

Transformation of primary care in Gosport

The views of local people



June 2015





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Introduction



Healthwatch is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in England. Healthwatch's function is to engage with local

people to seek views about locally delivered services, signpost service users to relevant information and to influence the design of local health and social care provision.

Healthwatch Hampshire is part of a network of local Healthwatches across 152 local authority areas that launched in April 2013 to ensure local voices are heard and enable them to influence the delivery and design of local services. Our sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care and to speak out on their behalf. Healthwatch has statutory powers, as stated in the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to ensure the consumer's voice is strengthened and heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and care services. Local Healthwatch helps people get the best out of their local health and social care services, whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow.

GPs in Gosport, with support from Fareham and Gosport Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), are planning to transform primary care in Gosport in order to provide accessible, high quality, comprehensive healthcare services. There are currently 11 GP surgeries covering a population of approximately 82,000 residents (see Appendix 1). A comprehensive survey about primary care in Gosport has been compiled already by the CCG and received approximately 1,400 responses¹ (see Appendix 3 for the CCG analysis of the survey results). Healthwatch Hampshire were approached by the CCG to independently analyse the results of the survey and identify gaps in knowledge so that further feedback could be gained from local people to feed into development plans before more formal proposals are made.

As a result, Healthwatch have carried out the following engagement work, the results of which are explored in this report.

- High Street information stand to inform the general public and ask for feedback.
- Children's Centre information stand to specifically talk to parents of young children and obtain feedback.
- Two focus groups looking into specific areas of the project to obtain detailed feedback.



Executive Summary

The continued strain on GP's and primary care is constantly in the news. These pressures have effected services in Gosport and the local surgeries and Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) willingness to work together to find a joint solution is welcomed by local people.

The people we have spoken to about these changes are open to new ideas and joint solutions to address the problems of non-uniformity of services that currently exists.

The proposed changes are focussed on creating a system that treats people based on need and giving people quicker access and more suited support. Local people

are supportive of this approach as long as choice and personal care remain as vital components to any changes.

Any changes have to work for those that are frail, elderly and unable to use new technologies as well as those that are willing and able. Changes should happen in a way that allows full engagement with patients and recognises that there are varying needs in the area that only a flexible and person centred system will be able to support.

Our collective summary is below:

Waiting times

- Any system that reduces waiting times for routine appointments would be beneficial.
- A wait of 2-3 days would be widely acceptable for routine appointments.
- Same day emergency appointments are essential.
- A consistent approach to booking systems across the area would be welcomed.
- Most people want the ability to book appointments beyond two weeks ahead.
- A drop-in centre or system could be considered as another option.

Access and Transport

- Most people would be prepared to travel to a different location for a faster service.
- This would not be appropriate for all so alternatives need to exist. The voluntary sector may be able to help ease this pressure.
- A telephone triage system would be useful if it was staffed by 'skilled' professionals.
- A triage system should not be a permanent, cheap solution - in the long-term, more GPs are needed.



Pharmacies

- Some people feel that they would prefer to see a GP as they are more qualified.
- More should be done to raise awareness of services available from local pharmacies.
- Confidentiality must be guaranteed when interacting with pharmacists.

Skype & Web-based Consultations

- A good option for some but not accessible for all.
- It would be difficult for a GP to carry out a 'proper' assessment.
- The reliability of internet services may cause problems.
- Convenience of Skype and telephone consultations was welcomed.

Other

- There is a need for better recruitment and retention of GPs.
- A shared IT system between all surgeries in Gosport would improve continuity of services.
- Signposting to voluntary sector operated services could help ease pressure on GP services.





Context and critique

The main aims of the transformation² are based upon the development of some key changes to the way services are delivered. These include:

- **One generic clinical GP IT system across the area**
- **One generic telephony system across the area**
- **The development of a same day appointment service**
- **Investment in workforce development (particularly practice nurses, advanced nurse practitioners and pharmacists)**

The reality for patients is that they should be offered quicker and easier access to appointments, have the opportunity for longer appointments and be more likely to see an appropriate person on the same day. To support this, same day appointments could be managed through a central hub. This could mean being offered the option of a same day appointment at somewhere other than their own surgery. This could mean speaking to an appropriate person (whether that be a GP, nurse or pharmacist) on the phone or being referred to visit a pharmacist. Surgeries across the area would all have access to patient records through the same IT system. The survey also asked the local population for their views on using Skype or e-mail as a way of communicating with a GP as

another option for making appointments more convenient, flexible and accessible. The aim of all these changes would be to relieve pressure on GP's who would then have more time to spend with the patients with most need. All patients would still have the option of seeing their own GP for routine appointments.

Survey

Analysis of the survey results collected by the CCG has formed the basis of the focus of further engagement. We decided to focus on the following areas as we felt these were the areas that required follow up work based on the survey results¹:

Waiting Times

This is a continued concern for the people of Gosport and experiences vary greatly from surgery to surgery. Survey results suggest that most people would be willing to wait up to 7 days for a routine appointment and would like to be able to book them in advance.

Access & Transport

Although the option of using a different surgery or service may be good for some, it can be difficult for others due to mobility, cost and access to public transport. Survey results suggest that most would be willing to travel further for a faster appointment but this was dependent on numerous factors such as how ill you were feeling, location, bus routes and cost.

¹ The survey results are available in Appendix 3.



Pharmacies

The survey specifically asks for views on receiving advice and support from pharmacists. The results show that 62% of participants did not know that pharmacists could prescribe medication. Further questions in the survey ask who participants are confident to consult when their GP is unavailable. The survey also asks specifically why people may have scored pharmacists low. Pharmacists in all these questions score very low and the majority of people state the following as the reason why:

“Pharmacists are not as qualified as GP’s or practice nurses”

Healthwatch wanted to explore this a little further and speak to people about their experiences with pharmacies to see why these concerns exist.

Skype/Web-based consultations

Skype and web-based consultation methods were also explored in the survey. Results show that the majority of respondents preferred telephone based services but some would be willing to use web based methods. Healthwatch have explored the reasons for these results to provide a more detailed response.

Other

Throughout our consultation and engagement we have continued to ask for further comments about any aspect of the proposed changes. Results of this feedback are included in this report.





1. Feedback

Waiting times

Overall we have found that there is a positive outlook for the proposed changes by the people of Gosport, but it is accompanied by some concerns over its feasibility and accessibility for all.

The majority of people we spoke to have to wait longer for a routine appointment than they feel is appropriate and it is clear that there is a large disparity between the length of time people have to wait in different areas of Gosport. These varied from as little as 2 days right up to one patient from Lee-On-Solent Surgery who had to wait a month for a routine appointment. Everyone we spoke to welcomed a more joined up, consistent approach across the whole area if it reduced waiting times for all. Most people we spoke to felt that a wait of 2-3 days for an appointment was appropriate with the option for same-day emergency appointments. Many echoed the thoughts of one of the focus group participants:

“If you make an appointment to see a GP, you are only doing it because you are unwell. Long waits for an appointment often means that symptoms get worse and an emergency appointment becomes necessary.”

Another theme that came through in the focus group discussions was around booking systems for appointments. Again, it was clear that systems varied across the area and a more unified approach would be preferable. More than one

surgery was highlighted as not pre-booking appointments more than two weeks in advance. Most people found this frustrating and unnecessary. These results are echoed in the survey results. Forton Road Surgery was mentioned in particular as having a frustrating system:

“At Forton Road you can’t make an appointment in person even if you stood there in the surgery. I was asked to leave and call in by phone to book.”

Many felt that these systems were only in place to allow surgeries to meet government targets for waiting times. Participants in one of the focus groups were in agreement that the concept of not being able to book appointments could work as long as you knew you would be seen that day via a drop-in system. Simply turning up and waiting at the surgery would be preferable to some to avoid the waiting times.

Summary

- Any system that reduces waiting times for routine appointments would be beneficial.
- A wait of 2-3 days would be widely acceptable for routine appointments.
- Same day emergency appointments are essential.
- A consistent approach to booking systems across the area would be welcomed.
- Most people want the ability to book appointments beyond two weeks ahead.
- A drop-in centre or system could be considered as another option.



2. Feedback

Access and Transport

Our findings show that while the majority of people are prepared to travel further if it meant they could be seen sooner, a number of those we spoke to have to walk or rely on public transport to get to their GP. Any changes to the current system need to also work for the frail, elderly and those that need to see the same professional, for example those with mental health conditions.

Many are only willing/able to travel up to 30 minutes in and around the Gosport area. Of those who said they would prefer not to travel, the main reasons are that they only like to see their own GP or the travel is too expensive.

Healthwatch Hampshire have mapped all of the Gosport surgeries alongside the bus routes available to help determine accessibility (see Appendix 2). Although all of the surgeries are on a bus route, this does not mean they are easily accessible. The focus groups gave further detail. It became clear that certain bus routes are not very regular, the Number 11 bus was highlighted in the Alverstoke area in particular. The bus comes once every two hours so to use it to get to the GP **“would be a day out.”** It was noted that clarity was needed on the figures of how many people are reliant on public transport to determine if this was likely to be a significant issue (given that the issue would only arise if you were asked to visit a different surgery). Many people

said that they do not live on a bus route so may have to walk a significant distance to a bus stop. The elderly, frail and very ill would be the most likely to have difficulty using public transport. The volunteer drivers scheme was mentioned as a potential help to those who find public transport difficult. This needs to be advertised more widely and to rely upon it too heavily would not be an appropriate long term solution.

When discussing the telephone triage system, it was generally considered helpful as long as it was possible to speak to an appropriate person. Many saw this as a GP or Specialist Nurse rather than a receptionist, who it was felt need more training.

“I don’t like talking to receptionists about my conditions, they are not qualified and shouldn’t be asking personal questions.”

Queries and concerns around the triage system revolved around the need to talk to a ‘real person’ not someone reading a script.

Summary

- Most people would be prepared to travel to a different location for a faster service.
- This would not be appropriate for all so alternatives need to exist. The voluntary sector may be able to help ease this pressure.
- A telephone triage system would be useful if it was staffed by ‘skilled’ professionals.
- A triage system should not be a permanent, cheap solution - in the long-term, more GPs are needed.



3. Feedback Pharmacies

In the survey, when asked about their confidence of consulting a pharmacist about their condition the results were primarily negative with 62% of respondents who did not know that a pharmacist can prescribe medication. Our findings were more positive than the survey would indicate. Nearly everyone that we spoke to would go to their pharmacist for advice on routine ailments before going to their GP. However, when asked to explore this in more detail there were some key issues worth highlighting. The first was around qualifications and trust. There is a perception that pharmacists lack the qualifications of a GP and therefore would not be the most appropriate person to go to when you are ill.

“Every time I go to a pharmacist I end up getting referred to a GP anyway.”

The focus groups were more positive and the shared view was that pharmacists have more skills and knowledge than anticipated and people need to be made more aware of what services are offered in local pharmacies. A second recurring theme in our research was about confidentiality. Many felt that they wouldn't want to discuss personal issues over the counter but would if there was a private room that was pro-actively offered. There were a range of experiences about the availability of such rooms. The final point, raised in the focus groups was about cost. It was highlighted that people entitled to free prescriptions would be more likely to go

to a GP so that they didn't need to pay for their medication as they would if they went directly to a pharmacist. One example given at one focus group was of a mother with three young children who is in receipt of benefits...

“If three kids all had head lice at the same time it would be much cheaper to go to the GP and get a prescription than to go to a pharmacy and pay for treatment for all three children.”

Some people have experience of their Pharmacy working very well with the local GP to allow repeat prescriptions directly from the pharmacy. Most people were not aware that this was possible. Many respondents felt that they would be happy to go to a pharmacy for advice, support and basic services if that was the most appropriate place to go. There was also a need to provide simple and clear information to support greater use of pharmacies.



Summary

- Some people feel that they would prefer to see a GP as they are more qualified.
- More should be done to raise awareness of services available from local pharmacies.
- Confidentiality must be guaranteed when interacting with pharmacists.



4. Feedback

Skype

Skype and web-based consultation could be one further way of reducing demand on GPs and reducing the amount of people who need to physically attend the surgery for an appointment. The general feeling was that this would be a good extra option for people who want it but it would not work for many people in Gosport. There are many people who don't have a computer, don't know how to obtain Skype and wouldn't know how to use it effectively even if they would be, in theory, willing to use it.

It was felt that telephone consultations are quite effective and taking this a step further and actually being able to see the GP would be of further benefit. It was raised, however, that it would be much harder for a GP to do a 'proper' assessment...

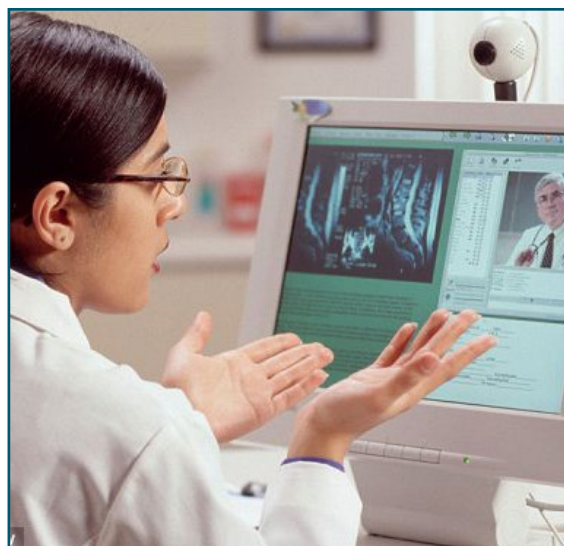
“The GP would only be able to see you, they would have difficulty doing even the most basic physical checks”

Many people felt that the use of Skype or web-based consultation would depend upon the situation. If you are feeling particularly unwell it may not be the most reassuring way of receiving advice and support. Where as one mother of young children that we spoke to said that if her child has something contagious then Skype would be the ideal way of speaking to the GP and would stop her feeling guilty for taking an infection to the surgery.

The reliability of using the internet for this kind of use could also be an issue. It was a concern to some that you would need to be sat by your computer waiting for the call where as with phone consultations you can be anywhere with a mobile phone.

The overall feeling was positive and again, any system that relieved pressure on the system more widely, would be welcomed.

“All of these systems should filter and reduce the amount of patients in surgeries and therefore improve waiting times... that can only be a good thing”



Summary

- A good option for some but not accessible for all.
- It would be difficult for a GP to carry out a 'proper' assessment.
- The reliability of internet services may cause problems.
- Convenience of Skype and telephone consultations was welcomed.



5. Feedback

Other comments

Staffing

It was felt by many that more GPs are needed in the area. Local people are aware of an increasing number of locum GPs and feel that recruitment and retention of new staff is an important factor in the long term success of services in Gosport. Some felt that this issue was partly due to the geography of the area and difficulties in accessing the area if located outside of Gosport.

We also found that many patients feel a strong connection to an individual GP.

Information Technology

Everyone we spoke to had a slightly different experience of how the IT systems worked in their surgery. There is an inconsistency in booking systems, record keeping and online booking between different surgeries. One participant in the focus group summed this up:

“A shared IT system across the whole area is critical to the success of this work”

People we spoke to also highlighted the need for gradual change. Changes to the way that care is provided takes time for the frail and elderly to adjust to.

Signposting

It was felt that services supplied by the voluntary sector such as support groups,

coffee mornings, carers hubs etc. could provide valuable services and take away some pressure on GP and health services more generally. It was felt that GPs are getting better at signposting people to some of these services but it would be unrealistic to think that they could ever know about everything that is available. Some of our focus group participants were aware of the Voluntary GP Signposters project that is starting in Gosport. It was felt that this would be yet another way of easing pressure on GPs and should be welcomed throughout Gosport.

One final comment from the focus group highlighted the need to learn from experience...

“It seems to me that we have spoken about many examples of good practice throughout Gosport. These should be carefully identified by the CCG and they should learn from them when shaping their plans”





References

1. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/?sm=DyCIBtxPIBq8u2xYZFJRHksQAHUKij8fPvNZPGqdCaQ%3d>

2. Transforming Primary Care in Gosport - Main Aims:

GP practices across the country are under increasing strain with a growing demand for services. In Gosport a number of GPs are set to retire in the near future and there are difficulties recruiting new GPs to work on the peninsula, so the pressure on local surgeries is increasing. Local people have told the CCG that they would like to see GPs and other health and social care staff working more closely together. They would like to be able to access urgent GP appointments more easily and through a variety of ways including phone and online consultations. Local people would also like us to use IT services more effectively so that their patient record is available to all of the professionals caring for them. All of the GP practices in Gosport are now working together with support from Fareham and Gosport CCG and the Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Alliance to look at how they can tackle these issues and transform primary care in the local area. The first stage has been for the eleven individual practices to agree a collective vision for an accessible, high quality and comprehensive service for local people and work is now well underway to turn this into reality. The first stage has been for the practices to agree to work together on the following priorities:

- Improving access to same day appointments
- Developing an integrated multi-professional team with GPs, community staff, social care staff and pharmacists all working together
- Tackling the clinical recruitment issues
- Developing a common GP IT system
- Reviewing the estates currently used and ensuring we use these effectively
- Looking at the potential of sharing back office functions.

The views of local people and our partners are central to this work and the practices, with support from the CCG, will continue to seek their views and ensure these are used to help transform primary care. This will be done using a range of ways including going to the sixth form college to see what young people think, attending local groups and working closely with the Patient Participation Groups at the practices.

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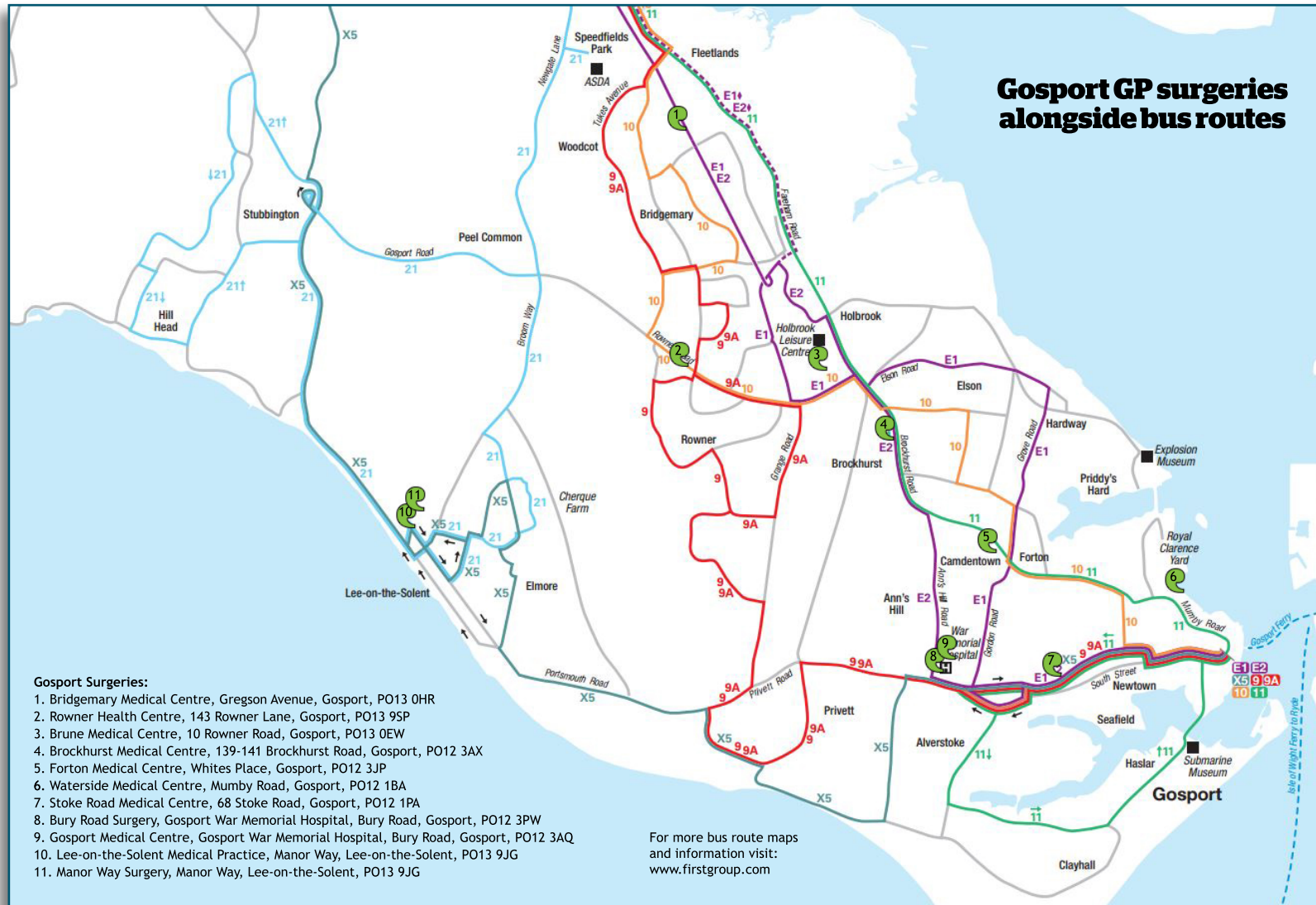
Appendix 1

GP Surgeries map



Appendix 2

GP Surgeries and Bus Routes





Appendix 3

Survey Analysis

Transforming Primary Care in Gosport Highlights of survey results

In the beginning of April 2015 the GP practices and CCG launched an online survey seeking the views of people living in Gosport on local GP services. These views will be used to help us ensure GP services meet the needs of local people.

The survey was promoted through:

- An article with a link to the survey on every GP practice website
- An article with a link to the survey sent to nursing/care homes and pre-schools asking for it to be shared with residents, carers and parents
- A press release issued to the local media
- Tweets through the CCG Twitter account
- Attending Gosport Locality Patient Group
- A workshop at the Gosport Older People's Forum
- TARGET session for practice staff.

Below are the highlights of the survey results.

Who replied to the survey?

The survey was completed by almost 1,400 people. Of these:

- 78% of respondents are female
- 3% of respondents are 24 years old or younger, 52% are 25 to 54 years old, 38% are 55 to 74 years old and 7% are over 75 years old
- 34% have a long term condition
- 19% care for dependent children and 8% are responsible for caring for a parent/friend/relative
- Every in Gosport practice has had responses from patients registered with them.

What did they say about when they feel they need to be seen on the same day?

Only 38% know that some pharmacists can prescribe medication compared to 74% for experienced nurses and 90% for a GP other than their own.

This was reflected in responses from those who having a caring responsibility or a long term condition apart from a slightly higher number of carers for adults (80%) knowing that experienced nurses can prescribe.

Most would feel confident seeing a GP other than their own (83%) or an experienced nurse (68%) but less than half would feel confident seeing a pharmacist (40%). The key themes for lack of confidence were people seeing pharmacists as not as qualified as their GP or nurse and some only wanting to see their GP.

The majority (82%) of respondents would be happy to be seen somewhere other than their own practice if they needed a same day appointment.

What did they say about when they need routine advice or care?

43% of respondents feel it is reasonable to wait four to seven days for a routine appointment with 36% saying one to three days. This was reflected in the responses from those with a long term condition.



Appendix 3

Survey Analysis

35% feel you should be able to book a routine appointment three or more weeks in advance with 33% saying one to two weeks. This was also reflected in the responses from those with a long term condition.

Most would feel confident seeing a GP other than their own (86%) or an experienced nurse (77%) with 46% saying they would feel confident seeing a pharmacist. The key themes for lack of confidence were people seeing pharmacists as not as qualified as their GP or nurse and some only wanting to see their GP. The responses from those with a long term condition were slightly different but still with most saying they would feel confident in seeing a GP other than their own (82%) or experienced nurse (73%) with 42% saying they would feel confident seeing a pharmacist.

The majority of respondents (80%) would be happy to be seen somewhere other than their own practice if they needed a routine appointment. The response from those with a long term condition was lower at 75%.

What did they say about when a loved one they care for needs care or advice?

There were differences in responses from those with a caring responsibility with 68% caring for an adult saying that person would be happy to see a GP other than their own and 59% an experience nurse. However, 87% of those caring for children said they would be happy to see a GP other than their own and 77% an experienced nurse.

82% of those caring for a child said they would be happy to be seen somewhere other than their own GP surgery. This was different to the responses from those with a long term condition (78%) or caring for an adult (66%) which showed less would be happy to be seen somewhere else.

What did they say about how they are seen?

93% of respondents would be happy to be seen by another healthcare professional if advised to. 55% would be happy to do so if advised by their GP with 38% happy to do so if advised to by their GP or practice receptionist. The majority of those who would not be happy to be advised by a receptionist said this was because receptionists are not qualified to give this advice.

76% said they would be happy to talk to a healthcare professional over the phone and about 34% said they'd be happy to used Skype, email or a web-based consultation.

71% said they would like GP practices to provide services earlier in the day and 93% said they would like them provided later.

95% said they would like any GP services provided at the weekends to be on Saturdays and 80% on Sundays.

67% said they would like all of the GP practices across Gosport to manage their appointments in the same way with 30% saying they don't mind/know.



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