

CQC publishes FIRST national survey of ‘hear and treat’ ambulance callers – designed and coordinated by the Picker Institute

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has today published the results of a pioneering new national survey of the experiences of people calling ambulance services. The survey, designed and coordinated by the Picker Institute, is the first to look specifically at the experiences of “hear and treat” callers - people who called 999 but who were deemed not to have life threatening conditions, received advice over the phone, and were not necessarily attended by an ambulance crew. This group makes up a growing proportion of callers to the ambulance service and their feedback on the national survey provides unique insights.

Responding to the publication, the Picker Institute’s Chief Executive, Dr Andrew McCulloch, said: *“We are delighted to have been involved in creating this survey, which is the first to look at the experiences of ‘hear and treat’ callers to ambulance services. We are pleased to report that most ‘hear and treat’ service users experience high quality care, and it is encouraging that results on the whole are very positive”.*

The survey showed that over eighty percent of service users said that they felt they were “always” treated with dignity and respect and 87% said they felt the call taker listened to them “completely”. Furthermore, 80% felt that call takers at the ambulance service asked an appropriate number of questions – a principle aspect of care for this hear and treat group. Ultimately, 76% of services users rated their overall experience as 8 or above out of 10.

Whilst the results are generally positive, there were particular concerns related to people who called 999 but were not sent an ambulance. One in three of such people did not agree with the decision to give them telephone advice only, and more than a fifth said they did not receive any explanation for this decision (including 17% of people who spoke only to the initial call handler and 21% who spoke to a second telephone advisor).

Dr McCulloch said, *“Most people who call ‘999’ assume they will be sent an ambulance if they want one. But this is not always the most suitable course of action, and increasingly ambulance services try to respond appropriately to problems without a costly emergency dispatch. The challenge for those services is to ensure that they always give clear explanations about these decisions. This is important for delivering coordinated care, as effective management of emergency calls is one way to help ensure that services are used appropriately and efficiently.”*

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- The survey included people aged 18 or over who called 999 and were given advice by the ambulance service between December 2013 and January 2014.
- Almost 3,000 people responded to the survey, which was conducted by telephone. Around half of all the respondents had called 999 on their own behalf; others had called for someone else.
- Further information and survey results are available on the CQC website at www.cqc.org.uk/Ambulancesurvey201314
- For all **Picker Institute Europe** media enquiries, speaker opportunities and recent news please contact: Lanisha Butterfield on Lanisha.butterfield@pickereurope.ac.uk or 01865 208204.
- For further information visit <http://www.pickereurope.org/>