



A report looking into individuals not registered with a GP

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Healthwatch Enfield is the independent consumer champion for Health and Social Care in the borough of Enfield. We are part of a national network of Healthwatch organisations.



Summary

This report outlines a recent study undertaken by Healthwatch Enfield to determine if there are individuals within the borough of Enfield who are not registered with a GP, whilst seeking to explore the reasons why.

During our small scale study, consisting of three one-hour sessions of talking to individuals on the streets of Edmonton, we found a total of 25 Enfield residents who are not registered with a GP. This represents 17% of our sample size.

We found that the main reasons for individuals not registering with a GP were because they did not feel they needed to, or because they had difficulties registering at a GP practice.

The most common problem we heard about that prevented individuals from being able to register with a GP practice was difficulties in individuals being able to provide a proof of address.

This report and its recommendations are issued using the powers given to Local Healthwatch and should be a useful tool for Enfield Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Enfield Public Health, NHS England and Public Health England to initiate work to increase the number of individuals registered with a GP in Enfield.

In line with the relevant legislation, we are asking these organisations to respond to us in writing within 20 working days of receipt of this report to inform us of the work they are doing in response to the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

- Information needs to be available, both nationally and locally, about how to register with a GP in the United Kingdom.

Recommendation 2

- It is imperative that work is undertaken in Enfield to ensure that all GPs are aware of alternative ways of registering individuals who do not have a proof of address.

Recommendation 3

- A campaign should be considered encouraging individuals to register with a GP practice before they become unwell.

Recommendation 4

- Further work needs to be conducted within Enfield to provide a more accurate and up-to-date assessment of the numbers of people who are not registered with a GP.



Background

Access to GPs has been one of our priority areas of work for more than a year because it is a health service that most people use. Concerns raised by people across Enfield regarding GPs are more often about securing appointments in good time and the experience of their appointments.

However, recent research by a neighbouring Healthwatch and local voluntary organisations highlighted that high numbers of residents in the neighbouring constituency of Tottenham were not registered with a GP practice.

Due to the close proximity of Tottenham to Enfield and similarities in the demographics of the local population, this led us to wonder if there is a similar problem in Enfield, specifically in the Edmonton area, near the border with Tottenham. Our aim was to establish if there are individuals in Enfield who are not registered with a GP.

We set out to research this by simply asking passing residents on the streets of Edmonton if they live in Enfield and if they are registered with a GP. We aimed to explore if individuals are registered with a GP, and if not, the reasons why. We wanted to explore if non-registration is due to a lack of awareness of eligibility to register with a GP and/or if this is because local residents have encountered difficulties registering.

Our research

We organised three, one hour sessions, in different locations in Edmonton, at different times of day to explore if there are individuals in Edmonton who are not registered with a GP. Teams were made up of 4-5 Healthwatch Enfield staff members, board members and volunteers.

We devised a survey (appendix 1) exploring if individuals live in Enfield and are registered with a GP, and if not, why. We also asked those who are not registered with a GP where they would go if they were to become unwell, to help us understand more about their knowledge of the health service and in particular the role of a GP.

We piloted this survey during the summer months at various festivals in Enfield. We found that the survey did ask the appropriate and necessary questions, but those who we surveyed at the summer festivals were all registered with a GP.

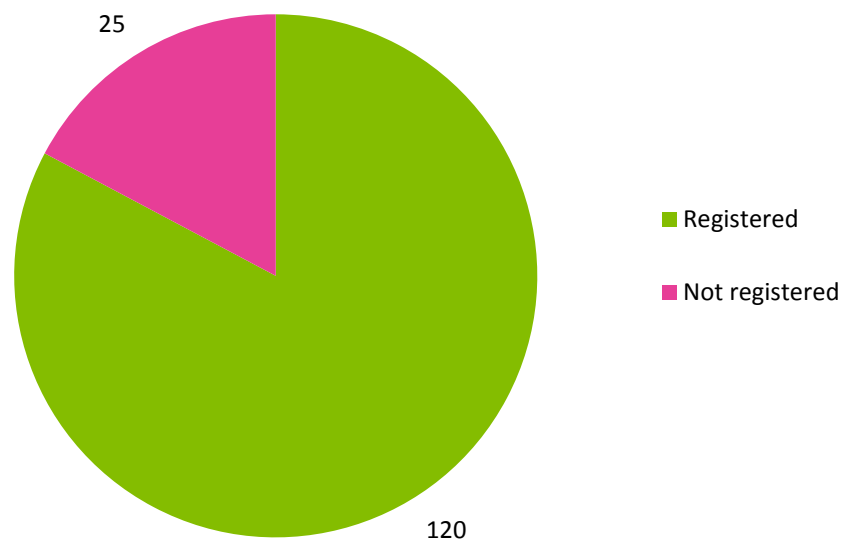
To complement our survey, we made a leaflet 'How to register with a GP practice' to give to individuals who are not registered with a GP, with general questions and answers about the eligibility criteria needed for registration. It was necessary for us to produce this leaflet ourselves as NHS England did not have any printed materials that we could use.



Our results

During our three sessions we spoke to a total of 145 Enfield residents.

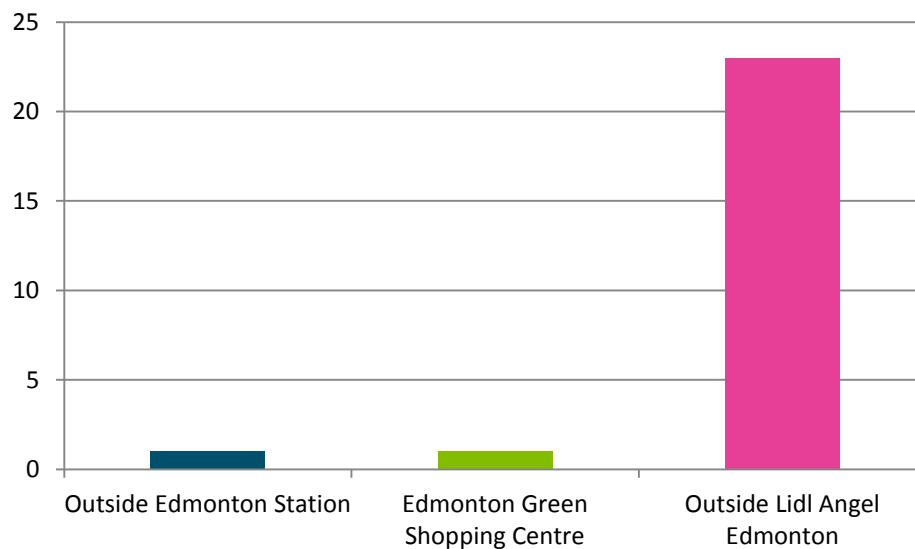
1. Registration status



Of these 145 residents, 120 residents were registered with a local GP.

However, we found that a total of **25 Enfield residents were not registered with a GP. This included 4 children.**

2. Location of those surveyed who are not registered

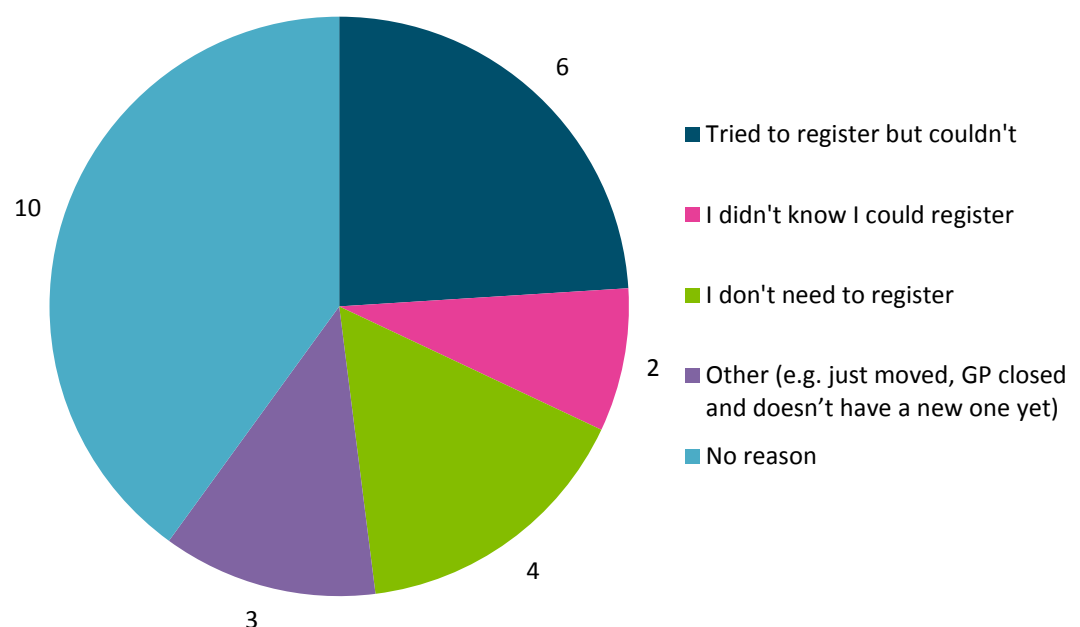




The vast majority of individuals not registered with a GP were surveyed in the south of Edmonton, next to the North Circular Road, on the borders of Upper Edmonton, outside Lidl Angel Edmonton.

Although our locations had different amounts of footfall of individuals who were prepared to stop and talk to us, we found it interesting to note that the specific area of Angel Edmonton / Upper Edmonton had the highest numbers of individuals not registered with a GP practice.

3. Reasons for not registering with a GP



Of those individuals who provided a reason why they are not registered with a GP, **24% had tried to register with a local GP but couldn't.**

We also found that individuals either did not know they could register with a GP or felt that they do not need to register with a GP. We found several middle aged men who told us that they did not feel they needed to register with a GP because they 'had not needed to see one so far'.

All the individuals who had tried to register with a GP but couldn't explained that this was because they were not able to provide proof of address as they were living in privately rented accommodation.



Individuals explained that the use of online utility services and online banking services makes it difficult to provide proof of address via a bill, when all this information is now provided online.

It was also explained that individuals who had a short-term tenancy agreement often did not feel the need to change their registered address with their bank or mobile phone provider and therefore simply did not have any proof of address.

When we asked those who were not registered with a GP where they would go if they were to become unwell, 16% told us they would go to A&E.

The remaining individuals did not give us an answer.

We also spoke to a number of individuals who did not live in Enfield and gave those who were not registered with a GP a copy of our leaflet explaining how to register.

Conclusions

We were encouraged to learn that 83% of Enfield residents we spoke to were registered with a GP in the borough. However, we were concerned to learn that 17% of Enfield residents we spoke to were not registered with a GP, including families with children.

We were particularly concerned to hear about difficulties in registering with a GP practice without providing a particular proof of address. Upon discussing this with the wider Healthwatch network, it appears that this problem is not unique to Enfield, with reports of similar difficulties happening across the country. Healthwatch in Southampton¹ have raised the issue, as we have done, with Healthwatch England.

It seems that there is a general belief amongst some people that they do not need to register with a GP because they can go to A&E if they were to become unwell. A few people are unaware they can register with a GP, which could be reflective of a lack of awareness of primary care services amongst certain local communities.

Although our research is based on a small sample size, it does confirm that there are individuals within Angel Edmonton/ Upper Edmonton who are not registered with a GP and provides some reasons as to why individuals are not registered. We only conducted three, one hour sessions and therefore only spoke to a very small proportion of Enfield residents. Our concern is that this may be reflective of a much larger problem in the area. The fact that we spoke to a small sample size of individuals in Enfield and still found 25 individuals who are not registered with a GP (including children) was rather alarming. We cannot extrapolate from this small survey to suggest that 17% of all local residents in the Edmonton wards,

¹ Healthwatch Southampton, GP Registrations project
<http://www.healthwatchsouthampton.co.uk/news/gp-registration>



particularly Upper Edmonton, are not registered with a GP, but further research is necessary to determine the exact numbers of individuals in Enfield who are not registered with a GP.

There is no current data available in Enfield that estimates the numbers of individuals who are not registered with a GP.

Current estimates of the numbers of individuals in Enfield registered with a GP in the Enfield Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)² are from 2013 and only include the numbers of individuals registered with a GP in Enfield. At the time of writing, the Enfield JSNA does not include any data referring to the number of individuals in the borough who are not registered with a GP.

More up-to date publically accessible data referring to the numbers of individuals in Enfield who are registered with a GP is available from the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC)³. We could subtract this data from the current population estimate for Enfield to calculate the number of individuals not registered with a GP practice. However, the resulting figure would be an estimate and not a definitive answer. This figure would not tell us the reasons why individuals are not registered with a GP, nor would this figure enable us to identify and reach out to these individuals, helping them to register with a GP.

Our small scale research project is the first of its kind in Enfield that aims to identify if there is a problem with patients not being registered with a local GP. We believe our findings clearly demonstrate the existence of a potentially serious problem and highlight the need for further work to fully understand the reasons why patients fail to register and the barriers to registration they encounter.

² Enfield JSNA

http://www.enfield.gov.uk/healthandwellbeing/info/13/enfield_people/146/gp_registrations

³ Health and Social Care Information Centre GP Registered Population

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/searchcatalogue?productid=18318&topics=2%2fPrimary+care+services%2fGeneral+practice%2fGP+registered+population&sort=Most+recent&size=10&page=1#top>



Recommendations

Our work has highlighted a number of issues that need to be addressed to ensure that Enfield residents are aware of primary care services, so that they ‘Choose Well’ when they become unwell.

Furthermore, it is apparent that work needs to be done to ensure that all residents are able to register with a local GP, even if they cannot immediately provide a particular proof of address.

This report and its recommendations are issued using the powers given to Local Healthwatch and should be a useful tool for Enfield Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Enfield Public Health, NHS England and Public Health England to increase the number of individuals registered with a GP in Enfield.

In line with the relevant legislation, we are asking these organisations to respond to us in writing within 20 working days of receipt of this report to inform us of the work they are doing in response to the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Information needs to be available, both nationally and locally, about how to register with a GP in the United Kingdom, dispelling beliefs individuals may have regarding eligibility. This type of leaflet is not readily available and this basic information is a necessity to ensure that individuals are aware of their rights to access primary care services and are aware of how to do so.

Recommendation 2

Work should be undertaken in Enfield to ensure that there are alternative ways for individuals who do not have a proof of address to register with a GP practice. It is essential that all GP practices are aware of alternative ways for patients to register and are able to register individuals who do not have a proof of address.



Recommendation 3

A campaign should be considered aimed at encouraging individuals to register with a GP practice before they become unwell, rather than accessing emergency services when they become ill. Our research indicates that it is likely that some groups may be more inclined to think that they do not need to register with a GP. Work to identify these groups and a targeted campaign may be an effective way to encourage GP registration. It may be useful to evaluate past initiatives that were intended to encourage people to register with a GP whilst initiating a new campaign.

Recommendation 4

Further work needs to be conducted within Enfield to provide a more accurate and up-to-date assessment of the numbers of people who are not registered with a GP. It is important that this data is collated through talking to residents and through engagement with different communities within the borough. It is important to provide individuals who are not registered the information and guidance they need to be able to register. Secondary research using projections based on data will not be adequate in itself.

Our future work

Once we have received the responses to our recommendations we will publish these on our website. We aim to monitor whether our recommendations are taken on board to improve access to and awareness of primary care services in Enfield.

In the meantime, we will continue to listen to local residents experiences of accessing primary care services in Enfield through our wide range of engagement work.

How you can help us

Healthwatch Enfield is keen to hear about your experiences of registering with local primary care services in Enfield. Please tell us your story [via email](#) or via our [website](#).

Appendix 1

GP Registration Survey

Enfield Residents only

1. Do you live in Enfield? (if no please do not continue)
2. Are you registered with a GP in Enfield?

If Yes please fill in 'Yes Tally' and do not continue any further

No ☐

3. If no, why?

I'm registered with a GP in another borough ☐

If so which borough?

I didn't know I could register ☐

I don't need to register ☐

I have tried to register but couldn't ☐

What happened?

4. If you were unwell, where would you go?

Handed 'How to register with a GP' leaflet ☐

Demographics

Male ☐

Under 25 ☐

Dependents ☐

English speaking ☐

Female ☐

Over 65 ☐

Disability ☐

Carer ☐