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Where to go for the right health care? The public needs clear information

With the ever-mounting pressure on Accident and Emergency (A&E), Urgent care and GPs, consumer champion Healthwatch Leicestershire spoke to 500 members of the public about reducing strain on health services. The watchdog found a mixed picture that suggests that people want clearer information on where to go for the right health care.

On average, 40% of people spoken to were unaware or unsure of where to find their nearest Urgent Care Centre. Many respondents also said that relevant information about Urgent Care Centres could be displayed in GP practices and hospital waiting rooms, alongside information on which services would be most appropriate for their symptoms.

Of the people who were asked what they would do if they needed a doctor when their GP practice was closed, 101 out of 390 respondents said that they would telephone their GP practice and listen to the answerphone message. This highlights the importance of the GP Practice's out-of-hours message. Encouragingly, only 10 out of 390 people from across Leicestershire said that they would ring 999.

Healthwatch Leicestershire's findings suggest that people are aware that there are a range of health services but that they are sometimes unsure of which option is most suitable to their individual situation. Many feel that they would benefit from additional information.

Healthwatch Leicestershire hopes that its findings will support healthcare providers, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and other providers as they work to increase care in the community by integrating health and care services across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Sue Venables, Communications, Engagement and Involvement Manager at West Leicestershire CCG commented on Healthwatch Leicestershire's findings saying:

Patient insights and experiences are essential to enable the NHS to plan, design and provide services that improve the health and lives of local people. The findings of this work will help to ensure that the patient voice is heard and contributes to transforming our urgent and emergency care

system so that people find it easier to access information, advice, guidance and treatment at the right time and in the right place.

Healthwatch Leicestershire's full findings are available in its report, *Community Conversations*, which is available online at:
<http://www.healthwatchleicestershire.co.uk/resources>

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Editor notes

About Healthwatch Leicestershire

Healthwatch Leicestershire is an independent consumer champion for health and social care in Leicestershire. The organisation helps to shape and improve local health and social care in our community. Healthwatch Leicestershire is part of the Healthwatch national network, established by the Government to ensure local patients and users have a greater input to shaping and designing local services.

About Healthwatch England

Healthwatch England is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in England. The organisation has independent statutory powers, as stated in the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to ensure the consumers' voice is heard and best practice is delivered in health and social care nationally. Healthwatch is also focused on providing leadership, guidance and support to the development of the Healthwatch network. To find out more please go to www.healthwatch.co.uk.