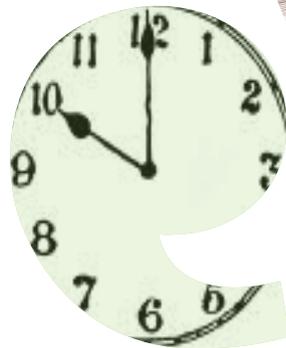


WHY A&E? (Children)





	Page
Foreword	3
Background	4
Summary	5
Engagement Process	6
Questionnaire	7
Responses	8
Recommendations	19
Equality and Monitoring	21





This report outlines the view of respondents who took part in the *Why Children's Accident and Emergency* project which Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham carried out.

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham are the voice of local people, groups and networks. We are independent and therefore do not have a pre-set agenda or a pre-determined interest in influencing the outcome of the results of a consultation.

This document represents a collective public response to the consultation and is a random sample. This has been conducted impartially - Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham have no organisational view.

Copies of this report are available by contacting Barking and Dagenham Healthwatch on 020 8596 8200 or by emailing

If you would like a hard copy of this report please contact Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham

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If you require this report in an alternative format please contact us.



The Child Health Profile of Barking and Dagenham (March 2014) indicates that in 2011/12 there were 12,152 attendances at Accident and Emergency Units (A&E) by children aged 4 years and under and resident in the Barking and Dagenham area. This rate is higher than the England average.

The Child Health Profile of Redbridge shows that the neighboring borough had 10,831 A&E attendances by children aged 4 years and under. This indicates there were 1321 more attendances from Barking and Dagenham.

In May 2014, Professor Mike Sharland, a government advisor to the Department of Health, told a conference at the Royal Society that children with minor coughs and colds are being taken straight to accident and emergency units by their parents. Following on from this *Stephanie Smith of the Royal College of PCH* said, 'particular attention needs to be given to parents who often feel like A&E is the only option when their child is ill. But parents will only change habits if there is a viable alternative.'

There were also discussions at the Child and Maternity group about the high attendance rates of under 4 at A&E at the time this was a concern for the sub group.

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham wanted to look at the reasons behind parents attending A&E and also if they are aware of alternative services they can attend. Healthwatch also wanted to engage with parents to find out what suggestions parents had for reducing unnecessary A&E attendances.

Barking Havering and Redbridge University Trust (BHRUT) runs two paediatric emergency care departments: one at Queen's Hospital in Romford and one in King George Hospital in Redbridge. Healthwatch attended both the emergency departments and children's centres to speak to parents.



Summary

This report highlights the findings from the questionnaires completed by parents in the Children's Centres and A&E departments of both King George and Queens Hospital.

Healthwatch spoke to 107 parents who had attended an A&E department in the last year.

There were various reasons as to why parents chose to take their child to A&E rather than another service. Results show that there were five common themes, 16% of parents took their child to A&E as they were unable to see the GP, 7% felt their child needed an x-ray and 7% of parents called 111, who told them to go A&E or sent an ambulance. A further 9% told Healthwatch they had no choice but to go to A&E as everywhere else was closed (for a full list of reasons please read the findings section).

Results from the questionnaires show 52% of parents had accessed a GP to get advice or been seen before attending the A&E department. A further 27% accessed the 111 service and 27% had telephoned or been to the Walk in Centre.

There were some parents (42%) who chose to take their child straight to A&E. Various reasons were given as to why they made this decision, 15% said everywhere else was closed and 13% felt their child needed an x-ray. A further 9% commented on being fed up with their GP for not referring their child to a specialist when they had a reoccurring health issue. (A full list of reasons can be found under the findings section)

The findings highlight that under half (49%) of the parents we spoke to are aware of what services the community pharmacies can offer them for their child. Only 32% knew of what GP out of hours services are available and 25% were aware of the services that are offered through the Urgent Care Unit.

Parents (32%) told us better access to GPs would help to reduce A&E visits. A further 7% felt that early referrals to specialist would also make a difference. In addition 10% said a drop-in specifically for children in the borough is needed.

Having the correct information and knowing where to go, was mentioned by parents. Overall there was 28% who commented about having clear information for parents so they know exactly where to go.



Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham believe that the people who use the services are best placed to tell us their views. This enables us to have a true reflection of how a service is working, make recommendations on where improvements are needed and highlight what is working well.

Healthwatch devised questionnaires which included specific questions.

Healthwatch visited the King George and Queen's Accident and Emergency departments on various days and times. We also went to a number of children's centres. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and parents at all the children's centres and the A&E departments.

To enable respondents to take part, without the fear of their personal details being shared or have an impact on the services they receive Healthwatch explained the following part of the questionnaire to all respondents:

1. Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham is about local voices being able to influence the delivery, design, quality and standard of local health and social care services and that their view is important and will help to ensure that views of service users are forwarded to relevant organisations involved in delivering those.
2. Participation is voluntary, and individuals are not required to answer any questions that they do not want to. It was also made clear that participation or non-participation will not affect access to the service they are currently receiving.
3. It was also explained to respondents that Healthwatch staff are not medical professionals and are not there to say whether they should be attending the accident and emergency department.
4. We explained that all the information collected will be kept strictly confidential, however if they would like a copy of the final report then they are welcome to give their details.



Questionnaire

In total Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham spoke to 133 Service users. Out of these 107 had taken their child to A&E in the last year and 26 had not.

The questions asked were as follows:

- Please tell us why you chose to go to A&E?
- Did you use any of the access points/advice points below to get advice/ information/treatment before attending A&E ?
- If not please tell us why?
- Are you aware of what the services below offer ? (please tick all that apply)
- Is there anything that could be done in the community to prevent unnecessary visits to A&E?



1. Please tell us why you chose to go to A&E?

	Number	%
GP referred	4	4%
Needed an X-ray	8	7%
No appointments at the GP	17	16%
Walk- in,said child too young to be seen	5	5%
No reason wanted to see a specialist	2	2%
Walk -in referred	2	2%
Closest place to come	6	6%
Felt hospital best place for her	1	1%
Called 111, they said go A&E/sent ambulance	8	7%
Called 999	2	2%
Everywhere else was closed	10	9%
Injury	1	1%
Constant health problem, GP not referring to the specialist	4	4%
Referred from urgent care centre	1	1%
Panicked	2	2%
When you call 111 too many questions and child in pain	1	1%
Child burnt themself	1	1%
Had already gone GP a few days ago but no improvemnet to the cough and fever.	1	1%
Some people chose to give a health reason as to why they chose to take their child to A&E, these are listed below .		
Vomiting	3	3%
Seizure /fit	2	2%
Asthma attack	1	1%
Broken finger	1	1%
Chesty cough and fever related	8	7%
Child fainted	1	1%
Hurt side of head	1	1%
Cut chin	1	1%
Rash	2	2%
Injury accident	1	1%
Piece of glass stuck in foot	1	1%
Child could not breathe	1	1%
Choked	2	2%

Drank washing up liquid	1	1%
Back of stud stuck in ear	1	1%
Eye infection	1	2%
Ear infection	1	1%
Breathing difficulties	1	1%
Bump on head	1	1%
Total	107	

In total we spoke to 107 parents who had attended A&E in the last year.

There were various reasons as to why parents choose to take their child to A&E rather than another services. Results show that there were five common themes, 16% of parents took their child to A&E as they were unable to see the GP, 7% felt their child needed an x-ray and 7% of parents called 111, who told them to go A&E or sent an ambulance. A further 9% told Healthwatch they had no choice but to come to A&E as everywhere else was closed.

Feedback shows that how far you live from a service, matters to some parents, 6% of parents told Healthwatch they chose to take their child to A&E as it was closer to where they live than an alternative service.

A small percentage(4%) of children were referred to A&E through their GP.

There are a number of other reasons as to why parents chose to go to A&E, all the reasons can be seen in the table above.

Parents told us the health reasons they attended A&E for. The most common reasons were

- Flu/flu like symptoms (13 %)
- Injury (11%)
- Breathing difficulties (7%)
- Vomiting (12%)

A full list of the health issues can be found on the following page.

Health issue

	Number	%
Asthma	2	2%
Back of stud stuck in ear	1	1%
Bad cough and vomiting	1	1%
Breathing difficulties	7	6.5%
Bump on head	3	3%
Burn(touched hot iron , hot water)	2	2%
Constipation	2	2%
Cough and fever	7	6.5%
Cut chin	1	1%
Chest infection	5	5%
Chesty cough and fever	1	1%
Child fainted	1	1%
Choking	2	2%
Diarrhea	1	1%
Drank washing up liquid	1	1%
Ear infection	3	3%
Eye infection	1	1%
Fell over the bed	1	1%
Fever	9	8%
Fever and vomiting	1	1%
Fit/seizures	3	3%
Flu and cough	3	3%
Hurt side of head	1	1%
Injury (Broken arm/leg/twisted elbow, hurt leg)	12	11%
Nose infection	1	1%
Painful leg	4	4%
Piece of glass stuck in foot	1	1%
Rash	6	6%
Stomach bug	1	1%
Stomach pain	5	5%
Throat infection	1	1%
Viral infection	1	01%
Vomiting	13	12%
Went abroad and child has virus	1	1%
Did not state reason	2	2%

Did you use any of the access points/advice points below to get advice/information/treatment before attending A&E ?

	Number	%
Yes	54	51%
No	53	49%

54 parents told us that they accessed another service before going to A&E and 53 said they had not.

Please tell us which service you used:
(Please note the figures below will not add to 100% as some individuals accessed more than one service)

	Number	%
London Ambulance Service	6	11%
Walk-in Centres	8	15%
Urgent Care unit	1	2%
GP	28	52%
Community pharmacists	1	2%
111	15	27%
The internet	4	7%

Out of the 54 parents who accessed services, 52% had accessed a GP to get advice or were seen before attending A&E, 27% contacted 111 and 15% had called or attended the walk-in service.

In addition, 11% called the London Ambulance Service. Only 2% of parents had been to the community pharmacist and a further 2% had been to the urgent care centre.

There was a small percentage (7%) of parents who accessed the internet for advice.

Comments made from those who access another service before attending A&E

“Went to community pharmacist then they sent ambulance”

“When I call, they told me someone would be there to open X-RAY later on so I went to A&E”

“First called A&E, they sent me to GP. GP sent to A&E as the bump had swollen from previously when child bumped head”

If you did not access another service first, please tell us your reasons for this?

	Number	%
Wanted to see a specialist	3	6%
Thought we would need an X-ray done	7	13%
Was panicking and worried	5	9%
Child had seizure, too serious to try anywhere else	1	2%
Too long to wait, GP couldn't see us on the day	1	2%
Everywhere would have been closed	9	16%
Not registered with GP	1	2%
It was a Saturday and the GP was closed	1	2%
No appointment at GP	1	2%
No reason given	10	19%
I didnt call 111 because too many questions are asked whilst child in pain	1	2%
Hospital best place to take her, everything in one place	1	2%
Wanted child seen quickly and on the same day	3	6%
Walk -in not seeing under 2s	1	2%
Rash was bad	1	2%
Had already seen GP no improvement so went A&E	1	2%
Fed up of constant problem and GP not referring	5	9%
Too urgent to wait or see anyone else	1	2%

There were 53 parents who chose to take their child straight to A&E, various reasons were given as to why they made the decision. Some parents (16%) said everywhere else was closed and therefore had no choice, 13% of the parents went straight to A&E as they thought their child would need an x-ray and 9% went as they were worried.

The findings also highlights, 9% of parents being fed up with their GP as they did not make a referral to a specialist for their child's on going health issue.

A full list of reasons can be seen above in the table.

Comments from parents

"It was early morning and I was really worried".

"Walk-in Centre do not see under 2"

"Thought she would need an x-ray"

Are you aware of what the services below offer ? (please tick all that apply)

The table below is for the parents who had attended A&E.

Results for those parents who have taken their child to A&E in the last year.		
	Yes (Number)	%
GP out-of-hours	34	32%
Walk-in centre	84	79%
111	67	63%
Community pharmacists	52	49%
Urgent Care unit	27	25%

From the 107 who had taken their child to A&E, 79% said they were aware of what services the Walk -in Centre offers and 63% said they knew what the 111 service offered.

The findings highlight that under half (49%) of the parents we spoke to are aware of what services the community pharmacies can offer them for their child. Only 32% knew of what GP out of hours services are available and 25% were aware of the services that are offered through the Urgent Care Unit.

From the results it's evident that more work needs to be done in terms of the providing clear information to parents as to what each service can offer them.

The fact that only 25% of parents were aware of the service offered at the Urgent Care Centre highlights the importance of promotion of the services through avenues where parents will see this information.

Comments from parents

"Yes I usually try one of them before coming A&E"

"Yes, I would use these services and have used the services"

"No/Yes, I know but how do I go there, call them"

"Did not know I could get free medication for my son"

Is there anything that could be done in the community to prevent visits to A&E?

All parents were asked this question. 79 responded. Please note some parents gave more than one response.

	Number	%
Better access to GPs	25	32%
More information and clear publicity	1	1%
Awareness of other services	2	3%
Where else can we go for childrens X-rays	5	6%
Need a local walk-in centre, closer to home	1	1%
No I was sent by a professional	1	1%
Clear information on what the service offers and what they can actually do for you.	10	13%
Nothing	2	3%
Some people will go A&E no matter what happens	2	3%
Don't know	9	11%
More specialist childrens doctors in the community	5	6%
Referrals made earlier to a peadiatrician	6	7%
Should be able to see a specialist on the day	1	1%
Didn't know about the minor ailments scheme until today.	4	5%
For some of us the only option is A&E because under 2s can't go to the walk-in centre.	8	10%
Face to face triage system rather than 111 where they cannot see you, this does not work very well as they cannot see you!	1	1%
Drop in service specially for children	8	10%
Found out about walk-in through a friend! No information in GPS or anywhere else about this.	1	1%
Awareness training for parents where to go! What to do !	4	5%
Health visitors to have more time for childrens illness, rather than a quick drop every now and again.	1	1%

Out of the parents who chose to answer this question, 32% felt that better access to GPs would help with A&E attendance.

There was 10% of parents who felt that apart from the GP there is no alternative for them apart from A&E as the Walk in Centre do not see children

under 2. Furthermore 7% of parents felt that GPs need to make referrals sooner to specialialists.

Parents (28%) felt that more needs to be done in terms of the promotion of services that can be used, this includes clear information for example can you have an x-ray at a Walk-in Centre for under 5s.

Furthermore parents wanted to know what else is available for under 2s as they feel the only option as parents is to take their child to their GP or A&E.



Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, parents choose to attend the A&E department for various reasons. Some of the reasons given by parents included:

- 16% were unable to get a GP appointment for their child
- 9% said everywhere else was closed
- 7% had called 111 and were told to go to A&E or were sent an ambulance
- 7% needed an X-ray
- 4% child had a constant health problem and GP did not refer them to a specialist.

The 42% of parents who chose to take their child straight to A&E without accessing another service gave different reasons as to why, 15% said everywhere else was closed and 13% felt their child needed an x-ray. A further 9% commented on being fed up with their GP not referring them to a specialist for the constant health issue their child had.

Out of the 107 parents that had been to A&E in the last year, 51% told us they had accessed another service before going to A&E.

Parents (28%) felt that more needs to be done in terms of the promotion of services that can be used, this includes clear information for example "can you have an x-ray at a Walk-in Centre for under 5s.

Furthermore parents wanted to know what else is available for the under 2s as they feel the only option are for parents is to take their child to their GP or A&E.

Recommendations

Taking into consideration feedback from both parents who have used the A&E service and those who have not Healthwatch recommends the following:

- Information needs to be produced by the CCG with involvement from parents that gives visual examples of what is available for parents with an easy read leaflet to distribute. This should be specifically for parents.

- The CCG need to make it clear what is available for children under 2 in the community in terms of urgent care.
- North East London Pharmaceutical Committee to work with the local pharmacies that offer the minor ailments scheme and to promote this to their residents. NELC should encourage pharmacists to advertise the scheme more widely.
- When a new urgent care model is looked at, the CCG might want to consider a drop-in, within a child friendly environment, specifically for sick children. This may be specifically relevant given the rising numbers of young children in the borough.



Gender

	Male	Female	Transgendered	Prefer not to say	
	6	97	0	4	107

Age

	18 -24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 59	Over 60 years	Prefer not to say	
	4	69	30	0	1	3	107

Sexual Orientation

	Heterosexual	Bisexual	Homosexual	Lesbian	Gay	Prefer not to say	
	96					11	

Disability?

	Yes	No	Prefer not to say	
	7	88	12	107

If you are disabled, please tell us what your impairment is?

	Number	%
Visual		
Speech		
Hearing	2	
Learning Disability		
Mental Health	3	
Mobility (a wheelchair user)		
Mobility (not a wheelchair user)		
Prefer not to say	2	
Other		

What is your religion, faith or belief?

	Number
Buddhist	
Hindu	5
Muslim	15
Sikh	9
Jewish	2
Christian	49
No religion	9
Prefer not to say	6
Others	1
Roman Catholic	1
Methodist	0

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

	Number
British White/English	43
Irish White	
Gypsy/ Irish Traveler	
Any other white background	6
Albania	3
Kosovan	1

	Number
Asian/Asian British - Indian	16
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	
Sri Lankan	1
Any other Asian background	

	Number
Black/Black British - African	12
Caribbean	4
African & Caribbean	
Any other Black background	

	Number
Mixed - White & Asian	
Mixed -White & Black African	
White & Black Caribbean	1

	Number
Arab	
Prefer not to say	10
Did not answer	1



Census Demography

	Census
Males	48.50%
Female	51.50%
16-24yrs	12%
25-59yrs	47%
60+yrs	14%

Ethic Group	Census
White British	49.46%
White English	Not on Census
White Irish	0.93%
White Gypsy or Irish Traveler	0.10%
White Welsh	Not on Census
White - any other white background	7.81%
Mixed -White and Black Caribbean	1.44%
Mixed -White and Black African	1.14%
Mixed -White and Asian	0.67%
Other mixed	0.99%
Asian/Asian British : Indian	4%
Asian/Asian British : Pakistani	4.31%
Asian/Asian British : Bangladeshi	4.14
Asian/Asian British : Chinese	0.71%
Other Asian	2.76%
Black or Black British : African	15.43%
Black or Black British : Caribbean	2.81
Black or Black British : Other Black background	1.74%
Any other Ethic Group:	1.04