

GP Access Report

December 2014



CONTENTS



	PAGE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
GP ACCESS REPORT	
1. Prioritisation	6
2. Remit	7
3. Objectives	7
4. Methodology	7
5. Implementation and Variation	8
6. Analysis	8
7. Key Findings	17
8. Recommendations	18
9. Areas for Commendation	19
10. Next Steps	20
11. Acknowledgements	21
APPENDICES	
Appendix A - Full list of survey questions including, graphs and charts	22
Appendix B - Full Comments	28
Appendix C - Question Scores Calculation Method	35

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Throughout 2013 Healthwatch Sutton members, along with members of the public, reported that they found accessing their GP increasing difficult, key areas of concern centred around GP opening days/times, out of hours services and the appointment systems. 'Access to GP's' was included in the Healthwatch Sutton work plan for 2013/2014.

Remit

Healthwatch Sutton planned to research previous similar pieces of work carried out by Local Healthwatch organisations and other organisations with a view to developing of set of questions that would help identify the areas where improvement was needed.

Methodology

1. A short survey was produced to collect feedback
2. The questions were created using a variety of different sources including GP national surveys, other Healthwatch GP access surveys and tailor-made local questions.
3. The survey was available on-line and hard copies were sent out if requested. The survey was also promoted through e-bulletins, newsletters, websites, social media and local voluntary sector organisations.
4. Healthwatch Directors, staff, volunteers and members promoted and supported completion of the survey through their connections and via meetings/ events/groups they attended (with particular focus on voluntary and community sector groups). This approach ensured that a high number of responses were received.
5. A report would be created with recommendations and sent to all relevant parties.

Key Findings

1. In some cases, when patients call to make an appointment they are asked to call back closer to the time or on the day they would like an appointment. Patients who were able to get an appointment when they first contacted the surgery rated their overall experience of making an appointment more highly (85 out of 100) than those that had to ring back (53 out of 100). Please see Appendix C for an explanation of the scoring calculations. Patients who were able to get an appointment when they first contacted the surgery also rated their satisfaction with the system to book appointment higher (78 out of 100) than those who didn't have to call back (43 out of 100).
2. When asked to rate the convenience of their appointment, people of working age (18-64) rated the convenience of their appointment as 65 out of 100, whereas people of retirement age (65+) rated the convenience of their appointment as 70 out of 100.
3. When asked to rate their satisfaction with the system used to book appointments, people of working age (18-64) rated their satisfaction with the system used to book appointments as 58 out of 100 whereas people of retirement age (65+) rated the system as 75 out of 100.

4. When asked 'If you weren't able to get an appointment or the appointment you were offered wasn't convenient why was that?', 24% said that this was because they could not book ahead at their GP surgery. This feedback was also reflected in several comments received.
5. When asked 'If you weren't able to get an appointment or the appointment you were offered wasn't convenient why was that?'; 30% of respondents said this was because there weren't any appointments for the day they wanted.
6. When asked to identify their preferred method to book appointments 17% said 'On-line', 9% 'By email' and 5% 'By text message'. This means that a total 31% would prefer to use methods other than 'By phone' or 'in person'
7. Respondents were asked to identify which methods they would happy to use to hold a consultation with a GP. If commonly available methods are removed from the equation (i.e. face-to-face appointments), 58% of respondents advised that they would be happy to hold a consultation over the phone, 16% by email and 12% via video call (Skype).
8. Comments clearly show a large degree of dissatisfaction with systems that require the patient to call in the early morning to make an appointment. Often this was an inconvenient time to call and patients were unable to get through due to the volume of calls. When they were able to make contact were not able to obtain an appointment on that day.
9. When asked which additional opening times would make it easier for them to see or speak to someone; 34% of respondents asked for additional opening time on Saturday with a further 21% asking for appointments after 6.30pm.
10. When asked if they would be happy to travel to another location locally and see a different doctor if they wanted a routine appointment on a Saturday or a Sunday, 53% of respondents stated that they would be willing to do so.

Recommendations

1. GP surgeries to put in place appointment systems that allow patients to make an appointment on their first contact with the surgery (urgent and non-urgent).
2. GP surgeries to ensure that appointments are available to cater for people of working age. Data shows more specifically that Saturday and later evening appointments are preferred.
3. GP surgeries to investigate working in partnership to provide GP appointments at the weekends (in rotation?) as many patients have shown that they would be willing to go to a different location and see a different doctor at weekends.
4. GP surgeries to put in place appointment booking systems that are convenient for people of working age (i.e. accessible out of normal working hours).
5. GP surgeries to ensure that patients are able to book well ahead (more than 48 hours in advance) as well as being able to make more urgent appointments.
6. GP surgeries that do not already have technology in place, to investigate on-line, email or text messaging systems to be used by patients to make appointments.
7. GP surgeries to allow consultations to be carried out over the phone when appropriate and investigate the use of email and video calling (Skype).
8. GP surgeries to change/remove systems that require patients to call in the morning to make an appointment.
9. GP surgeries to investigate possible improvements to the availability of parking at their surgery.

Next Steps

A formal response to the report will be requested from NHS England and Sutton CCG.

The report will be shared with GP practices (via Sutton CCG), Healthwatch England, local MPs, the London Borough of Sutton council (including Health and Wellbeing Board), the Patient Reference Group and the Care Quality Commission.

In light of the small number of responses relating to the out-of-hours questions, data will be shared with providers of the 111 service and SELDOC (who provide the out-of-hours doctor service for Sutton) and general response requested.

The report will be promoted to all Healthwatch Sutton members and others through all available channels.

GP ACCESS REPORT

1. Prioritisation

All Healthwatch organisations are required to routinely collect the views of local people in relation to health and social care. The information collected is used to identify the key areas of concern for local people. Healthwatch Sutton uses a variety of methods to collect this information including running events, forms on web pages, external reports and outreach (e.g. attending other meetings and running stands at relevant locations). The information is analysed annually and used to create the Healthwatch Sutton Work Plan. If an urgent issue arises during the year the Board can decide to adjust the Work Plan to reflect the new issue.

During 2013-14, Healthwatch Sutton collected local people's views about health and social care in Sutton. This included a detailed prioritisation exercise carried out in February 2014. The data was collated and analysed, and resulted in a 'Work Plan Proposal' document being agreed at the Healthwatch Sutton Board meeting in May 2014. Access to GP services has emerged as an area of concern for local people and as such it was agreed that this area would be investigated as part of the Work Plan 2014-15. The data collected during 2013-14 showed that the areas of concern centred around GP opening days/times, out of hours services and appointment systems.

National Picture

The concerns of Sutton residents reflected those that have been raised nationally over the last few years. Several other Healthwatch organisations have already carried out investigations into GP access in their area.

Changes were made to the GP contract in 2004 that allowed GPs to opt-out of providing 'Out-of-Hours' services. Following this change the media highlighted examples of difficulties that people had experienced being able to access the newly created 'out-of-hours' services. Concerns regarding out-of-hours services have continued.

National studies have highlighted the changes in demands of people nationally to move towards a 24 hour service and the actions that patients take when they are unable to access a GP (i.e. A&E attendance) that can be more costly for the NHS.

Government initiatives have encouraged GP surgeries to be open in the evening and at weekends. Recent studies have highlighted the pressure on GPs to cover the demand for their services and the aging population of GPs.

At the Conservative Party conference in 2014, the Prime Minister promised GP surgeries would be open for up to 12 hours everyday by 2020.

2. Remit

The remit of this project is to investigate the feedback already received by Healthwatch Sutton by setting up a process of further collection of patient experience information that will be able to give a more accurate and detailed picture of the experience of GP service users across the borough. This process will enable, through analysis, the development of a series of recommendations that will be shared with service providers and commissioners so that issues can be addressed.

3. Objectives

1. To research previous similar pieces of work carried out by Local Healthwatch organisations and other organisations.
2. To develop a set of questions that will help identify the areas where improvement is needed with regards to access to GPs.
3. To find a suitable/practical method of collection of responses to these questions.
4. To collect a body of evidence, comprised of the views and experiences of local people that will stand up to scrutiny.
5. To analyse response data and identify themes and/or areas for improvement/areas that are working well.
6. To produce a report with a series of recommendations
7. To follow up on the completion of actions developed in response to the recommendations

4. Proposed Methodology

A review was undertaken of methodologies that had already been used to look at this issue. A majority of engagement activities had been conducted using surveys. A national survey is conducted by Ipsos Mori every year on behalf of NHS England. This survey asks 58 questions relating to a wide variety of aspects of GP services activities including a number relating to accessing services. Surveys are sent to a random sample of patients from existing GP lists.

Several other Healthwatch organisations have also carried out activities to investigate patients' experience of gaining access to a GP (including Healthwatch Richmond Upon Thames, Healthwatch Luton and Healthwatch Merton). Methods used included surveys, focus groups, working forums and analysis of existing data.

It was agreed that a short survey would be the most practical way of collecting patient experience data and that questions from existing surveys would be used where possible. In the case of duplicated questions from the national GP survey, this would give Healthwatch Sutton the opportunity to cross-compare results. New questions would be created if existing questions were not available to respond to the feedback already collected. A large majority of the questions included would generate statistical, quantitative data and as such it was agreed that several hundred responses would be required in order to ensure that the results were statistically significant and to reduce the potential variance in the figures produced.

The survey would be made available on-line via the online survey software 'Survey Monkey'. It would also be available on paper with a freepost envelope if required. A compliment slip with the web address of the survey would also be produced alongside a flyer available both electronically and in hard copy.

The group agreed the promotion of the survey through newsletters, e-bulletins, flyers and social media. Promotion through existing local voluntary and community groups by Directors, volunteers and staff was also agreed to be a potentially productive method of collection. The option of co-ordinating volunteers to visit GP surgeries to ask patients to complete the survey in waiting rooms was put forward and it was agreed this option would be investigated further. This practice could potentially be used to target GP surgeries that have only received a small number of responses.

5. Implementation and Variation

A survey containing 20 questions and 4 supplementary demographic questions was created. Eight of the questions were copies of those already used in the national GP survey. Four questions related to the Out of Hours service. For the full survey please see appendix A.

The survey was promoted to the Healthwatch membership of 764. 286 were local voluntary and community group who were asked to promote through their own channels. Everyone was offered paper copies, freepost envelopes and compliment slip with the web address if they needed them. Directors, staff and volunteers attended many local groups to promote and support the collection of responses. These included groups with interests relating to mental health, older people, specific ethnicities and specific geographic localities. This particular approach proved to be the most productive, eliciting the largest number of responses.

The potential to visit GP surgery waiting rooms was considered by staff. This idea was not implemented as it was felt that it would require a large amount of co-ordination and resource for a potentially small number of responses. GP surgeries may not have been receptive to this methodology.

In total 454 survey responses were received. The vast majority were completed on paper forms and entered manually on to the Survey Monkey system.

The survey was active from July to end of August 2014.

6. Analysis

Respondents were asked to identify their practice at the beginning of the survey. Survey responses were received from 24 of the 25 GP practices listed on the survey. Sutton CCG list 27 practices, however, in this survey we combined 3 practices under the title GP Centre Cheam.

The survey covered different aspects of making an appointment to see the GP and looked at what changes could be made to make it easier for people to see their GP.

We also asked about other aspects of access including transport, interpreters, and the access needs of people with physical disabilities and sensory impairments.

The table below shows the percentage of survey responses as a proportion of GP list size for each GP practice in Sutton.

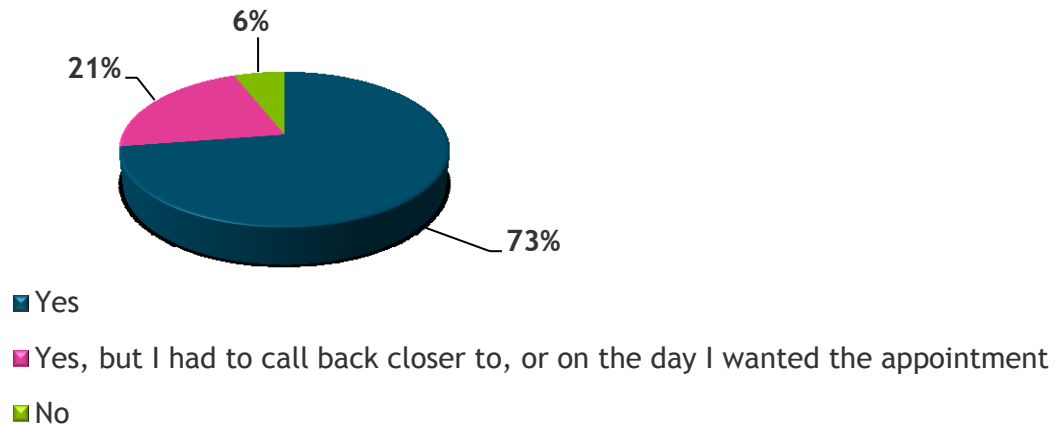
Healthwatch Sutton Survey	Raw List Size		Percentage
	Apr14	Responses	
GP Centre Cheam	15,078	36	0.23%
Wallington Medical Centre	2,423	10	0.41%
Shotfield Medical Practice	10,593	37	0.35%
Beeches Surgery	5,666	19	0.34%
Carshalton Fields Surgery	3,362	11	0.33%
Dr Grice and Partners/Old Court House	12,858	40	0.31%
Well Court Surgery	2,011	6	0.30%
Mulgrave Road Surgery	8,606	22	0.26%
Manor Practice	8,632	20	0.23%
Robin Hood Lane (Dr Seyan)	10,325	22	0.21%
Cheam Family Practice	12,514	26	0.21%
Benhill and Belmont	11,217	23	0.21%
Park Road Medical Centre	4,059	8	0.20%
Grove Road Practice	8,706	17	0.20%
Wrythe Green Surgery	13,486	25	0.19%
Hackbridge Medical Centre	3,816	7	0.18%
Green Wrythe Surgery	9,947	17	0.17%
Sutton Medical Centre	4,274	7	0.16%
Beddington Medical Centre	3,748	6	0.16%
Chesser Surgery	6,744	10	0.15%
Wallington Family Practice	13,547	20	0.15%
Maldon Road Surgery	3,666	5	0.14%
Bishopsford Road Practice	4,039	5	0.12%
Faccini House	6,294	7	0.11%
Wandle Valley Health Centre	1,922	0	0.00%

Ten of the GP practices have received 20 or more survey responses. This could be considered sufficient responses to give a stable indication of performance against specific criteria. However, as only a third of practices could be included, Sutton-wide practice comparisons have not been made in this report.

For analysis purposes, some question responses have been converted in to a score (0-100). For the method of calculating this score see Appendix C

Appointments

We asked people if they were able to get an appointment the last time they wanted to see or speak to someone at their GP practice.

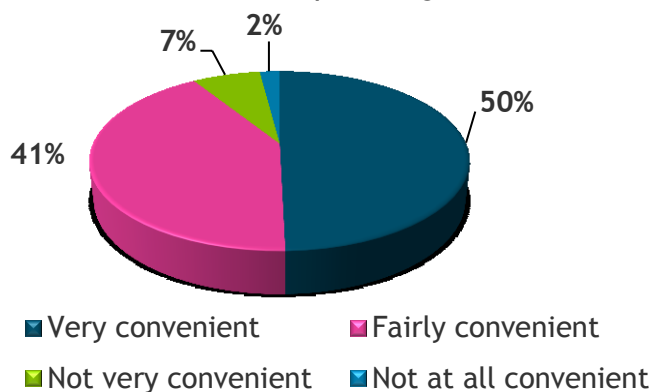


The majority of respondents indicated that they were able to get an appointment when they first contacted the surgery, however nearly a quarter had to call back closer to or on the day that they wanted the appointment.

As expected patients who were able to get an appointment when they first contacted the surgery rated their overall experience of making an appointment higher (85 out of 100) than those that had to ring back (53 out of 100).

Patients who were able to get an appointment when they first contacted the surgery also rated their satisfaction with the system to book appointment higher (78 out of 100) than those who didn't have to call back (43 out of 100).

We asked people how convenient the appointment they were offered was. The chart below shows the responses given.



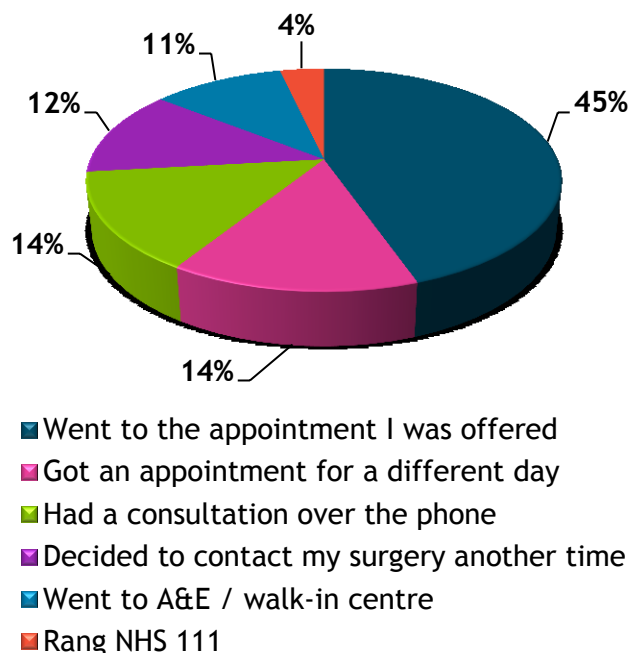
We wanted to find out whether different age groups felt the appointments offered were convenient to them, we analysed the following;

- People of working age (18-64) rated the convenience of their appointment as 65 out of 100.
- People of retirement age (65+) rated the convenience of their appointment as 79 out of 100.
- People aged between 0-17 rated the convenience of their appointment as 71 out of 100. (It should be noted there were 7 respondents in this age range).

We asked people if they weren't able to get an appointment or the appointment they were offered wasn't convenient, why this was. (It should be noted that 53 people responded to the question).

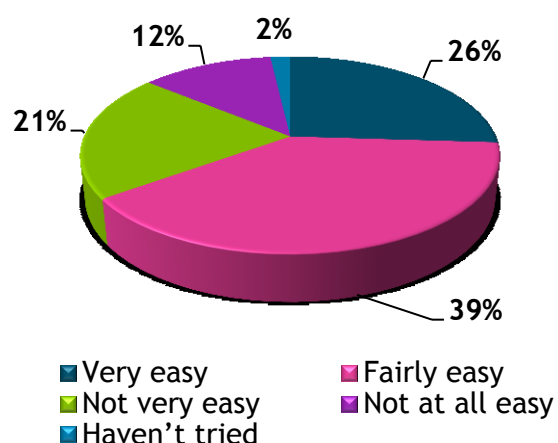
- 30% of respondents said that there weren't any appointments for the **day** they wanted
- 24% of respondents said that they could not book ahead at their GP surgery
- 10% of respondents said that there weren't any appointments for the **time** they wanted
- 7% of respondents said that they could not see their preferred GP and
- 29% did not specify

The patients who were not able to get an appointment or found the appointment was not convenient took the following action.



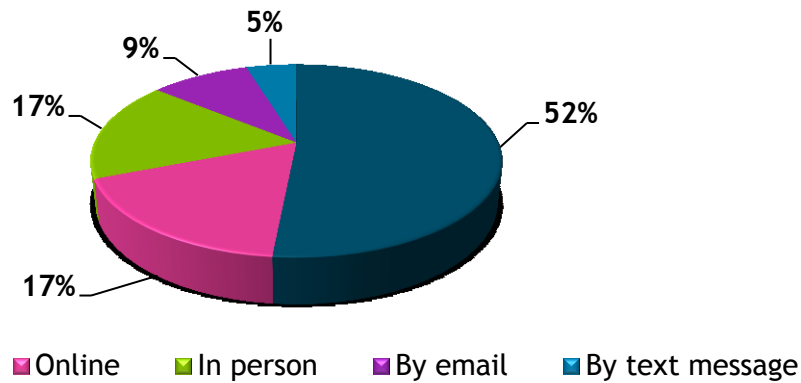
Communication / Methods of booking appointments

The chart below shows people's response when we asked how easy it was to get through to someone on the phone at their GP surgery. The majority of people indicated it was either very or fairly easy to get through to someone on the phone.

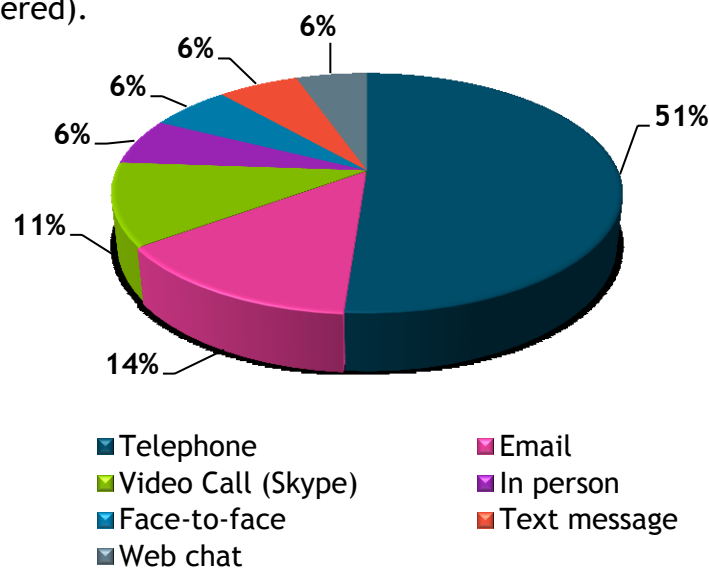


People of working age (18-64) rated their satisfaction with the system used to book appointments as 58 out of 100 whereas people of retirement age (65+) rated the system as 75 out of 100.

We asked people which methods they preferred to use when booking an appointment with their GP;



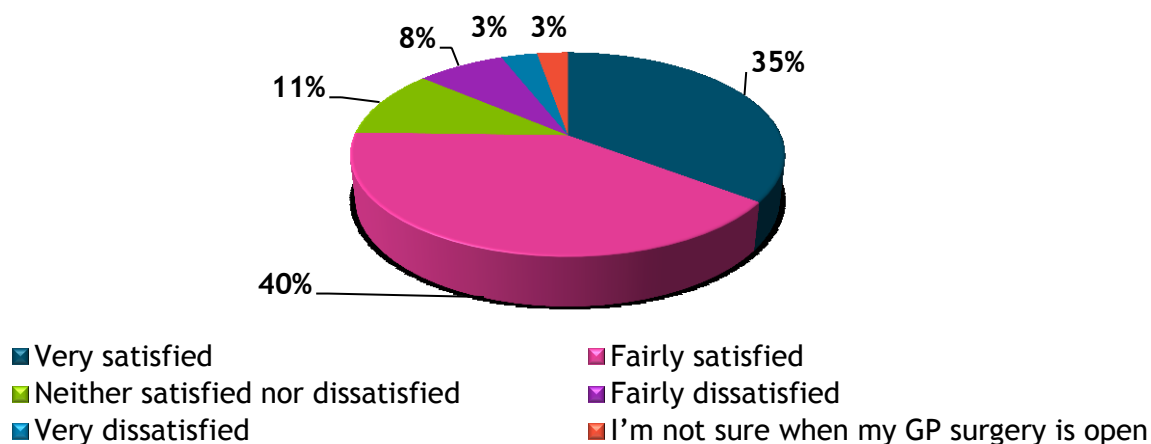
The chart below shows people responses when we asked which of the following communication methods they would be happy to use to hold a consultation with their GP (if offered).



When reading through the comments there appears to be a theme whereby people need to contact the surgery before 8am to request an appointment for the same day, however many people found the phone lines to be engaged or had to wait a long time for the phone to be answered, when people did get through quite often there were no appointments left and they would be told to call back the following day. In some instances people could book an appointment in advance but for two or three weeks' time. It also emerged that people were keen to use an online booking/appointments system.

Opening hours

We wanted to understand people's views with regards to the opening hours at their GP surgery. As you can see from the chart below the majority of responses indicate that people are satisfied with the opening hours at their surgery.



We then asked which of the following additional opening times would make it easier for people to see or speak to someone. The most popular choice was 'On a Saturday' (34%), followed by 'After 6.30pm' (21%). 'Before 8am' (16%), 'At lunchtime' (15%) and 'On a Sunday' (14%).

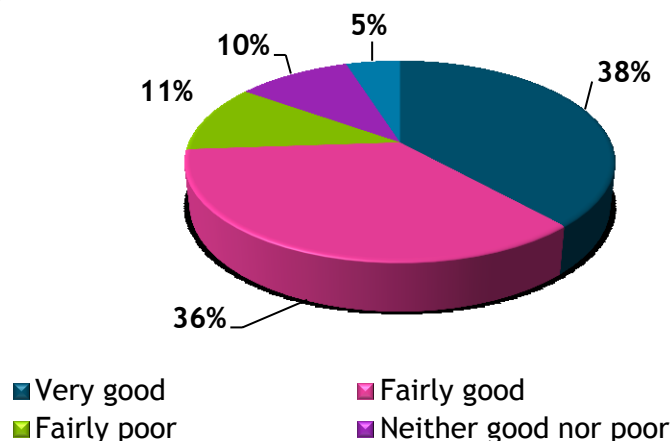
Of those patients that advised that they would want a routine appointment on a Saturday or Sunday, 53% said that they would be happy to travel to a different location locally and see a different doctor. 47% said that they would not be happy to do so.

Access for people with physical and sensory disabilities

The vast majority of respondents advised that they had not experienced any difficulties when they have visited their GP. Parking was highlighted as the largest issue by 89 out of the total of 415 responses. Access for people with a physical disability and access for people with a sensor impairment was highlighted by 16 people each. Poor access to public transport was identified by 14 patients.

Overall experience

The chart below shows how people rated their overall experience of making an appointment with their GP



When comparing satisfaction with the overall experience of making an appointment, people from ethnic minority groups (including people of mixed race) showed no difference in experience, both rating the experience as 72 out of 100.

We also looked at the comments we received, the following themes emerged;

- People wanting to see their GP on the same day and not being able to
- Difficulty in making advance appointments e.g. only able to book two weeks in advance, no earlier
- The need for more GPs,
- More flexible appointment choices
- Longer opening hours and after hours appointments
- Surgeries to be open on a Saturday or in the evenings
- Transport and parking
- Attitude of reception staff
- Online booking system

Out of Hours

Only 60 people stated that they had contacted the out-of-hour service in the last 12 months.

Thirty two percent said that they had found it 'Very easy' to contact the out-of-hours service and 39% said it was 'Fairly easy'. 20% said it was not very easy and 9% said it was 'Not at all easy'

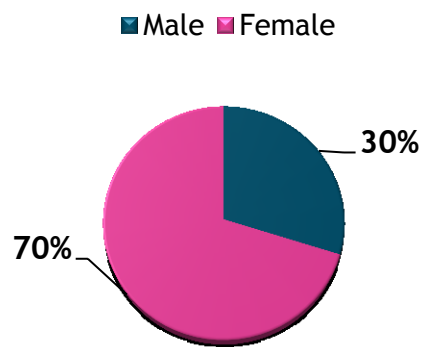
Forty two percent of the 60 respondents said it had taken too long to receive care with 58% saying it was about right.

People described their experience of using out-of-hours as follows:

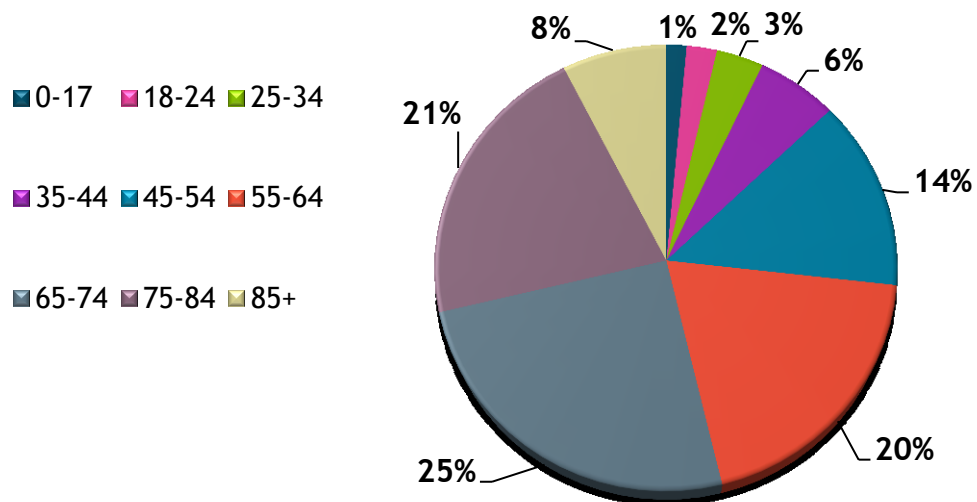
- Very good - 24%
- Fairly good - 30%
- Neither good nor poor - 20%
- Fairly poor - 19%
- Very poor - 7%

Demographics

Gender



Age Range



Ethnicity

English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	344
Indian	20
Any other White background	10
Any other ethnic group	9
Irish	6
White and Asian	6
Any other Asian background	3
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	3
White and Black African	2
African	2
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1
White and Black Caribbean	1
Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background	1
Bangladeshi	1
Caribbean	1
Arab	1
Pakistani	0
Chinese	0

Disability

38% said yes, 62% said no.

National GP Survey Comparison

Eight of the questions used in the Healthwatch Sutton survey are identical to those used in the National GP survey. Three of these questions relate to the out-of-hours service that received a very limited number of responses in the Healthwatch Sutton survey (less than 50). Due to the potential level of variance due to the low response number, the out-of-hours questions have not been compared.

The table below shows the results for each question compared to the National GP Survey results published in July 2014. The data used for this is the amalgamated data collected between July and September 2013 and January and March 2014. The unweighted data has been used as the Healthwatch Sutton data is also unweighted. These figures are all composite results for all GP practices in Sutton. Please see Appendix C for the calculation process that was used to create individual questions scores.

Question	Healthwatch Aug 2014	Sutton CCG	National
Q3 (Q12 Nat) On the last occasion were you able to get an appointment to see or speak to someone?	83	87	82
Q4 (Q15 Nat) How convenient was the appointment you were able to get?	79	81	81
Q7 (Q18 Nat) Overall, how would you describe your experience of making an appointment?	73	78	77
Q8 (Q3 Nat) Generally, how easy is it to get through to someone at your GP surgery on the phone?	60	67	68
Q9 (Q25 Nat) How satisfied are you with the hours that your GP surgery is open?	75	78	77

All scores collected as part of the Healthwatch survey show a lower level of satisfaction in comparison to the nationally co-ordinated Ipsos-Mori survey. Factors that may explain this divergence could be:

- Satisfaction with local services have declined since the national survey was carried out.
- The different methodologies of survey collection have leaned towards a particular group(s) that show higher levels of dissatisfaction.
- The independence of the Healthwatch organisation has allowed respondents to feel more able to express their views.

The question with the most significant divergence between the national survey and the Healthwatch relates to the question concerning how easily patients are able to get through to someone on the phone.

6. Key Findings

1. In some cases, when patients call to make an appointment they are asked to call back closer to the time or on the day they would like an appointment. Patients who were able to get an appointment when they first contacted the surgery rated their overall experience of making an appointment more highly (85 out of 100) than those that had to ring back (53 out of 100). Please see Appendix C for an explanation of the scoring calculations. Patients who were able to get an appointment when they first contacted the surgery also rated their satisfaction with the system to book appointment higher (78 out of 100) than those who didn't have to call back (43 out of 100).
2. When asked to rate the convenience of their appointment, people of working age (18-64) rated the convenience of their appointment as 65 out of 100, whereas people of retirement age (65+) rated the convenience of their appointment as 70 out of 100.
3. When asked to rate their satisfaction with the system used to book appointments, people of working age (18-64) rated their satisfaction with the system used to book appointments as 58 out of 100 whereas people of retirement age (65+) rated the system as 75 out of 100.
4. When asked 'If you weren't able to get an appointment or the appointment you were offered wasn't convenient why was that?', 24% said that this was because they could not book ahead at their GP surgery. This feedback was also reflected in several comments received.
5. When asked 'If you weren't able to get an appointment or the appointment you were offered wasn't convenient why was that?', 30% of respondents said this was because there weren't any appointments for the day they wanted.
6. When asked to identify their preferred method to book appointments 17% said 'On-line', 9% 'By email' and 5% 'By text message'. This means that a total 31% would prefer to use methods other than 'By phone' or 'in person'.
7. Respondents were asked to identify which methods they would be happy to use to hold a consultation with a GP. If commonly available methods are removed from the equation (i.e. face-to-face appointments), 58% of respondents advised that they would be happy to hold a consultation over the phone, 16% by email and 12% via video call (Skype).
8. Comments clearly show a large degree of dissatisfaction with systems that require the patient to call in the early morning to make an appointment. Often this was an inconvenient time to call and patients were unable to get through due to the volume of calls. When they were able to make contact were not able to obtain an appointment on that day.
9. When asked which additional opening times would make it easier for them to see or speak to someone, 34% of respondents asked for additional opening time on Saturday with a further 21% asking for appointments after 6.30pm.
10. When asked if they would be happy to travel to another location locally and see a different doctor if they wanted a routine appointment on a Saturday or a Sunday, 53% of respondents stated that they would be willing to do so.

8. Recommendations

1. GP surgeries to put in place appointment systems that allow patients to make an appointment on their first contact with the surgery (urgent and non-urgent).
2. GP surgeries to ensure that appointments are available to cater for people of working age. Data shows more specifically that Saturday and later evening appointments are preferred.
3. GP surgeries to investigate working in partnership to provide GP appointments at the weekends (in rotation?) as many patients have shown that they would be willing to go to a different location and see a different doctor at weekends.
4. GP surgeries to put in place appointment booking systems that are convenient for people of working age (i.e. accessible out of normal working hours).
5. GP surgeries to ensure that patients are able to book well ahead (more than 48 hours in advance) as well as being able to make more urgent appointments.
6. GP surgeries that do not already have technology in place, to investigate on-line, email or text messaging systems to be used by patients to make appointments.
7. GP surgeries to allow consultations to be carried out over the phone when appropriate and investigate the use of email and video calling (Skype).
8. GP surgeries to change/remove systems that require patients to call in the morning to make an appointment.
9. GP surgeries to investigate possible improvements to the availability of parking at their surgery.

9. Areas for Commendation

1. 74% of respondents described their overall experience of making an appointment as either 'Very good' or 'Fairly good'.
2. 73% of respondents advised that they were able to get an appointment the last time they wanted to see or speak to someone at their GP practice.
3. Only 9% of patients advised that the appointment offered was either 'Not very convenient' or 'Not at all convenient'.
4. Ethnic minority groups (including people of mixed race) showed no difference in experience to non-minority groups.
5. Patients showed satisfaction with their GP surgery through comments in some cases naming their surgery as particular good.

10. Next Steps

This report is intended to influence change in local practice in order to improve people's experience of accessing GP services. Currently NHS England is responsible for the commissioning of Sutton GP contracts. As such, this report will be submitted to NHS England with a request for a response to the findings and recommendations.

Sutton CCG also has influence on local primary care provision including GP services and therefore this report will be submitted to them with a request to look through the findings and recommendations with a view to identifying areas where they may be able to influence change.

Plans are underway to change the commissioning arrangement for GP services to be a co-commissioning arrangement between NHS England and Sutton CCG. These changes may give Sutton CCG more opportunities to influence local GP services.

This report will also be sent to Healthwatch England, local MPs (Paul Burstow and Tom Brake), Sutton Health and Wellbeing Board, the London Borough of Sutton council, the Patient Reference Group (representing the GP Patient Participation Groups of Sutton) and the Care Quality Commission.

This report will be promoted to all Healthwatch Sutton members including voluntary and community sector groups.

Electronic and paper copies of this report are available on request (please see the contact details at the end of this report).

Healthwatch Sutton staff, Trustees and volunteers are willing to be involved in activities to support the development of actions in response to this report.

11. Acknowledgements

A special thank you to all of the following people who have made this work possible:

The Healthwatch Sutton Directors
David Williams (Vice Chair)
Hilary Smith
Adrian Attard
Annette Brown
Derek Yeo
Shri Mehrotra
Sylvia Aslangul

Healthwatch Sutton Volunteers that took the survey to different locations to enable people to contribute.

Sutton Centre for Independent Living Learning for taking the survey to their outreach sessions in the community.

Citizens Advice Bureau for promoting the survey when seeing clients.

The Healthwatch Sutton staff team (Pete Flavell, Operations Manager, Pam Howe, Volunteer and Engagement Officer, Sara Thomas, Communications and Administration Officer.

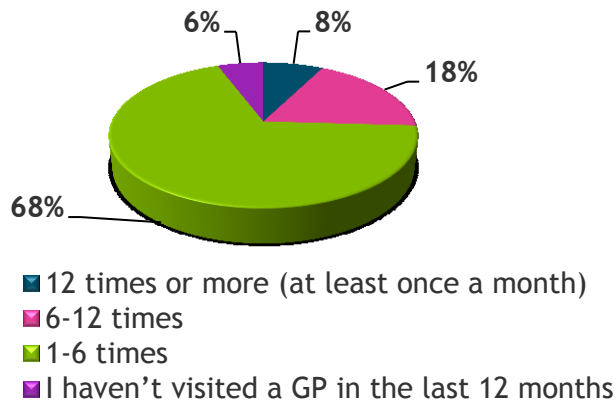
And, all the local residents who gave up their time to complete our survey so that this work was possible.

Appendix A

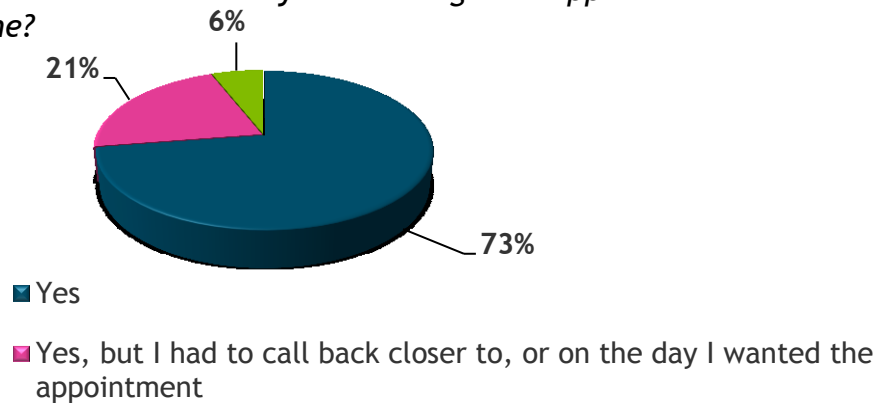
Full list of questions including charts and graphs

A total of 454 questionnaires were completed.

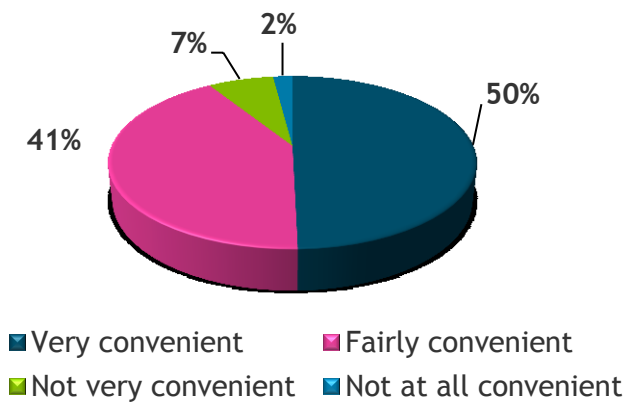
How often have you visited a GP in the last 12 months?



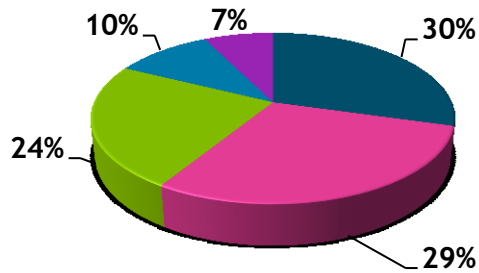
On the last occasion were you able to get an appointment to see or speak to someone?



How convenient was the appointment you were able to get?

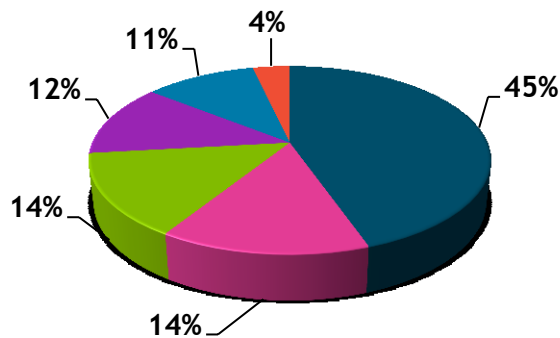


If you weren't able to get an appointment or the appointment you were offered wasn't convenient, why was that?



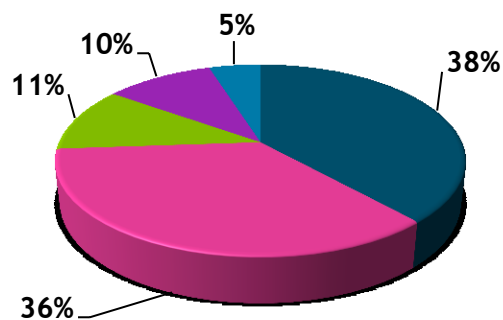
- There weren't any appointments for the day I wanted
- Another reason
- I couldn't book ahead at my GP surgery
- There weren't any appointments for the time I wanted
- I couldn't see my preferred GP

What did you do on that occasion?



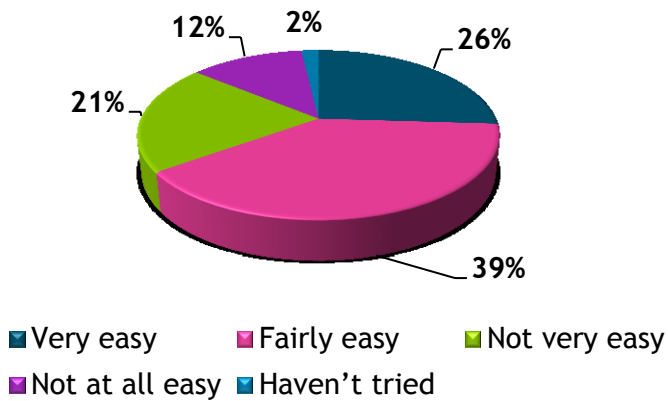
- Went to the appointment I was offered
- Got an appointment for a different day
- Had a consultation over the phone
- Decided to contact my surgery another time
- Went to A&E / walk-in centre
- Rang NHS 111

Overall, how would you describe your experience of making an appointment?

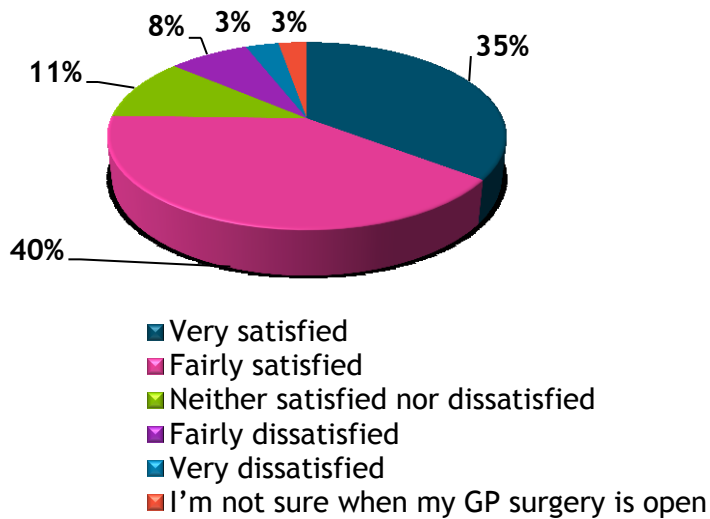


- Very good
- Fairly good
- Fairly poor
- Neither good nor poor
- Very poor

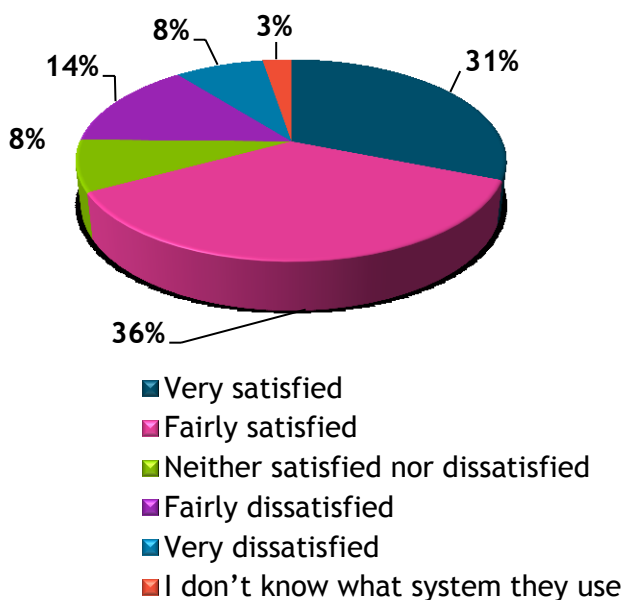
Generally, how easy is it to get through to someone at your GP surgery on the phone?



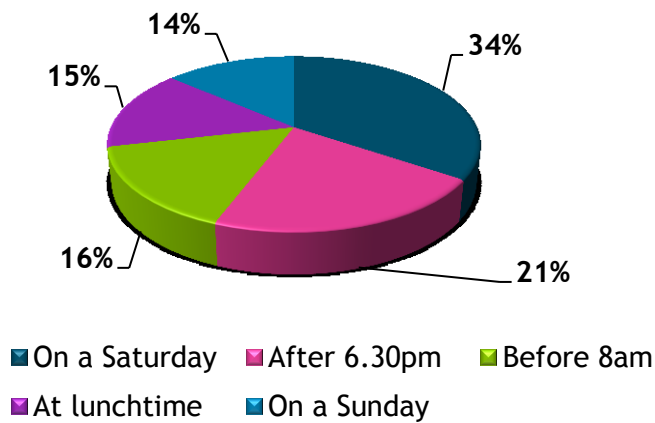
How satisfied are you with the hours that your GP surgery is open?



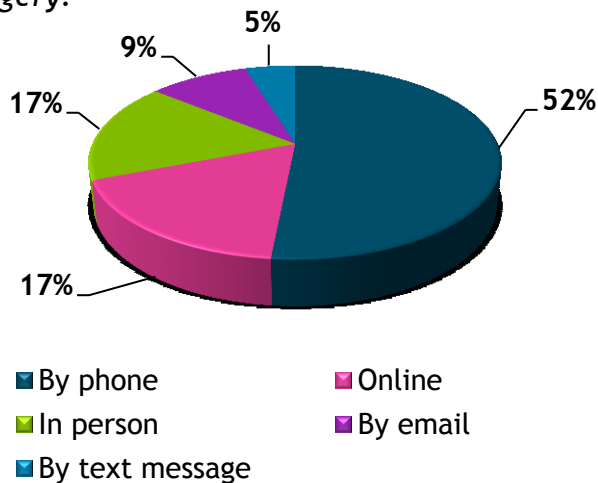
How satisfied are you with the system used to book appointments at your GP surgery?



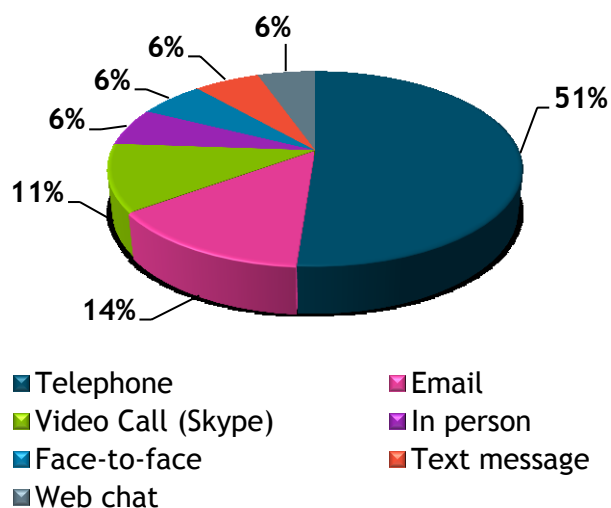
Which of the following additional opening times would make it easier for you to see or speak to someone?



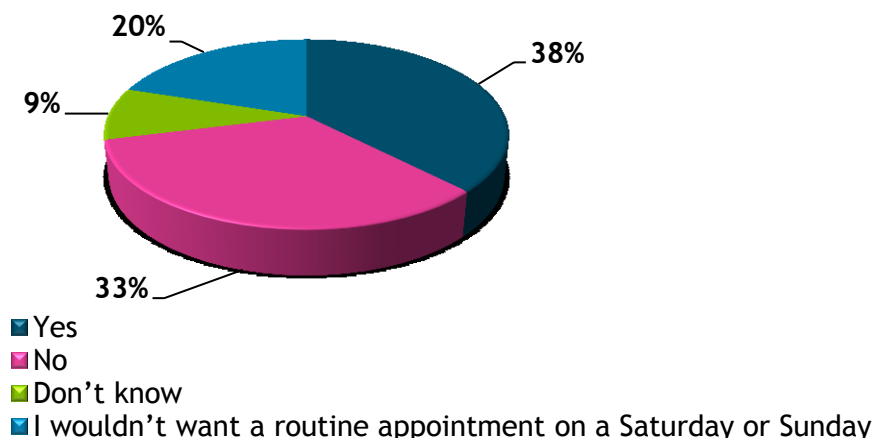
Which of the following methods would you prefer to use to book appointments at your GP surgery?



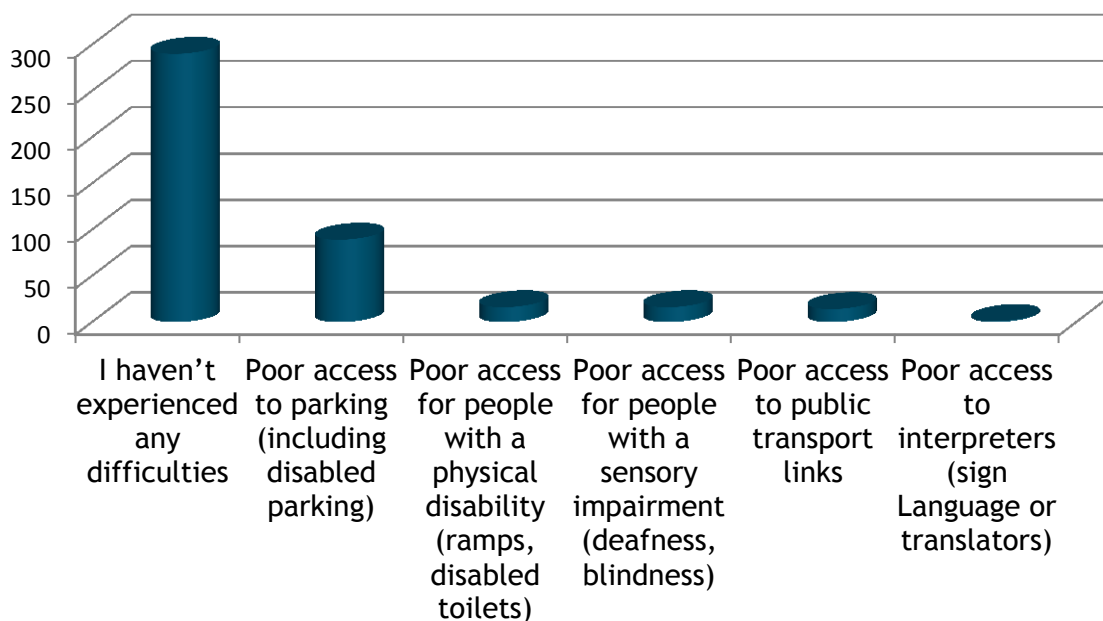
Which of the following communication methods would you be happy to use to hold a consultation with a GP?



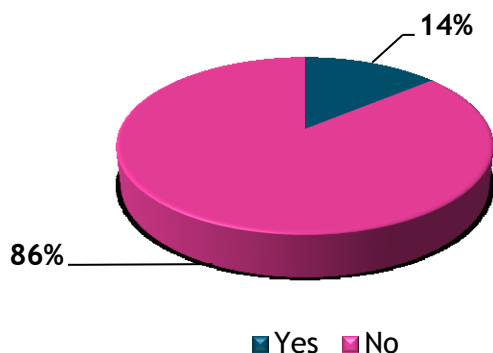
Would you be happy to travel to another location locally and see a different doctor if you wanted a routine appointment on a Saturday or Sunday?



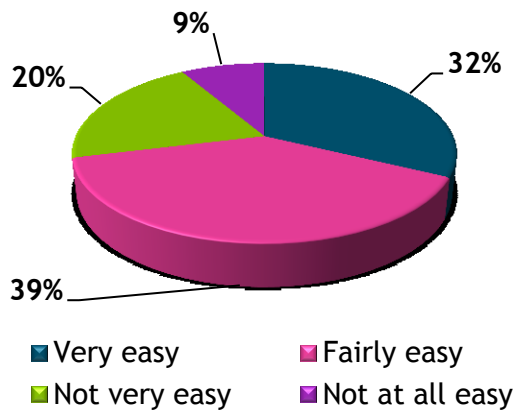
What difficulties have you or someone you know experienced when you have visited your GP surgery?



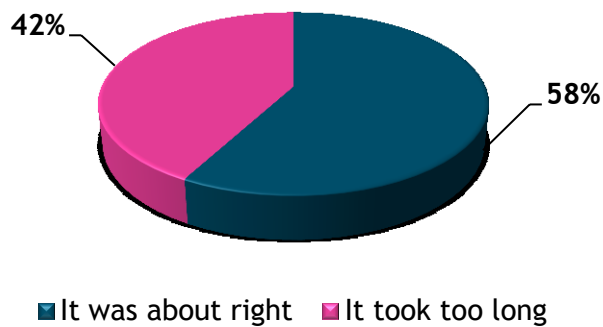
If you have contacted the out-of-hours GP service in the last 12 months would you be willing to answer a further 4 questions about your experience?



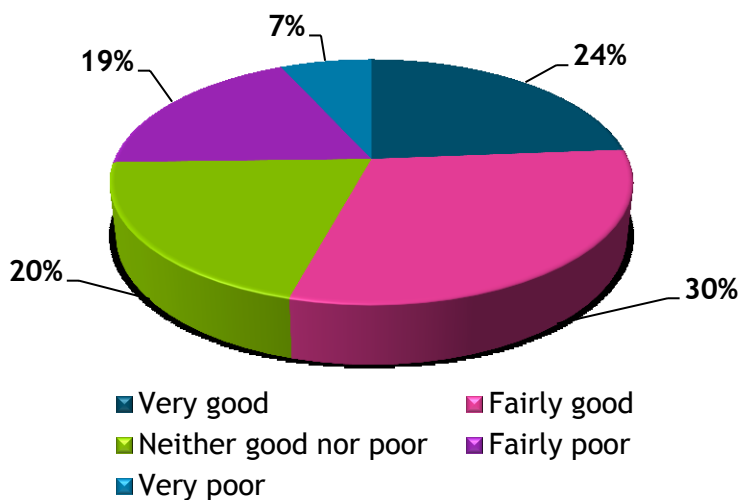
How easy was it to contact the out-of-hours GP service by telephone?



How do you feel about how quickly you received care from the out-of-hours GP service?



Overall, how would you describe your experience of out-of-hours GP services?



Appendix B

We asked what changes could be made to make it easier to see a GP, below are the comments received.

More staff to answer phone
Not seeing patients the same day - only if you ring at 8am
Easier appointment system
To put the old system back as phone for appointment not good
Better phone system
Make advance booking
Have less patients
More GPs
Perhaps a minor injury clinic as in New Addington with nurse
Better phone system
Longer surgery hours
More GPs
More appointments
Open Saturday morning
Home visits and back to how it was before you had to call and wait for a call back
Appointment less than 2 weeks waiting time
Change of attitude of receptionists
Advanced bookings for non urgent appointments.
The staff are always really friendly and helpful on the phone, and usually appointment times are accommodating of 9-to-5 work schedules. My main issue is that come 8am in the morning the phone lines are jam packed, and by the time you get through to an operator the appointments frequently will be booked up for that day. There has been one incidence in the last six months where I had to try every day for three days to get a fairly urgent appointment, and one where I had to try for two mornings. I understand that this is because demand is high and there's not much that the appointment-makers can do about it, but when you're feeling very ill and need to see a GP it can be frustrating.
I believe that there is someone available on a Saturday but you are unable to phone
A same day appointment
Appointment after hours
A daily "urgent" appointment period. More lines available to avoid long phone queues
More doctors
Longer opening times and weekends
Longer opening times
Saturday appointments
More appointment
Better phone service
Longer opening hours
More appointments: less paperwork. GP needs access to records
More GPs
To have the phone answer quickly

I have only moved to the area recently, so haven't experienced a problem
To be able to call before 8am, as it is very inconvenient for me at this time as I am taking the children to school and going to work. By the time I get through there are no same day appointments available and I get told to call back at 8 the next day which as explained I cannot do. If I request a pre-booked appointment it will be around a 2 week wait. Also my doctors is located in the town centre and there is no parking available, I have to use the public car park which can be costly if the GP is running behind or if your appointment is a sit and wait, also if one of the children is very unwell this is very inconvenient. I have tried to register with other GP's but get told 'I'm not in there catchment area'.
In the past, we used to have a system when we arrived at the surgery we took a number and waited in the surgery for our numbers to be called out to be seen by the On-Call Doctor. This was removed as people complained that they were waiting a long time - I personally never found that to be the case. I found this system to be fair, and although, I did not get an appointment with the GP that, I usually like to see. I would ideally prefer to see the same GP for continuity purposes. But if I am not well, I would rather like to get access to a GP when I need one, and not have to wait for over 2 days before being seen by a GP or 2 weeks for my own GP!
They need to change their hours to meet the needs of the modern world. They need to come out and see patients in their home if needed like they use to do in the old days.
None. My surgery offers excellent service.
More availability of appointments and more choice, it is the lack of available appointments that are the main issue, a case of supply and demand, not being able to book in advance for more than a few days which makes it difficult when you have to juggle time off work (which i have to make up) and childcare.
better access to public transport
An extra telephone line.
I would like to make an advance booking but am told can only make one only on the day.
Our surgery now asks that you have a telephone appointment and they will invite you in if they consider it necessary. I totally disagree with this system!
The surgery is closed for 1.5 hours at lunch time and does not open on Saturdays, so difficult for full time workers. Staff are flexible about early or late appointments, but late for them means leaving work early for me .
Not having to book an appointment three weeks in advance - there is no way to know when you will be ill. Having appointments available before 8.30am or after 6pm which aren't a month plus in advance. More polite members of staff who do not interrogate you for the reason you are booking an appointment and contact you when an appointment is no longer required so you don't take time off work when it is not necessary. (The doctors themselves are very helpful).
To be able to book advance appointments with my preferred GP like I used to be able to do.
Extended opening times & maybe two doctors working as one surgery.
extend opening hours, make it possible to have an emergency appointment late in the day or on weekends
They need to open for much longer hours to help working people, you either have to book an appointment for several weeks ahead or join a scramble by

phone for the few emergency appointments which are held open for daily release.
Being able to book appointments in advance
Making it easier to book non-urgent appointments a few days ahead, rather than most appointments having to be booked on the day by phoning first thing in the morning along with lots of other people so difficult to get through
Online appointment booking, Saturday and later evening appointments.
To enable me to make an appointment nearer to where I work rather than live
Not having voice activated options on the telephone, faster response time on the telephone, not being made to feel guilty for calling to make a GP appointment, being able to book in advance if it's not urgent and being able to book a same day appointment with ease.
Improve same day appointment system, which is totally random so a less urgent case could get an appointment and a less urgent one fail to get through. However, emergencies are always seen by one of the doctors.
Ability to book beyond one week ahead.
Better working hours, Saturday would be good,
More time
Good phone booking system for appointment
To see my own GP
None other than Saturday, Sunday and Skype etc.
Booking ahead
More appointments available by opening on Saturday and Sunday
By pass receptionist
Turn up on time of surgery such as 10.30 to 11.30 and 4.30 to 5.30
Transport
Make more appointments available
To be able to phone earlier than 9am
Short delay
Have more GPs
I am at ease using technologies but do not believe that as good patient care can be given using them. I also work full time, but take the view if I need to see my GP I need to make some of the effort to do so. My GP cannot look in my throat on Skype for example, or pick up on the things I may find it difficult to voice via email. Our Doctors work hard, they also have family lives, child care arrangements etc. The government recently said anyone can ask for flexible working. It would seem the opposite is true for GPs where more hours are being suggested.
Make all doctors available for all patients
What you have avoided or ignored, to get a choice of GP the first need is to have a choice of GP practices. Why are we forced into geographical zones given as a monopoly to specific GPs? I want choice. A GP at Sainsbury's would be choice
On line access, Improved telephone answering Late appointments or weekend surgeries
A local bus route passing the surgery, better car parking facilities, better facilities for disabled people in the surgery
quicker access to my own doctor for emergencies and for routine and follow up appointments
The practice is excellent and in my view does not need things to be made easier. They have done much with increased hours and staffing already.

None at our surgery
More doctors and better appointment times for people who have to work for a living and can't do 11.15 on Thursday 3 weeks hence because they have to go to work.
Quicker answers to the telephone
Reception staff could be more helpful. Should be able to make a phone call for an appointment at any time of day not just at 8.00am & then told that there are no appointments left, although you are then not allowed to book for another day.
To have more doctors at the practice and to have staff who are a bit more with it.
Once I have got past the receptionists 20 questions it is quite easy.
Able to see GP at weekends if worried about sudden emergency such as an accident or not feeling very well, ie not a routine visit.
The practice now has a good system. Before it was a nightmare when it was only same day booking. I suppose online booking would be useful
More reception staff Greater availability of appointment- if working full time - able to book an appointment after work. Those retired/ not working should be given appointments that are at off peak times.
More flexible appointment booking
Greater flexibility by the staff and the receptionists are really very unhelpful at this practice
To see the GP you wanted and have been with for years
Knowing when the particular GP I want to see is working
My GP surgery is just fine the way it is
extended hours and weekends
On line appointments
More than one phone line
Availability of emergency appointments with GP at weekends
It is phone in system is bad. People can ring at 11.30am. Do not really see how it could be made easier to get through surgery.
As a shift worker I know when I am available. Sometimes they cannot tell at surgery when more slots will be possible and to ring on day
More doctors on duty
As told where you are in the queue when you phone to make an appointment as some company do
More GP, Saturday reserved for working parents
See the same doctor every time
More doctors available
Larger waiting room comfortable seating
Just get an appointment
The condition of the patient especially if he/her is not very visitor at surgery
An updated brochure outlining surgery times and other information
The PPG is looking into it right now
To make available evening appointments for people that work during the day
As I am now retired, no changes are necessary.
More appointments slots, less locum GPs
We have been stopped from seeing a doctor this question is laughable.
More GPs

To go in time and not to wait over an hour of my appointment time. If I was late I would lose my appointment.
Bus routes going past surgeries
More hours.
Control the number of patients registered in the surgeries.
Easier to get through on phone at peak times.
To phone GP and get an answer takes a long time.
Walk in and wait for turn. No appointment.
Appointments to be made up to a week in advance.
As I am retired any appointment on a Sat or Sun would be emergency so this would not apply
Longer time with the GP in consultation
Simply to be able to get an appointment ASAP when one is ill; it's a bit of a lottery too often.
More flexible appointment times
Online booking system where I can view available slots and decide which one I want without having to wait for the receptionist on the phone to give me only one time which (in her opinion) is available.
With regards to the Jubilee Health Centre - actually making it accessible to blind people. The only (glass!) door that opens has a pillar almost right behind it and is a danger to anyone with eyesight problems. Also the position of the buttons on the lift are not in the same position as 90% of others
Better attitude from Receptionists; an appreciation that those in employment cannot always make calls at specific times of the day only, and require more evening/weekend availability especially when a patient has a LTC or particular ongoing appointment that means referrals to various services.
The phone system is slow at answering and often put on hold
Due to the increase in the local infrastructure more Doctors are needed with more and better manning of the phones
For the surgery to open for four hours on a Saturday and Sunday.
More ability to see my GP rather than whoever happened to be available
More telephone lines (it is impossible to get through in the morning for an emergency appointment.
Prioritising appointments according to severity and disability perhaps even providing more home visits, in particular for infection vulnerable or dangerously infected people.
Generally happy with then system recently introduced
GP working full time at surgery
In person i.e. face to face with my GP sufficient time to explain myself GP to LISTEN to me! and act accordingly Use plain language and NO jargon And GP to be honest with me Please don't fob me off with a PA who appears to lack experience dealing with the elderly
Reversion to the previous booking method
I am sure it would help everyone, not just the patients, if there were to be a dedicated appointment phone line for each GP. However, I do realise that this may be difficult to implement. In my opinion, the GP's have to deal with too much" red tape" and form-filling due to the inflexibility of the NHS. Everyday routine stuff such as dealing with prescriptions, blood test requests etc could be carried out by Nurse Practitioners.
No significant issues

Just being able to make an appointment online or by email. To make an appointment online I need to register by going to the surgery with my passport, I haven't had time to do this.
Later hours for working people; priority appointments for carers of young children (to avoid long waits when they get fractious)
Reception services being available at more times.
Online booking. I could then see what was available and choose the best slot
Stop this stupid 48 hour rule, if I want to make an appointment for 10 days' time, I should be able to book it in advance.
Longer opening easier to make appointment
Extended hours for people who work full time or unsociable hours.
Our GP has changed their appointment system we now have to phone on the day wait for a call back and then attend the surgery if necessary. This is really very inconvenient as I am a work and I cannot receive the call back let alone attend the surgery. I emailed the surgery and was told that if I was not well I would not be at work - this is not true. I am really unhappy with this system and I have expressed my dissatisfaction every time I have to attend the surgery
Quicker to answer the phone. Appointments should be available to make in advance not just on the day
Have more GPs so waiting lists are not as long for non urgent appointments/routine check-ups and enabling you to see a GP on the same day you call.
More appointments
Flexible opening hours
More times allocated per week for routine non-emergency appointments that could be booked a week ahead.
If I could be seen or at least have a phone consultation after 6.30pm on a weekday.
Saturday Surgery
Evening or early morning appointment times made available
Longer opening appointment hours starting earlier, not closing middle of the day for four hours and later appointment times
More appointments available to see GP on same day
An improvement in the access to appointments, and a signing in system when arriving at the surgery
None at Wrythe Green. They seem to have it bang-on.
Receptionists could ask callers if an appointment is urgent and if not, ask callers to speak to a Doctor on the phone for advice first if they are unsure whether an appointment is needed. More available appointments on Saturday mornings or later in the evening.
I'm retired & so can be flexible about appointment times. The surgery does offer early mornings & late evenings so I would think most people are suited.
As I have not found it that difficult to see a GP, I am unable to think of any changes.
Perhaps a 'phone triage service?
Easier telephone contact for an appointment is a priority older people do not trust a 'GP Associate' as it feels as if this is a lesser qualified person! Although a leaflet was handed out explaining the role of this Associate older people prefer the GP - preferably someone they know!

I think the problem lies in not being able to get through to the Surgery. I find that once I have got through, there is no problem. If I need to contact someone at the week-end, it's because I need to go to A&E and, presumably, I would still be able to do that.

Longer times when you can make a phone call

To know the days when particular doctors are on call

If you required a further appointment to see the GP that you could make an appointment there and then instead of having turning up nearer the date to make an appointment as you are rarely able to get one

Pre booked appointments

Appendix C

Calculating scores

In order to calculate an overall score for each question, responses are rated with the following weighting. The percentage value for each response is multiplied by the weighting figures and then added together to give a score between 0 and 100.

Q3. Ease of getting through to someone at GP surgery on the phone	
Base: All	
	Weighting
Very easy	1
Fairly easy	0.66
Not very easy	0.33
Not at all easy	0
Haven't tried	N/A
Total	

Q12. Able to get an appointment to see or speak to someone	
Base: All	
	Weighting
Yes	1
Yes, but I had to call back closer to or on the day I wanted	0.5
No	0
Can't remember	N/A

Q15. Convenience of appointment	
Base: All who were able to get an appointment	
	Weighting
Very convenient	1
Fairly convenient	0.66
Not very convenient	0.33
Not at all convenient	0

Q18. Overall experience of making an appointment	
Base: All	
	Weighting
Very good	1
Fairly good	0.75
Neither good nor poor	0.5
Fairly poor	0.25
Very poor	0

Q25. Satisfaction with opening hours	
Base: All	
	%
Very satisfied	1
Fairly satisfied	0.75
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	0.5
Fairly dissatisfied	0.25
Very dissatisfied	0
I'm not sure when my GP surgery is open	N/A



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