

PATIENTS ASSOCIATION PRESS RELEASE

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Patients Association research reveals huge variation in out of hours spending, monitoring and patient satisfaction

Call for participation in benchmarking to be mandatory

Spending varies from less than £5.00 per person to over £20.00 per person, three fold differences in the number of patients rating service as poor or very poor

Information obtained by the Patients Association through Freedom of Information Act requests and the unweighted results of the National GP Patient Survey quarters 1 and 2 2009/10 of over a million patients has highlighted wide variations in spending and reveals a league table of poor patient satisfaction with out of hours care.

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."

The Patients Association has also analysed the results of the GP National Patient survey and can reveal that for the first two quarters of 2009/10 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.

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.

Notes for Editors

National GP Patient Survey Results Q's 1 and 2 2009/10 (information placed in the House of Commons Deposited papers library reference numbers DEP2010-0390 and DEP2010-0389)

Worst performing Trusts in Q's 1 and 2 2009/10 (18% and over)

PCT	Percentage rating out of hours care as poor or very poor
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%

Best performing Trusts in Q's 1 and 2 2009/10 (8% and less)

PCT	Percentage rating out of hours care as poor or very poor
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%

Table of spending per head of population 2008/9

Based on answers received from 90 Primary Care Trusts by the Patients Association in response to Freedom of Information Act requests.

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

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.:

<http://www.primarycarefoundation.co.uk/page1/page31/page21/files/EXAMPLE%20Report%20Round%202.pdf>

LIST OF PRIMARY CARE TRUSTS THAT WERE UNABLE TO PROVIDE US WITH DATA ON THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS THEIR PROVIDER ORGANISATIONS HAD RECIVED

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**

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.

To arrange interviews please contact the Patients Association on 0208 423 9111 or 07779 004898
or 07980 541 946