

The experiences of Solihull residents who try to access urgent care

Impact Report May 2024



healthwatch
Solihull

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Our initial report: What we heard

Healthwatch Solihull investigated residents' experiences of trying to access urgent care. The report looked at what helped and/or hindered residents experiences trying to access urgent care and the impact such barriers have on their health, wellbeing and/or quality of life.

Most of the urgent care services we heard about included A&E, NHS 111 and the ambulance service.

The report also found that the most important thing for Solihull residents when choosing an urgent health service included:

- location (it is easy to access or close to get to/from).
- access a healthcare professional on the same day.

Residents told us:

- The closure of the Minor Injuries Unit in Solihull Hospital during the pandemic meant people had to travel further to access urgent care and this caused further stress and upset.
- The public were confused about what is available to access and where.
- People used A&E inappropriately because they could not get a GP appointment.
- Alternative urgent care options were not clear or well advertised. Poor communication between services leads to confusion and negative experiences.

You can read the full report and findings [here](#)

What we did as a result:

Healthwatch Solihull shared what we heard from patients with Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB) and University Hospital Birmingham (UHB). They acknowledged the need to improve on the issues we found during our investigation and they committed to improve services.

What happened next?

Healthwatch Solihull followed up with Birmingham and Solihull ICB and University Hospitals Birmingham six months following our initial report to find out what improvements had been made.

As a result of our original report, and the actions the ICB have implemented, patients and the public should experience the following improvements:

- Improved communication and engagement following the implementation of a comprehensive stakeholder engagement programme that will ensure that patients voices inform the development of the UEC strategy.
- Improved continuation of care and communication between providers following a communications plan being developed.
- Improved signposting for alternative access to avoid unnecessary attendance to A&E or other parts of the urgent care pathways following work undertaken via Locality Hubs and integrated same day urgent care.
- Improved awareness of Solihull Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) following ongoing collaboration with University Hospitals Birmingham.
- In our original report, patients reported concerns around distance of services and the costs of travel. The ICB have committed to a 'Joint Forward Plan' over the next 5 years which will 'radically shift the way health and care is delivered– focusing on preventing ill-health while integrating services so that healthcare is provided as close to people's homes as possible'.

In addition to this University Hospitals Birmingham updated us on the following measures they took following our report:

- Undertook a comprehensive communications campaign regarding the opening and what service was available, including social media, local newspapers, local radio, and advertising on billboards and in local train stations.
- Updated the webpage to make it clearer for patients to understand how to access the two services running in the UTC including how to book an appointment with BADGER for a minor illness.
- Continue to promote the UTC on social media including opening times, access routes, and conditions treated.
- If eligible, patients can claim travel costs etc through the NHS scheme and reclaim at reception.
- The ICB continue to promote the UTC for urgent issues when patients cannot access a GP.
- New signage has been installed within the UTC waiting area to explain how the two services work, who runs them, waiting time expectations and conditions treated.

Despite the many changes and improvements made by both the ICB and UHB, we are continuing to hear from members of the public that accessing urgent care in Solihull is confusing.

People are still reporting that the UTC is hard to navigate, and they are unsure what care is available there. People have also told us how they have accessed the UTC and been turned away.

We will continue to work with providers to ensure that they are hearing feedback and acting upon concerns.

If you would like to tell us your experiences, you can do so here:
www.healthwatchsolihull.org.uk/services/

About Us

Healthwatch Solihull is the independent champion for health and social care services. We exist to ensure people are at the heart of care. We provide patients and the public with ways to feedback and have a stronger say about the services they use. We listen to what people like about services, and what could be improved. This could be about general practices, hospitals, dentists, opticians, pharmacists, nursing and residential homes or care you receive in the community. We have the power to ensure that those organisations that design, run or regulate NHS and social care, listen to people's views and act on them. People's experiences prompt and lead our activities and investigations, with our reports focusing on improving services. We also encourage services to involve patients and the public in decisions that affect them. Through our Information and Signposting Line, Healthwatch Solihull also helps people find out the information they need about services in their area. People sharing their experiences can make a big difference. We aim to help make health and care services better for patients and their families.

Healthwatch Solihull
Enterprise Centre
Solihull
B37 7PB

0808 196 3912
enquiries@healthwatchsolihull.org.uk
www.healthwatchsolihull.org.uk

