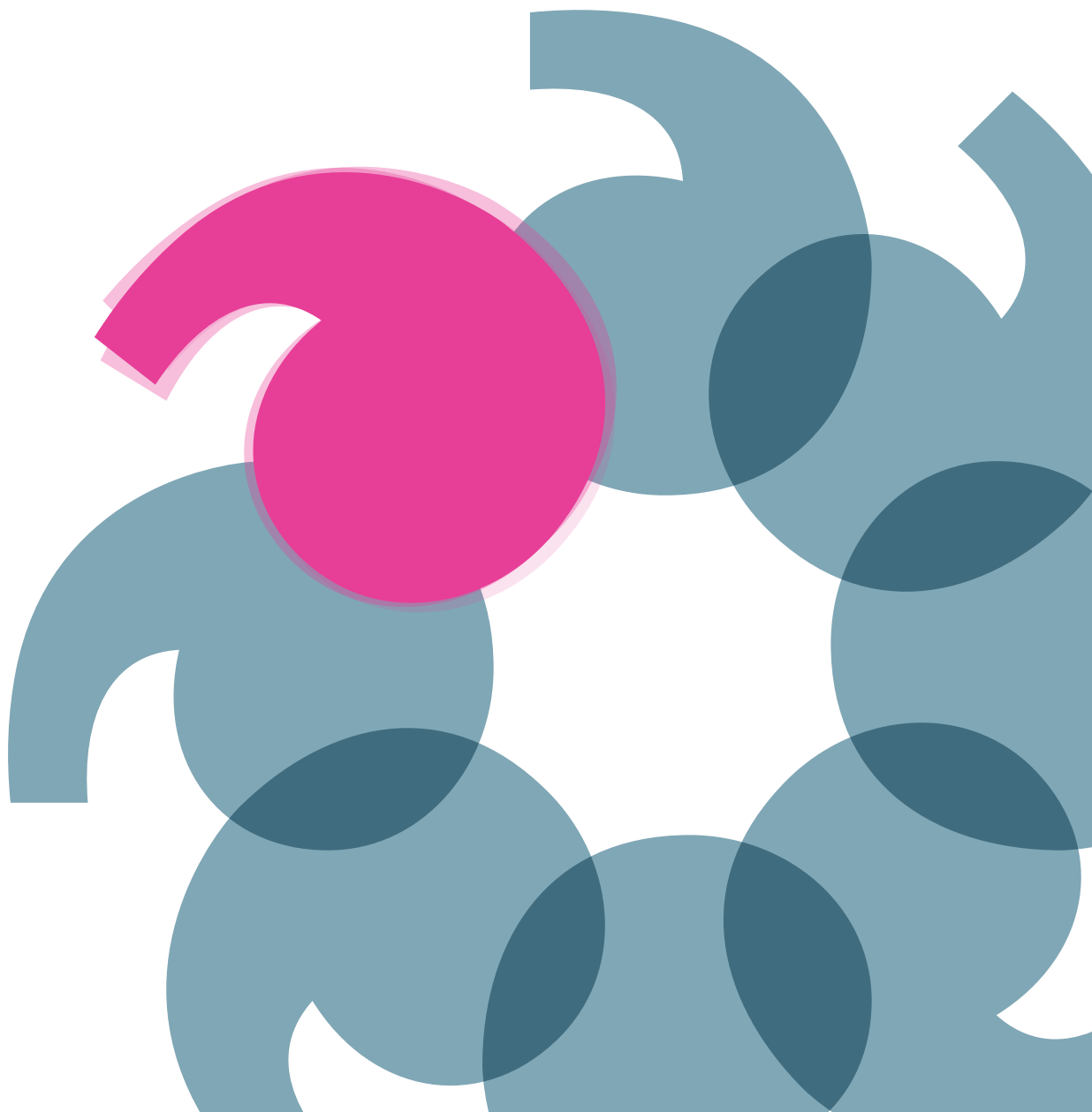


Urgent and same day GP services Feedback from the community



Healthwatch Islington

Healthwatch Islington is an independent organisation led by volunteers from the local community. It is part of a national network of Healthwatch organisations that involve people of all ages and all sections of the community.

Healthwatch Islington gathers local people's views on the health and social care services that they use. We make sure those views are taken into account when decisions are taken on how services will look in the future, and how they can be improved.

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Introduction

The Angel Medical Centre walk in service is based at the Ritchie Street Health Centre. The walk in service is used by people who need an urgent or same day GP appointment. However, the service is unable to access patient notes, and unable to refer patients on to secondary services. It is also used by many people who don't live in the borough. It is unlikely that this walk in service will be recommissioned.

At the request of Islington Clinical Commissioning Group, we gathered feedback from the community about urgent and same day GP services. We undertook two pieces of engagement work:

- 1.** Same day GP services questionnaire. We invited respondents to give feedback about the walk in centre and about the I-HUB service (which provides weekend and evening GP appointments to patients registered with an Islington GP). Where respondents had not used these services we wanted to understand why. We also invited respondents to express a preference between two proposed models for the future delivery of urgent and same day GP services.
- 2.** Visits to the Angel Medical Centre. We interviewed service users who were using the walk in service. This allowed us to hear from a younger demographic. It also allowed us to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the existing service, from the perspective of service users.

In this report we share the findings from both pieces of work. This will help to inform local decision-making about the future provision of urgent and same day GP services.

Same day GP services questionnaire

Who we heard from

We designed a survey asking respondents whether they had used the Angel Medical Centre (the walk in service operating out of the Ritchie Street Health Centre) or the iHUB service (offering evening and weekend appointments to Islington residents out of three GP centres across the borough). We asked those that had used the services what they had liked or disliked about them. We asked those who hadn't used the services why they had not used them. Additionally we asked respondents whether, when they needed to see the GP urgently, it was more important that they were seen at their own practice, or that there was a larger pool of appointments available to them even if it meant being seen elsewhere.

A link to the survey was shared with the Healthwatch membership via email, and with a wider Islington audience via our website and social media channels. In addition, a paper version of the survey was made available at the June 2018 meeting of the Islington Patient Group. We also collected responses at CallyFest, a street festival on Caledonian Road.

We received 68 responses, 65 of which were eligible (from people who were registered with an Islington GP or lived in Islington). About three quarters of respondents said that they visited their GP only a few times a year, or less often than that. Most respondents were aged over 50.

Age of respondents

17 & under	18-24	25-49	50-64	65-79	80+	Did not say	Total
1	1	6	22	26	0	9	65

Sex of respondents

Female	Male	Did not say	Total
41	20	4	65

Ethnicity of respondents

Asian/ Asian British	3
Black/ Black British	8
Chinese	3
Mixed	1

White British	33
White Irish	2
White Other	1
Did not say	14
Total	65

Is respondent a carer?

Yes	No	Did not say
11	44	10

Does respondent identify as disabled?

Yes	No	Did not say
24	34	7

The walk in service at the Angel Medical Centre

'I was seen as soon as possible. At my GP, I have to wait 3 weeks.'

Respondent 20

Just over a quarter of respondents (17) had used the walk in centre. Reviews were mixed, but tending towards the favourable end of the spectrum. The high quality of the staff and the service were mentioned. There was also a sense that, irrespective of urgency, some simply preferred this model of accessing GP services since no appointment was necessary. This was a preference that was shared by many of the service users we spoke to when we visited the walk in centre.

Criticisms related to the inability of the service to refer patients on to secondary care, to long waits, and being sent on to wait again at A&E. One respondent said that the service was not accessible to Deaf patients because there was no interpreting support for British Sign Language.

In the main, the three quarters of respondents that hadn't used the walk in centre either hadn't heard of it or had never had need of it. One or two cited regular GP surgeries that offered evening appointments (St Johns Way) or a same day triage system, meaning their urgent care needs were already met. Similarly, another respondent relied on a Telecare system. Three respondents complained that the walk in centre was too far away or poorly located.

The I-HUB service

'Very quiet, seen quickly, plenty of time given. I wonder about the cost. Three reception staff with only three people in the surgery - do they have enough to do?'

Respondent 39

13 respondents had used the I-HUB service. Reviews were generally very positive. The service was described as fast and efficient, and the staff as being helpful.

45 respondents said that they had not used the service. Reasons given were very similar to those given for the walk in centre.

Preferences for future provision

'I don't mind who I see if I have an urgent medical problem, and if they can access my notes that is excellent'

Respondent 3

Respondents were told that extra appointments for people who needed to see a GP urgently would continue to be funded, but not using the existing model. Respondents were asked to express a preferred choice out of the following two options for a future delivery model (respondents were also able to say that they were unsure):

Option 1: All the extra appointments would be available to you, but you'd have a limited choice of where you could go to see a GP - you wouldn't be seen at your own practice.

Option 2: Only a few of the extra appointments would be available to you (so you'd be less likely to get one) but you'd be seen in your own GP practice.

There was an even split of opinions:

- ▶ 23 respondents chose option 1, which describes a hub model. Respondents felt that getting the appointment was more important than convenience. A number of respondents did not feel that they had a strong existing relationship with a GP, so placed less value on being seen at their own practice.
- ▶ 23 respondents preferred to be seen at their own practice. One or two made this conditional, feeling it was more important for children than for adults. Others cited mobility issues or long term health conditions as the reasons for this choice.
- ▶ 15 respondents weren't sure and 4 did not answer the question

We also asked respondents to rank in order of preference four different methods for booking a same day/ urgent appointment. Phoning was most popular, followed by booking online, then going in and waiting to be seen. Going in and booking an appointment for later in the day was the least popular method.

Visits to the walk in centre

Who we spoke to

We spent the afternoon of Tuesday 28 August and all day (8am to 4pm) on Thursday 30 August at the Angel Medical Centre talking to service users. One member of staff and two trained volunteers took part in this exercise. We identified people who had used the walk in centre (as opposed to the GP practice located on the same site) and approached them on their way out to invite them to give feedback about their experience of using the service. Feedback was collected via a survey form we had prepared in advance, based on questions that had been sent to us by Islington Clinical Commissioning Group.

We spoke to 48 people who had used the walk in centre. Of these, only one had been unable to secure an appointment (once all the walk in appointments for the day are allocated, no further appointments are issued and people arriving after this point are turned away).

34 of the respondents were Islington residents. 14 were non-Islington residents. None of the non-Islington residents reported being registered with an Islington GP, although in one or two cases the responses they gave to later questions appeared to suggest that they were. Most respondents were aged under 50.

Age of respondents

17 & under	18-24	25-49	50-64	65-79	80+	Did not say	Total
4	12	23	5	2	1	1	48

Sex of respondents

Female	Male	Did not say	Total
28	19	1	48

Ethnicity of respondents

Black/ Black British	6
Chinese	2
Latin American	1
Mixed White and Black	3
Mixed White and Asian	2

White British	20
White Irish	2
White Any Other	10
Did not say	2
Total	48

Why respondents had come to the walk in centre

Patients fell into four broad categories, though there was some overlap:

1. Patients who were not registered with a local GP (for example, had just moved to the country or were on holiday) who had either run out of medication or needed to see a GP urgently.
2. Patients who hadn't been able to get a same day, or sometimes same week, appointment with their own GP so came here to be seen sooner. These patients seem not to have been told about the I-HUB service.
3. Patients who had called 111 or been referred by a local pharmacy or GP.
4. Patients who just wanted to be seen quickly – some worked locally and came on their breaks.

How did you find out about the walk in centre?

Method	Number of respondents
GP told me about it	13
Looked online	10
Friend or family	9
111	3
Work colleague	2
Previous visit/ local knowledge	2
Signposted by another organisation	2
Hospital minor injuries department	1
Pharmacist	1
Unknown/ did not say	5
Total	48

Experience of getting an appointment at the walk in service

Feedback was very positive. 40 of the respondents gave positive responses when asked about their experience of getting an appointment at the walk in service. The process was commonly described as fast, easy and efficient. There were no negative comments about the appointment process, though one respondent qualified their endorsement because they felt there was insufficient privacy at reception.

If you hadn't been able to come to the walk in centre, what would you have done?

Action	Number of respondents*
Booked a GP appointment	13
Don't know	7
Gone to another walk in centre	6
Gone to Accident and Emergency (A&E)	6
I would have left it/ stayed in bed	4
I would have waited	3
Come back to this walk in centre another day	3
Gone private/ maybe have to pay	2
111	2
Pharmacy	1
French medicare	1
No answer	4

*some respondents identified more than one action

Knowledge of other services offering urgent care for minor conditions

27 respondents said that they were aware of other services. With these respondents we went through a list of named services to measure knowledge levels for each service. The knowledge of named services was quite low. This could reflect the fact that a number of people using the walk in centre were signposted there directly by their own GP, or by friends and family, so had not needed to investigate other options.

The 111 and pharmacy services were the best known alternatives to the walk in centre, and were each recognised by 12 respondents. Although we would expect most, if not all of these respondents to be familiar with pharmacy, it was clear that not everyone identified it as a service appropriate for urgent care for minor conditions. Three respondents identified Accident and Emergency as an appropriate service even though it was not included in the list we used on the survey form. Two respondents knew about hospital urgent care centres. Only one person was familiar with the I-HUB extended hours GP service.

20 respondents had used these other services, with 111 and pharmacy again the services commonly used. We did ask why they had chosen on those occasions to use other services instead of the walk in centre, but they had often been accessed in relation to the same episode of ill health. The fact that they were quicker appeared to be the main consideration. There was also some sense that less serious issues did not merit a visit to the walk in centre.

Satisfaction with the service

There was a high level of satisfaction with the service provided by the Angel Medical Centre. We asked respondents whether the problem that they had come with today had been resolved as a result of their visit. Out of the 41 respondents who answered the question, 36 felt that their problem had been resolved.

A good number of respondents felt that their problem was resolved once they were prescribed medicine (Fourteen respondents mentioned medicine specifically in response to the question). Antibiotics in particular were mentioned.

We also asked if there was anything that could have helped resolve their problem more quickly. Suggestions included:

- ▶ Making it easier to get a GP appointment in the first place. Much of the traffic that the walk in centre receives is due to difficulties in accessing GP appointments in a timely and/ or convenient manner. A good number of respondents had presented at the walk in centre because they had been unable to book an appointment with their GP.
- ▶ Being able to book appointments at the walk in centre over the phone
- ▶ Giving pharmacists the ability to prescribe antibiotics

Finally we asked respondents whether there was anything that was particularly good or bad about their experience of the walk in centre. Despite the question being framed in such a way as to encourage a mix of responses, comments received were overwhelmingly positive. The speed of the service and the quality of the staff were praised. Service users also liked the fact that a pharmacy was based at the same location, which made it a simple matter to collect all the medicine that you'd just been prescribed.

Most couldn't think of anything that could have improved their experience. Two respondents did say that having their electronic records updated would have been better. Another said that the toilets were not clearly signed. One person suggested that a television could be installed to help pass the time during long waits, and another respondent said they would have liked a cup of tea. These responses indicate that the people we spoke to didn't generally have any big issues with the service.

Conclusion

- ▶ The current service provided at the Angel Medical Centre is very highly thought of by the people who use it.

Some of the service users we spoke to expressed a preference for the walk in model as a means of accessing services in general. Others had tried to book an appointment with their GP practice, but had been frustrated in their attempts to do so. The speed and quality of the walk in service was praised, as was the fact that a pharmacy was located on site.

- ▶ Data from commissioners shows that most people who use the walk in centre live nearby

Some people who hadn't used the walk in centre told us it was not well located. A redistribution of urgent and same day appointments across the borough would make availability more equal.

The results from our same day GP services questionnaire revealed no clear preference amongst respondents regarding the model by which these appointments should be made available. Whatever that new model ends up being, it is important that the strengths of the current model are not lost. It is also important that needs of people who are not registered with a local GP are considered.

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