

Your Care & Getting There

Report summarising responses to a survey from people in Lancashire about transport to primary healthcare services.

March 2016



Introduction and context

Between September and November 2015 Healthwatch Lancashire engaged with residents in Lancashire to gather their views and experiences about transport to primary care services.

The remit of the survey was to engage with local residents across Lancashire with a short survey to find out how people travel to appointments at GPs, dentists, health centres and pharmacies and gather details on convenience, cost and how this affects their experience.

Methodology

This study was undertaken by Healthwatch Lancashire staff and volunteers through face-to-face discussions with members of the public. These took place in a variety of locations in Lancashire including public events, in GP practices, hospitals, pharmacies and through community group workshops.

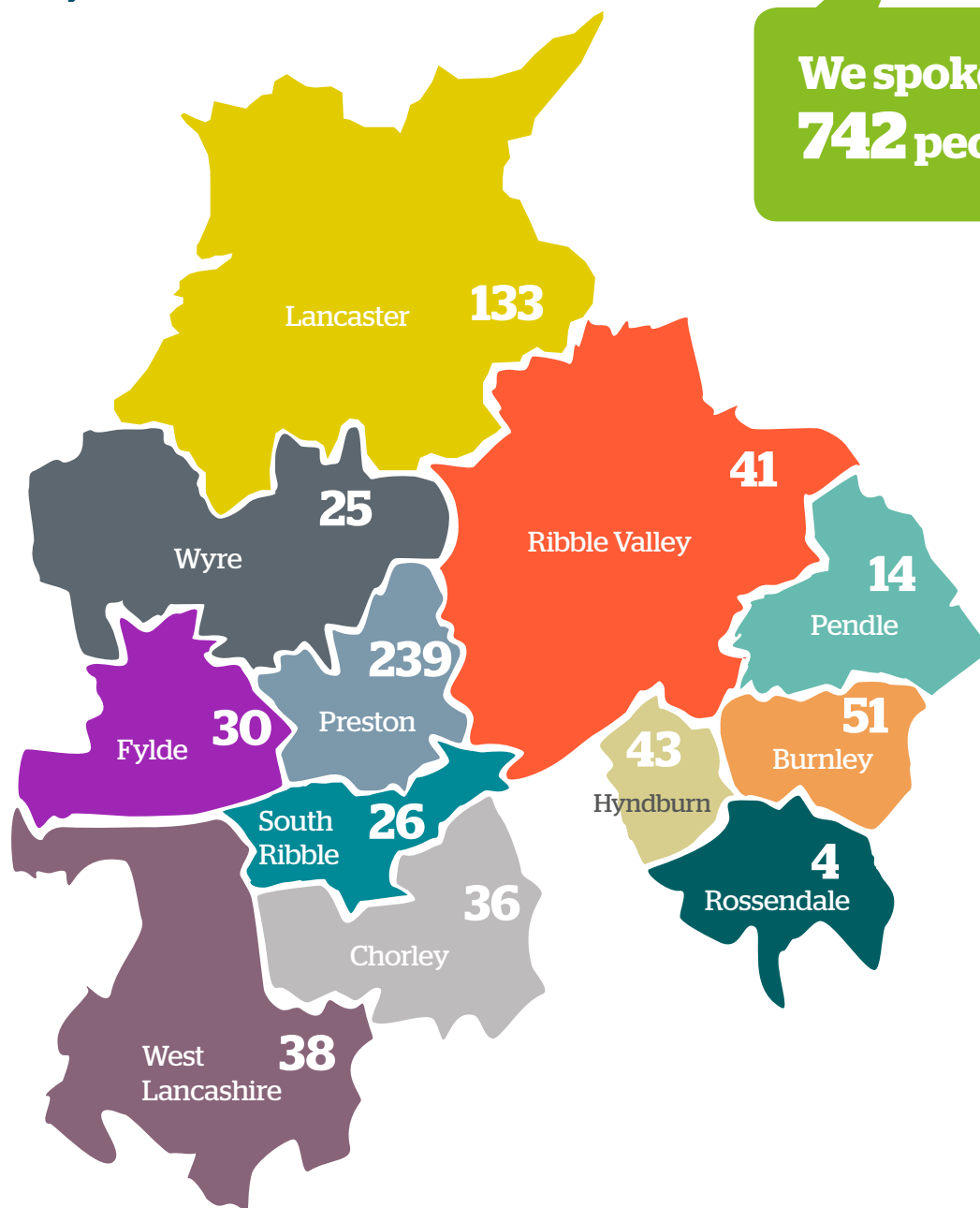
Responses to the survey were also gathered from people using a range of different transport services in Lancashire such as community transport services (pictured right).

The survey was also available on the Healthwatch Lancashire website and was supported by our communications team. The project received extensive coverage in regional newspapers, radio and social media.



Responses by location

We spoke to
742 people



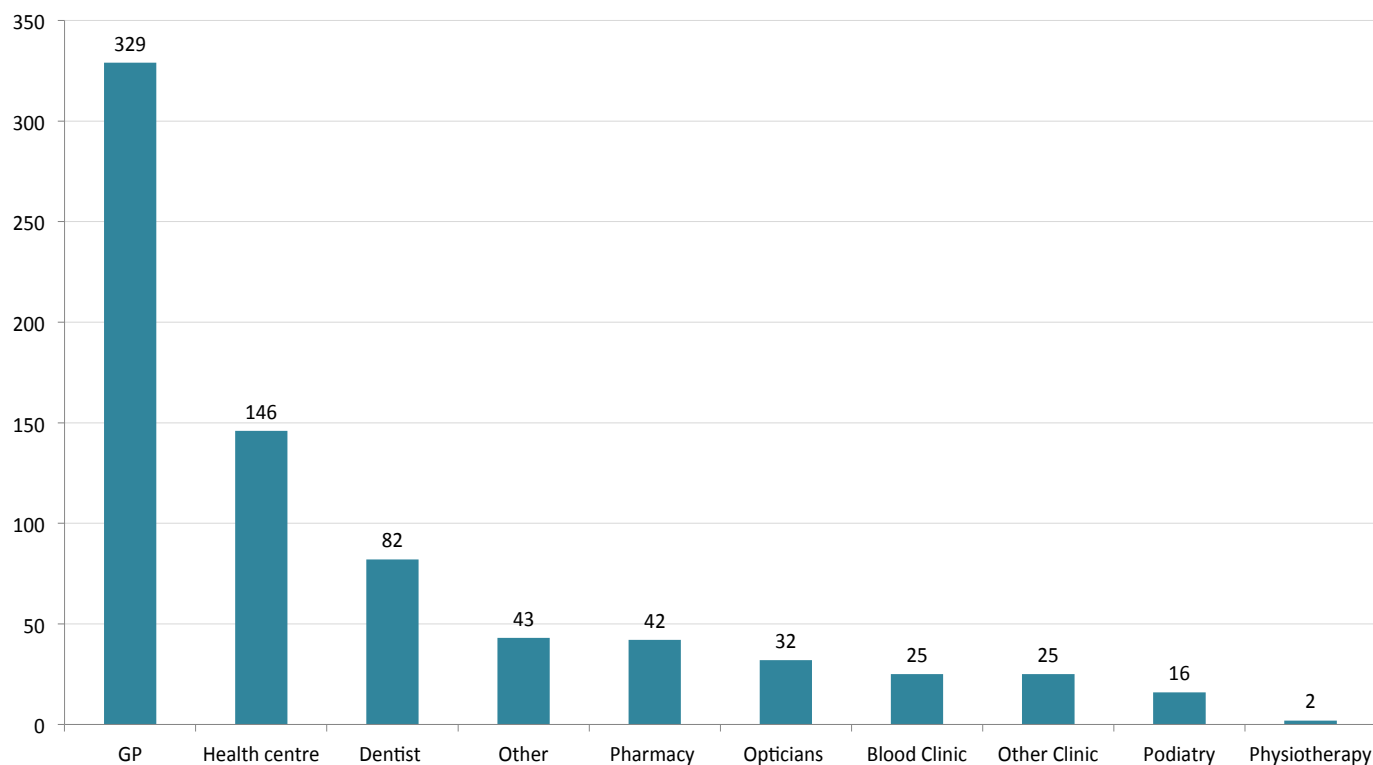
Region	Responses
Blackburn with Darwen	44
Blackpool	18
Burnley	51
Chorley	36
Fylde	30
Hyndburn	43
Lancaster	133
Pendle	14

Region	Responses
Preston	239
Ribble Valley	41
Rossendale	4
South Ribble	26
West Lancashire	38
Wyre	25
Total	742

Services used

We asked participants which primary care service they had used.

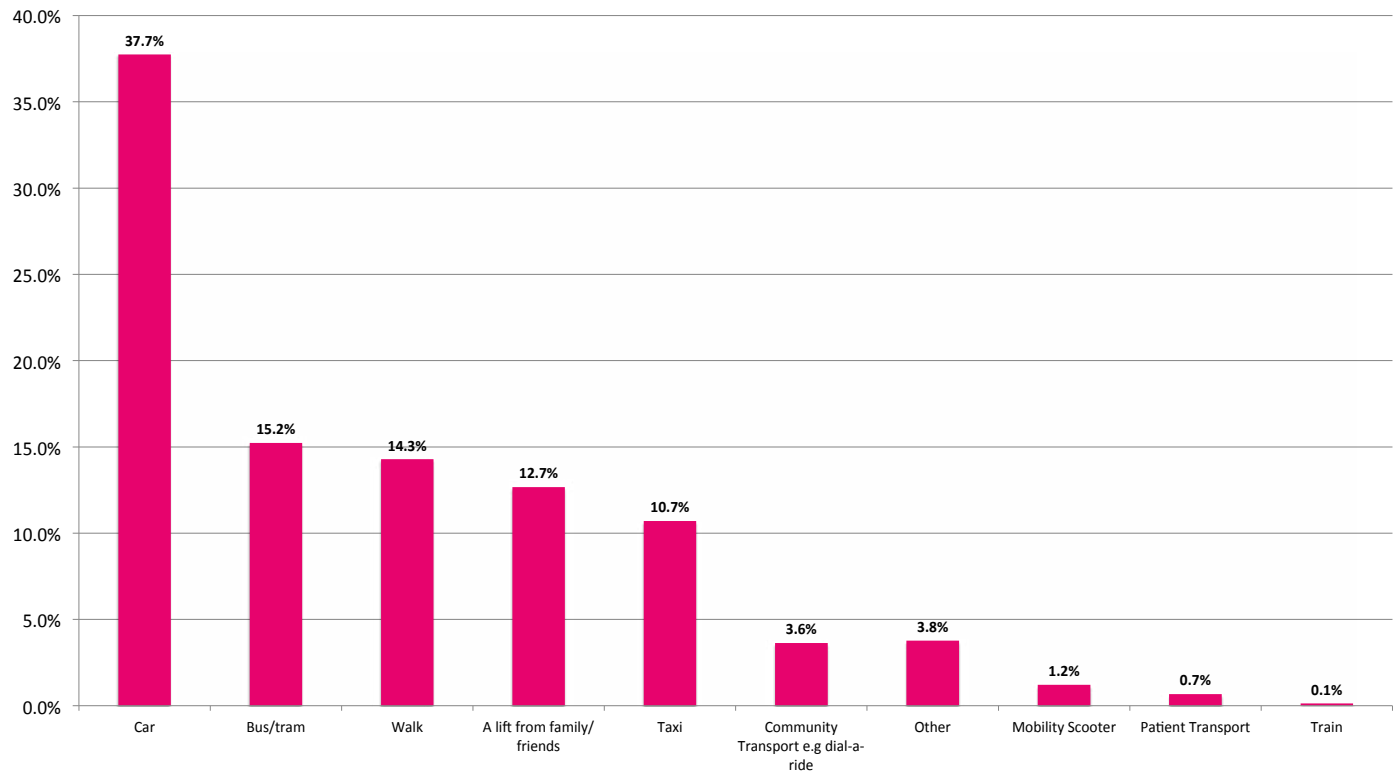
The chart below shows the number of responses for the services participants said that they had used.



Getting There

We asked participants how they had traveled to their appointment.

The chart below shows the transport participants used to get to appointments.

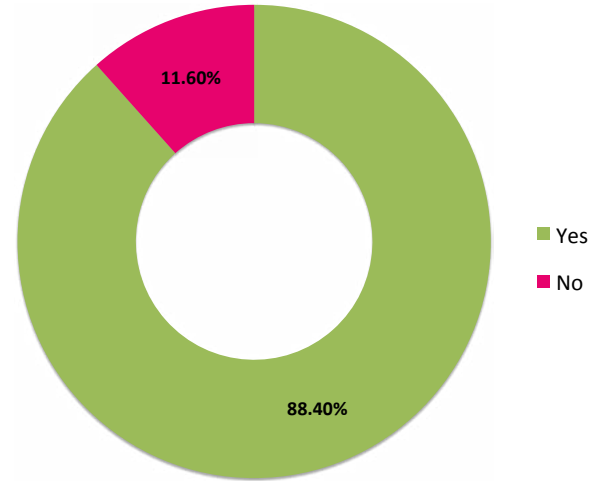


- Travelling to appointments by car was the most popular method of transport overall with 38% of people using this method of transport however only 4.5% of respondents living in Blackburn with Darwen and 7% of those from Ribble Valley used this mode of transport. Areas with the highest percentage of people who travelled by car were Pendle (85%) and Preston (58.6%).
- The percentage of people using taxis to get to their appointments differed considerably between areas. The areas with the highest percentage were Ribble Valley (24%), Blackburn with Darwen (22.7%) and Fylde (20%). No respondents from Pendle or Rossendale said that they had used taxis to get to appointments.
- The percentage of people who said that they had walked to appointments was highest in West Lancashire (34%). The areas with the lowest percentage of respondents who said that they had walked to their appointment were Hyndburn (4%), Ribble Valley (4%) and Pendle (7%).

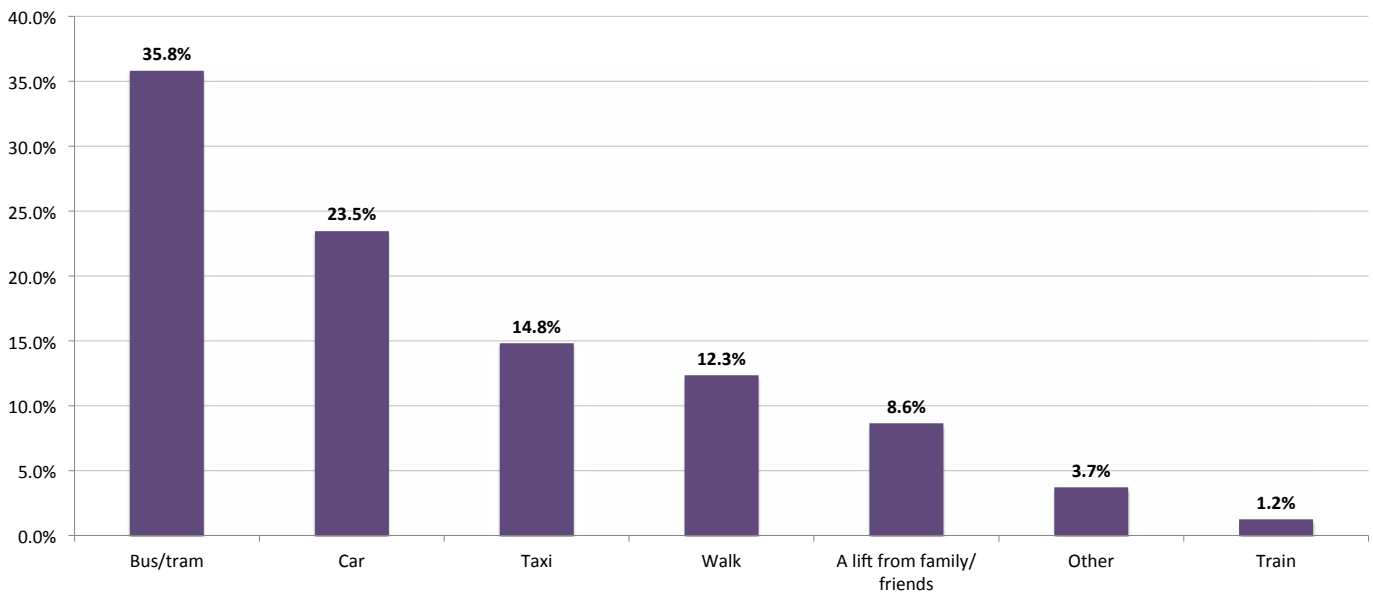
Convenience

We asked participants if they found their journey to their appointment convenient.

11.6% of respondents said that the journey to their appointment was not convenient 88.4% of respondents said that it was.



The chart below shows the percentage of the transport methods for those who said their journey was not convenient.

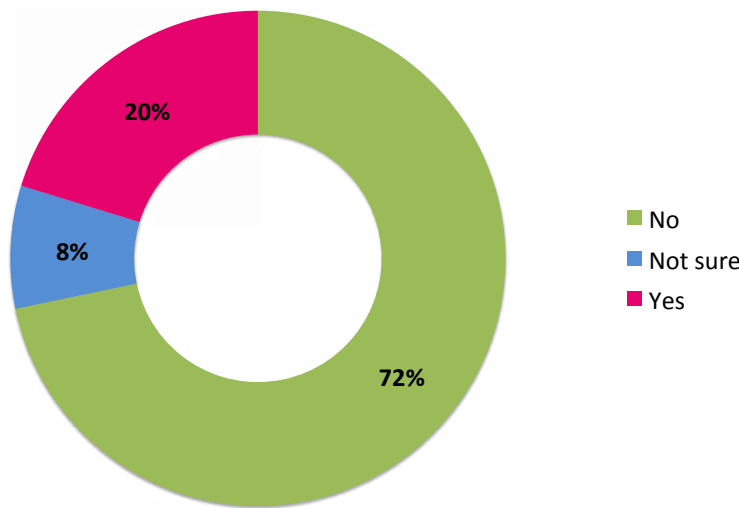


- From those who said that their journey was not convenient, the most common theme related to parking. In particular people said that there were difficulties finding parking spaces or parking near facilities that do not have a car park.
- Bus timetables, having to change buses and changes to bus routes were the main concerns from those using public transport.
- A number of people stated that their journey caused them anxiety or stress prior to their appointment.

Cost of transport

We asked participants if they were concerned about the cost of transport to their appointment.

The chart below shows how participants in the survey responded.

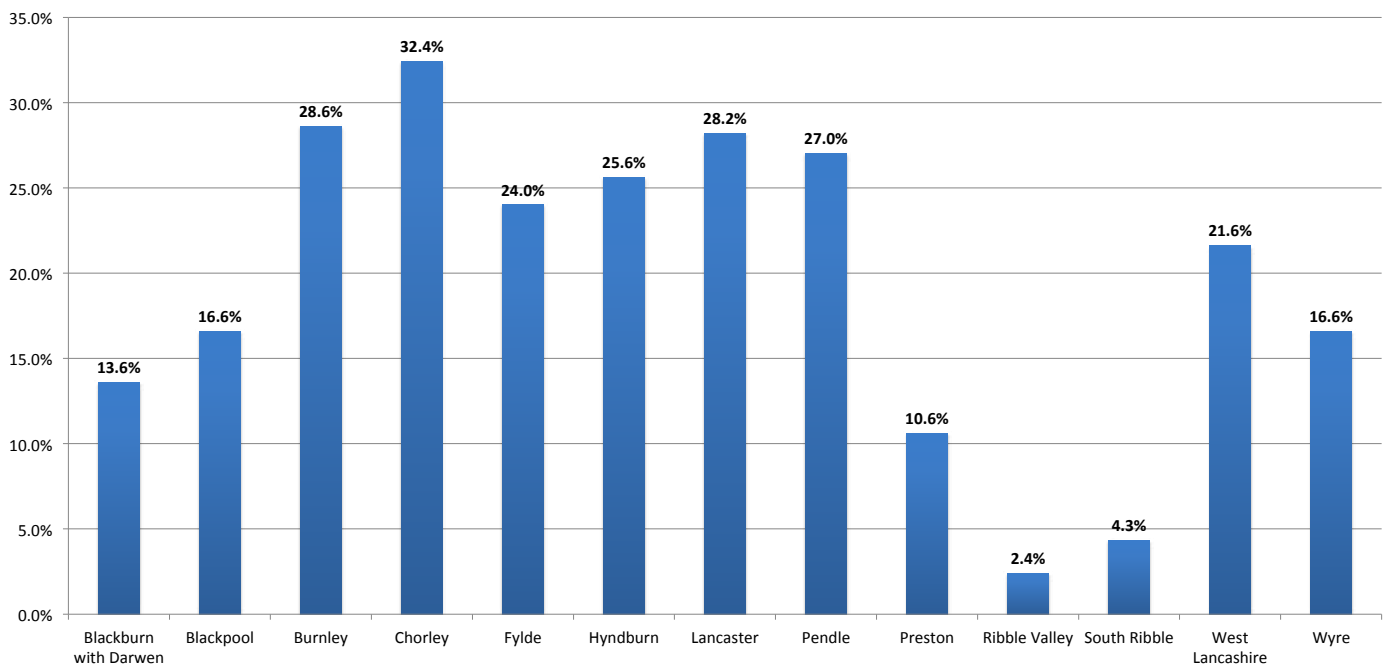


The areas with the highest percentage of people who said that they were concerned about the cost of transport are Chorley (32.4%), Burnley (28.6%) and Lancaster (28.2%).

The areas with the least number of people who said they were concerned are Ribble Valley (2.4%) and South Ribble (4.3%).

24.9% of people who did not travel by car said that they were concerned for the cost of transport to their appointment and 10.1% were unsure.

The chart below shows a the percentage of people in each area who said that they are concerned about the cost of getting to their appointments.



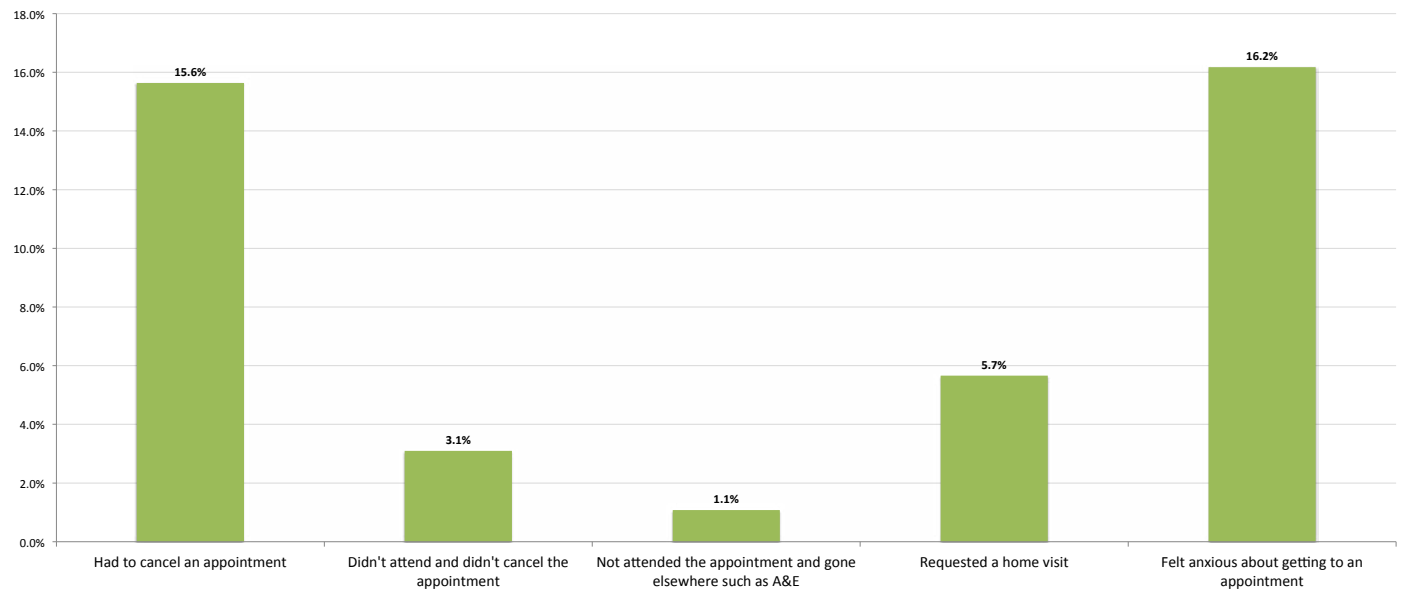
The table below shows a summary of the comments provided for each method of transport relating to costs or concerns.

Method of transport	Summary of comments
Car	<p>People said that their concerns were about the cost of petrol, traffic problems and parking.</p> <p>Some people said that they would be more concerned if they needed to attend more appointments and stated that they are concerned about the cost adding up.</p> <p>The cost of car parking was raised as a concern by a number of people.</p> <p>A number of comments were made by respondents about the lack of car park at the service they were attending for their appointment.</p> <p>Some respondents raised concerns about the number of disabled parking bays available.</p> <p>Some comments stated either their own health or the health of a relative was a concern when getting from where they parked their car to their appointment.</p>
Bus / Tram	<p>The majority of comments cited bus times as their main reason for their journey not being easy.</p> <p>A large number of people raised concerns that they feel using the bus is expensive. A range of amounts were quoted as being expensive from £7 to £16 for a return journey.</p> <p>A number of people said that they have free bus pass however some said that they are unable to use these for early appointments because of their validity.</p> <p>A service user said that they struggle to have enough money for the cost of transport to health appointments.</p> <p>A service user said that the cost of a return journey is high but they would prefer to pay this than ask for a lift from a family member.</p> <p>Service users raised a concern for changes to bus routes in Chorley.</p>
Taxi	<p>A number of people said that using a taxi is expensive however, people said that this is a necessity when there is a lack of bus stops or because of their health conditions.</p> <p>Some service users said that they require special taxis due to their disabilities.</p> <p>A number of people said that they felt they had no choice other than to use a taxi.</p> <p>The greatest concern for cost was from those who said they used taxis.</p> <p>It is evidenced within the comments that the elderly and those with medical problems are more likely to rely on taxis because of their difficulty with walking from bus stops and difficulty with booking community transport options.</p>
Lift from friends or family	<p>Some service users said that if they were unable to get a lift from a friend or family member then they would cancel their appointments.</p> <p>Some service users said they are not worried about inconveniencing friends and family for a lift whilst others said that it is a concern when they need to rely upon others to get to appointments.</p>
Drop off points and walking	<p>A number of people said that they struggle walking either to appointments from home or to their appointments from the drop off points as a result of health issues or their age.</p> <p>Lack of wheelchairs in services was raised as a concern.</p> <p>One patient raised a concern about needing to collect a prescription after their appointment and the difficulties they had with the additional walking distance.</p>
Accessibility	<p>A service user raised a concern about lifts within primary care buildings being out of order and commented that it is embarrassing when they have to be carried in these circumstances.</p>
Community Transport	<p>A service user said that they had been given the incorrect number for patient transport and when they had the correct number they couldn't get through on the telephone. They had to arrange a lift to their appointment.</p>

Have transport issues affected previous appointments?

We asked participants if transportation issues had ever affected their attendance at primary care appointments.

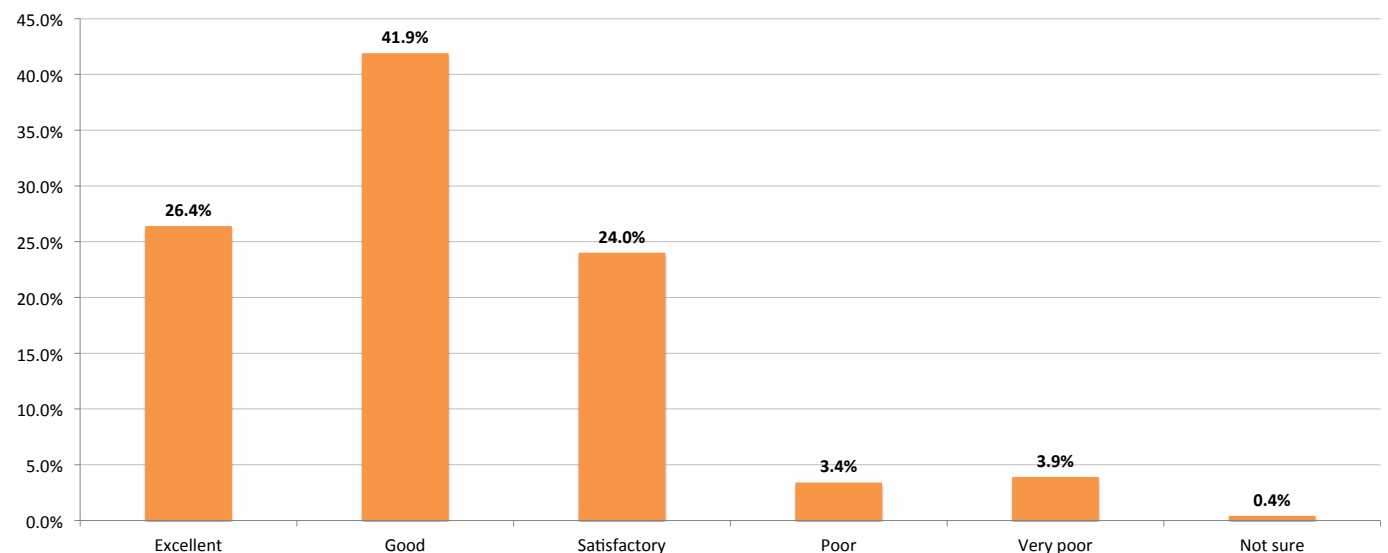
The chart below shows the percentage of respondents to the survey who have experienced the issues.



Overall experience

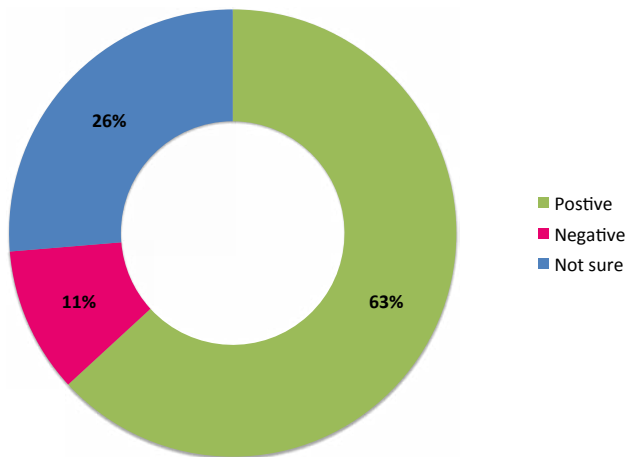
We asked participants to rate what their overall experience for getting to their appointment.

The chart below shows responses.

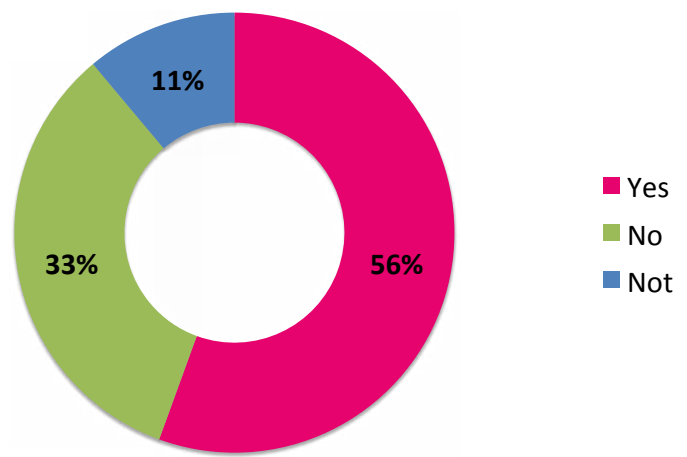


Community Transport

We asked 27 people who used community transport to get to their appointments if they found the experience positive, negative or not sure. The chart below shows responses as a percentage.



We asked those who used community transport if there were any issues with timing. The chart below shows responses.



Below are a selection of comments from those who used community transport:

“You have to be ready two hours before your appointment but that’s okay.”

“The problem with patient transport is you have to wait. However, the Little Green Bus voluntary drivers are fantastic - it’s a life-saver for me. I don’t have any problems anymore because I use the Little Green Bus.”

“The Little Green Bus is a great help because I can get prescriptions at the same time as going to other appointments rather than having to go straight home afterwards. The drivers are fantastic and are always on time.”

“We have to be ready two hours before the appointment so we are sat waiting.”

“They were a few minutes late.”

“I knew about the number for community transport from my elderly mother telling me, otherwise I wouldn’t have known. The hospital didn’t inform me about this service and it isn’t promoted.”

“The driver was a little later today than planned and then we got lost and I was very worried about getting to my appointment. It wasn’t the drivers fault though.”

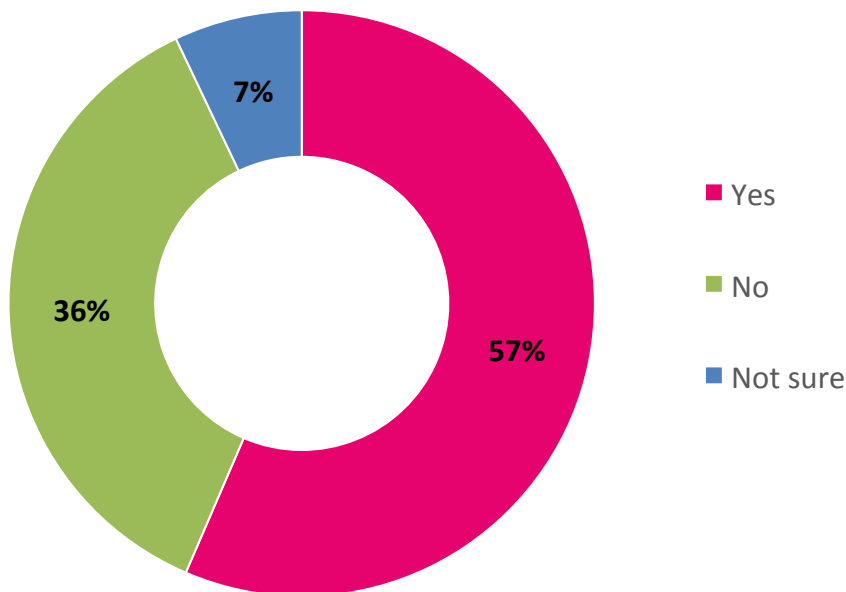
“With Community Cars you have to give a weeks notice. I have to use a taxi if I need to go to an appointment in under seven days.”

“It was five minutes late but appointments were running late anyway so it didn’t matter.”

“Difficult to fit timings of buses/dial-a-ride in with appointments.”

Getting a lift from friends and family

We asked those who had been given a lift from a friend or family member if they were concerned about inconveniencing the person who gave them a lift. The chart below shows response to the question.



Below are a selection of comments from those who said they had been given a lift:

“Sometimes I worry about asking for a lift from friends / family because I don’t want to inconvenience them but I struggle walking up the hill to the bus stop.”

“My husband is very ill and getting him in and out of the car on my own for his appointments is hard.”

“My husband has to get permission from his work to take me to appointments.”

“My battery on the scooter will only last when going to appointments which are nearby. If it is something further away then my husband will take me in the car.”

Real People of Lancashire

A number of people and groups shared their stories regarding transport to services with Healthwatch Lancashire whilst undertaking the campaign.

Here are some of their stories...

“I tried to arrange community transport but I found it extremely difficult”

Healthwatch Lancashire spoke to Ron from West Lancashire.

Ron shared his experience when he had an appointment at the eye clinic for an operation and was told that he should not drive.

Ron said: **“A taxi would have cost too much to the hospital and home again. I tried to arrange community transport but I found it extremely difficult. I did not have a number to phone and so I went to a local Age UK office to get help.”**

“We tried to call all the numbers we could find online but they were all answer machines. I tried to call them myself from home and spent a lot of time and money trying to get hold of a cheaper transport option.”

“Even West Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group gave me the wrong number for community transport. “



“I got through to one transport company who told me they couldn’t come to Ormskirk from Liverpool. In the end my son had to take a day off work and travel from Longton to take me.”

“I was at the hospital for five hours before I was allowed home again. It was a long day for both of us and it impacted on my son’s work. Services need to be more joined up and communicate with each other to improve a patient’s journey.”

“We’ve had our bus service taken away”

Healthwatch Lancashire spoke to Ravensthorpe Residents’ Association in Chorley which includes residents aged between 55 and 93.

Members of the group said: **“We’ve had our bus service taken away recently and it has impacted directly on our ability to attend healthcare appointments.”**

“Before a 125 bus would pass our residential area and take us to Chorley where most of our primary care services are located. Now we do not have the service, we must take two buses which takes over an hour and it is a very difficult journey if you are not young and energetic.”

“It also means we cannot make all the appointments that are available because of timing issues. Not only that but if we were to use a taxi it costs around £12 for a return trip which is a lot when you’re on a pension and maybe have frequent appointments for health needs.”

“Some of us get very nervous about doing this new journey on the bus. We feel there are safety implications travelling on the new bus journey. We cannot get to the shops easily anymore and we are more isolated which is upsetting.”



Pictured above: Members of the Ravensthorpe Residents’ Association in South Ribble

“The troubles we face here in Haslingden are mainly due to the infrastructure of the roads.”

Healthwatch Lancashire spoke to David from Helmshore in Rossendale.

He shared his experiences about getting to appointments by car. He said: **“The troubles we face here in Haslingden are mainly due to the infrastructure of the roads.”**

“It makes it very difficult to get anywhere as there are always congested roads and queues of traffic at peak times. Local journeys in-and-out of Rossendale Valley have excessive journey times compared to the actual distance travelled.”

“My local healthcare centre has dedicated parking saved for disabled, any other parkers must do so on the busy road and at peak times this can be very dangerous.”

“If I were to walk it would be around 4-6 miles or if I used public transport I would have to take two buses which would be a difficult journey, especially if I was older or less mobile.”

“Further to this the cuts in services mean that residents need to go further to get to hospitals and services, such as libraries and shops.”

“Excessive registering time means it is not easy to change to a local GP or dentist if you move address. Budget cuts are making things less local, we are losing valuable services from the valley of Haslingden and it is causing major transport problems.”



Response from Little Green Bus

Following the publication of this report Donna Atkinson, Manager of Little Green Bus, a community transport service in East Lancashire, informed Healthwatch Lancashire that a consortium of providers in Lancashire have been working on a central service that will provide information regarding community transport across Lancashire.

The following has been shared as a description of community transport in Lancashire:

“We provide safe, considerate and accessible transport to people who can’t use regular public transport for a variety of reasons and to other non-profit groups. We combat loneliness and isolation across Lancashire, helping to keep people active, engaged in their communities resulting in a positive contribution to their health & well-being.”

Donna Atkinson provided the following response to the report:

“Thank you very much for the report which makes very interesting reading.”

“Could I advise that the reason that passengers are asked to give community transport providers sufficient advance notice of their need for a community car is because the volunteer / community car scheme operates under the Car Sharing Legislation and is not a taxi service.”

“We are therefore obliged to abide by this legislation which requires at least 48 hours’ notice. I am not aware of any community transport operator asking people for a minimum of one weeks’ notice. However, the scheme does operate with volunteer drivers, covering large areas across the county and for this purpose, we do usually ask for as much notice as is possible.”

Please contact 0845 1217686 for the central service that will provide information regarding community transport across Lancashire.

Healthwatch Lancashire has confirmed that it will support community transport operators in sharing this information with people in Lancashire.

healthwatch
Lancashire

Tel 0300 3038811

www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk

info@healthwatchlancashire.co.uk

Twitter: @HW_Lancashire

Facebook: facebook.com/lancshealthwatch