

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for giving Healthwatch Birmingham (HWB) the opportunity to comment on BSOL's service specifications for Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs). We welcome that BSOL is committed to delivering an improved and sustainable primary and urgent care system, which operates 24 hours per day, seven days a week. As well as ensuring that these services are safe, high-quality, easily accessible, appropriate, integrated and responsive. Below are some of our comments to the service specification for UTCs:

Location of UTCs:

We are pleased to see that even though UTCs are replacing walk-in-centres, the location will remain the same. One key principle of Urgent Treatment Centres is that they are delivered in or as close to people's homes as possible, minimizing disruption and inconvenience for patients and their families.

We are therefore concerned that you state in the service specification, that there is potential for UTCs to move to a different location during the life of the contract. As stated in the document "*therefore, the CCG reserves the right to relocate services during the course of the contract. Any change of location will be on a "like for like" basis in service terms*". Although, we agree that service specification can change during a contract, our concerns are that:

- It is unclear why there is a consultations on locations that are likely to change in response to developments under the BSOL CCG's Primary Care Access Transformation Plan. Surely, members of the public need the right information in order to make informed decisions?
- Although, any change will be on a 'like for like' basis, the impact on patients and the public might be significant. If a service was moved to another location, it might make access difficult, especially for those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.
- It is unclear what specific developments will lead to a decision to change the location of a UTC.
- Equally important, it is unclear how members of the public, service users and patients will be involved in decision making. Will the CCG engage and consult with people in making decisions? At what points in the decision-making process will they be involved? A change of service location is a fundamental change for patients which would require a consultation and equality analysis among other things.

The Scope of Service and Workforce Requirements

The current structures of walk-in centres that UTCs will replace provide different services, have different staffing arrangements (some led by a Nurse and others by a GP), and different opening times. Therefore, the diagnostics and clinical service patients receive is inconsistent and this has the potential of resulting in health inequality. We recognise that the current service specification for UTCs has addressed some of these issues.



Healthwatch Birmingham

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- However, it is not clear whether all UTCs will offer the same service or be manned by similar staff in terms of skills, qualification and experience.
- It is not clear whether there is a minimum requirement of the staffing structure (although we welcome that there is an inclusion of mental health staff, paediatrician etc) or will this decision be left to the contract holder?

Healthwatch Birmingham believes that it is essential that there is consistency in the quality of care patients attending UTCs receive and this starts with patients being able to access like for like services from similarly trained/skilled staff.

Waiting Times

The specification states that *'There is no requirement to undertake an initial clinical assessment or triage in order to prioritise the order in which patients are seen. However, a protocol should be in place to identify on arrival any patients that need to be seen without delay or to fast-track any patient whose condition deteriorates whilst waiting to be seen'*.

Although, we understand the intention of the statement (i.e. manage expectations), we think that the two statements are contradictory and can be interpreted differently by different contract holders. We believe that this can be made clearer if it stated:

'An assessment will be carried out on arrival to identify any patients that need to be seen without delay or to fast-track any patient whose condition deteriorates whilst waiting to be seen'. However, this assessment is not done to prioritise the order in which patients are seen'.

Patient Satisfaction and Complaints

We agree that carrying out a patient satisfaction survey and having a complaints procedure will benefit patients and lead to improved health outcomes. However, Healthwatch Birmingham believes that this element of the specification should include a requirement for the UTC to demonstrate how they are using data from surveys and complaints to make improvements or changes to how they deliver services (i.e. *'you said we did'*).

Healthwatch Birmingham is currently working with Urgent Care Centres (UCCs) in Birmingham to ensure information on HWBs services is available and accessible to as many patients, service users and members of the public as possible across the city's health and care services. We have been keen to help UCCs meet the requirement of the NHS Standard Contract (SC16 16.2.1) which asks for health providers to display clear information about how to make a complaint, share feedback or **how to contact local Healthwatch** for service users and members of the public. We have so far provided UCCs with Healthwatch Birmingham information materials to display in their service.



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Currently, posters and information leaflets on how to contact or share feedback with Healthwatch Birmingham are displayed at the following UCCs/walk-in centre: Washwood Heath Centre, Warren Farm UCC, Birmingham NHS Walk in Centre, and South Birmingham GP Walk in Centre.

Healthwatch, believes that the requirement in the service specification should go beyond carrying out a patient survey and having a complaints procedure. This should include a requirement to display or make visible information to patients about making complaints, being involved in patient surveys and contacting their local Healthwatch as per NHS Standard Contract.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kalebe".

Chipiliro Kalebe-Nyamongo

Policy Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Cave".

Andy Cave

Chief Executive Officer



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