Out of Hours

Annual Report

The Out of Hours Service provides urgent care when your surgery is closed

April 2008

What to do if you are unwell during out of hours

**Emergencies**
For critical life threatening situations or accidents
Phone 999 or attend Accident & Emergency

**Unwell**
If you are unwell and need help or are unsure what to do
Contact NHS 24 on 0845 24 24 24, who will assess your problem and refer you to the OOH Service if required

**Self Care**
If I can treat myself
Contact NHS 24 or local pharmacy for advice. For details on pharmacy opening times contact NHS 24
Welcome

I am delighted to present NHS Lanarkshire’s Out of Hours Annual Report for 2007/8. The report introduces the wide range of staff who provide this essential service and reports on how the service has performed over the past year.

The Out of Hours service is a young service having been established in October 2004. It is an integral part of the care delivered by NHS Lanarkshire and already has established strong links across Scotland with the range of services providing care in the Out of Hours period. I am very pleased with how the service has developed by building a strong base and taking every opportunity to learn. Looking to the future, I am confident that we will build on this strong start as we continue to provide high quality care 365 days a year to the population of Lanarkshire.

I would like to thank all staff involved in delivering the service recognising that this is a unique service which provides care for patients when GP surgeries and most routine services are closed.

Finally, the future looks bright with some exciting developments planned for the year ahead and I look forward to reporting on these next year.

I appreciate your interest in reading this report and would welcome any feedback.

Alan Lawrie
Executive Director
South Lanarkshire Community Health Partnership

The OOH Management Team
Lead Nurse
Jean Donaldson
Clinical Director
Dr Liz Duncan
and Senior Manager
Linda McGregor
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<td>&quot;The service from the moment I made the initial call has been first class. She was treated with dignity and respect.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;The doctor was most understanding and very thorough in his dealings, I cannot praise him highly enough.&quot;</td>
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Patient

Relative

Patient
The Out of Hours (OOH) Service provides urgent care when your GP surgery is closed. You simply call NHS 24 where trained staff will assess your problem and offer advice on the best thing to do. You may be offered some practical advice. If you need to see a doctor or nurse, NHS 24 will pass your details to NHS Lanarkshire Out of Hours Service.

The OOH hub staff co-ordinate appointments, home visits and communications with all professionals involved in delivering the service. A doctor home visiting service is provided with six vehicles located across Lanarkshire. Paramedics also visit and treat patients. The service mini bus provides transport for those patients who cannot get to a centre under their own steam.

There are five Primary Care Emergency Centres (PCECs) across NHS Lanarkshire staffed by a team of doctors and nurses. The PCECs operate an appointment system to ensure the most urgent patients are given priority and to avoid unnecessary waiting.

All our clinical records are available electronically using a safe and protected system. This approach provides doctors with speedy access to essential information as well as allowing efficient transmission of the OOH clinical record to a patient’s registered GP.

There are four community nursing teams working across Lanarkshire, who take over care from daytime nursing services and who also respond to urgent requests thereby providing continuous care.

An emergency dental service is also in place in Wishaw General Hospital, which provides OOH cover for those dental practices who participate in the scheme and also for unregistered patients.

All of the above services are accessed via NHS24 on 08454 24 24 24.
Meet the Team

Doctor
Doctors undergo five years training to become a doctor, plus three years specialist training to become a qualified GP. Thereafter knowledge and skills must be kept up to date, a record of which is presented at an annual appraisal. “It is the daily challenge that creates a passion in me to treat patients to the best of my ability and work with the rest of the OOH team to make this service first class”.

Primary Care Emergency Centre Nurse
It takes three years to become a registered general nurse. PCEC nurses then attend additional university education spanning two years, which covers the assessment and treatment of minor illnesses including the prescribing of medication. This small team of nurses are highly skilled in managing the type of patients that attend PCEC’s and keep their skills up to date through attending relevant courses. “I have enjoy the opportunity to learn and to develop my skills and find it very fulfilling to see, treat and prescribe for patients completely on my own”.

Community Nurse
Following three years’ training to become a registered general nurse, community nurses undergo a period of additional training. This covers a wide breadth of topics that support the delivery of holistic care with a particular focus on terminally ill patients. “I enjoy working in the OOH period and get much job satisfaction from helping patients when they are most at need”.

Dentist
The Out of Hours Emergency Dental Service is delivered by a team of local dentists and dental nurses drawn from all branches of the profession in Lanarkshire. All are professionally trained and participate in ongoing education to keep their skills up to date. “I work for the service two week-ends a year and am on call as a reserve dentist available to come in if the service is really busy on two further week-ends. At the end of a session, you feel you’ve done a good day’s work that was really worthwhile”.

Paramedic
Paramedics are the new kids on the block who joined OOH Service as an innovative move to expand the workforce within out of hours. Their background in emergency care meets the wider demands of the service. They too have taken the opportunity to develop their own clinical skills in managing minor illness and gaining knowledge in prescribing. Paramedics begin their career as ambulance care assistants working through accident and emergency duties to become State Registered as an Ambulance Paramedic. Depending on rate of progress this takes around two to three years and is supported and assessed by senior consultants within hospitals throughout this period.

To work within out of hours the paramedics complete the same Glasgow Caledonian University course as the PCEC nurses, and receive the same mentoring from GPs. “I’ve been part of the project to have community paramedics working with the OOH service. I’ve extended my skills from dealing mainly with injuries and emergencies to now dealing with day to day illnesses. It’s been interesting, rewarding and exciting to be part of this new development”.

Out of Hours Service Annual Report
Behind the Scenes

Compliments & Complaints

The service handles receives on average 11,000 patient contacts per month and from this receives one or two compliments most months with around two or three formal complaints per month.

Compliments have highlighted how patients and their families appreciate the dedication and high standards of care provided by staff.

All complaints are fully investigated. Lessons learned are shared with those involved and, where appropriate, with the wider service as part of best practice. Specific educational programmes have been developed as a result of complaints received; some of the key learning points covered in these events include:

- The necessity for full and accurate record keeping
- The importance of good general communication, with truly listening to patients being particularly vital
- An up-to-date knowledge of the management of acute asthma
- Particular vigilance when attending abdominal emergencies including possible ectopic pregnancies.

While complaints are stressful for both patients and clinicians, much useful learning has been gained over the last year.

Improving our Service - Progress this year

To support delivery of high standards of care, staff have been active in a number of initiatives, some of which are summarised below:

- Management of Acute Asthma is up to date and tailored for OOH services with new guidance produced for clinicians and equipment in the PCEC’s and doctors’ bags updated to support best practice.
- Staff enjoyed lively discussion at a number of educational events on ‘hot topics’ with keynote messages from expert speakers.
- Doctors and nurses of the future gain experience of working in the OOH service. We provide training and regular supervision through schemes organised with NHS Education Scotland and Glasgow University Post Graduate Medical School.
- The first big project is underway for our new Drugs and Therapeutics Group where they are revamping the doctor’s bags.

Drug & Therapeutics Committee

- An Electronic Clinical Summary that provides an up-to-date information on medication and allergies and is drawn directly from the patient’s GP record was made available through our IT system in PCEC’s.
NHS Quality Improvement Scotland visited every NHS Board OOH Service during 2005/6 to assess the structures underpinning the delivery of care. Follow up review took place during 2006/7 with the final report being published in December 2007. NHS Lanarkshire was assessed as being ‘largely compliant with the standards’. Following the initial visit a work plan was put in place to address the 15 criteria that required improvement. As of December 2007 two criteria still require improvement:

✦ Linkages with voluntary organisations should be improved
✦ All staff, including non-clinical, should have personal development plans in place

Both these issues are being actively addressed at present.

NHS QIS recognises the huge effort that has been made by the newly formed OOH services in setting up robust infrastructures in such a short period of time. While no further reporting is required by NHS QIS, NHS Lanarkshire is committed to continually improving and developing the quality of service delivered.
Activity

Patients

Patients contact the service with a wide range of problems. You can see from the activity figures that almost half of those who make contact receive advice over the phone. Common topics for advice are children with a high temperature, medication queries and viral illnesses.

Most referrals to the OOH service are received via NHS 24. The service also receives requests for attendance directly from nursing homes, community hospitals, A&E and community pharmacies. During 2007/8 the service received 133,347 calls which averages at just under 11,000 contacts most months and closer to 12,000 during December and January.

You can see from the graph opposite that Saturday and Sunday mornings are extremely busy times, when we need to have most staff on duty. Over 10 per cent of contacts on a Saturday morning relate to medication enquiries, many of which are for repeat prescriptions. As a result of pharmacies now offering an emergency repeat prescribing service and also a minor ailments service, where patients can access emergency supplies of medication at the discretion of the Pharmacist, we hope to see a reduction in this activity over the next year.

Patients attending a PCECs are offered an appointment in one of five locations across Lanarkshire: Central Health Centre Cumbernauld; Monklands Hospital; Hairmyres Hospital; Wishaw General Hospital; and Lanark Health Centre.

For those patients who are too ill to come to a PCEC, a home visit is carried out. Over 95 per cent of home visits are attended within four hours of being requested by NHS 24. To assist staff achieve this performance we need reliable cars with the latest technology. The service purchased six new vehicles in November 07 to meet the demands of winter. Our cars are equipped with a safe, secure onboard computer to receive clinical information from the Lanarkshire OOH hub and to allow doctors access to patient clinical records. This information is essential in allowing doctors to prioritise to most urgent cases for home visiting.

Activity Information:

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<th>OOH activity</th>
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<td>Total patient contacts</td>
<td>133,347</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCEC attendance</td>
<td>53694 (41%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home visit</td>
<td>16147 (12%)</td>
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<td>Home care advice</td>
<td>63005 (47%)</td>
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<th>Community Nurse</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total patient attendances</td>
<td>31,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referred acutely</td>
<td>8607</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planned Care</td>
<td>23110</td>
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<th>Dentistry</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total patient contacts</td>
<td>5609</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attended by OOH dentist</td>
<td>3381 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home care advice</td>
<td>2228 (40%)</td>
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The pie chart opposite shows that we see patients from the cradle to old age; consequently our staff need to be highly trained in many aspects of medicine, from paediatrics to care of the elderly. The graph below shows the services busiest time starts about 8.00am on Saturday and Sunday mornings and eases off about 4.00pm.

Finance

The OOH Service has received considerable financial investment with an annual budget of £6m. All activities and developments were made within budget for 2007/8.
Winter Plan

Planning for winter, focusing on the festive period, was our single biggest challenge of the year and we began working on this as soon as the summer holidays finished in late August. While most services wind down over the festive period, it is our busiest time of year where we provide sole GP and nursing care for the population of Lanarkshire for eight out of 14 days while GP surgeries are closed. It is also a time when we tend to be busy due to the amount of coughs, colds and flu in the community.

This year we worked closely with our colleagues in the hospitals and in social services to produce a truly joined up approach to delivering care over the festive period.

The plan kicked off in November with communications in GP surgeries and local press advising patients to obtain sufficient repeat prescriptions to cover the festive period. This proved very successful.

By early December all the additional doctor, nurse, driver, receptionist, hub staff and management shifts had been covered. The service doubles its workforce at peak times to meet demand. Stocks of additional medications were ordered.

The range of staff offering telephone advice was also increased with pharmacists and community psychiatric nurses joining nurses and doctors in offering telephone advice to patients. Community pharmacies advertised the Minor Ailments Service and also promoted the Urgent Supply of Repeat Medications facility to provide patients with additional options for accessing necessary medication.

By mid-December the plan was in full swing with newsletters to GP practices, staff fully briefed and daily conference telephone calls between hospital, social and the OOH services to monitor progress and keep abreast of demand.

Demand was in line with predictions with just under 10,000 patient contacts over the two week period from Saturday 22 December 2007 until Friday 4 January 2008. That is the same number of contacts made in one month at other times of the year. Tuesday 2 January 2008 was the busiest day with 1,106 contacts.

The service was able to meet the demand, staff reported a good festive period where they were busy, but felt the service had been well managed. Most importantly, patients received good care throughout with only one small issue around access to medication in Cumbernauld which has been addressed.

Some great lessons were learned and these will be incorporated into the winter plan for 2008/9.
Developments

Over the next year we will continue with the plans that are currently underway. A few exciting new initiatives that will improve the service we offer patients are in the pipeline for next year:

✦ Working with our colleagues in Accident and Emergency and hospitals to set up an Emergency Response Centre which is a professional telephone link that will smooth the path for doctor’s admitting patients to hospital.
✦ Enhancing the role of our community paramedics.
✦ Completely revamping doctors bags and pharmacy stock order systems.
✦ Installing upgraded IT to the cars in the form of a tracker system and satellite navigation system.
✦ Extending available accommodation within PCECs.

Dentistry

The out of hours emergency dental service is staffed by local dental practitioners and dental nurses. Most dental practices in Lanarkshire are part of this service and it is also open to patients who are not registered with a dentist.

The Emergency Service is based within Wishaw General at week-ends. Over the past year patients have been referred to the service for a variety of reasons; most commonly relating to bleeding, infection or trauma. During weekdays, patients can be offered an emergency appointment with a local dentist the following morning if the dental nurse at NHS 24 assesses that emergency treatment is required.

Patient Guide to using the service

If you have an urgent health problem and you need to use the OOH service when your GP surgery is closed you should call NHS 24 on 08454 242424. You will be able to speak to a nurse who will advise you on the best thing to do. You may be offered some practical advice or you may need to see a doctor or nurse, in which case NHS 24 will organise this for you.

Unless have had an accident or there’s a life threatening emergency, it is best that you contact NHS 24 before going straight to an Accident and Emergency Department.

By calling NHS 24, you may completely avoid a trip to a Primary Care Centre. If you do need to go, you will be given an appointment which will save you a long wait.

Here’s a handy summary of what steps to take if you are unwell.

| Self-care | For treatment of minor illnesses by combining simple remedies with plenty of rest. |
| NHS 24 | For absolutely any health questions around the clock and to find local services. When your own GP surgery is closed, always contact NHS 24 if you need help or advice. |
| Pharmacist | For advice on common illnesses and the best medicines to treat them. |
| GP | For medical advice, examinations and prescriptions for illnesses you can’t shake off. |
| A&E or 999 | For critical, life-threatening situations or accidents. |
Day in the life of

My daytime GP colleagues are usually heading home when I start my working day. I arrive before the start of my shift at 6pm to give me time to speak to the Out of Hours hub at Hairmyres Hospital, the Primary Care Emergency Centre (PCEC) nurse, the reception and Accident and Emergency staff about workload and any that has come up.

When I’m on home visit duty, I also need to check my doctor’s bag for medication stock before going out in the car. I am on duty until midnight and once a week I do an overnight shift from 12 midnight to 8am when I cover both the PCEC and home visits. The shifts are always buzzing early on, but do generally ease off overnight.

In the PCEC, consultations run at ten minute intervals. Whether in the PCEC or on home visits, good communication is key so that I can do my job well and make sure patients are clear about what is happening. Every patient is different and you see a wide variety of problems. But common to all is the need to assess the problem and find out the patient’s own ideas and concerns. I’ll then perform an examination and agree a plan of management with the patient that hopefully meets their expectations.

Many problems can develop and change rapidly so I pay great care to advising patients on what to do next and ensuring they understand that advice.

“It is the daily challenge that creates a passion in me to treat patients to the best of my ability and work with the rest of the OOH team to make this service first class.”

I work in five different centres and enjoy rubbing shoulders with a wide range of colleagues from diverse backgrounds. There’s a real sense of co-operation to deliver the best service we can to patients.

Quiet or busy, it’s important to stay alert throughout my shift as the next patient I see might be very ill. It’s a very rewarding role and one where I always aim to treat minor ailments with same respect as serious illness.

While my main role is treating patients, I really enjoy the opportunities to teach and share my experiences with GP registrars, nurses and paramedics. To keep myself up to date, I attend monthly meetings with my doctor colleagues where we talk about new clinical developments. We discuss with management how well the service is working and what we need to do to improve and I also attend regular educational sessions. Most recently, I updated my life support skills.

Working in the OOH Service gives me time to pursue some of my other interests. Currently, I’m learning about interior design and maintaining the gardens of my church to a high standard.

I recently moved back to Lanarkshire having previously worked with a similar service on the Isle of Wight. It was just about as good as Lanarkshire’s, but on a smaller scale.

It is the daily challenge that creates a passion in me to treat patients to the best of my ability and work with the rest of the OOH team to make this service first class.

Dr David Tollan