



**What you told us about the GP
Improved Access Service**

January 2020



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Report summary

What is this report about?

This report looks at access to GP services across Wiltshire with a focus on evaluating the Improved GP Access Service. This is a service that involves GP practices across Wiltshire working together to provide routine appointments for patients in the evenings and weekends.

What did we do?

This project had several elements aiming to gather information in different ways:

- We visited a range of GP surgeries across Wiltshire during daytime, evening and weekend hours and interviewed 173 patients.
- We carried out a mystery shopping exercise. Our volunteers called 14 GP surgeries on two dates and asked about evening and weekend appointments.
- We distributed a survey for staff which aimed to gather their views about the service. 85 staff members completed the survey.

What were the key findings?

- Access to evening and weekend appointments are valued by patients.
- Overall there was a greater preference from patients for early morning or evening appointments as opposed to weekend ones.
- Most patients said that they would be happy to see a nurse, paramedic or pharmacist where appropriate. There seemed to be increased awareness and confidence in the triaging process.
- 60% of the people we spoke to said that they would consider travelling to be seen at another surgery in some circumstances. However, there was concern that those who are unable to travel should not be disadvantaged.
- Improved Access appointments were used and managed in a range of different ways by different surgeries.
- Surgery staff were not clear about what Improved Access appointments were available at other surgeries and some reported difficulties booking these.
- Staff thought that the Improved Access Service had improved access for patients, but their views whether it was a good use of their time was more mixed.
- The people we spoke to reported high levels of satisfaction with the treatment they received at appointments.

Conclusions and recommendations

The report concludes that access to out of hours appointments is something that is valued by patients and should continue.

We make recommendations which mostly concern the implementation of the Improved Access Service and are based on the views of patients and staff.

Introduction

Access to GP services has been frequently reported to Healthwatch Wiltshire as a concern from members of the general public.

Healthwatch Wiltshire regularly hears from many local people about primary care services. While we heard many positive comments about the quality of treatment people received, getting an appointment has been reported to be an issue across Wiltshire. Because of this, primary care was made one of our priority areas in 2019.

In October 2018 a new “Improved Access Service” was commissioned by Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group and provided by the Wiltshire GP Alliance with the support of Wiltshire Health and Care. Under this scheme, GP practices across Wiltshire are collaborating to provide routine appointments for patients in the evenings and weekends.

We were pleased to be invited to work with the GP Alliance to evaluate this service and to hear how patients, GPs and other staff feel this is working, and to hear any suggestions they may have for further improvements.

Our volunteers

Healthwatch Wiltshire has a team of committed, trained volunteers. Our volunteers supported this engagement by attending surgeries and interviewing patients, calling surgeries to carry out mystery shopping, entering data and proofreading the draft report. Eleven volunteers contributed a total of 51 hours of their time.



Our volunteers June, Michael and Meg, who supported us on the project.

Our approach

This project had several elements which aimed to gather information in different ways.

1. Interviews with patients at GP surgeries

We designed a survey for patients attending GP appointments. We asked questions about their experience of making their appointment, and of their preferences about the time, location and the health professional they would like to see. We also designed a short follow-up interview which aimed to gather information about how their appointment had gone.

In selecting which surgeries to visit, we considered the need to cover different areas of the county including both rural and town GP practices, and we chose surgeries with a range of different ratings in the recent national GP Patient Survey*. We visited surgeries during the daytime, evenings and weekends. We asked patients there if they would be happy to speak to us and we completed our survey with those that were.

We used this approach with the aim of gathering views from a typical sample of local people in Wiltshire who are using GP services. We aimed to complete most surveys as a one to one interview with patients, as this provided opportunities to explore people’s opinions further and to gain insights about the reasons behind people’s views. Most patients completed the survey this way, but a small number completed the survey by themselves.

We carried out:

- 9 evening visits to 8 different surgeries
- 2 Saturday visits to different surgeries
- 4 daytime visits to different surgeries

During our evening and weekend visits we tried to prioritise talking to patients who were attending an Improved Access appointment. Approximately 80% of those were doing so, with the remainder being those attending extended hours or walk-in appointments.

2. Mystery shopping exercise

We carried out a mystery shopping exercise where we telephoned a further selection of rural and town GP surgeries across Wiltshire and asked about evening and weekend appointments. Our volunteers carried out this activity using a script that was the same for all surgeries. We called 14 different surgeries, making two phone calls to each surgery on different dates.

3. Staff survey

We distributed a survey for staff which aimed to gather their views about the service. This survey was circulated electronically to staff in any role that was involved with Improved Access appointments. The questions covered their views about the impacts of the Improved Access Service both for themselves and for patients.

* www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/gp-patient-survey

Who we spoke to...

We completed a total of 173 interviews at GP surgeries. Ninety-nine of these were with patients attending evening or weekend appointments and 74 were with patients attending appointments during the day.

The charts show a breakdown of some demographic information about who we spoke to during daytime appointments and who we spoke to during evening and weekend appointments.

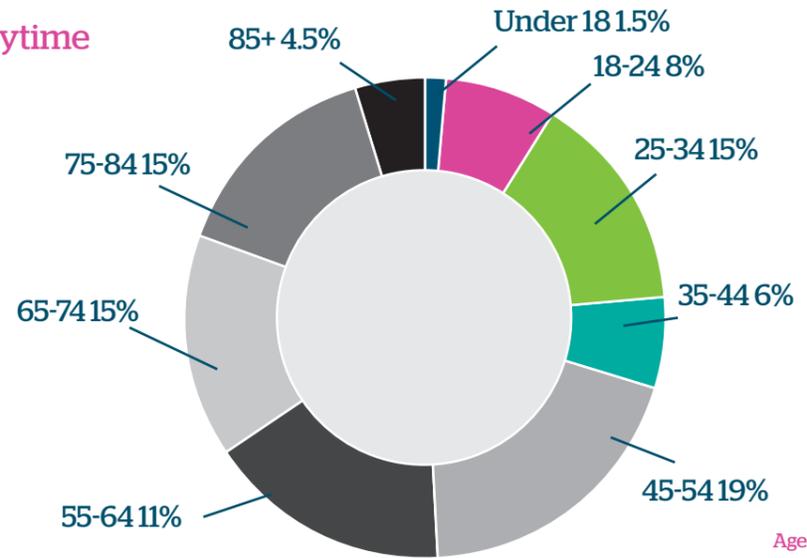
The demographics of those we spoke to were broadly typical of what we would expect to see for people attending GP services in Wiltshire.

However, we were surprised there was not more difference in the age ranges of people attending daytime appointments as compared to those attending evening and weekend appointments.

Where did we go?

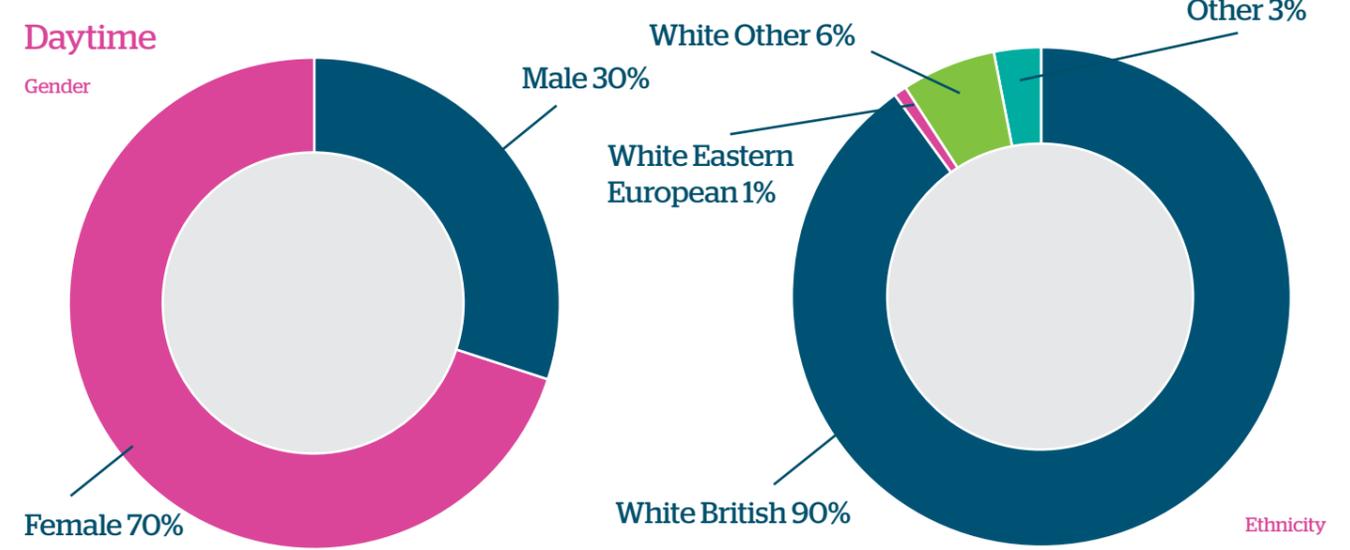
- Beversbrook Medical Centre, Calne
- Hathaway Medical Centre, Chippenham
- Old Orchard Surgery, Wilton
- Malmesbury Primary Care Centre
- Marlborough Surgery
- Salisbury Medical Practice
- Salisbury Walk-in Centre
- Southbroom Surgery, Devizes
- The Old School Surgery, Great Bedwyn
- Three Swans Surgery, Salisbury
- Tidworth Surgery (Castle Practice)
- Tinkers Lane Surgery, Royal Wootton Bassett
- Trowbridge Health Centre
- Westbury Group Practice

Daytime

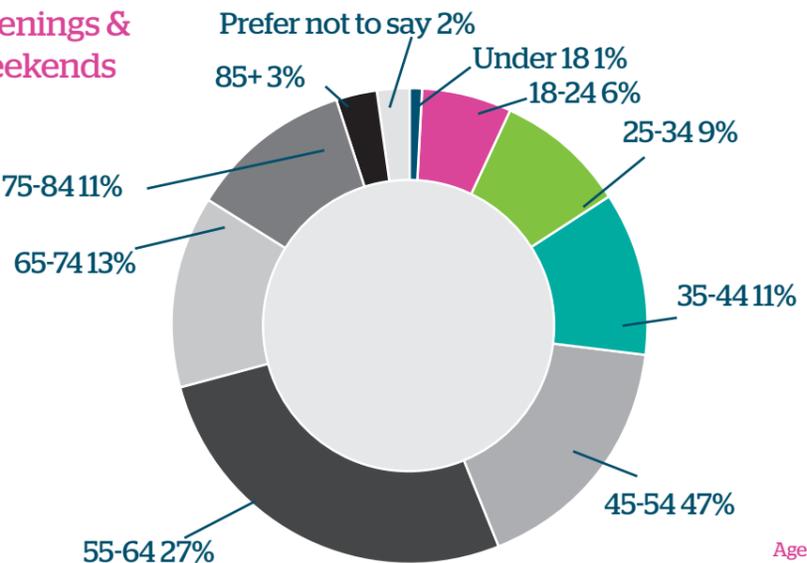


Demographics of patient respondents

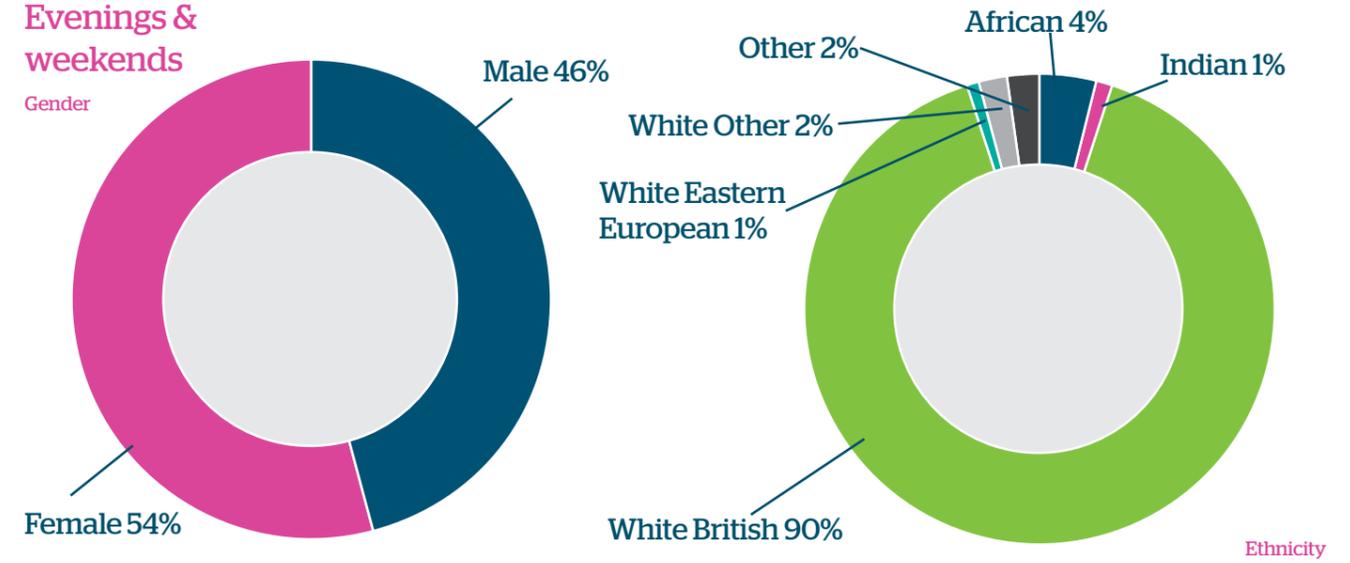
Daytime



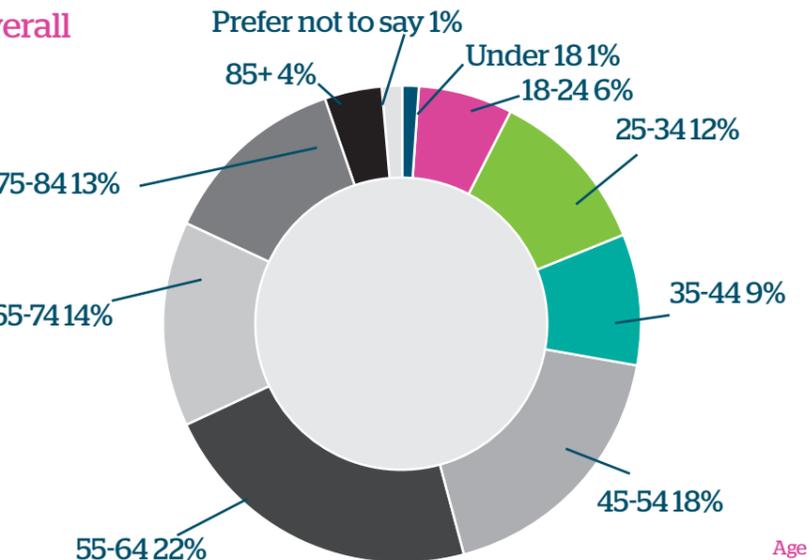
Evenings & weekends



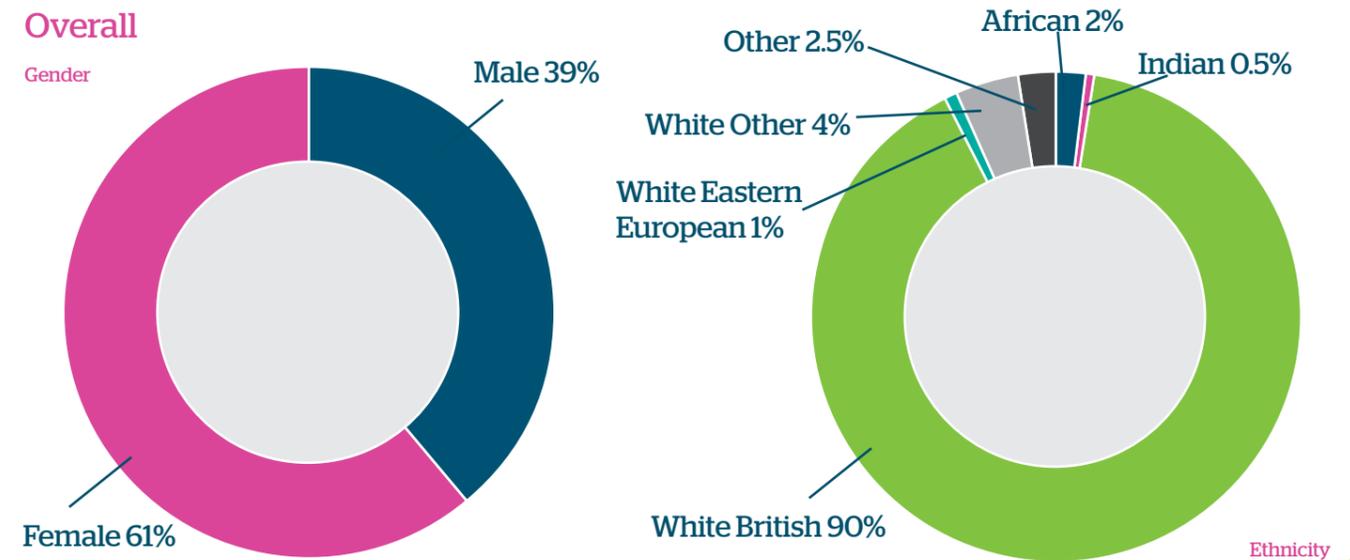
Evenings & weekends



Overall



Overall



1. What did patients tell us?

Ease of attending their appointment

We asked patients at GP surgeries how easy it was to attend their appointment. We aimed to get an overall picture of how easy or difficult people found it to attend GP appointments and, where people said it was difficult, to identify the reasons for this.

Of those we spoke to who were attending appointments during the day, 87% said it was easy to attend their appointment, and 13% (9 people) said it wasn't. Of the nine who said they had difficulty, seven of these said that this was associated with transport and travel and two said that it was due to their work. Eight out of the nine people were attending their usual surgery and one was attending a different surgery from their usual one.

Of those attending evening and weekend appointments, slightly more (94%) said that it was easy for them to attend the appointment and 6% (5 people) said it wasn't easy. Of the five who reported difficulties attending their appointment, three gave the reasons as distance, one said it was due to a busy lifestyle and one said it was due to their medical condition. Of these five, one person was attending a different surgery from their usual one.

Where were people attending their appointment?

We asked people to tell us whether they were attending their appointment at their usual surgery or a different surgery. If they were attending a different surgery, we asked how easy it had been for them to get to.

Of the people we interviewed during daytime surgery hours, 80% were attending their own surgery. The remaining 20% (15 people) told us that they were attending a different surgery, this was usually a surgery within the same practice. Of these 15 people, seven said that it was easy to travel to the surgery, 7 made neutral comments, and one said it was difficult.

Of those we interviewed during weekend and evening appointments, 78% were attending their own surgery and 22% (24 people) were attending another surgery. Of these 24 people, nine of these people said that it was easy to travel to the surgery, 13 made neutral comments, and two people said it was difficult.

Of all those who had attended another surgery, most of them said that they travelled by car.

Views about attending appointments at a different surgery

We asked people when they thought it would be better to travel to see someone at another practice sooner, rather than waiting for an appointment at their own practice.

Of those attending daytime appointments:

- 40% said they wouldn't want to and would rather wait
- 20% said they wouldn't mind
- 17% said they would if urgent
- 10% said if they could be seen sooner
- 9% said they would if surgery was close to them
- 3% if the appointment was at a more convenient time
- 3% said it would depend on the issue.

Of those attending evening appointments:

- 38% said they wouldn't want to and would rather wait
- 12% said they wouldn't mind
- 29% said they would if urgent
- 7% said if they could be seen sooner
- 5% said they would if surgery was close to them
- 5% if the appointment was at a more convenient time
- 4% said it would depend on the issue.

The results indicate that people would consider attending a different surgery and suggests that there are more patients who may be willing to attend another surgery than are currently doing so in Wiltshire. The most common circumstance where people said they might do this would be if the issue was urgent. Being able to be seen more quickly and the other surgery being relatively close by were also important to people.

Of those who said they wouldn't want to go to a different surgery, some said that this was because they had no difficulty accessing appointments at their own surgery and therefore couldn't see how this would be necessary. Others expressed a strong preference to be seen at their own surgery because they had confidence in the service they received there.

For an issue that was not long term and I didn't need to see a specific doctor, then I'd be happy to travel anywhere locally.

No. I'm quite happy with the way it works here.

Yes if it is a long wait and another practice is quicker. Would only be possible if you can travel.

How did people find out about out evening and weekend appointments?

For those attending evening and weekend appointments, 80% said that they were offered an appointment at that time and 20% said that they had requested one.

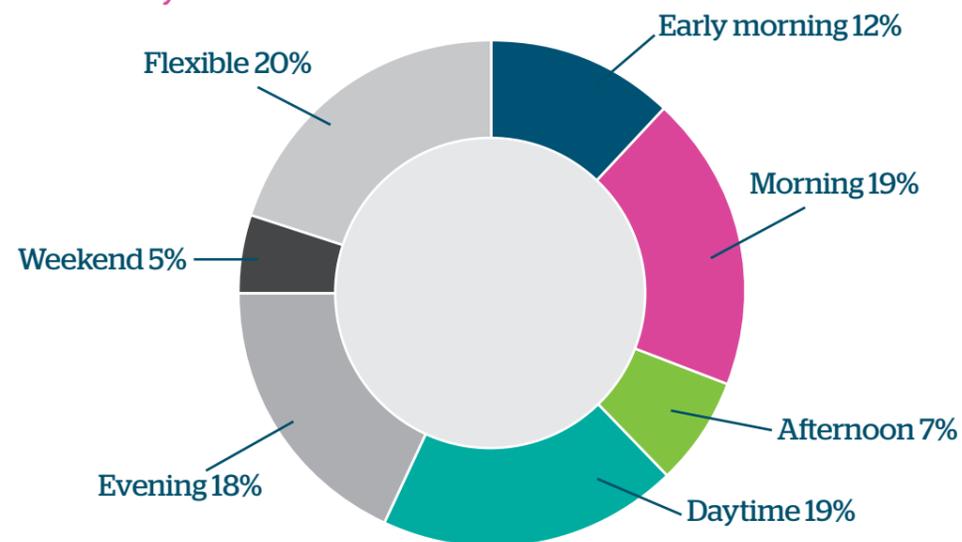
We asked patients attending daytime appointments if they had ever been offered an evening or weekend appointment. 67% of them said that they had never been offered one, and 33% said they had been offered one.

What time did people say they would prefer to come to appointments?

We asked people what time they would ideally prefer appointments. Some people identified more than one time that would be preferable, for example afternoons or evenings. An analysis of these results shows the times that patients told us were preferable.

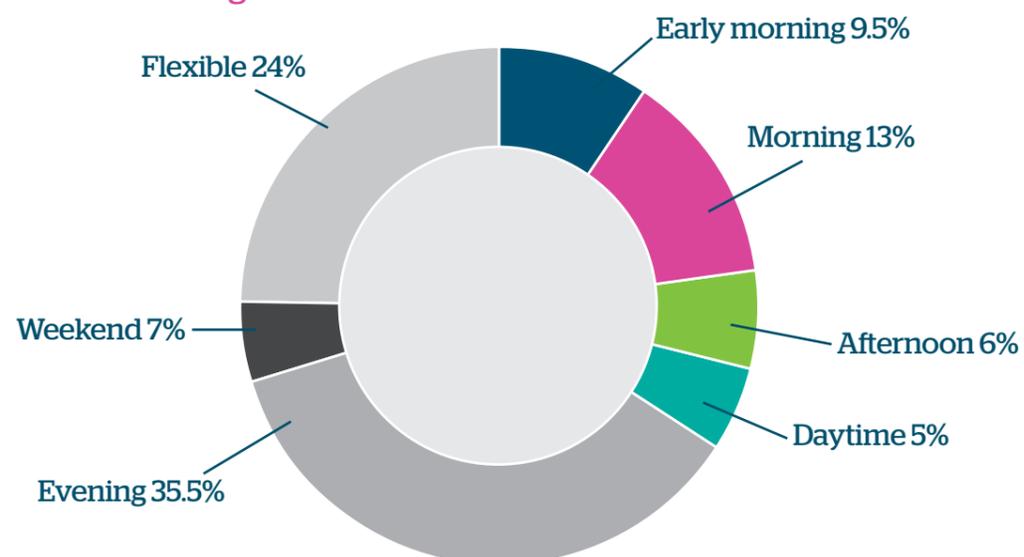
This chart shows preferences of the people we spoke to who were attending daytime appointments:

Preferences – daytime



This chart shows the preferences of people we spoke to who were attending evening and weekend appointments:

Preferences – evening & weekend



Among the patients attending appointments during the day, over a third of them expressed a preference for early morning, evening and weekend appointments as opposed to the daytime appointment that they were currently attending.

For out of hours appointments, a greater preference was expressed for early morning and evening appointments, as compared to weekend appointments. Patients who we interviewed who were attending on a Saturday did not express a clear preference for a weekend appointment.

A significant number of patients attending both daytime and evening and weekend appointments said that they could be flexible with the time they attended.

How did people's work affect attending appointments?

Of those people we interviewed attending evening and weekend appointments, 64% were in employment. We asked those people how easy it would be to attend an appointment during the day. 50% said that it would be difficult, 28% said it would be easy and 22% made neutral comments.

The most common reason for not being able to attend during the day was difficulties leaving work for a protracted period where people's work was not near to their GP surgery. Those who said it was easy said that this was because they worked near the GP surgery and had a flexible employer, or they worked part time.

Of those attending daytime appointments, 50% were in employment. Of these, 38% said that it was difficult to attend during the day, 17% said it was easy and 44% made neutral comments. Those who said it was difficult said that this was due to a range of different aspects about their employment which included having fixed work commitments, losing pay, and being self-employed.

Additionally, three people said that their commitments to voluntary work made it difficult for them to attend daytime GP appointments and being at college was also mentioned by one person.



How did being a carer affect attending appointments?

We asked people if they cared for someone who required extra support during the day. Of the people we spoke to attending appointments during daytime hours 20% identified themselves as carers and this was 14% for people attending evening and weekend appointments.

We asked how being a carer affected people's ability to attend appointments. Of those who answered this question, 40% told us that being a carer made it more difficult to attend appointments with the main reason for this being given as being unable to leave the cared for person at certain times of day.

When we asked for general comments several carers said that they found telephone appointments useful.

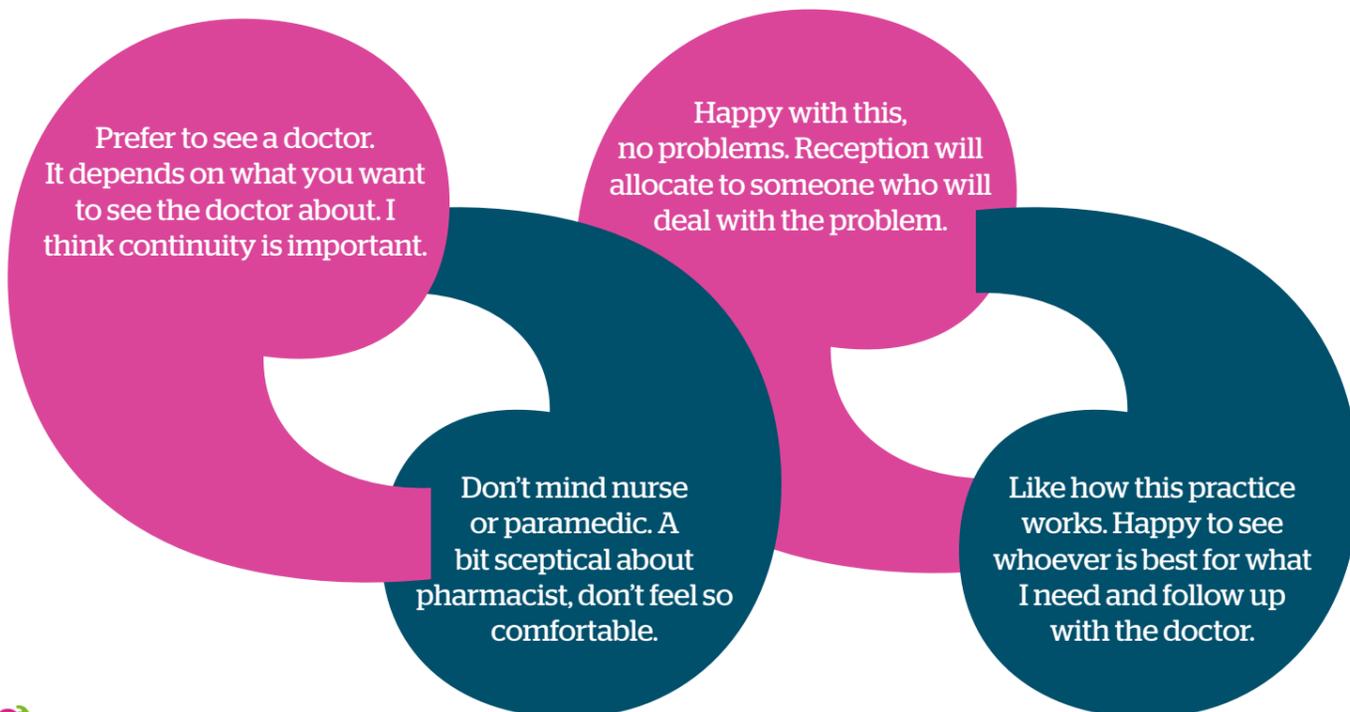
Choice of practitioner

We asked how patients felt about seeing a nurse, paramedic or pharmacist instead of a doctor. The vast majority of those we spoke to said they were happy to see another practitioner if they were able to deal with the issue. Of the practitioners we asked about, slightly more people said they were happy to see a nurse, and they were most unsure about seeing a pharmacist.

There were several positive comments about the triaging process in some surgeries and patients said that they understood this and said it worked well. This view was consistent across people attending during daytime and evening and weekend appointments. Overall:

- 88% said they happy to see nurse, pharmacist or paramedic if appropriate
- 8% said they prefer to always see a GP
- 4% would see a nurse but were unsure about a pharmacist or paramedic.

There were some instances where patients said that they would prefer to see a GP, these were if they were having ongoing treatment for a long term condition, if they thought their issue was serious or if it was something very personal. Most people with long term complex conditions also said that they would prefer to see the same GP for continuity of treatment.



Comments about the process of getting an appointment

We asked what was good about the process of getting their appointment and a wide range of different things were identified. These included straightforward booking process, booking at reception desk, appointment being booked for them by a doctor or nurse, being able to get an appointment with the right professional, and being able to get an appointment quickly.

Several people mentioned that they thought it was good it had been recognised that their need for an appointment was urgent and that they had been given one quickly.

Overall, we received a greater number of comments about things thought to be good about the process of getting their appointment, than those which identified things that could be improved.

When we asked what could be improved about the process of getting an appointment, the things that were most commonly identified were the booking system for making appointments and access to an appointment sooner. The chart below is an analysis of the comments about what people thought could be improved.

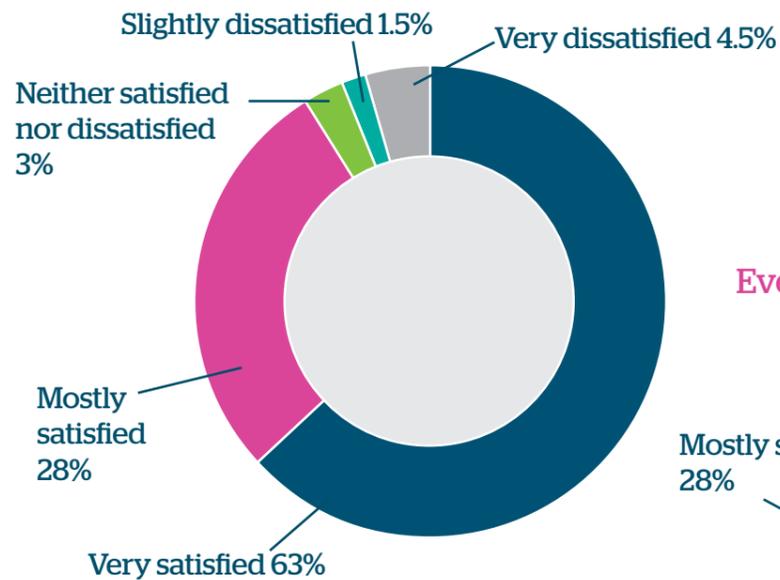
	Evening & Weekend appointments	Daytime appointments	Total number of people
Booking system	7	8	15
A sooner appointment	9	6	15
Being able to get an appointment (No available appointments)	4	3	7
Being able to see a particular GP	1	1	2
More availability of weekend and evening appointments	1	0	1
Other	2	6	8



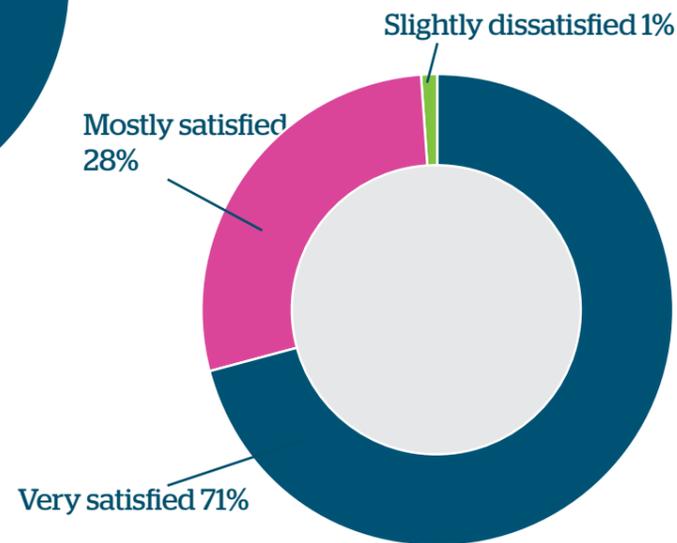
We asked people attending appointments to tell us over all how satisfied they were with the process of getting that specific appointment. Most patients reported that they were very or mostly satisfied. Those attending evening or weekend appointments were slightly more satisfied than those attending daytime appointments.

Satisfaction with getting an appointment

Daytime



Evening & Weekends



General comments about accessing appointments

We asked people if there was anything else they wanted to tell us about their experiences of using GP services generally. Most of the comments we received concerned access to appointments. We analysed these comments using a thematic analysis tool. We found that there were slightly more negative than positive comments about access to GP services. In total there were 138 comments, 55% of which were negative and 45% positive.

These comments appeared to reflect views and experiences of accessing appointments in general, as opposed to their experience of accessing a specific appointment.

While they seem to contradict what people said about their experience accessing specific appointments, there are several possible reasons for this. It might be that people are more likely to remember instances where they had difficulty getting an appointment. It should also be noted that in asking people about accessing specific appointments at doctors' surgeries, we were speaking to people who had been able to get an appointment.

People's general comments may have included several instances where they had tried to make an appointment but not been able to. This would not be captured in our interviews with patients who did have an appointment. It could have also been that these comments were reflective of a general high level of concern about being able to access appointments.

What did people say about how their appointment went?

In most cases, we interviewed patients about the process of making their appointment before they were seen. We then asked people to come back and tell us how their appointment went if they were willing and had time. We were surprised and pleased by the number of patients who wanted to come back and talk to us.

We carried out short follow-up interviews with a total of 117 patients. 61% of those who we had interviewed in daytime hours and 73% of those who we had interviewed at evening or weekend appointments, came back to give us feedback about how their appointment had gone.

Of those we spoke to during the daytime, 58% said that they were seen on time. 42% said they weren't, with waiting times ranging from five to 50 minutes. Of those attending evening and weekend appointments, 80% said that they were seen on time and 20% said they weren't, with delays ranging from five to 60 minutes. Most people we spoke to were not concerned about a short wait for an appointment. (Walk in patients were excluded from these figures as they do not have a fixed appointment time.)

The things that patients most commonly identified as being good about their appointment was knowledgeable and informative staff, competence, friendly manner, and listening.

In terms of what people thought could be improved, nine people identified something. Seven of these felt the waiting time could have been improved, one person felt they should have been given a specific medication, and one had seen someone not able to give the treatment needed and felt the triaging process should have been better.

Regarding how any necessary follow up was being arranged, overall, we were told that it had been or was in the process of being arranged. There were two patients that said that this had not been fully completed. One reported difficulty making a follow up appointment within the time scale that the Dr had requested. One person said that they had not yet received the results of a blood tests.

We also asked patients to tell us overall how satisfied they were with how their appointment had gone. Overall very good levels of satisfaction were reported, and these were slightly higher for patients attending weekend and evening appointments compared to those attending during usual surgery hours.



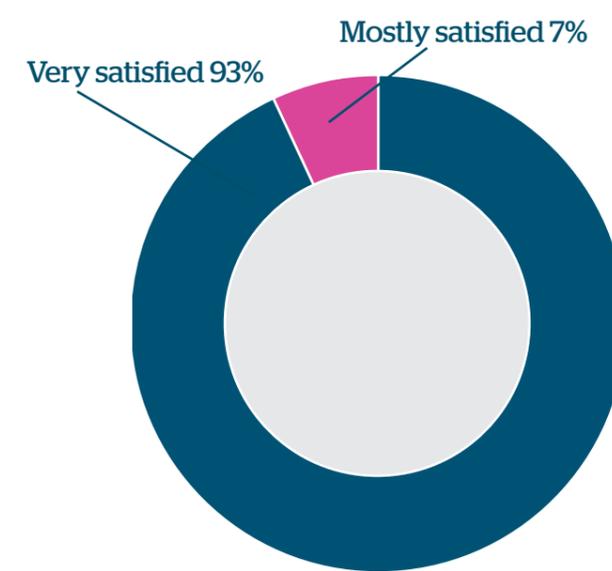
The below charts show how satisfied people said they were with their appointments:

Satisfaction with the appointment

Daytime



Evening & Weekends



Other things that people told us

We asked if there was anything else people wanted to tell us. A few things were mentioned that are not covered elsewhere in this report:

- Several people mentioned that they found telephone appointments useful.
- People reported that they did not like using Doctor Link as a way of accessing appointments, several people found it difficult to use and some said they didn't think it worked properly.
- Text reminders for appointments were mentioned as being a good thing.
- Some people didn't think that their surgery could cope with the demand in their local area.

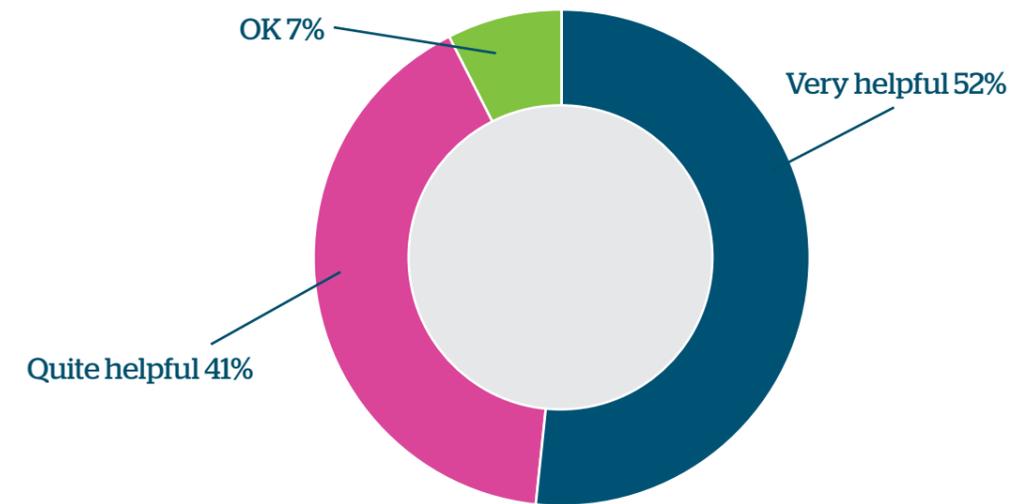
2. Mystery shopping - what did surgeries tell us?

Our volunteers carried out a mystery shopping exercise. We selected 14 surgeries across Wiltshire that served both rural and town areas and that we had not visited as part of this project. Our volunteers called each surgery twice on different days.

They asked the surgeries for information about what appointments were available at evenings or weekends. If they were asked for their name or why they needed an appointment they explained that they were a volunteer from Healthwatch Wiltshire and had been asked to call.

Overall, volunteers reported that people were happy to speak to them and that their calls were dealt with courteously and politely. We asked our volunteers to say how helpful they found the receptionist on each call. The chart shows their responses.

Helpfulness of staff



We found that knowledge about what was available differed considerably among receptionists. On some occasions we were transferred to more experienced staff who were able to give us more information. We considered that in these cases if we hadn't asked specifically about evening or weekend appointments, we would not have been told about them.

It was also evident from our calls that surgeries differed in how they booked evening and weekend appointments. For example, some surgeries told us that these appointments could only be booked with the person's own GP, while others said that they could be with a variety of practitioners. Some receptionists told us that appointments could only be booked by a GP and were unsure of what was available.

In 27 of the 28 calls, we were told that evening appointments were available. In most cases we were given times of evening surgeries and these covered both the extended hours and Improved Access appointment times. Overall, surgeries were clear about when they were opening in the evenings, although there were some cases where we had to be transferred to someone with more knowledge. Several surgeries told us that these appointments get booked up quickly.

We found that knowledge about what was available at weekends was much more variable:

- In 50% of calls we were told that these were not available.
- In 32% of calls we were told that they might be available, but the information about where and when was not clear.
- In 18% of calls we were told that these were available to patients and given clear information about when and where they were available.

We also found that information was variable about what might be available at different practices. No information was given about what might be available at other practices in 47% of calls. In 21% of calls some information was given, and in 32% of calls clear information was given about what was available and where.

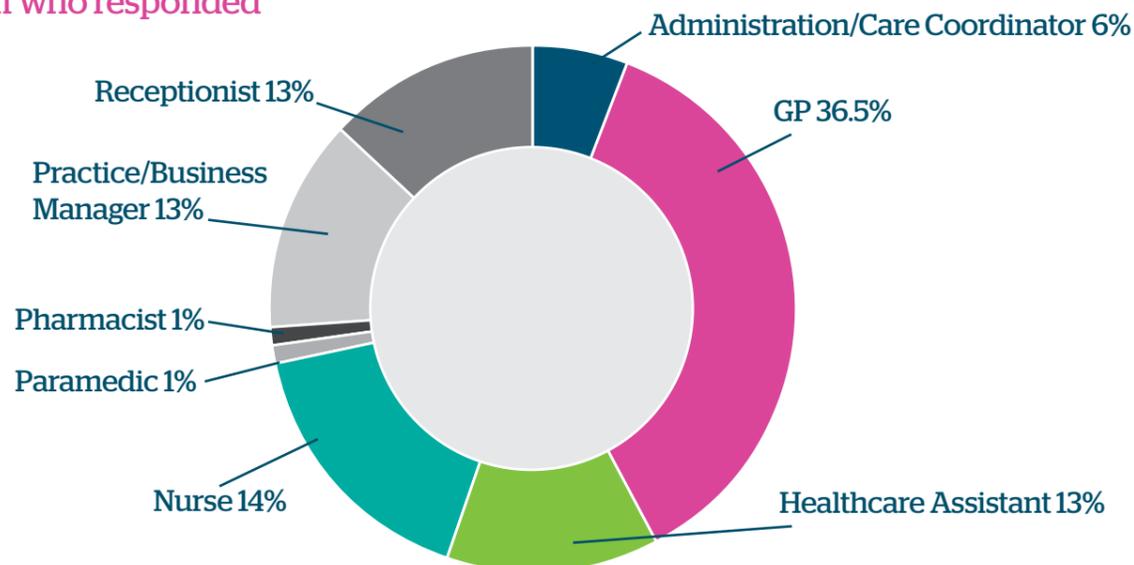
Where we were told about appointments at other surgeries, we asked if the staff there would be able to access to information they needed about the patients. In most cases we were told that they would if the patient had given prior consent for this to be shared.

Our volunteers making the calls also noted the wide range of different answerphone messages across surgeries and felt that some were more useful than others. They thought that this was something that might be worth looking into in more detail in the future.

3. What did staff tell us?

We designed an online survey that was circulated electronically to all staff involved in the Improved GP Access Service. The survey asked staff their views about the service and how they thought it affected them and their patients. Eighty-five staff from 35 different practices completed our survey. This chart shows a breakdown of survey responses by staff roles:

Staff who responded



What did staff think about the service?

We asked staff what they thought was good about the service for them as a staff member or practitioner. Staff mentioned more availability and flexibility of appointments for patients. They said that being able to have more appointments was good for them, and it was mentioned that it enabled them to see patients that they thought needed to be seen. Some staff said that the quieter, less pressurised environment benefited them. Being able to have longer appointment times was mentioned as being useful for seeing patients with chronic or complex conditions. Some staff mentioned that the additional funding and paid overtime benefited them.

Allows time for more comprehensive consultations with patients as there are less interruptions and other things to deal with that you have working in the week.

Sometimes gives more availability of appointments to offer to the patient. The flu clinics offered on a Saturday and smear clinics are always very popular.

Gives patients more access, which reduces negative opinions about appointment availability.

We asked staff what difficulties they had experienced working in the service. Fifty-two of the 85 staff members who answered this question identified a range of difficulties.

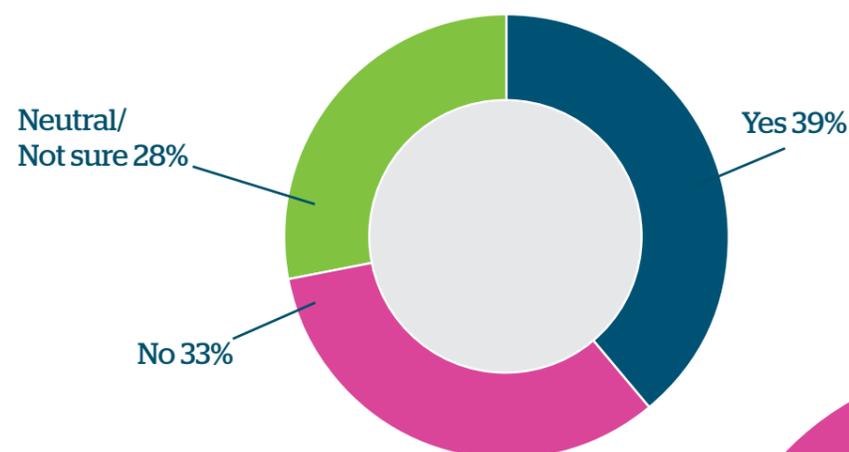
Difficulties with IT systems was mentioned, particularly in seeing and booking appointments at a different surgery. It was mentioned that the system was complex to use and cumbersome.

Staffing the extra hours was also mentioned as a difficulty for several surgeries including rota issues and cover. The impact on staff was mentioned including working long hours, tiredness, and impact on family life.

Poor take-up of appointments and patients not turning up for appointments was also raised. There was a feeling that practitioners' time and skill were not used to their full benefit.

We asked staff if they agreed that working in the Improved Access Service was a good use of their time.

Is Improved Access a good use of time?



Of those who said they didn't think it was a good use of their time, 18 were GPs.

The reasons given why people didn't think this was a good use of their time was that Improved Access required more administration and reporting, non-attendance and low take-up, meaning that appointments were not fully utilised, particularly at weekends.

Some GPs felt that the service shouldn't be provided by GPs who were already overstretched.

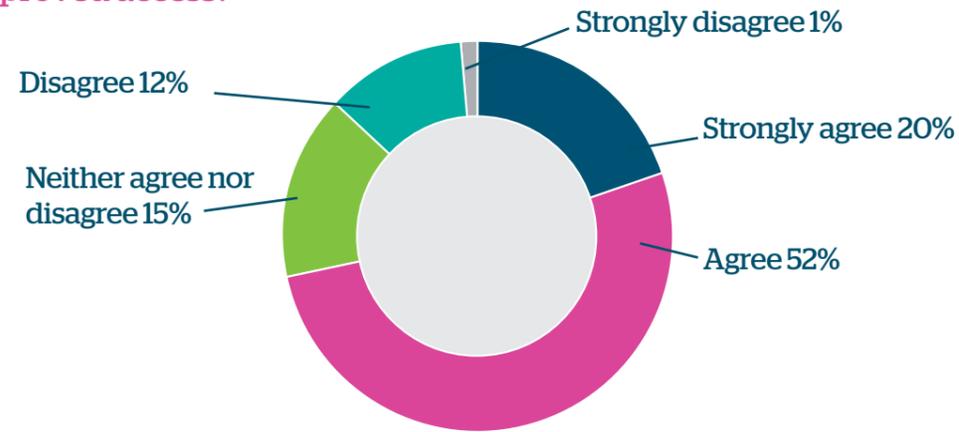
Feel there are a lot of wasted appointments with the service and clinicians not being booked to their full advantage.

No - just more work, good for me as means good pay but actually not necessary, it is not used by working age adults as intended.

No. Lots of empty appointment slots. Feel guilty earning more money for working much less hard than I do in my normal working hours. I am an experienced nurse practitioner but the patients I see in improved access could be seen by a healthcare assistant most of the time.

We asked staff if they agreed the service has improved access to GP services.

Has it improved access?



Those who agreed said that it provided flexibility and access to working people and was useful for people who had difficulty attending during the day. Appointments for cervical screening, smoking cessation and child asthma reviews were areas that were identified as being useful. It was commented that feedback from patients had been positive.

The people who disagreed said they thought this was because they didn't have issues with access at their surgery. Some said their surgery was in an area with less people of working age.

Some practice staff said that they thought patients didn't like to go elsewhere. There were several comments from staff who said that they thought that evening appointments were more useful than weekend ones.

Benefits and drawbacks to patients

Staff said that they thought the benefits for patients were greater access to appointments, reduced frustration at not being able to get an appointment, flexibility of appointment times, not needing to take time off work, timelier appointments, and longer consultation times. They also thought that access to a range of things out of hours was of benefit, for example flu clinics and blood tests.

We asked if they thought there are any drawbacks for patients. The main one mentioned was travel time for patients and lack of continuity of care if they were going to have an appointment at another surgery.

They might not be able to have as good continuity for ongoing conditions, they need to travel further to be seen.

The patients really appreciate being able to see a GP out of normal office hours. I can do blood tests for patients who can't make the morning blood clinic in time.

It affords patients who can't take time off through work, the flexibility to see a clinician in the evening. In turn, this reduces the levels of frustration that the patients experience due to lack of appointments.

Conclusions

We found that access to GP services remains a concern among local people in Wiltshire. However, it is interesting that patients were more positive when we asked about their experience of arranging specific appointments. People expressed frustration with some systems for making appointments, particularly where patients were asked to phone at a specific time. This was inconsistent across practices.

Appointments in the evenings and weekends are clearly valued. Feedback from patients attending both Improved Access and other out of hours appointments was very positive regarding being able to access these appointments and their treatment during them. There appears to be a greater preference for appointments in the early mornings or evenings as opposed to weekends. Patients' awareness of, and ability to access these appointments, was inconsistent.

It was evident that different practices and surgeries manage their Improved Access appointments in a range of different ways. Information about what was available was not always clear from surgeries when we telephoned them. This might prevent patients being able to book these appointments. This was particularly the case for weekend appointments and for booking appointments at other practices.

Staff processes for booking Improved Access appointments were not consistent or clear. Some staff reported difficulties with IT which meant that they couldn't see or book appointments at other surgeries.

Most staff thought that the Improved Access Service has improved access to appointments for patients and highlighted several benefits of it to patients. Feedback about whether staff thought it was a good use of their time was more mixed. Some staff highlighted low take-up of appointments as the reason for this. Staff commented about the impact of providing this service on their work-life balance.

We found a significant number of people who said that they would be willing to travel to another GP surgery for appointments in certain circumstances. However, some patients told us that this would not be possible for them. Concern was expressed that people who are unable to travel, should not have less favourable treatment because of this.

Overall, there is confidence in the triaging process and most patients are happy to have appointments with a variety of different health professionals, according to what is needed at that time. This appears to be a shift from views shared with Healthwatch Wiltshire in the past where this was much more mixed. People still felt that long standing complex conditions required continuity of care from a GP.

Feedback about the quality or treatment people received and patients' satisfaction levels with how their appointment had gone was overall very positive.

Recommendations

We would like to make the following recommendations:

- Access to evening and weekend appointments is valued and should continue.
- IT processes for booking appointments in other surgeries should be reviewed and improved.
- Consideration should be given to offering more patients who are able to travel an appointment in a different surgery.
- Patients who are unable to travel should be prioritised to be seen at their own surgery.
- The availability and take-up of weekend appointments should be reviewed with a view to assessing whether there is potential to simplify and streamline access at weekends. If there is excess capacity, this could potentially be used for appointments at other times where there is local demand, for example early mornings.
- Clear information about what is available at weekends needs to be provided to surgery staff and to the public.
- All reception staff at surgeries should be provided with clear information and training about booking of evening and weekend appointments both at their own and other surgeries.
- Further consideration should be given on how to reduce the impact on staff whilst retaining an evening and weekend service.
- Recognition should be given regarding the very positive comments from patients regarding the overall quality of treatment.



Thank you

Thank you to all the individuals that stopped to share their honest thoughts. To the GP Alliance for working with us on this project and to the GP practices who supported us by facilitating our visits. Thanks also to our volunteers who gave their time to take part.

Responses

Jo Cullen, Director of Primary Care, BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire CCGs

Many thanks for undertaking this work and sharing this final draft report with the Clinical Commissioning Groups as the commissioners of the Improved Access Service.

We appreciate the work carried out by your committed and trained volunteers, and recognise a number of your findings.

We also appreciate the honesty of the patients and staff members your team spoke to.

We would like to confirm that this service will be continuing on the same basis for 2020/21 and be delivered locally through the GP surgeries, now grouped into Primary Care Networks.

We are really interested to hear the patients' views, particularly about travelling to other local surgeries and seeing other members of the primary care team, other than GPs where appropriate.

You may be aware that as set out in Investment and Evolution: A Five-Year Framework for

Dr Lindsay Kinlin, Wiltshire GP Alliance

We are constantly trying to improve the quality and accessibility of primary care. With this in mind, we were very glad to invite Healthwatch to carry out an independent and impartial assessment of the innovative Improved Access Service.

Your work has provided us with an invaluable insight into the views of patients and staff alike.

The introduction of evening and weekend appointments was not without controversy at the time, and it is pleasing to hear that patients really value this additional access, particularly those

We appreciate the honesty of the patients and staff your team spoke to

GP Contract Reform to Implement the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England is undertaking a national review of access to general practice, which commenced in July 2019 for full implementation by 2021/22.

The access review has one main objective: to improve patient access both in hours and at evenings and weekends and reduce unwarranted variation in patient experience. The review will support the development and implementation of a single coherent "extended access" offer. This review is ongoing, and the expectation had been an interim report this winter (not yet published).

We would welcome involving Healthwatch in any review of the service in line with any changes which are introduced as part of this national report.

who genuinely struggle to attend daytime appointments.

It's pleasing to hear that patients really value this additional access

Going forwards, we will use the lessons learned from your hard work to further develop and improve the service. In so doing, we hope to take some of the pressure off the wider NHS, and improve the quality and timeliness of patient care overall.

We would like to thank Healthwatch and your team of volunteers for this immensely helpful research, and we look forward to working with you again.



Appendix 1

Improved Access to General Practice Survey (For use in usual surgery hours)

Healthwatch Wiltshire would like to hear your views about using Improved access to General Practice.

Healthwatch Wiltshire is the independent champion for people using health and care services in Wiltshire. We listen to what people like about services and what they think could be improved and share their views with those who have the power to make change happen. The results of this survey will be collated and put into a report. All responses will be anonymised, and no individuals will be named in the report. The report will be used to influence the way the service further develops.

We'd appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to answer these questions.

Survey Number:

Location of Appointment:

Date of Appointment:

Approximate time of appointment:

1. How did you make this appointment?

2. When did you make this appointment?

3. Is it easy for you to attend this appointment?

- Yes
- No

If no, why not?

4. Is this appointment at:

- Your usual GP surgery

If so, how would you feel about having an appointment at a different surgery?

- Another GP surgery

If so, was it easy for you to travel to this appointment? How did you get here?

5. Have you ever been offered an evening or weekend appointment?

6. Ideally what time would you prefer appointments?

7. Are you in employment?

- Yes

If yes, how easy is it for you to attend daytime GP appointments?

- No

8. Do you care for someone who needs extra support day to day?

- Yes

If yes, how does this affect your ability to attend appointments?

- No

9. When do you think it's better travel to see someone at another practice sooner, rather than waiting to see someone at your own practice?

10. If you were offered an appointment with a nurse, paramedic or pharmacist instead of a GP, how would you feel about this?

11. What has worked well about the process of getting this appointment?

12. Is there anything that you think could be improved?

13. Overall how satisfied were you with the process of getting your appointment?

- Very Satisfied
- Mostly Satisfied
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
- Slightly Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

14. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience of using GP services?

About you:

It's important that we hear from a diverse group of people. We ask some questions about you so that we can identify any issues that affect different groups of people. This information is anonymous, and you do not have to answer any questions if you don't wish to.

15. Please tell us the town or village you live in?

16. Are you?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer to use my own term
- Prefer not to say

17. Is the gender different to the gender you were assigned at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

18. Do you have a religion of belief?

- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism

- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism
- No religion
- Prefer not to say
- Other

19. What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75 - 84
- 85 +
- Prefer not to say

20. Are you?

- Bisexual
- Gay/lesbian
- Heterosexual/straight
- Asexual
- Pansexual
- Prefer to use my own term
- Prefer not to say

21. Do you consider yourself to have a health condition or disability?

- No
- Mental health condition
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Learning disability
- Physical or mobility disability
- Prefer not to say

22. How would you describe your ethnic group?

- African
- Arab
- Bangladeshi
- Black British
- Caribbean
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Indian

- Pakistani
- White British
- White Eastern European
- Any other white background
- Any other mixed background
- Other

The results will be collated and put into a report. All responses will be anonymised, and no individuals will be named in the report.

23. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please provide your email or postal address:

All data will be held securely and in compliance with data protection laws. It will only be used for the purposes of carrying out Healthwatch Wiltshire activity. Your details will not be shared with any other organisation. You may withdraw your consent to us holding your details at any time by emailing info@healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk or calling 01225 434218.

Thank you for completing this survey.



Appendix 2

Improved Access to General Practice Survey (For use at evening and weekend visits)

Healthwatch Wiltshire would like to hear your views about using Improved Access to General Practice.

Healthwatch Wiltshire is the independent champion for people using health and care services in Wiltshire. We listen to what people like about services and what they think could be improved and share their views with those who have the power to make change happen. The results of this survey will be collated and put into a report. All responses will be anonymised, and no individuals will be named in the report. The report will be used to influence the way the service further develops.

We'd appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to answer these questions.

Survey Number:

Location of Appointment:

Date of Appointment:

Approximate time of appointment:

1. How did you make this appointment?

2. When did you make this appointment?

3. Is it easy for you to attend this appointment?
 - Yes
 - No

If no, why not?

4. Is this appointment at:
 - Your usual GP surgery

If so, how would you feel about having an appointment at a different surgery?

- Another GP surgery

If so, was it easy for you to travel to this appointment? How did you get here?

5. Were you offered an evening or weekend appointment, or did you ask for one?

6. Ideally what time would you prefer appointments?

7. Are you in employment?

Yes

If yes, how easy is it for you to attend daytime GP appointments?

No

8. Do you care for someone who needs extra support day to day?

Yes

If yes, how does this affect your ability to attend appointments?

No

9. When do you think it's better travel to see someone at another practice sooner, rather than waiting to see someone at your own practice?

10. If you were offered an appointment with a nurse, paramedic or pharmacist instead of a GP, how would you feel about this?

11. What has worked well about the process of getting this appointment?

12. Is there anything that you think could be improved?

13. Overall how satisfied were you with the process of getting your appointment?

- Very Satisfied
- Mostly Satisfied
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
- Slightly Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

14. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience of using GP services?

About you:

It's important that we hear from a diverse group of people. We ask some questions about you so that we can identify any issues that affect different groups of people. This information is anonymous, and you do not have to answer any questions if you don't wish to.

15. Please tell us the town or village you live in?

16. Are you?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer to use my own term
- Prefer not to say

17. Is the gender different to the gender you were assigned at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

18. Do you have a religion of belief?

- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism
- No religion
- Prefer not to say
- Other

19. What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 -44
- 45 - 54
- 55 – 64
- 65 – 74
- 75 – 84
- 85 +
- Prefer not to say

20. Are you?

- Bisexual
- Gay/lesbian
- Heterosexual/straight
- Asexual
- Pansexual
- Prefer to use my own term
- Prefer not to say

21. Do you consider yourself to have a health condition or disability?

- No
- Mental health condition
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Learning disability
- Physical or mobility disability
- Prefer not to say

22. How would you describe your ethnic group?

- African
- Arab
- Bangladeshi
- Black British
- Caribbean
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Indian
- Pakistani
- White British
- White Eastern European
- Any other white background
- Any other mixed background
- Other

The results will be collated and put into a report. All responses will be anonymised, and no individuals will be named in the report.

23. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please provide your email or postal address:

All data will be held securely and in compliance with data protection laws. It will only be used for the purposes of carrying out Healthwatch Wiltshire activity. Your details will not be shared with any other organisation. You may withdraw your consent at any time by emailing info@healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk or calling 01225 434218.

Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix 3



Improved Access to General Practice - Survey for Staff

Healthwatch Wiltshire want to hear your views about your work in Improved Access to General Practice.

Healthwatch Wiltshire is the independent champion for people using health and care services in Wiltshire. We listen to what people like about services and what they think could be improved and share their views with those who have the power to make change happen.

We are talking to people who have used the Improved Access to GP Services, and to staff who are involved in providing it. Improved Access is a programme whereby practices are funded to provide additional appointments between 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm Mon-Fri, or Saturday mornings, or in some cases additional daytime services. In some areas, patients can book these appointments at a different practice to the one they are registered at.

The results of this survey will be collated and put into a report. All responses will be anonymised, and no individuals will be named in the report. The report will be used to influence the way the service further develops.

We'd appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to answer these questions.

1. Which practice do you work at?

2. What is your job role within this service?

3. What do you think is good about the service for you as a staff member or practitioner?

4. Are there any difficulties that you have experienced working within this service?

5. What do you think the benefits are for patients who use this service?

6. Are there any drawbacks for patients who use the service?

7. Do you think that working within this service is a good use of your time?

8. Do you agree that this service has improved access to GP services?

- Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Please tell us the reason for your answer::

9. How would you like to see this service further developed?

10. Is there anything else you would like to say?

11. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please provide your email or postal address:



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