



Patients Association

Out of hours-postcode lottery in patient care

Interim findings factsheet

March 2010

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1. Introduction

The Patients Association carried out a series of freedom of information act requests to PCTs around the issue of out of hours care and also analysed the results of the quarters 1 and 2 of the National GP Patient Survey 2009/10.

FOI results from 90 Trusts reveal that the average spend per head of the registered patient population was £9.00 but there was significant variation with the lowest spending less than £1.50 and the highest over £20.00.

Director of the Patients Association Katherine Murphy said:

“These figures aren’t an exact science. There will be some PCTs that didn’t do a very good job of negotiating their contracts or calculating what the service really costs them. Some PCTs will have large rural populations which can be more expensive. But common sense would tell you that this degree of variation is worrying - it is hard to understand how one PCT might be spending 16 times more on out of hours care than another. Similar variations were also found in research conducted by the Primary Care Foundation. It is vital that the Department of Health press on with reform in this area so we can have a much better idea of what service is being provided for what money. Participation in benchmarking must be mandatory and the results published as soon as possible. Then we’ll be more able to say what value for money is and when PCTs are scrimping on such a vital service. Local scrutiny is only effective if you know how well your local services are performing.”

Analysis of the results of the GP National Patient survey and revealed that in over a fifth of Trusts (33) 1 in 6 patients rate out of hours care as either poor or very poor. This represents an increase from the 2008/2009 results (30) though comparisons are limited due to different survey methodologies. On average 13% of respondents rated the out of hours GP service as either poor or very poor, with figures ranging from as low as 7% to as high as 21%.

PA Director Katherine Murphy said:

“Once again, there is huge variation with more than double the number of patients rating the service as poor or very poor at the bottom of the table compared to the top. This is completely unacceptable. The postcode lottery of care has to stop.”

The Patients Association also asked Primary Care Trusts to tell us how many complaints their providers had received and how many Serious Untoward Incidents (SUIs) there had been related to out of hours care. 5 Trusts were unable to tell us how many complaints there had been and 3 were unable to tell us how many SUIs there had been.

“This is appalling. If you are paying for a service for patients surely the most important thing you should be doing is monitoring when people aren’t happy with the service. Every Trust should have this information readily available” she added.

2. Quarters 1 and 2 of the National GP Patient Survey 2009/10

The National GP Patient Survey is commissioned by the Department of Health and conducted by IPSOS MORI and asks patients a range of questions about General Practice care including a number on out of hours care.

The Patients Association accessed the results of the survey specifically on out of hours care via the House of Commons Deposited papers library reference numbers DEP2010-0390 and DEP2010-0389 which can be accessed online through the following link;

<http://deposits.parliament.uk/>

The full results of the survey can be accessed via the Department of Health GP Patient Survey website:

<http://results.gp-patient.co.uk/report/main.aspx>

The Patients Association combined the percentage response rate for question 36 of the survey which is as follows:

Rating of the care received from the out-of-hours GP service (Q36)

Very good

Good

Neither good nor poor

Poor

Very Poor

Nationally 13% of patients that took part in the survey rated the out of hours GP service as either poor or very poor. The tables overleaf highlight the lowest and highest percentage scores of Primary Care Trusts for this question where respondents selected poor or very poor.

Primary Care Trust	Percentage rating out of hours care as poor or very poor (18% and above)
RICHMOND AND TWICKENHAM PCT	21%
HARTLEPOOL PCT	20%
EALING PCT	20%
HOUNSLOW PCT	19%
TOWER HAMLETS PCT	19%
HARROW PCT	19%
HEREFORDSHIRE PCT	18%
DARLINGTON PCT	18%
WANDSWORTH PCT	18%
NEWHAM PCT	18%
WEST ESSEX PCT	18%
SURREY PCT	18%
BARNET PCT	18%
LEWISHAM PCT	18%

Primary Care Trust	Percentage rating out of hours care as poor or very poor (8% and below)
HALTON & ST HELENS PCT	8%
CENTRAL LANCASHIRE PCT	8%
CUMBRIA TEACHING PCT	8%
PLYMOUTH TEACHING PCT	8%
BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET PCT	8%
WARRINGTON PCT	8%
OXFORDSHIRE PCT	8%
MEDWAY PCT	8%
STOCKPORT PCT	8%
DONCASTER PCT	8%
TORBAY CARE TRUST	7%
NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE CARE TRUST PLUS	7%
WIRRAL PCT	7%
WESTERN CHESHIRE PCT	7%
KNOWSLEY PCT	7%

Fig.1.1 Recombined results for patients rating out of hours GP service as poor or very poor (Source: IPSOS MORI National GP Patient Survey Q's 1 and 2 2009/10).

3. Freedom of information act research

On the 15th January 2010 the Patients Association sent the following freedom of information act requests to all Primary Care Trusts in England.

1. In the financial years 2005/6, 2006/7, 2007/8, 2008/9 how many complaints were received by the PCT about the primary care out of hours service?
2. In the financial years 2005/6, 2006/7, 2007/8, 2008/9 how many complaints (about the primary care out of hours service) were received by organisations contracted by the PCT to provide the primary care out of hours service?
3. In the financial years 2005/6, 2006/7, 2007/8, 2008/9 how many serious untoward incidents were there that were classified as relating to the primary care out of hours service?
4. In the financial years 2005/6, 2006/7, 2007/8, 2008/9 how much was spent by the PCT on the primary care out of hours service (if a multi year contract was used what was the average annual value of that contract for its duration)?
5. In the financial years 2005/6, 2006/7, 2007/8, 2008/9 what percentage of calls to the out of hours service were classified as urgent?
6. In the financial years 2005/6, 2006/7, 2007/8, 2008/9 in what percentage of calls to the out of hours service classified as urgent was the patient assessed within 20 minutes of the call being received?
7. In the financial years 2005/6, 2006/7, 2007/8, 2008/9 what was the population size of the PCT?

Fig 1.2 Freedom of information act request questions sent to all Primary Care Trusts in England on 15th January 2010.

The Patients Association received a very wide range of responses to our requests. Unfortunately a small number of Trusts did not respond in any way or stated that they could not supply us with the information because to do so would be too costly. An even greater number sent us responses past the legal requirement to respond within 20 days.

To provide some interim results the Patients Association collated the responses of all those Trusts that had provided spending figures in 2008/9 which totalled 90 organisations.

As the request for population figures received a low response rate we instead used the population figures provided by the NHS Information Centre to provide a basis for calculating a spend per person in the Primary Care Trust regions. These figures can be downloaded from the following website:

<http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/population-and-geography/gp-registered-populations>

Please note that these figures do not give any weighting to density of population or the nature of the PCT (e.g. rural, urban). They also do not account for variations in population figures compared to the registered population. As such their use as absolute indicators of spend is limited, however the large variation in spend has also been highlighted by other research done by the Primary Care Foundation which found ranges of spend from less than £5.00 per head and more than £15 per head.:

Fig 1.3 Ten highest and lowest spends on out of hours care per head of registered patient population 2008/9 (based on answers received from 90 Primary Care Trusts by the Patients Association in response to Freedom of Information Act requests and NHS Information centre registered population figures)

Ten lowest spends

PCT	2008 Registered population	Spending on Out of Hours care 2008/9	Ratio of spending
Hillingdon PCT	240,291	£339,778	£1.41
Heart Of Birmingham Teaching PCT	282,157	£587,021	£2.08
Sheffield PCT	534,251	£1,772,000	£3.32
Westminster PCT	234,500	£1,057,343	£4.51
South West Essex PCT	397,364	£2,094,563	£5.27
Hammersmith and Fulham PCT	169,996	£920,567	£5.42
Gloucestershire PCT	579,098	£3,413,874	£5.90
Islington PCT	187,274	£1,129,000	£6.03
Havering PCT	237,211	£1,457,314	£6.14
Redbridge PCT	239,977	£1,501,000	£6.25

Ten highest spends

PCT	2008 Registered population	Spending on Out of Hours care 2008/9	Ratio of spending
Leicester City PCT	308,698	£3,783,000	£12.25
North Yorkshire and York PCT	767,343	£9,475,365	£12.35
Herefordshire PCT	174,778	£2,260,000	£12.93
Sefton PCT	270,638	£3,590,000	£13.26
Wiltshire PCT	434,921	£5,800,000	£13.34
Shropshire County PCT	285,157	£4,040,132	£14.17
County Durham PCT	509,490	£7,398,871	£14.52
Medway PCT	265,207	£4,089,000	£15.42
Nottingham City PCT	305,234	£5,354,452	£17.54
Portsmouth City Teaching PCT	199,522	£4,610,259	£23.11

Average spend £9.00 per registered population

Fig 1.3 Full list of spending per head of registered patient population 2008/9 (based on answers received from 90 Primary Care Trusts by the Patients Association in response to Freedom of Information Act requests and NHS Information centre registered population figures)

Primary Care Trust	2008 Registered patient population	Spending on out of hours care 2008/9	Ratio
Ashton, Leigh and Wigan PCT	301,595	£1,898,395	£6.29
Barnsley PCT	231,551	£1,905,000	£8.23
Bassetlaw PCT	106,594	£882,000	£8.27
Bath and North East Somerset PCT	186,018	£2,070,000	£11.13
Bedford PCT	411,716	£3,966,985	£9.64
Berkshire East PCT	384,224	£3,172,000	£8.26
Berkshire West PCT	455,101	£4,320,609	£9.49
Blackburn With Darwen PCT	151,187	£1,153,752	£7.63
Bolton PCT	262,529	£2,444,450	£9.31
Bournemouth and Poole Teaching PCT	321,235	£3,044,000	£9.48
Bradford and Airedale Teaching PCT	497,635	£3,860,372	£7.76
Brighton and Hove City PCT	259,100	£3,013,812	£11.63
Bristol PCT	428,123	£4,760,000	£11.12
Bromley PCT	303,504	£1,981,000	£6.53
Buckinghamshire PCT	496,622	£3,977,686	£8.01
Bury PCT	182,115	£1,374,400	£7.55
Calderdale PCT	200,421	£1,267,585	£6.32
Cambridgeshire PCT	577,074	£6,386,000	£11.07
Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT	455,787	£4,444,559	£9.75
Central Lancashire PCT	438,711	£3,182,632	£7.25
City and Hackney Teaching PCT	220,479	£1,530,341	£6.94
County Durham PCT	509,490	£7,398,871	£14.52
Coventry Teaching PCT	322,770	£2,024,490	£6.27
Darlington PCT	98,203	£1,074,534	£10.94
Derby City PCT	271,023	£2,857,000	£10.54
Derbyshire County PCT	692,696	£7,078,000	£10.22
Devon PCT	732,201	£7,887,948	£10.77
Doncaster PCT	293,143	£2,381,000	£8.12
East and North Hertfordshire PCT	549,793	£4,006,449	£7.29
East Riding Of Yorkshire PCT	304,296	£3,509,000	£11.53
East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT	326,731	£3,528,317	£10.80
Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT	715,898	£7,380,053	£10.31
Gloucestershire PCT	579,098	£3,413,874	£5.90
Hammersmith and Fulham PCT	169,996	£920,567	£5.42
Hampshire PCT	1,235,910	£10,661,000	£8.63
Hastings and Rother PCT	171,398	£2,018,308	£11.78
Havering PCT	237,211	£1,457,314	£6.14
Heart Of Birmingham Teaching PCT	282,157	£587,021	£2.08
Herefordshire PCT	174,778	£2,260,000	£12.93
Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale PCT	203,963	£1,400,000	£6.86
Hillingdon PCT	240,291	£339,778	£1.41

Islington PCT	187,274	£1,129,000	£6.03
Knowsley PCT	150,286	£977,268	£6.50
Leeds PCT	767,081	£6,100,000	£7.95
Leicester City PCT	308,698	£3,783,000	£12.25
Manchester PCT	485,511	£4,321,859	£8.90
Medway PCT	265,207	£4,089,000	£15.42
Milton Keynes PCT	232,448	£1,990,059	£8.56
Newcastle PCT	260,861	£2,102,092	£8.06
Norfolk PCT	723,638	£5,359,594	£7.41
North Lancashire Teaching PCT	326,314	£3,311,000	£10.15
North Lincolnshire PCT	158,260	£1,247,728	£7.88
North Staffordshire PCT	204,102	£1,400,835	£6.86
North Tyneside PCT	204,085	£1,730,600	£8.48
North Yorkshire and York PCT	767,343	£9,475,365	£12.35
Northamptonshire Teaching PCT	660,508	£6,040,000	£9.14
Nottingham City PCT	305,234	£5,354,452	£17.54
Nottinghamshire County Teaching PCT	305,234	£2,677,226	£8.77
Oldham PCT	222,362	£1,700,000	£7.65
Oxfordshire PCT	612,823	£6,924,000	£11.30
Plymouth Teaching PCT	250,298	£2,541,036	£10.15
Portsmouth City Teaching PCT	199,522	£4,610,259	£23.11
Redbridge PCT	239,977	£1,501,000	£6.25
Salford PCT	222,861	£1,720,000	£7.72
Sefton PCT	270,638	£3,590,000	£13.26
Sheffield PCT	534,251	£1,772,000	£3.32
Shropshire County PCT	285,157	£4,040,132	£14.17
Somerset PCT	513,109	£5,268,026	£10.27
South Gloucestershire PCT	242,175	£2,089,000	£8.63
South Staffordshire PCT	583,057	£4,826,000	£8.28
South West Essex PCT	397,364	£2,094,563	£5.27
Southampton City PCT	245,611	£2,051,000	£8.35
Stockport PCT	281,488	£2,129,000	£7.56
Stoke On Trent PCT	258,117	£1,917,084	£7.43
Suffolk PCT	587,971	£6,050,400	£10.29
Surrey PCT	1,072,389	£7,279,865	£6.79
Tameside and Glossop PCT	225,259	£1,770,751	£7.86
Telford and Wrekin PCT	160,909	£1,689,000	£10.50
Trafford PCT	210,705	£1,461,000	£6.93
Wakefield District PCT	333,186	£3,106,000	£9.32
Walsall Teaching PCT	249,755	£2,228,000	£8.92
Wandsworth PCT	280,145	£2,116,082	£7.55
Warrington PCT	192,777	£2,091,000	£10.85
West Hertfordshire PCT	536,390	£4,088,859	£7.62
West Sussex PCT	773,856	£6,527,745	£8.44
Western Cheshire PCT	245,689	£2,188,000	£8.91
Westminster PCT	234,500	£1,057,343	£4.51
Wiltshire PCT	434,921	£5,800,000	£13.34

Wirral PCT	309,822	£3,266,000	£10.54
Worcestershire PCT	545,377	£4,874,000	£8.94

LIST OF PRIMARY CARE TRUSTS THAT WERE UNABLE TO PROVIDE US WITH DATA ON THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS THEIR PROVIDER ORGANISATIONS HAD RECEIVED (please note this does not include Trusts that have not responded to this question)

North Somerset PCT - Response received: The PCT does not collate details of the complaints received by our Out of Hours Provider. Details of these should be obtainable directly from Harmoni. Their contact details can be obtained at www.harmoni.co.uk/site/Harmoni/home

Somerset PCT - Response received: NHS Somerset commissions the 'out of hours' service from the South Western Ambulance Trust (<http://www.was.co.uk/>). As such, I would advise you to contact them for the requested information as NHS Somerset does not hold information regarding the number of complaints they have received with regard to the provision of the 'out of hours' service.

Barking & Dagenham PCT –n Response received: NHS Barking and Dagenham can now respond to you Freedom of Information request. We can only provide the answer to question 1. Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 should be forwarded to the Partnerships of East London Co-operative as they provide our Out of Hours service and we are not informed of complaints which are sent directly to them.

Manchester PCT - Response received: Trafford PCT does not hold this information. It can be obtained by writing to: Mastercall Headquarters, 226-228 Wellington Road, South, Stockport, SK2 6NW

Bradford & Airedale Teaching PCT - Response received: We do not have figures for the number of complaints received and dealt with directly by the provider.

LIST OF PRIMARY CARE TRUSTS THAT WERE UNABLE TO PROVIDE US WITH DATA ON THE NUMBER OF SERIOUS UNTOWARD INCIDENTS THERE HAD BEEN RELATING TO OUT OF HOURS CARE (please note this does not include Trusts that have not responded to this question)

Medway PCT- Response received: Answer = No information held.

Barking & Dagenham PCT - Response received: NHS Barking and Dagenham can now respond to you Freedom of Information request. We can only provide the answer to question 1. Questions 2,3,4,5,6 and 7 should be forwarded to the Partnerships of East London Co-operative as they provide our Out of Hours service and we are not informed of complaints which are sent directly to them.

Bradford & Airedale Teaching PCT - Response received: We are also not the data controllers so would not be able to provide this information. We do not hold this information in view that we do not performance manage the Out of Hours Service Serious Untoward Incidents nor have we done previously.

ABOUT THE PATIENTS ASSOCIATION

www.patients-association.com

The Patients Association is an **independent** charity that highlights the concerns and needs of patients. We work with Government and a broad range of individuals and organisations to develop better, and more responsive, health services.

The Patients Association advocates for greater and more equitable access to high-quality, accurate and independent information for patients. Our aim is to reduce health inequalities by helping patients to be better informed and by campaigning for patients to have the right to be involved in decision-making.

The Patients Association is well placed as an organisation to stand strongly and enable a dialogue between all stakeholders involved in a patient's care. We work with the people that affect care directly – from the NHS itself to the companies that produce the medical devices it uses, as well as the pharmaceutical industry, the medical insurance companies and private healthcare providers – we believe in coordinating healthcare properly and taking responsibility.

The Patients Association is in a unique position, always challenging, always independent and always there for patients.

The Patients Association Helpline – 0845 608 44 55 – is there to help. This is a local rate number and if a phone provider charges, we are happy to return calls. The Helpline both informs patients and gathers their views. We are of course available online, providing advice, the latest health news, signposting to further information and general advice.

We also have a range of booklets and guides for patients. Especially popular titles include Pain Management: A Guide for Patients, How to Obtain Access to your Medical Records, How to Make a Complaint, You and Your Dentist and How to make a Living Will.

We have also produced a number of research reports including Patients not Numbers, People not Statistics, Your Experience Counts: Patient Experience Survey, All About Health Survey Report and Infection Control: How much do you know and want to know?

Please browse the website for booklets, publications and more information. The Patients Association's charity number is 1006733.

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