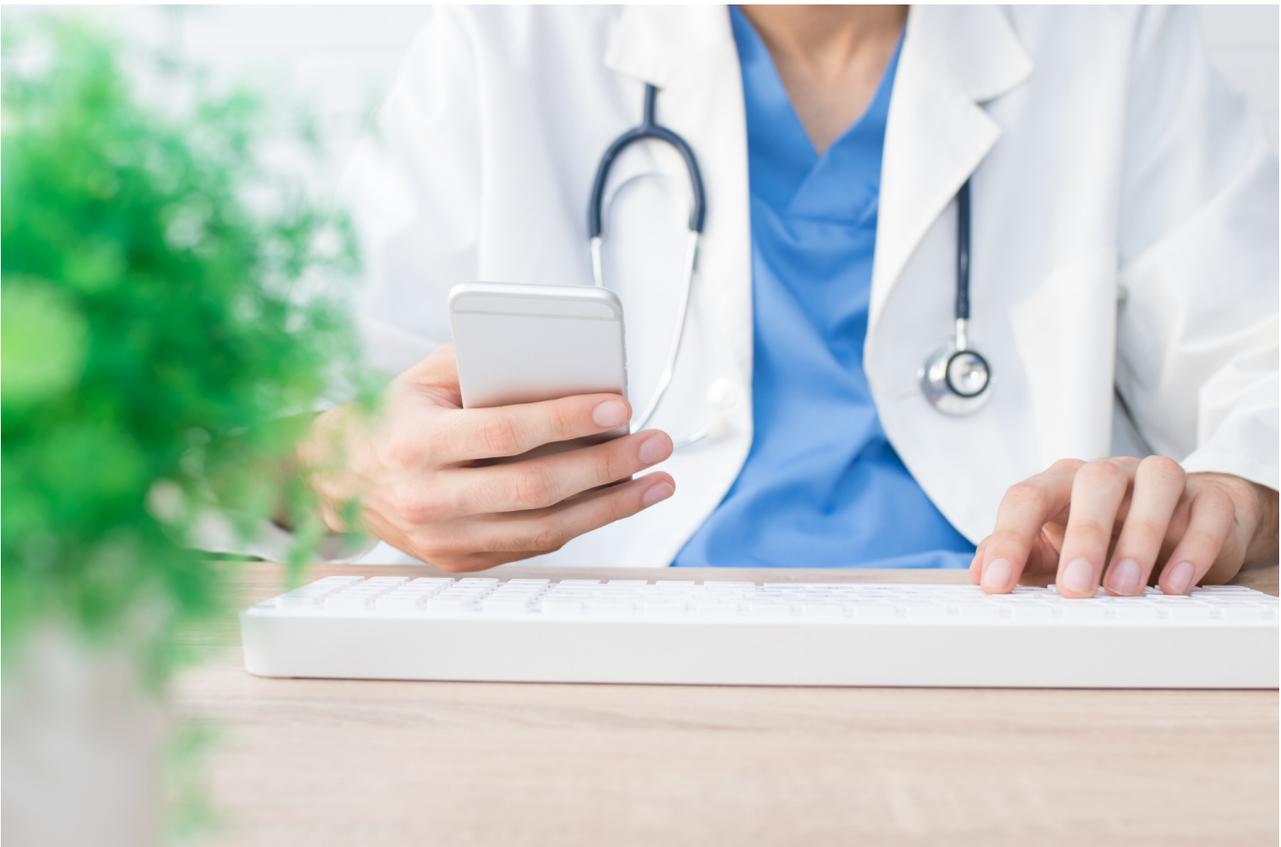


GP Access Project

A report on post-lockdown experiences of GP access in Southwark.



Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	3
Why We Did This Project	3
Methodology	3
Limitations/ Challenges	4
Background Research	4
Survey Findings	6
<i>General Access</i>	
<i>Booking Appointments</i>	
<i>Attending Appointments</i>	
<i>Staff and Communication</i>	
Website Audit Findings	21
Summary of Findings	22
Recommendations	23
Next Steps	24
Acknowledgments	24
References	24
Appendices	25

Executive Summary

This project explores people's experiences of accessing GP services in Southwark since the lifting of the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in July 2021. It responds to widespread feedback we have received on difficulties in using digital and telephone appointment booking systems and accessing face-to-face appointments.

The research was conducted through a survey of people's experiences of GPs across Southwark covering the 4 key domains of general access, booking appointments, attending appointments and staff and communication. We also undertook an audit of 29 Southwark GP websites to investigate the accessibility of information available. Lastly, we examined in-depth accounts of two people's experiences of accessing GP services who contacted us for signposting or to offer feedback, outside of the project.

The survey findings demonstrated that in terms of general access, a large proportion of people are dissatisfied with the options available for seeing a healthcare professional. When we looked closer at people's experiences of booking appointments, many people reported very poor experiences, reflecting on long wait times, limited availability of appointments, technical difficulties with online systems and struggling to get past reception. There were more mixed experiences of attending appointments, with positive experiences being associated with feeling listened to and being given clear information. On the other hand, negative experiences referenced long waits, lack of information, the impersonal nature of phone appointments, lack of flexibility about the subject of the appointment, and lack of staff continuity. We also received mixed feedback surrounding experiences of staff and communication with some negative accounts referencing staff rudeness, lack of professionalism, and limited understanding of patient needs. Notably, people agreed that there have been some positive developments since the changes to GP access including increased efficiency in accessing prescriptions and appointments and not having to wait or liaise with receptionists.

Our website audit revealed that there are opportunities to book appointments online but there are limited extended hour appointments available and opportunities to cancel appointments. GP websites also lack clear information on how to book face-to-face appointments which was shown to be people's preferred option expressed in the survey data. They also lack clear information around interpreter services available. Most sites featured an Accessibility statement but not all sites offered translation and BSL interpreting services for all of the information.

Based on these findings, our recommendations include calls for more available appointments, including face-to-face appointments, a more simple and flexible booking system, more frequent updates on access options, a more personalised service, and opportunities for users to review their experiences.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns have increased the challenges patients face in accessing GP surgeries. We, and many other Healthwatch across England, have received feedback on the difficulties in using digital and telephone tools to book appointments. There has also been feedback on the confusion about face-to-face appointment eligibility.

We have seen an increase in activity across primary and secondary care - over and above pre-pandemic levels - as people try to access care. There are several potential reasons for this including that people delayed seeking care during the first and second lockdowns (which we heard about in our survey last year) and emerging health needs following lockdown, such as anxiety. Patients are telling Healthwatch about a perceived conflict between what patients want, clinical needs and access. This project will explore these issues in Southwark.

Why We Did This Project

As the issue of GP access extends beyond our borough, we initially worked on a joint project with all the South East London (SEL) Healthwatch (Southwark, Lambeth, Lewisham, Greenwich, Bexley, Bromley). Our aim was to determine a post-lockdown baseline for GP access across SEL, and to understand and compare the experiences of patients accessing their GP surgeries across the six boroughs.

This report builds on the Southwark-specific findings from the joint report, by incorporating more in-depth information about patient experience in our borough gathered through multiple channels of engagement. It provides further opportunity to understand what is happening in Southwark, identify good practice in our GP services, and prioritise improvements for the future.

Methodology

We carried out a survey between 30th July and 31st August 2021 that asked Southwark residents about their experiences of making (or trying to make) and attending GP appointments since the lifting of lockdown on 19th July 2021. The survey asked a mixture of closed (e.g., rating scales) and open questions, to allow people to share more detail about their personal experience (see Appendix 1 for the full survey).

We also conducted an audit of all Southwark GP websites between 19th July and 16th August 2021, looking at whether they had certain information online (e.g., about booking appointments, complaints, and other services to go to) and how easily accessible this information was (see Appendix 2 for the full audit).

Finally, we developed case studies exploring the experience of two people who contacted us for signposting or to provide feedback, outside of this project (see Appendix 3 for the full case studies). Their experiences illustrate the complex journeys of patients trying to access GP services. The case studies are anonymised, and consent was obtained from the individuals to share their accounts in this report.

Limitations/ Challenges

There were some key challenges and limitations that we faced in the planning and delivery of this research project. Firstly, a small sample of people were surveyed and therefore, our findings cannot be considered representative of the entire population and their diverse experiences. Notably, we faced challenges in recruiting research participants to take part in the survey due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation which limited opportunities for in-person community engagement. Nevertheless, as outlined in our Research Framework, we are committed to conducting experienced based community research, valuing personal stories and experiences, which this research project captures.

Likewise, the findings gathered are also reflective of the specific context in which the survey took place. The Government had enforced its step 4 phase of Covid-19 restrictions which impacted how GPs could deliver their service. This included that all GP contractors should offer a blended approach to face-to-face and remote appointments, with digital triage where possible (NHS, 2021). Furthermore, we recognise the overwhelming pressures that health care professionals across the country have faced throughout the pandemic and the immense hard work and dedication that they have shown in the face of unprecedented circumstances.

Finally, this project was part of a joint project with all the South East London (SEL) Healthwatch and therefore the timeframe, process and survey questions were predetermined. Healthwatch Southwark adopts a collaborative approach to undertaking projects, coproducing our plans, methodologies, and processes with local stakeholders. This approach was restricted for this project due to the limited timeframe allocated for the completion of the project. In our commitment to ongoing learning, we recognise the need to ensure that our stakeholders are always engaged in our projects from the beginning and that our project timeframe can accommodate sufficient time for reviews going forward.

Background Research

Most of the current studies on GP access focus on the experiences of small groups of patients who have had virtual or phone appointments during the pandemic as part of a trial. However, not many studies focus on the experience of general GP users and the potential problems they face when trying to access virtual GP services.

Several studies conducted in the UK showed that a high number of patients seemed to prefer virtual appointments over face-to-face appointments during the pandemic, and that for many patients virtual appointments are less stressful as they don't require taking time off work and travel costs, and are accessible to people living more remotely. However, most patients also reported that they would prefer face-to-face appointments in the future over virtual ones.

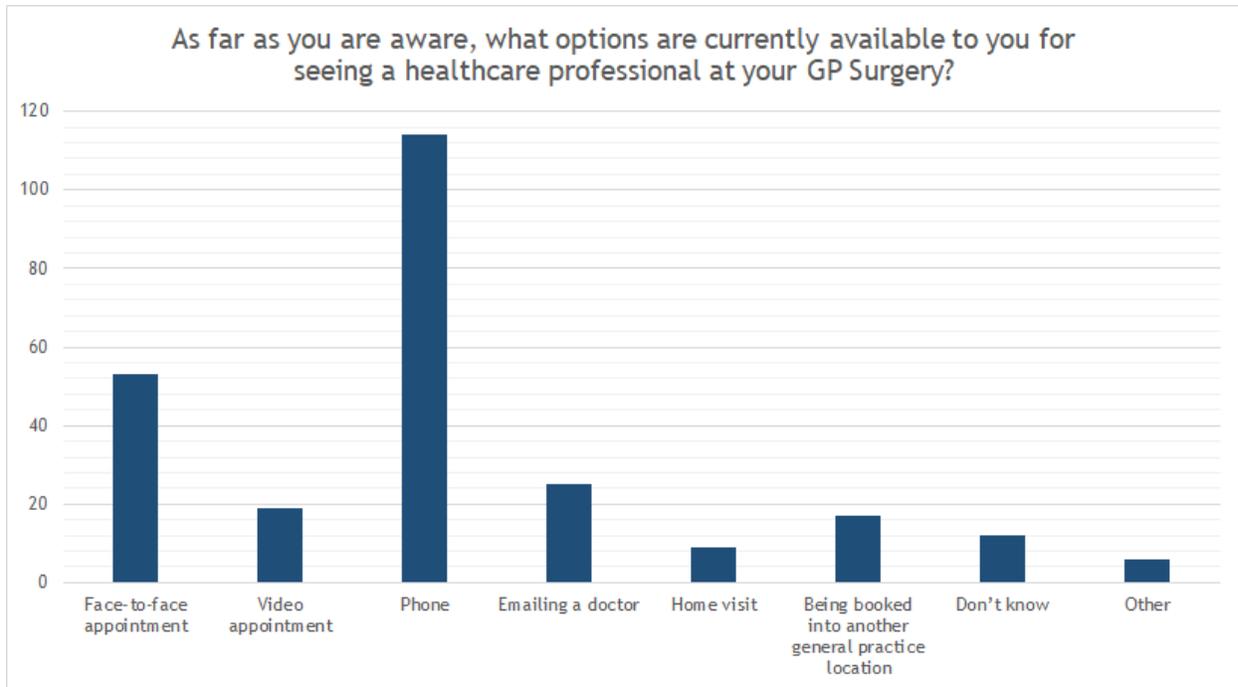
A study conducted during a pandemic lockdown in New Zealand and a study conducted in Australia both point to potential issues of access, for example for people with limited access to or knowledge of technology needed for these appointments.

One study interviewing cancer patients in Ireland also found that while patients valued the measures taken to keep them safe during the pandemic, patients reported that person-centredness and empathy suffered due to a lack of face-to-face appointments, restricting 'access to professional and social support'.



Survey Findings

General Access



Telephone appointments were the most well-known option available for seeing a healthcare professional. Respondents were less aware of email and video appointment options and opportunities to be booked into another GP location. Notably, a large proportion of respondents were very dissatisfied or fairly dissatisfied with the options

available for them to see a healthcare professional. The most common complaints concerned the process of booking appointments online or on the phone. Many respondents said they had issues phoning during the specified time window (usually during work hours) and that appointment slots were often fully booked. Several mentioned the difficulty of 'getting through to reception', being put on hold, or not being called back when promised. Many respondents also complained that phone and online appointments were not sufficient to address their conditions (such as lung, post-natal, chronic), or that their conditions were not being properly diagnosed without face-to-face appointments. Several felt dismissed by medical staff and receptionists, who they described as uncaring and rushed. Those who left positive comments said they had no issues booking or that the service was generally “excellent”, “efficient” and “easy to access”.

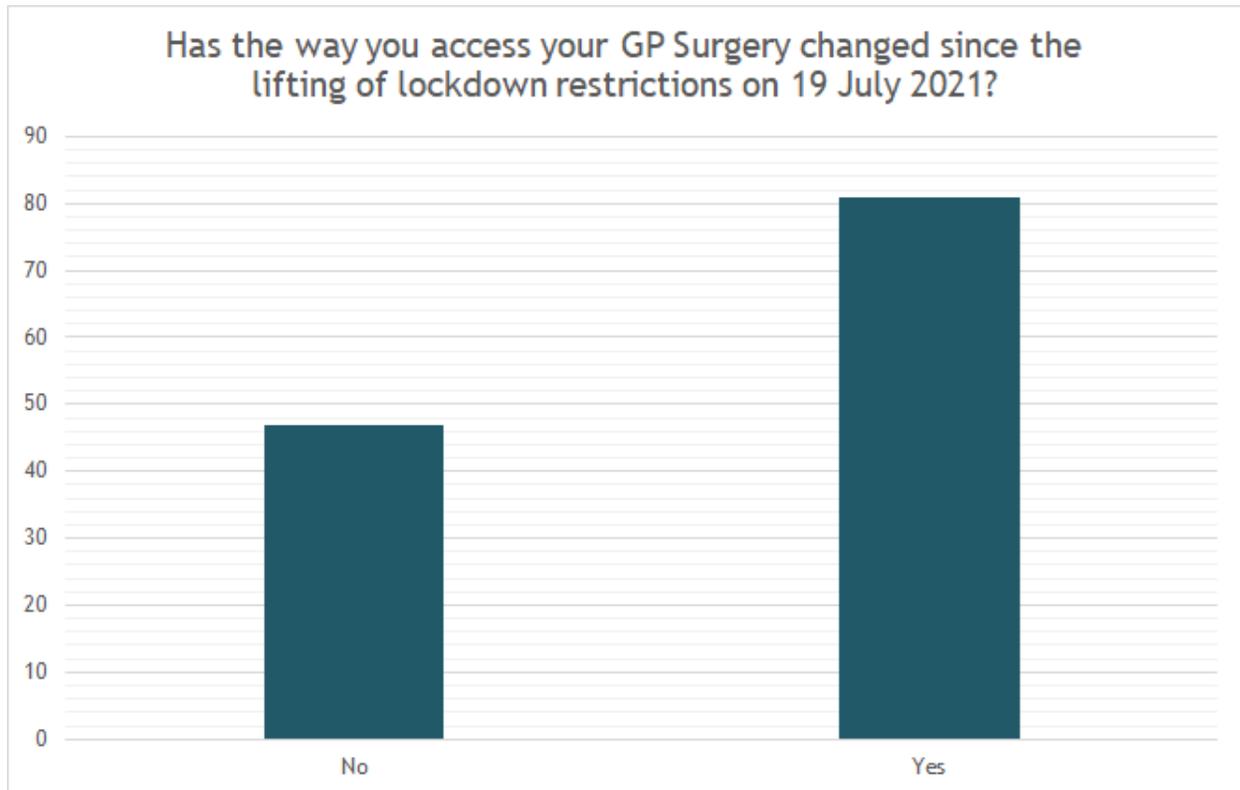


“I think that phone consultations are good as an additional option (e.g. for repeat prescriptions) but they are not a substitute for real face-to-face consultations, particularly after a year of no contact... very concerned about this becoming the norm long-term.”

“Phone triage system is useful if you have something non urgent. But I found it unsuitable for my child when he had a persistent cough (not covid) and it took much longer to get a diagnosis than it would with an initial face to face appointment.”

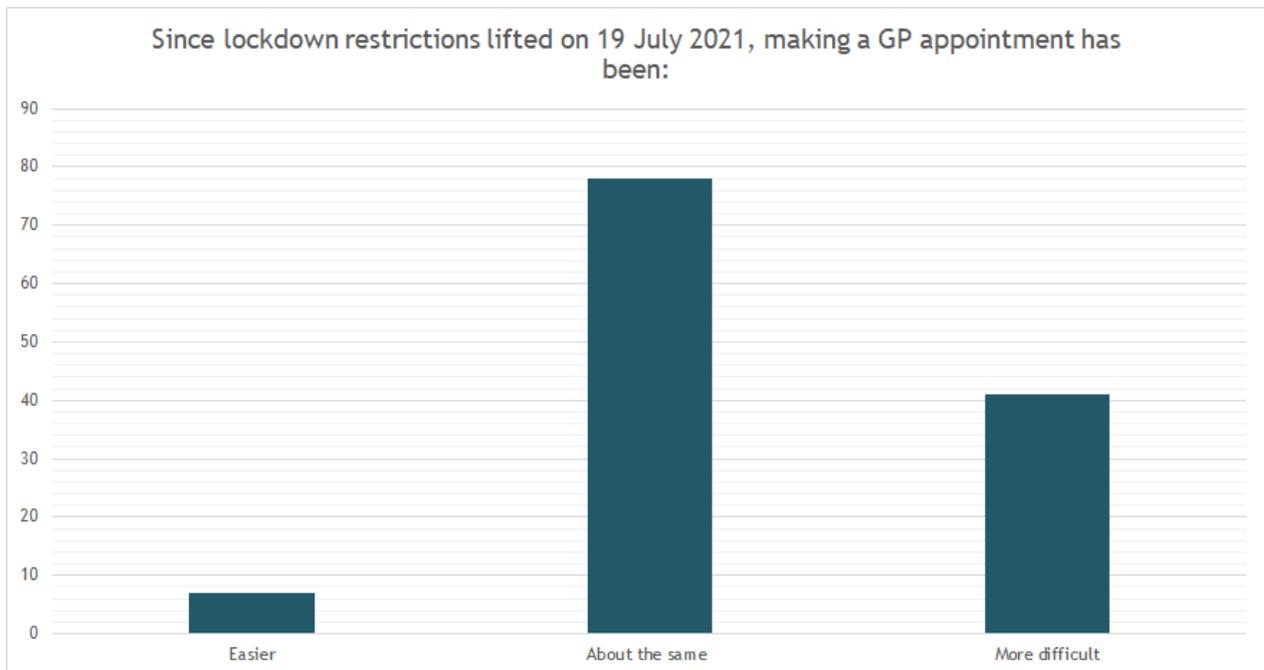
“It takes a very long time to get through to the practice...When you do get through to the reception there are no appointments offered, for even booking 2 weeks down the line. Sometimes it is very urgent, and I have had to call 111 instead of the GP.

The GP then does not know about this. They are unaware of how many times a person has called or tried to get through, as there is no record being kept. Also, when finally getting through to seeing the GP, it feels surreal and trying to get through more than one incident or health condition - it always feels rushed and there are no follow ups.”



Many of the respondents who believe that the way they access their GP surgery has changed said their appointments had been online rather than in-person. Several mentioned longer wait times for appointments and booking/prescriptions being processed online, without face-to-face options. Surprisingly, few respondents said that they had more access to their GP (including the return to face-to-face appointments) or that booking had become easier following the lifting of lockdown restrictions.

“The telephone access has gone down drastically. The phone system they use can be a disadvantage, as most the time patients are left waiting over 40 minutes in a queue which ends up getting disconnected.”



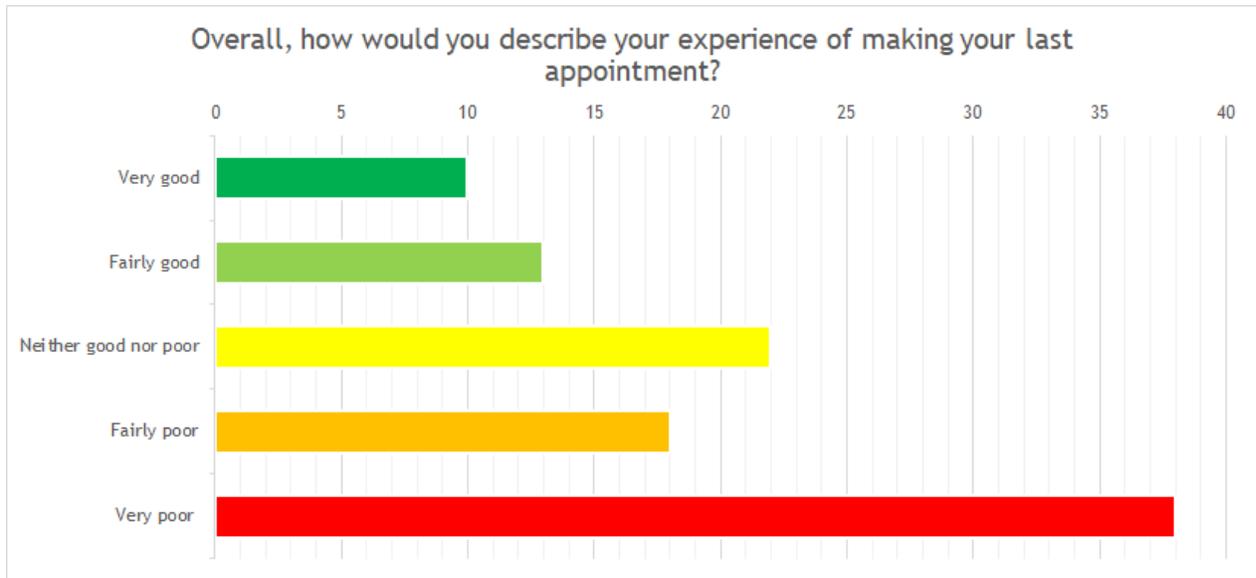
Most answers reflected were those given in response to previous questions. Those who found it 'more difficult' mentioned longer wait times, difficulty booking via phone/online, and being unable to speak directly with a GP (on the phone or face-to-face). Most people who said booking was 'about the same' said that 'nothing has changed' or that there is still not enough access to face-to-face appointments. Those who said it was 'easier' (only 7 respondents) said they had been able to book appointments without issue, had been able to see their GP in person, or that wait times had gone down.

“The telephones are extremely busy when I need to make an urgent appointment. A routine appointment is easy to book in advance online.”

“I was advised to use the app to book a review of recent prescribed medications. It took three attempts before I spoke to a doctor on the phone. The messages on the app told me to do different contradictory things, which wasted a lot of time.”

Booking Appointments

Approximately how many times have you contacted your GP surgery to try and book an appointment for yourself or someone you care for since 19 July 2021?	Number of responses
0	24
1	28
2	26
3	17
4	14
5+	20

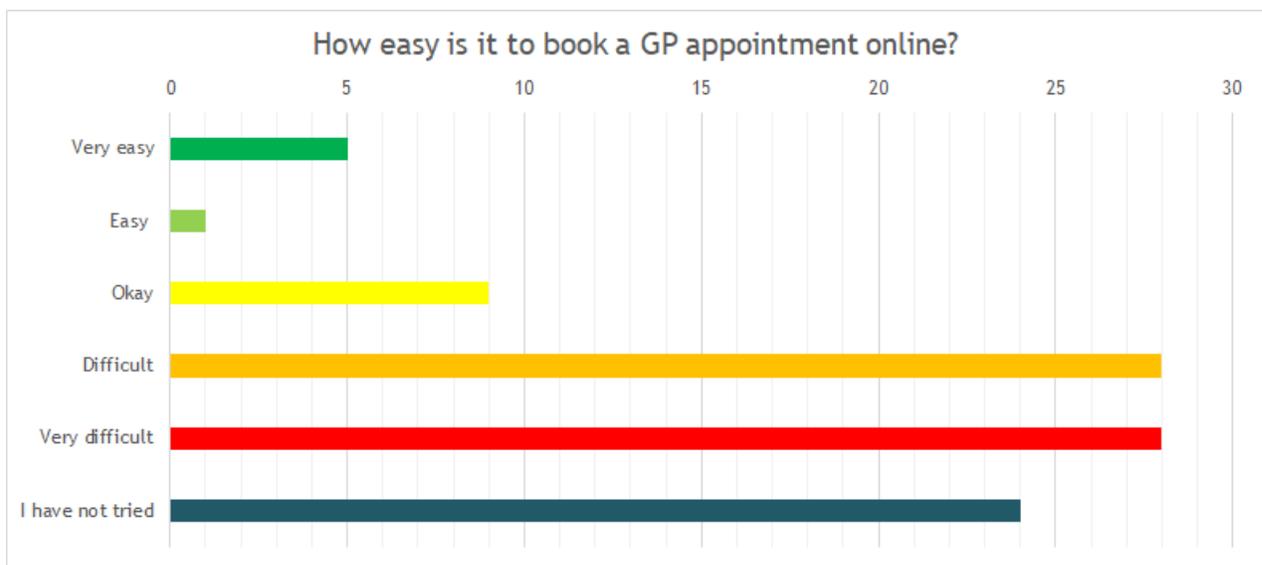
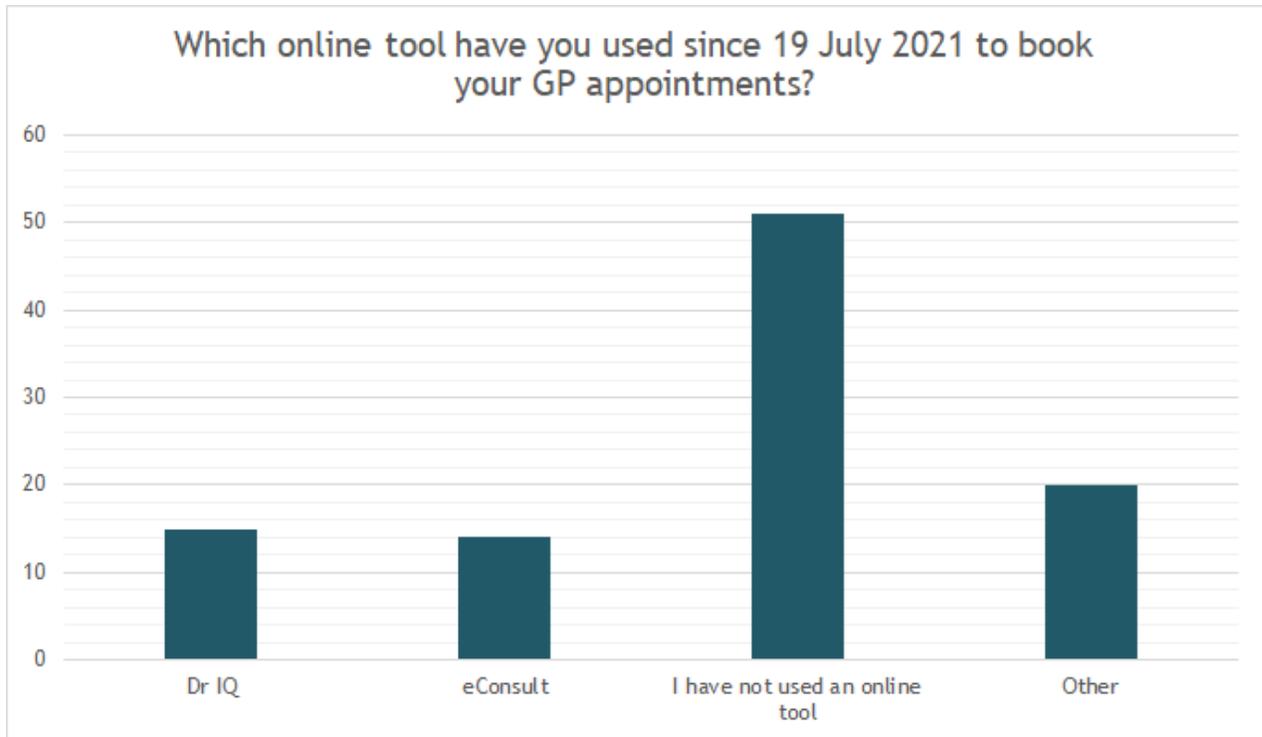


Those who described their experience as 'fairly poor' or 'very poor' mentioned long wait and hold times to book appointments, limited availability of appointments, and frustration at not getting past reception on the phone. Several described feeling forgotten when GP surgery failed to call back when promised. Those who described the experience as 'fairly good' or 'very good' reported that it had been 'easy' (positive answers usually much shorter than negative).

“Despite several calls to the surgery, I was told to email as that would get me a telephone appointment sooner.”

“I emailed the surgery and was told someone would ring within 24 hours but it was actually 5 days later.”

“I called because my husband had difficulty swallowing and was called back promptly. The doctor offered a video call and he was immediately referred to the Urgent Care Unit at Guy’s and St Thomas’ and admitted into hospital. The prompt action of our GP saved his life.”



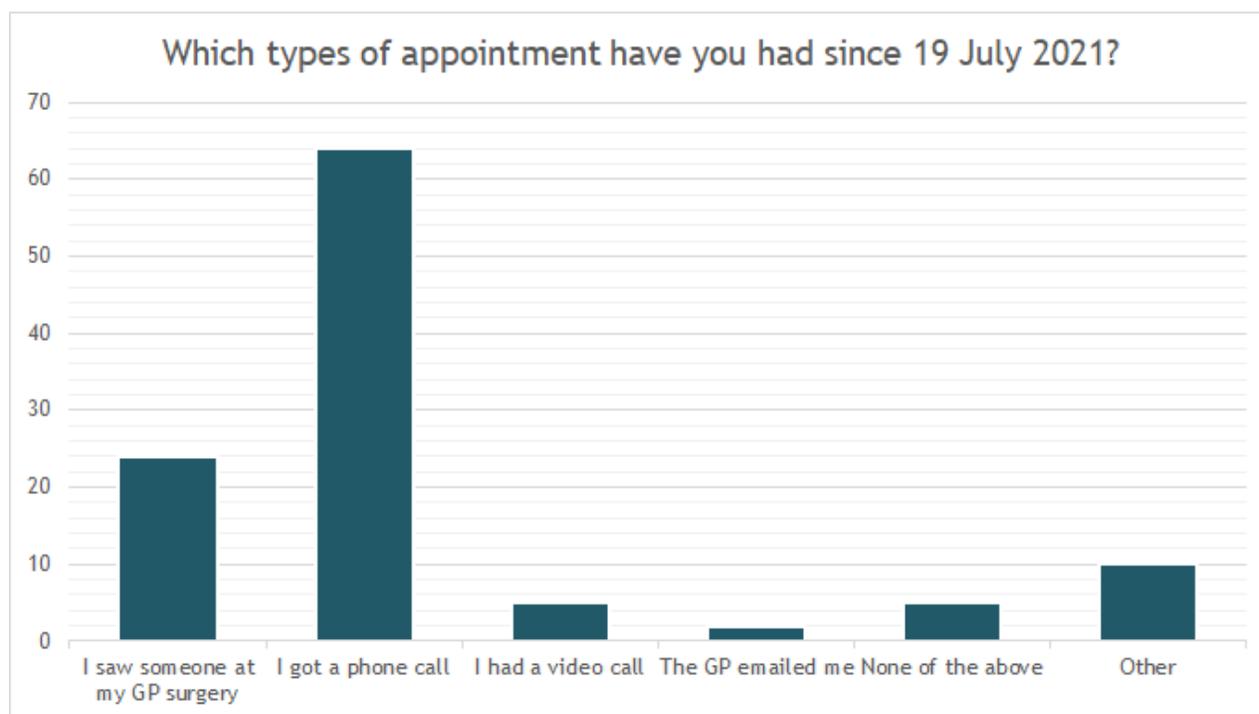
Those who said it was 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to book a GP appointment online said that their GP did not offer the service, that they were unable to access it (whether because of their digital ability or because of technical errors in the site), or that the process was overall too complicated. Several mentioned not receiving calls back from their GP and being unable to find an open appointment slot. Very few (6 people) said the process was 'easy' or 'very easy'.

“Online is an option that is not always available to everyone. There are far too many irrelevant questions asked and I was unsure when I would receive a call from the GP.”

“The practice has disabled the facility to book an appointment online via the app. You can only obtain an appointment via the e-consult, and that may still not result in an appointment. Also, the e-consult facility is often switched off (when they are facing increased demand) and only available at 8am on weekdays.”

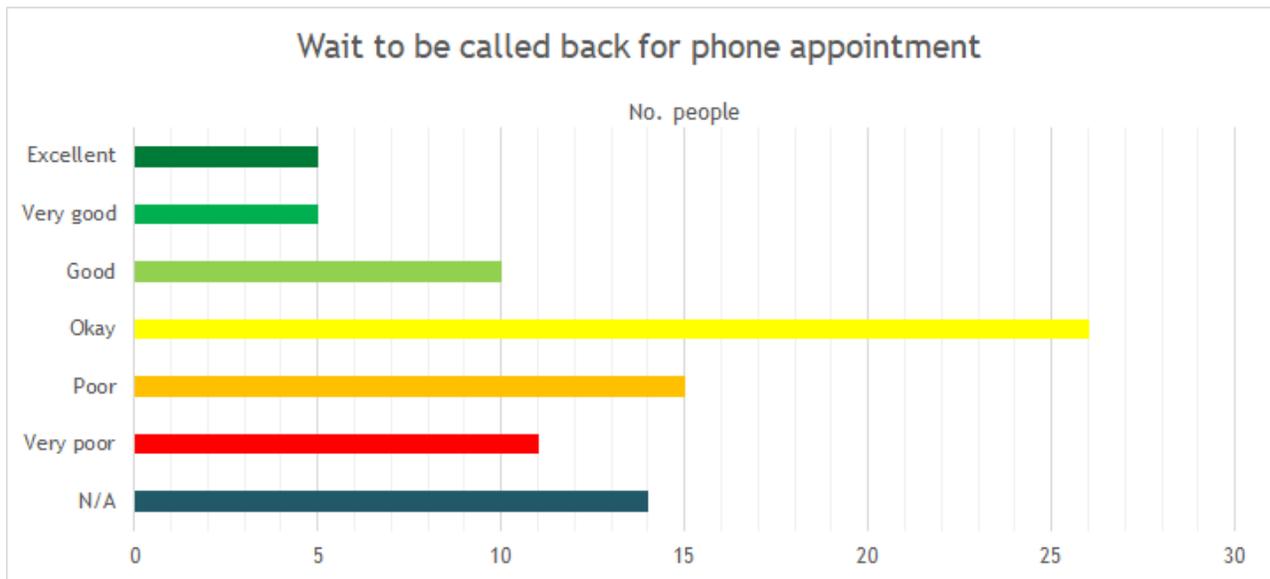
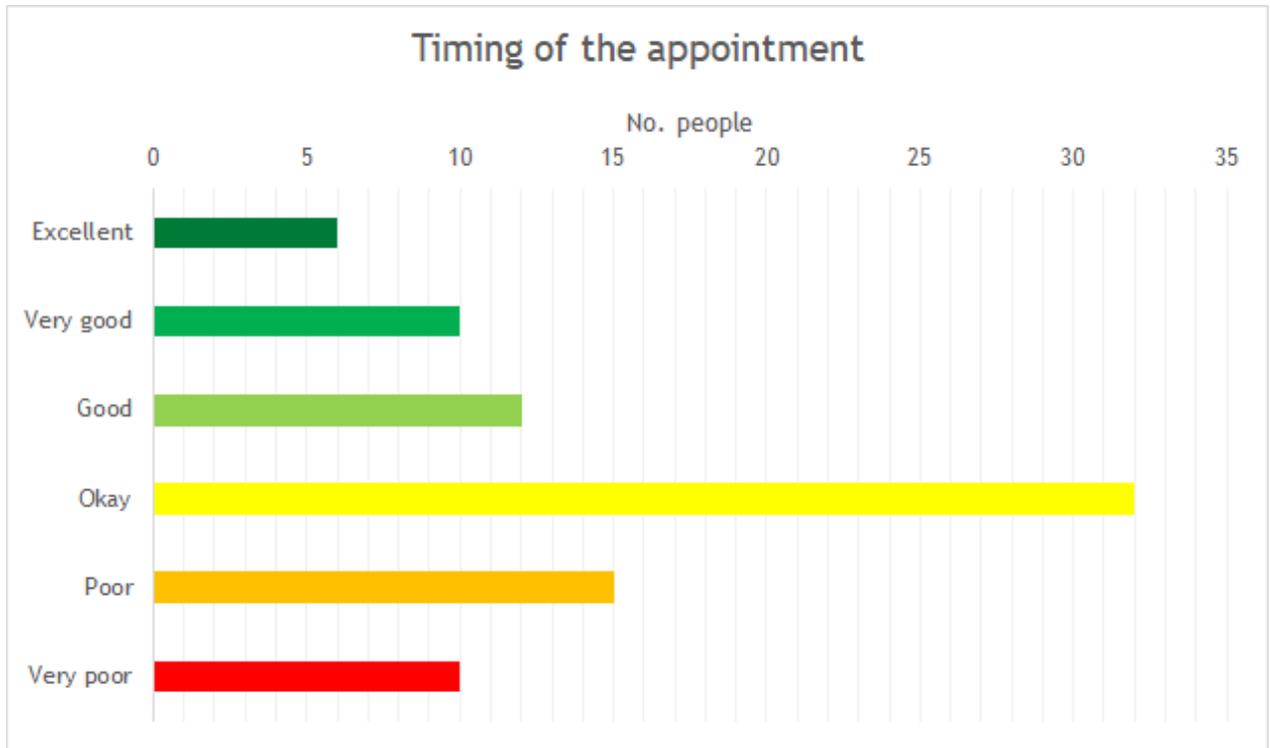
Attending Appointments

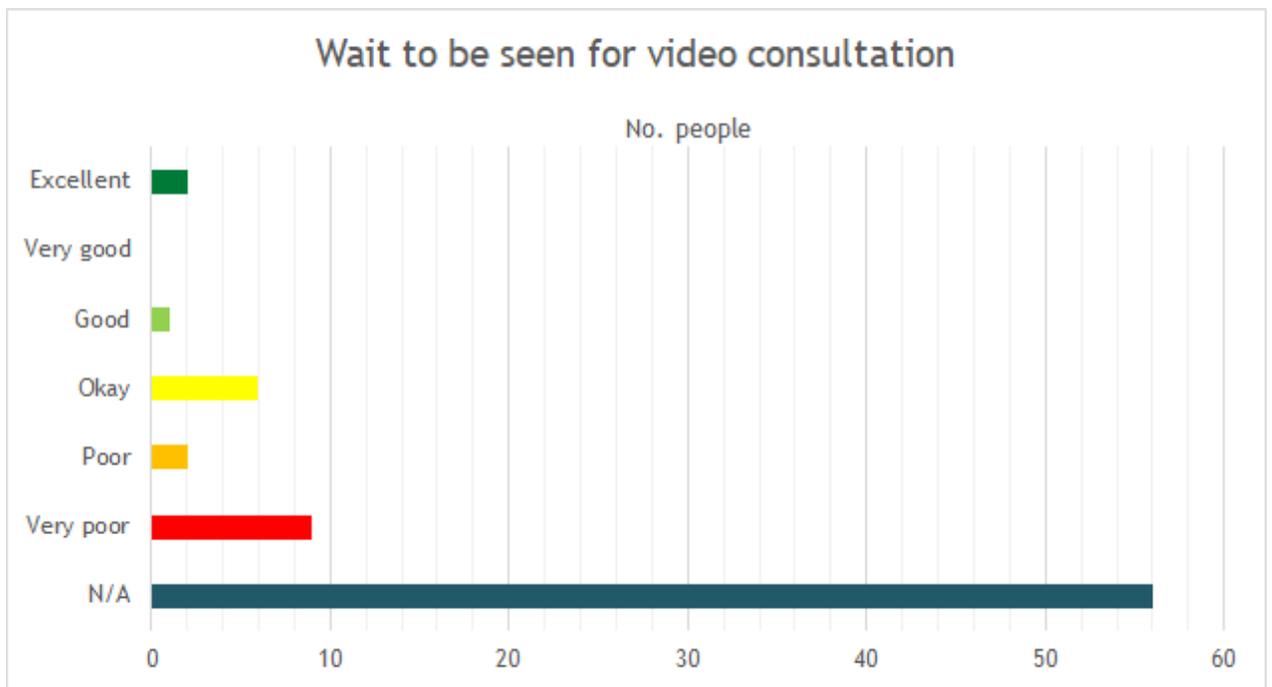
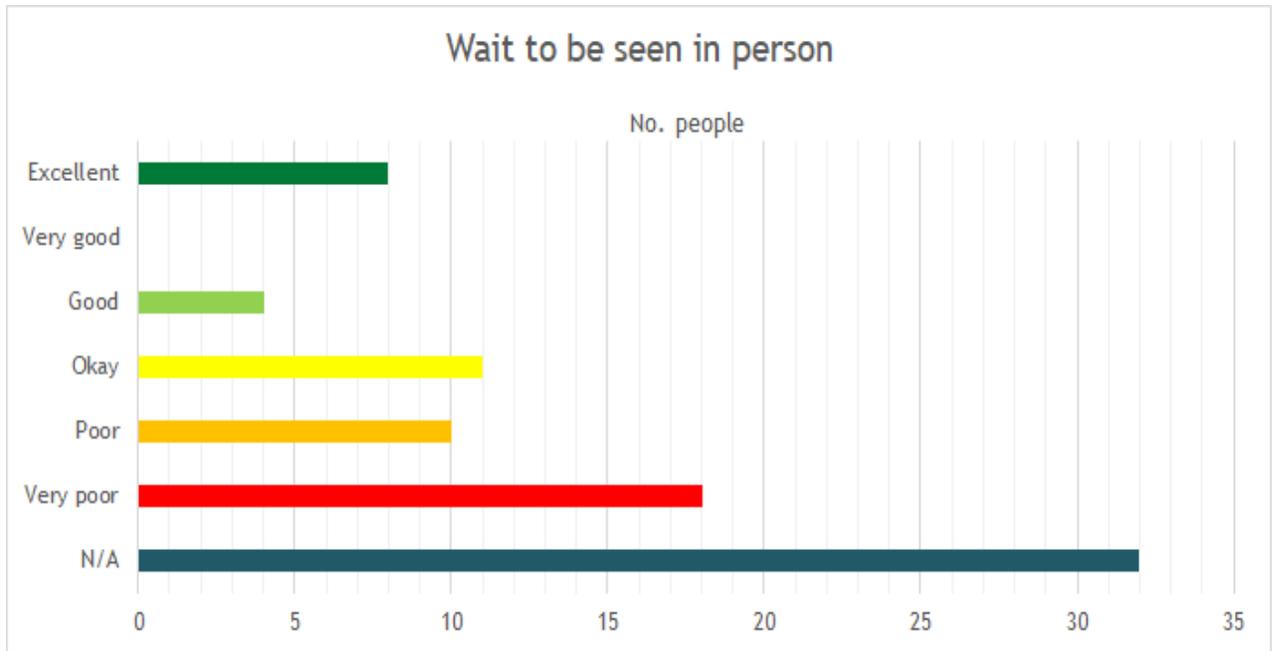
How many appointments have you or someone you care for had since 19 July 2021?	Number of responses
0	34
1	36
2	26
3	9
4	6
5+	12

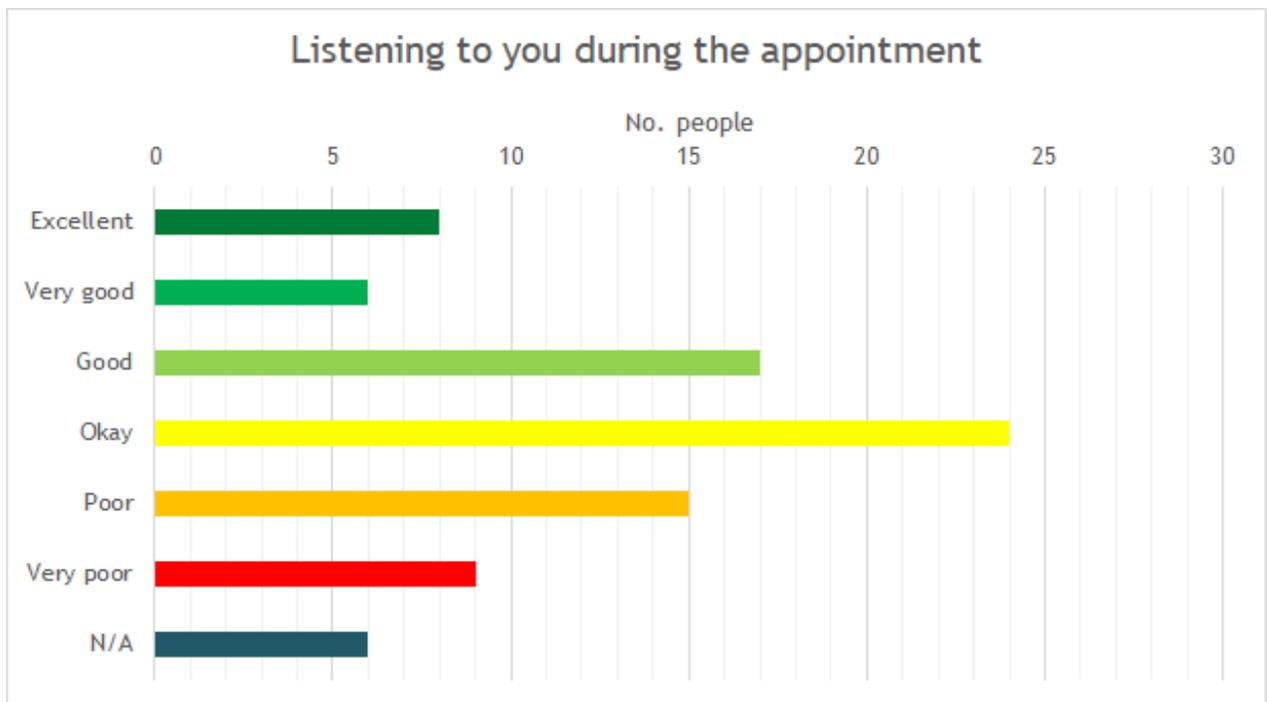
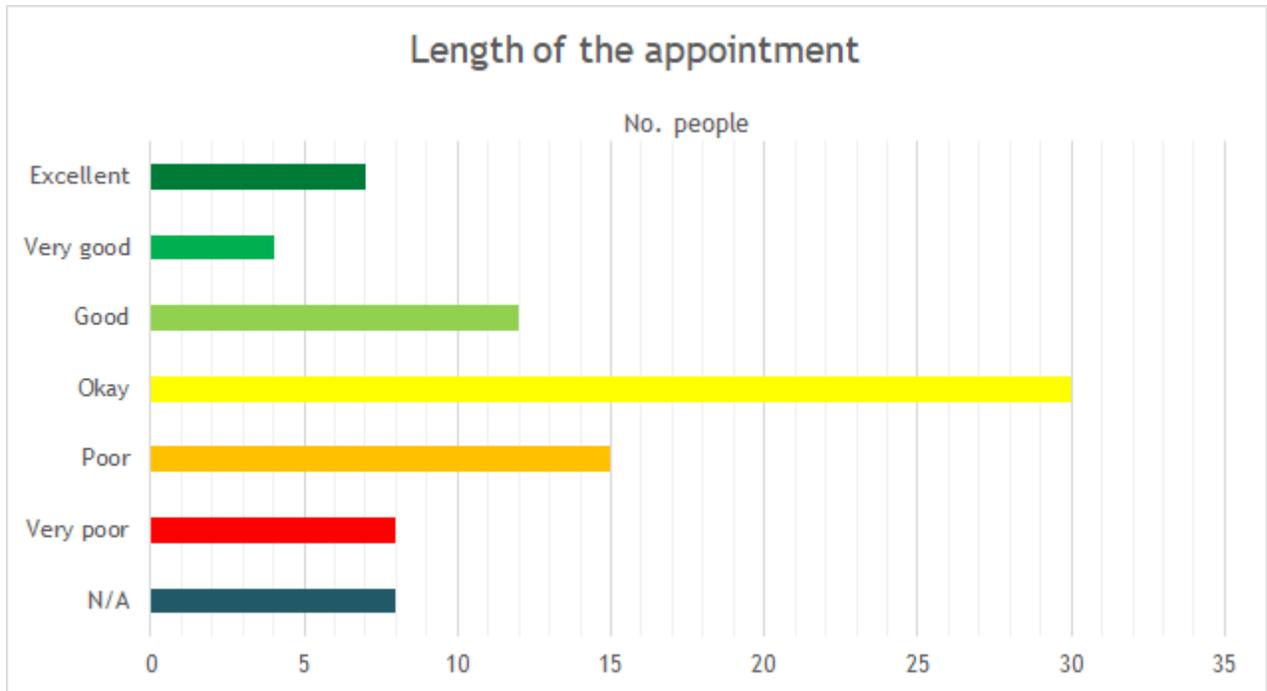


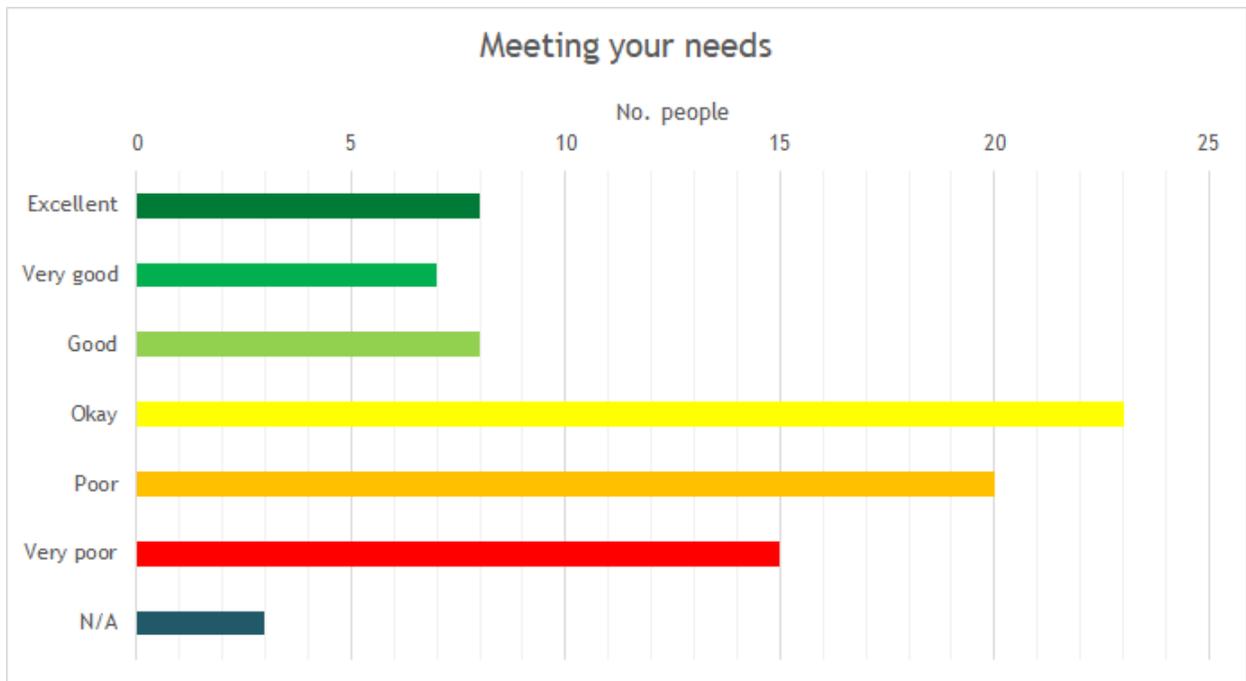
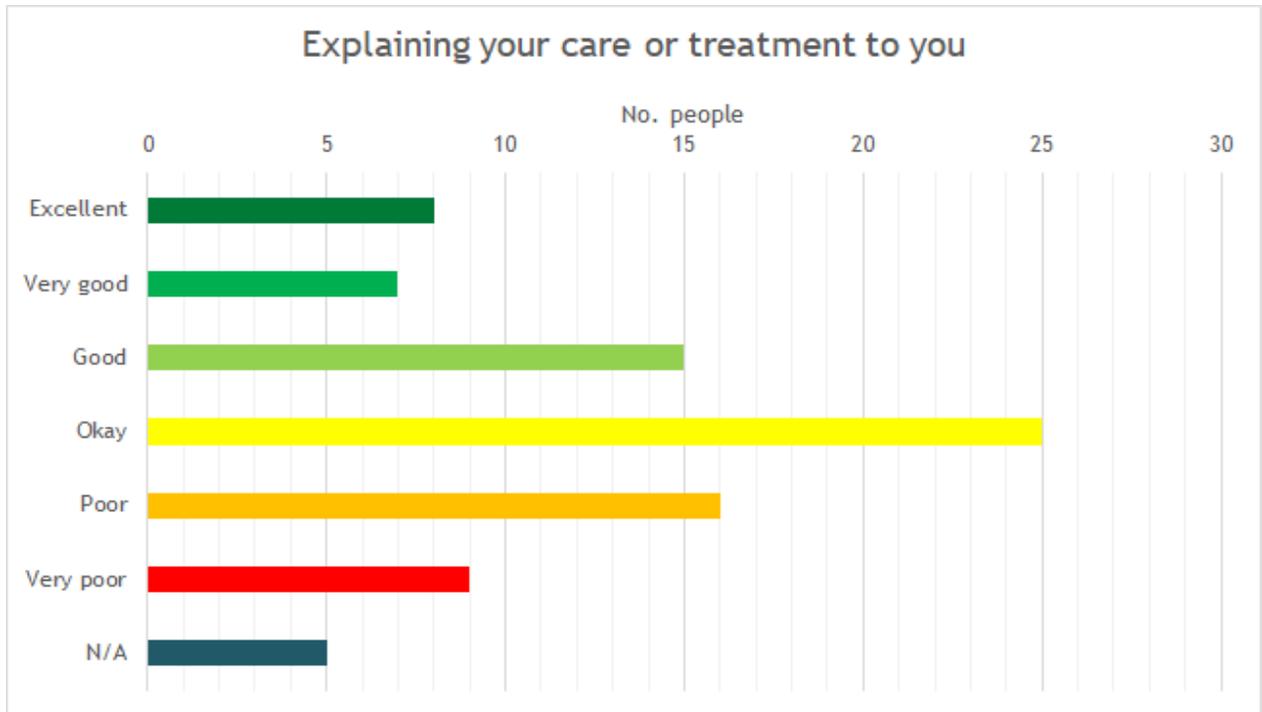
The majority of respondents (58%) had received a phone call appointment with their GP, 22% of respondents had seen someone at the GP and 5% had a video call appointment.

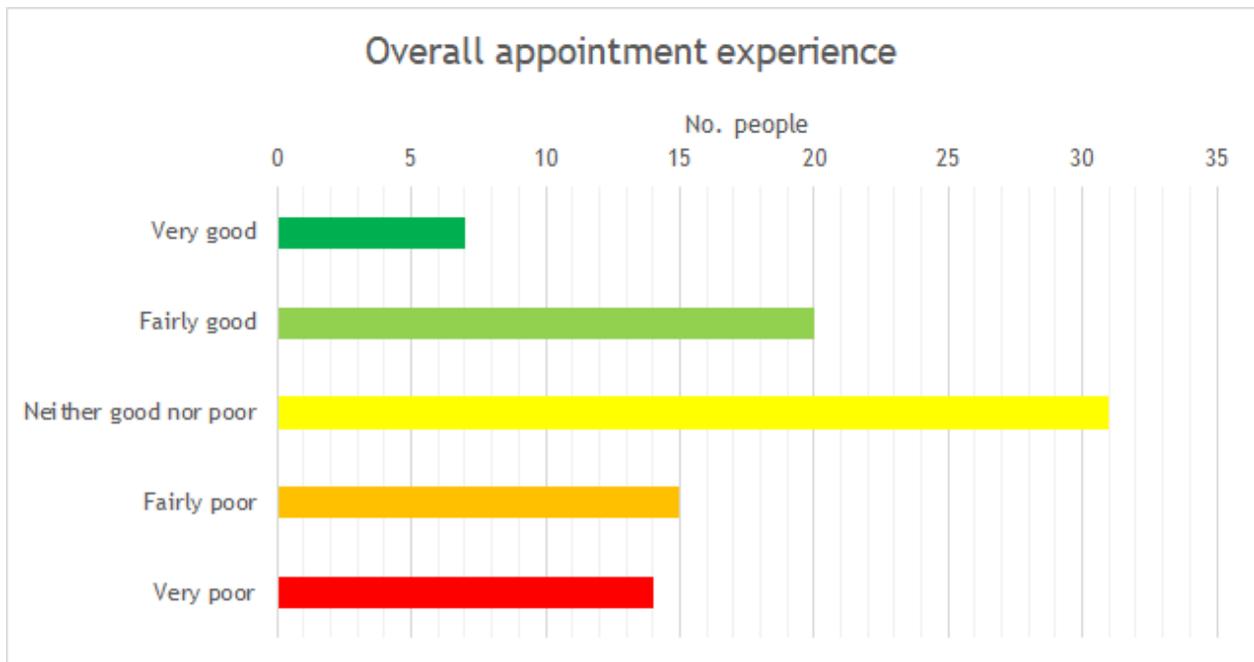
We asked people to rate the following aspects of their appointment: timing of the appointment; wait to be seen or called for video, phone and in-person appointments; length of the appointment; being listening to during the appointment; having any care or treatment explained during the appointment; and having their needs met.











Overall, people rated most aspects of their appointment as satisfactory with ‘okay’ being the most common response. The largest amount of dissatisfaction was directed at wait times for in person and video consultations. Notably, these two types of appointments also received the highest proportion of people responding ‘n/a’ when rating the service, suggesting that they don’t have experience of these services. This reflects the responses we received in terms of which type of appointments respondents had been offered since July 2021. Interestingly, there was more satisfaction with the wait to be called back for a phone appointment, likely because patients can get on with their daily activities whilst waiting for a call.

The people who had good experiences mentioned being listened to, having things explained and being given clear, direct information.

“It was really good, the doctor really spoke to me nicely and really listened to me.”

“I had a great experience except the waiting times on the phone are too long.”

“Once you actually get to speak to a GP the experience is fine. It’s the issues of how you get to this stage that is worrying.”

“The Doctor explained my condition and gave me direct advice.”



The key features of negative experiences were:

- Long waits on the phone and lack of appointments.
- Not being notified of the time of the phone call, and then missing it.
- Difficulty explaining symptoms over the phone or computer.
- Phone appointments focusing strictly on one issue, rather than a more holistic approach - especially for people with multiple conditions. One parent also mentioned having to make individual phone appointments for each child which was very time-consuming.
- Not feeling listened to and as a result being told to do things they had already tried with no success.
- Being given incorrect information which delayed the process for example, being given the wrong form for a hospital blood test and then being sent back to the GP - where getting an appointment takes a lot of time.
- Lack of continuity - never seeing the same staff and feeling like nothing about their condition or situation is known.

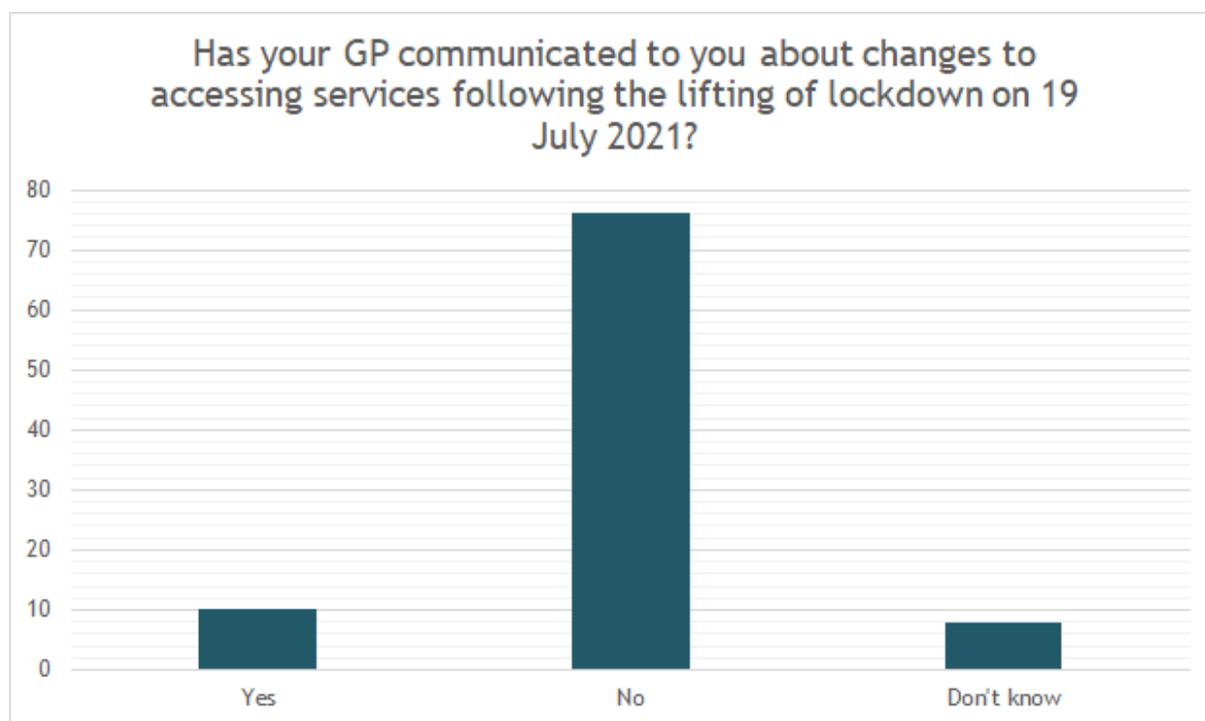
“I did not feel that the doctor listened to me. The suggestions they made initially were rather inappropriate in response to what I had described. Overall, it was a far inferior experience to being seen in person. During the call we agreed to increase my medication but no record was left with the surgery which meant that I increased the dosage and may now have to reduce it again.”

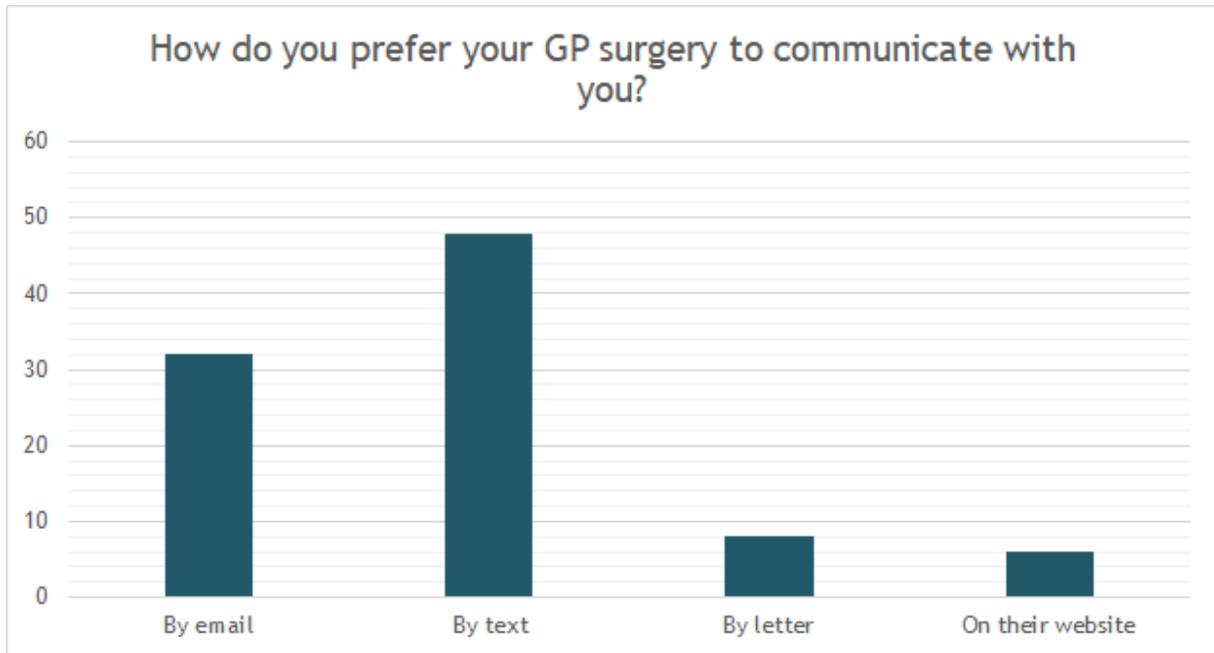
“Calling our surgery is very time consuming with the queuing system. It is horrid to be told, “no appointments ring again at 1.30pm.”

Staff and Communication

Which GP Practice staff have you had contact with since 19 July 2021? Please select all that apply.	Number of responses
GP Doctor	57
Nurse	32
Midwife	1
Practice Manager	8
Reception/Administrative Staff	62
Mental Health Nurse	3
None of the above	9

Overall, there were mixed experiences of staff and communications from GPs for example, “they were friendly but never able to give me an appointment”. Those who had negative experiences often mentioned unpleasant experiences with staff ('rude', 'unprofessional') and a few mentioned that staff didn't give them enough personalised attention or failed to understand their condition. Those who left positive comments mentioned GP or reception staff being 'friendly' and 'helpful'.





We asked people what information they wanted to know from their GP. The most common responses were:

- Current access.
- Changes to access, e.g., that you have to ring at 8am or 2pm on the dot for an appointment.
- When patients can see their doctors face-to-face.
- How triaging for appointments works.

“When will GPs start face to face appointments for everyone again? The in-person nursing services have been restarted. Why are some patients offered face to face appointments and not others? Do I have to make a nuisance of myself in order to be seen by a GP? Because that’s not a fair system.”

“Yes when will it open again? Why are they worried about reopening when nearly 80% of people are vaccinated? I find that quite worrying in itself.”

A few people said they did not want to know anything, as the information was all available on their practice website. This is explored in more detail in the findings of the website audit.

Website Audit Findings

We audited 29 GP websites in Southwark (Nexus Group and Southwark Group Practices have joint websites for all surgeries in their group). We looked at the quality of information on the website, and the accessibility of the website.

- Appointments can be made online at 86% of practice websites and cancelled online at 45% of practice websites (for 28% it was unclear if they could be cancelled online).
- 86% of practice websites had clear contact information.
- 25% of practice websites had an explanation on how to book a face-to-face appointment.
- 83% of practices did not have clear information on booking extended hours appointments.
- 59% of practices did not have clear information on self-referral services, but 34% did have clear information.
- 52% of practice websites had very clear information on out-of-hours services, whereas 21% had no information and 10% had unclear information.
- 76% of practices had clear information on how to complain, whereas 24% had unclear or no information.
- 42% of practice websites had clear information about advocacy support, the rest had unclear or no information.
- 62% of practices had information on 6 or more alternative services (e.g., pharmacies).
- We could not find information on catchment areas for 28% of practice websites.

We asked our auditors (Healthwatch Southwark volunteers) to rate how much they agreed with the statement 'The website is easy to navigate'.

- 7% strongly agreed
- 31% agreed
- 41% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 17% disagreed
- 3% strongly disagreed

“Site visitors are directed to download an app (Dr. iQ) to register and book appointments, otherwise there is no way to book online. Ads for the app distract from services/info on the website. Information about other local services and advocacy support are listed under 'Self-care services' which is somewhat misleading.”

“Not one link to other service works!”

- It was unclear whether an interpreter could be accessed for 84% of websites. 6 websites clearly stated an interpreter could be accessed, but 2 only referenced BSL interpreting.
- 76% of websites said they worked with a screen reader.
- 92% had an Accessibility Statement available online.
- 84% of practice websites had some easy-read formats available, but this could only be used for certain information (e.g., booking hospital appointments).
- 56% of websites could be translated into other languages.

Summary of Findings

We asked people whether any changes to GP access had worked well for them. The most common responses were:

- Ordering prescriptions online.
- Phone appointments, when they could access an appointment quickly and were told the time of the call.
- Being followed up with face-to-face if they called multiple times about the same issue.
- Not having to interact with receptionists or sit in the waiting room.
- Online booking, but there was mixed feedback about different platforms - Dr iQ received more negative comments.
- Feeling listened to.
- Being given clear information.

Across experiences of general access, booking and attending appointments and liaising with staff, a large proportion of people were dissatisfied with the options available. This was linked to:

- difficulties with the appointment booking processes,
- lack of available appointments,
- struggling with complicated digital booking systems,
- long wait times, particularly for in-person and video appointments,
- being unable to speak directly to a GP.
- the impersonal nature of phone appointments and limited understanding of patient needs,
- lack of information,
- lack of flexibility about the subject of the appointment,
- lack of staff continuity
- staff rudeness and lack of professionalism.

Our website audit revealed that there are opportunities to book appointments online but there are limited extended hour appointments available and opportunities to cancel appointments. GP websites also lack clear information on how to book face-to-face appointments which was shown to be people's preferred option expressed in

the survey data. They also lack clear information around interpreter services available. Most sites featured an Accessibility statement but not all sites offered translation and BSL interpreting services for all the information.

Recommendations

Healthwatch Southwark would like to make the following recommendations, which are based on respondents' feedback about how to improve access at their GP surgery and our own analysis of the findings.

- More appointments and better appointment booking system.
- Updates on current access, changes to access, and opportunities for face-to-face appointments.
- Opportunities to access face-to-face appointments and opportunities to choose the time of day for appointments.
- An easier process for booking appointments NOT on the phone, as this was very time-consuming and e-consult forms were felt to be complicated for issues other than getting prescriptions.
- Opportunities to share as much information as possible before the appointment and knowing the Doctor or other relevant staff member could view this.
- Greater understanding and knowledge about patients with multiple long-term conditions and disabilities.
- For staff to be empathic and remember that patients are feeling vulnerable when they contact the GP.
- Reviews of the user experience of the new systems and how everything works together. People generally wanted diverse ways to access their GP, but felt like there were currently multiple disjointed processes.
- Offering mental health services at the GP surgery.

“Communicate whether there will be any changes and what preferred method of communication you, as the surgery would prefer. Sometimes I've been told to use eConsult, other times call the reception desk, where they are then annoyed that I did so. It's not clear what the best way is to access an appointment or follow up, and people seem frustrated when you ask.”

“The patient population is diverse - and so there should be a variety of ways the public can access a GP. GP practices need to learn that 'disability' isn't just 'wheelchair access and parking' or a hearing loop. They are not 'automatically' accommodating the whole spectrum of disabilities -which as health care providers they shouldn't need an education in. I really shouldn't have to point out that my sleep disorder means I'd never be able to ring or send an e-consult at 8 o'clock in the morning.”

Next Steps

This is the interim report that is part of an ongoing project exploring experiences of GP access in Southwark during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our next steps involve:

- Engaging with local stakeholders and partners to see how we can support them to fulfil the recommendations,
- Developing targeted work informed by the key findings of this report to ensure that it has ongoing impact,
- Presenting our findings to local stakeholders, partners, and the steering group to get them involved in the next steps and facilitate coproduction,
- Working collaboratively with primary care stakeholders in Southwark and supporting them with their identified areas of improvement,
- Undertaking a follow up project on digital exclusion and patient engagement with a focus on older people,
- Engaging with seldom heard groups within the local community including people from Latin American and African/ Caribbean communities, carers, and older people to find out about their experiences of GP access during the Covid-19 pandemic and their distinct needs and demands.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Southwark volunteers contributed enormously to this project, and we could not have done it without them.

GP Website Audit: Monika, Milena, Helen

Quantitative Analysis: Adriana, Monika

Qualitative Analysis: Milena

If you have any questions about the report, follow up on any of the issues raised or would like to share your experiences of accessing GP services, please contact Megan Isherwood (Healthwatch Southwark Research & Projects Officer) at megan.isherwood@healthwatchsouthwark.org

References

National Health Service (NHS). (2021) *Arrangements for Primary Care from 19 July 2021*. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/documents/letter-on-arrangements-for-primary-care-from-19-july-2021/>

Appendices

Appendix 1- Survey

Understanding Your Experience of Making and Attending GP Appointments

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way people access their GP. Lockdown restrictions were lifted on 19 July 2021. We want to understand your experience of booking and attending GP appointments after this date. This includes online bookings and video and phone consultations. We also want to know if this has affected your experience of care.

Healthwatch Southwark is your health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback. The results of your feedback will be shared with decision makers to improve care.

We treat your personal data as confidential and protect it accordingly. We will always make sure that your data is protected and treated securely. Read our full Privacy Statement by typing bit.ly/HWSPrivacy in your browser.

Section 1: About Your GP Surgery

1. What is the name of your GP surgery?
.....

2. As far as you are aware, what options are currently available to you for seeing a healthcare professional at your GP Surgery? Please tick all that apply.

- Face-to-face appointment
- Video appointment
- Phone
- Emailing a doctor
- Home visit
- Being booked into another general practice location
- Don't know
- Other (please specify)

.....

3. Overall, how satisfied are you with the options available to you for seeing a healthcare professional?

- Very dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied

- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Very satisfied

4. Please tell us why you chose this answer:

5. Has the way you access your GP Surgery changed since the lifting of lockdown restrictions on 19 July 2021?

- Yes
- No

6. If yes, how has it changed?

7. Since lockdown restrictions lifted on 19 July 2021, making a GP appointment has been:

- Easier
- More difficult
- About the same

8. Please tell us why you chose this answer

Section 2: Making an appointment

1. Approximately how many times have you contacted your GP surgery to make an appointment for yourself or someone you care for since 19 July 2021?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

10. How did you book your last appointment?

- Phoning for a general appointment
- Phoning for an on-the-day appointment
- Booking online or through the website (e.g. eConsult, Dr IQ)
- In person by visiting the surgery
- Through NHS 111
- Emailing the surgery
- Automated telephone booking
- Cannot remember
- Other (please specify

.....

11. Overall, how would you describe your experience of making your last appointment?

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

12. Please tell us why you chose this answer

13. Which online tool have you used since 19 July 2021 to book your GP appointments?

- eConsult
- Dr IQ
- I have not used an online tool
- Other (please specify)

.....

14. How easy is it to book a GP appointment online?

- Very difficult
- Difficult
- Okay
- Easy
- Very easy

15. Please tell us why you chose this answer

16. If you did not get an appointment, what did you do?

- Called an NHS helpline, such as NHS 111
- Used an online NHS service (including NHS 111 online)
- Used a non-NHS online service, or looked online for information
- Went to A&E
- Spoke to a pharmacist
- Decided to contact my practice another time
- Spoke to a friend or family member
- Did not see or speak to anyone

Section 3: Your appointment experience

17. How many appointments have you or someone you care for had since 19 July 2021? *Please include all appointments with different healthcare professionals, as well as telephone and online appointments*

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

18. Which types of appointment have you had since 19 July 2021? Please tick all that apply.

- I saw someone at my GP surgery
- I got a phone call
- I had a video call
- The GP emailed me
- None of the above
- Other (please specify)

.....

19. Please rate your experience of the following

	Very poor	Poor	Okay	Good	Excellent	N/A
Timing of the appointment						
Wait to be called back for phone appointment						
Wait to be seen in person						
Wait to be called for video consultation						
Length of the appointment						
Listening to you during the appointment						
Explaining your care or treatment to you						
Meeting your needs						

20. Overall, how would you describe your experience of your appointment?

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

21. Please tell us more about your experience

Section 4: Experience of Staff

22. Which GP Practice staff have you had contact with since 19 July 2021? Please select all that apply.

- GP Doctor
- Nurse
- Midwife
- Practice Manager
- Reception/Administrative Staff
- Mental Health Nurse
- None of the above

23. What is your experience of engaging with staff?

24. Has your GP communicated to you about changes to accessing services following the lifting of lockdown on 19 July 2021?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

25. How do you prefer your GP surgery to communicate with you? 0

- On their website
- By text
- By email
- By letter

26. Is there any information about current access that you would like to know from your GP surgery?

Section 5: Improvement Suggestions

27. What changes to GP access (e.g. phone appointments, online booking) have worked well for you, if any?

28. What suggestions do you have for improving access at your practice

Section 6: Getting Involved

29. Please select if you would be interested in the following involvement opportunities:

- Joining your GP Patient Participation Group
- Joining Healthwatch Southwark mailing list (to receive updates about our work and local involvement opportunities)
- Volunteering for Healthwatch Southwark in the area that you live

30. If yes, please provide your contact details:

Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Section 7: About Yourself

The following questions will help us to see how experiences vary between different groups of the population. We will keep your answers completely confidential, and they will not be used for any other purpose. If you would prefer not to answer, please select 'Prefer not to say'.

31. Which area of Southwark do you live in?

- Borough & Bankside
- Bermondsey
- Rotherhithe
- Walworth
- Peckham
- Camberwell
- Nunhead & Peckham Rye
- Dulwich

32. Age

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <16 | <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16-17 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-54 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65-74 | |

33. Gender/gender identity

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer to self-describe | |

Is your gender identity the same as the sex you were registered at birth?

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|

34. Sexuality

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Straight/heterosexual | <input type="checkbox"/> Gay | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian | <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

35. Ethnicity/ethnic background

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arab/Arab British | <input type="checkbox"/> Black/Black British - African | <input type="checkbox"/> White British/English/Scottish/Welsh/Northern Irish |
|--|--|--|

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi | <input type="checkbox"/> Black/Black British - Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> White Irish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian British - Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Black - other | <input type="checkbox"/> White European |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian British - Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> Latin American | <input type="checkbox"/> White Traveller/ Irish Traveller/ Gypsy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian British - Pakistani | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed - Asian and White | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian - other | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed - Black African and White | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kurdish/Kurdish British | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed - Black Caribbean and White | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turkish/Turkish British | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed - other | |

36. Religion/spiritual beliefs

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No religion | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish | <input type="checkbox"/> Sikh | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

37. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|

38. Do you have any long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses? (By longer term, we mean anything lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more)

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|

39. Do you look after, or give any help or support to, family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either: long-term physical or mental ill health / disability, or problems related to old age? Don't count anything you do as part of your paid employment.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, 20 to 34 hours a week | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, 1 to 9 hours a week | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, 35 to 49 hours a week | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, 10 to 19 hours a week | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, 50 or more hours a week | |

If you would like to sign up as a Healthwatch Southwark Member or hear about the outcome of this project, please speak to a member of staff.

Appendix 2. GP Website Audit

Quality of Information

Date	Name of GP Practice	Appointments can be made online	Appointments can be cancelled online	Clear contact information	Explanation given on how to book a face-to-face appointment	Information on booking an extended appointment	Information about self-referral services	Clear information about out of hours services	Clear information about how to complain	Option to leave feedback	Clear Information about advocacy support (POhWER)	Information on alternative services .e.g. pharmacies	Ease of Navigation	Information on PPG activities	Notes/Comments (e.g. how are appts booked/cancelled)	Information on registration/catchment areas (notes)
19 th July	Albion Street Group Practice	No	No	Yes	No	Not available	Not available	Very clear	Very clear	Option to fill in 'Friends and Family test'	Not clear	6 or more services listed	Neither agree nor disagree	Yes	GPs decide on face-to-face appointment after patient contacts surgery or uses Web GP - even though they have a self-referral section, it seems to be empty	Yes
19 th July	Tessa Jowell GP Surgery	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Not available	Not available	Very clear	Very clear	Yes, plus Friends and Family test	Clear	1 other service listed	Neither agree nor disagree	Yes	Face-to-face appts: pre covid they were the norm, now surgery decides after triage	Yes

19 th July	Blackfriars Medical Practice	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	Not available	Not available	Clear	Very clear	Yes, via Practice Complaints Form to be downloaded and emailed to practice (or completed at reception)	Not clear	6+ services listed	Agree	Yes	A bit difficult finding information about making appointments (tab could be further up, or linked to via homepage). Ads are distracting and confusing, as they advertise outside/private medical services but look like they are referring to the GP's services.	
19 th July	Southwark Group Practices (inc. Falmouth Road Surgery, Queens Road Surgery, Silverlock Medical Centre, The Lister Practice)	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	not available	clear	clear	very clear	Yes, very clear (under 'Comments, Complaints and Feedback' tab).	not clear	6+ services listed	Neither agree not disagree	Yes	Site visitors are directed to download app (Dr. iQ) to register and book appts, otherwise there is no way to book online. Ads for the app distract from services/info on website. Info about other local services and advocacy support are listed under 'Self care services' which is somewhat misleading.	

28 th July	DMC Chadwick Road	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Not avail able	Very clear	Not avail able	Not clear	Yes, but hidden at bottom, not obvious	Not available	6+ servi ces listed	Neither agree not disagree	No	Online appts Via Patient online. Minimal use of website potential	Yes
28 th July	DMC Crystal Palace Road	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Not avail able	Very clear	Not avail able	Not availa ble	Yes, but hidden at bottom, not obvious	Not available	6 or more servi ces listed	Neither agree not disagree	Yes	Online appts via Patient Online (provides details and link). Not one link to other services works! Minimal use of website potential.	No
28 th July	Elm Lodge Surgery	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	not avail able	not avail able	not avail able	very clear	No portal found	clear	4-5 other servi ces listed	disagree	Yes	Online appts via Patient online & NHS apps.	yes
28 th July	Forest Hill Road Group Practice	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	not avail able	not clear	not avail able	clear	No portal found	clear	6 or more servi ces listed	disagree	Yes	Online apt via Patient Online (good explainatio n: non ref to face to face). 'Self-refer' services 'confused at practice, should be	Yes

															examples like IAPTs, not community organisations	
28 th July	Nexus Group Practices (inc. Artesian Aylesbury Commercial Way, Decima Street, Dun Cow, Manor Place, Princess Street, Sir John Kirk Close, Surrey Docks)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Not available	Not available	Not available	Very clear	No portal found	Very clear	2-3 other services listed	Neither agree nor disagree	Yes	Online appt via Patient Online & e-consult. Very clear that face-to-face appt will only be after e-consult and at GP's discretion only. Self refer links to either home page or a page with no info. Website attempting to cover 9 practices.	
2 nd August	East Street Surgery	No	No	Yes	No	Not available	Not available	Very clear	Very clear	Friends and family form but very hidden,	Very clear	4-5 other services listed	Strongly disagree	Yes	function to make appointments online temporarily suspended due to Covid	Yes

										had to google						
2 nd August	Penrose Maddock Way	Yes	No	Yes	No	Not available	Not available	Not available	Very clear	Not found	Not available	1 other service listed	Neither agree not disagree	No	All appts via phone due to covid, appts can't be cancelled online, but info on how to cancel them including cancellation line phone number, website connected to their other branch's website and to the other branch's web GP, which has much more info	Yes to registration ,no to catchment area
2 nd August	Penrose Surgery	Yes	No	Yes	No	Not available	Not available	Not clear	Very clear	Not found	Not available	1 other service listed	Neither agree not disagree	No	Appts can't be cancelled online, but clear description on how to	Yes

															cancel them, including via phone, put of hours info only on their web GP website	
2 nd August	Old Kent Road Surgery	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Very clear	Not available	Very clear	Very clear	Friends and family form and form to leave comments	Clear	6 or more services listed	Agree	Yes	Extended appt: in this case meaning evening appointments, info on how to complain was clear but not easy to find, info on NHS Complaints Advocacy service but not POhWER.	Yes to registration , no to catchment area
2 nd August	Villa Street Medical Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Clear	Not available	Very clear	Very clear	Yes	Very clear	6 or more services listed	Agree	Yes		Yes

2 nd August	The Trafalgar Surgery	Yes	Don't ' know	Yes	No	Not clear	Not avail able	Clear	Not clear	Friends and family form	Not available	6 or more servi ces listed	Neither agree not disagree	Yes		Link to registration , but then no form or info, just info about practice area, appointme nts can only be made via patient access, so can't check if they can also be cancelled there
3 rd August	Nunhead Surgery	Yes	Don't ' know	No	Yes	Not avail able	Not avail able	Very clear	Very clear	No portal or info found	Not available	No other servi ces listed	Neither agree not disagree	Yes	Appointme nt can be made online via e-consult. Contact details hidden in 'find us'. Services listed are not services delivered by the practice, (includes link to 'well	No map, no description

																begin hub' -rather than wellbeing hub.	
3 rd August	The Gardens Surgery	Yes	Don't know	No	No	Not available	Not available	Clear	Very clear	Yes, but only on external sites not internally	Very clear	6 or more services listed	Neither agree nor disagree	Yes	Apt can be made online via e-consult or practice app. Practice address ought to be at the top on home page. States only telephone appts due to covid. Self-care section only giving links to eg bmi calculator. Extended hours care 'striked through' on website rather than been removed. Patient participation group listed as	Yes with postcode search	

															'patient group' - nearly didn't recognise it	
3 rd August	Lordship Lane surgery	Yes	Yes	No	N/a	Not available	Not available	Clear	Not clear	Yes	Not available	6 or more services listed	Disagree	Yes	Appts via e-consult. Contact info not on front page, only via 'contact us' (has portal). Website clearly states GP's only providing telephone advice due to covid. Lots of info re: booking apt, nothing on extended/ double appt, clearly states Improving Health Limited providing extended primary care, but	No. No info re: registering

															contact 111 if unsure. Patient participation group info eventually found while searching for practice area map.	
3 rd August	New Mill Street Surgery	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Not available	Very clear	Very clear	Clear	Yes, 'Feedback' tab on homepage links to short survey with space for free response.	Clear	6 or more services listed	Agree	Yes	Can book GP appointments online after registering for Patient Access account and linking account with registration letter from local GP practice. GP appointments still being conducted over phone, unless patient is 'invited in by staff'.	Registration online via Patient Access portal or by phone.

3 ^d August	Dr Aru's	Yes	Don't ' Know	Yes	No	Not avail able	Clear	Not clear	Not availa ble	No	Not available	6 or more servi ces listed	Disagree	Yes	Apt via eConsult. Indicating no intention of face to face appt due to national policy. Lots of self-refer services (in alphabetica l order) largely community based orgs - would be better if separated in NHS and community. Only reference to complaints is in comments and suggestion s section - referring people to reception for information. (Very anti- stance on complaints)	No map. No description
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9 th August	Acorn and Gaumont House Surgery	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Clear	Clear	Very clear	Very clear	Yes, feedback and friends and family	Clear	6 or more services listed	Agree	Yes	E-referral service only, not POhWER, but voiceability	Yes, but no area info
9 th August	Camberwell Green Practice	Yes	Don't know	Yes	No	Very clear	Not available	Very clear	Clear	Friends and family only	Not available	6 or more services listed	Agree	Yes	Appts either via phone or Patient Access. No face-to-face appts due to Covid	Yes, but no map
9 th August	Parkside Medical Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Not available	Not available	Very clear	Clear	Yes, feedback and friends and family	Not available	2-3 other services listed	Strongly agree	Yes		Yes
16 August	Sternhall Lane Surgery	Yes	Don't know	Yes	No	Not available	Clear	Very clear	Not clear	Yes	Not available	6 or more services listed	Agree	Yes	Face-to-face appointments only at the discretion of the GP after triage.	Yes
16 th August	St Giles Surgery Dr Begley	Yes	Don't know	Yes	Yes	Not available	Very clear	Very clear	Not available	Kind of, options for comments	Not available	4-5 other services listed	Disagree	Yes		Yes

2 nd Sept	Bermondsey spa medical practic	Yes	Don't ' know	Yes	No	Not avail able	Not clear	Not clear	Very clear	Friends and family	Not available	6 or more servi ces listed	Agree	Yes	Out of hours emergency appts only. Appts booked through online patient access - clear info on booking but no info on cancellation s	Yes
2 nd Sept	St Giles Surgery Dr Rosman	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Not avail able	Very clear	Very clear	Clear	Friends and family only	Not available	4-5 other servi ces listed	Agree	Yes	Detailed info on how to book with times for when to call for specific types of appt – e.g. urgent on day, plus info on how to book online. Info on complaints is under Practice policies - difficult to find	Yes

2 nd Sept	Park Medical Centre	Yes	No	Yes	No	not avail able	not avail able	very clear	very clear	friends and family form	clear	2-3 other servi ces listed	neither agree not disagree	Yes	Yes - clear info under section appointmen ts which is easy to find	Yes/by post code
2 nd Sept	306 Medical Centre	Yes	No	Yes	No	not avail able	clear	very clear	very clear	friends and family form	clear	6 or more servi ces listed	strongly agree	Yes	cancellation info also includes responding to text reminder with CANCEL	Yes/postco de and map

GP Website Access Analysis

Quality of Information

Appointments can be made online		
Yes	25	86%
No	4	14%
Don't know	0	0%

Appointments can be cancelled online		
Yes	13	45%
No	6	21%
Don't know	8	28%
N/A	2	7%

Clear contact information		
Yes	25	86%
No	4	14%

Explanation on how to book a face-to-face appointment		
Yes	7	24%
No	20	69%
N/A	2	7%

Clear information on booking extended appointment		
Very clear	2	7%
Clear	2	7%
Not clear	1	3%
Not available	24	83%

Clear information on self-referral services		
Very clear	5	17%
Clear	5	17%
Not clear	2	7%
Not available	17	59%

Clear information on out-of-hours services		
Very clear	15	52%
Clear	5	17%
Not clear	3	10%
Not available	6	21%

Clear information about how to complain		
--	--	--

Very clear	17	59%
Clear	5	17%
Not clear	4	14%
Not available	3	10%

Clear information about advocacy support		
Very clear	4	14%
Clear	8	28%
Not clear	3	10%
Not available	14	48%

Information on alternative services e.g. pharmacies		
No other services listed	1	3%
1 other service listed	3	10%
2-3 other services listed	3	10%
4-5 other services listed	4	14%
6 or more other services listed	18	62%

The website is easy to navigate		
Strongly agree	2	7%
Agree	9	31%
Neither agree or disagree	12	41%
Disagree	5	17%
Strongly disagree	1	3%

Accessibility

An interpreter can be accessed		
Yes	6	24%
No	1	4%
Don't know	21	84%

Website works with screen reader		
Yes	19	76%
No	0	0%
Don't know	10	40%

Accessibility statement available		
Yes	23	92%
No	6	24%

Easy read formats available		
Yes	21	84%
No	8	32%

Can be translated into other languages		
Yes	14	56%
No	15	60%

Appendix 3 - Case Studies

Case Study 1

They have several inefficient processes and very badly trained reception staff that cause patients a lot of unnecessary stress and unnecessary calls. They have way too many patients for the resources. After the relaxation of the Covid measures, nothing really changed. In order to get a consultation, you need to call them as soon as they open (8am). The line is incredibly busy and you will wait one hour in the queue and will likely be told to call back again at 1:30pm and try your luck again. You can't use eConsult for children and when I tried eConsult once, I had no response after a week.

For admin issues, or any other issues not related with booking, you still have to call the reception and wait in the long queue. They have no online or email communication available for such issues. The reception staff are mostly nice and they genuinely will try to help you but often will give you wrong information, generating more and more calls.

I moved to the area in March 2020 and registered with a X GP surgery. In April 2020, my baby was born and I registered him with the practice as well. I'm very lucky to not have any critical health issues so my interactions with the practice started when baby was due the normal newborn consultations. When trying to book for the baby's 6-week consultation, I faced hour long waits over the phone just to get through to reception. The consultation happened over video as we were in the beginning of the first lockdown and it happened a week late. The 8-week consultation never happened as the GP told me they would book it automatically but never did.

After that, my interactions with the practice were about booking baby's vaccinations. Always having to book everything only by phone, the hour-long waits on the phone were common but I thought that was just because of the pandemic.

When my baby had a skin issue, on a phone consultation, the GP told me to send photos to the practice's email. I did as instructed and received a very nasty call from the reception saying that I shouldn't have sent them an email and that I had to call them instead, which makes no sense at all! I basically ignored her and the GP later sent me a message thanking me for the photos and sent me a prescription.

A few months later, I had to order a repeat prescription for migraines and found out that my previous health record had not been moved from my previous GP. I did an e-consult and did not receive any calls for a week. I had to call the reception twice before they put me through to speak with a nurse who provided me with the prescription but she failed to send it to the pharmacy. After 2 trips to the pharmacy, I had to call again and was told "she must have missed some button" and they would try to get my prescription sent. That took yet another week and a few more calls for me to be able to get my prescription. And when I got it, they didn't create a 'repeat prescription' order, just a single order. Which meant I had to call several more times until that was fixed.

After that, my interactions with the practice were regarding booking baby's one-year immunisation. Every time I had to call to book, it was the same hour-long wait to get through to reception. His one-year vaccinations were very delayed because the practice had to cancel the appointment last minute a few times. I was told they were short on nurses. And then they were short on vaccines. After the ordeal, baby received his one-year vaccinations about 2 months late at the practice.

In the meantime, I kept receiving letters from the practice saying that my baby's vaccinations were due and that he was going to be removed from the practice if I didn't respond. So more useless calls. About a month after his last vaccination, I received a more urgent letter from them saying that my baby was still not registered as vaccinated and was going to be removed from the practice. Once again, I called to tell them he had been vaccinated at the practice and was told to come to the practice with his 'red book' as proof. I had to leave work to go there and when I arrived, I was told I would have to come back the next day as they were short on paper for the printer!

After that fiasco, my baby had a health problem, and I called the GP in the morning and was told to go to the practice at 1:30pm. When I got there, with the baby, a rude receptionist told me it wasn't a walk-in service, and she would try to get us booked for a phone call. That day I broke down into tears because I had left work and ran there for the time as I was told, with the baby, just to be told off and, again, receive no consultation. I did get a phone consultation at the end of that day and the doctor was nice but very brief. The doctor tried to follow up with me 2 days later but he called when I was putting the baby to sleep so I couldn't hear my phone and missed the call. It took me 3 phone calls (all hour-long waits) to be able to follow up with him, when an email would have easily sufficed.

Then I found out that I am pregnant again. Instead of calling, I decided to notify them in person at the reception. But when I got there, I was told I would have to call them instead....The next morning I called first thing at 8am. The line was so busy that I couldn't even get to the queue. I got the busy line tone directly. Around 8:30am, I was able to get through the queue and had to wait yet another 45 minutes to get through to reception, only to be told I would have to call again at 1:30pm because they didn't have any more phone call appointments. I didn't even ask for a GP appointment. I just

wanted to get into the midwife register. So once again, another hour-long call at 1:30p, to be booked to a GP phone call. The GP called later in the day to tell me the reception had given me wrong information and that the GP cannot refer me to the midwife and that it has to be done by the reception. I almost cried again. So, I called the reception again with that information, only to be told I need to contact the hospital directly!

This issue is still outstanding! I'm trying to get a referral for a 6-week scan, given my history of miscarriage, and I'm lost in limbo because this practice clearly doesn't have any processes in place for ANYTHING.

As you can see, I'm lucky to not have had any major health issues but based on my experience, there is no chance I would get proper care in a more serious scenario. The fact that it is so hard to contact the reception alone makes me very scared. And the fact that you almost never get your problems solved in one call, regardless of how simple they are, is another big issue for me.

Email received 11/8/21. Writer heard about Healthwatch through a neighbour.

Case Study 2

I am a 68 years old woman living in SE1 and have been isolating as the Government ordered which finished in March this year. During the isolation period I was self-medicating various aches and pains with the hope that when I could eventually go out into the world again I would be able to secure an appointment with a doctor at my GP surgery and go through the list of things that I felt need addressing. To date, I have been unable to get an appointment. I have filled in various E-Consult forms which end with "contact 111 immediately for help" and after about the 4th attempt I did ring 111 last Friday (4th June), and eventually a doctor called me back around 9pm and listened to my tale of woe. He did say I could attend a local hospital that evening but I said it was too late for me to consider that and that if he could help at all in getting me an appointment at my own surgery I would be grateful. He told me to fill in the E-consult form and not put as much detail in as I had been doing. So last Wednesday I did yet another e-consult listing my anti-depressant tablet and low mood and got an automated response saying I would be contacted either by telephone, text or email by Thursday 6.30pm, presumably to be triaged first. I received nothing on Thursday and nothing on Friday, but their email did contain another form which you could send to say "I have still not heard from you". Hopefully tomorrow, Monday 14 June, I will be contacted.

I had a text this afternoon at 5.06am saying a Dr had tried to call me but was unsuccessful and to call the surgery which I have just done. I have repeatedly told my surgery not to call me on my mobile but the home phone as I can hear better on that. So, I spoke to a receptionist who said they had tried 3 times to call me on my mobile, and I said I have had no missed calls and asked them to check the number which was correct and again said remove it and just use the home phone. So, the upshot is I will get a phone call on Thursday this week, at some point in the morning when hopefully I

will be able to arrange an appointment with a GP. This is a result of sorts but it should not have taken a week from their response saying I would be contacted last Thursday.

Well today was the day. Just after midday my mobile went, despite having told the surgery time and time again not to call me on it as I cannot hear properly. I could see it was "Doctor" so answered and asked that they call me back on my home phone, which Dr X did. I said I had various issues that I wanted to discuss and he said he would see what the time allowed he would be able to deal with.

I asked when would face to face appointments be readily available for patients to come in to the surgery without the need for being triaged over the phone. His answer, "We are trying to keep to using telephone consultations". So there we are, it took 7 days for a response to my e-consult and I wish I had taken the name of the doctor I spoke to on Friday 4 June as I must have said to him at least 5 times, "I just want to see my GP with various issues which due to lockdown I have been putting off and self-medicating".

I am glad I am being referred for an x-ray and the time spent on the phone 16 minutes.

My doctor looked at the photos I sent and said they looked like warts but did not offer any suggestion as to how to get rid of them so I will ask the pharmacist next time I pick up my repeat prescription. I had a blood test last Friday at a local hospital and yesterday got a text saying to call the practice to make an appointment for a telephone consultation for my result. I called today at 5.30am. I was 4th in queue and was told that I had to be called back at 8 am or 2 pm when appointments become available for the day. I am 68 years old, a pensioner, and at the moment quite savvy but what about all the people on lower incomes who have to keep calling. And I know, if I were to ring tomorrow morning at 8 am, I may be 10th or, as I have been in the past, 16th in the queue and stupidly held on until my call is answered only to be told I'm too late and that all the appointments have gone. Rant over.

I have just put the phone down with my surgery, I was 10th in queue. The call lasted 9 minutes and 59 seconds and the cost was expensive at £2.09 plus VAT. I should get a call back this morning at some point from the GP. And just another point, I am on blood pressure medication, as loads of their patients probably are, and each time I would visit before the pandemic the GP would say "well since you are here we might as well check your blood pressure" and if too high we can adjust your medication etc. Well, that has not been done for ages.

Email received 14/06/21.