

Ramsay Healthcare – Ashted Hospital Patient Engagement Report

June 2024



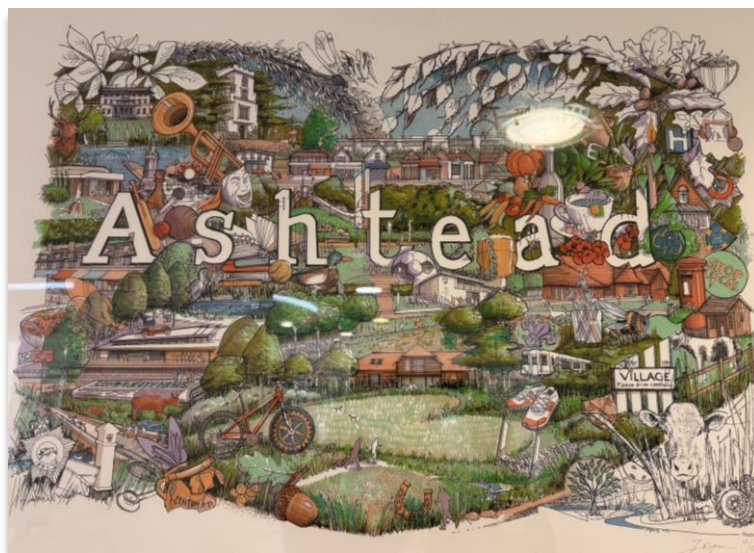
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About Luminus

Luminus Insight CIC (known as Luminus) is an independent, not for profit organisation, which exists to empower people to have their voices heard in the design and delivery of services; and to help organisations provide equity of access and the best services possible through the inclusive involvement of local people.

Background

Ashtead Hospital wanted to learn more about patient experience at their hospital and commissioned this research to take place.

Luminus have spoken to patients to understand the patient pathway experience of accessing health care at Ashtead hospital; to gain richer, qualitative insight into what is working well and if any improvements could be made which would positively impact patients.

The approach:

- 2 engagement events at Ashtead Hospital: 20 May (outpatients) and 6 June 2024 (inpatients)
- An online survey supported by leaflets distributed at the hospital and paper copies made available in waiting areas and reception
- Support to complete the survey by Luminus engagement staff.

Overview of participants:

In total 21 patients were engaged in the study, of these:

- 16 were private patients (2 self-funding their care)
- and 5 NHS patients.

Of these, 13 patients were using outpatient services on the day (although some had experience of using inpatient services previously), and 8 were inpatients.

We engaged with 19 people at Ashtead Hospital in person and 2 people completed the online survey.

Key findings

The study focused on a number of areas including general facilities, attitudes of staff, refreshments and communal areas, communications, choices of consultant and venue, travelling to the hospital, cleanliness and quality of care.

This report has clustered the findings into four key areas:

- a. Overall impressions
- b. General facilities
- c. Communications and ease of booking
- d. Quality of care, Staff and relationships.

a. Overall impressions

The data reveals that most people (17 out of 21) have praised the environment, facilities and general staffing.

"They leave no stone unturned here. Staff have been very thorough. Good from reception through to consultant."

(Private in-patient)

"My experience at Ashtead Hospital was great, from the first consultation, to the consultant, to the operation. The staff are so caring and kind. The key nurse who was looking after me was absolutely amazing, she was lovely and calm."

(Private in-patient)

It appears that most people were able to choose their consultant; private patients often mentioned that they had researched and requested a particular consultant; NHS patients also indicated that they were able to make a choice.

"I was given a choice of Ashtead / Cobham / Epsom. I chose Ashtead because I had been here before and it was a good experience. I was also given a choice of consultants."

(NHS outpatient)

b. General facilities

Of those participants who commented on the general facilities most were complimentary.

Parking: The provision of free parking is a positive and 8 people specifically mentioned this. There were 2 people who told us that sometimes (at peak times of the day) it can be difficult to find a space. The main consideration for Ashtead is that patients who attend the hospital

for treatment relating to mobility such as knee treatment, or who have general mobility issues, find the steep drive to the car park difficult to walk up and down.

However, one patient did say that reception staff had given them permission to park in a blue badge space when they visited because they could not manage the walk. Others mentioned being dropped at the door by a family member or friend who then went to park. This is problematic for anyone who needs assistance or someone with them all the time.

"The steep drive is an issue if you can't get a space in the front part, but they are disabled spaces. I don't have a blue badge. I really couldn't walk back up. Often there are empty disabled spaces, so the reception has let me park there a few times after I've explained."

(Private inpatient)

Food and beverages: The free coffee available for outpatients was mentioned by 7 people and is greatly appreciated.

"Coffee is free, such a bonus."

(NHS outpatient)

There were positive comments about the quality and choice of food for inpatients and 1 person specifically mentioned that their dietary choice was accommodated and that through an armband system all staff were aware of this dietary requirement.

"I've been fed very well. Food is adequate. I had a preference of no mushroom, and they gave me a red band to wear on my wrist to indicate allergy / preference. This was good."

(Private inpatient)

This was also true for an NHS inpatient who had feared they would be given inferior food compared to a private patient.

"When I first came here, I thought the food would not be as good for NHS patients as those that had paid but I was wrong. Didn't think we'd all be cared for the same way. I was asked if I had any dietary requirements [which I don't]. Food has been fantastic."

(NHS inpatient)

Cleanliness: Of those participants (6 people) who commented, all felt that the hospital was clean. There were no comments about any area of the hospital (rooms, wards or communal areas) being dirty or unclean; this included public toilets which can often be an area of discontent.

"The facilities here are good. It's very clean everywhere."
(NHS inpatient)

"The room looks and smells really clean!"
(Private inpatient)

Waiting areas: General comments were good for the waiting areas. People felt they were clean, tidy and welcoming. The television channel and furniture in the waiting area was not to one person's taste, but this is likely to be the case in a sample of 21 people.

It may be worth considering that some people find the outpatients waiting area drafty and chilly when the doors are open.

"The waiting area is ok but, in some places, it is very drafty when the entrance doors are open."
(Private outpatient)

There were both positive and negative comments about the reception area (see section on staffing below). Some people commented that it was bright and well signposted. However, one person said:

"The area could be carpeted. Gatwick Spire looks much better at reception and first impressions count if I'm being honest."
(Private outpatient)

Signage: Most people felt the signage was good. One person had difficulty finding their way after a test and felt that there should be a chaperone provided.

"When you finish but need bloods or CT, no one chaperones you. I get back to the lounge area I was waiting in and then literally wandered onto wards and departments looking for where I need to go to follow-up. Someone should be showing me surely. Does the consultant not realise this either?"
(Private outpatient)

Luminus observations of outpatient's lounge area:

- Free Wi-Fi is available, but a sign is needed
- Toilet signage needed; one person gave up looking for the toilet
- Clean, welcoming and reception staff very kind and polite
- Free tea and coffee plus a water dispenser
- TV, lots of seating and various places to sit
- Friends and family details displayed, allowing feedback channel for patients.

Luminus observations of inpatients area:

- Clean and welcoming.
- Staff very friendly – the Matron couldn't be more helpful, and cleaners and physiotherapist were also very friendly.
- Spacious and bright with televisions for people to watch.
- Signage good and feedback forms on display.
- We observed tea and coffee being given, and corridors being cleaned.
- Whiteboards were being completed in the patient's rooms with details of physiotherapy and discharge information etc.
- We also noted a green sticker being used to indicate when a room had been cleaned.

c. Communications and ease of booking

This section relates to appointment booking systems, hospital correspondence and responses to enquiries. In the staffing and relationships section below there is detail about staffing interactions and relationships with patients.

On the whole people praised the communications from Ashtead.

“Had good communications throughout through letters. This hospital feels more open and friendly than a usual hospital.”

(NHS inpatient)

“I feel I have been communicated with well.”

(Private inpatient)

There were 2 people who said that postal delays had meant they received communications after the appointment date but recognized that this is not the fault of the hospital.

“Royal Mail is unreliable. Sometimes letters arrive after an appointment date.”

(Private outpatient)

There were also 2 patients who described poor communication. This related to long wait times on the booking line, reception ringing for a long time, and not being made aware that follow-up appointments need to be requested by the patient rather than being automatically arranged.

“I think staff are caring and the quality of care is good but comms and access to booking let this place down greatly.”

(Private outpatient)

"Sometimes, though, the reception area isn't manned and when I call up, I wait on speaker phone as it can take a long time. I call back later often but have been known to pop down and chat face to face as easier."

(Private outpatient)

For one person the difficulty they experienced trying to get through has made them choose a different hospital for further treatment.

"If I was starting out again, I'd avoid Ashtead but have to complete my treatment now. In fact, I am being treated at a different hospital for something else as couldn't bear another year here. The booking line is crazy to get through to as I said. Not good re: communications that's for sure."

(Private outpatient)

Several people were not aware of how they could provide feedback and/or make a complaint. Luminus staff explained the options available, but it may help to have more posters about the feedback systems and the PALS service.

"I wouldn't know where to feedback and reception always look too busy to help."

(Private outpatient)

d. Quality of care, staff and relationships

Quality of care: The relationship a patient has with their clinical staff is important for them to feel well cared for and for patients to feel they have an active role in their own care. The majority of people complimented their consultants, sometimes choosing Ashtead because they had researched the best consultant for their condition and had been able to see this consultant at Ashtead. Many people also felt that they were actively involved in their care.

"I feel very involved with my care."

(Private outpatient)

Reception staff: more people praised the reception staff than were critical, but there were a number of negative comments as well as positive.

"I book my next appointment at reception and speak to the ladies there. She was very nice today. If I need to ask something, I ask them."

(Private outpatient)

One person referred to the reception staff as needing to improve their problem solving and another said they were not 'smiley'.



"Overall, everything is excellent (car park, cleanliness, quality of care, staff, overall, signage), the only thing I'd feedback is that the reception team could improve their problem-solving."

(Private outpatient)

"The reception team though are very unsmiley and given that they are the first people you see, it is disappointing."

(Private inpatient)

"Reception area is light but could be more welcoming by the reception team."

(Private outpatient)

Outpatient staff: There was just one comment about outpatient staff, and it seemed that the patient had not fully understood some test instructions that they had been contacted about.

"All staff have shown a kind and caring attitude. I partly feel informed about all my care and decisions but one part of the testing I'm having, wasn't explained clearly to me. Outpatients called me and needed two urine tests within a 24-hour period. I work full-time and need some notice to arrange childcare etc. The Consultant has explained things clearly to me on other occasions."

(Private outpatient)

Nursing staff: many people praised the nursing staff as being kind, friendly and considerate. There were no negative comments.

"I've had plenty of interaction with staff. They said, "Don't worry, please take your time." I was in lots of pain, so I really appreciated them saying that."

(NHS inpatient)

"Nurses have responded to me really quickly when I pressed the alarm when I needed the toilet."

(NHS inpatient)

Clinical staff: Most people reported that they were very happy with their clinical care and the consultant or doctor who treated them. However, there were a few comments about clinical staff talking too quickly and not fully understanding what their consultant had said.

"I think my consultant is very thorough but sometimes talks to me too quickly. The knowledge my consultant has is amazing."

(Private outpatient)

One person felt it was not explained that they needed to book a follow-up appointment.

"I have my consultations and then get dismissed and he says, 'See you in 3 months'. The first time he said this, I had to learn the hard way as 3 months went past, and I had no appointment. At no stage, is it made implicitly clear, that the onus is on you to book it!"
(Private outpatient)

We received 2 negative comments about clinical care but feel without additional information this is inappropriate for us to comment on. One referred to a comment a consultant made to a patient which they took negatively, and the other was a patient who felt that their condition was dismissed. However, the majority of people were happy or very happy.

"The staff are all really nice and kind. My consultant is the best and came highly recommended."
(Self-funded inpatient)

Financial processing: One person mentioned the difficulty that slow invoicing caused and we have included this to raise awareness that this may be a problem for others. We also heard that sometimes, it isn't entirely clear what is covered at appointments and what might be later billed.

"My main issue is paying for treatment. They are very slow to bill. Once I got a bill a year after treatment. I can't then check them as can't remember all the detail. Keeping track is tricky."
(Self-funded outpatient)

"I wish it was clearer and more upfront, it's embarrassing to ask. I have to contact his secretary each time. Clarity and certainty about payments is needed."
(Self-funded outpatient).

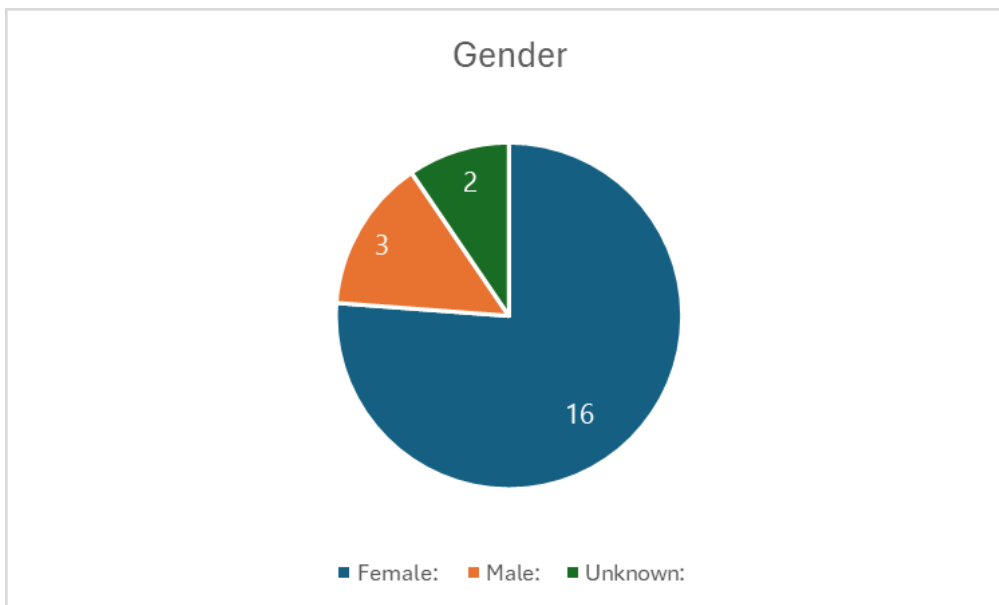
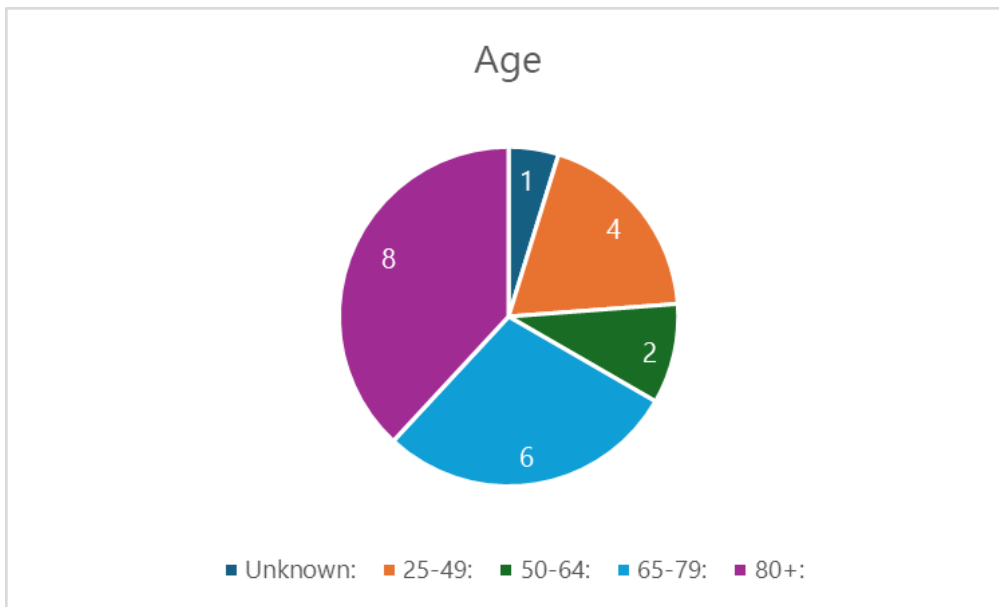
Recommendations

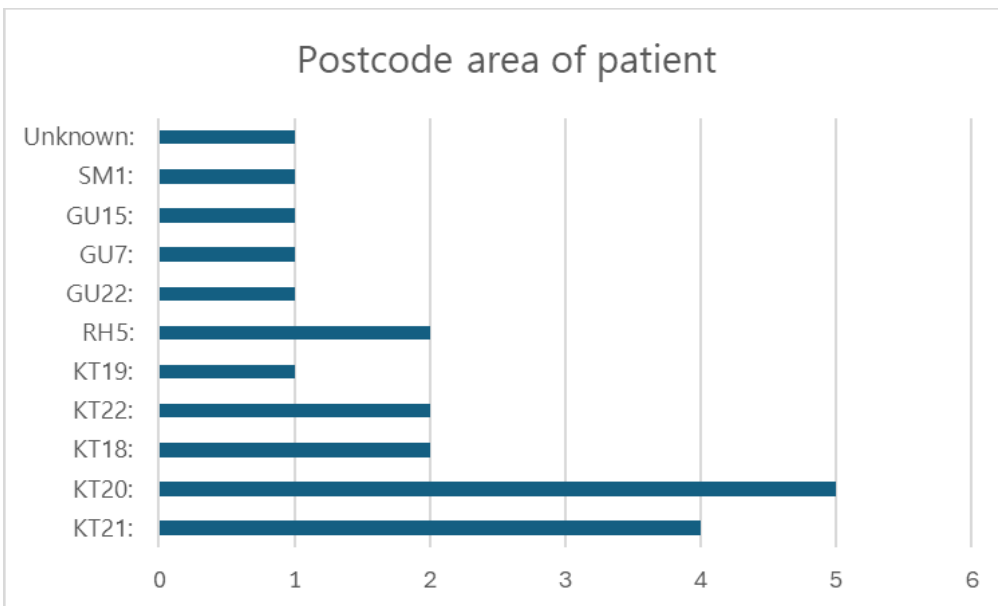
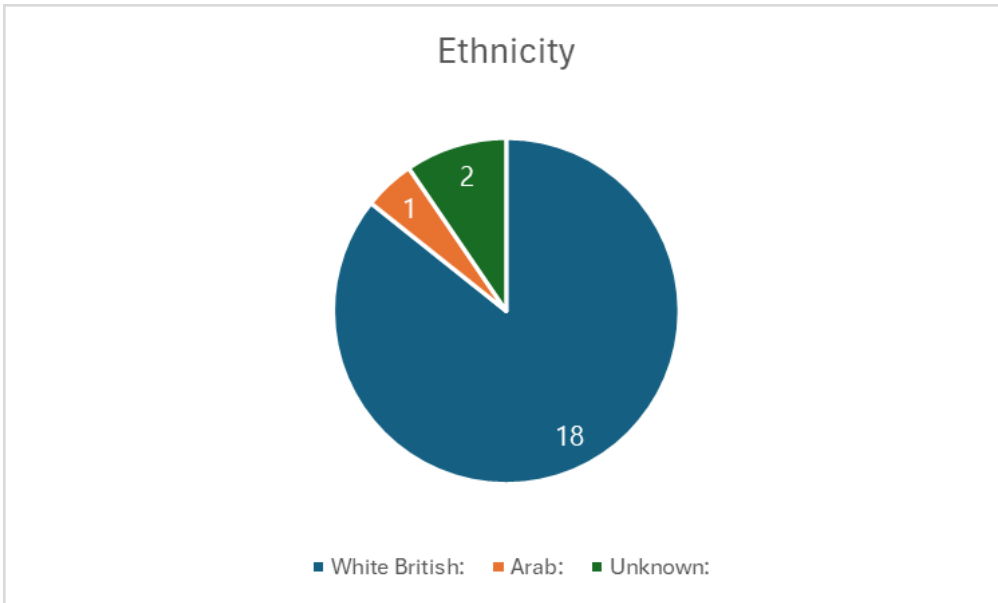
These recommendations are based on the key findings of this report and should be considered in light of the evidence collected.

- To make car parking available at the bottom of the hill for people with mobility challenges (who do not have a blue badge) – is it possible to offer a reservation option for parking for people with mobility challenges?
- To put up a Wi-Fi sign in the outpatients' lounge area.
- To put direction signs to the toilets from the outpatients' lounge area.
- To check with patients if they need support to find areas within the hospital and provide a chaperone if needed.
- To provide a range of communication options such as text and email if people would prefer this to paper letters. (If this is already in place, does it need communicating more to patients, so they are aware of it?).
- To ensure patients understand the next step of their treatment and if they need to make a follow-up appointment themselves or will be contacted by the hospital.
- To further investigate the booking systems and reception staffing to identify capacity issues and pressures which may be leading to patient discontent.
- To provide an alternative to telephone booking and/or a recorded answering facility to mitigate long wait times on the booking line.
- To review invoicing timescales for self-funding patients.

Demographics

The following charts show the demographics of the people we engaged with.





Of the 21 people we spoke to 6 reported having a disability / impairment / long term health condition and 1 person was a carer.

Thank you

Luminus would like to thank everyone who shared their experiences with us, the staff that welcomed us and Ashtead Hospital for commissioning this project and allowing the patients to feedback in the development of future services.



Contact us

Contact us through any of the channels below.

We'd love to hear from you:

-  Web: luminus-cic.uk
-  Telephone: 01483 301448
-  Text: 07592 787 533 (SMS only)
-  Email: info@luminus-cic.uk

Our address is:

Luminus, GF21 Astolat, Coniers Way, Burpham, Guildford, Surrey, GU4 7HL

