Spouse queried this, as patient had come into ED with urinary complication and hadn't undertaken an ECG?

Receptionist went away and checked again with staff; came back and confirmed there had been a mix up on the patient's notes at Triage. Spouse advised receptionist that patient had therefore been incorrectly triaged. Receptionist agreed. Spouse immediately requested someone come and speak to them given this issue and patient's condition. Receptionist checked and advised that a member of staff would come out to discuss.

During this period, the receptionist kept offering their name as spouse had indicated they would be raising a complaint. Subsequently the patient and spouse declined to take name details as receptionist had been trying to help as best possible.

At 17.15 the patient was recalled to triage, this time with spouse. Initially, 2 nurses spent time explaining that previous triage hadn't been an error, rather than focusing on patient's obvious deterioration from first admission into ED.

Apparently, a staff member had clicked on the wrong name and put ECG on the notes. If it wasn't an error, spouse did query why the patient was waiting for a medical Doctor to review, especially given that the admission was for a urinary condition? They advised that there wasn't any risk to the ECG note being included on patient's paperwork and this wouldn't have affected further treatment/admission. This was queried by the spouse, that in their opinion it had certainly influenced an unnecessary long wait time.

At no point in this second triage did the 2 members of staff comment on patient's worsened condition.

Observations or pain relief weren't offered at any point by nurses. Patient and spouse were only told that they were waiting for a treatment bed in order to carry out a bladder scan and the patient would be called in as soon as available. Patient's pain was increasing and at 17.25 spouse chased again to be told that a hurry up/chase had been put on patient's follow up treatment.

At 17.40, patient was still waiting and experiencing more pain and feeling extremely confused/agitated. Spouse and family member, (who had now arrived at ED), demanded that patient's observations were taken again, and pain relief administered. Finally, observations were taken and 2 co-codamol prescribed. Blood pressure and temperature checks were taken.

During the whole period of waiting in ED, the patient was only able to pass a small amount of urine due to the retention being experienced. The patient was finally admitted to AMU at circa 19.30 that same day. At 20.00 a bladder scan was undertaken on AMU and the patient was found to be retaining urine. A catheter was administered at 20.15 to alleviate the pain pressure and drain urine.

The patient's care in AMU was also erratic and further evidence of this is available as required.'

Case Study 2. Comment taken from our website review submission platform. Permission granted from reviewer.

'I was admitted with a nasty kidney infection, in A&E I was seen quickly, safely, and courteously. The staff were incredible. Then on admission, the staff on ward 14 were great. As it was over the Christmas period and during strike action, the staff never faltered, their care was top notch'.



Want to join us?

If you are interested in volunteering, get in touch and find out what experience you can gain by joining our team!

Advice and Support

Are you living in Walsall and would like advice and support around Health and Social Care?

We are here to listen to you; we want to hear your experiences of accessing and using services in Walsall. Do you think services could be improved? We want to know how you think services could be made better. Are there services which are doing well, and you want to tell us about them?

Get in touch with our team who can listen to what you say.

If you need help or advice, we can also put you in touch with the right people who can support you.

Our contact details are on the back page. You can call, email or contact us online. We also accept any direct messages through social media.



Contact us:

Email: info@healthwatchwalsall.co.uk

Telephone: 0800 470 1660

Our office address:

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WS3 1LZ

Twitter: @HWWalsall

Facebook: @HealthwatchWSL

Instagram: @healthwatchwsl

The contract to provide the Healthwatch Walsall service is held by: Engaging Communities Solutions C.I.C. www.weareecs.co.uk

Telephone: 01785 887809

Email: contactus@weareecs.co.uk @EcsEngaging



**Engaging
Communities
Solutions**

Share your health or social care service experiences by visiting the 'Have Your Say' section of our website <https://www.healthwatchwalsall.co.uk/share-your-views>