

Can you obtain an emergency appointment at your General Practice?

We continue to hear that some patients find it difficult to obtain an emergency consultation at their General Practice (GP).

Since our previous report, feedback from patients and members of the public to Healthwatch Birmingham include:

A caller's mother had unsuccessfully tried for three days to make a GP appointment. She had a stroke one week later, and passed away within a month. The family felt if earlier access to an appointment had been available, she might have avoided the stroke.

"Cannot get an appointment to see a doctor in the morning. Told to go to Erdington walk-in clinic."

Another person, with stomach pain, telephoned to book an emergency GP appointment. After two days of trying, unsuccessfully, he went to the surgery and obtained an appointment.

"It's hard to get a same day appointment when you need it ..."



People have been sharing their experiences through our [online Feedback Centre](#) and through our Information and Signposting Line.

The challenge of how to provide a sufficient number of emergency GP consultations is a national problem and GP's contracts require them¹. This has resulted in some practices adopting innovative ways of working, such as telephone consultations² and the reorganisation of practices into 'super-partnerships'³.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) are encouraging GPs to improve their allocation of consultations:

"The Healthwatch Birmingham report was interesting and triggered a discussion within the Birmingham Team regarding how, during inspection, we consider how General Practices allocate appointments. As part of the key line of enquiries CQC Inspectors ask General Practices how they ensure that they triage to the most appropriate healthcare professional, either within the practice or to an alternative urgent care service."

Inspector, CQC (Central West), Primary Medical Services Inspection Directorate

Share your feedback

Please continue sharing your experiences about this issue. Healthwatch Birmingham will use this feedback to highlight to commissioners and regulators, such as the CQC, the variability in the quality of health and social care services across the city. We will also continue to highlight the findings of our report to influence change.

You can share your feedback with us by:

Calling us: 0800 652 5278.

Visiting our Feedback Centre: www.healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk

Talking face to face with one of our staff or volunteers at an [Engagement Event](#).

Experiences on our Feedback Centre are freely available for patients, the public and health and social services staff to read. Health and social care providers are invited to respond to feedback about their service on the website.

¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2015/06/pms2015-16.pdf> (Page 40)

² <http://www.bmj.com/content/358/bmj.j4345>

³ <http://www.mmpmedical.com/our-services/appointments/>