

Using Minor Injury Units in Oxfordshire

People's views and experiences

Healthwatch Oxfordshire

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1 Background

1.1 Background and introduction

Healthwatch Oxfordshire (HWO) regularly meets with the people who are responsible for overseeing quality and patient experience from local health and social care providers and commissioners. At one of these meetings, we explained HWO's powers to enter and view and how we would like to use them in a collaborative way, where useful. Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust thought it would be beneficial to assess people's experiences of their minor injuries units (MIU), as it is difficult to engage with patients using these services because the nature of the services on offer means that they tend to be used as a one off, rather than over several sessions.

As many people who attend minor injuries units were unlikely to want to stay for an interview after being seen, we developed a two stage project, designed to better understand what influences patient decisions on where to access healthcare and what they thought of the service once they had received it.

We were unable to extend the project to better understand people's use of the Emergency Department at the Oxford University Hospitals Trust because of other ongoing conflicting projects being carried out by Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. We hope those projects will give a fuller picture of people's experiences of urgent care in the county.

Specifically, this project aimed to:

- Assess patient views on access to, and quality of, services in minor injuries units.
- Build an understanding of what influences patient decisions on where to go to access health care.
- Ascertain if people are accessing more than one service in trying to access the right care.

1.2 Methodology

A total of 62 semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted with patients at the point of care (but before accessing care) to better understand people's use of the service, their path to accessing the service as well as their views on the service.

These interviews were conducted by Healthwatch Oxfordshire staff and our trained volunteers. Interviewers approached people who were waiting to be

seen, asking if they'd like to share their views as they waited. All participants were offered an information sheet and were asked to sign a consent form indicating they would like to participate.

In order to not disrupt the smooth running of the service, all interviews were ended when patients were called to see a health care professional.

Patients were offered a questionnaire, with a few questions adapted from the national emergency department survey, with a freepost envelope to return after they had received their care. 25 questionnaires in total were returned, which was a pleasing response rate of 40%.

1.3 Enter and View

The Health and Social Care Act allows authorised representatives of Healthwatch to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. Local Healthwatch-authorised representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. We employed the Enter and View methodology to conduct the semi structured interviews with people using the minor injury units.

Sites for Enter and View were identified with the co-operation of Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. These included:

Date	Time	Site
9 th May 2016	10-12 am	Henley MIU
11 th May 2016	5-8pm	Witney MIU
16 th May 2016	10-12 am	Abingdon MIU
17 th May 2016	5-8pm	Abingdon MIU
19 th May 2016	10-12 am	Witney MIU

In all 62 people were interviewed over the course of 5 visits to 3 different MIUs.

2 People's views on accessing MIUs and quality of services

“Friendly staff, short waiting times, good experience, easy to get to.”

This sums up what many people felt about their experience of using the MIUs, when interviewed in the waiting rooms before accessing the appropriate service. In sharing their views on the MIUs, people were mostly very positive although there were some concerns around waiting times and accessing the x-ray facilities.

2.1 Main reasons people cited for their positive feelings towards the MIUs were:

Good quality of service, facilities and specialist knowledge

People praised the staff, with descriptions of “helpful” and “brilliant”. One person said the service is “perfect when you see someone, [they are] very thorough”. People also said they chose to come to the MIU for the staff’s specialist knowledge in dealing with injuries. As one person explained, they were looking for professional medical advice on their injury and did not want the more “generic medical advice” they felt was on offer from other services. Another pointed out that there were times when they believed the MIU was preferable to a GP when you “need a diagnosis” referring to the range of diagnostic facilities available, most notably the x-ray facilities.

The friendly attitude of staff was appreciated. One person explained how staff are good with dealing with children and young people and would include the young person in the conversation about their care, rather than just talking to the parent.

Good previous experience of using an MIU

Another important reason people gave for attending the MIU on the day was the good experience of the service that had had previously. Of the 62 people we spoke to, 40 had used the same or another MIU before. Comments ranged from “excellent previous experience”, “this place is very high in my estimation, superb service” and that using the MIU was “always a good experience.”

Ease of access

Many commented that they would prefer to go to an MIU than battle through traffic, parking problems and long waiting times that using an A and E department involved. There were several comments on the location of the MIU being “closer and more convenient”.

Linked to that was the view that the MIU was a good place to go to for a non-urgent injury and helped avoid attendance at an Accident and Emergency (A and E) department. A few people said they preferred coming to an MIU than going to a busy A and E as “the MIU is a more relaxed service and a friendly choice” and gave them some “reassurance” and “peace of mind” in dealing with their injury.

2.2 Concerns raised about MIU services

Accessing the x-ray facilities

A total of 11 people out of the 33 seeking an x-ray were on their second visit as they had been unable to get an x-ray on their first attempt. One reason was because the facility was shut when they arrived. At least 3 people mentioned attending the MIU on the Sunday and being told by staff to return the next day as the x-ray facilities were shut. Another reason was the x-ray facilities actually shut while they were waiting for it. Some had waited a few hours only to be told they could not have one as the x-ray facility would be shutting. One person said they had waited 3 hours before they were told the x-ray facility had shut. Another pointed out that on a previous visit, they had waited three and a half hours before being told that the x-ray facilities were shutting and that they would not be able to have one that day.

Waiting times

There were some adverse comments about the length of time people had to wait to be seen. One person, who said they had already been waiting for two hours, said they were surprised that it was taking so long to be seen. Another said they had been told they would have to wait around three hours to be seen. Another said she had had a poor experience last time, where she had had to wait eight hours from mid-day for an x-ray.

Lack of clarity in the process of being seen

Others raised the concern of not knowing when they would be seen, how long it would take and whether there was a triage system in operation and if there was one, how it was being used. One person said “Some people have been walking straight in, not sure how they do triage. At the JR [John

Radcliffe hospital] they visibly triage you. What triage there is here doesn't exist. I arrived at 4.30pm and have been told x-ray closes at 6.30pm."

Parking

A few people commented on the difficulty in finding a parking spot close to the unit. One person said even having a blue badge did not aid in finding a spot easily. Another said they could not park on site and had brought a young child with an injury, which made making their way to the MIU more difficult. Another said they were forced to park in the multi-story car park in Witney and another had chosen a spot at the Tesco store nearby.

2.3 Factors that influenced people in their decision to use the MIUs were:

Facilities offered by the MIU

The available x-ray facility was one of the main reasons cited by people in choosing to come to the MIU. A total of 33 out of the 62 people interviewed needed an x-ray that they could get at the MIU. Others said they needed stitches or glue to deal with a wound that their GP could not provide.

Referral by GP surgeries

A total of 23 out of the 62 people interviewed had been advised to come to the MIU either over the phone or face to face at their GP surgery. Some people had seen their GP or practice nurse before being advised to come to the MIU and some had called and spoken to either their GP or a receptionist who advised them to go. In most cases the reason for referral was the nature of the injury that was felt to be more appropriately treated at the MIU or the facilities like x-ray and stitches offered by the MIU. Six out of the 62 people interviewed were referred to the MIUs by other health services including another community hospital, another hospital service, other NHS staff or 111.

Barriers in accessing GPs

Of the 62 people interviewed, 33 went directly to the MIUs without consulting anyone beforehand (though two had used the internet). An oft-repeated comment was that it was too difficult to see a GP; the waiting times can be 3-4 weeks and people did not want to wait that long. As one person said "It's no good telling me to wait until 8am tomorrow to try and be seen when my injury needs attention now." Some people were mindful of GPs' workloads and others that their GP would not have the necessary diagnostic tools like the x-ray facilities that the MIU could offer them.

Barriers in accessing Accident and Emergency (A and E) departments

A couple of people interviewed said they would consider going to the A and E at the John Radcliffe (JR) hospital if necessary, but most said that the traffic encountered en route, the trouble and cost of parking at the JR and the waiting times to be seen, were barriers that deterred them from seeking treatment at the hospital. One person interviewed had actually been to the JR and waited for six hours at A and E to be seen but had not been seen and had left. Still wanting medical advice, they had now come to the MIU to be seen. Others mentioned how it was easier to access the MIU than the A and E in Reading.

2.4 Services people had accessed before using the MIU

When asked what other services they had accessed before coming to the MIU, just over half- 33 out of 62- had not accessed any other service and had decided to go to the MIU because of the nature of their injury and the knowledge of the facilities offered by the MIU, especially x-rays. Out of these, two had used the internet- including NHS Direct- to help them decide where to go.

A total of 23 people had contacted and had received advice from their GP surgery to come to the MIU. Out of these 10 had had a face-to-face appointment with a GP or practice nurse before going to the MIU and 13 had spoken to someone at the surgery who advised attendance at the MIU.

Another 6 had taken advice from another NHS service or from NHS staff.

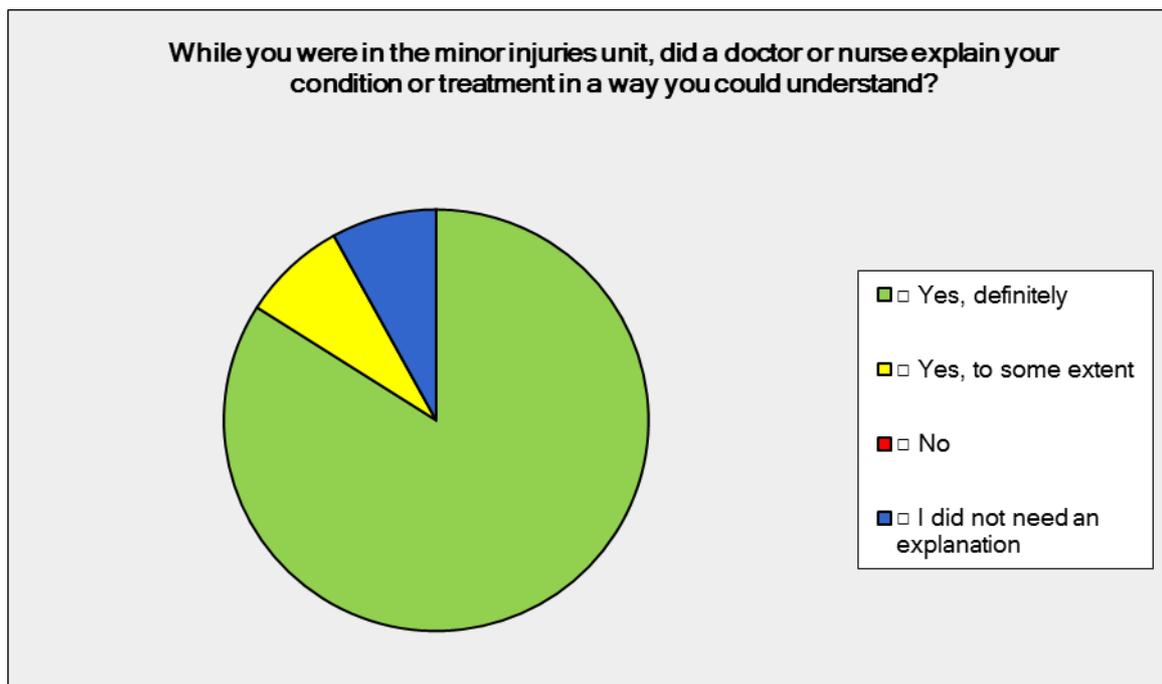
3 People's experiences of using the MIUs

In all, 25 people responded to the post-service questionnaire, which asked them to report on various aspects of their experience at the MIU.

People were once again overwhelmingly positive about their experience of the MIUs:

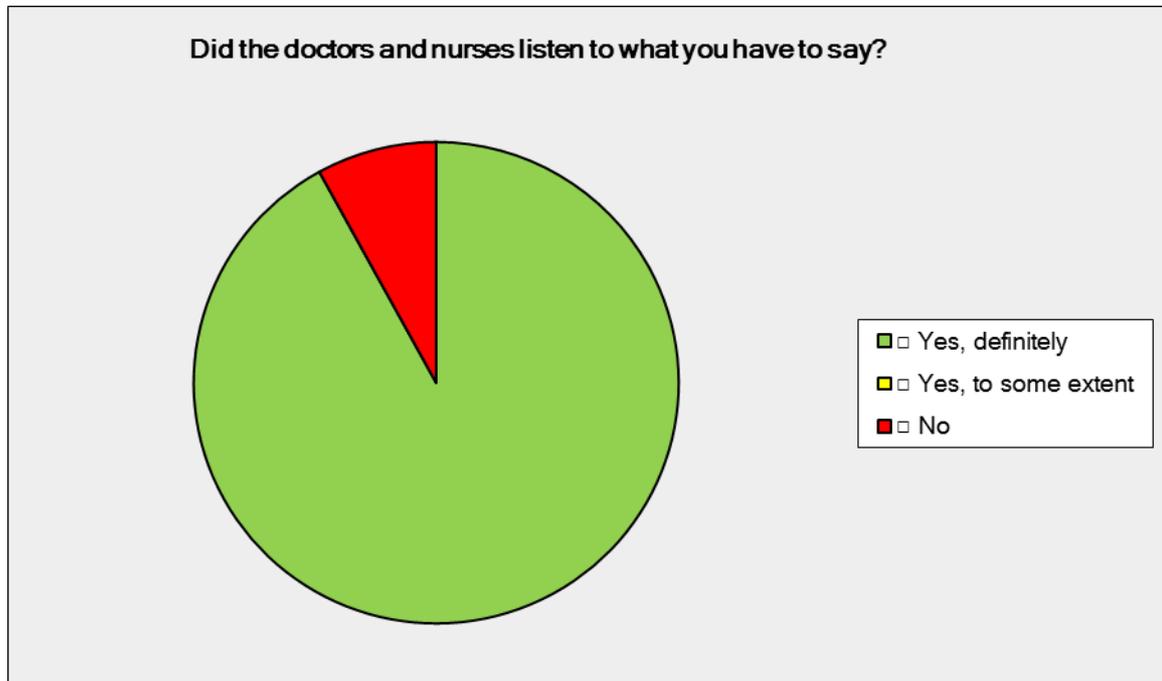
A majority of people felt their condition had been explained to them in a way they could understand.

In all, 84% (21) said "Yes, definitely" when asked if the doctor/nurse had explained their condition to them in a way that they could understand, with another 8% (2) saying "Yes, to some extent".



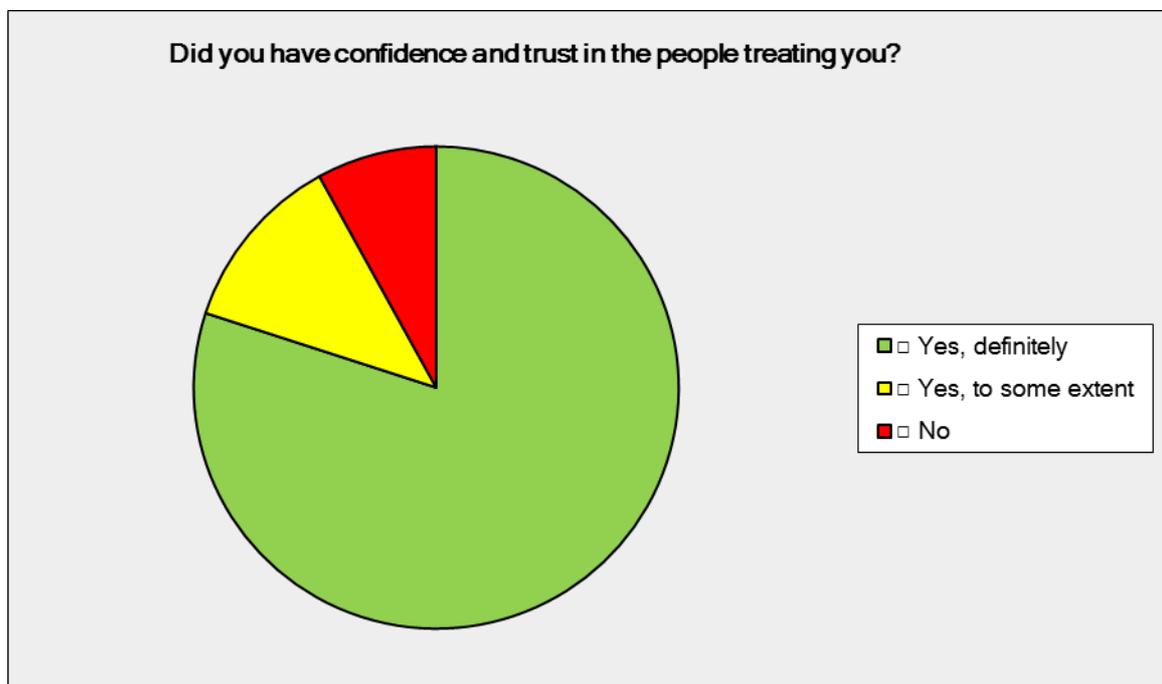
A majority of people felt they were listened to.

In total, 92% (23) people felt the nurse or doctor had "definitely" listened to what they had to say, with 8% (2) feeling they were not listened to.



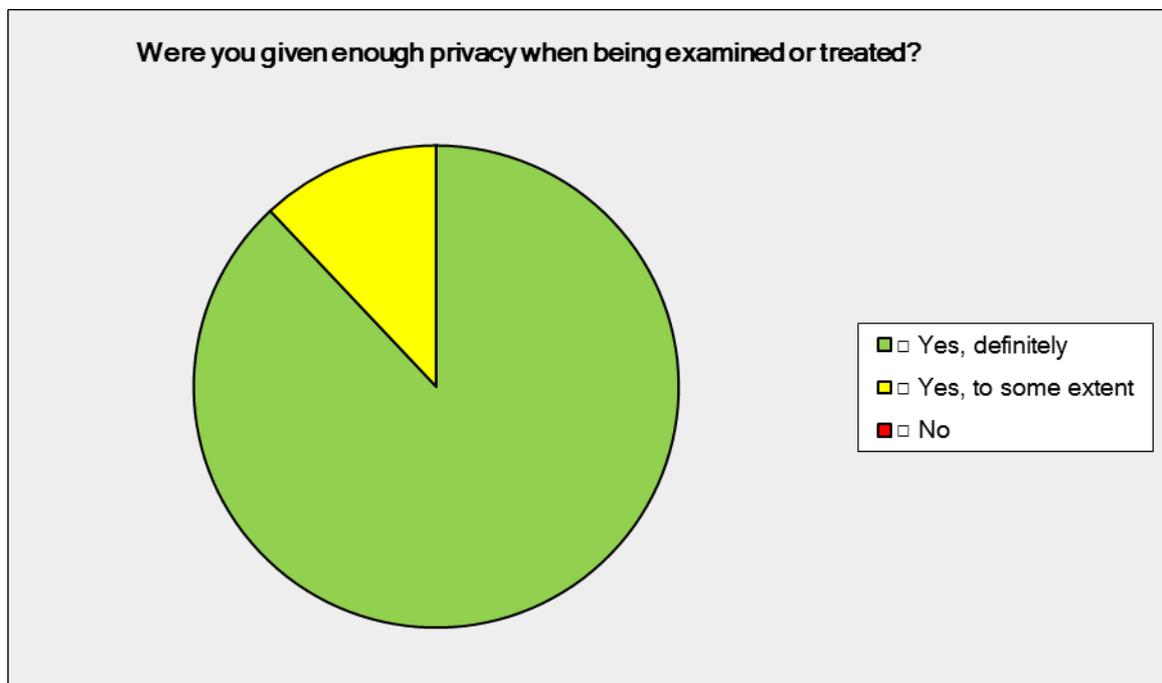
Most people said they had confidence and trust in the people treating them.

When asked if they had confidence and trust in the people treating them, 80% (20) said "yes, definitely", 12% (3) said "yes, to some extent" and 8% (2) said no.

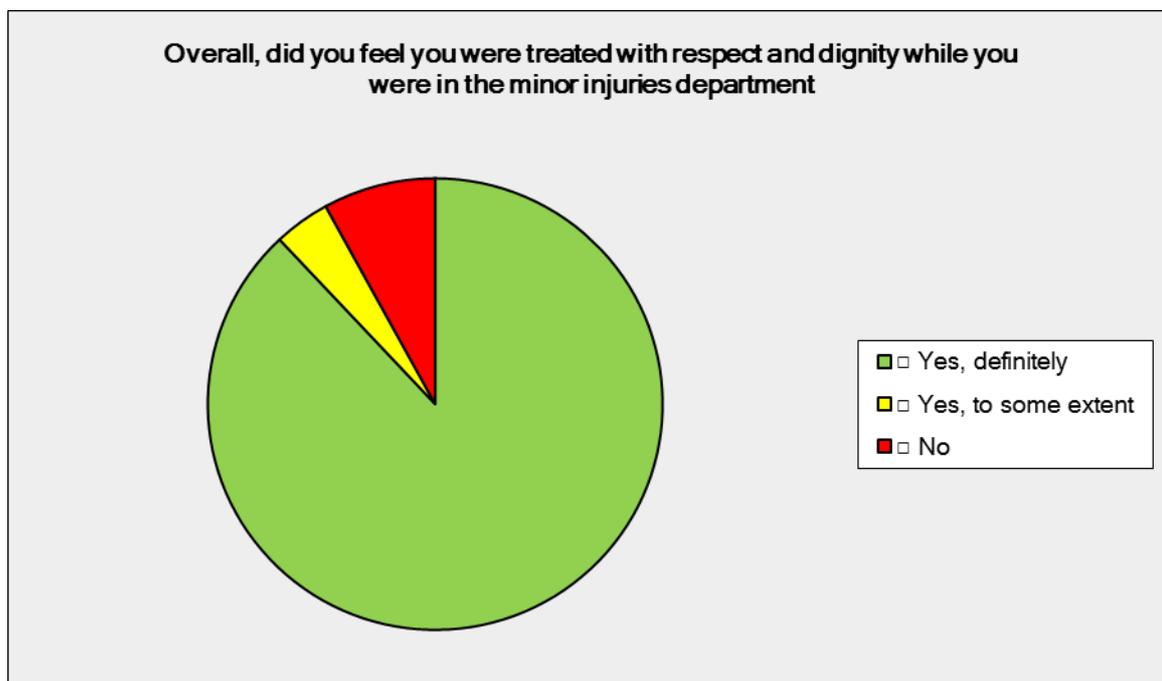


Most felt they had been given enough privacy when being treated or examined.

A total of 88% (22) said "yes, definitely" and 12% (3) said "yes, to some extent".



A majority- 88% (22) felt that they were "definitely" treated with dignity and respect at the MIU, with 1 person saying "yes, to some extent" and 2 saying "no".

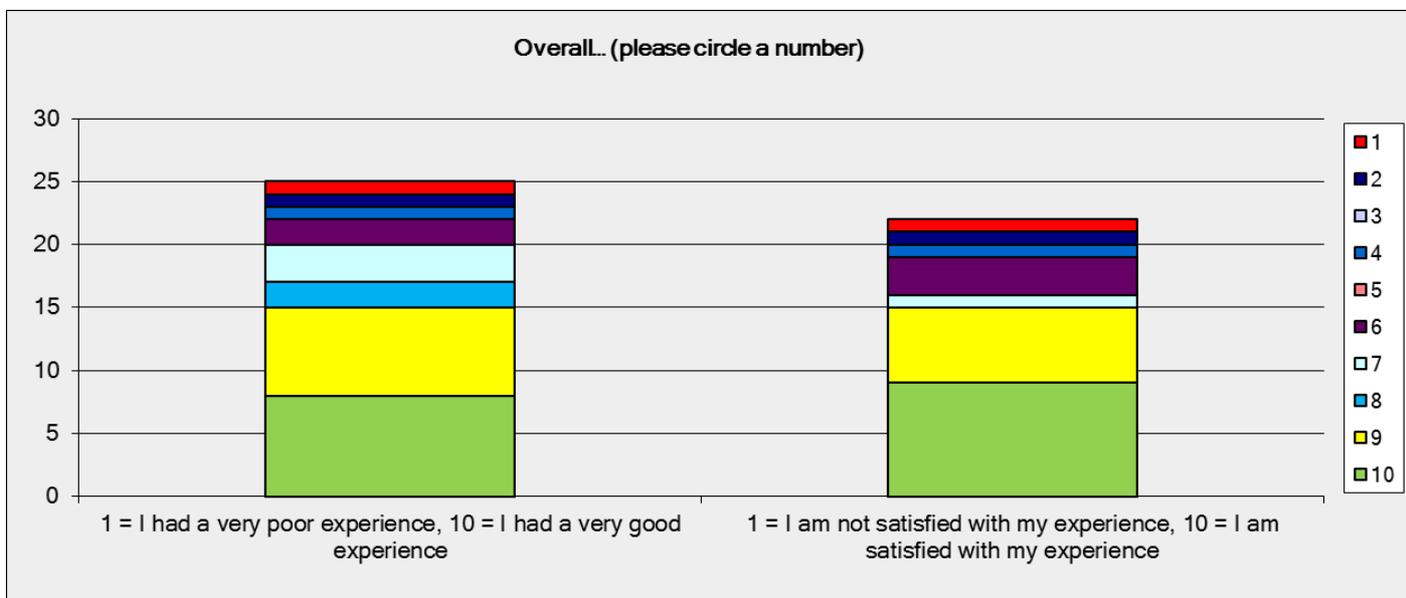


A majority had a good experience of the MIU.

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 meant "I had a very poor experience" and 10 meant "I had a very good experience" 60% (15) picked 9 or 10. A vast majority- 88% (22) picked 6 or above. Only 3 people picked between 1 and 4.

Overall, a majority of respondents were satisfied with their experience of the MIU.

On a scale where 1 meant "I am not satisfied with my experience" and 10 meant "I am satisfied with my experience", 41% (9 out of 22) picked 10 and another 28% (6 out of 22) picked 9. Only 3 (out of 22) people picked 4 or below.



Additional comments

At the end of the questionnaire, a free text comment box allowed patients to expand on their answers. Of those who responded, 11 raised concerns in this section. These mirrored what people had told us in the waiting rooms before being seen (please note the comments are transcribed into the report verbatim as they were sent in to us).

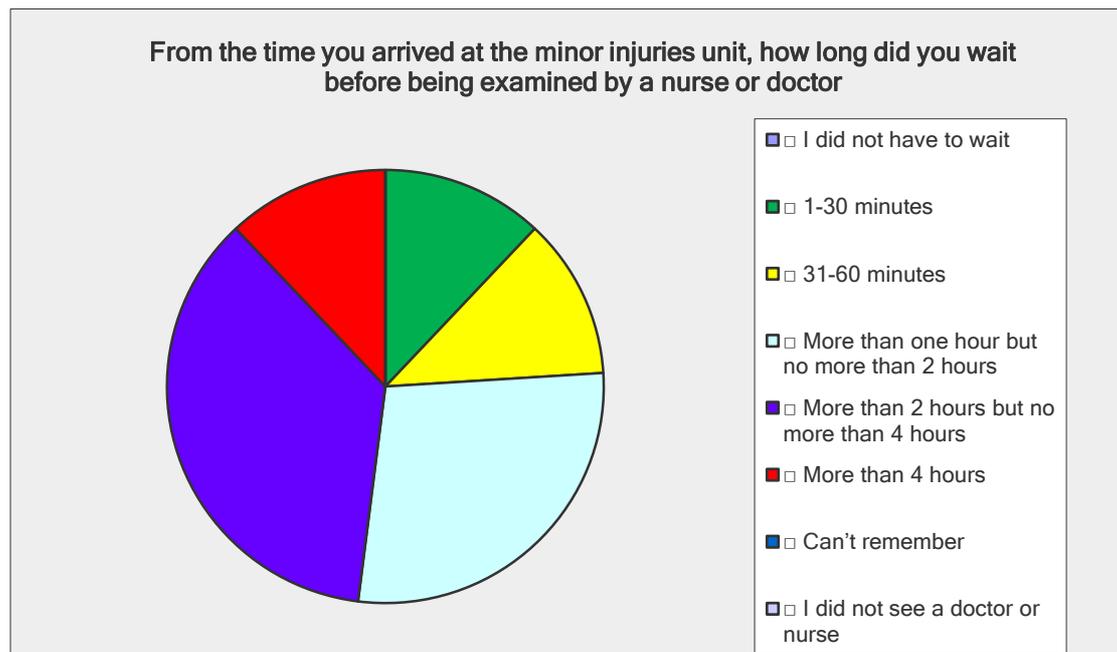
Accessing the x-ray facilities

People again noted having to make a repeat visit because the x-ray facilities were shut when they got there or shut after having had to wait a length of time. One person said *"Why is the x-ray diagnostics not working after 5 pm Sunday when the unit is open till 10.30?"*.

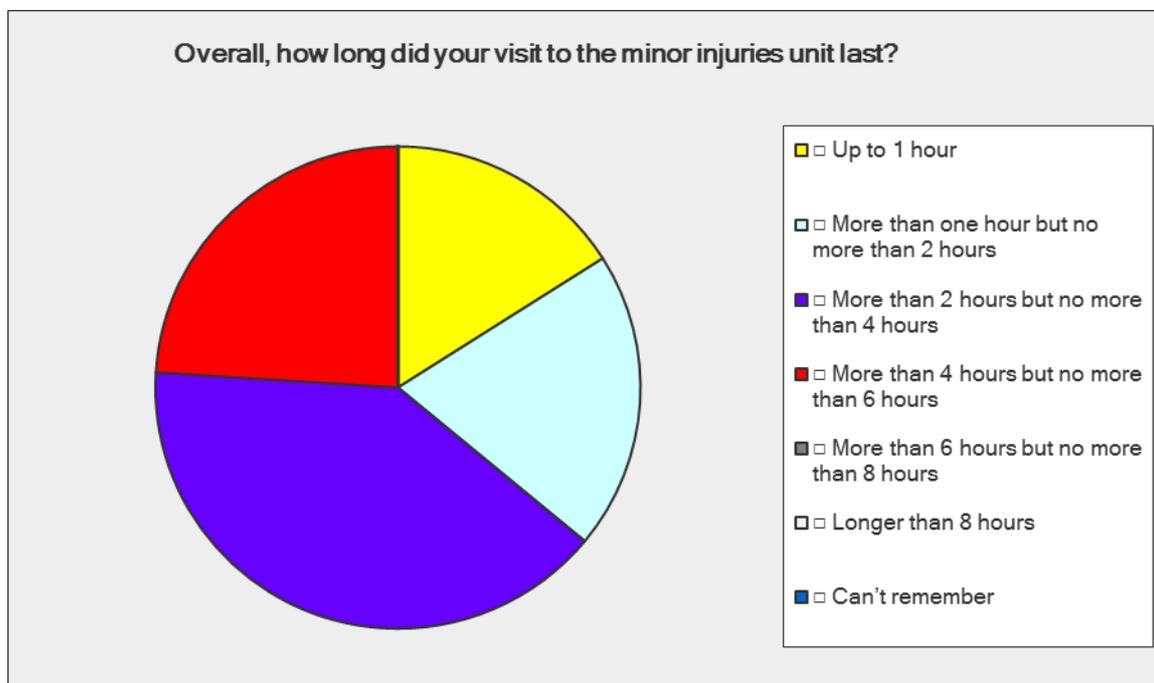
Another said *"the medical staff were great. However the process feels inefficient and as a result patients have long waits. We waited 3 hours on the sunday and then told to come back for an x-ray on monday when we waited for another 2 hours. A triage system could improve efficiency and reduce patient waiting times."*

Waiting times

There were comments about the length of time people had to wait to be seen. Of those who responded, 36% (9) said they had waited between 2 and 4 hours and 12% (3) had waited between 4 and 6 hours.



When asked about the overall length of the visit to the MIU, 40% (10) said between 2-4 hours and 24% (6) said between 4-6 hours.



In the free text comment box, the most comments were about waiting times.

" A 5 hour wait is not exseptable more staff needed at busy times."

"waiting time and quw jumper was here at 5.15 still here at 9.15".

"Just surprised that the visit to so long!"

"the waiting time with a 2 year old was a bit long."

"did not seem to be enough staff. no one seemed to be in any hurry. lot of time spent in duplicating forms. i.e. initial assessment forms, xray, etc. but staff very pleasant. I was there for 6 hours - staff said it was their busiest morning but there did not seem to be many people in the waiting area. Maybe they're coming from another area?"

It is interesting to note that one respondent who had waited more than four hours felt very negative about their experience, answering "no" when asked if they felt listened to, had confidence and trust in the staff who treated them, felt treated with dignity and respect and felt staff had done everything they could to control their pain. Another person whose visited lasted six hours rated both their experience of and satisfaction with the

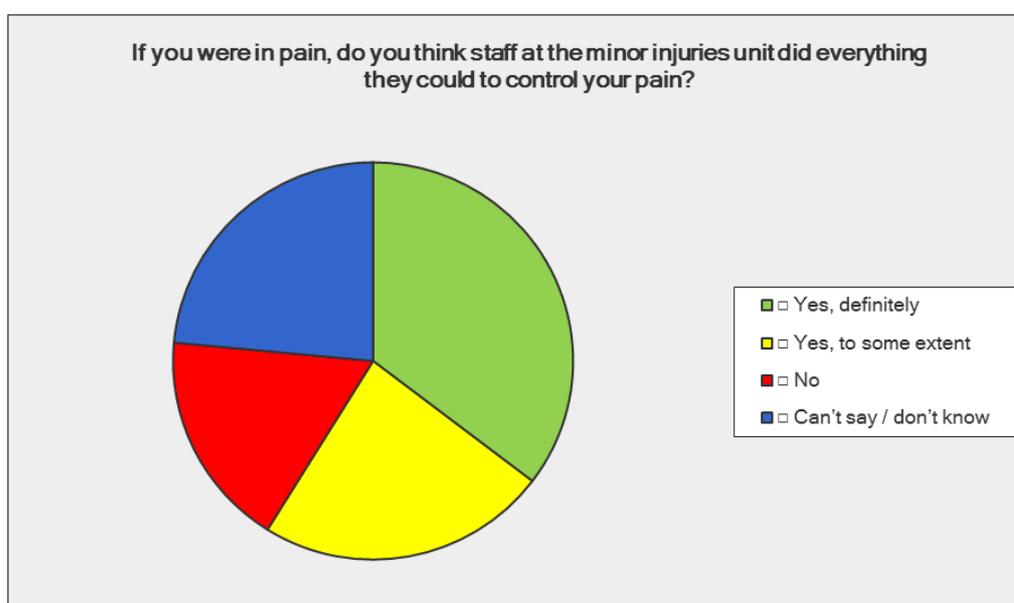
service as poor (2 on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 meant I had a very poor experience/I am not satisfied with my experience and 10 the opposite).

Lack of clarity in the process of being seen

Some people raised again the issue of not knowing when they would be seen, how long it would take and whether there was a triage system in operation. One person said *"more updates once inside the cubicle would have been nice"* as the person they were accompanying was very anxious. Another said *"It's difficult to understand why some people who arrived after me were seen before me, although I understand that those with more serious injuries are seen first, some that went before didn't appear more serious!!"*

Pain relief

Out of the 17 people who responded to the question "If you were in pain, do you think staff did everything they could to control your pain?" 35% (6) answered "Yes, definitely", with another 23.5 (4) saying "Yes, to some extent" and another 17.6% (3) saying "no" and 23.5% (4) "can't say/don't know". The experience of pain is a highly individual one but these responses suggest that there could be better communication with people to understand the levels of pain they are in and how much relief they can expect from interventions the staff can offer.



4 Recommendations

It is clear from what people told us that a majority of people are satisfied with the MIU services. It is also apparent from the interviews that people are using them appropriately, choosing to visit them with a clear understanding of what services and facilities are on offer.

However, there are some actions that could be taken to improve people's experiences and usage of the MIU services. We recommend that Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust consider:

I. Better signposting to MIU services

It was notable that those who knew about the MIU service chose to use it and, on the whole, used it appropriately. Indeed 33 out of the 62 people interviewed had come straight to the MIU without accessing any other service. However, another 23 had attempted to access their GP surgery before coming to the MIU. Of further note, not one person mentioned the national "Choose Well" Education campaign in influencing their decisions.

Therefore, if the aim is to have more people accessing the 'right care, in the right place, the first time', some awareness raising needs to be done about MIU services and the types of services they offer. This could be done at a CCG level as well as at GP surgeries.

II. Better communication about opening hours and better coordination of staffing:

A significant number of the people waiting for x-ray (11 of the 33 who needed x-ray) were on their second visit to the MIU because they hadn't been able to have an x-ray on their first visit. This was because they first attended on a Sunday, or had not been seen by 6:30pm when the x-ray unit shuts, even though the MIU is open until 10-10:30pm.

Either the trust needs to staff the x-ray unit to longer hours, or be more explicit about what services are available at what times so people can make informed choices about where and when to be seen.

III. More information about expected waiting times and triage process

A significant minority of people commented about waiting times and the data suggested that for those who waited over 4 hours, their experience of the MIU services was negatively affected by the long wait. When people register at reception, they should be given clear information about waiting times and how long they may have to wait until they will be seen.

They should also be given clear information about if there is a triage system in operation i.e. what process determines when a person is seen as there were many comments about 'queue jumping' and this left some people feeling very negative about their experience.

IV. Better communication around pain control

In all 7 out of 17 people said they either did not feel staff had done everything they could to help them control their pain or didn't know/couldn't say if that had been the case. This suggests there could be better communication to check if people are in pain, to take action to alleviate that pain and to check on people throughout their wait.

V. Better amenities such as water fountains and vending machines

A particular problem at Henley was the lack of access to water, or any food or drink while waiting to be seen. One person at the Witney MIU mentioned how glad they were that the Witney MIU had a vending machine that made it possible to have access to snacks, as people are not able to leave the waiting room while waiting to be seen. Another commented on how grateful they were to staff for providing them with a drink of water. Therefore, it is important that people's basic needs are catered for at all the MIUs through the provision of vending machines and water fountains, particularly since there may be waits of several hours involved in accessing services.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank John Daniels, manager of the MIU service for his help in developing the project and for facilitating our access to MIUs. We would also like to thank the staff at the county's MIUs who were welcoming to our staff and volunteers. This project was made possible through the assistance of our dedicated volunteers. Finally, and most importantly we would like to thank the patients who took the time to share their views with us.

5 Appendix 1: Topic Guide for interviews



Healthwatch Oxfordshire - Minor Injuries Project Topic Guide

Introduce yourself and the project

Answer any questions

Obtain Consent

1. Starting from when you first knew you might need to see a doctor or nurse, tell me the details of how you got here. (You don't need to give me specific medical details, if you're uncomfortable)
2. Did you consider any other options before coming here?
-prompts: GP? A&E? Pharmacist? Calling 111?
3. Did you go anywhere else before coming here?
4. Have you used a minor injuries service before?
 - a. What was the experience like before (good? Bad?)
 - b. If not, what did you know about this service before coming here? What did you think about its quality?
5. Did anyone else tell you to come here / refer you here?
- Prompts: GP? Pharmacist? 111? School? Family member?
6. Generally, how do you decide where to go for help with health problems / issues?
7. What outcome are you looking for / hoping for today?

6 Appendix 2: Questionnaire



Healthwatch Oxfordshire - Minor Injuries Experience Survey

Please answer this survey about this, most recent, experience of the Minor Injuries Unit. Use the freepost envelope provided to return it to us. Please try to respond by **1st June 2016**. All of the information you provide will be anonymous and we will not be able to trace responses back to you.

1. From the time you arrived at the minor injuries unit, how long did you wait before being examined by a nurse or doctor

- I did not have to wait
- 1-30 minutes
- 31-60 minutes
- More than one hour but no more than 2 hours
- More than 2 hours but no more than 4 hours
- More than 4 hours
- Can't remember
- I did not see a doctor or nurse

2. Overall, how long did your visit to the minor injuries unit last?

- Up to 1 hour
- More than one hour but no more than 2 hours
- More than 2 hours but no more than 4 hours
- More than 4 hours but no more than 6 hours
- More than 6 hours but no more than 8 hours
- Longer than 8 hours
- Can't remember

3. Were you in pain while you were at the minor injuries unit?

- Yes
- No

4. If you were in pain, do you think staff at the minor injuries unit did everything they could to control your pain?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, to some extent
- No
- Can't say / don't know

5. While you were in the minor injuries unit, did a doctor or nurse explain your condition or treatment in a way you could understand?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, to some extent
- No
- I did not need an explanation

6. Did the doctors and nurses listen to what you have to say?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, to some extent
- No

7. Did you have confidence and trust in the people treating you?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, to some extent
- No

8. Were you given enough privacy when being examined or treated?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, to some extent
- No

9. Overall, did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity while you were in the minor injuries department?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, to some extent
- No

10. Overall... (please circle a number)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I had a very poor experience I had a very good experience

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I am not satisfied with my experience I am satisfied with my experience

If you were referred on to another service from the minor injuries unit, please tell us where:

Please add any other comments in the box below:

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!