

# Awareness of Minor Injuries Units

## Main Findings

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Healthwatch Worcestershire  
Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive,  
Persore  
WR10 1PT  
Tel. 01386 550264  
Email: [info@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk)

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### Acknowledgments

HWW would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete our Survey.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Healthwatch Worcestershire gathers feedback about local health and care services and makes recommendations to those who run them about how they could be improved from a patient, service user and carer perspective.

### WHY THIS WORK

Worcestershire has five Minor Injuries Units (MIUs) located in Bromsgrove, Evesham, Kidderminster, Malvern and Tenbury. They are part of the NHS urgent care and out of hours service offer. They offer advice and treatment for a variety of injuries including cuts, grazes, wounds, sprains, minor eye injuries, strains and minor burns.

We wanted to explore levels of awareness amongst the public of Minor Injuries Units. It follows on from our Report: “What patients told us about why they walk into A&E Departments in Worcestershire”, where we found that people were not necessarily aware of MIUs and what they do. It was undertaken as part of our summer engagement so is not intended as an “in-depth” study.

We carried out a Survey at various locations across the County.

635 people completed our survey - 426 were completed face to face with a further 219 completed online. We received 359 comments which have been themed.

The Survey was completed by more women than men, there was a spread of people from different age groups, although fewer people aged under 24 completed the Survey compared to other age groups. Most respondents were White British and had English as a first language. For more details please see the Survey Report and Appendices.

### MAIN FINDINGS

#### **While most respondents had heard of Minor Injuries Units, more information about them is needed**

Overall, about 8 in 10 people told us they had heard of Minor Injuries Units, mostly through word of mouth or prior knowledge. Only about 2 in 10 people found out about them through web based information sources or social media.

We found that people who had not heard of MIUs were more frequently male (one in three of the men who responded to our Survey had not heard of MIUs), in the younger age groups and do not own their own homes. People with a disability were also less aware of MIUs than other respondents.

#### **People have heard of Minor Injuries Units, but they don't necessarily know which injuries they can treat or when they are open**

7 out of 10 people who had heard of Minor Injuries Units told us they were not confident or only somewhat confident that they knew which injuries can be dealt with by MIUs. People are uncertain about which injuries they can see and treat and also about what MIUs cannot do. They are also not clear about when MIUs are open and when X-Rays are available. The availability of answers to “Frequently Asked

Questions” may also be useful to clarify the MIU offer. There is a risk that uncertainty about the service provided by the MIUs will act as a deterrent to people who may use the Units. Our findings suggest there is further scope to improve and target information to the public about MIUs.

### **Those that had not heard of Minor Injuries Units would like a leaflet through the door as the MAIN way to receive information**

The MAIN way people would like to receive information about Minor Injuries Units was a leaflet through the door. It was the first option chosen by both men and women, by all age groups, by people with disabilities and carers and across all housing tenures. Web based options and social media were the next most frequently selected options.

### **Most people who had attended a Minor Injuries Unit in the last 12 months had a good experience**

Of the 136 respondents who had used a Minor Injuries Unit in the last 12 months most, 7 in 10 (n94) rated their experience as very good or good. We also received positive comments from people about their experience of the service and of the staff who provide it.

### **People told us the MIU service offer could be improved**

People told us about long waiting times, that MIUs were not always open when they were needed or that opening hours should be extended, and that X-Ray facilities were not always available. We also heard that a wider range of services were needed at the Minor Injuries Units, for example having a doctor on site or being able to prescribe for minor illnesses. We had a few comments about people being turned away from MIUs because they had not first contacted NHS 111. This may present a barrier to access and does not reflect how the service is advertised.

It is important that MIUs meet people’s needs, or they may be encouraged to vote with their feet and go directly to A&E instead.

### **Location - MIUs are important local services, but people living in Worcester and Redditch do not have direct access to a Minor Injuries Unit**

We heard that MIUs are an important and valued local service. People living in Worcester and Redditch do not have direct access to a Minor Injuries Unit. People without a car and/or on lower incomes, or with a disability or impairment, may find it more difficult to use MIU alternatives to A&E, potentially exacerbating health inequalities. Distance and a lack of certainty about the MIU offer may provide dual deterrents to people from these localities travelling to a Minor Injury Unit.

### **MIUs as an alternative to A&E**

32 people who were not aware of Minor Injuries Units had visited an A&E Department in the last twelve months with an injury that could have been treated at a MIU. This is 22% of the people who were not aware of MIUs. Whilst these actual numbers are small there could be potential to reduce the demand on A&E if people were made more aware of MIUs and were able to use them. Better

information about MIUs and having these available locally may help to take pressure off busy A&E Departments.

### **Out of Hours - Most people are aware of the message about contacting NHS 111, but will telephone rather than going online. Some people find out of hours services confusing**

The NHS preferred route for those needing out of hours care is for people to contact NHS111 Online first.

8 out of 10 people would first contact NHS 111 in an urgent, but not life threatening situation outside of GP opening hours. 5 out of 10 people would telephone NHS 111 and only 1 in 10 would first go to NHS 111 online.

We received some comments that people had a long wait for an answer to their NHS 111 call or for a call back from the service, or were unhappy with the quality of the response from NHS 111.

We heard of some confusion about out of hours pathways, and of occasions when people had been sent from one service to another.

There is a danger that if the Out of Hours pathway is unclear, or the response to patients through NHS 111 is not accurate or timely, or if patients are becoming confused or frustrated they may be deterred from using the preferred pathway on a future occasion.

### **Our A&E Report recommended a review of online information about MIUs - this has improved, but could still be more consistent**

We know that not everyone can look for information online but when they do this needs to be clear, consistent and up to date. From a patient perspective, whilst online information about MIUs has improved, it could still be more consistent. The Integrated Care System website does not reference the Kidderminster or Tenbury MIUs. The H&W Health and Care Trust site does provide improved information, but opening time information needs to be kept up to date, and information about video consultations could be more prominent. The Acute Hospital's Trust site has also improved, but the explanation of what MIUs do is still not fully consistent with other sites, there is no information about X-Ray opening hours at the Kidderminster site and some of the information about opening hours in the Contact Us tab is inaccurate.

### **The NHS System is reviewing MIU provision in Worcestershire, including looking at X-Ray opening times and Urgent Treatment Centres**

Following the publication of our A&E Report the NHS in Worcestershire told us:

“We are currently reviewing the MIU provision within Worcestershire, including the impact that diagnostics has on the utilisation of these services.... This includes an audit into the x-ray opening times at MIUs and associated impact on attendances to A&E, as well as considerations into Urgent Treatment Centres within Worcestershire.”

At the time of writing this Report, a 3 month trial is being conducted at Bromsgrove MIU to extend weekend opening hours and provide X-Ray facilities during the day over the weekend to assess the impact this has on A&E demand. We will be interested to know the outcome of this.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Minor Injuries Units are a valued local service and most people who use them have a positive experience.

However, there is still a lack of awareness about the service provided by MIUs. People need clarity about the MIU offer if they are to have trust and confidence that the service will meet their needs.

There was a preference from people who did not know about MIUs for paper information rather than online options. Where information is provided online, it needs to be accurate, consistent and up to date.

Long wait times, or MIUs being unavailable or unable to meet people's needs could act as a deterrent to people using the service in future. For people living in Worcester or Redditch a lack of awareness about the Units, difficulties with travel, transport costs and uncertainty that if they travel to a MIU their needs will be met may provide further barriers.

It is positive that most people would contact NHS 111 first in an urgent, but not life threatening situation when their GP surgery is closed. There is scope to further promote the NHS 111 Online First message. However, Out of Hours pathways need to be clear and work from a patient's perspective, as a frustrating experience may lead to people going directly to A&E instead.

Overall, the findings from this work very much echo those of our A&E Report.

If MIUs are to offer an alternative to A&E, as well as a valuable local service, they must be accessible to patients, clear about what they can offer and to who, and provide the services (e.g. X-Ray) that people need when they need it.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1 Further promote information about Minor Injuries Units to the public. This information to include what injuries MIUs can see and treat and what they cannot do, when they are open and when X-Ray facilities are available.
- 2 Provide information in a range of formats, in accordance with the Accessible Information Standard, recognising that not everyone is willing or able to access online information and taking account of the preference expressed for a leaflet through people's door.
- 3 Consider targeting information at males, younger age groups and people who are not homeowners
- 4 Consider how information can be made available to people whose first language is not English
- 5 Consider developing "Frequently Asked Questions" about Minor Injuries Units to further clarify the MIU service offer
- 6 Consider a single source of online information about NHS services in Worcestershire, that brings together up to date and accurate information for

patients about Urgent & Emergency Care services that they can access in the County

- 7 Further review existing online information about Minor Injuries Units, so it is up to date, consistent and accurate across all local NHS sites.
- 8 Communicate the outcomes of the review of MIU services, including the Bromsgrove MIU extended hours pilot and the potential implementation of Urgent Treatment Centres

## Awareness of Minor Injuries Units - Main Findings

### 1. Introduction

Healthwatch Worcestershire gathers feedback about local health and care services and makes recommendations to those who run them about how they could be improved from a patient, service user and carer perspective.

### 2. Why this work?

#### 2.1 What are Minor Injuries Units

Worcestershire has five Minor Injuries Units (MIUs). They are part of the NHS urgent care and out of hours service offer.

The service provided by Minor Injuries Units are described on the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (H&WH&CT) as follows:

“Our Minor Injury Units (MIUs) offer advice and treatment for a variety of injuries including; cuts, grazes, wounds, sprains, minor eye injuries, strains and minor burns.

Unfortunately we cannot treat illnesses at our minor injury units. If you need advice or treatment for an illness please contact your GP or NHS111.”

The website also states that children under the age of one cannot be treated at a Minor Injuries Unit.

Minor Injuries Units are located in Bromsgrove - Princess of Wales Community Hospital, Evesham Community Hospital, Kidderminster Hospital and Treatment Centre, Malvern Community Hospital and Tenbury Community Hospital.

People living in Worcester and Redditch do not have direct access to a Minor Injuries Unit.

The MIUs are run by the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (H&WH&CT), with the exception of Kidderminster Hospital and Treatment Centre, which is run by the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

Opening times of the Units vary, and the provision of X-Ray facilities at the Units do not align with opening times. Usually there are no X-Ray facilities at Minor Injuries Units at the weekend and between 1-2 p.m. and after 5 p.m. on weekdays. Further details about opening times of the Units and the availability of X-Ray facilities as advertised on the providers website can be found in the Appendices.

NHS 111 can book a timed appointment for people at a MIU. However, people are able to “walk in” to the Units and will be seen, but may have to wait longer. The Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (H&WH&CT) provided Minor Injuries Units also offer video consultations through an NHS approved web based service called Attend Anywhere®

#### 2.2 Awareness of Minor Injuries Units

In February 2022 we published a Report: “What patients told us about why they “walk in” to A&E Departments in Worcestershire”. We refer to this as our A&E Report.



Our findings indicated that there was scope to improve communication with the public about Minor Injuries Units, in particular about opening times, what injuries /illness and which age groups fall within the remit of the MIU and the range of services they provide. We found that information about Minor Injuries Units available on the internet was inconsistent across different NHS sites. Patients need clarity about the MIU offer if they are to have trust and confidence that the service provided will meet their needs.

We wanted to explore levels of awareness of MIUs amongst the public more generally, as we had previously only spoken to people who were attending A&E during our visits. We identified Awareness of Minor Injuries Units as the topic for our summer engagement activity, as a way of opening conversations and raising awareness of Healthwatch Worcestershire. As such this is not intended as an “in-depth” study but does offer a snapshot of views and opinions. It has also provided us with an opportunity to review the actions relating to Minor Injuries Units identified in the NHS response to the recommendations in our A&E Report.

### **3. What we did**

We carried out a Survey asking people if they had heard of Minor Injuries Units (MIUs) in Worcestershire, and if so how confident they were about what injuries could be dealt with at an MIU and their experience of using them. For those who had not heard of the Units we asked how they would like to receive information about them and what would encourage them to use them. We asked everyone which NHS service they would contact first if they needed help outside of GP hours for an urgent, but not life threatening condition. We also asked for comments about MIUs and Out of Hours Care.

The majority of the surveys were completed face to face at engagement events across Worcestershire. Paper copies of the Survey were made available and distributed through local organisations. An online version of the survey was promoted through HWW News Bulletins, Facebook advertising, Twitter and with support from NHS services and local voluntary and community organisations.

Further information about where the Survey was completed, and its distribution is available in the Appendices.

### **4. Who took part**

- 635 people completed our survey - 426 were completed face to face with a further 219 completed online
- 387 were female and 207 were male. 7 identified as Trans / Non-binary / in another way and 6 preferred not to say
- 505 people told us they were heterosexual or straight, 33 gay or lesbian, 33 bisexual, 11 identified in another way and 9 told us they prefer not to say.
- 42 were aged under 24, a further 251 were aged between 25 - 55, 97 were 55 - 64, 121 were aged 65 - 74 and 102 were 75 +
- 558 were White British. Other ethnicities were White European (11), White Irish (6), Asian / Asian British Indian (5), Asian / Asian British Pakistani (5), Asian / Asian British Bangladeshi (2), Other Asian (2), White and Caribbean

(2), White and Asian (2), Other Black (2), Black Caribbean (1), White Gypsy Traveller (2) and White Other (6).

- 518 had English as their first language.
- Most lived in Worcester (251) and Wyre Forest (117), 64 lived in Malvern Hills, 56 in Wychavon, 44 in Redditch and 37 in Bromsgrove. 12 lived out of County but were using Worcestershire services
- 220 people considered themselves to have a disability or long term health condition
- 100 considered themselves to be an unpaid Carer
- 376 of respondents were owner occupiers, 61 social or housing association tenants, 60 private tenants, 53 were in temporary or supported accommodation, 11 were rough sleepers and 11 were sharing or lodging. Other situations given (25) included living with family or parents

### **Note**

We received 359 comments from people about their experience of Minor Injuries Units. We have themed these as positive, negative or neutral and reported on these where relevant in this Report. In some cases, the numbers reported for each theme or comment type may total more than the number of comments, due to feedback covering more than one issue.

## MAIN FINDINGS

### 5. While most respondents had heard of Minor Injuries Units, more information about them is needed

#### 5.1 Most people had heard of Minor Injuries Units

Overall, about 8 in 10 people told us they had heard of Minor Injuries Units.

Half the people who had heard of Minor Injuries Units knew about them through word of mouth/prior knowledge. NHS or other staff were the next most frequent information source. Only about 2 in 10 people found out about them through web based information sources or social media.

One in three of the men who responded to our Survey had not heard of MIUs. Women had heard of Minor Injuries Units more frequently than men.

People aged under 25's were least aware of MIUs. They found out about MIUs through the internet and social media more often than other respondents.

People who were social or housing association tenants, private tenants or living in supported / temporary accommodation or were rough sleepers were less aware of Minor Injuries Units than people who were owner occupiers.

These findings reflect those of our A&E Report. We found that people who walked into the A&E Departments without having contacted another NHS service first shared the characteristics of those who had not heard of Minor Injuries Units set out above - that is they are more frequently male, in the younger age groups and do not own their own homes.

People with a disability were also less aware of MIUs than other respondents.

Further information about how people heard about MIUs is available in the Appendices.

#### 5.2 People have heard of Minor Injuries Units, but they don't necessarily know which injuries they can treat or when they are open

7 out of 10 people (n348) who had heard of Minor Injuries Units told us they were not confident or only somewhat confident that they knew which injuries can be dealt with by MIUs.

Carers and people with a disability reported more frequently than other respondents that they were not confident about what MIUs do.

People told us that they are not sure how "minor" is defined, and they are unsure about which injuries MIUs can and cannot treat. For example, people told us that that MIUs cannot stitch wounds, deal with fractures or offer X-Rays.

We also had comments that suggested that MIUs can't treat children under 3, or those aged over 65 after a fall.

People are also unclear about Minor Injuries Units opening times and the hours that X-Ray services are available.

*(82 comments).*

*“One person’s definition of a minor injury is not the same as another’s. What is the definition of a minor injury?”*

*“I understand from social media that they cannot do stitches at Kidderminster, and you have to go to A&E at Worcester. Don’t know if this is true and if it is true I would like to know why they can’t”*

*“I am a health professional and yet I don’t know which services are offered by minor injuries and would probably go to ED rather than minor injuries - do they all have X-Ray facilities? I don’t know”*

There is a risk that uncertainty about the MIU service offer and their availability will act as a deterrent to people using the Units, and they may instead opt to use A&E for Urgent and Out of Hours Care.

The availability of answers to “Frequently Asked Questions” may be useful to clarify the MIU offer.

### **5.3 Those that had not heard of Minor Injuries Units would like a leaflet through the door as the MAIN way to receive information**

Two in ten people (n124) who responded to our Survey had not heard of Minor Injuries Units.

We asked them what would encourage them to use a MIU. Better information about MIU services was the most popular response.

The MAIN way people would like to receive information about Minor Injuries Units was a leaflet through the door, most (54) chose this option, and it was the first option chosen by both men and women, by all age groups, by people with disabilities and carers and across all housing tenures.

Web based options followed this - NHS national website (20) and NHS local website (12). Other ways were through social media (13) and NHS/other staff (12).

Women preferred web based options more frequently than men, whilst men more frequently preferred NHS/other staff and social media as their main information source.

Further detail about information preferences, including by age, can be found in the Appendices.

*“It would be useful to have a small plastic sheet of information/phone numbers of the appropriate services available to keep for reference. Not all patients are computer literate or have smart phones. Do not build any service provisions based entirely on these last items.”*

Suggestions for promoting awareness of Minor Injuries Units included advertising them in chemists, GP surgeries, inside ambulances/patient transport, and using existing road signs about the Units to display opening times.

Our findings suggest there is further scope to improve and target information to the public about MIUs.

## 6. Most people who had attended a Minor Injuries Unit in the last 12 months had a good experience

Of the 136 respondents who had used a Minor Injuries Unit in the last 12 months most, 7 in 10 (n94) rated their experience as very good or good.

We also received positive comments from people about their experience at Minor Injury Units (43). They told us about friendly and professional staff and of a good service or experience.

*“Care and communication have been excellent from all staff... best experience of using any NHS service.”*

*“I was impressed by their excellent service, being seen immediately and by a highly professional and caring team”*

*“Visited a few times, always quickly dealt with. Great help and advice. Excellent service”*

## 7. People told us the MIU service offer could be improved

3 in 10 of the 136 people who had visited an MIU in the last twelve months rated their experience as OK or poor. We asked these people why or what would help.

We also received 102 negative comments from all respondents about people’s experience at a Minor Injuries Unit. Key themes are set out below.

### 7.1 Waiting times

People told us about long waiting times at the MIUs (30), they expressed particular frustration if, having waited at the MIU they were then sent to A&E or referred to another service.

*“Just had to sit and wait. No information or people around to advise what was happening”*

### 7.2 Opening hours

We heard that MIUs were not always open when they were needed or that opening hours should be extended. (20)

*“Opening hours could be more flexible, longer or extended”*

*“Why do these units close at 8 p.m.? Surely this just means people have no option but to go to A&E”*

### 7.3 Range of services available, including provision of X-Ray

Having X-Ray facilities available when needed was identified by 54 people as something that would encourage them to use a MIU.

Some people (16) told us that X-Ray facilities were not always available when they were needed, and that this limited the service that the MIU was able to provide.

We also heard that a wider range of services were needed at the Minor Injuries Units, for example having a doctor on site or being able to prescribe for minor illnesses. (15).

13 people told us they attended a MIU, but their injury was not able to be treated or was not diagnosed.

*“I feel if they are open then X-Ray should also be open”*

*“Staff can’t prescribe and they can’t see minor illness .. so it’s very limited”*

#### **7.4. Being turned away from a MIU as they did not have an appointment**

We also had a few comments (3) from people who had been turned away from a MIU as they had not first contacted NHS 111 and booked an appointment. These were not numerous; however we have highlighted this as a concern as it may act as a barrier to access to urgent care and does not accord with the way that the service is advertised.

*“We were berated for not booking an appointment (who knew!) made to wait in the car and call NHS 111. By then X-Ray had closed so we had to wait again at the Alex”*

#### **7.5 Other issues**

Other issues raised were: people were unhappy with the attitude of staff (7), lack of awareness of the needs of people who are hearing impaired (2), have a learning disability (1) or are neurodiverse (1), waiting time information should be prominently displayed (1), they don’t cater for housebound people (1) and the physical environment was uncomfortable (seating, lack of food or drink) (1).

*“Be more aware of difference and communication issues”*

It is important that MIUs meet people’s needs or they may be encouraged to vote with their feet and go directly to A&E instead.

### **8. Location - MIUs are important local services, but people living in Worcester and Redditch do not have direct access to a Minor Injuries Unit**

#### **8.1 MIUs are a valued local service**

We heard that MIUs are an important and valued local service. Respondents from Tenbury particularly value their local MIU, but would like to see longer opening, a wider range of services and access to X-Ray facilities.

*“It is vital to community life, as not all of us travel”*

*“It is a brilliant and useful resource that is appreciated”*

#### **8.2 There are no Minor Injuries Unit located in Worcester or Redditch**

People living in Worcester and Redditch do not have direct access to a Minor Injuries Unit. Perhaps unsurprisingly they are less likely to have heard of Minor Injuries Units than people who lived in other areas.

Half of the people who had not heard of Minor Injuries Units (68) said that having an MIU closer to them would encourage them to use it. There was support for locating a MIU in Worcester and Redditch (20).

Urgent care is provided in Worcester and Redditch through the Acute Hospital A&E Departments. These Departments contain a “Minors” service, but this is not directly accessible to the public, requiring triage through A&E first.

Currently, people in Worcester and Redditch are encouraged to use Minor Injuries Units in other locations where appropriate, primarily Malvern or Bromsgrove, and may be directed to these Units by NHS 111.

Travel and transport, and the costs incurred, can be a barrier to people in Worcester and Redditch accessing a Minor Injuries Unit.

*“I can’t get to Bromsgrove from Redditch. It’s too far and I don’t drive”*

*“I once had to ring 111 and they sent me miles away from Worcester to minor injuries. I had to get a bus there when I was in so much pain and then didn’t get seen until late which meant I had to get a taxi home costing £30 which I didn’t have”*

There is a risk that directing people from Worcester and Redditch to MIUs may exacerbate health inequalities, as people without a car, on lower incomes or with a disability or impairment may find it more difficult to use a MIU. This may be compounded by the lack of information about what Minor Injuries Units do, which affects people’s confidence in travelling to use a service which may not meet their needs.

*“I would be put off attending an MIU in case they didn’t have the facilities to deal with my query and then having to be referred to A&E”*

### **8.3 MIUs as an alternative to A&E**

32 people who were not aware of Minor Injuries Units had visited an A&E Department in the last twelve months with an injury that could have been treated at a MIU. This is 22% of the people who were not aware of MIUs. Although these actual numbers are small there could be potential to reduce the demand on A&E if people were made more aware of MIUs and were able to use them.

We received 17 comments that better information about MIUs and having these more locally located would help to take pressure off busy A&E Departments.

*“I would like to see the service expanded to do more and relieve the pressure from Worcester and Redditch”*

## **9. Out of Hours - Most people are aware of the message about contacting NHS 111, but will telephone rather than going online. Some people find out of hours services confusing**

### **9.1 NHS 111**

The intention of NHS England is that every patient needing either Urgent Care or Out of Hours services should first contact NHS 111. The NHS preferred route is for

people to use NHS 111 online as their first option, rather than the telephone service.

We asked people if they needed help from the NHS outside of their GP surgery hours for an urgent, but not life threatening situation what was the FIRST NHS service they would contact.

8 out of 10 people would contact NHS 111.

Not everyone specified if they would contact NHS 111 by telephone or online, but of those that did 5 out of 10 (290) would telephone NHS 111 and only 1 in 10 (42) would first go to NHS 111 online.

We received some comments that people had a long wait for an answer to their NHS 111 call or for a call back from the service, or were unhappy with the quality of the response from NHS 111.

*“It takes so long to get through”*

*“I waited 12 hours for a call back”*

*“When I was at the MIU in Kidderminster people were being sent there by NHS 111 for things they couldn’t treat, like breathing difficulties and very young children. People were waiting 2 hrs to be seen and then being sent to the A&E in Worcester, and they were getting understandable very annoyed about it”*

## **9.2 Out of hours pathways - “who does what” can be confusing for some people**

We heard of some confusion about out of hours pathways, and of occasions when people had been sent from one service to another.

Difficulties accessing GP appointments, and a lack of availability of pharmacy when prescribed medication by the GP Out of Hours service were also mentioned.

*“Out of Hours now feels very fragmented. Used to be you rang your GP for what to do or went to A&E. For people who are older or in an emergency when you don’t think straight it all feels a bit convoluted and confusing”*

*“I was referred by the Nurse Practitioner at my GP practice but when I arrived at the MIU they said that I shouldn’t have attended as I didn’t know how my problem ... had occurred, so it didn’t count as a minor injury. They told me to go back to my GP, which was frustrating as we had travelled to the MIU. From that [GP] appointment I then had to go back to the MIU for an emergency X-Ray!. Altogether a very frustrating experience”*

There is a danger that if the Out of Hours pathway is unclear, or the response to patients through NHS 111 is not accurate or timely, or if patients are becoming confused or frustrated they may be deterred from using the preferred pathway on a future occasion.

## **10. Our A&E Report recommended a review of online information about MIUs - this has improved, but could still be more consistent**

We know that not everyone can access information online, but if they do so information needs to be clearly communicated, comprehensive and consistent.



In our A&E Report we recommended that the NHS review the information about Minor Injuries Units across organisations websites, as we found it to be inconsistent and unclear. We also recommended that websites are updated if there is any change to the published information.

In response the NHS undertook to review and update MIU information available online and to ensure there is consistency between the services delivered by the MIUs and the information that is published on respective partners sites.

We reviewed the information about MIUs available on the **Integrated Care System website**.

We found that the description of MIUs was consistent with that on the Health and Care Trust website.

However the text then states: “We have local MIUs in Worcestershire; Malvern, Evesham and Bromsgrove - all of which can offer you an x-ray if you need one, Monday-Friday.”

This does not reference the Kidderminster and Tenbury MIUs, so people will not know from this website that there are MIUs at these locations.

People are advised to contact NHS 111 first and a weblink is provided, and there is a working link to the Health & Care Trust website Minor Injuries page for further information.

#### **Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (H&WH&CT) MIU page**

This provides a description of what the Minor Injuries Units do and advises that illnesses and Under 1’s cannot be seen. The latter information has been added since our A&E Report was published, which is a positive development and reflects our recommendations.

There are links to NHS 111, and people are advised that NHS 111 can book timed appointments at the Units. The NHS 111 link is repeated in the opening time information, which also contains the opening times of X-Ray facilities.

It is made clear that people can walk into the Units, but may have to wait longer.

The website advises that people can find out more about virtual consultations. However our observation is that this information could be more prominent and the benefits to patients briefly explained.

There is a link to information about other NHS services.

It was positive to see that the early closing of one of the Units on a specific date was displayed under opening times, as providing up to date information about the service is important. However this had not been removed 8 days after the date had passed.

#### **Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust Minor Injuries Unit page**

The information about Minor Injuries on the Acute Trust website has improved.

However the narrative description of what Minor Injuries do is not consistent with the other sites, and still refers to Units dealing with “some broken bones”, and does not reiterate the NHS 111 first message contained in the pictorial box.

There is a link to the Health and Care Trust Minor Injuries Unit page.

There is no information about when X-Ray facilities are available at the Kidderminster Hospital site.

The “Contact Us” drop down contains inaccurate information about opening times on the Kidderminster site (described as 24/7), as well as the Bromsgrove and Tenbury MIUs.

From a patient perspective, whilst online information about MIUs has improved, it could still be more consistent.

### **11. The NHS System is reviewing MIU provision in Worcestershire, including looking at X-Ray opening times and Urgent Treatment Centres**

In our A&E Report we recommended the NHS consider whether extending the X-Ray Department opening hours at MIUs would be a realistic and effective way of relieving pressure on the A&E Departments and that the NHS system consider whether MIUs are correctly located to meet the needs of patients in Worcester and Redditch.

We were told that the NHS are working in partnership with all the relevant services to ensure that MIUs are able to meet the demands of the public.

“We are currently reviewing the MIU provision within Worcestershire, including the impact that diagnostics has on the utilisation of these services.... This includes an audit into the x-ray opening times at MIUs and associated impact on attendances to A&E, as well as considerations into Urgent Treatment Centres within Worcestershire.”

At the time of writing this Report, a 3 month trial is being conducted at Bromsgrove MIU to extend weekend opening hours and provide X-Ray facilities during the day over the weekend to assess the impact this has on A&E demand.

### **12. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Minor Injuries Units are a valued local service and most people who use them have a positive experience.

However, there is still a lack of awareness about the service provided by MIUs. People need clarity about the MIU offer if they are to have trust and confidence that the service will meet their needs.

There was a preference from people who did not know about MIUs for paper information rather than online options. Where information is provided online, it needs to be accurate, consistent and up to date.

Long wait times, or MIUs being unavailable or unable to meet people’s needs could act as a deterrent to people using the service in future. For people living in Worcester or Redditch a lack of awareness about the Units, difficulties with travel,

transport costs and uncertainty that if they travel to a MIU their needs will be met may provide further barriers.

It is positive that most people would contact NHS 111 first in an urgent, but not life threatening situation when their GP surgery is closed. There is scope to further promote the NHS 111 Online First message. However, Out of Hours pathways need to be clear and work from a patient's perspective, as a frustrating experience may lead to people going directly to A&E instead.

Overall, the findings from this work very much echo those of our A&E Report.

If MIUs are to offer an alternative to A&E, as well as a valuable local service, they must be accessible to patients, clear about what they can offer and to who, and provide the services (e.g. X-Ray) that people need when they need it.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1 Further promote information about Minor Injuries Units to the public. This information to include what injuries MIUs can see and treat and what they cannot do, when they are open and when X-Ray facilities are available.
- 2 Provide information in a range of formats, in accordance with the Accessible Information Standard, recognising that not everyone is willing or able to access online information and taking account of the preference expressed for a leaflet through people's door.
- 3 Consider targeting information at males, younger age groups and people who are not homeowners
- 4 Consider how information can be made available to people whose first language is not English
- 5 Consider developing "Frequently Asked Questions" about Minor Injuries Units to further clarify the MIU service offer
- 6 Consider a single source of online information about NHS services in Worcestershire, that brings together up to date and accurate information for patients about Urgent & Emergency Care services that they can access in the County
- 7 Further review existing online information about Minor Injuries Units, so it is up to date, consistent and accurate across all local NHS sites.
- 8 Communicate the outcomes of the review of MIU services, including the Bromsgrove MIU extended hours pilot and the potential implementation of Urgent Treatment Centres