



Hertfordshire Community Trust Adult Referral Hub Telephone Mystery Shop – How well does the service respond to a variety of calls?

Engagement: 28th August – 10th September 2023

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About Healthwatch Hertfordshire

Healthwatch Hertfordshire (HwH) represents the views of people in Hertfordshire for health and social care services. We provide an independent consumer voice for evidencing patient and public experiences and gathering local intelligence with the purpose of influencing service improvement across the county. We work with those who commission, deliver and regulate health and social care services to ensure the people's voice is heard, and to address gaps in services quality and/or provision.

About the Hertfordshire Community Trust (HCT) East and North Herts Integrated Care Co-ordination Centre (Adult Referral Hub) Based at Robertson House, Stevenage

The Integrated Care Co-ordination Centre (also known as the Adult Referral Hub) manages referrals for a range of specialist adult community health care services in East and North Hertfordshire. It uses one universal telephone number - **0300 123 7571** - and lines are open from 8am-8pm seven days a week. You can also call them if you have a question or need advice about your referral.

Finding out how well the Adult Referral Hub responds

Healthwatch Hertfordshire was asked by Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust (HCT) to undertake a telephone mystery shop of their East and North Hertfordshire Integrated Care Co-ordination Centre (Adult Referral Hub). The aims of the mystery shop include:

- A better understanding of how quickly and professionally calls are answered
- Assessing the quality of responses to set scenarios covering a wide range of services
- Making recommendations to Hertfordshire Community Trust so improvements can be implemented

The Hub manager and Head of Patient & Carer Experience asked for a focus on calls at different times of day & weekends to understand how these experiences may differ and to observe soft skills such as standard & clarity of communication and tone, as well as process such as ease of access. For example using the phone options, waiting time, information and correct signposting.

This work took place from 28th August 2023 to 10th September 2023 and included a Bank Holiday Monday.

Background

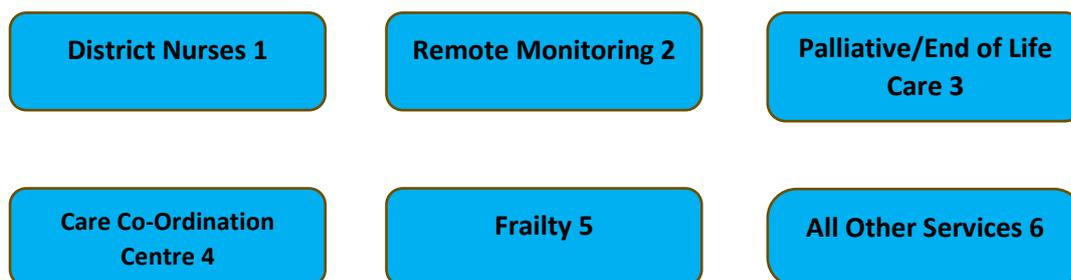
Adult Referral Hub

The Adult referral Hub receives over 700 calls a day with the busiest times generally being Monday to Friday between 9-12 in the morning and 4-6 in the afternoon. The calls can cover 'planned' and 'unplanned care'. Planned care is generally about changing or chasing up appointments whereas with unplanned care the call could be about anything.

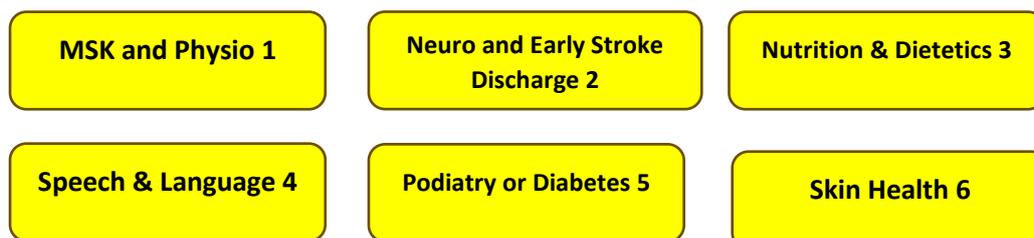
Callers are given a range of options when they ring the Hub. They are initially asked to choose from 3 options:



Choosing the Patient Option will give the caller 6 more options to choose from:



If the caller picks Option 6 then a further 9 options are presented to the caller:



**Pulmonary or Bladder
& Bowel 7**

**Tissue Viability
Lymphoedema and leg
ulcer 8**

**Covid Rehab or
swabbing 9**

If the caller chooses the wrong option they should be quickly transferred to the right department. We also found that if you chose no option and waited, it would be answered by an administrator.

No after-call survey to gather patient satisfaction on the service is currently used and HCT receives little feedback on this service so HCT felt that 20–30 mystery shop calls would help to better understand the experience of people who contact the Hub.

Aims

The aims of this telephone mystery shop include:

- To understand what it is like calling the Adult Referral Hub.
- To explore what sort of information is provided across a wide range of services and whether people are signposted to the correct service if they ring with an issue .

Methodology

To explore the above aims, 3 Healthwatch Hertfordshire volunteers and 1 staff member were recruited and briefed on the project. They were given a scoring sheet to record the details of the call. This included:

- Initial contact including navigating the options
- Call response
- Information given
- How satisfied the mystery shopper was with the call
- Areas for improvement
- Good practice
- Recommendation score to friends and family

24 scenarios and likely responses were developed by the Hertfordshire Community Trust Hub Manager and the Head of Patient & Carer Experience. Volunteers used these scenarios to call the Adult Referral Hub over a two week period starting on 28th August (Bank Holiday Monday) and ending 10th September 2023. Volunteers

chose the days and times and also which scenario to use. Scenarios were a mix of complex and simple requests. Four scenarios were not used by the mystery shoppers.

Staff (known as 'administrators') at the Hub were made aware of the project and the possibility of a mystery shop call. For some scenarios the Healthwatch Hertfordshire volunteers had to reveal that they were mystery shoppers when specific patient information to search the Hub database was required .

Our volunteers often invented detailed back stories for the scenarios to make the call sound as authentic as possible and made 36 calls to the Hub in total. These covered most of the days in the 2 week period including the weekend and Bank Holiday.

Limitations

Mystery shopping is when trained individuals (the "mystery shoppers") act as potential customers or service users and objectively report on their experiences of using a service. With this research method, the service is unaware that the researcher is anything other than an average customer.

However, this methodology is limited as it only provides a snapshot of the service for one point in time. For example, the mystery shopping exercise's findings may differ from the average person's experience. It could instead only be representative of that particular day or time.

Mystery shopping aims to improve service user experiences and the quality of the service rather than to evaluate the performance of specific employees. HCT's administrators are therefore not named and referred to as X in the report.

Number of Calls made to the Adult Referral Hub Service

Scenario number	W/C 28.08.23	W/C 04.09.23	Scenario number	W/C 28.08.23	W/C 04.09.23
1	1	0	13	0	2
2	2	0	14	1	2
3	0	0	15	0	1
4	0	0	16	0	0
5	1	0	17	0	3
6	2	1	18	0	2
7	1	4	19	0	1
8	2	0	20	0	0
9	0	1	21	0	1
10	1	1	23	1	0
11	2	0	23	1	0
12	1	0	24	1	0



Key Findings

Initial Contact including navigating the options

One volunteer commented that the opening recorded greeting of **“Please select the right option to avoid patient delay”** was not a good first impression and should be more personalised e.g. ‘so we can put you through to the right person’. It sounded like this was a message for a professional rather than a member of the public.

For some of the scenarios, choosing which option to press was straight forward but for others it was difficult to know which one to choose and volunteers had to guess. Some volunteers found choosing the option difficult. However calls were generally transferred to the right service quickly or on some occasions were answered by the first contact anyway.

Understanding what the options covered was variable due to the technical language used but being quickly transferred meant it didn’t necessarily matter which option you chose and if in doubt you could stay on the line and the Care Coordination Centre picked up the call anyway (although this wasn’t advertised but found by accident).

Note: patients already being seen by HCT may have the options they need to choose on their letters or text messages from HCT.

Volunteer comment: Hard to follow, rather a lot of options. For me, I felt the prompts were not clear for the specific query I was making and I had to make a judgement call as to which might be the best option.

Volunteer comment: Chose option 2 then 6 then didn't know what to press so waited while music played. Then said 3rd in the queue so I knew someone would answer.

Time waiting for a response (once the option was chosen) was generally good varying from seconds to 7 minutes and though there are a lot of options to go through, it doesn’t take long to hear them. However it can be hard to remember which option you might want, once you go through the 3, 6 then 9 available.

Note: One call to the District Nurses took 14 minutes to be answered (2nd in queue) but this was an exception.

Call Response - Greeting

Advisers were generally professional, friendly and polite on first contact. However there were some calls where clarity or tone of voice sounded disinterested or was difficult to hear.

The name of the service was not routinely given at the option stage and when it was, it did not always reflect the chosen option. When calls were transferred the name of the service now answering the call wasn't always given so that the caller had to check who they were talking to. (As option 4 is the Care Co-Ordination Centre, callers were expecting the name of the chosen option e.g. Diabetes or District Nurses rather than Care Co-Ordination Centre again).

Volunteer comment: They did say the name of the service- I pushed the option for Diabetes but they answered Podiatry. (Although this option covers both services I was expecting Diabetes to be mentioned as well and was a bit unsure if they could therefore deal with my enquiry after all).

The name of the administrator was not routinely given or was difficult to make out by the volunteer.

The Call Experience

Quality of information varied across the scenarios, particularly around the complaints process scenario and hand therapy scenario but there were some excellent examples of administrators giving full information about services that are managed by other providers (non HCT services) so that the caller was signposted correctly and supported to know what to do next.

Callers did not always receive the advice that was indicated as the expected response to the scenarios. In some cases some additional questioning would have been appropriate to ensure the caller was supported in case the situation was actually of a more urgent nature.

The way the call was handled e.g. tone of voice, friendly manner sometimes impacted positively or negatively on the experience of the caller and also on the friends and family rating.

Volunteer Comment: Felt they handled my query very well. (NB no intrusive questions which would have made me feel uncomfortable, just straight in to try and direct me to the right place to resolve my query).

Volunteer Comment: I felt a bit dismissed as if the call handler was in a hurry. I had said my son had been 'very poorly recently' . However the information given to me was specific and clear.

Volunteer Comment: Very good – I gave my details over the phone and X correctly identified that I came under Herts Integrated Diabetes Service and not East & North Herts – tried to give me number for HIDS but couldn't find it.

Volunteer Comment: I could have done with some advice as to what to do /how long to wait before chasing up referral again.

Volunteer Comment: Staff should know the HCT complaints process and if not look it up on the website! If I'd had a real complaint it would probably have got worse after this. At the very least an email address to HCT complaints page should have been given.

Volunteer Comment: Good practice: Friendly and reassuring manner of the administrator and giving excellent signposting.

Post Call

Recommendation Score for the 24 scenarios (36 calls)

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
12	8	9	5	2	0

This shows that overall satisfaction with the service was positive with 56% of calls resulting in callers 'likely' or 'extremely likely' to recommend the service and 19% of calls where volunteers were 'unlikely' or 'extremely unlikely' to recommend the service. 25% were undecided (Note: there were 3 calls which went to answer machine and therefore scored 'neither') .

The Scenarios – Responses and Volunteer Feedback

Scenario 1 – MSK- Physio

I believe my GP has referred me to have **physio** at one of the clinics, please can you see if the referral has been received?

Number of calls : 1

Information Given:

- Initially the administrator was unsure whether the physio clinic was open as it was a Bank Holiday. It was explained that a referral from a GP was necessary, then it could be up to a 12 week wait. Told to ring back tomorrow to check.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Yes, the system for the physio referral was fully explained and I felt satisfied.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- No

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- The information was clear, the call handler very pleasant

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
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1

Scenario 2 – Dietitian

My son has been very poorly recently, and I have googled and believe he is displaying symptoms of having a cow's milk allergy, is this something that you can help with?

Number of calls : 2

Information Given:

- Both callers were told that they would need a GP referral to access HCT's nutrition clinic so that they could provide further help.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: I felt a bit dismissed as if the call handler was in a hurry. I had said my son had been 'very poorly recently' . However the information given to me was specific and clear.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- No

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- Clear and specific information given straight away.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
	1	1			

Scenarios 3 (Podiatry) and 4 (District Nurses) were not used

Scenario 5 – Long Covid

I've been waiting to speak to someone from the long covid service but haven't received anything yet, please could you check the status of my referral?

Number of calls : 1

Information Given:

- The mystery shopper chose option 9 for Covid Rehab as they thought this was the most appropriate option but was told this was the wrong option. However they were transferred straight away.
- The administrator told the caller they weren't on the system but did not offer any further advice.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Partly. The options were not clear but it did not hold up the call.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

Volunteer Comment: I could have done with some advice as to what to do /how long to wait before chasing up referral again.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- Quick transfer when picking the wrong option.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
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1

Scenario 6 - Diabetes

My mum is on medication for her diabetes but I'm unsure if the dosage is too high, please can we speak to a diabetic nurse

Number of calls : 3

Information Given:

- The diabetic nurses all attempted to look up the callers details on their system in order to offer further help and advice. However one was locked out of the system for a while.

- One caller said they lived in West Herts and were correctly identified as coming under another provider.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Very satisfied. Felt they took my query seriously, dealt with it quickly and in a professional way.

Volunteer comment: Very supportive approach. Alert and empathetic

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- No, apart from not having the number for the Herts Integrated Diabetic Service.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

Volunteer comment: Felt they handled my query very well. (NB no intrusive questions which would have made me feel uncomfortable, just straight in to try and direct me to the right place to resolve my query).

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
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3

Scenario 7 – Hand Therapy

I've been referred to hand therapy but haven't heard anything yet, can you please look into this for me?

Number of calls : 5

Information Given:

- 3 of the calls were at the weekend and were dropped following a recorded message that stated 'Sorry due to unforeseen circumstances we are unable

to take your call. Please call back later'. On trying a different option on the fourth call the administrator said the team would be available 9am on Monday and to call then. They could not help otherwise.

- Another caller was told that the administrator had not heard of hand therapy but would look them up on the system.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Hand therapy is a separate service but we understood that callers should ideally be given the contact details for this service. HCT does have Hand therapy clinics at the Kingsway Health Centre and Lister Hospital in Stevenage.

Volunteer comment: Not satisfied. Couldn't understand why this seemed to be so difficult for the call handler - it just needed other contact details.

Volunteer comment: I felt that the recorded message should have been more explicit about when to call as that would have saved a number of calls as well as perhaps providing an alternative in case of emergency such as 111.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- The person from the Care Coordination Centre could have asked if I had a problem in case I needed medical attention.
- More knowledge about hand therapy and what HCT offers.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- No.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
		4	1		

Scenario 8 – Therapy on discharge

My granddad/father was recently in hospital and we were told by the hospital that on discharge he was going to receive assistance from the therapy team, I'm just wondering how long this will take

Number of calls : 2

Information Given:

- Both callers were asked for details to look the person up on the system.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Unsatisfied, because although I repeated the scenario several times (3) and finally actually said I was only looking to find out how long it would be before referral (as per the scenario) nothing was said about this and the call handler persisted in wanting to know the personal details. I felt a bit pressured to give them.

The other caller had a 'satisfactory' experience.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- Just the tone of voice and manner the questioning took.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- Quickly dealt with.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
1		1			

Scenario 9 – Swallowing

My nan is struggling to swallow, please can I speak to someone for some advice

Number of calls : 1

Information Given:

- The administrator asked whether the patient had already been referred as they couldn't put them through to anyone without a GP referral.
- The administrator didn't know if the referral would be to a dietician or to speech and language, swallowing was usually speech and language.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Not very satisfied. What if this had been urgent, or my nan was having a lot of difficulty? If it were me, I wouldn't have found this very helpful.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- Could X have put me through to someone who could give me more advice?.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- X did say to contact the GP.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
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1

Scenario 10 – Adjustments in the home

My husband had a stroke and was admitted to Danesbury but has returned home and was told he should speak to the team for adjustments to equipment and the house, when will we be receiving a visit

Number of calls : 2

Information Given:

- 1 caller was put through to 'Neuro' after the administrator could not find the person on the system but after waiting another 8 minutes the caller gave up.
- 1 caller was asked a lot of questions about why they were calling, did they have a letter or a clinic appointment before the administrator decided that

the caller was through to the right department and then proceeded to look them up on the system.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: . Very dissatisfied with the experience – long waits and no support

Volunteer comment: Felt interrogated. Not given the information I wanted. Confused. .

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- Yes –Eliminate long waits. Make it clear who X is transferring to (I had to ask).
- Yes, could have explained that if he had been referred he would be on the waiting list or if not would need to contact Danesbury for the referral.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- No

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
		1		1	

Scenario 11 – Blood Test

Can I book a blood test at Lister Hospital ?

Note: HCT does not book blood tests at Lister Hospital and these would need to be booked online.

Number of calls : 2

Information Given:

- One caller was advised to book online.

- One caller rang at 17.05 but was told the service closed at 15.00.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Callers were generally satisfied given that this was not an HCT service.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- I assumed the service would have the same opening times as the Hub. Perhaps this could be clearer?

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- No

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
	1	1			

Scenario 12 – Catheter issues

My husband's/wife's catheter isn't filling up, I think he's/she's been drinking plenty.

Number of calls : 1

Information Given:

- The system took a long time to load and then the administrator only wanted to know the patient's GP Surgery. The caller then had to say this was a mystery shop call.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: The briefing notes imply that X should have qualified the call and provided advice.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- This call took over 14 minutes to be answered.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- X sounded alert and interested.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
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1

Scenario 13- GP Registration

I'm supporting a refugee family, how do they sign up with GP?

Note: this is a non HCT service.

Number of calls : 2

Information Given:

- Both callers were advised to contact a local GP and complete a registration form .

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Yes - couldn't provide help but gave advice.

Volunteer comment: Yes, satisfied in the circumstances! The call handler was pleasant and kind, despite the scenario not being in their 'ball park'. I felt comfortable speaking to X about my query.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- No.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- Friendly approach.
- The call handler was kind and helpful.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
1	1				

Scenario 14 – Wound care following hospital stay

Mum's in hospital, I just want to arrange her wound care with a district nurse when she's home

Number of calls : 3

Information Given:

- 1 caller was just asked for the name of the GP surgery but the other 2 callers were given an explanation of what happens at discharge.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Very good indeed.

Volunteer comment: Yes, the information given was clear and easy to follow. I felt comfortable about making this enquiry.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- No- it was excellent.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- X sounded very positive and supportive; assured me that it would all be sorted out.
- Yes, the call handler spoke clearly and gave the information well.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
2	1				

Scenario 15-GP referral to District Nurses

GP has advised us to call the hub as my neighbour has a lump on their leg to arrange a nurse to visit.

Number of calls : 1

Information Given:

- The administrator checked their system and when they couldn't find the 'neighbour' advised to chase the GP for the referral.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: It was OK – rather cold and business-like.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- Perhaps a bit more empathy and support!

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- X was very efficient but a little brusque.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
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1

Scenario 16 (when is my next visit) wasn't used

Scenario 17 – Social Care Package

I think my relative needs a package of care, who do I need to speak to about this?

Note: this is not a HCT service.

Number of calls : 3

Information Given:

- 2 administrators suggested calling Adult Care Services and provided a telephone number.
- 1 administrator was unsure and suggested that the GP should make a referral.
- 1 caller was given a full explanation of the difference between medical care and social care with lots of examples.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Poor start (spoke very fast) but definitely improved.

Volunteer comment: Yes satisfactory advice given.

Volunteer comment: Not really satisfied. I didn't feel I was being given the information I asked for (who do I need to speak to about this).

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- Just wondered why the call handler didn't tell me about the Adult Care services.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- X took time to explain the options and sign-posted me effectively.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
1	1		1		

Scenario 18 -Mobility Frame

I think my mum needs a frame as her mobility is not great at the moment

Number of calls : 2

Information Given:

- Both callers were advised to contact the GP but one administrator provided more information as to the process of getting a mobility frame.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Yes very clear advice.

Volunteer comment: Poor start and stayed that way! Nothing – very disinterested

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

Volunteer comment: I guess it comes down to those options – how on earth is someone unfamiliar with what HCT covers going to be able to make an intelligent choice. (Caller chose option 5 Frailty but was given the impression they had chosen the wrong service).

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- Offered good advice.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
1			1		

Scenario 19 – Therapist for a care home

I'm calling from a care home can I speak with a therapist please

Number of calls : 1

Information Given:

- Asked which therapist the caller wanted to speak to and then offered advice when the caller didn't appear on the system.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Yes, I picked the wrong option but was quickly transferred to the right service.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- No – response followed what was expected from the scenario.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- Quick transfer to the right person to speak to.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
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1

Scenario 20 (nurse calling from Danesbury) – Not used

Scenario 21 – Nurse Complaint

A nurse visited my neighbour and was really rude to them, I'd like a call back from a manager to make a complaint

Number of calls : 1

Information Given:

- The administrator insisted on taking the complaint details there and then. However the caller explained that they were calling on behalf of a neighbour who was quite distressed by the incident and therefore couldn't do it verbally as they weren't with the caller. Caller asked if they could put the complaint in writing. The administrator said they needed to speak to their manager and after 3-4 mins came back and said it couldn't be submitted in writing as they couldn't give out an email address as they were confidential.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Handler was professional throughout; my problem would have been with the system rather than with the way the call was handled.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- Review the complaints system for this type of scenario.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- The administrator’s general approach was good.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
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1

Scenario 22 – A non HCT Service

A caller with a non HCT issue (GP, acute hospital, social services for example) – how well is the caller supported and signposted to the correct service .

Example used was the Wheelchair Service – ‘Ringing to organise a wheelchair for my mother’.

Number of calls : 1

Information Given:

- The name and the number of the new wheelchair service was provided but was also advised that a GP referral may be required.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Very satisfied. Not only was the administrator friendly and made a joke that ‘they do a lot of things but not that’ when I tried to apologise for calling them but also was able to immediately quote the name and number of the new wheelchair provider, AJM Healthcare.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- Not with the response though maybe with the options the voice could say if you are unsure please hold on and someone will be able to help - I nearly put the phone down to start again as my query didn't fit the options.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- Friendly and reassuring manner of the administrator and providing excellent signposting.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
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1

Scenario 23 – Complaints handling

A caller who wishes to complain about a HCT service and how they are informed and supported to do this.

Example used was a complaint to Bladder and Bowel.

Number of calls : 1

Information Given:

- To Google PALS – this was the way to make a complaint. Had to ask for clarification about what PALS was.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Not at all. Firstly I thought the Care Coordination Centre who I first rang could have given me the information as it's generic to all departments. The administrator from Bladder and Bowel was friendly but just answered the phone with hello so I had to check who I was through to. I wasn't sure whether I was still in the 'Hub' or not. I was very surprised to just be told to Google PALS as they didn't even say to google HCT PALS until I kept checking what PALS was . That was it"

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- Yes staff should know the complaints process and if not look it up on the website! If I'd had a real complaint it would probably have got worse after this. At the very least an email address to HCT complaints page should have been given though googling HCT PALS as suggested did work!

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- No.

Recommendation .Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
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Scenario 24 – Palliative Care Service

A call to the specialist **palliative care service** from somebody wanting to understand how the service provides support and what to do in emergency situations.

Number of calls : 1

Information Given:

- Explained about the role of the District Nurses and that a referral needs to be made by the Hospice or the GP. Talked about the Hospital at Home scheme and Adult Care Services for carer support but stressed this needs to be from a GP referral. Explained about syringe driver and ‘just in case meds’ and something called a bridging service but always came back to the need for a referral.

Did you feel satisfied with how the call was dealt with?

Volunteer comment: Yes the call handler was able to give a lot of tips as to what to do immediately and how things could be put in place . Whilst they did not come out with lots of supportive phrases I could feel that they were understanding of the difficult situation we were in and kept thinking of other things that might help. They were calm and reassuring but made it clear the route that needed to be taken.

Was there anything that you felt could be improved?

- Not really . I think this was handled well.

Was there anything that you felt was good practice?

- There was little hesitation in the advice once the situation was explained. The administrator was keen to give lots of information but at the same time making it clear the route to gain support, The administrator showed empathy.

Recommendation Score:

Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	Don't Know
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A photograph of a person in a wheelchair being assisted by another person on a park bench. The person in the wheelchair is wearing a dark jacket and a cap, and has a red and black checkered bag on their lap. The person assisting them is wearing a grey hoodie and a white cap. They are sitting on a concrete bench in a park-like setting with trees and a building in the background. A large white circle with a blue border is overlaid on the top right of the image, containing the word "Recommendations" in green text.

Recommendations

Recommendations

The HCT Adult Referral Hub receives a large number of calls from the public each day. Many of these are routine but some will be unplanned like many of the scenarios used in this mystery shop exercise. Based on the findings outlined in this report, we have the following suggestions for improvement to further enhance the experience for people calling the HCT Adult Referral Hub.

Initial Contact

It is important that first contact is welcoming and supportive as some callers may be nervous about calling the service either for themselves or for family or friends.

1. Consider making the recorded introductory message more welcoming and personal.
2. Ensure that where services close early or are suspended that the message states when the service is likely to re-open again and where appropriate provide a number to call for emergencies.
3. Consider whether the options provided could be simplified in some way. Though callers were not disadvantaged by choosing the wrong option and generally received a quick and efficient service a smaller amount of choices would be preferable and/or a message saying to hold for an administrator if their query is not covered by those options or they are unsure of which option to choose.

Call Response - greeting

Callers were greeted by professional and polite administrators. Callers were not always told the name of the service and sometimes administrators did not say their name or it was unclear.

4. Remind administrators of the importance of speaking slowly and clearly on introduction and to always give their name.
5. Ensure the name of the service is provided and that the name is consistent with what the caller is expecting to hear.

Call Experience

The findings indicated that there were some really supportive responses and some excellent signposting, however there are a few themes that could be developed to improve the call experience as well as some good practice that should be shared with the team.

6. Review and address the information provided across the scenarios so that gaps and inconsistencies are addressed and good practice is shared.
7. Remind administrators of how important tone of voice, clarity and manner are to the overall experience of the caller. Volunteers often commented on how a person sounded. Tone helps with the person's expectation and feelings of whether they have had a good experience.

Post Call

The Friends and Family recommendation scores were mostly positive but with a number of 'neither' scores.

8. Identify the themes of why 'neither' and negative scores were given by the callers to improve the overall satisfaction with the service.
9. Consider how the Adult Referral Hub might gather patient experience of the service in the future e.g. via a post call survey.

Response and Action From Hertfordshire Community

NHS Trust

We would firstly like to thank Healthwatch Hertfordshire and their volunteers for their time and support with the mystery shop of the Adult Referral Hub. We welcome the recommendations that have been made and these will help us to improve the experiences of people using the service, at what we recognise can often be stressful and worrying times.

It is also encouraging to read examples of excellent service provided by staff and the findings have also highlighted how we can better support staff to continue to provide a personable and efficient service.

With reference to the recommendations that have been made, we are in the process of simplifying the amount of initial options people hear and pre-recorded voice messages are also being changed so these are more welcoming and informative for people using the service.

The report findings have been shared with staff to remind them of the importance of clear and concise communication and learning from the report will also be used to inform future staff training sessions, including enhancing staff knowledge about HCT services and our complaints and feedback processes.

Anthony Power, Head of Patient & Carer Experience

Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust

