

*Torbay GP Surgeries  
Patient Feedback for  
the Primary Care Joint  
Commissioning Committee*

Summary  
Report

April-May  
2017





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# Introduction

Recent social media activity, particularly negative posts from the public regarding GP booking systems via Facebook groups, has led to an increase in patient feedback on the Healthwatch Torbay’s online rate and review feedback centre regarding dissatisfaction with access to GP Surgeries in Torbay, particularly appointment booking systems.

Following the reorganisation of GP surgeries merging and federating, it would appear that there have been different approaches to communicating any system changes to patients. This has led to some confusion as to the new arrangements for patients as to the best way of accessing their local GP surgery.

This report provides a summary of the feedback received by Healthwatch Torbay’s rate & review system on local GPs during April - May 2017, together with social media comments surrounding the frustrations that many of the local community are facing accessing their GPs.

It also highlights the reasons why this feedback has surfaced so abruptly in recent weeks.

## Intelligence Overview

Since April 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 to date (25<sup>th</sup> May 2017) we have received **54** new online reviews of local GP services, nearly **five times more** than the previous 2 month period (11 reviews from Feb to March 2017).

Sixteen different GP practices were reviewed, with an overall star rating offered by the public as **2.5 out of 5**, compared to the overall average of **3.9** (since June 2014).

Average Healthwatch rating	Average individual Healthwatch ratings	View all
 <p>Average rating for April 2017-May 2017 (2.5370)</p>	<p>Cleanliness </p> <p>Staff Attitude </p> <p>Waiting Time </p> <p>Treatment explanation </p>	
 <p>Overall average (3.9723)</p>	<p>Quality of care </p> <p>Dignity and respect </p>	

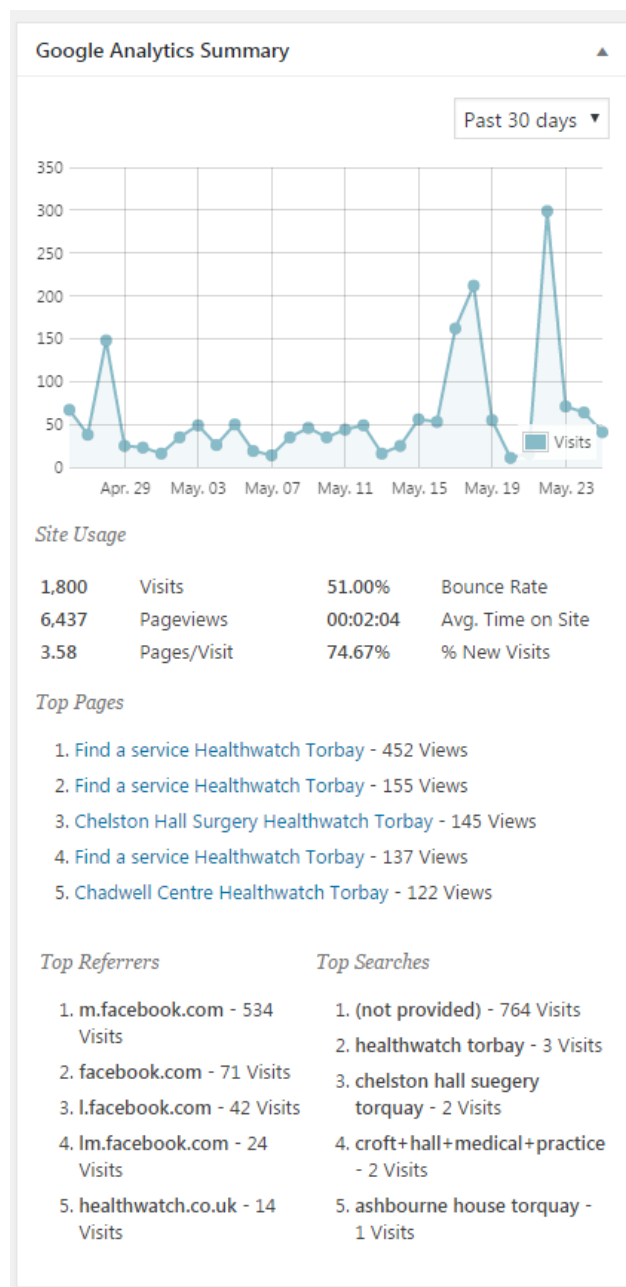
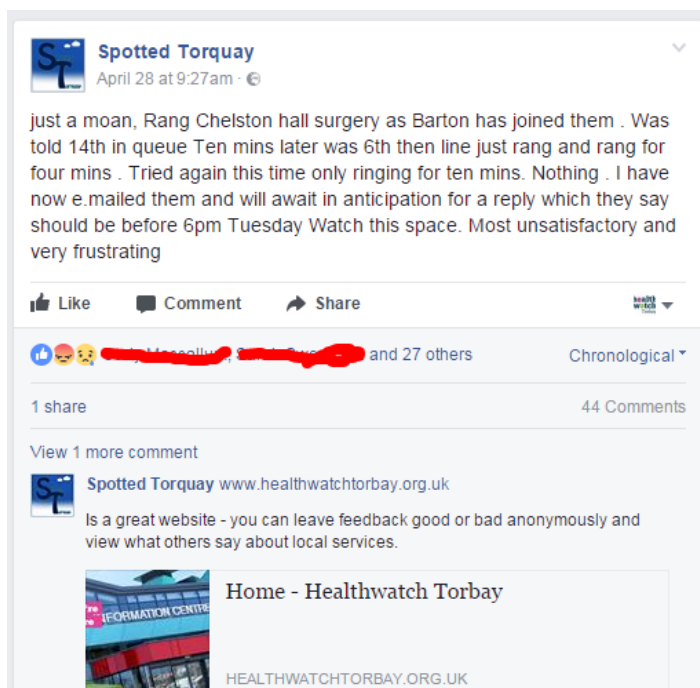


# Social Media Activity

We were aware of increased recent social media activity, particularly negative posts from the public regarding GP booking systems via Facebook Groups such as ‘Spotted Torquay’, ‘The only way is Torbay’ and ‘Devon Live’.

The Healthwatch Torbay website Google Analytics Summary graphic (right) shows a direct correlation between social media posts and website traffic, beginning with an increase on the 28<sup>th</sup> April when the initial post below was made. The reaction to the post below was relatively contained with only 27 ‘reactions’ and 44 comments, but did lead to an increase in Healthwatch Torbay online reviews and treble our usual number of daily visitors.

The majority of comments on the post below were centred on GP appointment booking systems (not limited to Chelston Hall) and patients unhappy with the time taken to get through and book appointments. Many commented that they have tried calling at 8.30am, not been able to get through, and when they finally do all the appointments available for the day have already been allocated.



You can see from the Healthwatch Torbay website Google Analytics Summary graphic above that our ‘Top referrers’ in April - May 2017 were from Facebook, with the majority of visitors looking for services to review, particularly Chelston Hall Surgery. 75% of our website visitors in this time were new to the site.



## Further posts

On May 17<sup>th</sup> an account appeared online from a member of the public (right) complaining about an ‘angry’ call from his ex-Practice Manager, allegedly threatening legal action over a comment he left online about his former GP surgery.

This was shared by other Facebook groups and led to a significant increase in Healthwatch Torbay online reviews and four times our usual daily visitors. (See *Healthwatch Torbay website Google Analytics Summary graph on page 3*)

Following this post, Healthwatch Torbay received concerns from members of the public regarding the legality of using patients’ confidential records for reasons other than for their healthcare. There were also concerns regarding why GP surgeries were not using this patient feedback to improve services, rather than concentrating their efforts on suppressing comments and discouraging patient feedback.

A follow up Facebook post (right) from ‘Spotted Torquay’ on May 22<sup>nd</sup> led to a further increase in Healthwatch Torbay online reviews and six times our usual daily visitors. (See *Healthwatch Torbay website Google Analytics Summary graph on page 3*)

There were further negative comments on the Spotted Torquay post itself (right) regarding GP appointment systems and also further concerns regarding the threats of legal action revealed in the previous post above.

**The only way is Torbay - A little bit of Devon.**  
May 17 at 10:58pm · 🌐

Has anyone else been threatened with legal action over negative comments in relation to a local doctors surgery? 😬  
Please share so that this reaches people.. It would be interesting to know how many people this has happened to.

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share   

🙄 🗨️ [redacted] and 4 others    Chronological

13 shares

**The only way is Torbay - A little bit of Devon.**

**Devon Live**  
5 hrs · 🌐

Just had a threatening and angry phone call from [redacted] (GP surgery) He has threatened me with legal action regarding my comments on facebook and said he has passed my comments onto their solicitors? I told him good I look forward to seeing you in court. I have more than enough evidence to prove my comments are true. I also asked what the fxck he was doing calling me, as i am no longer with the surgery? He was really angry and stressed about all the complaints people put on fb about this very poor excuse for a doctors surgery. Looks like their trying to prevent people from going public by threatening with legal action which we end up paying for. 😬😬😬😬 "Watch your blood pressure [redacted]"

Like · Reply · 🗨️ 🙄 🗨️ 9 · May 17 at 10:59pm

**Spotted Torquay**  
May 22 at 11:41am · 🌐

Admin here:  
I've had a lot of messages about trying to get through to surgeries to book GP appointments this morning.  
It has apparently taken some of you hours whilst others have been unsuccessful.  
Since some of you (and myself) have been threatened with legal action for such posts,  
I would recommend you post your thoughts on [www.healthwatchtorbay.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchtorbay.org.uk)  
It's anonymous and you can leave feedback both good and bad.

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share   

🗨️ 🙄 43    Chronological

View 40 more comments



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# Healthwatch Feedback Themes

The graphic overleaf shows the top six themes attributed to these new reviews and the sentiment of those themes (green = positive, red = negative). It also breaks down the top three themes into sub-themes to identify particular areas.

## Administration

The most frequent theme surrounded administration, particularly appointment booking systems and appointment availability, with many reviewers commenting that they are unable to book an appointment and that the current system of booking appointments ‘doesn’t work’.

## Staff Attitude

Although there was still some praise for reception staff and GPs, with many reviewers commenting that they ‘understood the pressure they were under’, reception staff and GPs were the next most frequent theme, with many reviewers saying they were unhappy with reception/administration staff attitude.

## Access to Services

Access to GP services is centred on waiting times to obtain an appointment and also the distance patients have to travel, particularly - according to them - following GP mergers and not being able to get an appointment at their original GP Surgery.

## Treatment and Care

Most patients were happy with the treatment they received, but did comment that it took them too long to be able to access it.

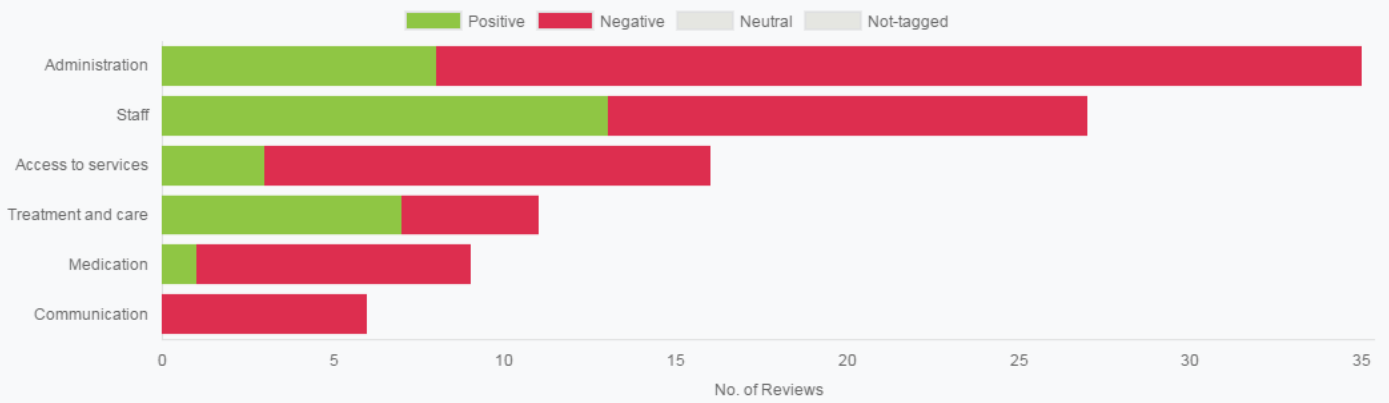
## Medication (Prescriptions)

The majority of patients were unhappy with how long it takes a prescription to reach the pharmacy, with some reviewers commenting that their medication is never ready to be picked up due to communication errors.

## Communication

Those reviewers unhappy with communication commented on miscommunication surrounding where their appointments were, with some turning up at the surgery they expected their appointments to be, only to be told they were meant to be somewhere else.





Search:

Theme name	Reviews	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Not Tagged	
<b>Administration</b>	55	23%	77%	0	0	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
Admission Procedure	2	0%	100%	0%	0%	
Appointment availability	12	0%	100%	0%	0%	
Booking appointments	30	17%	83%	0%	0%	
See my GP	4	0%	100%	0%	0%	
Appointment Waiting Times	3	67%	33%	0%	0%	
Telephone	4	25%	75%	0%	0%	
<b>Staff</b>	36	48%	52%	0	0	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
Attitudes	9	56%	44%	0%	0%	
Capacity	1	0%	100%	0%	0%	
Staffing levels	1	0%	100%	0%	0%	
Doctors/GPs	11	64%	36%	0%	0%	
Reception/Administration Staff	13	38%	62%	0%	0%	
Quality & Effectiveness	1	100%	0%	0%	0%	
<b>Access to services</b>	16	19%	81%	0	0	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
Convenience/Distance to travel	6	0%	100%	0%	0%	
Lack of	1	0%	100%	0%	0%	
General	2	50%	50%	0%	0%	
Patient choice	2	100%	0%	0%	0%	
Waiting times	5	0%	100%	0%	0%	
<b>Treatment and care</b>	13	64%	36%	0	0	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<b>Medication</b>	9	11%	89%	0	0	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<b>Communication</b>	6	0	100%	0	0	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>



# GP Services Reviewed

The graphic below shows the top 12 reviewed GP Surgeries in the April - May 2017 period and the overall rating provided for each by the public during that time.

Service	Service Type	Reviews ▲	Rating
▶ Barton Surgery		19	★★★★☆
▶ Chelston Hall Surgery		6	★★★★☆
▶ Croft Hall Medical Practice		4	★★★☆☆
▶ Brunel Medical Practice		4	★★★★☆
▶ Chilcote Surgery (Dewerstone)		4	★★★★★
▶ Cherrybrook Medical Centre		4	★★★★☆
▶ Mayfield Medical Centre		2	★★★★☆
▶ Southover Medical Practice		2	★★★★☆
▶ Old Farm Surgery		2	★★★★★
▶ Compass House Medical Centre		1	★★★★☆
▶ Park Hill Medical Practice		1	★★★★☆
▶ Pembroke House		1	★★★★☆

During April - May 2017, **22 one-star reviews** of GP surgeries were submitted to the Healthwatch Torbay online feedback centre. There were also **11 two-star reviews**, **5 three-star reviews**, **2 four-star reviews**, and **14 five star reviews**. The table in the Appendix shows these specific **1 star reviews** of GP surgeries during April - May 2017. Other reviews are all available online ([www.healthwatchtorbay.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchtorbay.org.uk)) or can be supplied on request.





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# Conclusion

Following the significant increase in public reviews of GP Surgeries on the Healthwatch Torbay website, a meeting was arranged with the Practice Manager from Chelston Hall (with branch sites at Abbey Road and Barton Surgery) to discuss this feedback.

There was some reassurance during this meeting that system changes were being put in place during early April 2017, which may have led to issues during a 'settling in' period. The Practice Manager assured us that the systems were now working effectively but some patients may not have been completely aware of this or the work undertaken behind the scenes to achieve this.

However, although these new processes were being introduced and we agree that there needs to be a 'settling in' period, the majority of the patient feedback at the time suggested the system may not have been working effectively. This may have led directly to an increase in social media comments surrounding GP practices.

Healthwatch Torbay would hope that in the coming months patient feedback regarding GP appointment booking systems will be more positive.

Healthwatch Torbay have concerns regarding the way social media GP surgery feedback was responded to - especially regarding the legality of using patients' confidential records for reasons other than for their healthcare - which need to be addressed immediately.

## Healthwatch Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1** - an up-to-date information-sharing marketing and communications strategy is required to inform patients, the public and stakeholders about changes to GP surgeries **BEFORE** they happen, including information on GP mergers, new appointment booking systems and the work undertaken behind the scenes to improve services.
- **Recommendation 2** - A consistent approach to gather feedback from GP patients to improve and drive up standards within the Practice, including effectively sharing how this has been used to improve their service with the patients.
- **Recommendation 3** - a clear social media protocol needs to be created for Practice Managers which includes a specific procedure for handling online complaints and effectively responding to online feedback.



# Appendix

Provider	Title	Review
Chelston Hall Surgery	Disappointing	<i>I rang to request a call back from a gp and was asked what for so I explained only to be told I wouldn't be entitled to speak to a gp because I seen a gp last month about the same thing. Very frustrating.</i>
Chelston Hall Surgery	Wasting GPs time, wasting pharmacy money	<i>I need regular medication for a life time condition. Getting the drugs is a nightmare. I am really careful about ordering my prescription about ten days in advance by email. I like email as I then have evidence of the date ordered and items ordered....two thirds of the time I get there and find either a prescription hasn't been done or is incorrect. I am then sent to the practice to request in person. I then go back two days later to collect it. I work full time and find it really hard to get there once a month let alone twice. I also have items I didn't request added to the script???? I have twice in the last six months had to make appointments to see GPs because my drugs have been cancelled or reduced due to "new policy" (a new policy that no one told me about until I found that yet again drugs were missing). On seeing the GP they've said that is incorrect and reinstated. It is a waste of everyone's time and makes me want to weep as it's so predictable *every* month.</i>
Brunel Medical Practice	Can never get an appointment...	<i>On the phone from 8.30 to get an appointment...engaged..ring back engaged. This goes on for an hour and by the time you get through all the appointments have gone. Last time I had to go to the out of hours GP who told me I should be seeing my own GP to which I replied I would love to but I can't get an appointment.</i>
Barton Surgery	Poor Service.	<i>It's such a shame how downhill Chelston Hall has gone. I don't know if it's because of the merge, but I absolutely dread having to try and get an appointment or needing to go to the surgery itself. At times it has taken me over 100 tries of getting through in a morning to try and get an appointment, only to be told there are none left. I've even gone down to the surgery for 8.30 to still be told there are none left, how is this possible when they have just opened? A lot of the reception staff appear very rude too. I witnessed one lady take a call on a headset and be quite abrupt in telling the person they had rang the wrong number and they needed to call back on the appointment line. THE same phone rang again and the lady answered, but this time saying "Chelston Hall appointment line" ..? Some of the doctors do not seem concerned about what is actually wrong with you, more so just fobbing you off with the first thing they can think of.. meaning more appointments are then needed. Today I was on hold for 1 hour and 13 minutes trying to get quite an urgent appointment, only to be hung up on. Also, I have always emailed dowricks for a repeat prescription which has taken 2 days maximum. Last week I was told it was take about 10 days as the process is slower now and doctors are taking longer to sign off the prescriptions. I chose Chelston Hall surgery because at the time I lived down the road. It is still convenient for me due to being able to drop my children off with a relative (who is also just down the road) if I need to go in myself. I did not register with Abbey road, Croft Hall or Barton for a reason, therefore I do not want to be going there for appointments. I think it is a popular opinion that Chelston Hall has gone really downhill and needs some major changes to get it back up to scratch. I certainly wouldn't recommend anyone to join here.</i>



Barton Surgery	Shocking, slow, unreliable	<i>First of all you have to wait for a call back some times days later!! And that's after waiting to get through on the phone ( then the line going dead once your next in line). I don't drive, have two children, and have to go all the way to Abbey Road to see a doctor for my children when they are poorly. Shame on this system it's absolutely rubbish.</i>
Cricketfield Surgery	Terrible	<i>Cricketfield has gone down hill. I was registered at this practice since birth (23 years) and went on to develop some issues in my teens. I visited the surgery many times with the same complaint but was just being told I had anxiety and to take some tablets. This went on for 7 years and this created anxiety, anxiety that certainly wasn't there beforehand. Anyway, to cut a long story short, I moved practices, I was listened to, I had tests and now I have been referred to the hospital, something that probably should have been done some 5 years ago. Admin team wise, not sure I ever experienced any particular issues, but now that I can compare them to my new practice, they weren't particularly friendly or polite. It was always extremely difficult to get an appointment too, if you didn't ring at exactly 8:30 you had no hope. I often had to book appointments 4 weeks in advance.</i>
Croft Hall Medical Practice	Terrible!!	<i>Majority of doctors come across as a "can't really be bothered" attitude and completely dis-interested. There are a couple of good doctors here but the others I've seen have been terrible! Ring dead on 8.30 constantly engaged only to be told there are no appointments when you do get through. When trying to book an appointment in advance you have to wait weeks and weeks before you get one. Have since moved GPS and have a brilliant doctor and have always got an appointment straight away.</i>
Barton Surgery	Phone rings out, no appointments ever	<i>Call up in the morning, phone doesn't get answered. Overall awful customer care.</i>
Chelston Hall Surgery	Phone just rings and rings	<i>Tried many times to get myself and son appointment. My son is 3 and can't ever get appointments. Also tried to get a coil fitted and was told I would have to wait 6 weeks for an appointment - ended up going to local family planning clinic!</i>
Barton Surgery	Horrendous	<i>Unable to get through on the telephone to book an appointment, drove to the surgery at 10am to be told no appointments available for my two year old daughter! Made complaints in the past and nothing improved so will now be moving surgery.</i>
Cherrybrook Medical Centre	Terrible service.	<i>I needed a Dr appointment, I haven't been to the Dr in over 3 years, so I don't go unnecessarily and only use the Dr when I really need too. When I called for an appointment it wasn't deemed an emergency, I asked to make an appointment for another day and was told to call back the following morning. I called and stayed on the line waiting for my call to be answered for over half a hour. When they answered they still didn't have an appointment. I eventually, after some persistence, I got an appointment with a nurse. The nurse took my bloods and said my results would turn up in a few days. I hadn't heard from the Dr so a week later so I called to get my results, the results were in but hadn't been seen by the Dr so they couldn't tell me anything. I called a few days later and still the Dr had not looked at them, so I then asked to be booked in for a telephone consultation. When I still hadn't heard from the Dr a few days later I called again and the man who answered the calls let me know the Dr had sent a prescription down to the chemist, it's a repeat prescription and I don't even know why I need it.</i>



		<i>Very poor service, long waiting times on the phone, unhelpful staff, hard to get appointments, not told why we need prescriptions, and when I went to get the prescription they didn't send it to the right chemist so I had to go to their other surgery in town, when I got to their chemist they said they didn't have the prescription either and it took 20 min for them to locate it.</i>
<b>Barton Surgery</b>	Poor!! Lack of patient care	<i>Tried for weeks to get my epileptic meds to be told a doctor will phone - waiting all day to not get a call back days on end. Resorting in me being over a month without meds. Seizures most days one resulting in me cutting my back open by landing on something. Searching for a new gp practice now.</i>
<b>Pembroke House</b>	Unorganised, impersonable, worrying service	<i>Had an appointment and the doctor seemed to be treating another person at same time in another room and online too, felt lack of attention, have had several other issues, wrong prescriptions, sent to diff surgeries, appointments being in other surgery without informing. Appointments incorrectly booked, absolute sham really.</i>
<b>Barton Surgery</b>	poor service	<i>Since merging with Chelston Hall, the practice has gone down hill. Very unlikely to get seen and that's if you can get through the first hurdle at reception and past the 20 questions you are faced with.</i>
<b>Croft Hall Medical Practice</b>	unable to book an appointment	<i>Phoned at 11am and was told by receptionist to go to a pharmacist, but I need to see a doctor. I was unable to book an appointment and was told to ring at 8.30 in the morning, when the phone is constantly busy and I start work at 8am. Do not understand why you can't book an appointment, absolutely disgusting. You could die before you get to see a doctor at this rate.</i>
<b>Barton Surgery</b>	Try ringing them	<i>Just try getting a repeat prescription. Waited all day for them despite them saying it's only waiting to be signed off. Pharmacy never received by end of day. In the end, wasted more NHS time by having to ring 111. Utter shambles.</i>
<b>Chelston Hall Surgery</b>	Ridiculous system	<i>Registered with this surgery as it was my closest. Since merger, all on the day appointments are now made at a surgery in the town centre .... some distance from where I live. Had to take my poorly 3 year old into town on bus, only to discover it's a sit and wait system, rather than booked time appointment. Seen by a nurse, rather than known gp as requested, given a prescription ... but this surgery, unlike the one I'm registered with, has no pharmacy. Total joke!!! I followed complaint procedure on website and rang practice manager as website suggested. After putting me on hold for 5 mins, receptionist reports to me that manager said he was too busy to deal with call and she would handle complaint instead. I have simply registered at a different practice!!!!</i>
<b>Barton Surgery</b>	Post Cancer Treatment	<i>Told my appointment would be at Chelston Hall. That is two bus journeys, that took me over two hours round trip and paid £4.80 for the privilege.</i>
<b>Barton Surgery</b>	Doctors seemed not to care and uninterested	<i>Had all the symptoms of a kidney infection but my first urine sample was negative. First lot of meds didn't work but found myself feeling more unwell and needing to see the doctor. I was told as my urine sample was negative in the first place that it wasn't an infection and that I had probably picked up a bug and if I still felt unwell after the weekend then to give them a call and book in to see a nurse!! The next day I was running a fever, being sick and had awful back back pain. Husband rang to get me an appointment and they had none and no one available to speak to either. 111 were incredible and I saw a doctor within the hour who treated me for a kidney infection. Once I</i>



		<p><i>finished this course of meds I became poorly again- same symptoms and needed further medication and was put on the same course of meds (again this was following a 111 call). Urine samples were sent off and came back negative and the doctors at my surgery didn't seem to care and offered no alternatives. I was still struggling to get well and was due to go away and thought it would be sensible to make an appointment, but got a call back saying there is no infection (After another urine sample, even though I was on meds!?) and I was given meds for an irritable bladder! Surprise surprise, they didn't work and I was still ill. Following a urine sample I did at Barton I was then given some different antibiotics following some white blood cells shown in the test (however this had always shown up on dip tests previously with 111 but lab tests said no infection!?).</i></p> <p><i>I'm glad to say I am finally well but it's taken weeks and I've missed work and feel this could have been handled much better. I rarely use the doctors and when I need them I want them to be there for me. Getting through to speak to someone was always an issue but the attitude of the staff there was upsetting and I was made to feel like there was nothing wrong with me! As a result my husband and I have moved surgery.</i></p>
<b>Barton Surgery</b>	<b>Marathon to get through on the phone</b>	<p><i>To get through on the phone can take hours, this is no exaggeration. Then you have to get through the receptionist who wants to know all the details about your illness to triage your illness ready for a call back from the doctor (if you are lucky after 2 hours of waiting to get through, often you will be too late to book in for a call back) For an appointment? You'll be lucky, now if you can get to Abbey Road - you MIGHT be able to get one there but actually seeing someone is harder than getting through on the phone line. I was diagnosed over the phone by a nurse who suggested it was just a cough even though I couldn't breathe properly. Weeks later, I finally got seen and had pneumonia and was given the right treatment. Bring back appointments! More GPs required!</i></p>
<b>Cherrybrook Medical Centre</b>	<b>Two surgeries that do not work together</b>	<p><i>I arrived for an appointment at the surgery I had phoned to make the appointment and booked in electronically. My appointment time went and passed, and when I asked at the reception whether I had been overlooked, I was told that my appointment was at the other surgery and that the doctor had already called me there. Another appointment was made so I then drove to the other surgery, tried frantically to find a parking space and eventually did with just minutes to spare, but then had to wait another 30 minutes before being seen. Absolutely disgusted with the way I was treated and still feel like I was not given the answers I needed. Due to the appointment being about my heart condition I feel I may need to attend the cardiac unit at Torbay Hospital instead.</i></p>
<b>Chelston Hall Surgery</b>	<b>Impossible to make an appointment</b>	<p><i>Can't make an app, told to ring in morning for any cancelled apps. Hard when you work. Too large a practice, very impersonal, much better when it was old mill surgery with 1 family doctor. Could always make app for later date. Great nurses that knew your name and put you at ease. Much more friendly and put you at ease. Tried making my 1st app in over 2 yrs &amp; was told to ring a helpline or to go to another surgery in Barton, whom they've just gone into partnership with. I rang my local dr and I wished to be seen locally. I'm now suffering with anxiety and depression with no help whatsoever. This is 2017 not the Middle Ages. The girl on the phone couldn't have given a hoot!.</i></p>



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