

# Widnes Urgent Treatment Centre

Patient Feedback report – October 2023 to March 2024



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## What is an Urgent Treatment Centre?

Halton has two Urgent Treatment Centres, located at Halton Hospital in Runcorn, and at the Health Care Resource Centre in Widnes.

Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs) provide urgent medical help when it's not a life-threatening emergency.

Open at least 12 hours a day, every day, UTCs are equipped to investigate, diagnose, and deal with many of the most common injuries and illnesses people attend Emergency Departments (A&E) for.

People who go to a UTC are typically:

- mobile and able to move around
- in need of same day treatment.

People may also need some investigative tests to be carried out while they are in the UTC.

The UTC Principles and Standards<sup>1</sup> set out the minimum service that UTCs are expected to provide. As a priority, UTCs are expected to:

- open 7 days a week, 12 hours a day as a minimum
- see both booked and walk-in patients
- see both minor injuries and minor illnesses
- see patients of all ages, including children under 2
- have a basic consistent investigative and diagnostic offering on site (with clear pathways if these are not available in the UTC)
- accept appropriate ambulance arrivals
- have access to patient records
- clearly communicate what the service is for via consistent urgent treatment centre signage, to ensure everyone understands the service.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/urgent-treatment-centres-principles-and-standards/>

## Why are we visiting the UTC?

We have been visiting both UTC's in Halton as part of our planned public outreach and engagement sessions across the borough. The aim of the visits is to ask patients about their experience at the Urgent Treatment Centre, explore any themes emerging from comments made and feed these back to the service providers, and service commissioners, to help improve services in the future.

Copies of our UTC reports can be found on our website - <https://bit.ly/hwhUTC2>

## What we did

We carried out five visits to the Widnes UTC between 18 October 2023 and 27 March 2024.

The UTC is located within the Widnes Health Care Resource Centre, Caldwell Road, Oaks Place, Widnes, Cheshire.

Each visit lasted between two and three hours and in total 98 people took the time to give us their experience. We used a two-part questionnaire to gather the views of patients. Part One covered their experiences prior to triage and treatment. Part Two was to be completed once the patient had been treated and discharged.

The information in this report gives a snapshot of the experiences of people attending the Widnes Urgent Treatment Centre during our visits.

Due to the number of responses received the report cannot be considered to be fully representative of all patients attending the UTC. It is presented to provide a snapshot of the experiences of those who took part and to highlight areas for consideration by commissioners and providers.

### Acknowledgement

We would like to thank all the staff and patients at NHS Widnes Urgent Treatment Centre for their help and support during our visits.

## Summary

A total of 98 patients took time to give us their views.

The results and feedback show that the UTC offers an excellent alternative for patients who feel they need same day treatment and may have visited A&E instead if there wasn't a local UTC available.

It supports patients attending from Halton and further afield, many of whom have been unable to access suitable appointments with their own GP practices and see the UTC as a viable alternative for treatment.

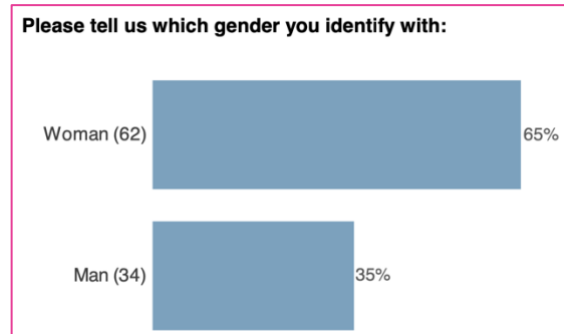
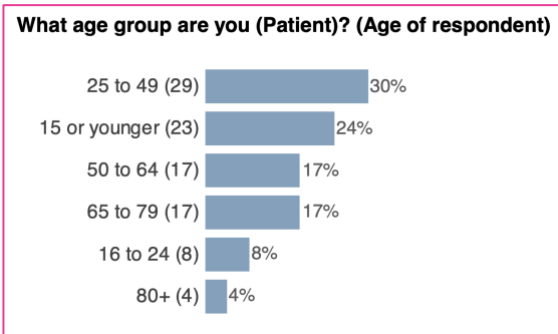
During our visits we observed staff treating patients with dignity and respect and being, friendly, helpful and courteous to patients, which is also reflected in the comments from patients taking part in our survey.

The Widnes UTC service is generally well valued by the people using it, with 94% of patients likely to recommend the service to friends or family members.

Patient satisfaction rates do tend to vary in line with how busy the service is and how long patients have to wait for treatment.

# Survey results

## Demographics – Age and Gender

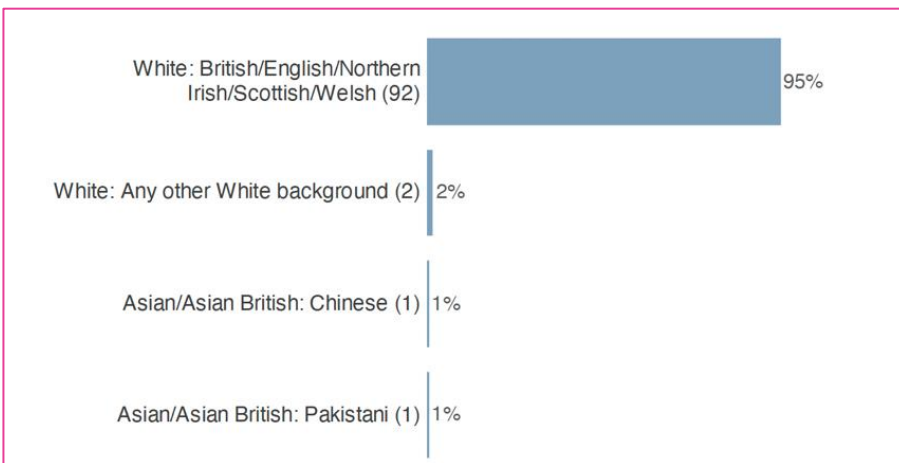


Almost a quarter of all patients, (24%), were aged under 16. 32% of patients were aged under 25. 47% were between the ages of 25 and 64.

17% of patients were aged between 65 and 79 years old.

96 patients gave us details of their gender. 65% of patients were women, 35% men.

## Ethnicity

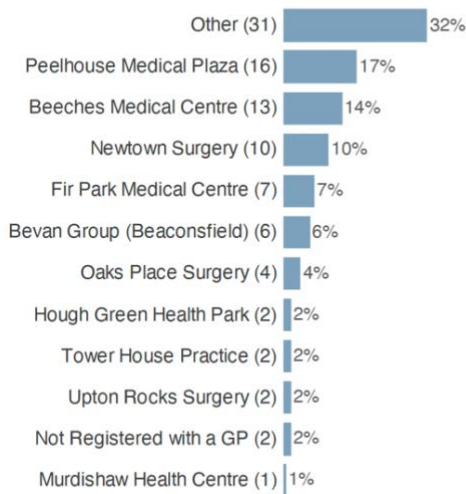


96 patients gave details of their ethnicity, with two people preferring not to answer.



## Which GP practice are you registered with?

### Which GP practice are you registered with? (Your Registered GP Practice)



96 people answered this question. Two people (2%) were not registered with GP's.

32% of people were registered with GP practices outside Halton.

63% of patients were registered with Widnes GP practices, and the remaining 3% were registered with Runcorn GP practices.

## How did you travel here today?

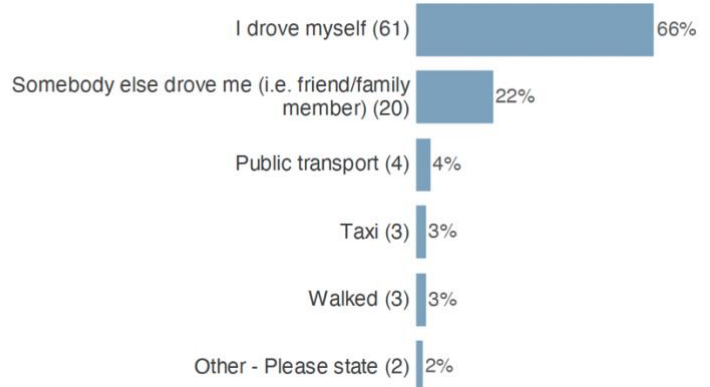
Ninety-three people answered this question. Most patients arrived at the UTC by car, with 66% driving themselves and another 22% getting a lift from a friend or family member.

Four people arrived via public transport, while three told us they lived close enough to walk to the UTC.

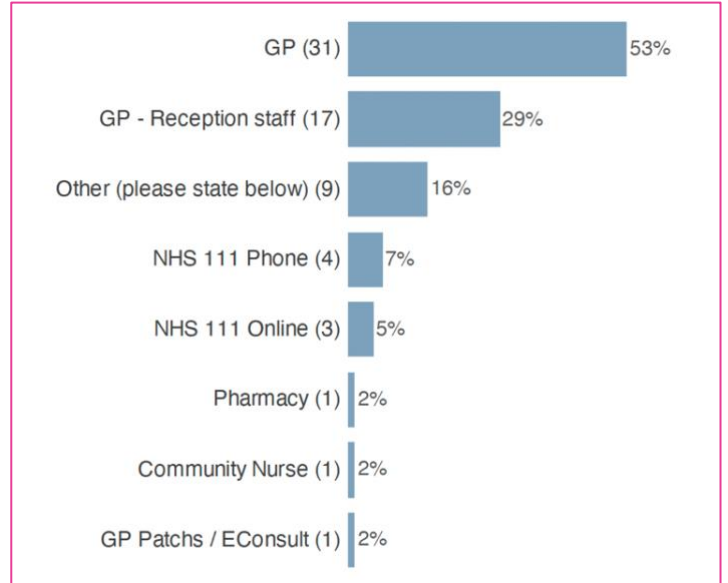
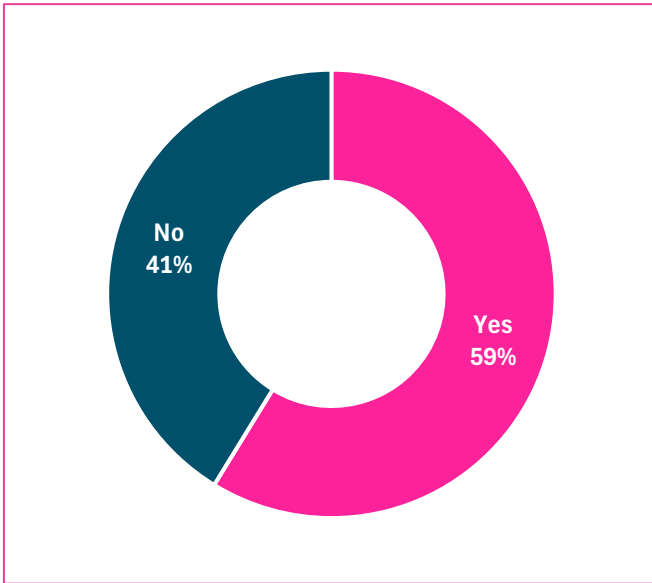
Three people arrived by Taxi.

One patient actually worked within the Health Care Resource Centre

### How did you travel here today?



## Did you look for help or advice elsewhere before coming to the UTC? (multi-choice)



59% (57) of patients had looked elsewhere for help or advice before attending the UTC.

Many patients had attempted more than one route before visiting the UTC.

Of the 57 who'd tried for help elsewhere:

- 31 people (53%) said they had spoken to their GP.
- 17 people (29%) said they had spoken to reception staff at their GP practice.
- One person had tried to use the online Patches system but hadn't received a response, so they came to the UTC.
- Four people had tried the NHS 111 phone line and three had tried NHS111 online.
- One person had visited the pharmacy and been advised to attend the UTC.
- One person had been advised to visit the UTC by a community nurse.

When we break the figures down just for the 62 people who told us they were registered at Halton GP practices, we see a slight increase in the numbers, with 57% (35) saying they had sought help elsewhere before attending the UTC.



## What was the outcome? (multi-choice)

Thirty-three people told us they were unable to get an appointment at their GP practice.

Seven people said they were advised to attend the UTC by their GP practice. One person

had a video call with their GP and were told to attend the UTC for treatment.

Another person explained they were offered a GP appointment in 10 days' time, but felt they needed to be seen sooner so came to the UTC.

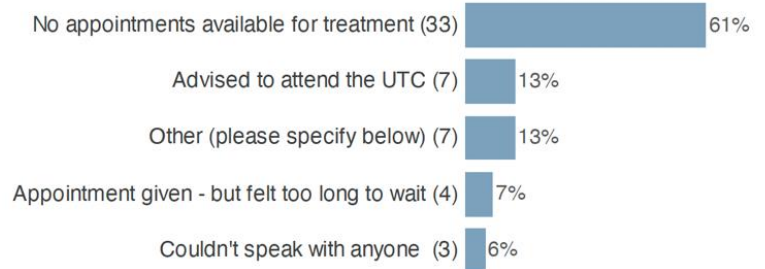
Another patient said, *'My surgery said a pharmacist would call me but they never did. When I followed up the next day, they explained that the GP surgery should never had promised that as it is not a service they offer.'*

One patient was offered a 3.00pm appointment at their GP but was worried about the pain they were in so decided to come to the UTC.

Another told us, *'My practice said they are short staffed today, they only have three staff, so they sent us to the UTC.'*

Another commented that they had, *'given up on visiting our GP as they never have any appointments.'*

### What was the outcome?



## If you didn't try going anywhere else instead of the UTC, why not? (multi-choice)

Forty people told us they came straight to the UTC without seeking advice or treatment elsewhere.

The reasons why they didn't look for help elsewhere first included:

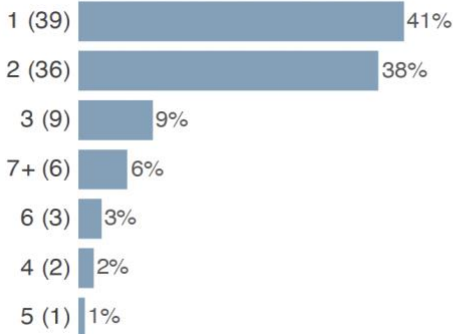
If you didn't try going anywhere else instead of the UTC, why not? (Please tick all that apply)



- Six people (15%) felt it was too urgent to go elsewhere.
- Fourteen people (35%) said the UTC was the most convenient option for them.
- Seven people (18%) thought they wouldn't be able to get a GP appointment and hadn't tried.
- Six (15%) said they assumed it was the best place to be seen with their symptoms / condition.
- Six people (15%) had previously been advised to come to the UTC by a medical professional.
- Four people (10%) suspected they needed a scan or x-ray and felt the UTC was their best option.

## How many times have you visited the UTC in the past year?

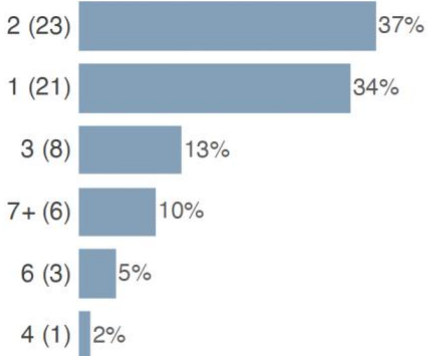
### Patients from all areas – Visits to the UTC



Ninety-six people answered this question. For 41% it was their first visit to the UTC in the past 12 months. 38% had been twice, while 9% had been three times.

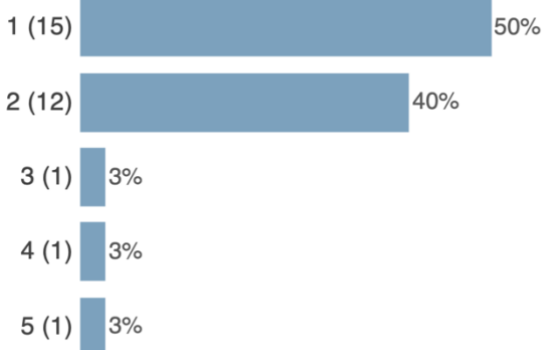
6% had visited between four and six times, while a further 6% had been seven or more times during the year.

### Patients from Halton – Visits to the UTC



When we break down the figures to just patients from Halton, we can see that 34% of Halton patients were at the UTC for the first time in over a year, while a further 37% were at the UTC for the second time.

### Patients from outside Halton – Visits to the UTC

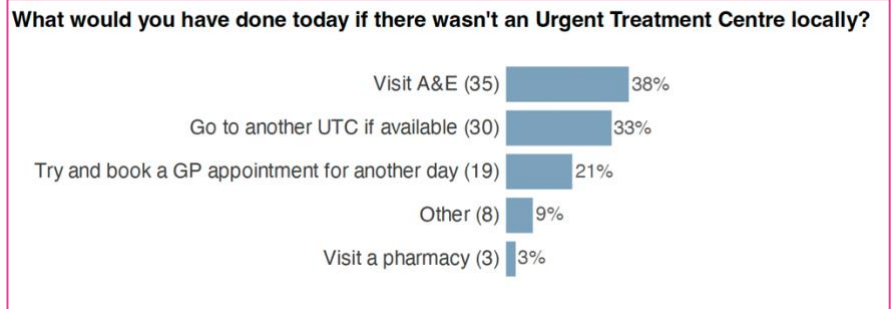


For 50% of people from outside Halton it was their first visit to the UTC in a year or more.

A further 40% were attending the UTC for the second time in twelve months.

## What would you have done today if there wasn't an Urgent Treatment Centre locally?

More than one in three people, (38%) said they would have gone to A&E if there hadn't been the option of an Urgent Treatment Centre to visit.



Another 33% said they would try another UTC. One person said they would have visited Runcorn UTC, while another two said they would have tried St Helens UTC. One person told us they had tried St Helens UTC the previous day and the x-ray was closed, so they had come to Widnes today.

Just over one in five people (21%) said they would have tried to book an appointment with their GP for another day.

Three people told us they would have visited a pharmacy for help instead.

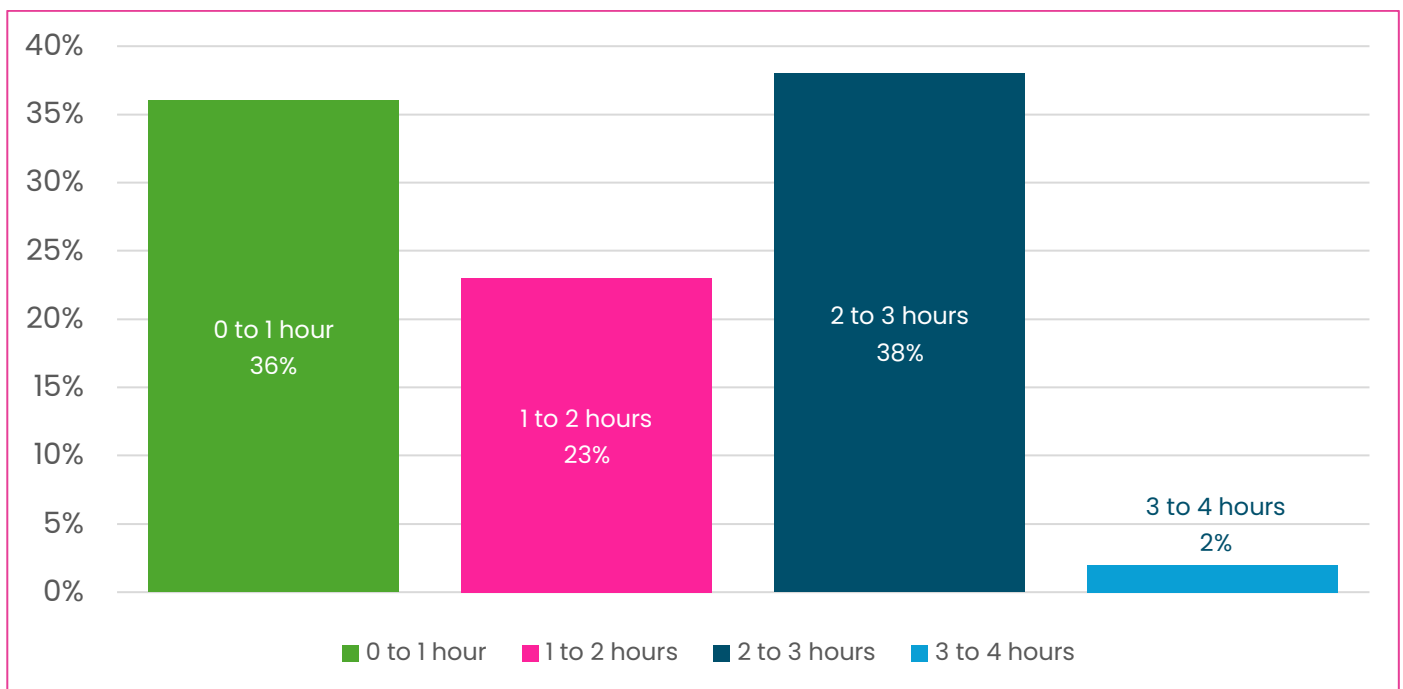
One person told us, *'I don't know what I would do. I nearly cried when they told me they could help me here after already trying the GP and Halewood UTC.'*

## Part Two results

We asked people we initially spoke with to complete a second questionnaire once they'd been seen and treated at the UTC. As our visits to the UTC are generally less than four hours in length, we ask for the second questionnaire to be returned via Freepost, or handed in to the UTC reception and forms are then posted on to us. Not everyone completes and returns this form. In total we received 51 'Part 2' forms, a response rate of 45%.

The information given below is based on the responses of these 51 patients.

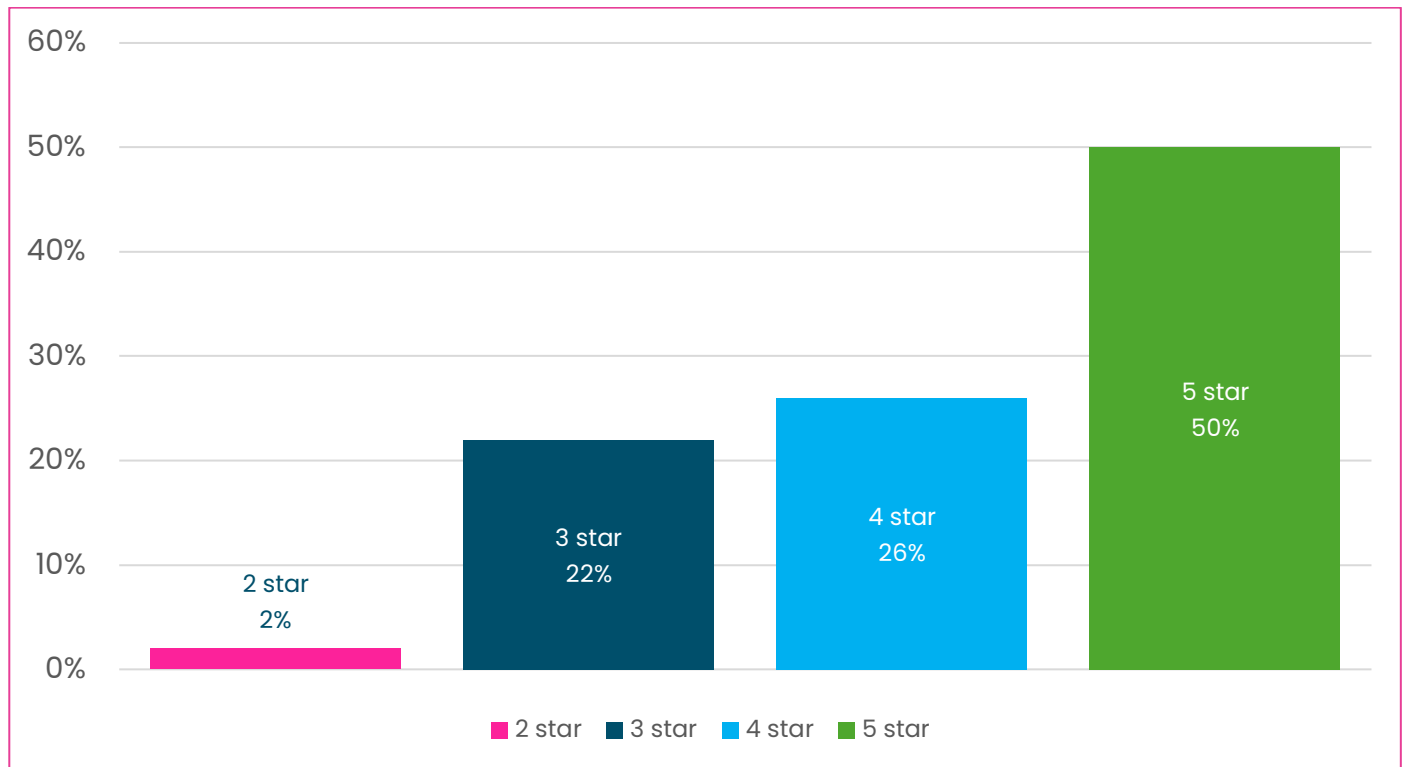
### How long has it taken from your arrival at the Urgent Treatment Centre to being treated and discharged?



The UTC had a steady flow of patients during all our visits, but all patients who completed this question were treated and discharged within four hours.

- 36% were seen and discharged within one hour.
- 51% were seen and discharged within one to three hours.
- 2% were seen and discharged between three to four hours after arrival.

**On a scale of 1 to 5 stars (1 being poor and 5 being excellent), please rate your experience today.**



50% of people rated their experience at the UTC as five-star, with a further 26% rating it as four star.

We received many positive comments about the Widnes UTC, including:

*'This is a wonderful centre. I have had an x-ray here in the past too and they were very good.'*

- *'Lovely helpful staff and committed.'*
- *'The staff are very friendly and welcoming. The nurse and doctor we saw were very helpful and thorough.'*
- *'Thank you for an excellent facility and to the blood test team.'*
- *'It was ok. A lot quicker than A&E. Staff are nice as well.'*
- *'Brilliant service.'*
- *'Thank you. Well-staffed, clean facilities and friendly doctors, nurse and reception.'*
- *'Excellent service, pharmacy on site, fast and effective patient care.'*
- *'This centre is convenient for me. All staff and Doctors here are very nice.'*
- *'The care here is superb! We could do with a UTC in Warrington.'*



Generally, during our visits people were seen promptly, although there were certain times when waiting times increased and a lack of information about the reasons for the delays meant that patients frustration grew.

**Waiting times:** A number of people commented on the current method for displaying waiting times on a whiteboard. This is an issue that has come up consistently during our visits to the Widnes UTC.

One patient told us, *'They need a better way to display waiting times! The white board stated that the wait was 1.5 hours. This was eventually updated to 3 hours but only after we had already waited 3 hours. It would be helpful to know how long the wait is expected to be. It is also hard to hear who is being called which led to people having to check if it was their named called out.'*

Another said, *'Wait time information could be displayed better and updated regularly.'*

Yet another said, *'The waiting time on the board says up to an hour but I have been here for nearly 2 hours now.'* This was echoed by another patient who told us, *'The waiting time on the board is not accurate.'*

Some voiced their concerns over the system for calling patients, with one saying, *'Overall I'm pleased with the treatment received today. A tannoy system for calling patients would be beneficial.'*

Another patient said, *'I am hard of hearing so worry I will miss my name. They should have system in place so you can hear when you are called to the UTC rooms.'*

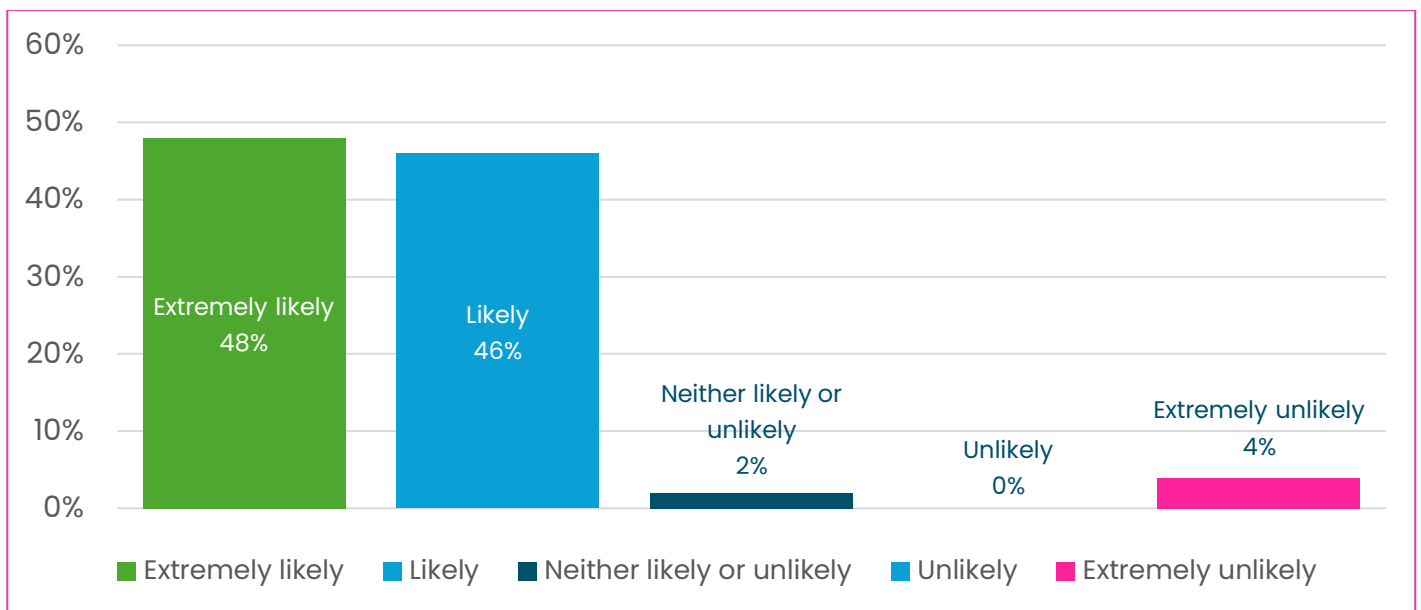
**Seating:** While there are a large number of seats within the building there are occasions when seating is limited, due in part to the number of additional services using the building. This was highlighted by a few people during our visits, with one person saying, *'They need more chairs for the UTC as I am standing with a child and so are other people'*.

**Appointments:** One person told us, *'I would prefer an appointment system. It is heart breaking having to wait. I came last Thursday and after two and a half hours had to leave to pick up my grandchildren. I came back on Friday and was seen. The treatment centre nurse told me to come back at 8.00am today and I would be seen immediately, to have my head dressed but it is now 10.10am and I have only been triaged.'*

**Other suggestions for improvement included:**

- *'It would be nice to have an area for vulnerable people away from the main waiting room.'*
- *'A tea and coffee machine in the UTC would be good.'*

**How likely would you be to recommend this service to a friend or family member if they needed similar care or treatment?**



94% said they would be *'Likely'* or *'Extremely likely'* to recommend the service. While still high this is a slight drop of 7% from the figures in our feedback report in March 2023.

2% gave a neutral *'neither likely or unlikely'* rating, with a further 4% saying they would be *'unlikely or extremely unlikely'* to recommend the service.

## Observations, suggestions and recommendations

These suggestions and recommendations are made for both the service provider and service commissioners.

- 1. Information screens.** Feedback highlighted a need for an improved way of keeping patients updated on waiting times. This is an issue that is often raised with us when we visit the UTC and is something we have suggested previously and is currently in place at the Runcorn Urgent Treatment Centre. Waiting times for the Runcorn UTC are also displayed online at <https://dashboard.whh.nhs.uk/ed/>. If a system similar to this was introduced, we feel it would be of benefit to patients using the centre.
- 2. Next patient please!** We recommend a review of the way patients are currently called in for triage or treatment. People told us that it is sometimes difficult to hear staff calling out patient names if they aren't sitting immediately by the treatment area.
- 3.** During our visits we've had some people asking about getting drinks of water. We are aware that water is available for patients at reception upon request, but we saw no notices to highlight this to patients. If this facility is to be offered, then patients need to be made aware of it. **We recommend the installation of a water cooler, in line with the one provided at the Runcorn UTC**
- 4.** Several people were confused as to where they had to wait for an x-ray, and we had a number of patients ask us to point out the toilets. **Improved signage from both entrances to the HCRC for these would be helpful to patients.**

**Observation:** We noticed that Dressings appointments were adding to the wait times as people could not always get an appointment at a dressing clinic so had to come to the UTC for essential dressing changes, which usually require a longer appointment.

## **Service Provider response**

Many thanks for your report.

I have read the report and will action the recommendation to the best of the Trust ability, with the involvement of the buildings/tenants managers, estates and Associate Director for Halton Directorate.

**Helen Wakefield**

Operational Manager Halton Adult Services  
Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS FT



**healthwatch**  
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