

What matters to  
people using  
**Poole Hospital  
Accident & Emergency?**

Local health  
and social care  
shaped by you

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Introduction	3
Background	3
What we did	4
Who we spoke to	4
What people told us	
. Communication	5
. Waiting times	5
. Local hospital services	6
. Staff	6
. Environment	6
. Case study I	6
. Case study II	7
Recommendations	7
Next steps	8
Stakeholder's response	8
Thank you	8

© Healthwatch Dorset (published February 2020)

The material must be acknowledged as Healthwatch Dorset copyright and the document title specified. Where third party material has been identified, permission from the respective copyright holder must be sought.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [enquiries@healthwatchdorset.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchdorset.co.uk)

You can download this publication from [healthwatchdorset.co.uk](http://healthwatchdorset.co.uk)

# Introduction

Healthwatch Dorset is the county's independent health and social care champion. It exists to ensure that people are at the heart of care. A dedicated team of staff and volunteers listen to what people like about local health and social care services, and what could be improved. These views are then shared with the decision-making organisations, so together a real difference can be made. This report is an example of how views are shared.

## Background

Healthwatch England has been helping NHS England to understand the potential impact of new Accident and Emergency targets by finding out what matters most to patients and the public when it comes to A&E. The ongoing national review of A&E performance measures offers hospitals and their staff an opportunity to consider how targets align with patient priorities, and how data gathered as part of national performance reporting can be used in innovative ways to improve patient experience. See : <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/report/2020-02-20/what-matters-people-using-ae>.

Poole Hospital is one of 14 Hospitals across the country currently piloting a different set of A&E standards, since May 2019. Their target is to achieve an average length of stay in the department of 200 minutes or less.

As part of this national work Healthwatch Dorset, along with five other local Healthwatch across the country, was asked to carry out a project gathering people's experience of Poole Hospital A&E and waiting times. A project worker and five volunteers carried out the project, speaking to 40 people over the course of a month, in October/November 2019, carrying out ten visits to the department at a mix of times (morning, afternoon and evening) and days (weekdays and weekends).

Our project has shown that the majority of people we spoke to had been waiting over 4-hours.

Poole A&E department has capacity for 170/180 people, but they are currently seeing 215 people plus daily. This is causing longer stays in the department and making it more crowded than ever before.

“Good triage but a long wait in the department, loud and chaotic.”

Bruce Hopkins, matron for emergency care at Poole Hospital, told us:

***“Like many other emergency departments across the country we've seen very significant demand for our services from more patients who are more ill. This can lead to waiting times longer than either the staff in the department or our patients would like. Patients should be reassured, though, that our hardworking teams place care at the very centre of what they do and really go the extra mile to provide the best experience possible.”***

***“We're pleased with the positive feedback from patients highlighted in the survey but aware there is more work ahead.”***



# What we did

We took part in planning meetings with Healthwatch England and NHS England in August/September 2019 to create an interview guide, used by all the local Healthwatch.

We met with representatives from Poole Hospital in September 2019 to outline the project and plan the visits.

We produced posters and leaflets which were displayed in Poole Hospital A&E department through October and November 2019 to promote our project to visitors and staff and encourage people to contact us to share their experience and suggestions.

We held a workshop session with our volunteers before the project began to run through the interview guide agreed by Healthwatch England and NHS England, to plan the visits (one volunteer accompanied by our Project Worker at each visit) and discuss how to gather feedback.



Project Volunteer Bob Kensley told us: “Exceptional project, I am fortunate enough to have never been in A&E and it was a new experience. I was struck by the professionalism of the staff.”

Project Volunteer Christine Clark explained: “I really enjoyed taking part in this Healthwatch Dorset project, it was so interesting. One particular gentleman stood out for me. He was elderly and very poorly (post sepsis). It was his second visit to A&E in 6 weeks but when I asked him if he would take part in our project he said ‘Of course, anything for the NHS’. He highly praised the staff, especially the nurses, who he said were ‘Angels in different coloured uniforms’. It shows how highly people rate the NHS, even though it may not be perfect.”

As a team, our Project Worker and volunteers felt welcomed by staff within Poole A&E department.

# Who we spoke to

Over the course of 10 visits to Poole A&E department we spoke to 40 patients, carers and their family and friends using an interview guide to find out how they felt about their experience. We also gathered feedback from staff in the department during our visits.

## Demographics

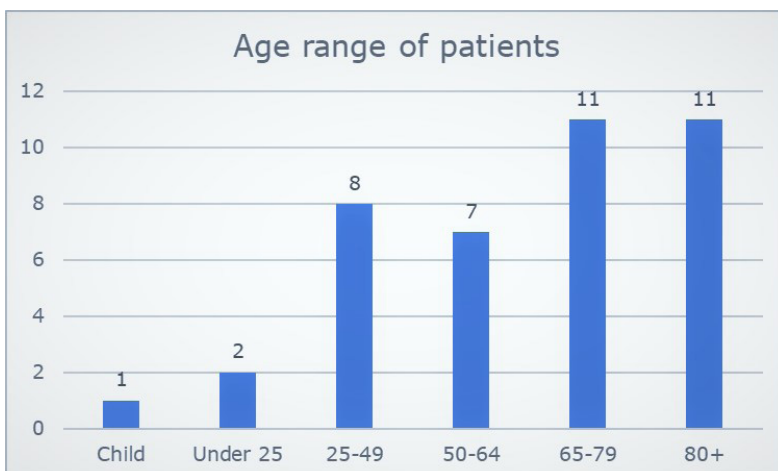


Figure 1. Age range of patients.

19 of the patients we spoke to identified themselves as female and 21 identified themselves as male.

Figure 1. shows the age range of patients.

Most people we spoke to identified themselves as White British, two patients identified themselves as Eastern European.

10 patients we spoke to had long term health conditions.

21 patients had been brought into the A&E department by ambulance, seven had been advised to attend by NHS 111 and 11 patients had been brought in by family/friends or made their own way.

We spoke to 11 people who identified themselves as a carer.

# What people told us

## Communication



Most people were generally happy with the department, but the most commonly expressed concerns were about the quality and frequency of communication by staff. One of our interview questions prompted people to share their experience of communication in A&E, but respondents often also chose to comment on communication in their responses to other questions too, linking communication to other aspects of their experience.

Two carers we spoke with said that they felt they were acting as the communicator and that there had been little or no acknowledgement of the patient they were supporting. They felt that they were constantly chasing staff to ask what was happening and how much longer the person would be waiting.

A patient told us that he had been waiting in the department for 7½ hours and was unsure if he could have a drink, he didn't know who to ask. He explained that he was hesitant to ask staff for a drink and said that some guidelines, a poster on the wall, would be of some help.

“Poor communication, the department seems heavily staffed, but no-one will tell us what's happening. I keep having to ask the questions.”

## Waiting times

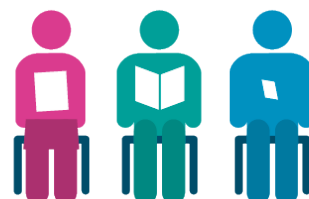
The department was very busy during most of our visits and especially so during our evening visits and at weekends, sometimes standing room only.

(N.B. there are two times displayed on the screen in A&E; the wait to see a triage nurse to assess severity of illness and then the wait for a doctor. Patients are prioritised on clinical need, not time in department.)

The comments people shared with us indicate that while waiting times are important, it's only one factor in determining the quality of people's experience in A&E.

“Screen says zero minutes, but it's an eight or nine hour wait to see a doctor!”

### WAITING ROOM



## Local hospital services

There was a general worry amongst people we spoke to that the A&E department in Poole will close and become an urgent treatment centre. Issues raised centred around 'where will people go' plus concern for those living in Swanage and outlying areas in terms of transport times.

"We're really concerned that A&E is moving to Bournemouth; on the whole we couldn't wish for better than Poole Hospital."

## Staff

"Nice friendly staff, the people here are excellent."



Most people we spoke to had praise for the staff and felt that they were under a lot of pressure.

There was a general feeling from most patients and carers of 'I don't want to bother the staff'. We heard 'I don't like to ask' on several occasions and gathered comments like 'the NHS are so pushed, they have little resources' and 'it's not their fault'. However, this left people feeling isolated and frustrated and most people welcomed having our volunteers to chat to, especially those who had been waiting for a long time.

## Environment

The department was fairly clean and the hospital had obviously tried to make it a welcoming environment by displaying scenic pictures on the walls. Some of the people we spoke to suggested it would be helpful to display a 'who's who' poster of staff so that patients and relatives/carers understand who they are talking to. Staff all have name badges, but these are small and challenging to read.

## Case study I

We spoke to a man in a side room with his wife. They had called 111 and been brought into the A&E department by ambulance. They had been waiting in the side room for over 2½ hours and whilst they had some checks carried out, they had yet to see a Doctor.

The man's wife, who is his carer, felt that 'they have not understood my husbands' needs'. She had to go and find a member of staff to ask what was happening. They felt isolated in the side room, anxious and worried that they'd been forgotten about.



## Case study II

We spoke with a lady whose mum had been brought into A&E via ambulance from her care home. When she arrived at the A&E department waiting area and explained that her mum had been brought in she was told to wait, but staff didn't tell her what was going on.

"I didn't want to bother the staff but had an hour wait and felt that was enough of sitting, not knowing what was happening."



"Thank goodness we have an NHS."

When she asked at the desk she was told: "Yes your mum is being moved to a bed, I've checked." But when she did get through her mum was on a stretcher in the corridor. They then took her mum through to a bed space and although the staff were going off shift, instead of leaving, they stayed and found a chair for the carer to sit on and checked that her mum was ok. She felt that staff had given her mum a thorough check following the fall that has brought her into A&E, and she wanted to say that the staff are 'doing a good job under immense pressure'.

## Recommendations

- The people we spoke to really appreciated having someone to talk to. We recommend that the Hospital looks into recruiting A&E volunteers who are visible in the department and available to answer questions.
- Many of the people we spoke to wanted more information, so we suggest the department displays clear and accessible Information about the 'process' of A&E, what to expect and if/when you can have a drink or food while you're waiting.
- Patients, family members and carers wanted to know who they were talking to in the department and who to ask for help and information, so we recommend creating a 'who's who' display of staff in Poole A&E.
- Several patients and carers told us that in previous visits to the A&E department they would have appreciated some information to take away with them. We suggest that a leaflet and some online information is produced providing patients and their carers with a contact for any follow up questions when people leave the department.



"I had to ring A&E the next morning to get more information. It would help if they gave you a name and number to contact for follow up questions."

# Next steps

We will now work with Poole Hospital to share our findings and explore ways to meet our recommendations. We will also share this report with Bournemouth Hospital, Dorset County Hospital, Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group and the local Health Scrutiny Committees.

By working to put patient experience at the heart of NHS England's thinking we have aimed to ensure that any new targets track what matters most to patients, drive positive patient-centred behaviour in departments and are understandable by the wider public.



"The NHS is a wonderful thing and little changes could make it even better."

# Stakeholder's response

This report has been shared with Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. Mark Mould, Chief Operating Officer at Poole Hospital said:

"I welcome this report and how it has captured what we know to be true - that patients want timely care that they are kept informed about, and to know who is providing it.

"I am looking forward to working with Healthwatch Dorset to identify how their recommendations can best be implemented to better support our patients."



**Poole Hospital**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Thank you

Healthwatch Dorset would like to thank all the participants who took the time to contribute their views and experience through the engagement activities. Also to Poole Hospital staff and Healthwatch England for their support.

Finally thanks to our project worker and dedicated volunteers who helped to support the engagement activity. Without them we would not have been able to reach the numbers of people that we did.



local health and care shaped by you



This page is intentionally left blank

## Why not get involved?



[healthwatchdorset.co.uk](http://healthwatchdorset.co.uk)



[enquiries@healthwatchdorset.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchdorset.co.uk)



0300 111 0102



The Bridge, Chaseside, Bournemouth, BH7 7BX



HealthwatchDorset



[@HWatchDorset](https://twitter.com/HWatchDorset)



[healthwatch.dorset](https://www.instagram.com/healthwatch.dorset)