

Public Consultation on Urgent Out of Hours GP Service

May 2024

Contents

Introduction		2			
What People	Told Us	2			
-	Focus Groups	3			
-	Survey Results	7			
-	Social Media Feedback	13			
Conclusion					
Recommendations					
Appendix					

Introduction

Background

The Out of Hours Urgent GP Service is an NHS service that helps patients from all parts of Herefordshire. The service is only available following referral by NHS 111. It operates when your usual GP practice is closed. It is not the same as the routine weekend and evening appointments offered via your GP service at 10 different locations throughout Herefordshire.

Healthwatch Herefordshire have been commissioned by Taurus Healthcare to carry out a 6week public consultation on a proposed change to the urgent out of hours GP service.

What we did

Alongside Taurus Healthcare, we created a survey that allowed the public to tell us their opinions on the proposed changes as well as any considerations that should be taken into account if the change were to go ahead.

Public engagement took place in a variety of forms to reach as many people as possible. Healthwatch produced video, explaining the current and proposed location, including where to access the proposed new building and the parking facilities. There was also an explanation of how the service works.

The details of the proposed changes and the online survey were promoted through our social media channels and these posts were sponsored to give increased reach across the county. We also organised focus groups across the county. Drawing on previous experience, it was felt that the focus groups would benefit from being organised at times and locations where community groups already meet to reach a larger number of people. The focus groups provided an opportunity for the public to discuss the details of how the proposed changes may affect them if they were to go ahead. Healthwatch also offered to speak to public over email, telephone or face to face if the focus group times were not convenient.

There were 8 focus groups that took place in the Leominster, Bromyard, Ross, Kington, Peterchurch and two in Hereford city (The Kindle & Hereford Library). We promoted the consultation and talked to the public on a number of occasions at the Talk Wellbeing hub in Hereford city.

What People Told Us

Through a variety of methods, we communicated this consultation to the following numbers of people:

310 online survey responses 295 people spoken to at focus groups at locations across Herefordshire. 70,524 people reached on social media.

Focus Groups

During the 8 focus groups and dedicated sessions at the talk wellbeing hub we spoke to the public to explain the proposed changes to the service, gave them an opportunity to ask questions and make comments. Many of these people didn't want to complete a survey, but were happy for us to capture how the proposed changes may affect them. We made a note of whether proposed changes would make it easier, harder or make no difference in terms of accessing the services, we also captured any additional comments that members of the public communicated to us.

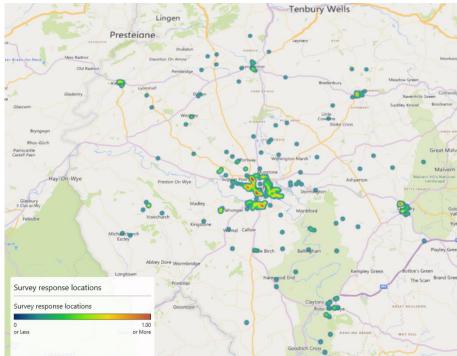
Focus Group	Number of people spoken to	How do you think the proposed relocation of services would affect the accessibility & convenience of Out of Hours Urgent GP care for patients?			Comments	
		Will make it easier	Will make no difference	Will make it more difficult		
The Kindle Centre, Hereford	32	2	28	2	 Comment regarding the zipper bus that goes to the medical centre but not Nelson House (Wouldn't make a difference in the night but would at the weekend). One comment of concern as to why the service 	
					as to why the service needs to move.	
The Larruprez Centre, Ross on Wye	42	0	41	1	 8 people said they lived on the border and were unsure as to which services they would be sent to. 	
					 Many people said it would make no difference where in Hereford city the service is, however highlighted the challenges of getting to Hereford from Ross, especially out of hours if you don't drive or have someone that can take you. 	
					 One individual was concerned about more 	

					services being moved away from Ross (doesn't drive). Passionate about keeping services in Ross.
The Lion Café, Kington	10	3	7	0	• Comment that from Kington, would probably need to drive anyway, however Nelson House is on the bus route from Kington.
The HOPE Centre, Bromyard	15	0	13	2	• A number of comments that, again, said it didn't matter where in Hereford the site was, however, there was concern as a number of people didn't drive.
Ledbury Methodist Church	28	T	15	12	 Mainly, the comments were that it would make no difference as they would have to drive anyway, one individual said they would have to get a taxi or could try and book community transport on a weekend, however, it was highlighted that there is a train service from Ledbury and the medical centre is convenient from the train station (this is valid for the weekend daytime hours).
Leominster Library	39	0	39	0	 Comment about concern of driving around Hereford. Would prefer the route of driving down Whitecross road to avoid the Victoria Street/A49 roundabout . One comment, concern that they do not drive at night.

Hereford Library	22	2	19	1	 One comment about parking being made available One comment that it is the wrong side of town for the individual. One comment regarding the need for good signposting for the car park. One comment that there should be a sign at the front stating the building is called Nelson House. One comment saying lighting would need to be good. One comment regarding a concern for border counties, would they need to use the service?
The Hub Café, Peterchurch	18	0	17	1	 Mainly, would make no difference as have to drive in anyway. One comment, that they felt it would make sense to stay where it is as it is close to the hospital.
The Talk Wellbeing hub, Hereford (Day 1)	49	25	24	0	 Comment of concern about the continuity of the service. Comment about improving the communications about all the Taurus buildings. Comment to say there would need to be good lighting and signposting at the new building. Comment from someone who lives in Wales but has a Herefordshire GP, but always sent to

					 Abergavenny so don't think it would make a difference and they don't drive. Comment about parking concerns - having enough spaces that are close by.
					 Comment that individual wouldn't use 111 and wouldn't drive if ill. Lives at retirement housing complex and would call the warden.
The Talk Wellbeing Hub (Day 2)	40	15	25	0	 2 comments saying that it would possibly be slightly easier as live on Ross road / south of the river so slightly closer, but don't drive and use the zipper bus to go to the medical centre. Taxi would be needed out of hours.
Total	295	48	228	19	

Survey Results



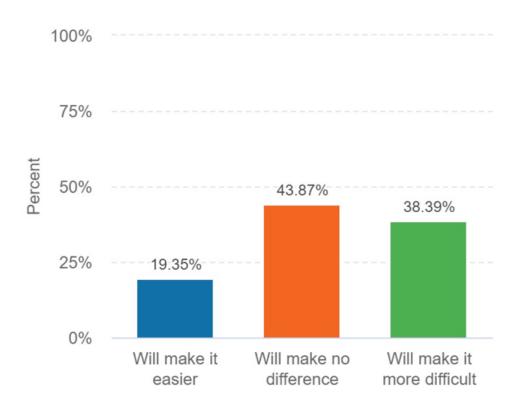
310 people responded to the survey online. The responses to the questions can be seen below and have been presented in a variety of methods to highlight the themes.

There was a wide geographical spread of responses across the county, which has meant we have captured a range of views from rural areas, market towns and the city. The heat map and table of postcode areas below highlights this:

Postcode Area	Number of people	HR-
HR9	14	{
HR2	61	2
HR6	17	5
HR7	16	3
HR5	10	5
HR1	75	1
HR4	91	\sim
HR8	24	-NP8
HR3	1	
Out of County	1	



How do you think the proposed relocation of services will affect the accessibility and convenience of Out of Hours Urgent GP care for patients?



Question 4

Are there specific groups (e.g., elderly, disabled, low-income) that you think may face additional challenges due to the move? If so, what do you think these challenges would be?

101 responses reported they didn't think there were any specific groups that would face additional challenges. The remaining responses to this question have been themed into the following areas:

Disabled access

This was mentioned 34 times; however, most people have said they would be happy as long as the new proposed building is fully accessible to people who are disabled and there is plenty of disabled parking.

Parking

This was mentioned 15 times in the comments, but mainly to ensure sufficient free parking.

Transport

This was the main theme that people reported, mentioning it 100 times. The comments about this were about people who can't drive and are reliant on public transport or taxis which can be expensive. A lot of the comments relate to challenges that people already face with transport to an out of hours service at the current location, however, at the weekends during the day there is a zipper bus that currently goes to station medical centre and not to Nelson House. Station medical centre is also located by the train and bus station.

Low income

This was mentioned 13 times as a group that may face additional challenges with the proposed new location relating to transport costs.

Older people

This cohort were mentioned 30 times as a group who may face additional challenges with a couple of people mentioning that they are more likely to be apprehensive about any changes.

"Challenges will remain the same." "Hereford medical centre next t transport hub – near to A&E and pharmacy options."

"Depends on where you live. Closer for some people, further for others."

"This move is more central. Better bus service." "I don't think it matters where the provision is, Whitecross is probably more central Hereford than station approach so should be easier to access from all areasof Hereford."

"Will the Zipper bus take patients to this centre – currently it does to the Hereford medical Centre so this centre should be added to the route – community transport for OOH patients should be considered – what happens to patients needing this service in the North and west of the county?"

> "Potentially those who aren't comfortable using satnav."

"Transport service - zipper bus would be useful to call at the new location."

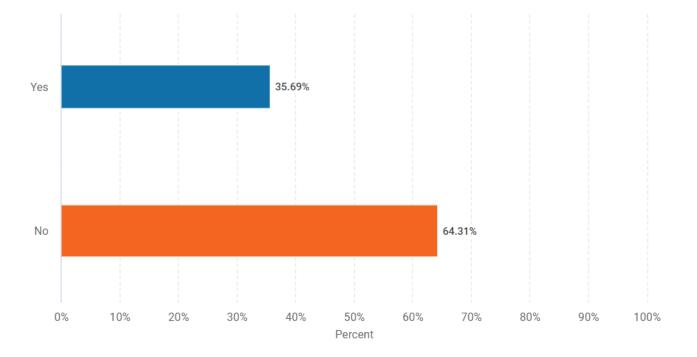
"OOH generally need a taxi service, rather than public transport anyway due to the times of the service. Can't see that it will make any difference to most. If anything maybe slightly closer to the South side." "Only the same challenge one would face during any out of hours service, which is getting transport if they don't drive."

Do you think there are any groups who would benefit from the change of location? If so, who and how?

Theme	Number of responses
People that live close to the proposed new site / Whitecross / west & north of the city	71
No / "Can't think of any groups it would specifically benefit"	128
Those living in Hereford / "proposed site is more central"	13
"All groups" / "Anyone and everyone" / "most people"	13
Patients who live south of the river or Ross	3
Those who can drive	5
Will make no difference	4
"There needs to be something south of the river."	3

<u>Question 6</u>

Do you have any concerns regarding the quality and continuity of services after relocation?



Do you the think the change will impact service users in any other way(s)? If so, how - both positively and negatively.

The responses to this question brought up a similar mixture of opinions as stated in the previous answers, for example, it will benefit some and not others depending on what part of the county they live in, whether they drive or rely on public transport as well as comments that it will make no difference.

However, there were a number of themes that were highlighted in this question, these include:

- Reassurance and knowledge of where the nearest pharmacy is, including details of when they are open out of hours.
- A couple of comments highlighted a concern about the level of funding needed to refurbish a new building, and a need for an explanation to the public on this matter.
- A couple of opinions were that the area of the new proposed site is less desirable with increased crime rates and therefore good lighting around the building would be necessary.
- A comment relating to the knowledge needed to be able to drive to the proposed new location, navigating more complex roads, particularly for the elderly and therefore a need for good signposting from different routes into the city.

"If a pharmacy is not onsite, this is an issue as there is no longer a pharmacy in the nearest supermarket." "It's not clear to me why you are having to change buildings in the first place. There is a perfectly good building with everything that is needed. It just seems like a waste of money and time having to adapt a new building and car park. Maybe this could be explained to the public as I'm sure there is a reason, but it's not clear at this stage to us."

"The journey needs clear knowledge of which stream of traffic to use on the large, complex roundabout before the bridge over the river. Need to make sure the building is signposted on the roundabout and messages of getting in the right lane from different parts of the county."

"Safety when parking and walking too as the area has more trouble around it than station road."

Parking would be available for patients coming to the new site for the Out of Hours Urgent GP service. Do you think there are any considerations we need to think about with relation to parking?

The main themes emerging from this questions were :

- Plenty of well lit, free parking with large enough bays.
- Parent /child spaces
- Adequate number of disabled spaces

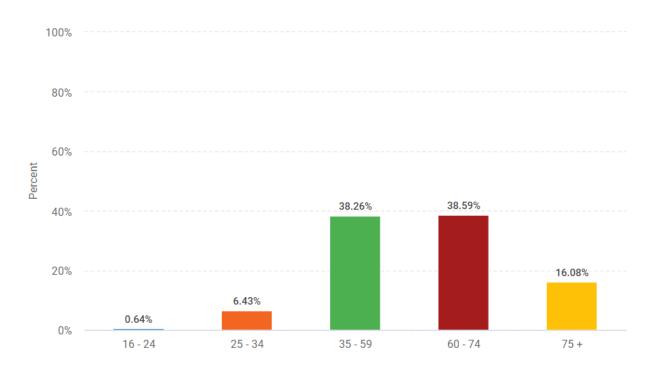
<u>Question 10</u>

Do you think we need to make the public aware of this change?

96% of responses stated 'Yes' to a need of making the public aware of these changes. The main suggestions of how to do this can be seen in the word cloud below.

access advertise advertising aware boards building communications COMMUNITY computers
doctors drop drs elderly facebook general groups health hereford
herefordshire hospital hours household internet leaflet leaflets letter letters
local location magazines mail news newspaper newspapers nhs notices online paper
papers patients people posters practice practices press public radio service
services shops signs SOCial station supermarkets SURGERIES SURGERY text town village
websites

<u>Question 11</u> What is your age?



Social Media Feedback

This consultation was advertised several times on the Healthwatch social media channels (Facebook and Instagram), which also includes some posts being boosted with paid advertising. Appendix 1 shows the statistics of people that the posts reached.

The Facebook comments including a lot of discussion about Hereford Medical Group Practice, however there were some comments that were specific to this consultation. These comments included:

- Transport concern for people from 'south of the river' including the elderly and people that don't drive as well as people that live outside of Hereford and it being expensive to get a taxi.
- There were several comments that suggested bringing back the walk-in service at Asda, as well as bringing back minor injury units in the smaller towns to avoid having to use NHS 111 and that the location of Asda walk in worked well.
- There were comments regarding the zipper bus at the weekends, as this currently goes to the medical centre building, and suggestions of the route being changed to include the proposed location Nelson House.
- There were some comments about a concern for the amount of money that it will cost to relocate services, when the service is currently in a purpose-built building.
- There were some comments with a concern for parking, however Healthwatch Herefordshire directed these people to the video detailing where the proposed new parking would be.

Quotes from Facebook comments

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"I called 111 at the weekend and was seen quickly at the station medical practice. Although think it was better when there were doctors based at local surgeries especially for those that cannot drive. Also having pharmacies open in small towns on a weekend would be beneficial".

"I was told this week to get myself a taxi to an appointment at gone 8pm - I live out of town, was feeling very poorly and no one could drive me, I was on my own - a taxi there and back would have been £40 or thereabouts - Dr was most put out when I tried to explain no chance of me getting in to any surgery - so doesn't matter if you're south or north of the city"

"Please bring back the out of hours medical centre by Asda in Hereford, it was great, there when needed in an emergency and took unnecessary pressure off A&E, which since its closure is pretty much always full and then some! It was easily accessible for all, had Asda's Pharmacy next door 'on-site', free parking and now there's the new Hereford 'zipper' bus service, making it even more accessible than before. The 'drop-in-centre' used to help loads of local people and would be even better now with the free bus service."

"Would be better to have an out of hours surgery both North and South of the river especially with the proposals for more homes being built in and around Hereford."

"It's not just Hereford that need an out of hours service. How about the smaller towns in Herefordshire especially if you do not have a car or access to the internet. These folk still pay towards the NHS like everyone else."

"Walk in service at Asda was ideal. Why get rid of something that worked?"

"The location worries me – trying to get to you on a weekend would be a nightmare during the day especially around the holidays."

"Where are they currently based? Would it not be better to use the existing facilities on offer at HMG after the amount spent on it?"

"Could you tell us what number bus will be running on this route and will the free zipper bus be rerouted as it currently goes to HMG. People need to know how to get there (Not everyone can drive)."

"North Herefordshire needs an accessible out of hours service. Public transport, Beryl bikes, own transport are not available to many people out of hours. No wonder A&E is full. We also need minor injury units in community hospitals which would ease the pressure in A&E in the County Hospital. Too much cutting corners, not enough common sense."

"Awful place to get to if you don't drive and Whitecross road is often congested. Wonder if they have a hoist so that folks in moulded wheelchairs can be assessed on the examination couch or weighing scales that they can be accurately weighed on. HMG fail their patients by having neither of these essential pieces of equipment."

"How much will the renovation cost and what funding pot will it come from?"

"That's of no use to people south of the river..."

"At least the Zipper bus stops outside the station medical centre and runs on weekends too."

"A new medical facility was built, Taurus use the building and now we are spending more money adapting an office building. I fail to see the logic. Good money after bad?"

"Would have been better going back to Asda then it would be served by the free zipper bus for some at least."



"What would be helpful is to get the walk in back there."

Conclusion

This project gathered responses from of a variety of people., ages and areas of Herefordshire with different personal circumstances and therefore produced a mixed collection of opinions regarding proposed changes to the urgent out of hours GP service.

Obviously, depending on where someone lives, whether they drive or not and whether they have people around them to help them all affects the use of this service and how much of an impact the proposed changes would have on them.

However, as seen in the results of question 3, the largest proportion of people (43.87%) highlighted that the proposed changes to where the service is delivered would make no difference to them. This is mainly because of it being an out of hours service where there is limited, or no public transport and the majority of people would need to drive or be driven to access the service in the same way that currently exists.

The results from the focus groups were clearer showing the majority of people (228 out or 295 people we spoke to) saying that moving the location of the service would make no difference to them. The results from the focus groups are likely to be more in the favour of the proposed move making no difference as a lot of the focus groups were in the surrounding areas and market towns of Herefordshire, where the likelihood is that they would need to drive to this service out of hours, so where it is located in Hereford city isn't too much of a concern.

The market towns it is likely to have the biggest impact on is Ledbury or Bromyard. There were discussions in Ledbury that there is a train service from Ledbury into Hereford and therefore the current location is easier if you are using this means of transport at the weekend during the day, the same is the case for Leominster, however not as many people in Leominster highlighted it as an issue. The focus groups did allow for discussion regarding the challenges to people in the market towns accessing services if they don't drive, but it was acknowledged that these challenges exist already.

Transport was the main theme of this consultation, particularly for the elderly who may not drive or be confident driving in Hereford city, and therefore it is suggested that health services should link with transport services to provide solutions for the public regardless of what area of the city or county they live.

The importance of communication with the public has become increasingly apparent within this consultation to avoid confusion about the various services within the health system and who runs particular services. It was clear that there are people who wouldn't know the difference between the various out of hours services, nor who operates them and increased knowledge about this may help the different services to be used more effectively.

The resources that Healthwatch Herefordshire used to inform the public about details of the proposed changes to this service showed the architect plans for parking and refurbishment of the proposed building. The public reinforced this message commenting about the need for plenty of parking (including disabled and parent child bays, that were wide enough each side). They also reinforced the message of good lighting and signage for the area and the building.

In several of the questions, there were concerns regarding the situation with pharmacies. It was highlighted that with the new proposed location, the nearest supermarket has now closed their pharmacy (Sainsbury's). Taurus healthcare should consider this challenge and try to find solutions/suggestions for the public, so it is available to be communicated to them when they need it.

Recommendations

Based on the information provided by the public in this consultation, the following recommendations have been made for consideration:

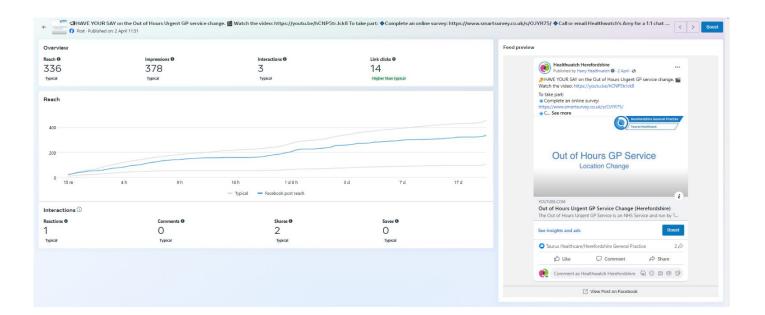
- Ensure if the proposed changes to the service go ahead that the building has specialised equipment for disabled users, including a hoist to enable people in moulded wheelchairs to be assessed/examined as well as appropriate weighing scales for all to be accurately weighed on.
- Public transport was one of the main themes mentioned during this consultation and whilst we acknowledge the challenges that exist and will continue to exist for people who aren't able to drive regardless of where in Hereford city the service is located, the comments regarding the Zipper bus are valid for the weekend when this out of hours service operates. Therefore, a recommendation would be to investigate whether the route of the Zipper bus could be altered to stop off at the proposed new site, if the changes were to take place.

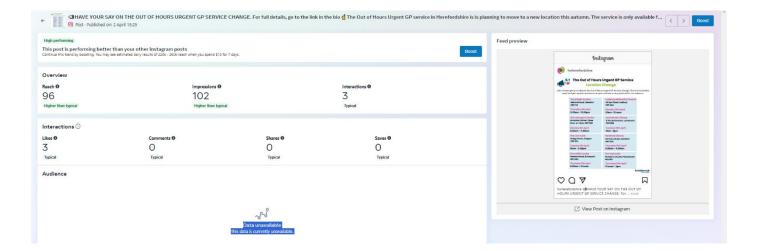
Other bus & train services coming into Hereford from the rural areas should be examined in order to communicate effectively to the public how public transport can be used at the weekend when accessing this service.

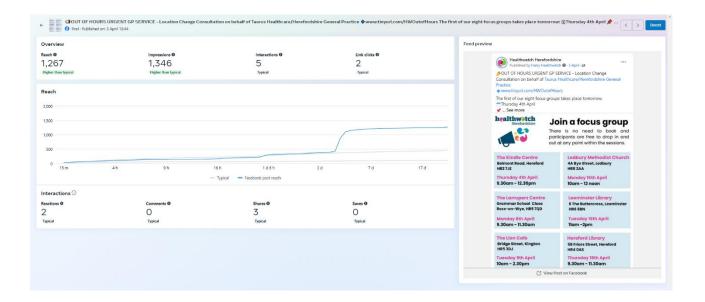
- If the proposed changes go ahead, signage and directions to the building need to be put in place. It is suggested that routes are designed from the more rural areas, which avoid some of the busier routes of the city, and communicated to the public so that they can plan how they would access the service should they need to. This would be particularly useful for more elderly residents, people who aren't confident drivers or don't visit Hereford city often.
- To consider the nearest pharmacy options for out of hours, overnight and at the weekend, and communicate these well to the public using the service.
- A number of comments during this consultation suggest that there is a lack of understanding about various health services and how they are run, with confusion on which organisations run certain services. Therefore it is suggested that a communication campaign to reach out to the public and inform them as much as possible is continually needed so that they can understand why changes are proposed and can therefore provide valid, informed feedback.
- When considering parking arrangements, it is recommended there is adequate disabled bays and parent & child bays that are wide enough on either side.
- With some concerns about the safety of the area with the new proposed location, it is advised to have good outside lighting all around the building.
- Following discussions with public describing where the building is located, it was suggested about a clear signage outside of the building stating the name of the building.

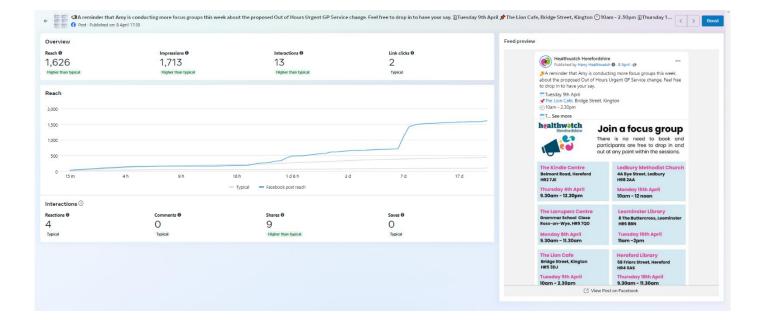
Appendix 1

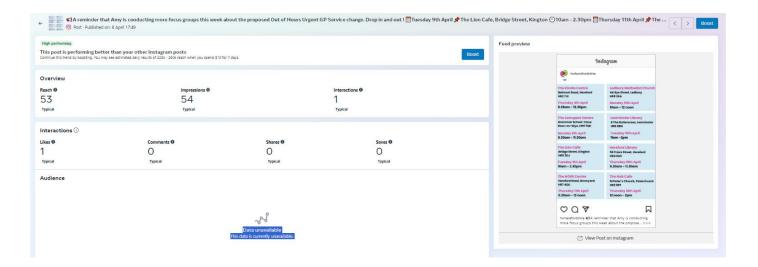
Social media statistics

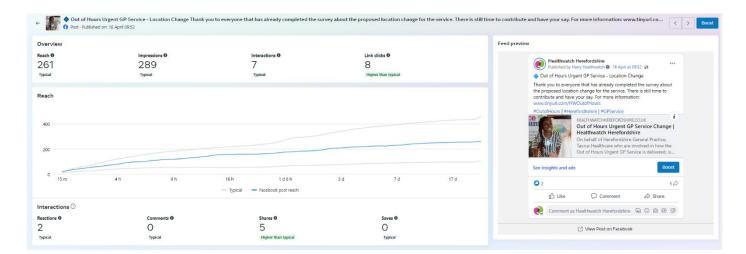


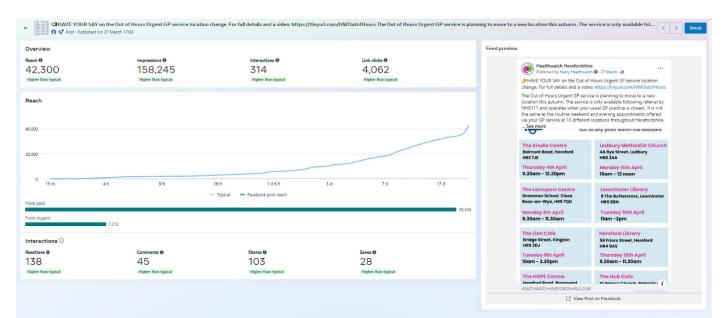


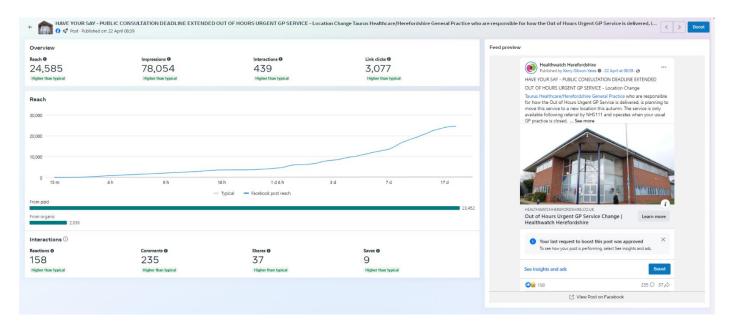














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