

# The views of Liverpool Residents on GP Access

April 2025

# Contents

---

Executive Summary	2
Key themes and trends	3
1.0 Introduction	4
2.0 Methodology	5
3.0 Who did we hear from?	6
4.0 Findings	8
5.0 Summary of GP Access Survey Findings Against PCARP Objectives	24
6.0 Next Steps	26
7.0 Appendix 1 – Survey	27
Appendix 2 –All responses	
Appendix 3 – Cross section of places we engaged	



*“The nine local Healthwatch continue to be critical friends and champions of the patient voice for NHS Cheshire and Merseyside. They have delivered an important piece of work – gathering thousands of views from residents on how they access and experience GP services across our region.*

*This survey offers an essential temperature check on how well recent investment and changes to primary care are landing with the public. The findings provide us with rich insight into what’s working and where further improvements are needed to ensure timely, fair, and effective access to GP services.*

*As always, we are grateful to the Healthwatch network for their support, constructive challenge, and for ensuring we stay grounded in real patient experiences as we plan for the future.”*

*— Clare Watson, Assistant Chief Executive, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside*

# Executive Summary

---

The Healthwatch Liverpool GP Access Survey looks closely at how local residents feel about their primary care services. Conducted between October 2024 and March 2025, we gathered feedback from 514 people in Liverpool representing different backgrounds. The survey revealed both challenges and successes in how GP services are provided.

**In Spring 2024, national plans were introduced to improve patient access to primary care services through the Primary Care Access Recovery Plan (PCARP). To understand the real-world impact of these changes and ensure that the patient voice is central to any future developments, all 9 Healthwatch across Cheshire and Merseyside ran a joint ICB-commissioned project to hear directly from residents. The Cheshire and Merseyside-wide along with individual reports for each Healthwatch area can be found in Appendix 4.**

One of the key issues highlighted was that many people found it hard to get appointments. A lot of residents had trouble with the phone systems and online booking. While half of those surveyed eventually managed to get face-to-face appointments, it often took several tries using different methods to get that appointment.

## Key findings from our research include:

- **Nearly 70% of respondents mostly used the telephone** to contact their GP, but many experienced long wait times and interruptions. The average ease-of-access rating was 5.2 out of 10, indicating that there is room for improvement in accessibility. **While 87% of those who secured appointments were satisfied with their experience, the process of getting to this point was challenging for many.**
- **Vulnerable groups**, including elderly patients, people with disabilities, and caregivers, **faced barriers to accessing services**. However, when support was available, these groups reported positive experiences, particularly appreciating staff who understood their needs.
- **Alternative service routes, such as pharmacies and other healthcare providers were used** by some patients when they were unable to secure GP appointments. While these options offered support for some, others found them insufficient for their healthcare needs.
- **Interactions with staff received mixed reviews**, with almost half of respondents rating their experience as excellent (5 stars). However, the other half reported feeling dismissed or not fully heard, especially during their contact with reception staff.

These findings will contribute to future improvements to primary care services across Liverpool, ensuring that patient experiences inform strategic planning and service delivery.

# Key themes and trends

Our analysis identified many themes in patient experiences, emphasising both issues in the primary care system and opportunities for improving GP service delivery.



## Challenges with Access and Booking

- Patients commonly reported challenges with the 8am booking system, which particularly affected working parents and those with caregiving responsibilities.
- The 'competition' for same-day appointments often led to multiple call attempts and long waiting times, causing some patients to seek alternative care options or postpone seeking treatment.



## Challenges with Digital Services

- Digital services provided convenience for many, but they also created barriers for others.
- Elderly patients and people without reliable internet access have reported feeling excluded by the growing trend toward online booking systems like PATCHS.
- This 'digital gap' especially affects people or groups who might not have the tools or knowledge to use these platforms easily.



## Inconsistent Staff Experiences

- Patient experiences with practice staff were mixed.
- While many praised the professionalism and empathy of the clinical staff, some reported challenges with the reception staff, especially regarding triage decisions and appointment allocation.



## Other Ways to Access Care

- The use of alternative services, such as pharmacies and NHS 111, has also produced mixed results.
- Some people took care of their health issues using these options, but others had to go back to their GPs.
- They mainly tried these other routes because of a lack of GP appointments.

# 1. Introduction

Healthwatch Liverpool is the independent champion of people who use health and care services, forming part of the national network of local Healthwatch across England.

As part of our core activity, we seek the views and experiences of residents of Liverpool, to help inform how health, care and wellbeing services are planned and delivered. The information we gather is then analysed so we can identify and act upon trends, presenting our findings to decision-makers to improve the services people use. We also share people's views locally with Healthwatch England who strive to ensure that the government puts people at the heart of care nationally.

The project ran from **25<sup>th</sup> October 2024, until 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025**, delivered and supported by the wider Healthwatch team.

In line with the **Primary Care Access Recovery Plan (PCARP)** priorities for Cheshire and Merseyside, the GP Access survey explored various important aspects of accessing and delivering GP services.

- **Patient contact methods:** We asked people how they book GP appointments—**by phone, online, or in person**—and whether these options are **simple, accessible, and reliable**. The survey also looked at whether patients get **clear and friendly information from their first contact**, ensuring **fewer barriers, quicker access, and a better overall experience**.
- **Appointment availability and delivery:** We explored **waiting times for appointments**, what type of consultations people are offered, and whether these **options meet their needs**. We also checked if patients receive clear appointment details, including who they will see and why.
- **Support for vulnerable groups:** The survey looked at how GP surgeries support people who need extra help, **such as those with disabilities, language barriers, or unpaid carers**. We asked whether these groups feel listened to and whether practices are making reasonable adjustments to improve access.
- **Technology and alternative healthcare routes:** We explored whether patients are aware of and comfortable using **digital tools like online booking systems, NHS apps, and virtual consultations**. The survey also looked at whether patients understand when and how to use these tools, and **what alternatives are available if they cannot access digital options**. Additionally, we examined whether **people turn to pharmacies, private healthcare, or urgent care services** when they can't get a GP appointment—and how well these alternatives support patient needs.

# 2. Methodology

The survey was created to gather a wide variety of feedback about GP services. It was made to be shared in different ways so that many patients and service users could respond.

The survey was produced in both online and paper-based formats to accommodate different respondent preferences and to increase accessibility.

Healthwatch Liverpool would like to thank all the people who participated in this project – for generously sharing their experiences and time to help inform future strategies and services.



**514 responses**

including those collected via a

**digital survey link** and **paper responses** gathered through physical distribution and collection points.

## Cross section of places we engaged

(See Appendix 3 for a complete list)

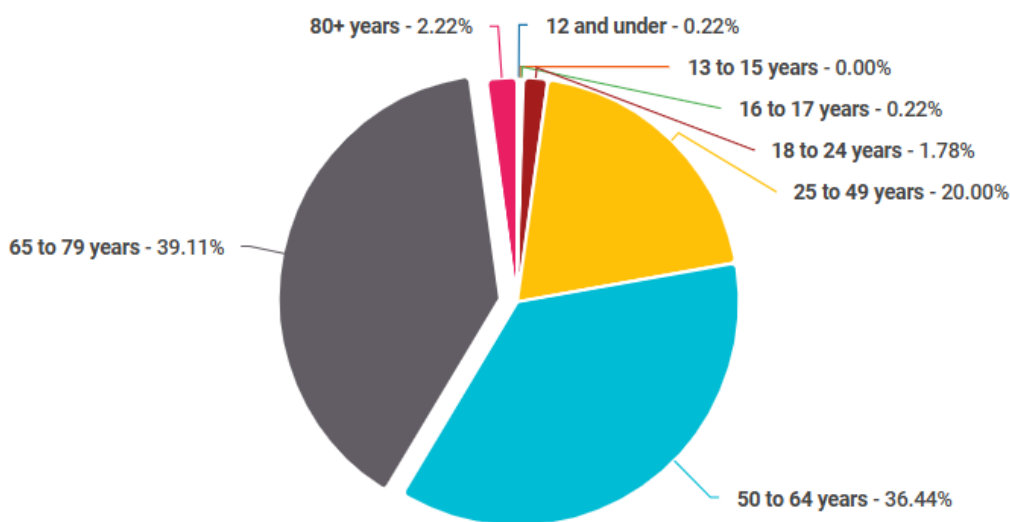
Open Engagement Responses	Gathered through in-person conversations at community events and venues.
Survey Promotion & Distribution	Digital outreach via social media (primarily Facebook), email newsletters, and website links.
Partner Organisations	Supported by NHS Trusts, ICBs, local councils, and third-sector organisations to extend survey reach.

# 3. Who did we hear from?

The survey gave respondents the opportunity to complete demographic information should they wish to disclose it.

## 3.1 Age

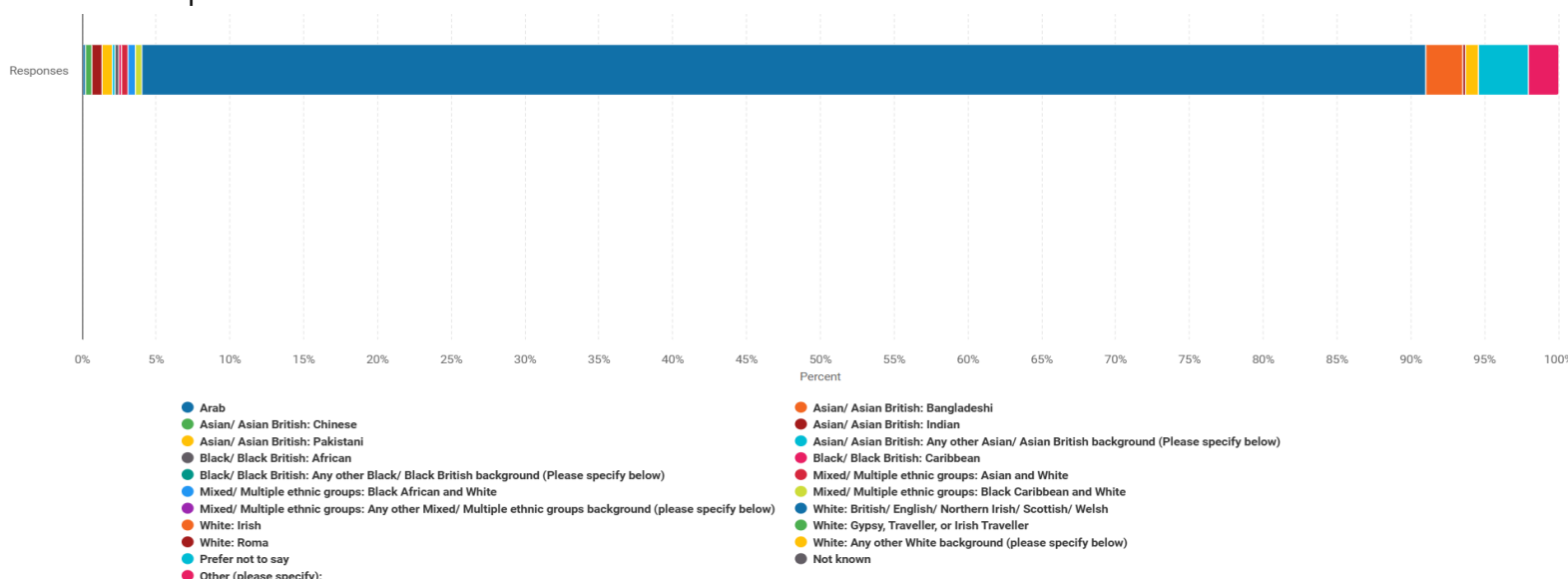
450 responses



- **77% of respondents were aged 50 years and over.** 78% identified as women and 19% as men.
- 98% indicated their gender identity matches their birth sex, and **86% identified as heterosexual/straight.**

## 3.2 Ethnicity

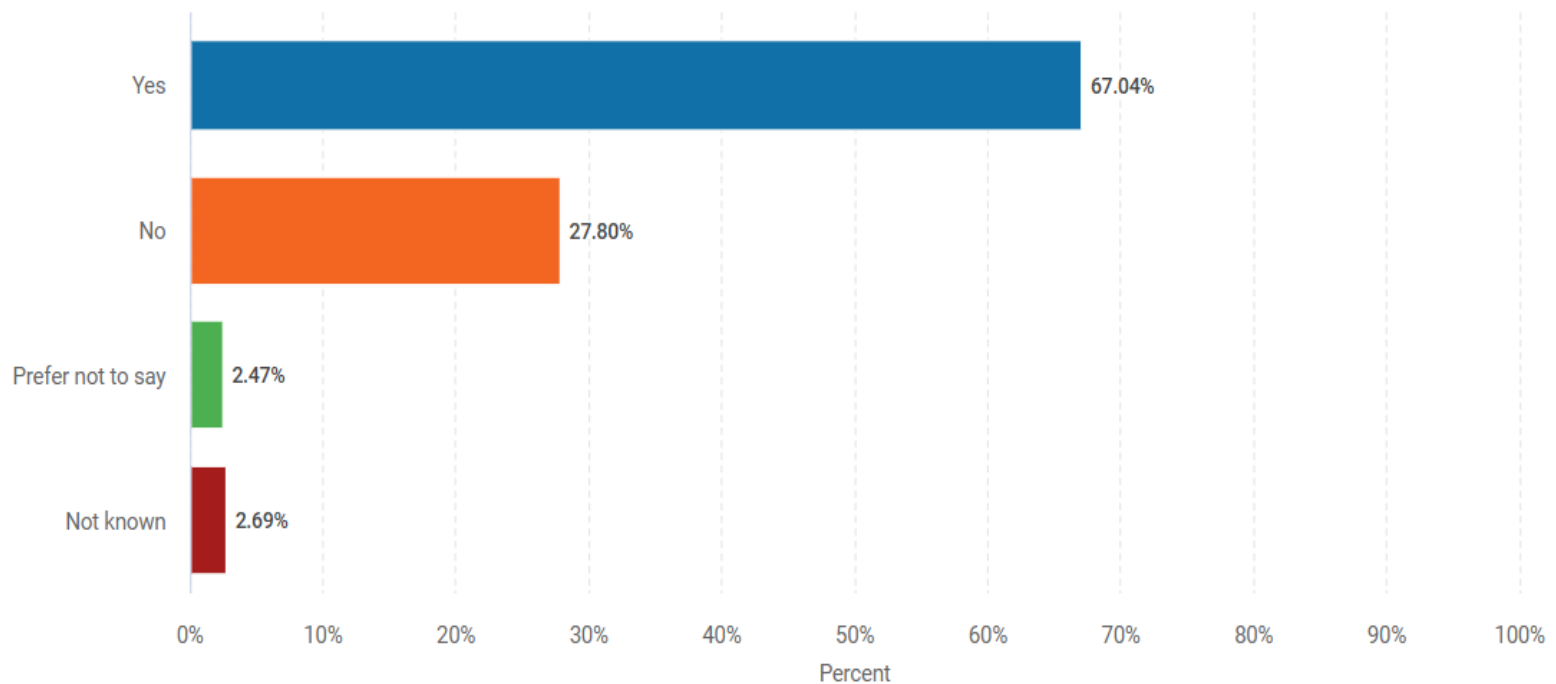
445 responses



- **87% of respondents identified as White British**, with low representation from Asian, Black, and Mixed backgrounds, each below 1%.

### 3.3 Do you have a long-term health condition?

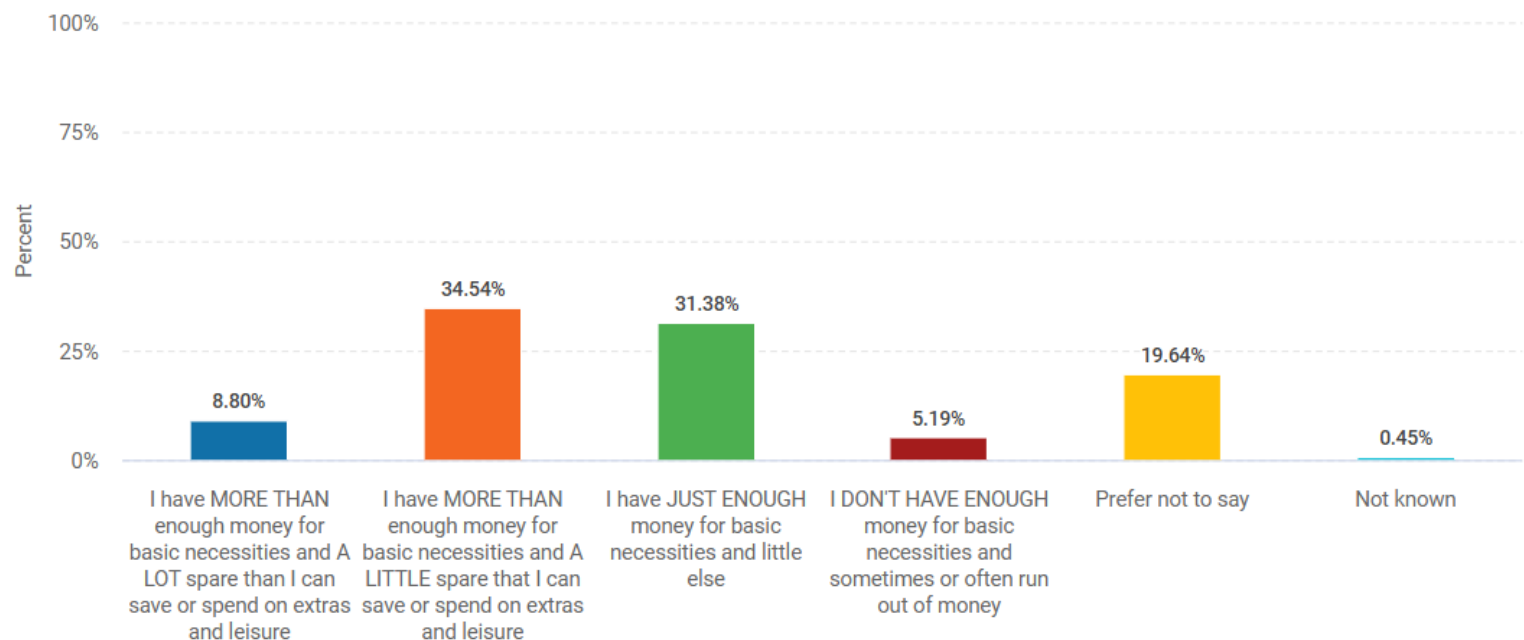
446 responses



- **67% of respondents reported having a long-term health condition**, while 28% said they did not.

### 3.4 Which of the following best describes your current financial position?

443 responses



- **44% of people said they have enough money to cover their basic needs.** Out of those, 35% feel they have a lot of extra money, while 9% have a bit of extra for saving or leisure activities. However, nearly 1 in 3 people (31%) indicated that they only have just enough or not enough money to meet their basic needs. Liverpool’s respondents were among the most financially stable of all who responded in Cheshire and Merseyside. This does not reflect local geography so it is likely that the sample of respondents is skewed.



# 4. Findings

Our survey highlights important challenges in accessing GP services in Liverpool, with **long wait times, difficulties booking appointments, and issues with staff interactions** emerging as key concerns.

While **some patients praised the support received**, others faced **barriers due to limited availability, accessibility issues, and a lack of clear communication**. Many turned to **alternative services such as pharmacies and NHS 111**, but these did not always provide the support that people were looking for.

The findings in this section provide a deeper insight into the experiences of patients and the impact of these issues on their health and wellbeing.

The comments, views and accounts of all our respondents can be found in Appendix 3.

# 4.1 GP Access – reasons, barriers, channels and ease of access

Many people needed to contact their GP practice multiple times in the last year, mainly for advice or treatment of new or existing health issues. A lot of people found it difficult to get through, with an average ease-of-access rating of **5.3 out of 10**, which is among the lowest scoring areas of Cheshire and Merseyside.

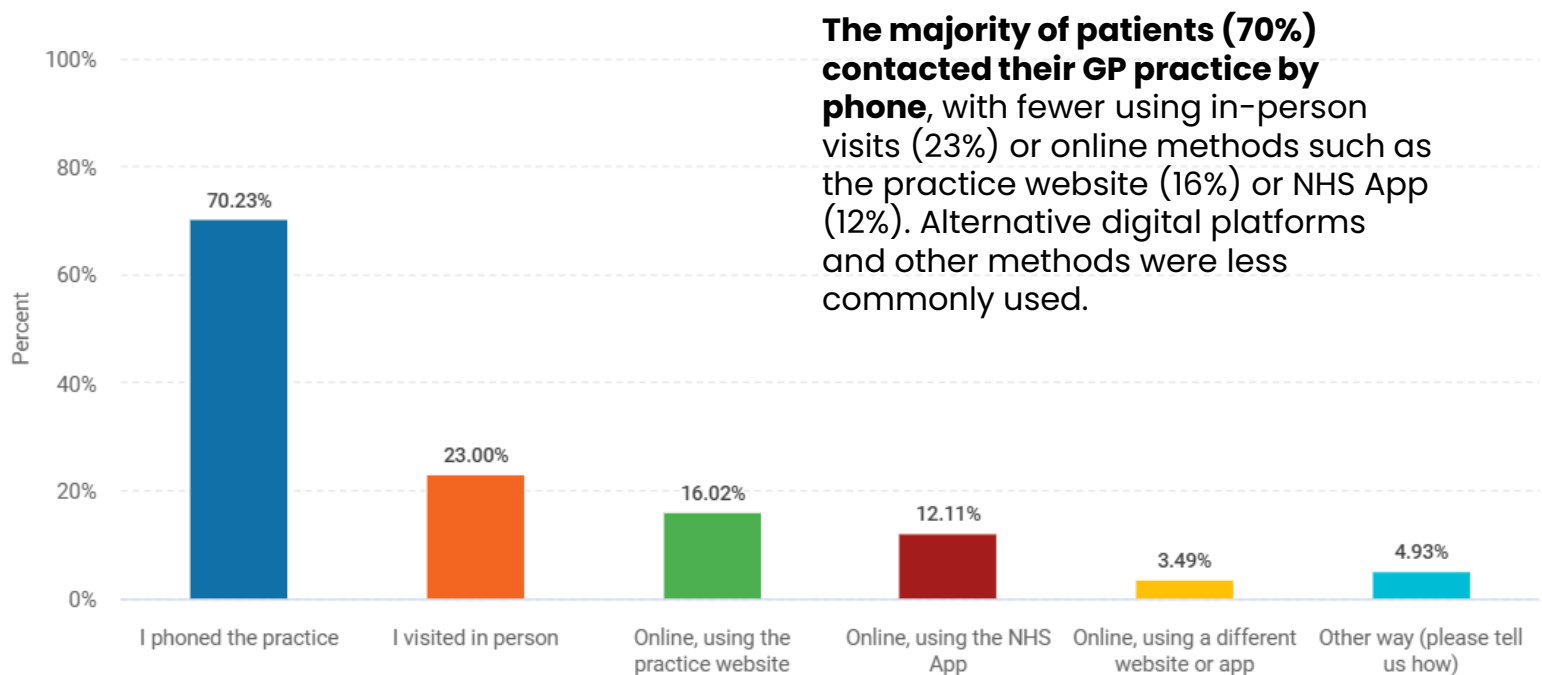
The most common way to contact a GP was by phone, though in-person visits, and online platforms were also used. **Barriers included having to call at 8am, long wait times, limited appointment slots, and difficulties for those with work commitments, caring responsibilities, or disabilities.** Some patients felt frustrated by reception staff, appointment availability, and lack of continuity in care. Others found online systems confusing or unreliable.

However, some patients had **positive experiences, appreciating helpful reception staff, efficient booking processes, and the availability of online options.** Those who successfully accessed care often found their GP practice responsive and supportive.

A small group avoided contacting their GP due to previous negative experiences or dissatisfaction with the service. Most people who don't use the service said they don't try to get care because it's hard to make an appointment.

## Which method did you use to contact your GP?

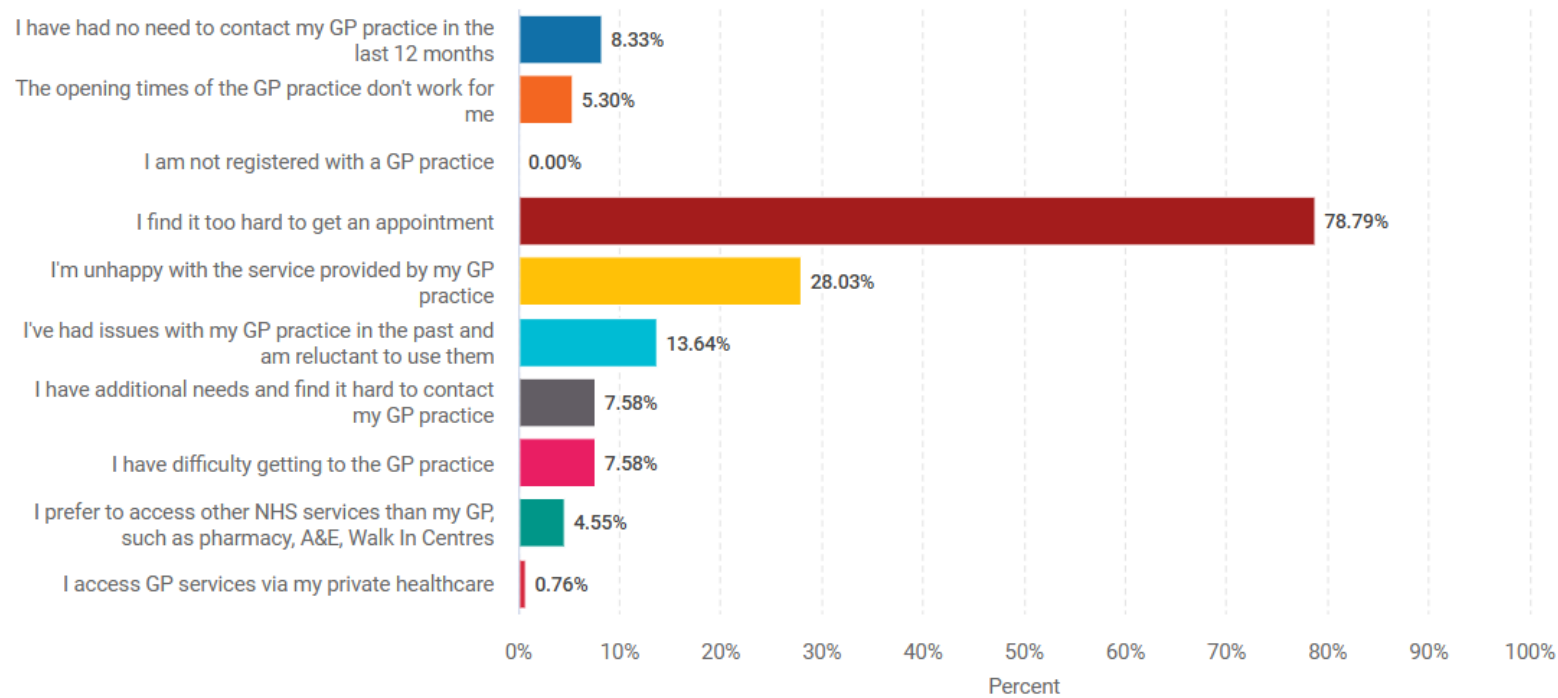
487 responses



# Why have you not accessed or tried to access your GP Practice in the last 12 months?

132 responses

We asked people why they had not accessed their GP practice in the past 12 months. The question explored whether this was due to personal circumstances, service-related challenges, or a preference for alternative healthcare options.



The main reason people did not access their GP practice was **difficulty getting an appointment (79%)**, followed by dissatisfaction with the service (28%). Others said inconvenient opening times (5%) or past negative experiences (14%).

This report further explores alternative care pathways for those who found it difficult to access primary care.

## What did not work?

In line with ensuring fair and timely access to appointments, a common issue is the **difficulty of reaching the practice by phone, especially at 8am when the lines are busy**. This is a problem for those with early work or school commitments, as they miss out on same-day appointments if they can't get through on time. People who work full-time or are parents often find it hard to balance calling at 8 am with their other responsibilities, such as dropping kids off for school or starting their own workday.

*"I have to be late for work to ensure I can access the system at 8am."*

*"By phone is impossible if you need an appointment for that day as they never answer the phone and when you get through you get told there are no appointments left. So, you have to physically go up before 8am and queue up. Trying to book one online is none existent as it says no appointments available."*

*"8am clashes with the school run (my children are in breakfast club before school) and getting into work. Plus, it is now impossible to get a 9am appointment. Instead, the GP will phone back at some unexpected time, say 10.30, when I am busy in work, and if I am lucky enough to be able to answer they then say, can you come in at X time, which might be impossible because by that point I am in work and I do not work near my house. Previously I could make appointments at 9am before work or school."*

*"I have MS and get very fatigued - can only get a same day appointment. Told to ring at 8, by 8:03 all appointments have gone. Sometimes I can't wake up that early due to my health/disability."*

*"Difficult trying to get an appointment, they say phone 8am. I work night shift 6pm-6am so I have to stay up just to make a phone call then still do not get an appointment."*

*"Keeping children at home while trying to get an appointment, then failing to get one and having to take them into school late. GP surgeries should all be like walk in centres - turn up and wait in turn."*

Additionally, **some people find it hard to use online systems, either because they don't have internet access or struggle with technology** suggesting the **access is not equal**. This is especially true for elderly patients or those with disabilities, like hearing impairments or mental health issues, who might not feel comfortable or capable of using the internet. The online system also doesn't always work when they need it.

*"The practice insist online forms are completed for assessment of urgency. I am not used to using online things due to my age. Recently I was told my problem couldn't be assessed as I was unable to take a photograph of the problem and send it electronically. I sometimes have to walk to the surgery in bad weather and ask the receptionist to fill the form in for me on her computer."*

*"The online GP app is good for reports, results, and repeat prescriptions, but can't leave a message. I'm deaf and can't use a phone"*

*"I think internet is creating an unfair 2 tier system. I have to help older neighbours order prescriptions."*

## What did not work?

---

People felt that another barrier to accessing GP services is the **behaviour of some receptionists and staff**. Many people feel that receptionists are not always helpful or understanding, **not providing patient-centred care**. The responses received indicate that some patients do not always fully understand or do not like the role that receptionists play in prioritising appointments.

For those with disabilities or chronic health conditions, accessing healthcare can be especially challenging. They find it physically hard to get to the surgery or feel that the GP doesn't fully understand their condition because of rushed phone consultations.

*"Can only contact for issues from 8:00 to 10:00. After that its only urgent queries. Receptionists are dismissive of my concerns when called, despite not knowing any medical history and that some symptoms are an emergency for me due to my history."*

*"In the past I've had very negative experiences with reception staff at this practice and my previous practice so I avoided going to the doctors unless it was an emergency. I have experienced extremely condescending reception staff in the past who have been quick to make assumptions "*

## What worked?

---

Despite these difficulties, some people shared positive experiences that show the GP practice is helpful and supportive. **Some patients appreciated the human connection rather than accessing online information or services, and were positive about their practice staff.** .

*"Got called back from the surgery within two hours - very helpful person."*

*"Dr (name of GP) has an amazing personalised surgery. He has a great way of dealing with enquiries by telephone consultations then offering a face-to-face appointment the same day if needed."*

*"The receptionist was understanding and sympathetic."*

*"I always like to speak to an actual person."*

*"Excellent practice, good access and friendly and professional staff."*

## 4.2 Making an Appointment

We talked to people about their experiences when trying to make an appointment with their doctors and how quickly they could get care. Their responses showed the difficulties in reaching the reception, the long waiting times, and how available appointments really are. **This part also looks at how easy it is to schedule an appointment and if other options like going to a pharmacy or using NHS 111 services, were explored.**

**59% (263)**

respondents reported **waiting in a queue** to have their call answered when trying to reach their GP practice.

**38% (195)**

were **unsuccessful** in securing an appointment.

**52% (242)**

respondents **were able to get an appointment on the same day**, and 71 were seen within a week.

**90% (218)**

found the **date and time of their appointment convenient**, indicating that most respondents were satisfied with the scheduling once appointments were secured.

**49% (220)**

**respondents tried to treat themselves through self-care before attempting to get an appointment, while 146 sought information on the internet.**

A regular theme was **the unavailability of appointments**—many respondents reported that when they called, all slots were already booked or only emergency appointments were left, forcing them to either wait weeks or be told to call back at 8 am repeatedly.

Additionally, several noted **issues with the online triage system**, which either prevented booking in advance or redirected them away from receiving a proper appointment. Poor communication and strict booking rules make it hard for some patients to get care. People reported that receptionists sometimes refused to book appointments over the phone or transferred calls without helping. This left those patients with no choice but to look for care through other means.

## Could you tell us more about why you didn't get an appointment?

Many respondents said that when they called, there were **no appointments available or only available in two weeks or more**. Some were told to call back at 8am every day, and only emergency appointments were available in many cases. Some felt the only way to secure an appointment was to visit the practice in person.

*"There weren't any left by the time I got through. To have a better chance of getting an appointment I have to actually go to the practice at 8 am and join a queue! If very ill this is impossible."*

*"Caller number 85 at 8.01am when the phone lines opened at 8am and they have about 10 appointments to give away, so no way anyone's getting one. It's absolutely insane."*

*"All phone and face to face appointments were booked for that day within 20 -30 minutes of phone lines opening. No future appointments available so have to try 8am 'lottery' again, and again, and again!"*

*"All appointments done by 8:05 or sometimes 8:03 and then get told to ring back the next morning and try again. Same cycle I've been trying for 2 weeks now to get an appointment."*

*"None available or a week or so earliest available. It feels like you have to "plan ahead" if/when you're unwell and need/wish to see a GP face to face."*

*"I was told that day appointments were for emergency only. It took me 3 days to actually speak to a GP"*

*"As explained, by the time you get through appointments are all gone for that day. Phone again next day, same thing. Has taken 6 days before finally getting an emergency appointment"*

*"Phoned several mornings at 8 am, kept in queue until call automatically terminated, then when eventually answered all the appointments had been taken. Frustrating and soul destroying."*

*"No appointments, all gone, Doctor off sick and no pre bookable appointment. Next appointment in 3 weeks."*

*"Can't get through. You visit but no appointments available. Have to wait in a queue outside to get appointment on the day."*

Some respondents reported that their **personal circumstances**, such as work commitments or disabilities, prevented them from getting an appointment, because of the **need to call at 8am**.

*"Because of my disability I get too fatigued to wake up at 8am or wait in a phone queue."*

*"None left - don't always need an appointment on that day, for example something that is not urgent, but have to take the full day to be able to firstly get in touch, then wait for a doctor to call back, then possibly get any appointment. This isn't practical for someone who works full time."*

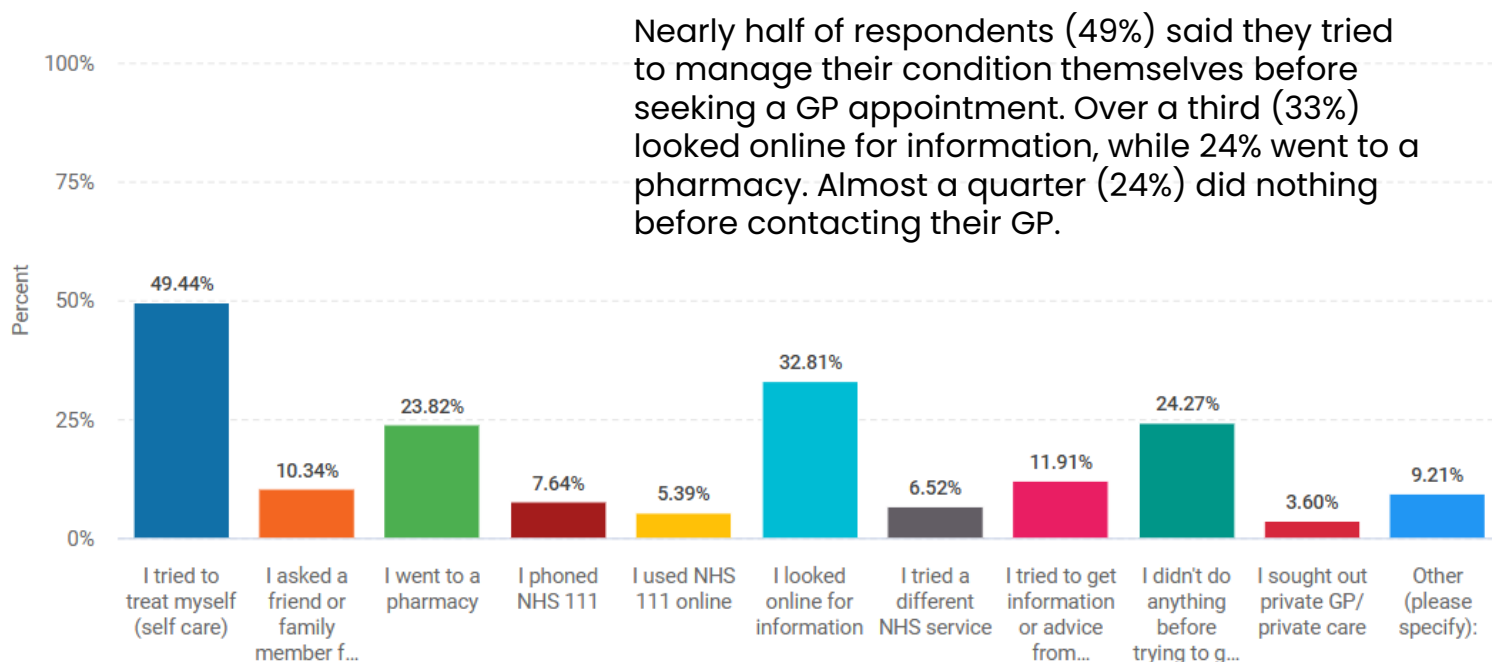
*"Because I couldn't get through on the phone until after 9am I was told no appointments left and to call again the following day. As a neurodiverse person it is very difficult to make phone calls due to communication challenges. For me to be then rushed off the call with just a 'call back tomorrow' feels very dismissive & impersonal."*



## Thinking of the last time you tried to get an appointment; did you try any of these alternative routes first?

445 responses

We asked respondents whether they tried any alternative routes before attempting to book a GP appointment. This included self-care, asking family or friends for advice, visiting a pharmacy, calling or using NHS 111 online, looking up health information online, or seeking help from another NHS service. We also asked if they sought private care, tried to get advice elsewhere, or if they went straight to their GP without trying anything else.

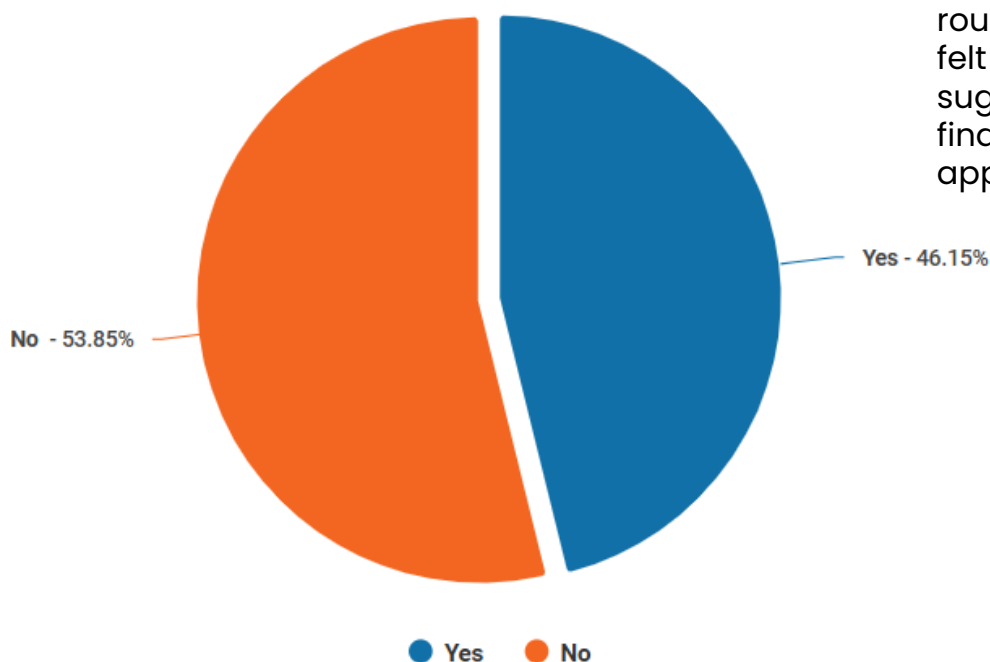


- Some people depended on their own medical knowledge or consulted healthcare professionals they knew, while others had pre-arranged follow-ups or long-term conditions requiring GP involvement.
- Some people felt alternative routes like pharmacies or NHS 111 weren't suitable for their needs, while others noted that specific treatments, such as injections or repeat prescriptions, required direct GP access.
- A few mentioned frustration with the system, stating they had either given up trying to book appointments or sought private care when NHS options weren't available.



## Did you find the route(s) worked well for you?

429 responses



Around 46% (198) found alternative routes worked well, while 54% (231) felt they didn't meet their needs, suggesting mixed success in finding suitable care outside GP appointments.

Nearly half of respondents found **that alternative routes worked well**. Advice from NHS 111, their local pharmacy or visits to walk in centres or A&E helped people get the help they needed on the day.

However, others **were advised to see their GP** by the alternative routes they took, so didn't get the answers they were hoping for. For others, the GP was their preferred option.

*"I have taken my children to a walk-in centre where I know they will be seen on the day."*

*"I had multiple symptoms and didn't realise some of which were relevant. I was able to list them thanks to the NHS symptoms website which saved time."*

*"NHS 111 directed me to a walk-in centre with an x ray machine so cut out the need for the GP to send to A&E."*

*"I asked the pharmacist for advice on painkillers I could take with new medication. When pain was unbearable and my condition worsened, I visited A&E where I was treated quickly and very well."*

*"The pharmacy provided excellent advice."*

*"NHS 111 service says to see the GP or go to A&E. The GP says phone 111, or go to A&E. A&E says the service is overwhelmed and avoid then a 60 plus hours wait by going to GP."*

*"Previously I have rung NHS 111 for assistance but had to wait over half an hour in a queue then was advised to contact my GP."*

*"I had an eye infection and went to the pharmacy counter in Superdrug who did not provide any help, just said I need to see a doctor. Going round in circles springs to mind."*

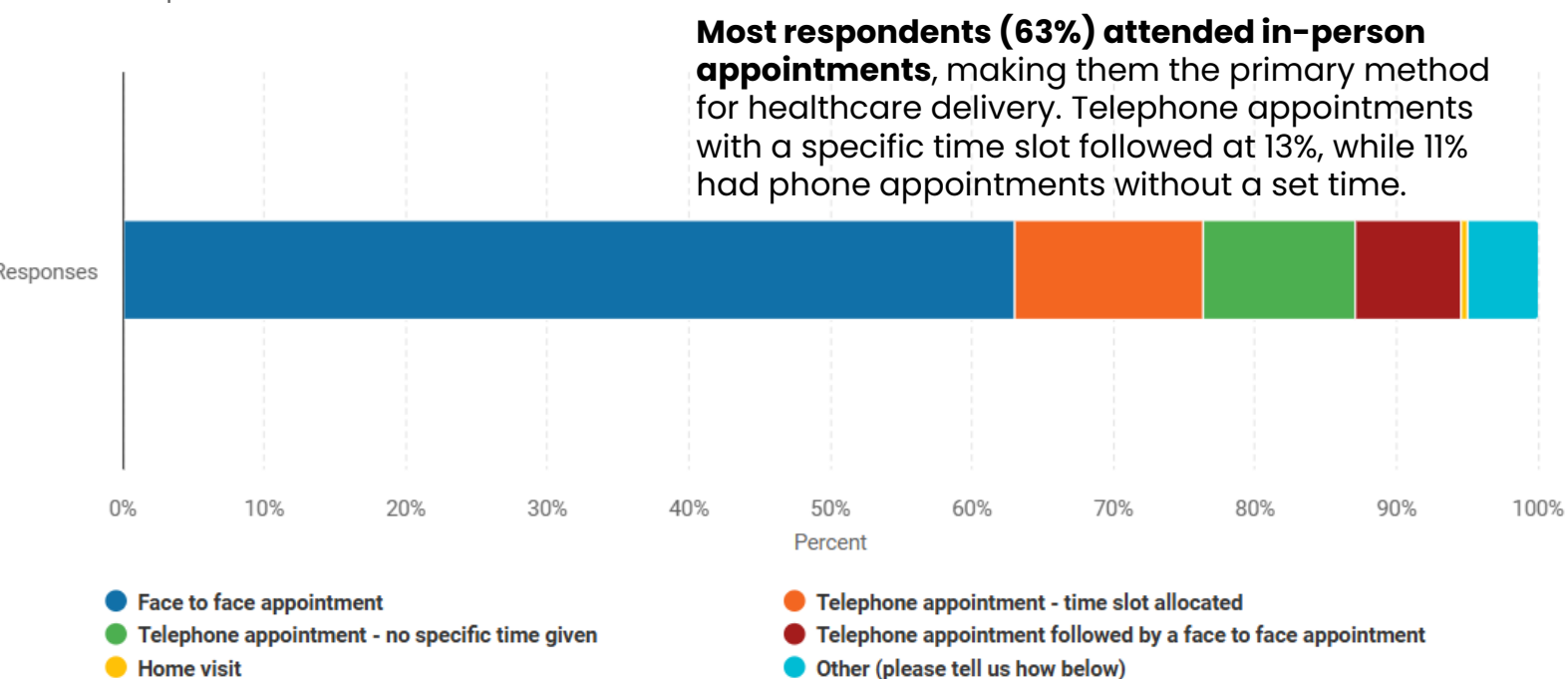
*"Ongoing medical care needs to be followed up with a GP."*

*"I still needed to see a doctor as wasn't sure if I was correct in my own diagnosis."*

## 4.3 Appointment Experience

### How was the appointment delivered?

241 responses



### What worked?

Some respondents praised the care they received once they reached a doctor or health professional —sharing their positive experiences.

*"I am very happy with my GP practice, and I feel able to see a health professional when needed."*

*"Anytime I have got an appointment with <name of GP Practice> I have never had to wait more than 3 days for an appointment. I think it's great and their system should be looked at for other practices. So much better than when I lived in another city."*

*"The appointment was on a Saturday - clinic supported by a nurse external to the surgery. However, she was excellent."*

*"Been at this surgery my whole life and have never had any problems."*

*"Helpful to be fitted in for an emergency appointment with an on-call doctor."*

*"GP was fabulous."*

*"It was great - I was given a choice of two appointment times."*

## What did not work?

Many respondents who were working found it **difficult to conduct telephone appointments**, as a set time wasn't given and their work couldn't accommodate the flexibility needed. The desire to book an appointment in advance and to see the same GP for continuity was evident.

*"When working it is really difficult to take a phone call back from the GP when I have no idea when they will call. My job involves being on the phone myself. I just have to hope I'm between calls when the GP calls."*

*"Appointments are with staff who aren't doctors (pharmacist or nurse) and who can't make referrals so required to make another appointment when the staff I saw could have just sent a request for me, maybe to the doctor via an email, to save going through another booking."*

*"Surgery has declined since Covid. Open to agile ways of working but trying to book advance appointments is almost impossible and trying to get a same day appointment if ill is a nightmare."*

*"The doctors are good, but it is very difficult to get to see a GP when needed as the patient has to negotiate with the reception staff first and this is very very difficult as they have very little medical knowledge. I never see the same doctor for the same condition and have been given conflicting advice by two different doctors."*

*"Present system is unsuitable for people who work."*

*"Go back to the old system that worked. Patient calls up and an appointment is booked. For example, Mrs Jones rings up at 10am Monday and says she can see the doctor this week. Receptionist looks in the diary and books her in for Thursday at 10 am. How hard can it be? It worked for 100 years."*

*"I have had telephone appointments which I realise the need for, but wish weren't necessary. The problem is usually that many of the GPs do not know me and you have to start from the beginning."*

*"Not being given a specific time is difficult to manage when you're at work - I work at home and have to manage online meetings. I've had to cancel meetings on the hoof to take a call from the doctor rather than being able to plan."*

*"I would prefer to choose which GP I see so I can have some continuity with the same GP. If I ring for an appointment I feel like I don't get to choose who I see because appointments are limited."*

## Were you satisfied with the way your appointment was delivered, and did you feel that the person you saw was the right one to speak to?

We asked people if they were happy with how their appointment was delivered and if they felt they spoke to the right person. The answers show that the majority of people were happy, but a few had some concerns.

**87%** (202)

said they were happy with how their appointment was delivered.

**78%** (186)

agreed when we asked if they felt the person they saw was the right one to speak to.

Respondents who were **happy with their experience spoke of the health professionals** who treated them and the way they approached the consultation.

*"Nurse practitioner said she would call me back within a week to check in and she did, which was great."*

*"I feel my GP helps me arrive at the correct diagnosis rather than tell me what is wrong with me and helps me come up with the best treatment plan rather than dictate"*

*"The appointment on each occasion was very thorough with referral on where necessary. I know I am lucky to be at my practice as compared to my brothers GP practice (which is awful) mine is brilliant."*

Some respondents who were not happy with their healthcare experience said they would have **preferred a face-to-face appointment**. Others were unhappy with their telephone appointment due to the lack of set time allocated and the need for additional appointments if **symptoms are unable to be diagnosed by telephone**.

*"It would have saved them an appointment if they hadn't needed on doing a phone appointment first. For some things, include this where they needed to do a physical examination, an in person appointment is going to be needed and a phone appointment first doesn't seem the best use of their or my time."*




*"I really would have preferred a specific time (autistic - waiting for phone calls very stressful) , but at least within the hour was vaguely manageable."*

*"Face to face is preferred."*

*"I would have preferred all of them to be face to face."*

## Thinking of the reason for your last appointment, did you feel your needs were met?

443 responses

Yes		48.53%	215
No		29.12%	129
Partly		22.35%	99

### What did not work?

Some people who responded 'no' or 'partly' to this question, talked of **poor communication** – feeling rushed, or staff not taking time to listen effectively, explain their diagnosis or give them advice on how to improve their health situation. **Difficulty getting an appointment** was a key theme once again.

*"Told to ring back next day in order to book appointment in 2 weeks time. Didn't ring again as obviously too busy to be bothered with me."*

*"They made me feel rushed and not really listening to what I was saying. Didn't get the help I really needed."*

*"The doctor I eventually spoke with over the phone came across as tired and disinterested in what I asked."*

*"I last saw a doctor for advice on menopause symptoms and came away feeling none the wiser."*

*"Not enough information provided about next steps for disease management."*

A common theme in patient feedback was the **delay in diagnosis, referrals or results, sometimes due to poor links between services**. Others reported actions not being followed through or not happening in a timely manner.

*"Phoned 4 times to gain information about test results, which have been available to the doctor for 7 days. Still waiting for results to be looked at."*

*"I was given steroids and antibiotics and told someone would ring me to see how I was getting on. No one rang."*

*"I just kept getting sent from GP to A&E like a yo-yo, until the doctor in A+E had to spend her precious time to write a letter to my GP informing them that they should be looking after me."*

*"Got nowhere with Ill, nurse at the walk in very helpful, but she couldn't access the surgery during the time I was there so I left. She phoned me later to say she had emailed the surgery and they would ring me. They didn't."*

## What worked?

---

The majority of positive responses related to the **care and manner of the medical staff**. Many people felt well cared for, highlighting that doctors and nurses took the time to listen, provide clear guidance, and act on their concerns. Some praised the reception staff and advice they'd received by 111.

*"GP listened carefully to what I had to say, discussed options with me, made a recommendation for treatment and seemed genuinely to care about my condition."*

*"When I eventually secured a telephone consultation appointment, my needs were entirely met – the GP went above and beyond."*

*"The clerk who made my appointment was friendly and helpful. I then saw a brilliant doctor, who referred me to secondary care. He was extremely knowledgeable and kind. I was very happy with consultation."*

*"I had been at the A&E and then advised to visit my GP for test results and medication review. GP was extremely helpful as always, left feeling more confident with the results from the hospital being explained and how to manage moving forward."*

*"We have never had a problem gaining treatment over the 70 years that I have been with them, they operate a very proficient, professional practice. I cannot praise them enough."*

*"Having long term anxiety and past mental health problems together with CKD and other conditions my GP and I do a 4 weekly review in person and can talk through anxieties and symptoms that might otherwise result in me needing other crisis help."*

# 4.4 Practice Staff

## How would you rate the attitude of the people you spoke to?

442 responses

We asked respondents to rate the attitude of the practice staff they interacted with, considering factors such as friendliness, kindness, professionalism, helpfulness, and respect. Participants rated their experience on a scale from 1 to 5 stars, with 5 stars indicating an excellent or highly positive attitude and 1 star reflecting a poor or negative experience.

Star Rating	Responses		
1	<div><div></div></div>	10.18%	45
2	<div><div></div></div>	11.76%	52
3	<div><div></div></div>	19.68%	87
4	<div><div></div></div>	15.84%	70
5	<div><div></div></div>	42.53%	188

**Almost half (42%) of the respondents rated their experience 5 stars, while 16% gave 4 stars.** The remaining responses were more evenly split, with 20% rating 3 stars, 12% rating 2 stars, and 10% giving 1 star.

## If you have additional needs how well were you supported by the practice staff?

435 responses

We asked people how well the practice staff supported patients with additional needs, such as being an informal carer, having a disability, hearing difficulties, or requiring language support. **The majority of patients indicated they had no additional needs (68%).**

I have no additional needs	<div><div></div></div>	68.28%	297
Well	<div><div></div></div>	9.66%	42
Ok	<div><div></div></div>	13.10%	57
Poor	<div><div></div></div>	8.97%	39

However, those with additional needs reported varying experiences. **Of the 138 people with additional needs**, 30% said they were well supported, 41% indicated they were okay, and 28% expressed poor support. The answers suggested that there is further opportunity for improvement in awareness and tailored support for people with specific requirements.



## What did not work?

---

Some people felt their specific needs were ignored by staff, which made them feel unsupported. Additionally, negative feedback was given regarding reception staff, with some patients feeling dismissed or given medical advice by unhelpful receptionists, which affected their experience.

*"Because it is all over the phone, I find it difficult to assess body language which is important for my communication needs."*

*"My son had additional needs, however as he is over 18 years old I cannot order his repeat prescriptions online. He does not have capacity to do this himself. He is at risk of not being able to access his medication."*

*"They don't have a clue and talk down to you. Like you have to tell them your problem, so they can see if it's worth an appointment or not."*

*"They did not care my child had special needs and receptionist had a (well that's just how it is) attitude."*

*"Receptionist was very unhelpful. Very dismissive and arrogant."*

*"Think the receptionist's attitude was disgusting and didn't want to help in any way at all. My appointment with the doctor over the phone was no problem. She helped me out and even followed up again with a call back to inform me of changes made."*

## What worked?

---

Some respondents were thankful that the practice staff helped meet their needs, such as changing appointment times for those with mobility or hearing issues. Others said they felt cared for and that staff were helpful and understanding.

*"Profoundly deaf. Have found staff to be very helpful, ringing hospital to change appointments when I have been unable to do it online. They always face me when talking or write it down if I can't get a lip pattern. Sending text messages for health events near me or for vaccinations. Very good staff."*

*"I have several illnesses. The receptionist is always helpful, as are all admin. I've never had a problem; in fact they are all amazing to me and my family and always get same day appointment to suit me."*

*"I have existing health conditions so they all generally do their best to care for me."*



## 5. Summary of GP Access Survey Findings Against PCARP Objectives

PCARP Question	Yes/No/Partly	Explanation
Feel valued and important/understood from first contact	<b>Partly</b>	Just about 2 out of 5 respondents rated staff attitude as 5 stars, the overall ease-of-access rating was only 5.3/10, with many reporting difficulties at initial contact.
Feel confident when calling GP practices	<b>Partly</b>	70% contacted their GP by phone, with 59% reporting waiting in queues. Many lacked confidence in calling due to long queues, unhelpful reception staff, and difficulty in securing an appointment. 1 in 2 of the respondents tried self-care before.
Accommodating the needs of carers	<b>No</b>	Out of 100 who identified as carers, responses around carer needs suggested negative experiences.
Able to make/manage appointments through phone, online, or in person	<b>Partly</b>	Phone was the most used method (70%), and 1 in 2 secured same-day appointments with the 8 AM rush. Online booking was used by only 31% of respondents. It excluded digitally disadvantaged groups. In-person booking was rare and often required prior appointments.
Understand the process/system for apps and technology	<b>No</b>	Only 31% of respondents tried online methods. While some found online tools convenient, others (especially the elderly) struggled with confusing systems like eConsult and a lack of clear alternatives.

## 5. Summary of GP Access Survey Findings Against PCARP Objectives

PCARP Question	Yes/No/Partly	Explanation
Assurance that language & translation services are effective	<b>Inconclusive</b>	There was little mention of translation services or language barriers meaning we were unable to classify.
Choice of appointment types (face-to-face vs. online)	<b>Yes</b>	87% were satisfied with the delivery method, many reported difficulty specifically getting face-to-face appointments.
Clear appointment details – time and doctor	<b>Yes</b>	90% of respondents found their appointment time convenient, some were unclear about who they were seeing and why.
Clear appointment details – why	<b>Yes</b>	78% of respondents agreed that the person they had their appointment with was the right person to speak to. 90% were happy with how the appointment was delivered.
Set times for online consultations rather than open-ended wait	<b>No</b>	13% (of 242) said that they received a specific time for phone/video appointments. Most of them had face-to-face appointments.

# 6. Next Steps

Healthwatch across Cheshire and Merseyside will continue to listen to the experiences of local people in accessing GP services and encourage residents to share their feedback with their local Healthwatch through their online Feedback Centres.

- [Healthwatch Cheshire East](#)
- [Healthwatch Cheshire West](#)
- [Healthwatch Halton](#)
- [Healthwatch Knowsley](#)
- [Healthwatch Liverpool](#)
- [Healthwatch Sefton](#)
- [Healthwatch St Helens](#)
- [Healthwatch Warrington](#)
- [Healthwatch Wirral](#)

The findings of this joint report highlight what is working well and identify where improvements can still be made. It will be shared with the Integrated Care Board (ICB), and partners across Cheshire and Merseyside to help inform the development and delivery of GP primary care services.

Each local Healthwatch will also share their individual reports and findings with their respective Place Leads, Primary Care Networks, Local Authority and VCSFE system partners to support discussions and improvements in access to primary care.

Local Healthwatch will monitor the impact of the actions and activity that is generated as a result of these findings through our independent engagement and feedback gathering activities.

We will provide regular updates to the ICB System Primary Care Committee to ensure that patient insight and intelligence continues to inform and shape future services.



# 7. Appendices

(Click the underlined phrases to access the files)

Appendix 1: The survey

Appendix 2: The comments, views and accounts of all our respondents can be found here. This includes feedback from our online survey.

[Comments on the spreadsheet can be filtered by Place (Q3)]

Appendix 3: Cross-section of places we engaged

Appendix 4: Link to the Cheshire and Merseyside wide report and other local reports





Healthwatch Liverpool  
LCVS building  
151 Dale Street  
Liverpool  
L2 2AH

[www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk)

t: 0300 777 7007

e: [enquiries@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk)



@HW\_liverpool



[Facebook.com/HWLiverpool](https://www.facebook.com/HWLiverpool)