

GP Out of Hours Services Public Engagement Document

October 2023



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1. Purpose

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) is seeking views on its delivery of GP Out of Hours, to inform the development of the service.

NHSGGC is committed to delivering high quality healthcare services that meet the needs of our people and communities. We are undertaking a programme of engagement to ensure that the way we deliver GP Out of Hours (GPOOH) services takes account of the feedback and experiences of our patients, communities and wider public.

This seeks to capture your views and feedback to understand how best to deliver this service on a permanent basis in the future.

Through this engagement we aim to:

- **Provide open communication:** We will create opportunities where thoughts, questions and suggestions regarding GPOOH services can be shared.
- **Build a shared understanding:** By providing clear information, we will ensure that everyone has a shared understanding of the way in which GPOOH services operate; the challenges and opportunities and how they align with our commitment to providing high quality care.
- **Provide an approach to capture a diverse range of feedback:** We recognise that our communities are diverse, with varying needs and experiences and we will actively involve a wide range of stakeholders, ensuring a wide representation of views and feedback.
- **Inform decision making:** The feedback we receive will directly inform the decision-making process, helping us shape the future of GPOOH services in a way that benefits all.

This engagement is a two-way process to help us work towards delivering a service that is safe, effective and person-centred. We invite you to participate, share your thoughts and help shape how we provide healthcare services that serve the needs of the people of NHSGGC.



2. Introduction

The GPOOH service in NHSGGC provides urgent care to patients when their regular GP service is closed. These services are designed to handle non-life-threatening medical issues that require attention outside regular working hours, such as evenings, weekends and public holidays.

In February 2020, the NHSGGC GPOOH service faced difficulties in covering shifts across all Primary Care Emergency Centres (referred to as 'centres'), which meant that the service faced unplanned closures. The number of centres was temporarily reduced to maintain the service and make it more stable and sustainable.

In December 2020 the Scottish Government introduced a new national patient pathway for unscheduled care (for both in hours and out of hours). This meant that patients with non-life-threatening conditions would be directed to a new single point of access via NHS 24 .

The need for new ways of delivering services during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated what can be achieved to keep people safe, and that there are a range of alternative ways to access NHS services in addition to traditional face to face care, such as telephone and Near Me consultations¹ where appropriate.

Allen Stevenson, Interim Director Primary Care and GP Out of Hours for NHSGGC, said:



GP Out of Hours has undergone significant changes since the start of the pandemic since it was put into business continuity in 2020. With all patients being channelled through NHS 24 as a first point of contact, we can ensure that people are directed to the most appropriate type of care within the right environment, at the right time.

We have heard so many positive stories from those accessing GP Out of Hours and we want to continue to engage to ensure patient voices and experiences are heard as we look to make this a permanent approach to delivering the right care in the right place.👏

We have continued to evolve and test the development of the service with extensive feedback from patients using the service. In the most recent feedback, **87%** of people who responded rated their care as either 'good' or 'excellent' with **93%** of respondents also stating that the service met their needs.

Some negative feedback was also received, around themes such as waiting times from initial telephone assessments and travel to GPOOH centres.

Having developed and refined this model with patient feedback over the last three years, we would now like your views and feedback to understand how best to deliver this service on a permanent basis in future.

¹Near Me is a video consulting service used across NHS Scotland for health and care that enables people to attend appointments from home or wherever is convenient.

3. Background

Many factors have led to a changing model of care for the delivery of GPOOH service within NHSGGC. Much of this is driven by the need to deliver a service that is stable and sustainable and supports patient safety as well as the safety of staff working within the service.

These issues are common throughout Scotland. In 2015, the Scottish Government undertook a review on GPOOH services due to increasing pressures on the service relating to workforce pressures, with difficulties in recruiting and retaining enough GPs and other healthcare professionals to deliver the service.

In 2019, the Chair of NHSGGC asked Professor Sir Lewis Ritchie to conduct a review of the service in response to increasing numbers of unplanned closures and shifts that could not be filled. This was to ensure that the NHSGGC service operated in line with the national review Sir Lewis Ritchie had previously undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Government. The report provided 28 recommendations to ensure resilient, high quality and safe services, providing the best urgent and emergency care for the population. During the review of the GPOOH service it became clear that there were issues that required immediate attention.

Key themes of the Sir Lewis review of NHSGGC's service were:

- **GP engagement:** Concerns raised regarding the environment and facilities in some of the GPOOH centres and poor communication between those working in the service and management.
- **Workload:** With increasing workload in daytime General Practice fewer GPs were committed to working in the OOH service. There was increasing workload and complexity presenting in the OOH period with little means of managing demand. This was further exacerbated by patients 'walking in' to GPOOH centres without accessing NHS 24 triage.
- **Workforce:** With fewer GPs working in the service there was increased lone working and professional isolation. Whilst there had been some work to develop the multi-disciplinary team and some additional Advanced Nurse Practitioners had been appointed the numbers of salaried GPs had not increased and therefore there was significant reliance on sessional GPs² with insufficient capacity to meet demand.

Fewer GPs working in the service resulted in many shifts across the week and weekends being left unfilled causing short notice closures of primary care sites, daily decisions around site opening and safety and significant operational work in moving staff to alternative sites.

²Sessional GP is a term used to describe GPs who have the flexibility to choose to work any combination of vacant sessions and hours available across the GPOOHs service.

4. Steps Taken by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Since 2020, NHSGGC has taken steps to stabilise, evolve and improve the service. This has included delivery on fewer physical sites, with an increase in the range of methods with which people can access the service. These methods include:



1. Stopping walk-ins and introducing appointments at the GPOOH centres:

Patients “walking in” to GPOOH centres have not gone through the NHS 24 triage process and need to be assessed to determine what, if any treatment is required and by whom. The GPOOH service may in fact, not be the right service for their needs. The move to ‘appointment only’ was introduced in June 2020 to support access for those requiring the service, and in line with other NHS Boards across Scotland. Developments also included the delivery of virtual consultations (through telephone or Near Me) to reduce the need for patients to attend in person.



2. Move to telephone first model:

A telephone first model was introduced in March 2020 to provide remote triage and consultations for patients accessing the service. This new pathway means patients receive either a telephone consultation from a clinician or are asked to attend a centre at an allocated time. Video consultations using Near Me are also available.



3. Extending the Patient Transport Service:

The GPOOH patient transport service is offered to patients requiring transport³ to and from the out-of-hours service if they have no other means of transport. This service was extended to widen the criteria for those able to access patient transport and allow for the transport of a carer to support the patient where required.

³Patient Transport is available to all patients. At time of arranging an appointment for a centre, the administrative staff will discuss travel arrangements to the centre for the patient. Any patients who indicate they don't have transport means to travel to the centre will be routinely offered patient transport. Patient transport now includes accessibility for wheelchair users.



4. Maintaining the home visiting service:

For those that cannot travel to a GPOOH centre, the home visiting service is undertaken by clinicians in dedicated cars with driver support colleagues. Investment has also taken place in new cars with enhanced technology to improve on clinical safety.



5. Expansion to Vale of Leven Integrated Care Model:

The service provision introduced at the Vale of Leven was fully reinstated in February 2021 to provide a full Integrated Care service from the centre.



6. Expansion to Inverclyde GPOOH model:

The GPOOH service and Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership worked together to identify a model that could provide a local GPOOH service. In May 2021, the GPOOH centre was introduced on Saturday mornings and public holidays and moved to a co-located basis within the Emergency Department in Inverclyde Royal Hospital.



7. Recruitment of salaried clinicians:

The ongoing commitment to increase the number of salaried clinicians working in the service with rolling adverts (GPs, Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Nurses and other Allied Health Professionals) has led to an increased number recruited for the service.



8. Redesign of Urgent Care Implementation:

Work undertaken to Redesign Urgent Care was taken forward as part of the National programme. This recognises the importance of transforming pathways and providing appropriate and safe care in and out of hours and was officially launched in December 2020.



9. Improved Working Conditions:

Work was carried out to ensure the environment of each of the GPOOH centres was appropriate. This has included moving some of the sites to improved locations (e.g. Royal Alexandra Hospital). In addition, agreement has been reached to ensure no lone working for clinicians in GPOOH centres, reducing professional isolation and improving safety.

The development of the model has resulted in significant achievements. These include:

- **Reduced requirement and demand for in-person (face-to-face) attendance**
- **Greater service stability across the GPOOH centres**
- **Improved working environment and elimination of lone working for staff**
- **Increased number of salaried GPs supporting the service**
- **Full re-instatement of an Integrated Care service at the Vale of Leven**
- **Development of a service in Inverclyde for Saturday mornings and public holidays (co-located with the Emergency Department at IRH)**
- **Establishment of remote working arrangements to support the service**, either as a routine shift or as a surge response (a group of GPs who have agreed to provide short term remote back up to the service at times of increased demand).

5. How the Service is Currently Being Delivered

GPOOH services are staffed by a team of skilled healthcare professionals who are equipped to address a wide range of non-emergency medical conditions. To access GPOOH services the public must contact **NHS 24** on **111** and trained call handlers at NHS 24 will assess the caller's medical needs and provide appropriate advice, arrange a home visit or direct them to the nearest GPOOH centre if necessary.

There is patient transport to ensure all patients are supported to access the GPOOH centres, when required, across NHSGGC.

If you require urgent non-life threatening care after your GP has closed you should phone **NHS 24** on **111**



Trained call handlers at NHS 24 will assess your needs and if clinically appropriate will refer you to the GPOOH service

What Happens Next?

You may receive a **remote consultation** by telephone or video, **or a face to face consultation**, either by appointment, at one of the GPOOH Centres or in your home or homely setting.



Remote Consultation

Within 1-4 hrs a **clinician will call you to assess your care over the phone or by video.**

This could mean advice to self-care, a prescription or asking you to attend a GPOOH Centre.



Visiting a Centre

If you need to **visit a centre you will receive a call from staff to arrange an appointment.**

They can also discuss patient transport needs with you.



Home Visit

Based on the information provided to NHS 24, and **if you require a home visit, this will be arranged by the GPOOH Service.**

The centres providing the GPOOH service are:

- Inverclyde Royal Hospital
- Stobhill Ambulatory Care Hospital
- Royal Alexandra Hospital
- Vale of Leven Hospital
- Victoria Ambulatory Care Hospital.



The services previously delivered at Easterhouse Health Centre, Gartnavel General Hospital, Queen Elizabeth University Hospital and Greenock Health Centre were closed to concentrate services and resources on a smaller number of sites.

An Integrated Care service has been fully operational at the Vale of Leven site, providing a 24/7 service for patients and encompassing the GPOOH work in the out of hours periods⁴.




The service in Inverclyde has now been co-located with the Emergency Department at Inverclyde Royal Hospital and operates on Saturdays 10.00am – 2.00pm and public holidays.

⁴The GPOOH Service provides urgent care during the out-of-hours period: Monday to Friday 6.00pm – 8.00am and 24 hours at weekends and Public Holidays.

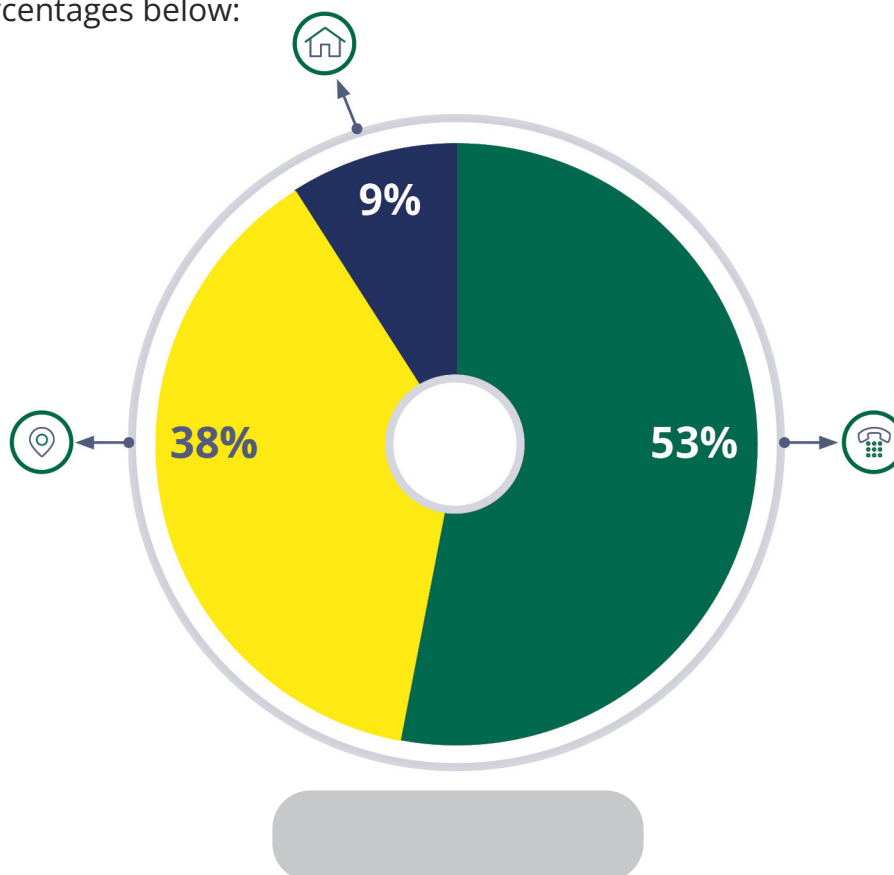
6. Current Service Provision

Currently, there is an average of approximately **15,000** patient consultations per month.

A breakdown of activity from March 2023 to August 2023 is highlighted below.

	 Phone Appointment	 Centre Attendance	 House Visits	Total
Mar 2023	7,710	5,427	1,255	14,392
Apr 2023	10,090	6,851	1,550	18,491
May 2023	9,325	6,475	1,395	17,195
Jun 2023	7,077	5,126	1,159	13,362
Jul 2023	7,646	5,618	1,400	14,664
Aug 2023	6,603	5,372	1,122	13,097
Average	8,075	5,812	1,314	15,200

Shown as percentages below:



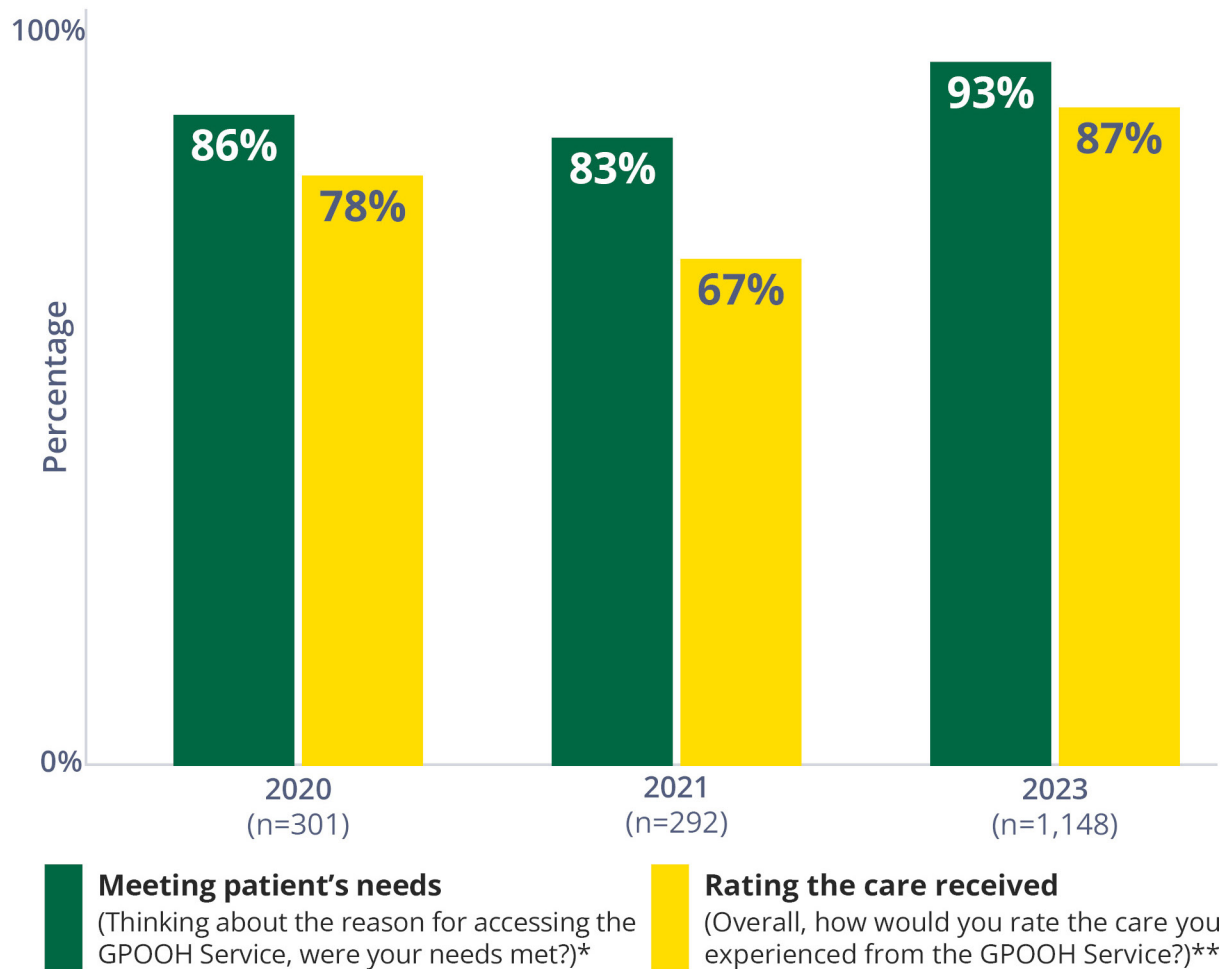
7. Listening to our Patients

Throughout the last three years NHSGGC has sought the views of those using the service to understand how it is working and to inform how we continue to deliver the service.

In 2020/21 we spoke to **639** people who had used the service, to understand their experiences from the care received. This exercise was repeated recently, with responses received from an additional **1,148** people.

Of the 1,148 people responding in 2023, 93% stated they felt their needs have been met by the service.

The feedback is used to continually improve the service, but a high-level summary is provided below.



*Figures provided indicate those responding yes to this question

**Figures provided indicate those rating care 'good' or 'excellent'

The figures above highlight positive feedback from those using the service, and also reassuringly, how this positive feedback has increased over the last few years as the service has evolved and established its new way of working.

Dr Thomas Gilhooly, Clinical Director, said:

The changes made to the GP Out of Hours have been positive for patients who require GP care when their local practice is closed and for the service itself, resulting in fewer unexpected closures of our GP Out of Hours centres.

We now want to involve patients and the public in our proposals to make this change permanent and I'd encourage members of the public and patients to get involved.

The way we access care is changing, to maximise resources and technology while delivering high-quality person-centred care. This new and more stable approach underpins a much wider exercise to ensure the whole of Greater Glasgow and Clyde has access to a safe, reliable, and sustainable GP Out of Hours service.👏👏

Got a GP phone call instead of a visit to out of hours which suited us perfectly. Prescription was waiting at the pharmacy for me.

I visited GP Out of Hours service twice this week and was seen by the same doctor who was absolutely lovely and he listened to my concerns regarding my baby.

Exceptional care and attention from the out of hours doctor who was called out to the house.

All staff are very helpful and friendly. Very understanding and had empathy.

8. Impact Assessment

Routine Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) have been carried out to inform developments and are available on our [website](#).

9. Engagement Process

There will be a programme of engagement across the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde board area from Monday 9th October 2023 running until Monday 11th December 2023.

Plans include meeting with and engaging community groups, third sector organisations, community councils and elected representatives.

There will be opportunities for people and communities to share views on the current service model through our ongoing engagement survey. We will also host drop-in and information sessions across Glasgow, including Inverclyde, that will offer an opportunity for information sharing and engagement with the public. Details of these sessions will be advertised on our social media and website.

There will be ongoing social media activity throughout this time that will provide information on the service and allow people to share feedback.

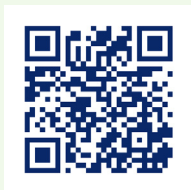
The outcome of this work will be presented at the NHSGGC Board meeting on Tuesday 27th February 2024.

10. Further Information

Further information on this work, including 'Frequently Asked Questions' can be found on the NHSGGC website at: www.nhsggc.scot/gpoooh/engagement.

Contact Information and Feedback Submission

- Feedback can be provided via the survey link:
www.nhsggc.scot/gpoooh/engagement
- You can also access the survey by using the QR code:



- For any additional queries or to arrange a further discussion with you or a group you are part of, please contact NHSGGC by email at:
public.involvement@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

All feedback should be submitted no later than Monday 11th December 2023.

