

“When will I be seen?”

Patients’ experience of accessing
GP appointments in Lincolnshire

April 2018



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Why did we choose access to GP services as a project?

- Over the past 5 years, Healthwatch Lincolnshire has consistently received patient comments, relating to the difficulties they are experiencing getting an appointment to see a GP, resulting in us having over 1,000 comments in this area alone.
- We have also heard from local Councillors and other NHS staff, telling us of the access problems local people are experiencing and how this is impacting on them.
- More recently, we are aware through patient feedback that closures and changes to local services have definitely had an impact on GP services, such as:
 - Closure of 5 GP surgeries in 2016 - Metherringham, Arboretum, Burton Road and Pottergate in West Lincolnshire and Wainfleet in East Lincolnshire.
 - Closure of 1 GP surgery in 2017 - The Little Surgery, Stamford in South Lincolnshire.
 - The number of mergers and federations being set up suggests this could lead to some GP surgeries being at risk of closure. For instance, The Witham Surgery and Hawthorne are due to merge with other surgeries in March/April 2018; and The Little Surgery closed when St Marys and Sheepmarket Stamford were merged with Lakeside Health Care in 2017.
 - With the closure of the Walk in Centre, Lincoln (March 2018), there will almost certainly be an impact on local GP services as a result. We are told that (West Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group) 75% (over 22,000 patients) of the attendees going to the Walk in Centre are already registered with local GP services. Many of the patients who responded as part of the closure consultation were clear in their views in that 'as they are unable to get a timely appointment with a GP they felt attending the Walk in Centre was their only option'.
 - Media headlines both nationally and locally have indicated waiting times to get an appointment to see a GP is a growing issue (see page 6)

Putting GP access in context

“We have a 3+ Week wait for a routine GP appointment. This is not normal for us. Demand has outstripped our capacity.

All urgent appointments are dealt with on the day, but the standard GP wait time is not acceptable to patients and we are looking at whether we can alter GP work patterns to provide more routine appointments”

Comments from a South Lincolnshire GP practice

Workforce - recruitment of medical staff into Lincolnshire has been an ongoing problem for many years. Whilst there has been and still is a lot of innovative work being done by the Lincolnshire Medical Committee and other NHS organisations with overseas recruitment programmes into Lincolnshire, the number of current medical staff due to retire in the next few years is significant. It is unlikely that, in the foreseeable future, recruitment into the county will exceed the numbers retiring. In addition, some areas of the county, such as the East, are much harder to recruit into, with other factors/barriers such as the local infrastructure (housing, road networks, schools, leisure facilities and employment) playing their part.

Patient demands:

- We are now living in a more ‘instantaneous’ society. As a result, many people are now expecting services to be available ‘on demand’. It is perhaps not always possible for GP services to respond in this way and the public needs to acknowledge this.
- Patients often build up a rapport with one GP and, for personal reasons, feel they do not want to see any other GP. The problem then arises when they want to book an appointment to see their ‘named GP’. This often means a longer wait. Our investigations have highlighted this as a real issue.
- Due to advancements in healthcare, thankfully we are all living longer. Many health conditions are now managed well on a day to day basis, due to the support of a GP, Nurse Practitioner and Practice, Specialist Nurse or Healthcare Advisor. Unfortunately, this also leads to an increase in demand for local GP Services.
- The large number of holiday makers visiting the east coast of Lincolnshire between April and September impacts GP services.
- An interview with Dr Maureen Baker, Chair of the Royal College of GPs which highlights some of these issues, can be read here <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/mar/23/family-doctor-service-brink-extinction>

What is the GP 5 year forward view and how will it impact our GP services?



Next steps on the NHS Five Year Forward View

- NHS England recognises that GP services account for 90% of all patient contact with the NHS. However, the level of funding the service receives has been under 10% of the entire NHS budget. The workload and pressures on GP services have reached an all-time high, but local plans tell us that care closer to home, keeping people out of hospital longer and daily management of health conditions is the most appropriate way forward. This only means more pressure on our Lincolnshire GP services.
- The GP 5 Year Forward View is centred on improving services and putting patients at the heart of these services. You can read more here <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/gpfv.pdf>

The fundamental areas of support include:

- Help for struggling practices, including more funding with £2.4 billion promised by 2020/21.
- Plans to reduce workload and expansion of a wider workforce, including the recruitment of 10,000 more staff into GP practices nationally by 2020/21. 5,000 of these will be doctors.
- To meet patient demands, GP services will also be expected to provide more opportunities for patients to speak to their GP, including 7 day access. However, few surgeries will be expected to provide 7 day services, on their own. Currently, our Lincolnshire GP surgeries are merging with other practices. This means that patients will sometimes have to travel to or contact neighbouring GP practices.
- People will be able to book appointments with GP or relevant services, at the practice, in the evenings and weekends, to get the right care when they need it. They will be able to access a mix of face-to-face, telephone, email and video consultations, which will provide a better fit with modern working lives. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-7-day-services>

What does the media have to say locally and nationally?



Sept 2017

Sick people forced to queue in desperate bid to be seen at doctors surgery

Dozens of sick people are being forced to queue outside a doctor's surgery on a regular basis, according to a frustrated user.

Dawn Clark claims she has been 'drenched to the skin', waiting outside Hawthorn Medical Practice in Skegness, with countless more beside her or sat in nearby cars.

<https://www.lincolnshirelive.co.uk/news/local-news/sick-people-forced-queue-desperate-435353>

Sept 2017

A Skegness man who suffers from coronary heart disease says that he does not even bother trying to get an appointment at his local GP practice because of the queues.

Terry Atkinson, who contacted *Lincolnshire Reporter*, said that the situation at the Hawthorn Medical Practice was becoming "a joke". This comes after several patients went onto social media, to comment on the "regular occurrence" of waiting outside the surgery to be seen, often in cold and rainy conditions.

<https://lincolnshirereporter.co.uk/2017/09/i-dont-bother-trying-anymore-man-with-heart-disease-says-queues-outside-gp-are-now-a-joke>

It is important to note this relates to the views of patients from one practice, out of 92 in Lincolnshire.



6 July 2017 – The Telegraph

One million patients a week cannot get a GP appointment, statistics show

[Laura Donnelly](#), Health Editor

One million patients a week cannot get appointments with GPs, amid the longest waiting times on record, new figures show. Doctors said they were working "flat out" but under "unsustainable" pressure, leaving "worrying" numbers of patients without any help.

The NHS figures show the number waiting at least a week to see their GP has risen by 56 per cent in five years, with one in five now waiting this long. The pressures left 11.3 per cent of patients unable to get an appointment at all - a 27 per cent rise since 2012.

This amounts to around 47 million occasions on which patients attempted but failed to secure help from their GP, forcing them to give up, try again later or turn to Accident & Emergency departments.

Rising numbers of patients struggled to even get through on the phone, with 27.8 per cent of those polled citing difficulties, compared with 18.5 per cent in 2012.

The survey of more than 800,000 patients - which is held annually - found worsening access to family doctors, across a range of measures.

GPs said the NHS was "at breaking point", with patients increasingly giving up their search for help, even though their health was deteriorating. Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, Chairman of the Royal College of GPs, said: "Our patients should be able to see a GP when they need to, so it's very concerning that more people are having to wait for longer to get appointments with their GP or practice nurse.

"It is particularly worrying that some patients are deciding not to seek medical advice at all if they are not able to get an appointment initially."

The survey found that 15 per cent of patients, who failed to get any appointment or one that was convenient, got no help at all, while 13 per cent tried again another day and almost five per cent went to A&E.

8 Key Messages to patients and professionals

The following messages have been collated from a mixture of survey results, previous patient feedback and Healthwatch Lincolnshire insight.

1. Patients need to understand the impact of waiting to see a preferred GP. The top reasons why patients prefer to see a named GP are:
 - ‘Continuity of care, including ongoing conditions’
 - ‘Some GPs are better communicators (bedside manner) and/or more compassionate’
 - ‘Sometimes, it’s personal e.g. Female Dr’
 - ‘Because of ongoing investigations’
 - ‘Sometimes, there is a misconception of what other clinical professionals can do e.g. Nurse Practitioner.’
2. Patients may need to be more flexible about days and times of their appointments - we appreciate this is not always possible, due to work or caring responsibilities.
3. Patients welcome online booking and suggest this should be extended to advance booking e.g. four weeks or more in advance. Currently, not enough patients are using the service, telling us they regularly try to book online, but 2 week availability slots book up quickly.
4. GPs ask patient to see them ‘next week’, but are not always aware of appointment availability. This impacts on the patients ability to self monitor and keep health needs in check.

Patient Comments

“ The appointment system isn’t helpful for people who work and not flexible enough - I often have to take time off work to attend and added time if I have to travel.

There seems to be little support to save me taking time off work and people who work do get ill. I have a routine blood test every 3 months and I can have those at 8.30am before work which is great but urgent or other appointments you have to take what you are given generally which isn’t work friendly!

An evening surgery or telephone/Skype consultation would be helpful for those who work (if appropriate and it wouldn’t suit every condition/appointment need).”

8 Key Messages to patients and professionals

Continued ...

5. Recognition that some groups of people need more flexibility e.g. working parents and carers.
6. Sit-and-wait and GP telephone triage are well received - patients really like this system.
7. *"I am not telling the receptionist my health problems, they are not trained"*
This is something Healthwatch Lincolnshire hears constantly. It is our opinion that patients would benefit from understanding the role of reception. For example, initial telephone triage is an important step for patients, signposting to the correct support to meet their needs.
8. Healthwatch Lincolnshire are told that, for many patients, booking a 'routine' appointment to see their GP is taking longer than it seemed to, a few years ago.

Unfortunately, doctors are now facing significantly increased demand, with reduced capacity, due to shortage of workforce colleagues, resulting in less availability of appointments. Patients can wait around 3 weeks (sometimes more), for a routine appointment.

What is a routine appointment? - on-the-day emergency appointments are for patients, who have an urgent medical problem, that cannot wait for a routine appointment. Routine is classed as non-urgent medical problem, a medication review or follow up appointment.



What can patients do to help?

1. Make sure you keep to and attend your appointment, arrive on time and, if relevant, be prepared. For instance, if you know you are due to have an examination, wear suitable clothing.
2. If you cannot make your appointment, cancel it at the earliest opportunity. Healthwatch Lincolnshire calculated that, in 2014, it was costing the NHS in Lincolnshire £6 million, in missed GP appointments.
3. Make the most of your time with the GP and help them to help you, by writing down any questions you have, make a note of all your symptoms, keep a diary of when things are happening. Also, make sure you take along to the appointment all the medication, you have been prescribed by the doctor.
4. Use the range of services available to help you, such as text messages and online services, including e-prescribing, telephone triage and GP call-back. If your surgery does not offer these services, Healthwatch Lincolnshire would like to hear from you.
5. If you think you have a minor ailment, such as a cough or cold that has developed very recently, then see if your local community pharmacy could help, before contacting your surgery.
6. *“Many conditions get better on their own, so patients should look after themselves, read about their symptoms and conditions, and wait a few days to see how the condition develops. If their symptoms do not improve, seeking the advice of a pharmacist or GP may then be appropriate.”* Dr Kieran Sharrock Medical Director Lincolnshire LMC
7. Help yourself by having a healthier lifestyle, which could help to prevent avoidable serious long term conditions, such as Type 2 Diabetes and hypertension.

GP APPOINTMENT?
CAN'T MAKE IT?
DON'T NEED IT?



Missed GP appointments total three years of wasted time 14th December 2017

More than 150,000 appointments were missed across Lincolnshire's GP surgeries last year - prompting one doctor to urge patients to take responsibility for the NHS.

Figures have revealed appointments were missed more than 150,000 times last year. This is equivalent to one GP wasting about three years, waiting for patients who never turned up.

<http://www.lincolnshirewestccg.nhs.uk/News/missed-appointments-prompt-gp-call-patients-take-responsibility/>

The national GP survey

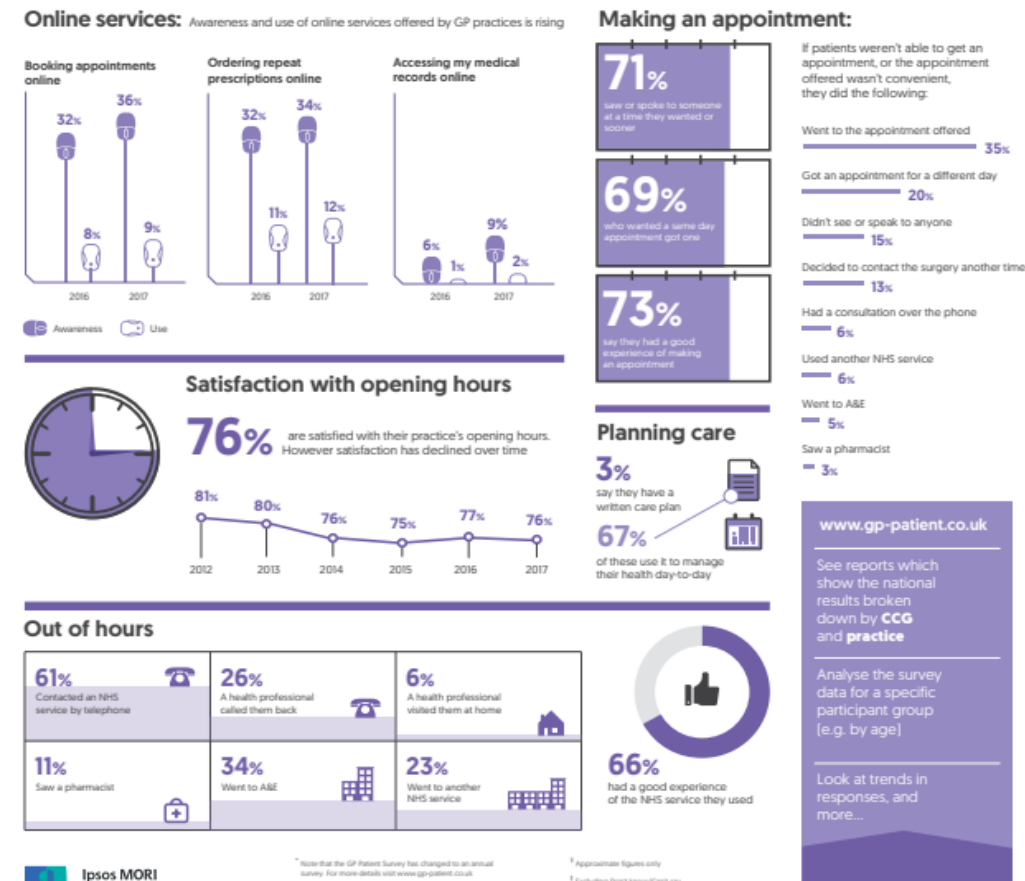


The GP patient survey is an annual independent survey, run by Ipsos MORI, on behalf of NHS England. The survey is sent out to a million people across the UK. The results show how people feel about their GP practice.

In Lincolnshire STP* area (2017) 24,206 questionnaires were sent out and 11,424 were returned completed. This represents a response rate of 47%.

Part of our analysis work for this project included assessing and referencing results from the National GP patient Survey, to compare them with the survey we carried out.

You can read more about the National GP patient survey here:
<https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/faq>



*STP stands for sustainability and transformation partnership. These are 44 areas covering all of England, where local NHS organisations and councils have drawn up proposals to improve health and care in the areas they serve.

How we gathered our results

We devised a series of questions, about patients' experiences of booking an appointment, to answer the following objectives:

- To identify patients views and experiences of making appointments at GP surgeries
- To explore patients views on the impact of any difficulties they experience, in making appointments at GP surgeries
- To ascertain patients knowledge of the appointment system, at their GP surgeries

We chose a 2 phase approach to this project. The first involved face to face engagement, in 12 GP surgeries across the county. The other was an online only survey, open to all Lincolnshire patients. We felt it was important to analysis the two sets of data separately due to the differences in the way they were gathered. As you can see throughout this highlighted a difference in results.

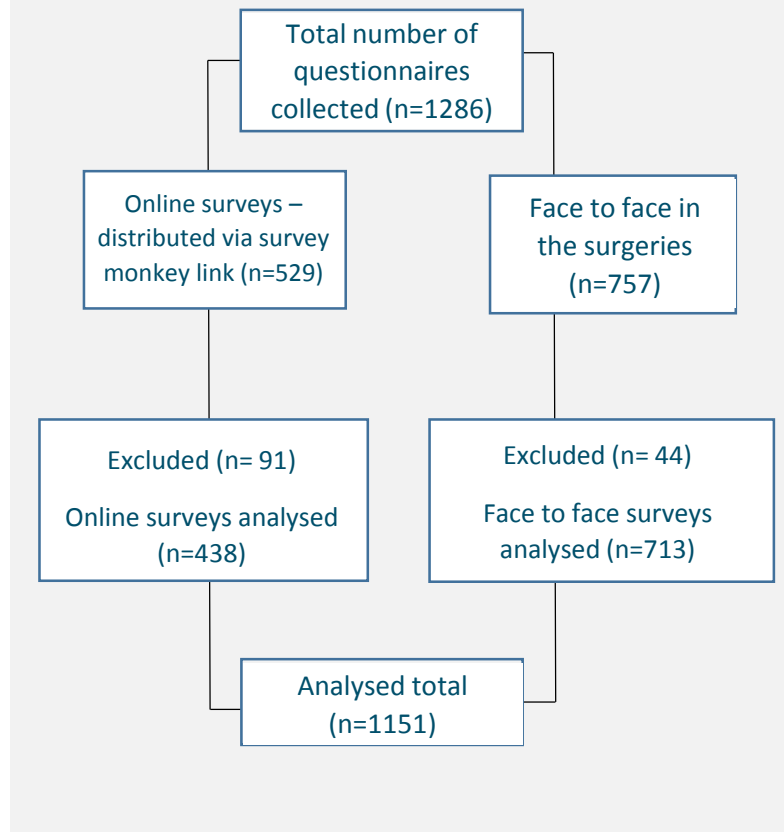
Face to Face engagement

We chose 12 GP surgeries across the county - 3 in each of the 4 Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group areas. We selected a variety of surgeries - rural, urban and surgeries with a range of different appointment systems. **Overall, we spoke to and received 757 completed surveys. We would like to thank the dedicated team of Healthwatch volunteers, trustees and staff, as well as the practices we visited, and, most importantly, the patients for agreeing to take part.**

Online survey

Online the survey was distributed across the county though various communication channels, from this we received 529 responses.

In total we received 1286 surveys, 135 of those were excluded from final analysis. This left us with 1151 surveys to analyse.



Key Headlines

- Whilst the National GP survey and the Healthwatch Lincolnshire (HWL) surveys all suggest that problems accessing appointments are not as widespread as thought, it is important to recognise there are some areas, where access to GP appointments is challenging e.g. East Lincolnshire (coastal)
- 1 in 4 patients told us having a delay in getting an appointment had an impact on them, with anxiety being the top reason.
- 1 in 3 patients told us they have used another service, when they could not get a GP appointment, with A&E being amongst the top places patients go to.
- Patients told us the telephone was the most popular way of contacting their surgery. However, from patient feedback to HWL, difficulty getting through on the telephone to the reception is the top cause of frustration.
- Throughout the survey, patients have placed an emphasis on receiving continuity of care and that may include seeing a named GP or other medical professional e.g. diabetic nurse. For patients who place particular importance on this, it could well have a negative and far reaching impact on patient experience, including such things as access to GP appointments.
- There is an appetite from patients to access services, such as text messaging and video conferences. Lessons learnt and best practice could be transferred from GP to GP service, across the county.

Key Headlines

Whilst the National GP survey and the Healthwatch Lincolnshire (HWL) surveys all suggest that problems accessing appointments are not as widespread as thought, it is important to recognise there are some areas, where access to GP appointments is challenging e.g. East Lincolnshire (coastal)



1 in 3

patients told us they have used another service when they could not get a GP appointment, with A&E being amongst the top.

92%

of patients completing the survey face to face were willing to see another health professional if it meant they could get an appointment sooner.



529



Questionnaires completed online

1 in 4



patients told us having a delay in getting an appointment had an impact on them, with anxiety being the top reason.

76%

of face to face patients would describe their experience of making an appointment as good*

757



Face to face questionnaires were completed

Telephone

Patients told us the telephone was the most popular way of contacting their surgery. However, from patient feedback to HWL, difficulty getting through on the telephone to the reception is the top cause of frustration.

Overall, patients' experience of getting an appointment was positive. However we should note the results differ from surgery to surgery and depending upon where in the county we live e.g. East Lincs.

* % good = %very good + %fairly good

35%

of patients chose to see a specific GP.

WAITING ROOM



58%

of online responses felt that seeing a specific GP had an impact on their waiting time.

1151



Questionnaires were analysed

Objective 1:

To identify patients' views and experiences of making appointments at GP surgeries

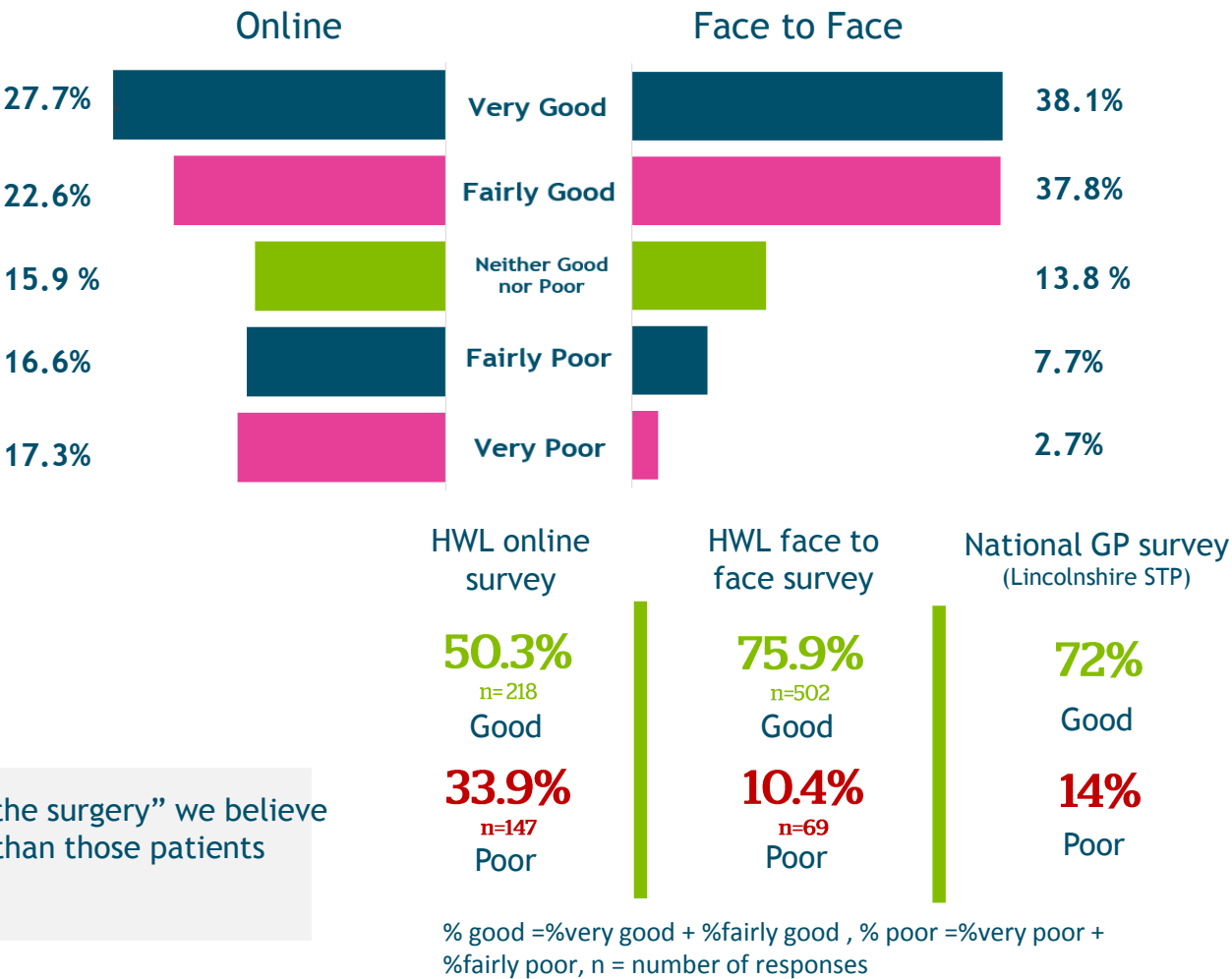
Overall, how would you describe your experience of making an appointment?

Patients' experience of getting an appointment was generally positive. However, we should note the results differ from GP surgery to surgery and depend upon where in the county we live e.g. East Lincs.

Very/fairly good	National GP survey	HWL face to face Survey
NHS South west Lincolnshire CCG	75.0%	87.0%
NHS South Lincolnshire CCG	77.0%	75.0%
NHS Lincolnshire West CCG	73.0%	74.0%
NHS Lincolnshire East CCG	66.0%	73.0%

It is important to note that as our face to face survey work asked patients “in the surgery” we believe they would be less likely to reflect a negative view of making an appointment than those patients who completed the survey online in the privacy of their own homes.

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



Objective 1:

To identify patients' views and experiences of making appointments at GP surgeries

Face to face experiences of making appointments at GP surgeries.

The results highlight the differences in how patients experience making appointments, across the county. The differences are not only found across the four CCG areas, but also within them.

For example, 1 in 3 people at practice East 1 found the experience of making an appointment poor. Compare this to East 2, where none of the patient we spoke to found the service poor and 96% rated the service as good. Similar differences can be found across the county

In rating the making of appointments as good or poor, the key themes from patients' comments include:

Good

- Good patient relationships - comments told us they felt the staff were friendly and helpful
- Patients can telephone and be connected with reception fairly quickly
- Patients can book an appointment within a required time scale

Poor

- Too many patients, not enough doctors. Patients feel the practice is over stretched
- Seasonal increase in demand for services, due to holiday makers and tourists
- Lack of continuity of care, due to patients not being able make an appointment with the same GP

Table of face to face results for How would you describe your experience of making an appointment? for each GP surgery (surgery names have been removed for report)

Practice	Total n	Good %	n	Poor %	n
West 1	68	76.5%	52	5.9%	4
West 2	36	77.8%	28	19.4%	7
West 3	25	60.0%	15	20.0%	5
South 1	62	59.7%	37	12.9%	8
South 2	123	87.8%	108	4.1%	5
South 3	75	66.7%	50	17.3%	13
East 1	66	40.9%	27	30.3%	20
East 2	53	96.2%	51	0%	0
East 3	61	86.9%	53	3.3%	2
South West 1	22	90.9%	20	4.6%	1
South West 2	39	76.9%	30	10.3%	4
South West 3	32	96.9%	31	0.0%	0

Table of face to face results for How would you describe your experience of making an appointment? for each CCG area (surgery names have been removed for report)

	Total n	n	Good %	n	Poor%
West	129	95	73.6%	16	12.4%
East	180	131	72.8%	22	12.2%
South West	93	81	87.1%	5	5.4%
South	260	195	75.0%	26	10.0%

% good =%very good + %fairly good , % poor =%very poor + %fairly poor, n = number of responses

Objective 1:

To identify patients' views and experiences of making appointments at GP surgeries

Improved Bother Happy Complain Telephone Urgent Matters Problem
Efficient Walk Waiting Room Surgery Depends
Day Appointments Health Doctor Lucky
Practice GPs Book Straight Appointment Available
Hospital Staff Parking Call Poor Receptionist Think

Word cloud depicting the key words used in patient comments

Comments received from those who felt their experience of making an appointment was poor or very poor:

41 comments (19.5% of the total) were regarding problems with making an appointment over the phone and not getting through to the practice.

"Appointment answer system on telephone - is impossible - even cuts you off sometimes. I'd rather just listen to engaged tone and keep trying to get through. If calling off a pay as you go mobile you use at least £1-£2 of credit just to make an appointment. Not good enough."

"You should be able to book weeks ahead as the Dr requests. Phone up on the day appointments. Could then be reserved for people who need to be seen urgently"

"Since merging with X practice, waiting times are longer for getting an appointment."

"Almost impossible to make an on the day appointment over the phone."

"For a pre-existing condition I would always prefer to see one of the two doctors I am most familiar with. Waiting times for either of them is usually 3-4 weeks. For urgent / new condition advice can usually be obtained within 24hrs"

"Sometimes no appointment available for 3 weeks. This is not acceptable because of the likely progression of serious condition in this time"

Objective 1:

To identify patients' views and experiences of making appointments at GP surgeries

Below is a summary of the main comments from our survey, both positive and negative, about making an appointment for GP services.

Appointment system negative

- We received 119 comments, where the patients said they need to attend the GP surgery for a same day appointment, because they cannot get through on the telephone
- 19 comments related to having to wait 3 - 4 weeks, for a routine appointments
- 11 comments regarding limited number of GPs
- 9 delays getting appointment, when Dr requires follow up appointment
- 6 comments that sometimes receptionists can be a bit abrupt with people
- 6 comments said not enough doctors and too many patients

Appointment system positive

- We received **68** comments, complimenting the appointment system “Extremely Happy”
“Always manage to get an appointment”
“Appreciate the late surgery times on wed evenings”

Appointment system general

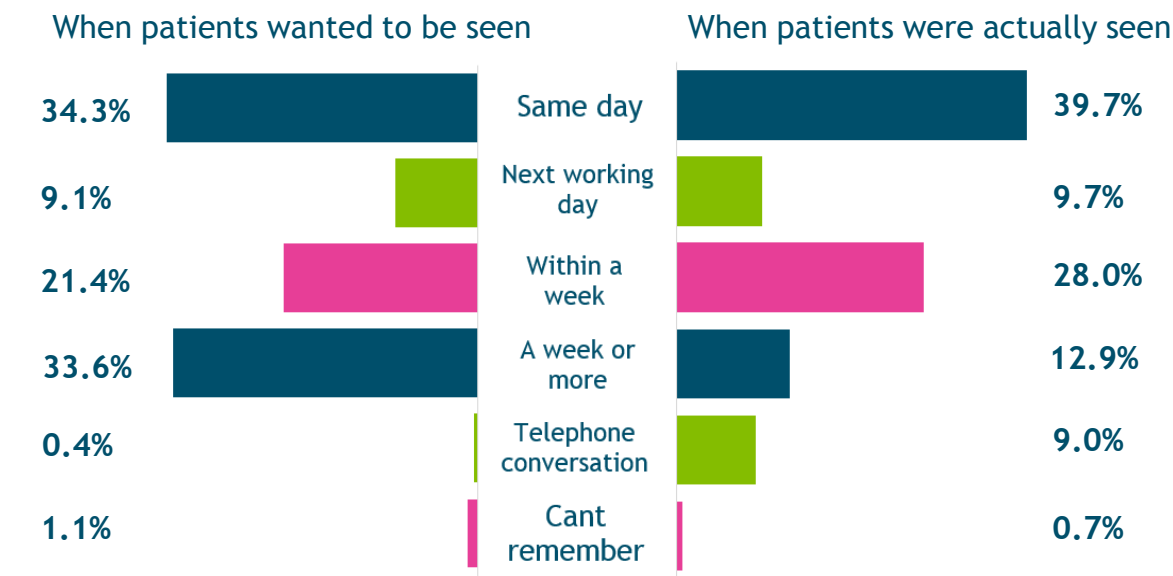
- We received 16 comments, relating to additional drop-in appointments and evening/weekend appointments, which patients feel would be useful



Objective 1:

To identify patients' views and experiences of making appointments at GP surgeries

How long after initially contacting the practice did you actually see someone? And when did you want to be seen?



- Face to face responses overall - 79.9% of those who wanted to be seen by a health professional, on the same day as contacting their GP surgery, were seen on the same day. 91.7% were seen within a week.
- Online responses - 70.1% same day, 79.0% were seen within a week.

As you can see from the table below (Surgery names have been removed for report), this shows the % of respondents who wanted to be seen on same day and were seen same day. What it identifies is the large differences between practices. Responses range from 50% - 95%, for those seen on same day and range from 72% - 100%, seen within a week.

Practice	n	Seen same day %	Seen with a week %
West 1	68	70.8%	79.2%
West 2	38	56.3%	81.3%
West 3	28	80.0%	100%
South West 1	24	94.1%	100%
South West 2	41	92.3%	92.3%
South West 3	35	95.2%	100%
South 1	63	66.7%	91.7%
South 2	127	92.7%	98.5%
South 3	84	50.0%	72.2%
East 1	69	72.7%	84.8%
East 2	56	87.0%	100%
East 3	63	75.0%	93.8%

n = number of responses

Objective 1:

To identify patients' views and experiences of making appointments at GP surgeries

What type of appointment did you book?

Type of Appointment	Face to face survey		Online responses	
	n	Percentage (%)	n	Percentage (%)
A routine appointment	323	49.1%	171	39.3%
A new illness or condition	171	26.0%	162	37.2%
An urgent matter	71	10.8%	67	15.4%
Something else	93	14.1%	35	8.1%

With the combined face to face surveys and online responses, around 45% of people we spoke to had a routine appointment, 13% was regarding an urgent appointment.

For those that felt their appointment was for an **urgent matter**:

	Urgent matter	All appointment types excluding urgent
Same day	88.7%	76.9%
Within a Week	96.2%	90.4%

Face to face responses, of those who wanted to be seen same day

	Urgent matter	All appointment types excluding urgent
Same day	72.5%	69.6%
Within a Week	77.5%	80.0%

Online responses, of those who wanted to be seen same day

How convenient was the appointment you were able to get?



For those that felt their appointment was not convenient they gave the follow reasons why not.

	Face to face survey		Online responses	
	n	Percentage (%)	n	Percentage (%)
There weren't any appointments for the day I wanted	20	45.5%	57	31.0%
There weren't any appointments for the time I wanted	13	29.5%	32	17.4%
I couldn't see my preferred GP	8	18.2%	53	28.8%
I couldn't book ahead at my practice	3	6.8%	42	22.8%
Total	44	100%	184	100%

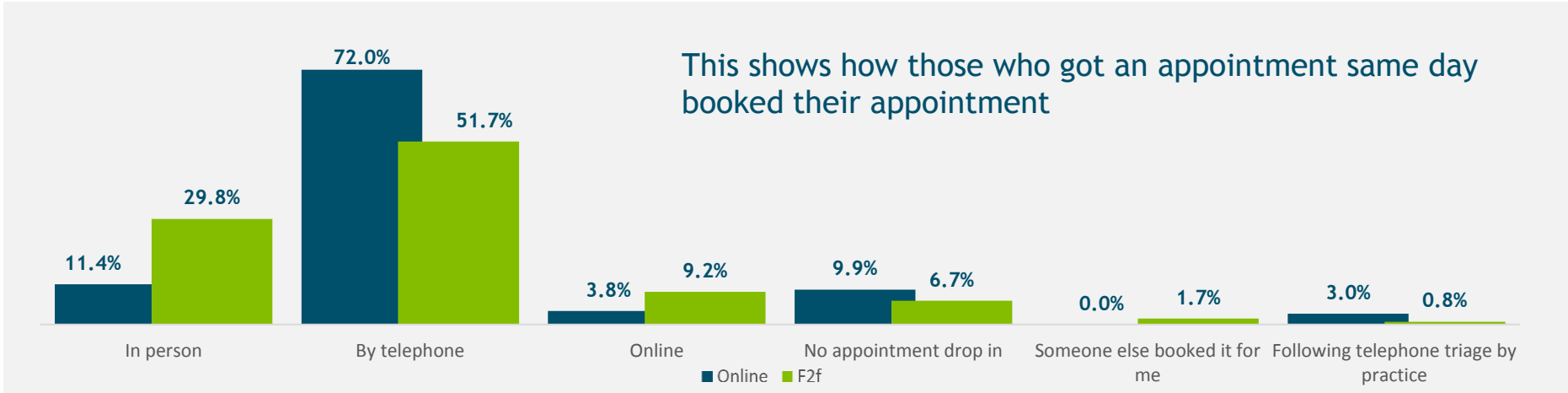
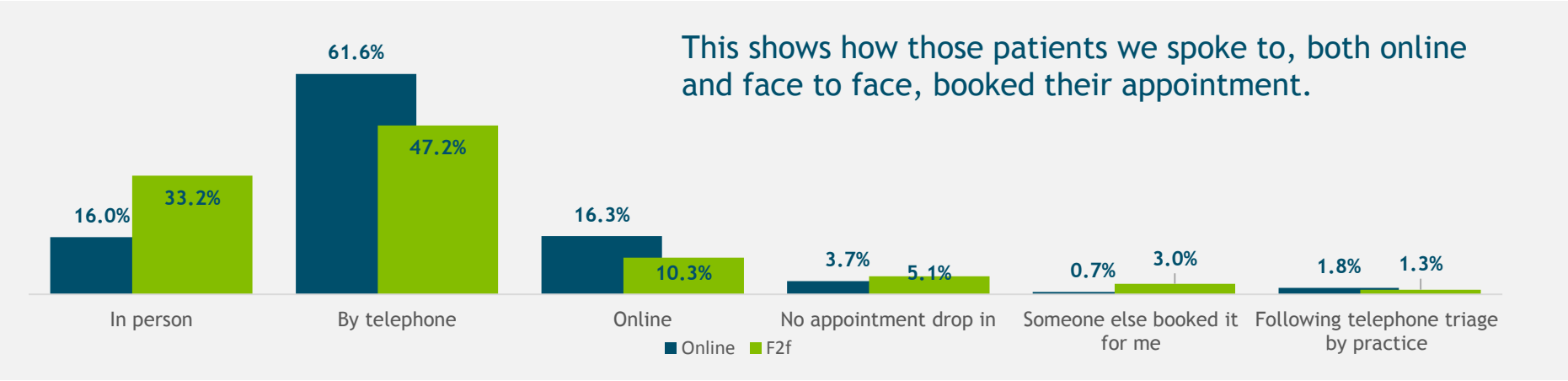
All responses, reasons why patients felt their appointment was not convenient

n = number of responses

Objective 1:

To identify patients' views and experiences of making appointments at GP surgeries

We asked patients the main methods of booking an appointment - ‘How did you book your appointment?’



The telephone is the most popular method of making an appointment at their GP practice.

For patients who are seen on the *same day*, the proportion who booked their appointments by telephone was slightly higher (72% online, 51.7% face to face).

It is worth noting that being able to get through to the GP receptionist by telephone continues to be an issue for patients.

Objective 2:

To explore patients' views on the impact of any difficulties they experience in making appointments at GP surgeries

If you had to wait longer for your appointment do you think it made any difference to your current health problems?

We asked patients whether it made any difference to their current health problem, if they had to wait any longer for an appointment.

- 25.6% said they felt it did make a difference.
- Of those patients who went to an urgent appointment, 48.3% (face to face) felt that it would make a difference to their current health issues, if they had to wait any longer.

For those who felt that waiting longer had an effect, we received 40 individual comments directly relating to the question. (face to face) Of which:

22.5% (9) felt increased anxiety and mental health effects

20% (8) felt the problem got worse

17.5% (7) health issues escalated and resulted in hospital

7.5% (3) had no idea, but potentially had an effect

5% (2) health issue became out of date

5% (2) felt it affected their work

2.5% (1) self-cared

Comments received from patients

"I had breathing problems and mobility problems and my son had to take me to A&E as he very concerned about me. I had become very dehydrated and confused."

"I ended up with a UTI and a short stay in hospital as I was taken to A&E by my daughter as I was dehydrated/confused"

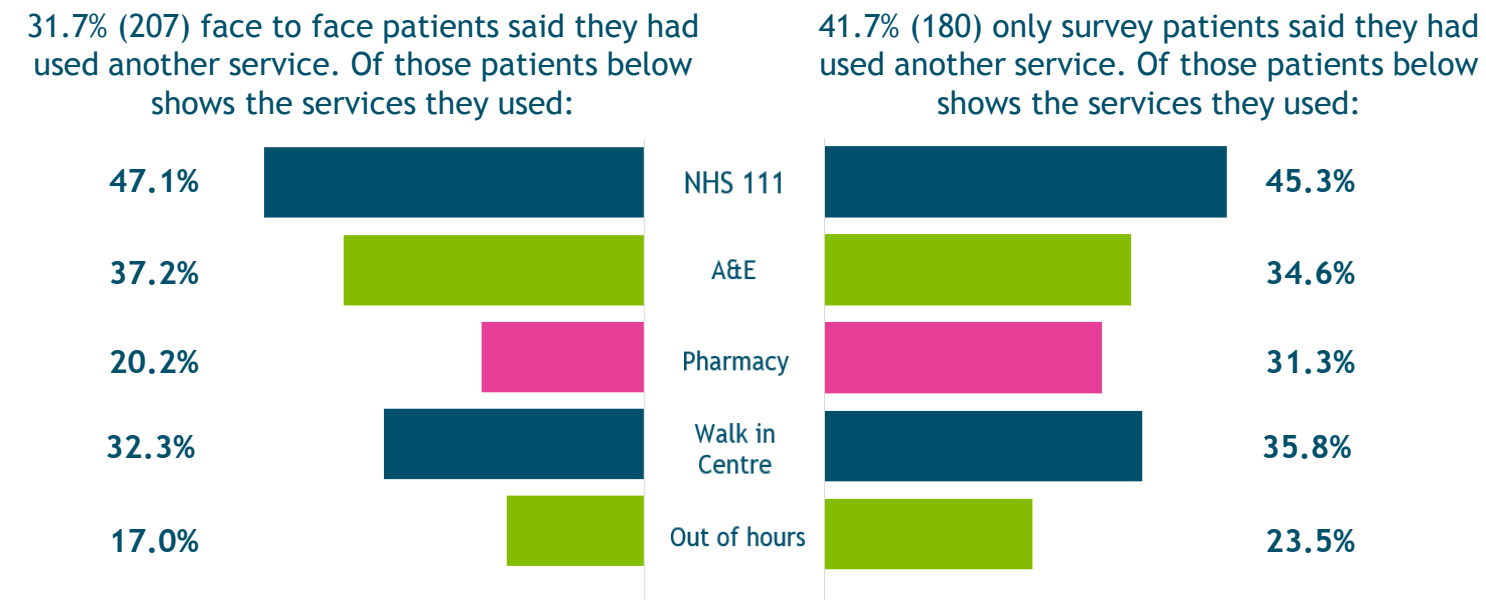
"I suffer from depression and have not been able to get access to my medication as a result of having to wait."

"Increased anxiety lengthened suffering." "Anxiety increases if you have a problem and have to wait to see someone."

Objective 2:

To explore patients' views on the impact of any difficulties they experience in making appointments at GP surgeries

Have you ever used another service, because you could not get an appointment with a GP?



“rang 3 days in a row for one but told there wasn't any left even though it was 8 in the morning”

“Had operation last year to remove lump from breast, got infected and as this surgery sometimes has busy periods it is difficult to get appointments when urgent”

“Kidney problems ended up in hospital with kidney stones (might have been caught earlier, if I had of got GP appointment)”

“Due to not getting medication I have had hospital admissions regarding my depression”

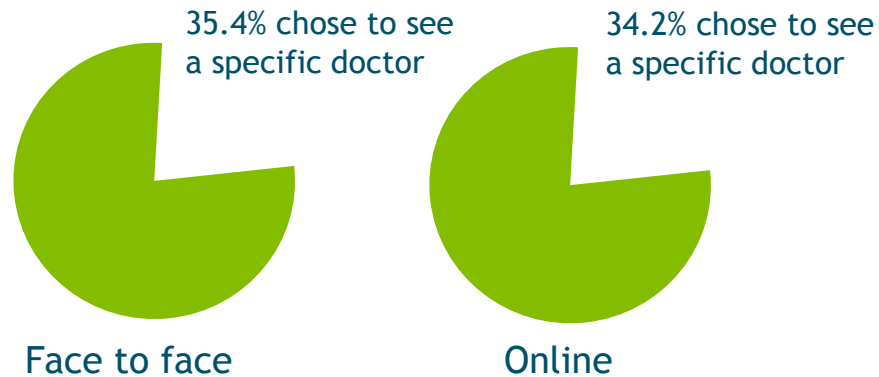
“Sprained ankle couldn't get an appointment for 1 week + unless I called at 8am every morning, so went to the walk in centre and had it strapped”

“My daughter had a severe cough and rash and the nurse was useless. The doctors wouldn't rebook me an appointment as said she had already been seen, so I had no other option but to attend A&E.”

Objective 2:

To explore patients' views on the impact of any difficulties they experience in making appointments at GP surgeries

Did you choose to see a specific Doctor?



- Of the 173 comments, 80.3% related to continuity and familiarity between the GP and the patient and their condition.
- 15.0% had a preference for a particular GP over others available. The comments related mainly to patients wanting a female GP in particular or not getting on with other GPs, at the practice.
- 4.6% saw a specific doctor, because of their specialist knowledge in a particular area. For example, many related to seeing a skin specialist.

We know that patients wanting to see a certain GP does impact on the length of time, waiting for an appointment. Some GPs are very popular. In other practices where GP numbers are low, extended waiting times maybe due to there being one specific GP e.g. female doctor.

Healthwatch recognises the value that patients put on continuity of their care. Unfortunately, this can result in extended waits.

One of the biggest issues we hear is when a GP asks to see the patient again in 2-3 weeks. Many patients tell us this is almost impossible to arrange.

"Continuity of care is important as I have complex medical conditions. I don't have to keep explaining about how my medical conditions affect me as my GP knows my medical history"

"Other doctor was extremely rude to me and I refuse to see him again"

"I have a lot of issues and I don't like explaining every thing all the time one of them being mental health"

"Couldn't see the Dr I wanted as he was locum and no longer there. No female Drs available. Only choice of 2 males"

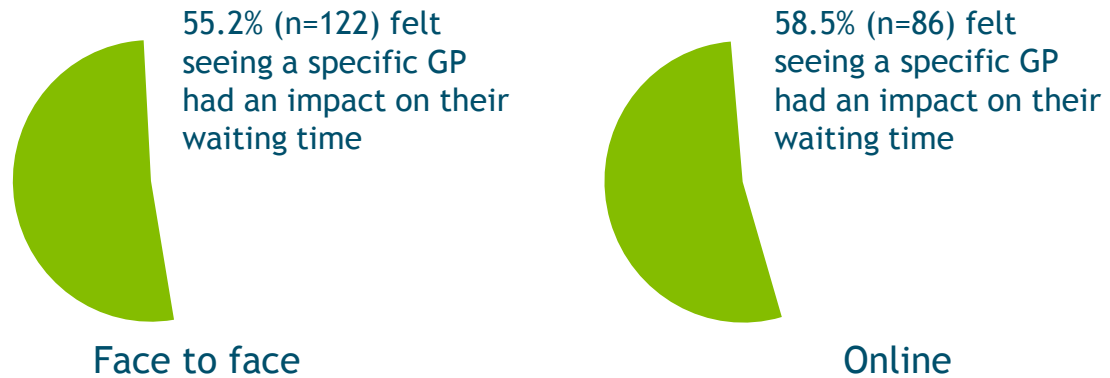
"Only Dr X deals with skeletal/muscular problems and only he will administer the required injections"

"Skin complaint and Dr X specialises in this"

Objective 2:

To explore patients' views on the impact of any difficulties they experience in making appointments at GP surgeries

Do you think that needing to see a specific Doctor had an impact on your waiting time?



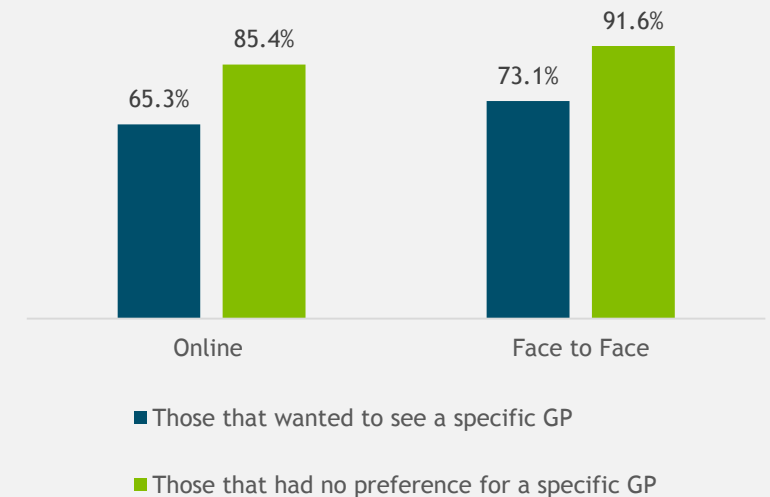
Face to face

- Of those who wanted to see a specific doctor, 40.9% had to wait a week or more to be seen, compared to 30.0%, who had no preference of GP

Online

- Of those who wanted to see a specific doctor, 48% had to wait a week or more to be seen, compared to 35.4%, who had no preference of GP

Would you be willing to see another health professional, if you could get an appointment sooner?

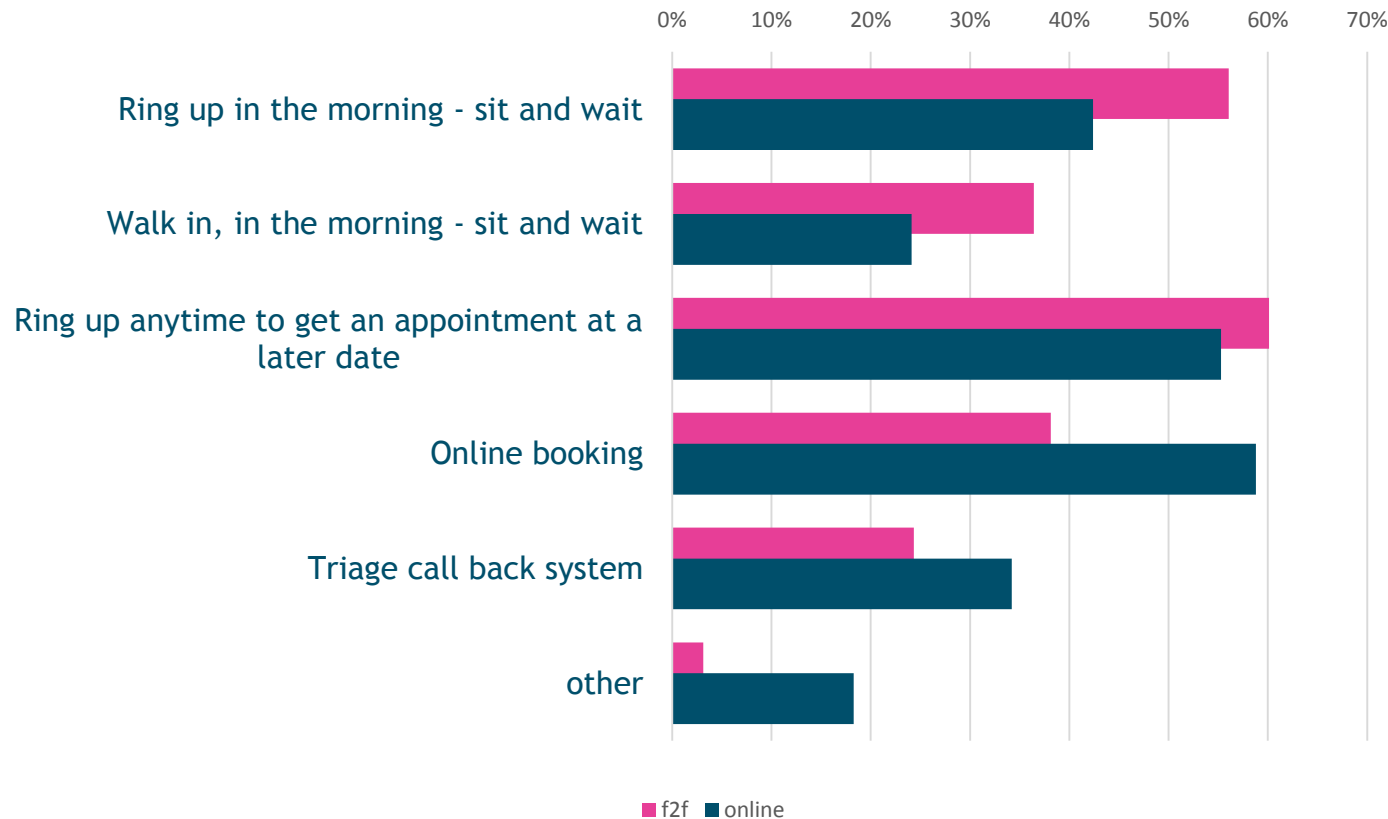


These results are positive, as they demonstrate that patients are more open to seeing other qualified staff, at the GP practice.

Objective 3:

To ascertain patients' knowledge of the appointment system at their GP surgeries

Do you know if any of the following different ways of booking appointments at this practice are in place?



Patients told us they value services such as:

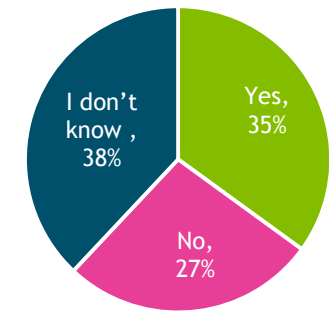
- Walk in, sit and wait
- Online appointment bookings
- Triage call back system

Practices that offer all of these services, reduce pressures on their own systems and patients feel more positively about the practice.

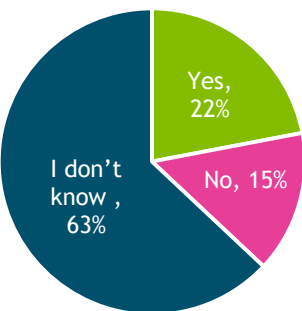
Objective 3:

To ascertain patients' knowledge of the appointment system at their GP surgeries

Does your practice offer consultation by telephone or video conference?

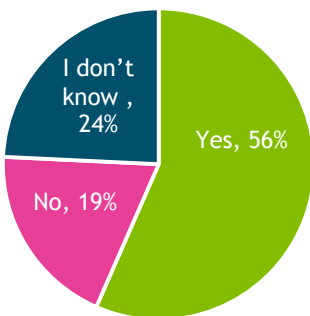


Online

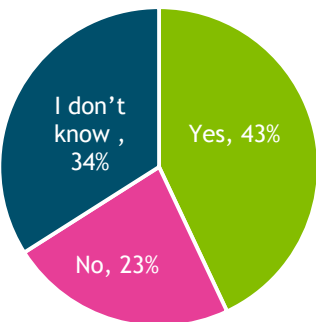


Face to face

Is this a service you would/do find useful?



Online



Face to face

This tells us that telephone and video conference calls are rated as very useful to patients.

Does your practice text you?



56% said yes, their practice sends them text messages

Online



44% said yes, their practice sends them text messages

Face to face

Is this a service you would/do find useful?



78% said yes, a text message service would be useful

Online



76% said yes, a text message service would be useful

Face to face

Text message reminders are definitely valued by patients.

Next steps and Timelines

April 2018 - This report will be sent to our 4 Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Groups, Lincolnshire Medical Committee, Lincolnshire Health Scrutiny Committee, Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board, NHS England, General Medical Council and GP surgeries across Lincolnshire.

31 May 2018 - Healthwatch Lincolnshire will request that responses, comments and where relevant 'identified actions for change' from the above organisations be returned by this date.

25 September 2018 - Within our watchdog role, Healthwatch Lincolnshire will follow up 'identified of actions for change' to ensure improvements to services are on track.

November 2019 - Healthwatch Lincolnshire will revisit this work to find out if the GP appointment availability situation has improved or declined over the past year.



Demographics:

An overview of the demographics from both Online and face to face survey participants.

Age Range

Age				
	Online		Face to Face	
Under 18	1	0.2%	11	1.6%
18 – 25	6	1.4%	102	15.3%
26 – 40	42	9.7%	109	16.3%
41 – 60	150	34.7%	163	24.4%
61 – 75	190	44.0%	188	28.1%
Over 75	43	10.0%	96	14.4%
Total	432		669	
Skipped	6		44	

Gender

Gender				
	Online		Face to Face	
Male	151	34.9%	202	33.3%
Female	269	62.1%	401	66.1%
Prefer not to say	13	3.0%	4	0.7%
Total	433		607	
Skipped	5		106	

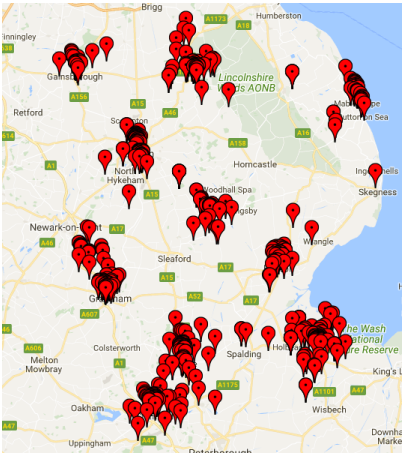
What best describes your situation?

What best describes your situation?				
	Online		Face to Face	
I work full time	111	26.5%	129	22.4%
I work part time	61	14.6%	91	15.8%
I am in full time education	2	0.5%	68	11.8%
I am in part time education	1	0.2%	3	0.5%
I am unemployed	9	2.2%	22	3.8%
I have a long term illness or disability	42	10.0%	39	6.6%
I am retired	193	46.1%	224	38.9%
Total	419		576	
Skipped	7		118	

Do any of the following apply?

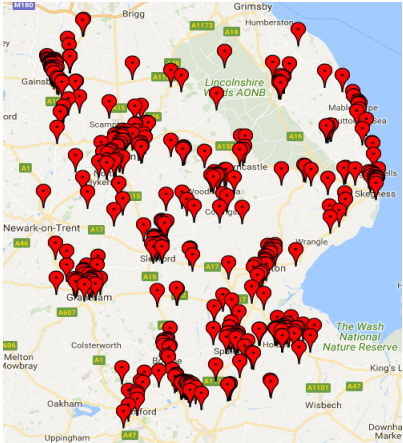
Do any of the following apply?				
	Online		Face to Face	
I am a parent	76	26.5%	138	37.7%
I have a long term health condition	169	58.9%	187	51.1%
I am a carer	53	18.5%	39	10.7%
I have a physical disability	73	25.4%	54	14.8%
I have a learning disability	1	0.4%	15	4.1%
I have a mental health condition	38	13.2%	56	15.3%
Total	410		489	

Face 2 Face



Maps showing the distribution of the face to face and online respondents

Online



Profile of the 12 surgeries involved in face to face patient surveys - Names have been substituted for reference numbers

As part of the investigative work for this project, we engaged with 12 GP surgeries (medical practices) across Lincolnshire. Along with spending time in their surgery, with patients to complete face to face questionnaires, we also asked the surgeries to complete a profile of the activities for the same day, including how many available medical staff, how many appointments, how many Did Not Attends (DNA) etc.

The following tables (page 29-30) provide a breakdown of their responses, in which we have observed the following:

- 2 surgeries do not have a text reminder service
- 11 surgeries responded and from this...
 - 3130 total number of appointments with GPs, Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs), Practice nurses, health care assistants and specialist clinics available
 - 2860 from 10 surgeries providing full data
 - 2756 number of appointments used at the 10 surgeries
 - 90 DNAs across the 10

We would like to thank the 12 surgeries involved in this work for allowing us to spend time in their surgery asking patients to complete a survey. In the interest anonymity we have not mentioned them individually by name and have substituted names for references numbers where relevant.



Profile of the 12 surgeries involved in face to face patient surveys - Names have been substituted for reference numbers

Area	Surgery ref no	Last CQC rating	Total No of apts available with all staff/clinics- on the day	Total No of apts used -on the day	No of DNA's on the day	No of available staff	No of staff not available	Appointment type and contact methods
East	E1	Requires Improvement	516	500	16	19 2 full time GPs, 3 full time and 1 part time locum GPs, 11 full time practice nurses and 2 full time agency nurses	2 nurses are due to retire in the next year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phone and walk in clinic – sit and wait Phone for apt at later date On line booking Telephone triage – call back Home visits Text reminders
	E2`	Good	245	242	3	8 2 full time and 1 part time GP, 3 full time and 2 part time practice nurses		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phone in clinic – sit and wait Phone for apt at later date On line booking Telephone triage – call back Text reminders
	E3	Good	270	Data not provided for specific day (month data provided 5028 apts attended October 2017)	Data not provided for specific day (182 DNA for October 2017)	13 2 full time GPs, 2 part time GPs, 1 part time locum GP, 2 ANPs, 3 part time practice nurses, 3 part time health care assists	2 new salaried GPs due to join the practice after training 1 GP due to retire in the next year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phone and walk in clinic – sit and wait (12 Noon) and (6pm) Phone for apt at later date On line booking Text reminders
South	S1	Good	824 (310 telephone triage)	799	25	12 6 GPs 4 full and 3 part time, 5 practice nurses 2 full and 3 part time	Currently recruiting 1.5 WTE nurses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phone for apt at later date On line booking Telephone triage – call back
	S2	Requires Improvement	282	265	12	7 4 full time GPs 1 part time GP, 2 full time practice nurses	1 GP due to retire in the next year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phone in then sit and wait Phone for apt at later date On line booking
	S3	Good	255	246	9	6 4 GPs 3 part time one full time, 2 practice nurses one full time ne part time	1 health care assist due to sickness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk in clinic – sit and wait (mon only) Phone for apt at later date On line booking Telephone triage – call back Telephone consultations Text reminders

Profile of the 12 surgeries involved in face to face patient surveys - Names have been substituted for reference numbers

Area	Surgery ref no	Last CQC rating	Total No of apts available with all staff/clinics- on the day	Total No of apts used -on the day	No of DNA's on the day	No of available staff	No of staff not available	Appointment type and contact methods
South West	SW1	Good	82	71	2	3 2 part time GPs, 1 health care asst	1 GP and 1 practice nurse on annual leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk in clinic – sit and wait • Phone for apt at later date • On line booking • Telephone triage – call back • Extended hours 2 days per week for telephone or face to face • Text reminders
	SW2	Good	181	176	5	3 2 part time GPs, 1 full time practice nurse	Nursing staff and 1 GP were not available due to mandatory training on the day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone for apt at later date • On line booking • On the day urgent apts are available • Text reminders
	SW3	Good	130	129	1	3 2 full time GPs, 1 full time practice nurse	No 2 members of staff are due to retire in the next year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone and walk in (before 12 noon)– sit and wait • Phone for apt at later date • On line booking • Text reminders
West	W1	Awaiting inspection	151	136	15	5 2 part time GPs (one locum), 2 Nurse Practitioners 1 full and 1 part time, 1 part time practice nurse,		Phone for apt at later date On line booking Telephone triage – call back Text reminders Telephone or video conferencing service available
	W2	Good	No other data provided by practice					
	W3	Good	194	192	2	6 2 full time GPs, 2 full time nurses, 1 agency nurse	1 GP on annual leave, 1 on-going GP vacancy, 1 nurse due to retire in the next year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone for apt at later date • On line booking • Telephone triage – call back • Text reminders