

Unannounced Visit to Kettering General Hospital Accident and Emergency Department, part of University Hospitals of Northamptonshire NHS Group, 31 January 2023

January 2023



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Introduction

Based on recent feedback from the public and other service providers, including negative comments posted on social media platforms with photos of the temporary tent at the Northampton General Hospital A&E Department (<https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/health/northampton-general-hospital-boss-issues-apology-and-explanation-over-state-of-accident-and-emergency-department-3935926>), the Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire (HWNW) Advisory Board agreed to use their statutory powers to conduct an unannounced visit to both A&E departments in Northamptonshire.

Two volunteers, both Advisory Board Members (the team) from Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire visited the Kettering General Hospital (KGH) Accident and Emergency (A&E) department for an unannounced visit (HWNW Enter and View Policy <https://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2023-01-17/our-enter-and-view-policy>) on 31st January 2023.

The hospital was informed prior to the visit that it would be undertaken and by whom but did not know the date or time of the visit prior to it happening.

The volunteers spoke to a number of patients about their experiences. This report, written by our volunteers, is a snapshot of the hospital A&E department on that day along with the team's recommendations to improve the patient experience locally. It is not a comment on the situation nationally, Government policy or the need for additional resources in A&E departments across the country.

Commissioner/provider response

Thank you for taking the time to complete the recent visit to our Accident & Emergency department. We always strive to improve our patients' experiences by listening and acting on feedback so this is very helpful to us.

We have noted the recommendations given to us by Healthwatch and can confirm that the table in our ED department has been moved accordingly.

We note that some of the patients the volunteers spoke to raised issues regarding waiting times on recent visits, and we always try our best to keep waiting times to a minimum where we can.

We are so pleased that our patients felt that they were treated with dignity and respect by our staff members, and that our department was a calm environment.

We will ensure we consider these findings to improve services as we believe that patients voices can help to shape a better Healthcare Service for the future.

Lucy Jones

Head of Patient Experience and Engagement

Background

The former entrance area to KGH A&E has been made into a pre-Reception greeting room manned by an A&E Health Care Assistant (HCA). The HCA checks that patients are wearing a face mask (there is a mask dispenser if a mask is needed) and that hand gel is used. A wheelchair is made available if appropriate. The patient is then directed to the main A&E area Reception desk.

At Reception patient details are taken and the patient is asked to sit in the waiting area and wait to be called for triage. Appropriate questions are asked to inform nurses and doctors so that patients are seen by the appropriate person.

The whole area has been re-organised since our last visit and looks bright and cheerful. Notices contain information relevant to the A&E Department. There is less seating than we saw on previous visits and the seats are more suitably spaced.

We walked along the corridor where the treatment rooms are situated and noted the area was clean and tidy. We spoke to two housekeepers who told us they were responsible for keeping the corridors and treatment rooms clean. This was an ongoing task.

We noted that there is now a separate Frailty, Same Day Emergency Care Unit where older patients who are brought in by ambulance after a fall or other ongoing conditions are triaged and either treated or admitted to a ward for further treatment. This ties in with the Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire (ICAN) Frailty Pillar.

We spoke to eleven patients, nine in A&E and two in the Minor Injuries area(MIAMI). The department was not very busy during our visit and several patients were unwilling to talk to us.

One patient said they did not speak English well enough.

We explained what we were doing in A&E to another patient and handed them a leaflet for information. They read it then handed it straight back saying they weren't interested.

There was only one ambulance waiting to hand over a patient at the time of our visit.

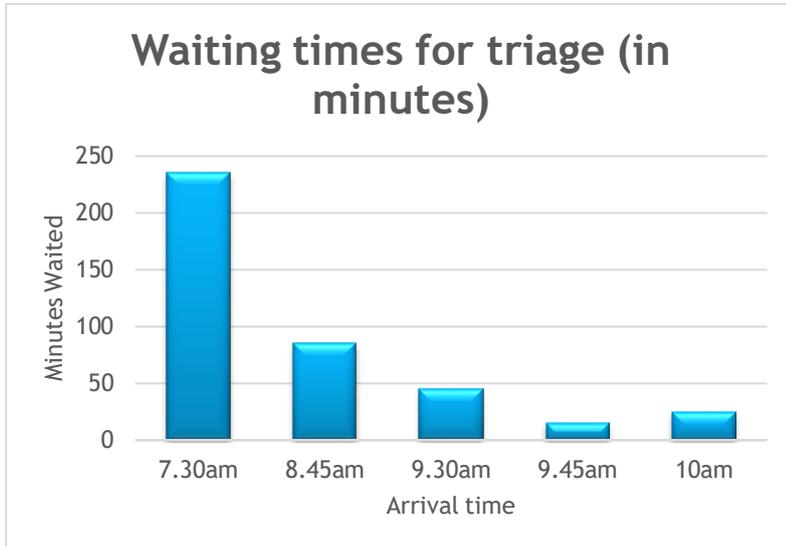
Recommendations

On the day we visited KGH it was a calm, manageable day with enough staff to cover those waiting to be seen. Most people felt that they were satisfied with the service and were treated with dignity and respect. Therefore, on this occasion we only have one minor recommendation/suggestion to make:

1. At one point in our visit a patient was called to be triaged and tripped and fell over a low table that was situated at the end of a row of chairs. We suggest the table would be more appropriately placed between two chairs rather than on the end of the row.

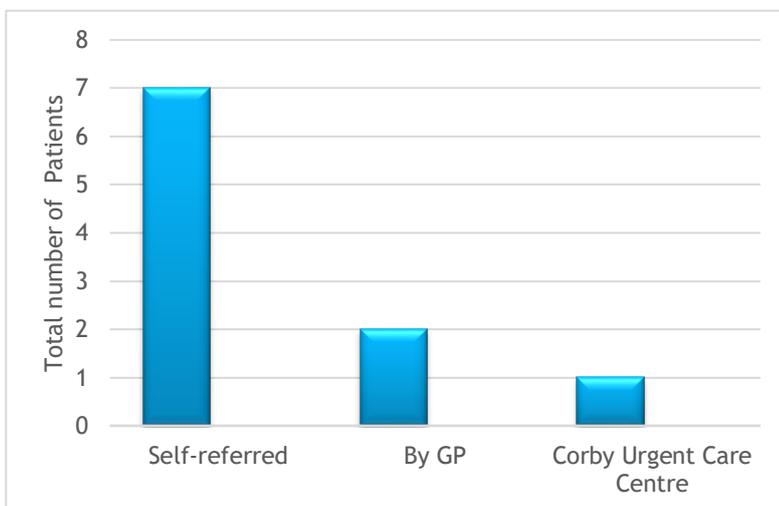
Key findings

Question 1: What time did you arrive at A & E Department? How long have you been waiting?



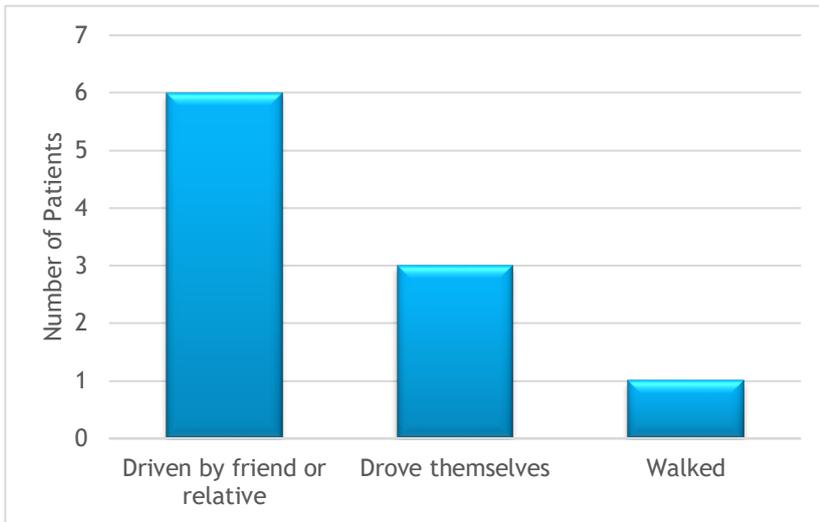
- 5 patients were unsure about the time they arrived

Question 2: Were you referred here by: a) Your GP, b) The NHS111 Service, c) If no to questions a) and b) why did you come to A & E today?



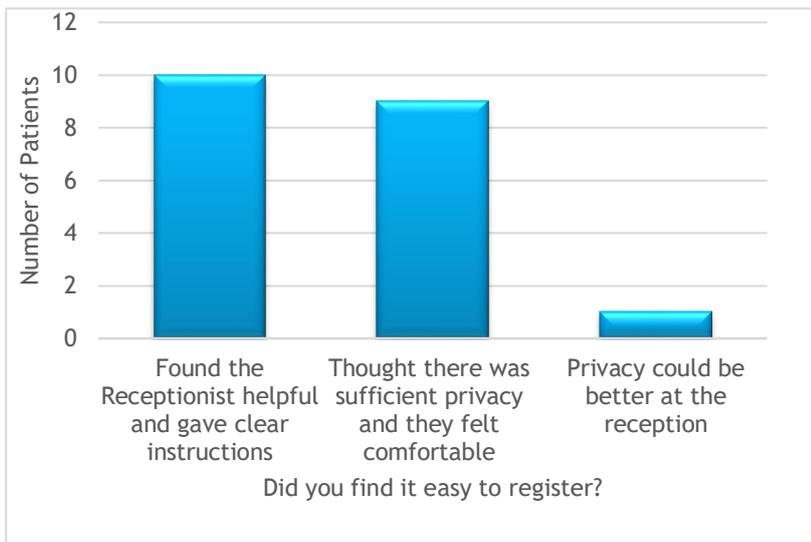
- Self-referred - 7 patients
- By a GP - 2 patients
- By Corby Urgent Care Centre - 1 patient

Question 3: What method of transport did you use - if by car, how was the parking?



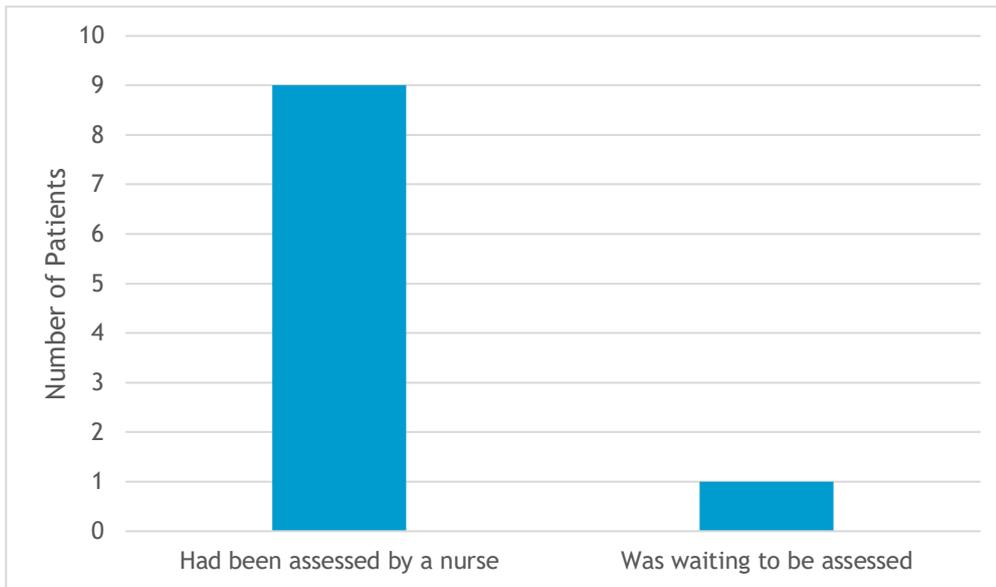
- 2 patients mentioned they had difficulty/it took a long time to find a parking space

Question 4: Did you find it easy to register? a) Was the Receptionist helpful, b) Were you told what would happen next? c) Was there sufficient privacy for you to feel comfortable discussing your condition?



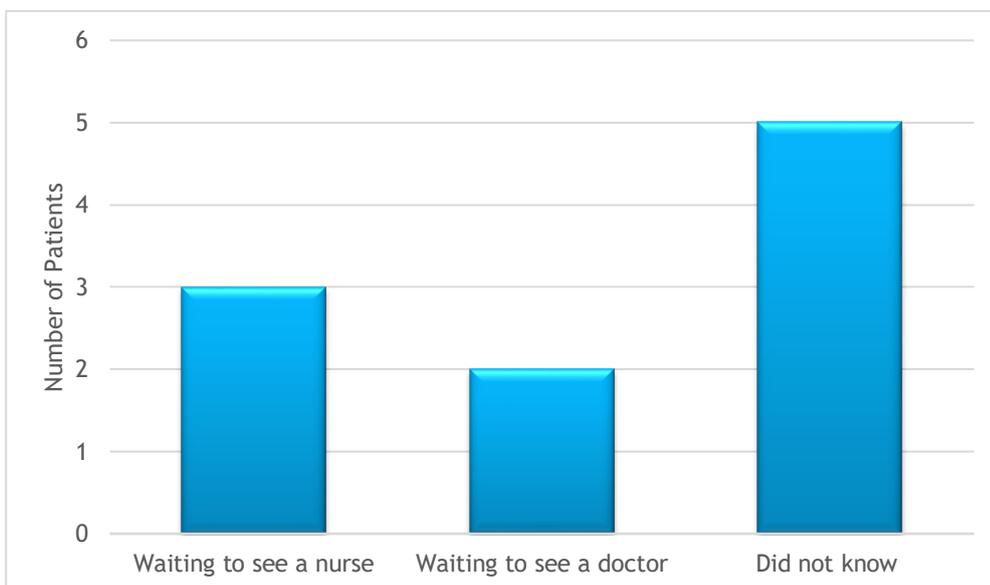
- 10 patients said they found the Receptionist helpful
- 9 Patients thought there was sufficient privacy and they felt comfortable discussing their condition
- 1 patient thought that privacy could be better at Reception

Question 5: Have you been assessed yet by a Nurse? If so, how soon were you seen after your arrival in the department?



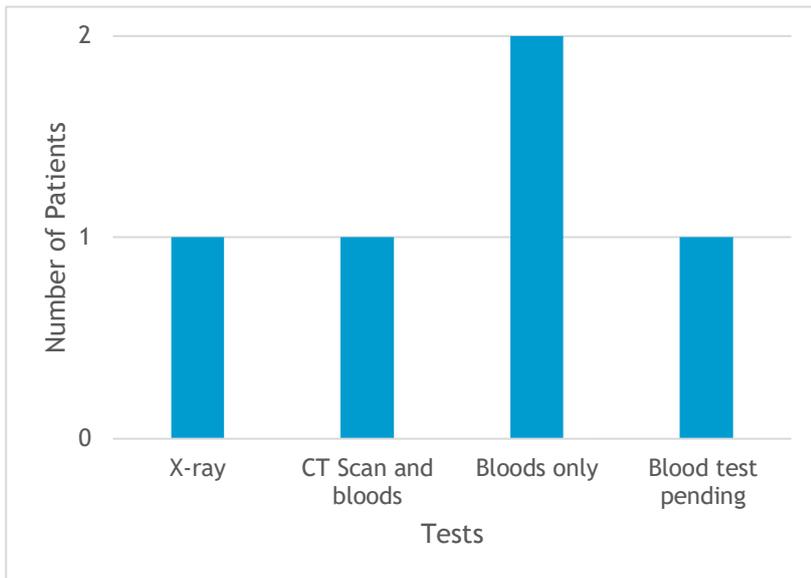
- 9 patients had been assessed by a nurse
- 1 patient was waiting to be assessed

Question 6: Are you waiting to see a Nurse Practitioner, a Doctor or another member of staff?



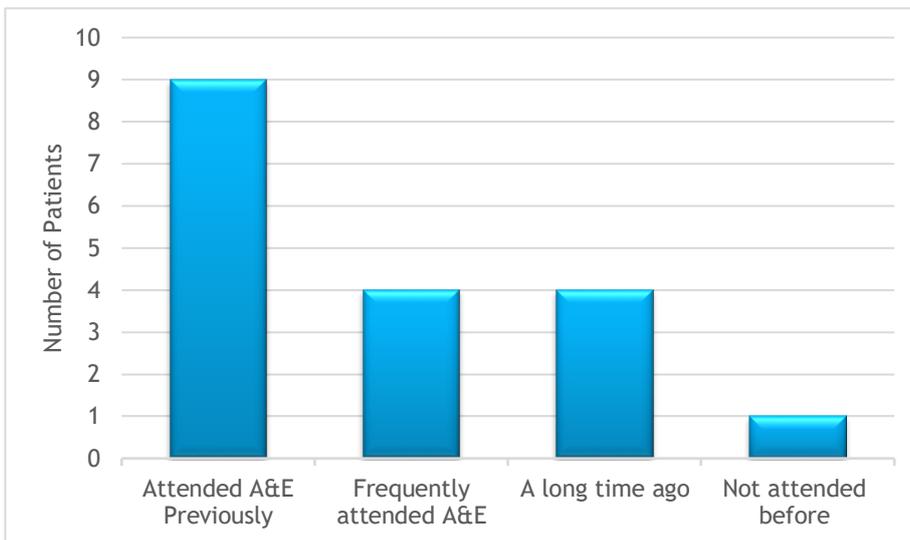
- 3 patients were waiting to see a nurse
- 2 patients were waiting to see a doctor
- 5 patients did not know who they were waiting to see
- 1 patient was waiting for a doctor to take bloods as the nurse was unable to do the procedure

Question 7: Have you had, or are you going to have, X-rays or tests, or have you been referred to another department/ward at the hospital? If so, to where?



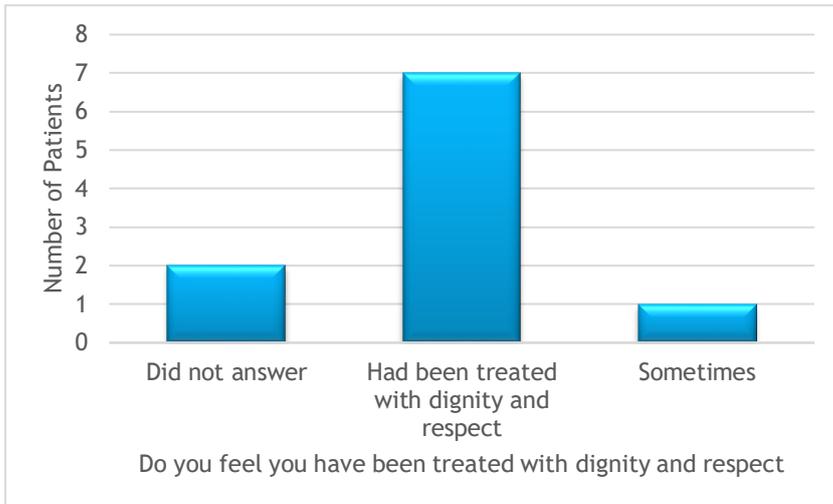
- 1 patient X-ray performed
- 1 patient scan and blood test carried out
- 2 patients had bloods only taken
- 1 patient had a blood test pending

Question 8: Have you had occasion to use the A & E Department at this hospital in the past? If so, when was this and were you satisfied with the time you had to wait and the treatment you were given?



- 9 patients had attended A&E previously
- 4 patients had attended A&E frequently
- 4 patients had attended A&E a long time ago
- 1 patient had not attended A&E before
- 9 patients were satisfied with the treatment they had received on the day they attended

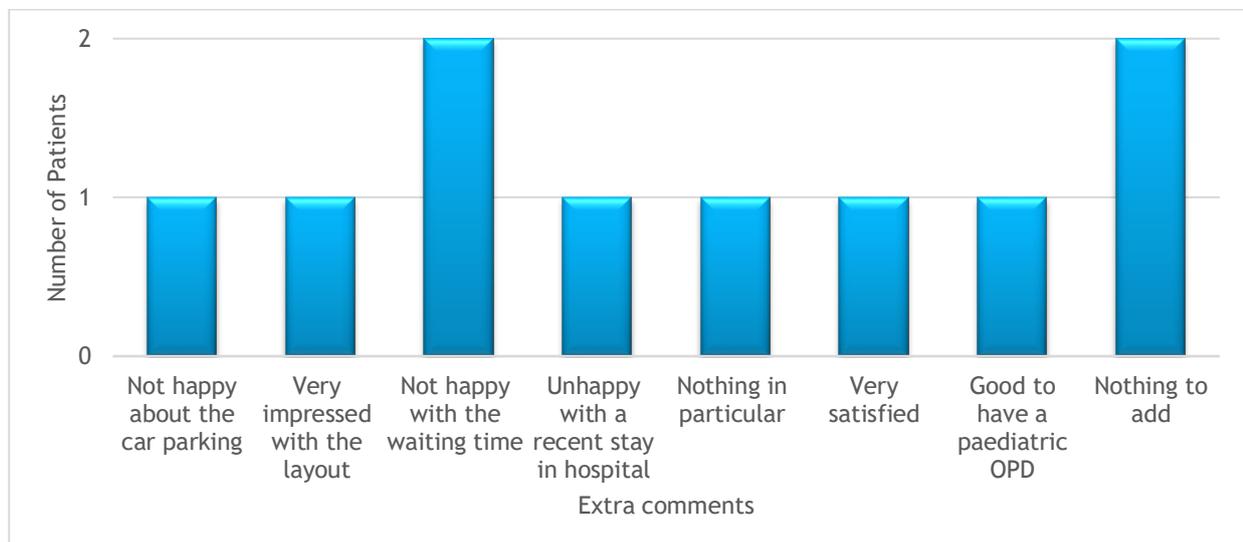
Question 9: Do you feel you have been treated with dignity and respect while you have been here? If not, please tell us why?



- 2 patients did not answer this question
- 7 patients said they had been treated with dignity and respect
- 1 patient said 'sometimes not always - attitudes vary'

One of the patients who said yes added that they always came to Kettering A&E as staff treated them with respect and the waiting room was much more pleasant.

Question 10: Is there anything else you would like to add about your visit today?



- 1 Patient was not happy about the car parking on the day - they had a blue badge
- 1 patient said they were very impressed with the layout
- 2 patients were not happy with the waiting time
- 1 patient was unhappy about a recent stay in hospital. They had been admitted to hospital for four days and were moved from one ward to another being pushed along long corridors. They found this difficult as their blood count was low
- 1 patient said 'nothing in particular - everything satisfactory'
- 1 patient said they were very satisfied with everything

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- 1 mother said they thought it was a good thing to have a Paediatric Out Patient Department. They added that their husband had not had a very good experience in A&E - had been sent home and then became quite ill
 - 2 patients had nothing to add

What people told us

Patient 1: Male White/British

- This patient arrived at 10 a.m. and we spoke to them at 10.25 a.m.
- They were self-referred
- They came by car driven by their wife
- They found it easy to register on arrival. The Receptionist was helpful and advised them to take a seat in the waiting area and they would be called for triage
- They were called for triage minutes after they were seated and were triaged by a Nurse Practitioner
- They had had blood taken and were waiting for results. Blood tests are now taken in the A&E department
- This patient had attended A&E in the past. They came to KGH because the staff treat them with respect and the waiting room is a pleasant place to sit
- Their added comment was that, although they had a blue badge there were no parking spaces available near the hospital entrance so the patient was dropped off at the A&E entrance and their wife went to find a parking space. This took around half an hour

Patient 2: Female White/British

- This patient arrived at KGH around 9.30 a.m.
- They were referred by their GP
- A friend drove them to the hospital
- The patient found the Receptionist helpful and had been told to sit in the waiting room and would be called for triage
- They thought there was enough privacy when discussing their condition
- They were called around 6/7 minutes after arrival for triage and had been given a blood test and a CT scan
- They were waiting to see a doctor when the results of the tests came through
- They felt they had been treated with dignity and respect
- Their added comment was that they were very impressed with the layout of the waiting area

Patient 3: Female White/British

- This patient arrived at the hospital at 7.30 a.m. and we spoke to them at around 11.25 a.m.
- They had been referred by Corby Urgent Care
- The patient had driven themselves to KGH, accompanied by their husband
- They found the Receptionist helpful when registering
- They were told to sit in the waiting room to be called for triage

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- They were triaged by a Nurse at around 8.30 a.m.
 - Blood tests were done around an hour later
 - They were still waiting for results and to be called to see a nurse or doctor
 - They thought they had been mostly treated with dignity and respect
 - They were not happy with long wait

Patient 4: Elderly Male. White/British

- This patient had arrived at KGH at 9.45 a.m. and we spoke to them at 11.10 a.m.
- They had been referred by their GP the day before but their daughter was bringing her mother to the Eye Department on 31st so brought her father to A&E on 31st January
- Daughter drove them to A&E
- They thought the Receptionist was helpful and privacy was not a problem
- They had been seen by a nurse for triage who had tried to take blood unsuccessfully and was waiting for a doctor to take blood
- No other tests had been ordered
- The patient did suggest that if their blood count was low they might need a transfusion
- They had been brought to A&E three weeks ago by ambulance after making a 999 call
- They had been admitted to Deene Ward where they felt they were treated with dignity and respect. They had been transferred to Geddington Ward which meant they were pushed on the bed through long corridors. They questioned why they were moved and was told the bed on Deene was needed

Patient 5: Male White/British

- This patient arrived at A&E at 9.45 a.m. and we spoke to them at 10 a.m.
- They had been called in for triage very quickly after arrival
- They were self-referred and had a problem with their eye
- They had walked to the hospital
- They said the Receptionist had been helpful - all staff had been helpful
- They confirmed that that had been called for triage very quickly
- They were waiting to see a doctor
- No tests had been given or suggested yet as they were waiting to see a doctor
- The patient had attended A&E several years ago and had been very satisfied
- They felt they had been treated with dignity and respect by everyone they had met
- When asked if they wanted to add they said 'nothing in particular - treatment was satisfactory'

Patient 6: Female British

- This patient said they had arrived in A&E a short time ago
- They were self-referred and had a plaster on their leg which was causing discomfort
- They had driven in by car and had found parking very difficult

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- They had found it easy to register
 - The Receptionist had been helpful and told them what would happen next
 - The privacy could have been better at Reception but the Receptionist was helpful
 - The patient had been assessed by a nurse - no time given but 'fairly quickly'
 - They were waiting to see a doctor
 - They were unaware whether they were going to have any tests
 - The patient had used A&E some years ago, not recently, but they were satisfied with treatment

Patient 7: Male

- Arrival time not known but patient said there was no waiting - they had come straight in.
- We understood they were self-referred today but were originally referred by their GP and told by A&E on that first visit to self-refer in future as their eye problem was re-occurring.
- They had driven in by car and had found the parking dreadful
- The Receptionist was polite and helpful and the patient had found it easy to register but said that was not always so. They knew their way around the routine because of previous visits
- They thought there was sufficient privacy when discussing their condition
- The patient had not yet been assessed but were aware of their ongoing condition
- They were waiting to see a doctor
- They had not yet been assessed re the condition of their eyes today
- The patient had visited A&E frequently. They said that staff had not always been so helpful as attitudes vary
- They had nothing else to add

Patient 8: Male British

- No arrival time given but patient said they had only waited a few minutes at Reception
- They had been referred by their GP
- A friend had driven them to the hospital
- They found it easy to register at Reception and were kept informed about what would happen next
- They thought there was sufficient privacy when discussing their condition
- The patient had been assessed by a nurse
- They were waiting to go for tests
- They were going to have an ECG and blood tests
- The patient said they were not in good health at present
- The patient had been to A&E previously and was very satisfied with treatment given at one of the best A&E departments in this part of the country
- They felt they had been treated with dignity and respect
- They had nothing else to add except they were very satisfied with everything

Patients seen in the Minor Injuries Unit/MIAMI

Patient 9: Male White/British

- This patient arrived at KGH at 9.45 a.m.
- They had come to A&E the day before (30th January) but went home after a long wait. They were told they needed an x-ray on the finger injured when helping to move a washing machine which was dropped on their finger
- The patient was self-referred
- A friend had driven them to KGH
- They had found the Receptionist helpful and had been asked to sit in the waiting area to be called for treatment. The patient understood this would mean the removal of their finger nail and dressing the wound. They had not been told whether they would be seeing a Nurse or a Doctor
- They were called into the treatment room as we finished speaking
- They said they had attended A&E many times. At one point had been sent home after three visits in the past but it had transpired that they had a heart problem
- The patient felt they had been treated with dignity and respect on the present visit
- They only comment they made was about the long waiting times

Patient 10: Male White/British. 10/11

- This patient accompanied by his mother had arrived in Paediatric A&E at 9.a.m.
- The visit was self-referred by the mother
- The mother had driven the patient to the hospital
- The staff in the Paediatric Unit were helpful
- The patient had been called for triage by a Nurse and sent to MIAMI around 10 a.m. after the results of an x-ray had been looked at. The patient had injured his foot the previous day and had the pain had not subsided the mother brought her child to A&E
- The patient was called in to see a Nurse at 11.05 a.m.
- Both patient and mother thought they had been treated with respect
- The mother's comment was that she thought it was a good thing to have a Paediatric Outpatients

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to all those who took the time to share their views and experiences with us. We would especially like to thank the staff and patients at KGH willing to talk to us and the two volunteers who undertook the visit and wrote this report, Sheila White and Wendy Patel.

About Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and wellbeing and improve the quality of services to meet people's needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and social care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvement, where required.

Our rights and responsibilities include:

- We have the power to monitor (known as “Enter and View”) health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of health and social care.
- We report our findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision makers and make the case for improved services where we find there is a need for improvement
- We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people, to influence how services are planned, organised and delivered.
- We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we find out what local people think about health and social care. We research patient, user and carer opinions using lots of different ways of finding out views and experiences. We do this to give local people a voice. We provide information and advice about health and social care services.

Where we feel that the views and voices of Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire and the people who we strive to speak on behalf of are not being heard, we have the option to escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations including Healthwatch England, NHS England and the Care Quality Commission.

Find out more at www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

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North Northamptonshire
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About Connected Together

Connected Together Community Interest Company (CIC) is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire.

The remit of the Connected Together CIC includes:

- Contract compliance
- Legal requirements
- Financial and risk management
- Sustainability and growth
- Agreeing strategy and operations
- Agreeing policies and procedures



Connected Together CIC is a social enterprise and a partnership between the University of Northampton and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire. It aims to be first for community engagement across the county of Northamptonshire and beyond.

By using our expertise and experience, we can help you in delivering community engagement programmes including workshops, research, surveys, training and more. Contact us to find out how we can help your community.

We welcome ideas and suggestions for projects that benefit Northamptonshire and its community.

Find out more at www.connectedtogether.co.uk



Appendix - e.g. survey questions

QUESTION 1

1. What time did you arrive at A & E Department?

A) How long have you been waiting?

QUESTION 5

Have you been assessed yet by a Nurse?

If so, how soon were you seen after your arrival in the department?

QUESTION 8

Have you had occasion to use the A & E Department at this hospital in the past?

If so, when was this and were you satisfied with the time that you had to wait and the treatment that you were given?

QUESTION 2

2. Were you referred here by:

a) Your GP?

b) The NHS111 Service?

c) If no to questions a) and b) why did you come to A & E today?

QUESTION 6

Are you waiting to see a Nurse Practitioner, a doctor or another member of staff?

QUESTION 9

Do you feel you have been treated with dignity and respect while you have been here? If no, please tell us why?

QUESTION 3

3. What method of transport did you use - if by car, how was the parking?

QUESTION 7

Have you had, or are you going to have X-rays or any tests, or have you been referred to another department/ ward at the hospital? If so, to where?

QUESTION 10

Is there anything else you would like to add about your visit today?

QUESTION 4

4. Did you find it easy to register?

a) Was the Receptionist helpful?

b) Were you told what would happen next?

c) Was there sufficient privacy for you to feel comfortable discussing your condition?

Contact us

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