

Healthwatch Brent gathered the views of 35 patients using A&E / Urgent Care Centre at Northwick Park Hospital in December 2014, and a further survey of 62 patients was carried out in February 2015.

This was in response to this A&E having one of the worst waiting times in England, and to the following description of a visit, sent to Healthwatch Brent.

My father had been in bed for approx. 2 weeks- due to a cut on his leg getting infected. Stars came out and took bloods- same day GP phoned and said need to go to A&E and will stay in- due to blood sugar levels and potassium levels, couldn't walk so sent ambulance.

Got to A&E just after 9pm, had to queue with all others who had come in via ambulance- queue was literally out the door. People were having bloods taken while waiting in the queue. Ambulance staff had to wait to book in their patient and then wait for them to get a bed before being able to leave to help others. Stay roughly an hour and a half or 2 hours later- finally got a bed- was told not to eat or drink anything (even though he is diabetic and was told he was dehydrated) - lovely nurse went and checked and allowed him to eat something.

Blood sugar levels were taken and ECG (bloods were over 20)- wasn't given any medication- or anything to bring down his blood sugar levels for the whole night, had to ask twice for pain relief.

One doctor came- he explained the whole story to him- assessed him- sent him for an x ray. Came back said medics were expecting him so someone would see him.

Nurses or health practitioners (Sree and Joseph) very nice and friendly- took time to assist. Also the guy taking coffees around was very friendly and helpful. All doctors didn't want to make eye contact, seemed like they couldn't be bothered. Finally saw a woman doctor who made him explain whole story again- didn't seem to care, showed no customer care and clearly hadn't even read his notes. Said it's a stiff knee so he can go home- was told to check his x ray (as she wasn't aware)- had to find her to see if she had checked it. She said its fine he can go home- asked how he could get home- said to catch a cab rudely (knowing he wasn't able to walk)!! When we said he cant walk she said to speak to a nurse as she didn't know how it works.

Whole experience was a joke!! Got home after 4.30am and they done absolutely nothing. Apparently now he has tendinitis and is still in bed!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Concerns for other patients especially elderly and disabled as they did not seem to care at all, frail elderly woman who had previously been discharged from the hospital as she was able to take 2 steps had to wait over 1hour 40 mins to get a bed and then be seen.

Lady with mental health problems was wondering- staff who dealt with her didn't seem to care.

The surveys

Healthwatch Brent volunteers and staff interviewed 35 patients during three 2 hours visits -one on a mid-week daytime, one midweek evening, and one Sunday.

The visit was limited to the newly opened joint reception and waiting area for A&E and the Urgent Care Centre (UCC). Most of the patients did not know if their service would be provided by A&E or the UCC, although most seemed to be for the UCC.

We did not know how long these visits took to complete after the interview. 2 of the 3 visits seemed to be at quiet times. We interviewed only 1 person who had waited over 4 hours. Healthwatch Brent does not know how representative these were of average weekly visit volumes around that time.

Healthwatch Brent also conducted a survey of 62 patients via a survey conducted by small groups and organisations in Brent. See 'Survey of Brent A&E Patients Feb 2015', supplied separately.

In contrast to the experiences reported on-site and reported below –

- Only 5% of patients reported being seen in less than 15 minutes of arrival versus 50% waiting over an hour.
- 76% waited over an hour to be examined, 21% over 3 hours, and 8% over 4 hours.
- 16% of people were told how long they would have to wait, 66% were not told.
- 25% of visits took between 4 and 8 hours to complete.

Healthwatch Brent reflections on on-site patients' views

The proportion of people coming from Harrow was surprisingly high.

The number of people using A&E on repeat occasions was surprisingly high.

There was a lack of awareness of GP Hubs as a route to quicker GP appointments.

There was a lack of awareness of the Urgent Care Centre at Central Middx. Hospital as an option.

Access –

People were concerned about parking charges for long and uncertain waiting times.

Some people found signage to the new A&E/UCC was poor.

Some people found the walk to the new unit was unsafe and long.

The process –

People were pleased to have been seen by a nurse within 10 minutes of arrival.

What happens next and waiting times were not made clear to most people.

Dignity, kindness, and respect –

Between 77% and 91% of people gave positive feedback. No one gave negative feedback.

The environment –

Most people were pleased with the new reception / waiting area.

Some suggestions were made for improvement.

Waiting times –

A number of people said the waiting time was better than previous visits.

A number accepted that waiting was what they expected.

A significant number of people said that the waiting time was something that would improve the service.

The following **questions** were sent to **Tina Benson, Operational Director, Northwick Park Hospital** -

1. How did patient numbers this week compare to previous December weeks?
2. How did patient numbers during these timed visits compare to other times that week?
3. What percentages of patients were seen within 4 hours during this week?
4. Can you give us a projection of how you expect visiting times to compare to this week, and the November 2014 low of 65% patients seen within 4 hours.
5. How do you measure waiting times?
6. We only took a snapshot off patients in reception - how much of people's waiting time is spent in reception?
7. Please give us an update on your plans to reduce waiting times, and any progress you have made so far.
8. Do you have any comments to make on this summary of patients' views?

Healthwatch Brent request a response to these questions from Tina Benson

Patient suggested improvements –

Reduce waiting times

Give patients a clear estimate of likely waiting time

Improve the patient calling service, using a message board

Install a clock

Make healthy drinks and snacks available to purchase

Change machine – to convert notes into coins for vending and parking machines

Improved distractions for those waiting – TV with subtitles, magazines, Wi-Fi

Ensure cleaning is done on a regular basis, or spillages responded to quickly

More bins

Sanitiser dispensers

Review / improve signage to the unit, from car parks and main entrance

Review / improve safe pedestrian access to the unit

Healthwatch Brent asks Tina Benson to respond to these suggestions.

Survey of Brent A&E Patients Feb 2015 are included as a separate report.

Healthwatch Brent asks Tina Benson to reflect on this report, and to give her responses.

The questions we asked	The responses patients gave us
Which borough do you live in?	Harrow 21 60% Brent 10 28% Ealing 2 6% Hillingdon 1 3% Lambeth 1 3%
Have you used A&E before?	Yes 28 80% No 7 20%
Which hospital was that?	Northwich Park 23 Ealing 2 Central Middlesex Hospital 1 Barnet 1 Moorfields 1 Royal Free 1 None 7
How often have you used A&E in the last year?	5 times 3 4 times 2 3 times 6 2 times 5 1 time 12 0 times 7
Do you know about GP hubs?	Yes 6 = 3 Brent and 3 Harrow No 29
Do you know about the Urgent Care Centre at Central Middlesex Hospital?	Yes 12 34% No 23 66% 4 Brent 7 Harrow 1 Ealing
How did you get here?	Car 14 Lift in car 5 Public transport 12 Taxi 2 On foot 2 Ambulance 1 The only problem expressed was parking charges
What happened when you first arrived here?	Almost everyone went straight to reception and was registered One person reported no one at reception for 5 minutes on arrival 3 people went to the old department first 1 person arrived with a referral letter from GP 1 came for a follow up following a previous visit 1 person went for an x-ray then to A&E 10 people described the process more fully, most said they were seen by a

nurse on arrival, in 10 minutes, and one 45 minutes after arrival. For most, this was followed by a wait to be called for treatment. 32 people had given a sample and were waiting for results – these were the longest waits reported.

1 person signed in and was waiting without yet seeing the nurse.

Only 3 people said they waited over 2 hours.
One person said they waited over 4 hours.
All others where waiting, having arrived within a hour of our visit.

2 people were sent to surgery straight after being seen by the nurse.

1 person was referred to a doctor by the nurse and was waiting.

Were the reception staff -	% Yes	% No response	% No
Polite?	91	9	0
Sympathetic?	80	20	0
Understanding?	83	17	0
Did staff treat you with -			
Dignity?	77		0
Kindness?	83	17	0
Compassion?	77	23	0
Courtesy?	77	23	0
Respect?	80	20	0

Have you been told what will happen next?
Yes 7
No 28

Have you been told how long you might have to wait?
Yes 10
No 25

Every time I ask (about 4 times) told 30 minutes – that’s ok-busy about 30 mins.
20 mins.
20 mins.
About 2 hours but maybe longer-will ask at desk
It’s better than before - sometimes you waited along time before seeing someone, I have spent 4 to5 hours in the past

Can you tell us about the atmosphere here?
Everyone made positive comments about the new department.
The key descriptions were –

	<p>Quiet and calm Nice, new, clean, spacious, comfortable, hi tech, good More welcoming 5 people said it was all right or ok</p> <p>I like separation between kids and adults, can see its new didn't think it would be this crowded I brought my son here before the change, before there was no space, too many people, not enough seats its relaxed-better than before the changes-more welcoming does not feel intimidating, more welcoming and modernised feels too relaxed to be A&E</p> <p>Suggestions for improvements - drinks expensive and unhealthy, vending machines don't take notes a TV with subtitles or music required</p>
<p>What has been good about this service?</p>	<p>8 people reported a pretty quick / very quick service 6 people said the environment was good 6 people said there was nothing good / nothing particularly good</p> <p>Very busy but thorough Staff listened and understood Nurse talked to me straight away Staff polite, professional Nothing to compare it to Process smoother than before Feel treated well: good at answering questions and made to feel relaxed. Nothing special, standard NHS service Quick and efficient, you know what's going on, that's all you need.</p>
<p>What would make this service better?</p>	<p>Waiting time</p> <p>Waiting time too long, have to ask staff about waiting Waiting times- its improving compared to what it was x4 Waiting time quicker- last time I waited 6-7 hours (was 11pm) at night Speed it up, more staff More staff, doctors- waiting times Less waiting times, not sure how realistic that is- it depends on the demand Its good - just the waiting-no one says anything - its quicker at the GP</p> <p>The environment</p> <p>Not coming and shouting out your name, can't hear as the unit so big - a screen or speaker with name would be better. X2 Need a clock, free coffee machine for the wait Needs- free Wi-Fi – [during the long wait] Entertainment, books, newspapers TV or light music</p> <p>Spillages on floor, cups, cleaning, needs more bins, more hand sanitisers It's a little dirty</p> <p>Parking not clear A vending machine with healthy options instead junk</p>

	<p>Walking distance is too far for people using buses-it's is very long from and entrance No easy walking route to new building (have to walk on the road) Maps not clear where A&E is , had to ask, the walk to new A&E did not feel safe, had to cross road, security issue location is poor, risks to female walking alone at night outside</p> <p>Signage for A&E parking could be clearer Very busy It's costing money because of the parking- that's stressful. Not enough disabled bays its good they now have more toilets need more comfortable seats, no shop here, more awkward, need free Coffee machine / coffee machine works</p> <p>The process Pretty good - noticed and dealt with quickly- informed Being more aware of waiting time that's real not ballpark Name shouting is not clear at all, people with bad hearing cant hear it. Approx. wait time, display off, patient calling system knowing how long wait is Have a doctor at reception would trust him more Be seen instantly Be seen quicker if your in more pain Its ok, just the waiting</p>
<p>How does using this service make you feel?</p>	<p>Hate hospitals- don't like having to be here but have to get health checked Comfortable, environment really nice-better atmosphere than other side Very accessible Hopefully it will put my mind at rest about the pain, then ill go back home Its very good / good / alright / better than most – 7 people Its ok / alright / not too bad - 6 people</p> <p>Should have come here first Good experience Wished had not come but necessary Cared for, accessible Don't like the seating Grateful - they try their best Feel you have somewhere to go when no doctors available Human Previously I was very happy with the service</p> <p>Grateful about resources at least some help Radiologist was good Quiet because of xmas Best experience ever in A&E</p>

