

**GP Access survey report.
July- October 2017**



1.0 Executive Summary	4
2.0 Questions arising from this piece of work:	7
3.0 Recommendations	8
4.0 Acknowledgements	9
5.0 Disclaimer	9
6.0 Introduction.....	10
7.0 What People told us.	12
7.1 What is your experience of registering with a GP in Herefordshire?.....	12
7.2 What is your experience of booking an appointment?	14
7.3 Length of time to get appointment.	18
7.4 What options do you know are available to you at your surgery? (Not all will be available at every surgery). And which have you used?	22
7.5 How often did you go to your surgery in the last 12 months? Do you have a long term condition e.g. Heart, Diabetes, mental health?.....	24
7.6 What is your experience of getting to the surgery?	26
7.7 What is your experience of access to the surgery?	29
7.8 Have you used the Walk-In Centre at ASDA in the last 12 months?.....	31
7.9 Why did you choose the Walk-In Centre? Please tick all that apply.	31
7.10 What will you do now it is shut?	34
7.11 Do you have any other comments about the Walk-In at ASDA?	36
7.12 Other findings.....	38
8.0 Conclusion.....	38
Questions arising from this piece of work:	39

Recommendations	40
9.0 Appendices	41
Appendix 1 A larger sample of patient comments from Section 7.0	41
7.11 Do you have any other comments about the Walk-In at ASDA?	56
Appendix 2 Patient suggestions.....	63
Appendix 3 Patient stories.....	65

1.0 Executive Summary

A survey was carried out in groups and online between July and October 2017. 313 people participated making over 3,000 comments. A good mix of ages, GP practices, (all but Cradley surgery and Credenhill branch surgery), and geographical spread are represented. The survey is skewed towards female responses (79%) and people with long term conditions (52%).

Registration

66% indicated that their experiences of registering were good or acceptable, 11% indicated issues or difficulties.

Booking an appointment

Experiences were mixed although the majority thought their experience acceptable if 'OK' and 'Good' are added together. However, over a third of survey participants have had bad experiences of booking appointments by telephone and online. Many patients expressed positive experiences of their surgeries, of the staff, of getting appointments, of reasonable adjustments and of the 111 service.

Many patients expressed issues and difficulties experienced when booking an appointment and these included: Not being able to book a GP or named GP and feeling that there is a lack of continuity; Poor customer service - a. Receptionists, b. Doctors and c. others; Online booking difficulties; 111 procedure difficulties; Length of time to get an appointment.

Length of time to get an appointment

Patients had mixed experiences. 58% of patients told us that they were able to get an urgent appointment in 1 or 2 days. For 42% it took more than 2 days.

6% took over a week and 2% said it took them over 2 weeks. This would not be acceptable for a truly urgent appointment.

6% of patients are not able to gain an urgent appointment within a week and yet 30% can get a same day non-urgent appointment.

There were lots of comments about how long it takes to book urgent and non-urgent/routine appointments.

Patients expressed much frustration about: Gaining urgent and non-urgent/routine appointments; Telephone calls including how busy lines are; the timing of calls; the triage system and Reasonable adjustments.

The report summarises patient concerns and a larger representative selection of comments is available in Appendix 1 including mention of some surgeries by name. Comments identifying personnel have been anonymised for the public report but Healthwatch will relay any such specific concerns, where appropriate, to practice managers to consider and act upon.

Because of difficulties accessing appointments, it is apparent that patients are using a range of tactics to be seen in the timescale that they deem reasonable including going to A&E. (See tactics list at the end of section 7.3).

What options do you know are available to you at your surgery?

The intention of this question was to find out if patients were aware of what practitioners and services were available at their surgeries. From the replies it is apparent that there is some confusion about choices and options and patients expressed surprise at options available in different surgeries.

Patients commented particularly about their concerns about telephone consultations.

How often did you go to your surgery in the last 12 months? And do you have a long-term condition?

52% of people said they had a long-term condition and the average number of times that patients went to their surgeries was not greatly different between those with long term conditions and those with no long-term conditions (6 and 4).

What is your experience of getting to the surgery?

37% travel to their surgery by car, 32% on foot, 16% by public transport and 15% by bicycle.

People's experience of getting to the surgery on foot, public transport or by bicycle was Good or OK. 40% felt their experience of public transport was bad often due to lack of a service or frequency especially in some of the rural practices.

People's experience of getting to the surgery by car was mainly good or ok (88%) but, 37% of people's experience of parking is bad.

What is your experience of access to the surgery?

Patients experience of the approach to the surgery, the entry and the facilities are overwhelmingly Good or OK (98%, 96%, 96%). There were a lot of comments about disabled access with some surgeries exemplary and some very difficult for disabled patients and their carers.

Have you used the Walk-In Centre at ASDA in the last 12 months?

71% said that they chose the Walk-In Centre because they could not get an appointment at their surgery, 44% because it was easier/more convenient, 34% wanted a quick appointment and knew it would take a long time at their surgery, 17.7% could not always plan their days to book an appointment because of work/caring responsibilities, 13.6% selected I work in Hereford and can't get to my surgery in the day time and 11.6% selected I work shifts.

Patient comments revealed further details and stories that explained their reasons for choosing the Walk-In Centre and a representative selection can be seen in the report and Appendix 1.

What will you do now it is shut?

Now that the Walk-in is closed patients indicated that 50% would book an appointment with their GP surgery, 38.1% would go to Taurus out of hours hubs, 34.9% would ring 111, 21.6% would go to a pharmacy, and 6% to a minor injuries unit. 39.9% said they'd go to A&E whether it is serious or not, 18.3% say they don't know.

From the comments patients raised questions and issues that are noted in the report that will help services and commissioners to address areas that patients do not understand following the closure of the Walk-In Centre at ASDA. These include how to access out of hours, Taurus, the role of Pharmacies and what to do if unregistered and in need of a quick appointment.

Do you have any other comments about the Walk-In at ASDA?

Patient comments made their views clear about the closure with the majority 67 against the closure and minority 3 in favour of the closure. Patients gave lots of positive comments (46) about the Walk-In and commented on difficulties and issues that they had with the Walk-In (13).

Other findings

The survey also gave us insights into some complex patient stories (Appendix 3). We have anonymised them and will ask services and or commissioners questions about how they support patients facing these scenarios. Issues revealed in patient stories included: Lack of Practitioner/Surgery/Reception clinical expertise, continuity and customer care; Concerns about out of hours services; Concerns about conditions that may not be covered by NHS; Are reasonable adjustments being made?; Lack of clear information; Telephone triage concerns; Accuracy of medical records; Lack of coordination/joint working across health and social care.

In addition, patients made suggestions that are included in Appendix 2.

Conclusion

The report raised the following questions (section 2.0) that Healthwatch Herefordshire will put to commissioners and these give rise to eight recommendations (section 3.0). Healthwatch will include responses from commissioners in the final report.

2.0 Questions arising from this piece of work:

1. How long should patients expect to wait for an urgent appointment, non-urgent appointment and a routine appointment?

2. What do commissioners do to make sure that Herefordshire patients experience equitable access to GP services no matter which practice they join? Including quality and equitable:
 - Appointment availability and choice.
 - Expertise and variety of practitioners.
 - Staff training and good customer service skills.
 - Associated infrastructure e.g. phone systems, online access/ booking.
 - Reasonable adjustments including consideration for carers.
 - Disabled Access.
 - Parking.
 - Surgery facilities.
 - Registration choice

3. How do patients gain the information and knowledge they need to:
 - Understand what is available at their surgery and elsewhere.
 - Decide which service is appropriate (Pharmacy, GP, 111, 999, A&E, Minor injuries).
 - Understand what is not available for example Earwax Micro suction.
 - Decide what is urgent and what is not.
 - Self-help e.g. to prevent earwax build up.
 - Understand rights and reasonable expectations.

3.0 Recommendations

The offer.

1. Act to unify the patient offer to make it equitable across different surgeries and people with different needs, abilities and conditions.
2. Act to make it a standard offer to book follow on appointments at the time of current appointments. If necessary create a bigger window of bookable advanced appointments.
3. Consider commissioning an independent patient experience trip adviser-type platform held independently by Healthwatch Herefordshire to:
 - a) Offer raised commissioner awareness and intelligence about differing patient experience and capacity/resource issues;
 - b) Provide independent feedback and good practice sharing for Medical Practices;
 - c) Offer transparent information and choice to patients;
 - d) Provide impetus and pressure for improvement and change.

Facilities.

4. Improve privacy at surgery receptions (majority) and consulting rooms (King Street).
5. Recommend that named surgeries address disabled access issues specifically mentioned in section 7.7 (Leominster, Hampton Dene, King Street, Wargrave, Aylestone hill).

Information.

6. Require that surgeries offer patients clear information about what services are available including:
 - a) How to access out of hours appointments?
 - b) What Taurus is and how it works?
 - c) What options they have - which they should use and when?
 - d) Where they can go if not registered?
 - e) How to use out of hours pharmacies?
 - f) What is being done to increase number of GP appointments and what is being done to extend hours?
 - g) What pharmacies can prescribe and why you have to go through a GP for some medicines?
7. Require that surgeries offer patients clear self-help and health care decision making guides.

Reasonable adjustments.

8. Give more guidance and resources to GP practices on how they could be making Reasonable Adjustments for patients with additional needs e.g. Autism, Learning Disability, Dementia, Mental Health and for Carers who are supporting patients

who are unable to travel or attend appointments independently. Offer training (e.g. Mental Health awareness), incentives and monitor it. Share good practice.

4.0 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Herefordshire would like to thank the groups and individual members of the public that shared their positive experiences, and their concerns, to create this report.

Thank you to the organisations that enabled us to meet groups that they support.

Thank you also to the volunteers, organisations and staff that shared our online link to gather responses.

5.0 Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are representative of 313 participants with the mix of ages, genders and health user histories described.

The views may not be representative of other Herefordshire GP service users but are authentic independently gathered views.

It is hoped that GP services and Commissioners will consider the views, celebrate and share good practice and respond to patient concerns by finding ways to improve practice where necessary.

6.0 Introduction

The people of Herefordshire chose GP Access as a topic for Healthwatch to explore in 2017/18. As a result, we carried out a survey from July to October. 313 people participated online and from groups visited.

Age

10% under 24

13% 25-34

18% 35-44

18% 45-54

- 18% 55-64
- 20% over 65
- 3% preferred not to answer

Gender

79% Female

19% Male

1% Transgender

1% Preferred not to answer

Location

42% from Hereford City

27% Market towns (9% Ross, 6% Ledbury, 1% Bromyard, 7% Leominster, 4% Kington)

17% Hereford Outskirts

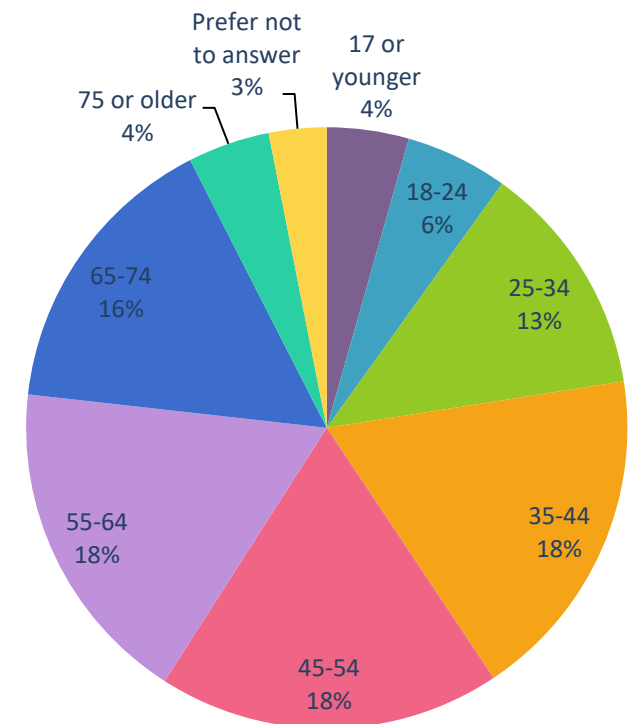
6% Welsh, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire or Shropshire borders

5% Golden Valley

0.3% live out of county but work in county

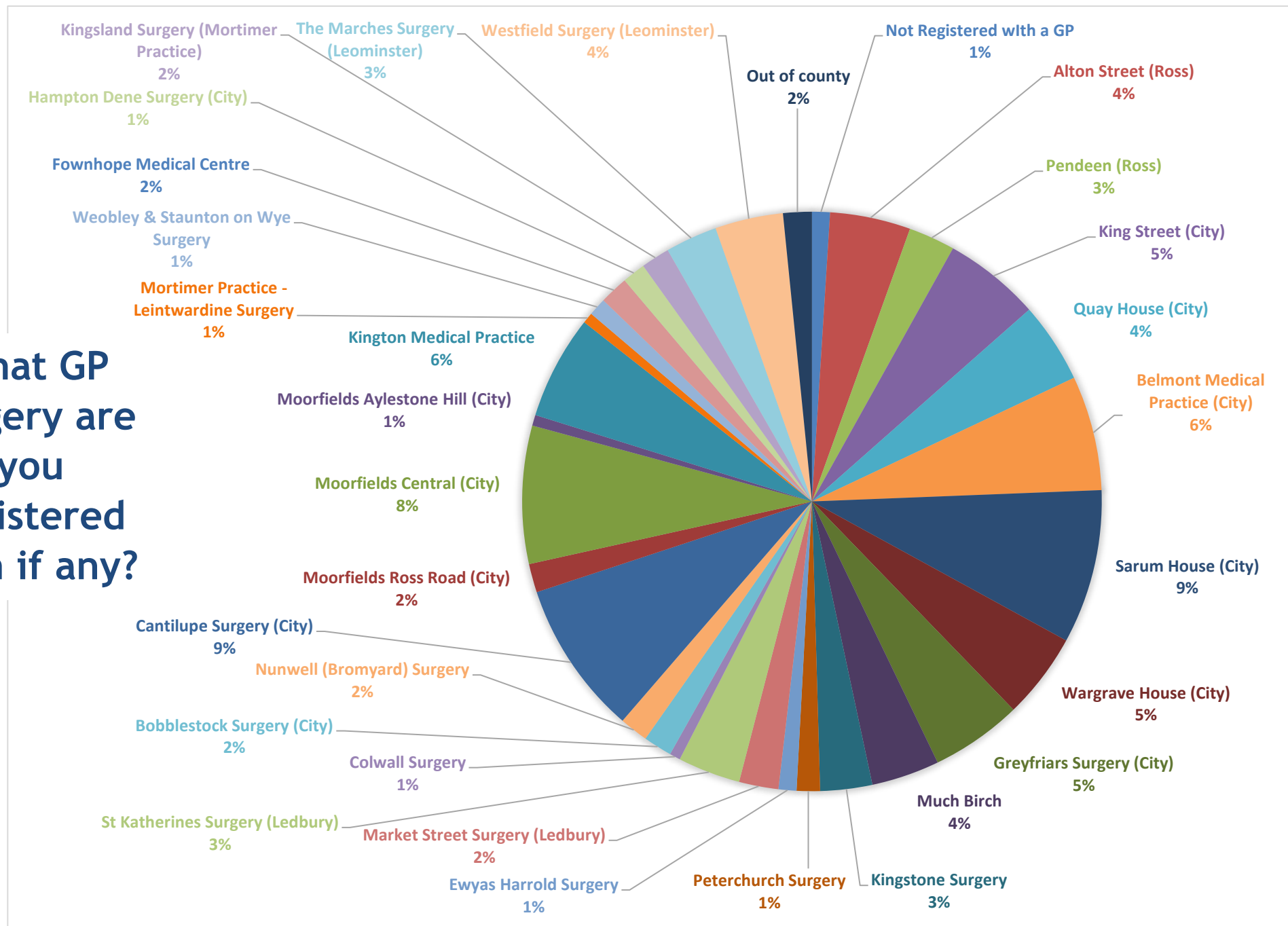
3% Other

What is your age?



All surgeries were represented except Cradley surgery and Credenhill branch surgery.

What GP surgery are you registered with if any?



7.0 What People told us.

As well as answering survey questions people left over 3,000 comments. A representative selection of comments are shown in italics in the report. A number of in depth stories and particular individual issues of serious concern were also raised. These have been anonymised and raised with the relevant body, and appear in Appendix 3.

7.1 What is your experience of registering with a GP in Herefordshire?

Approximately 66% selected the box that indicated their experiences were good or acceptable.

Approximately 11% selected boxes that indicated issues or difficulties.

Approximately 35% could not remember or did not register themselves.

Good or Acceptable	66%	Issues or difficulties	11%	Can't remember/ Other	42%
"Easy"	30.5%	"Difficult"	2.1%	I can't remember/ I did not register myself,	34.7%
"OK"	25.3%	"It took a long time to confirm registration"	1.8%	Other	7%
"It was Quick"	8.1%	"It took a long time for my patient notes to be transferred"	1.4%		
"There was plenty of Choice"	1.8%	"It was ok once I was told how but it was difficult to find out the information"	0.4%		
		"I have had to register further from home than I would have liked to"	0.7%		
		"It was difficult to find a practice that would take me"	1.8%		
		"There was not enough choice"	2.5%		
<i>(Note: As responders could select all that apply, the total is greater than 100%)</i>					

Positive comments about experience of registering for a GP in Herefordshire included:

Of those that could remember and had registered themselves the majority had positive experiences. Many commented that they had been at the same surgery for a long time/since birth.

- *Lovely receptionist. Just filled form seen by head and allocated to new young doctor. Subsequently changed.*
- *Simple enough - literally took pink card and gave reception it was easy and simple. Only saw GP once.*

Difficulties and issues raised about experiences of registering for a GP in Herefordshire included:

Lack of choice.

- *GP practices only taking patients in their catchment area, so stuck with practice local practice in Kington*
- *Persistent refusal to accept my registration, but eventually partially registered. When I last asked, my notes were not with the practice and I have not been informed otherwise.*

Technical/ administration issues, and lack of online option.

- *Have to drive a long way to clinic to pick up form can't register online or at time of appointment. Was registered as temporary and then was on NHS system twice receiving multiple letters.*

Poor customer services.

- *My surgery was awful. I was with them 28 years my family for over 50 years. I moved house and rang them and told them, had a letter 3 days later to say "you are out of our area you will have 21 days to find a new GP Surgery".*
- *Should have been an easy process as I had been at the same surgery prior to going to university but the receptionist was difficult and did not want to know. Refused my ID even though I had taken what was requested.*

Time to transfer notes was longer than expected.

- *Only moving to another surgery, (in Hereford), but it still took 2 months for notes to transfer over 30 years ago!*

Situation regarding people resident elsewhere for work or studies.

- *Tried to register for my son who is home from university and couldn't.*

7.2 What is your experience of booking an appointment?

In this survey:

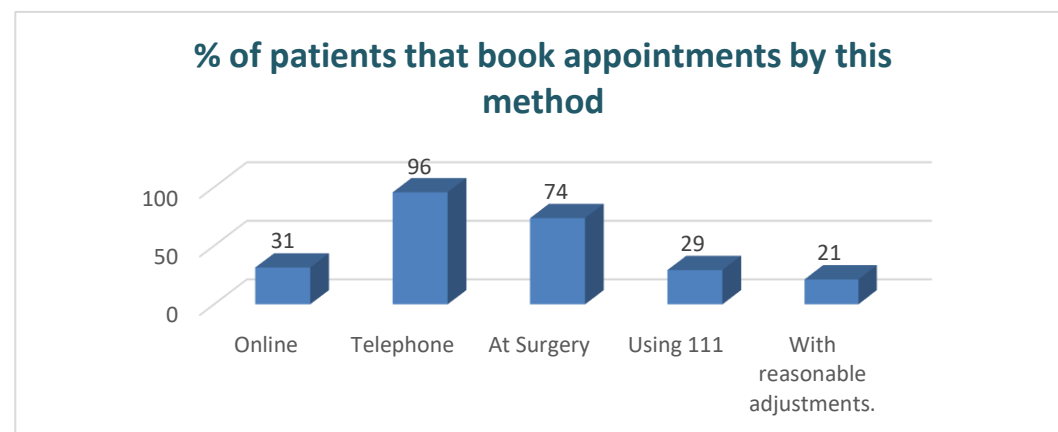
96% of patients had experienced booking appointments by telephone and

74% by visiting the surgery.

31% have booked online,

29% have experience of using 111 and

21% have experience of booking appointments with reasonable adjustments.



What is your experience of booking an appointment?

The table below shows that experiences were mixed although the majority thought their experience acceptable if 'OK' and 'Good' are added together. However, over a third of survey participants have had bad experiences of booking appointments by telephone and online.

	Good	OK	(Good or OK)	Bad
Telephone	31%	31%	(62%)	38%
At Surgery	34%	40%	(74%)	26%
Online	37%	27%	(64%)	36%
111	21%	45%	(56%)	34%

Positive experiences of booking an appointment.

Many patients expressed positive experiences of their surgeries, of the staff, of getting appointments, of reasonable adjustments and of the 111 service. **Positive experiences of:**

Surgeries

- *It is brilliant and should be used as a shining example of how good GP practices can be when well and efficiently managed. Helpful friendly receptionists and brilliant GP's.*
- *This is a great rural practice where you receive very personalized care. The staff know the community they serve and go out of their way to support their users.*

Of the staff

- *In spite of comments in press have always found receptionists polite and helpful*
- *Staff are welcoming and a useful source of information.*
- *They are very helpful and supportive.*

Of getting appointments.

- *I usually ring for an appointment. They only seem to have one week away so I end up having a phone consultation.*
- *Really helpful on phone. Have always offered appointment in totally reasonable timescale. I have never had to wait longer than I am happy with and have always been offered same day appointment when needed.*
- *Do repeat prescriptions online works well.*
- *Always been fairly simple, fairly quick service making appointment at the surgery.*
- *When I needed to access a GP very urgently (receptionist identified urgency) GP was available within 24 hours. GP identified problem, made immediate hospital referral, and I am in the system for cancer treatment. Thank you, Kington surgery.*

Of reasonable adjustments:

- *I have been to the surgery several times with my profoundly disabled daughter who always receives superb care from GP's who take the time to listen.*

Of the 111 service.

- *I had a good experience of 111. They listened made an appointment at hospital made appointment next day and reassured me that it was not urgent, so I had a good night's sleep.*

Issues and difficulties raised about booking an appointment.

Many patients expressed issues and difficulties experienced when booking an appointment and these included:

1. Not being able to book a GP or named GP and feeling that there is a lack of continuity.
2. Poor customer service - a. Receptionists, b. Doctors and c. others.
3. Online booking difficulties.
4. 111 procedure difficulties
5. Length of time to get an appointment.

Not being able to book a GP or named GP and feeling that there is a lack of continuity.

- *For one problem I had to see 3 different GPs there was no continuity because of availability of time slots and I was running out of tablets.*
- *To go to see my doctor 6 week wait but solved problem. The nurse practitioner couldn't solve problem.*

Poor customer service.

Receptionists.

- *I was left on hold for 10 mins after they initially answered and was asked to hold. I gave up in the end.*
- *The receptionist treats you like you're an inconvenience I don't go to the doctors often but when I do use the doctors I'm ill.*
- *If my Dr. tells me to call back in a week for a follow up appointment, it's not for the receptionist to question that.*
- *I had no idea I could book online. The receptionists do not tell you how to go about getting a non-urgent appointment.*

Doctors.

- *Doctors have never listened, almost impossible to get appointments.*
- *They then don't look at you.*
- *I feel I can't go unless I'm terribly ill. One Dr said I was drunk (I'd had a stroke). The way they have treated me, the attitude. Don't feel listened to.*

Other.

- *Surgery would benefit from mental health awareness training.*
- *I trust that my initial experience was the exception, but a better understanding of policy and procedures would have been welcome.*

Online booking difficulties.

- *Online system is not iPad or mobile friendly.*

Procedure difficulties with 111:

a) Too many Questions.

- *Why do you have to go through the whole list -why can't they listen to person on phone? What is the point in having education to spot a stroke then not listening to your observations and going quicker?*
- *They have a questionnaire to go through it is very frustrating.*

b) Have to speak to the patient.

- *My sister was ill had tumors they insisted on talking to her. She was in pain. I called 999.*

c) Confusion of 111 with 999.

- *111: I waited 6 hours for a doctor. In the end I took my wife to hospital.*
- *They always err on side of caution so end up going to A&E anyway. Should have just gone.*
- *Better off calling 999.*

d) Lack of expertise of operator.

- *Minimal experience, confusing.*
- *Disgusting. 111 - Had stroke, speech difficulties and 111 do not accommodate for this.*

e) Waiting for action/ call back.

- *Talk to 111 then nurse or doctor then get ambulance. It was a stroke we could tell they still go through everything...*
- *They said they'd send a doctor - we waited all day - didn't come. 999 did come.*

7.3 Length of time to get appointment.

The table below shows that patients had mixed experiences. 58% of patients told us that they were able to get an urgent appointment in 1 or 2 days. For 42% it took more than 2 days with 6% taking over a week and 2% saying it took them over 2 weeks. This is clearly not acceptable for a truly urgent appointment. We do not know what patients term urgent and whether they are refusing appointments with alternative GP's/ practitioners. However, we might have expected to see a greater difference between the figures for Urgent and Non-urgent waiting times. There appears to be a disparity between 6% of patients not being able to gain an urgent appointment within a week and 30% who can get a same day non-urgent appointment? It is also interesting to note that around a fifth of patients have no idea how long it takes to book an urgent appointment as they have never experienced it.

Type of appointment	Urgent	Non-Urgent	Routine
Same Day	46%	30%	28%
Next Day	12%	6%	2%
Within a week	15%	21%	17%
Within two weeks	4%	28%	31%
Longer than two weeks	2%	30%	28%
Don't Know/Never Experienced	21%	12%	21%

There were lots of comments about how long it takes to book urgent and non-urgent/routine appointments.

A representative selection of comments is in Appendix 1 including mention of some surgeries by name.

Comments are summarized below.

Urgent.

- Patients expressed frustration about how difficult it was to get a same day urgent appointment especially if unable to ring first thing.
- Some said Taurus appointments were not offered by GP receptionists.
- One said promise of a call back never happened.
- Taurus appointments can be difficult to access without transport.
- Patients felt that it was unreasonable to have to wait when in great pain. Some went elsewhere - Walk-In (when open in the past), A&E.
- Most concerning, a few patients said that the delay had led to hospital admission or preventable worsening of conditions.

Non-urgent/routine.

Although patients recognized that their need was not urgent patients were:

- Extremely frustrated at how long it could take to get a non-urgent appointment, the limited availability of appointments and choice of time and practitioner
- Concerned that they could not book appointments at times that were helpful to them because of work, being dependent on others for transport, or to treat a condition before it worsened.
- Not happy that it was difficult to get a non-urgent appointment with Taurus or other out of hours provision at weekends and evenings.
- Puzzled as to why appointments could not be easily booked ahead for routine appointments and seemed dependent on limited forward rotas.
- Annoyed when appointments were changed especially at short notice.

Telephone.

Patients expressed a lot of frustration around make appointments by telephone. There were three main areas of concern:

a. Busy.

Patients felt:

- The lines were too busy, engaged all the time. Phone was not answered.

- People calling many times, (up to 45 times in one case), before getting through.
- All appointments gone too quickly after 8.00, (one person said by 8.03).
- The technology was causing problems e.g. people cut off because receptionist said they could not hear them, being engaged for long periods and not put in queues.
- People said it felt like pot luck as to whether you would get through.
- Takes too long.
- Being put on hold at high cost.

b. Timing.

Patients concerns were:

- Having to call at 8 which was not possible with work commitments.
- Once at appointment having to wait unknown amount of time and often a long time.
- Calling for prescriptions at a fixed time was difficult.

c. Triage system.

Patients with concerns about telephone triage said:

- Every time they'd had one they had had to come in so it felt like a waste of their time.
- It was important for doctor to physically see them to properly diagnose them.
- Telephone ring back does not offer privacy, flexibility nor planning and might be fine for simple appointment but not for long term conditions.

Reasonable adjustments.

Patient concerns were:

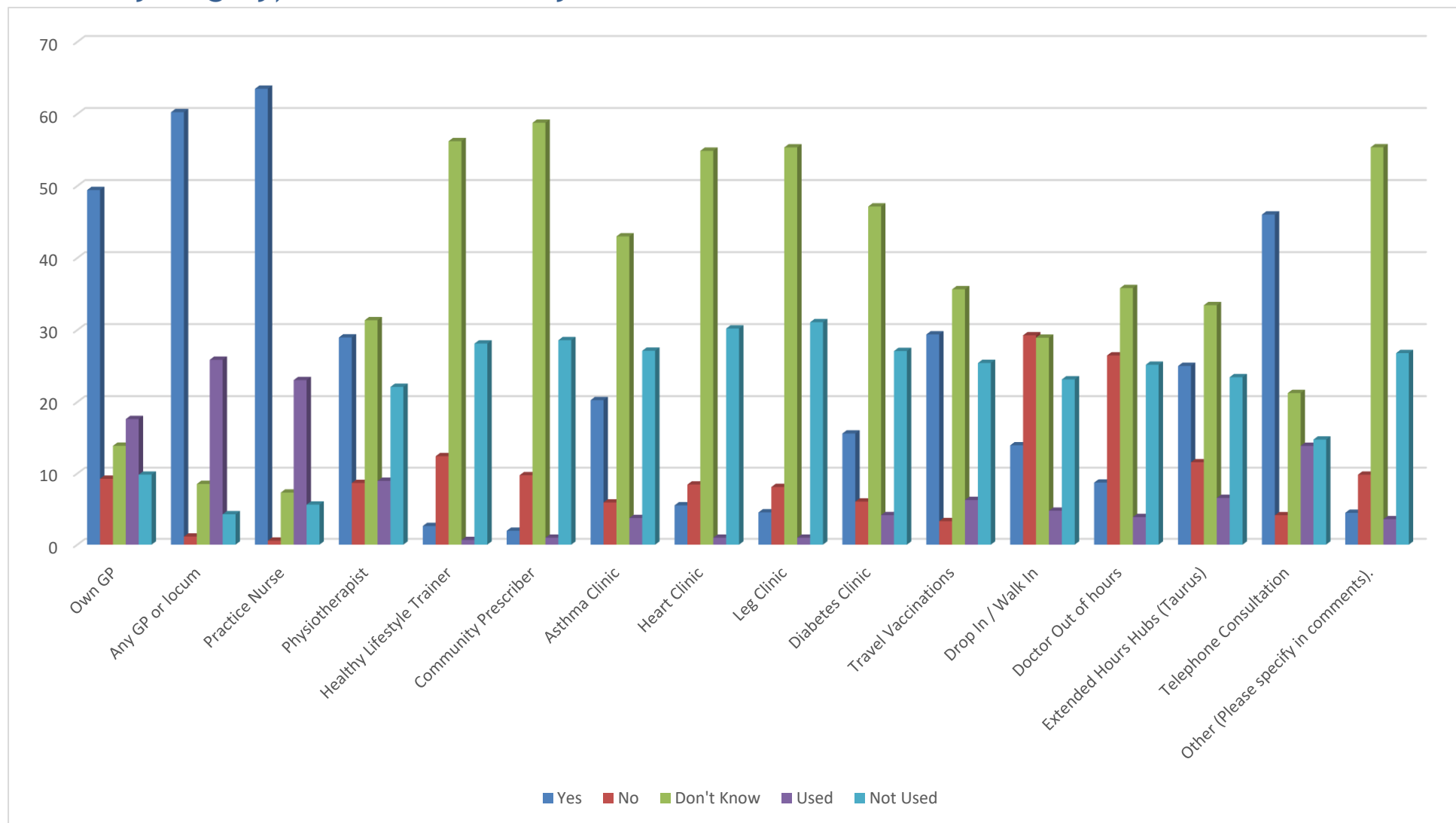
- Continuity of care is important for patients with particular conditions or needs e.g. practitioners with specialisms or an established relationship.
- Carers need appointments to be grouped where possible and consideration of their commitments.
- Patients that depend on others for transport need to be able to book appointments ahead at times convenient to their driver/ carer or public transport availability.

Patient tactics.

The survey indicates that patients have developed a range of tactics to try to gain appointments, that they feel that they need, in a time frame that is reasonable and convenient to them and to overcome frustration including:

- Going in to surgery.
- Using multiple phones and mobiles to all branches available.
- Going to minor injuries units.
- Going to A&E.
- Registering at relatives' addresses if closest surgery is more difficult to get appointments.
- Resorting to private services.
- Make appointments ahead and cancel if not needed.

7.4 What options do you know are available to you at your surgery? (Not all will be available at every surgery). And which have you used?



What options do you know are available to you at your surgery? (Not all will be available at every surgery). And which have you used?

The intention of this question was to find out if patients were aware of what practitioners and services were available at their surgeries.

A representative selection of comments is in Appendix 1 including mention of some surgeries by name.

From the replies it is apparent that:

- Most patients know about GP's, Nurse Practitioners and telephone consultation.
- Many patients who use their surgery a lot know about specialist services available that they or people they know use.
- There is some confusion about choices and options, patients felt that options were not clear.
- And patients expressed surprise at options available in different surgeries.

Telephone Consultation.

Patients commented particularly about telephone consultations saying their concerns are:

- It can be difficult waiting to be called back - uncertainty, inconvenient.
- Sometimes they don't call back.
- It can be very short and unfeeling.
- Does not resolve issue / you often need to go in anyway.
- Phone calls are difficult for me.
- Depends on condition are calling for.

On the positive side some patients said telephone consultation can be useful.

7.5 How often did you go to your surgery in the last 12 months? Do you have a long term condition e.g. Heart, Diabetes, mental health?

52% of people said yes they had a long term condition which shows that our sample is skewed towards people with longer term conditions. The average number of times that patients went to their surgeries was not greatly different between those with long term conditions and those with no long-term conditions.

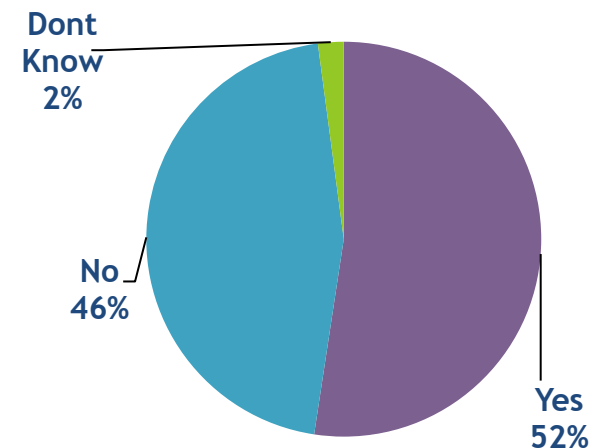
Averages:

Average number of times 153 patients with a long-term condition went to their surgery in the last 12 months = 6

Average number of times 131 patients with no long-term conditions went to their surgery in the last 12 months = 4

Many patients with long term conditions are going to the surgery only a few times during the year.

Do you have a long term condition e.g. Heart, Diabetes, and mental health?



Number of times 153 patients with a long term condition went to their surgery in the last 12 months.



This could be for a number of reasons for example:

- They have a diagnosis and medication, self-manage their condition well and do not need to go to the surgery regularly.
- They know how to self-manage their condition without surgery support.
- They do not wish to go to the surgery and/ or are not aware of support available for their condition.
- There is no support available for their condition.

Many older patients expressed concern about resources in the NHS and don't like to bother the surgery with conditions they consider "just part of getting older". It is of concern if patients are suffering in silence when there are treatments or therapies that can help them or ease pain and discomfort.

Alternatively, it is good if patients are informed, understand their conditions and are self-managing happily.

From visiting groups, it was apparent that all of the situations above exist but the extent of each across a Herefordshire population or even within this sample is not clear from the results and comments.

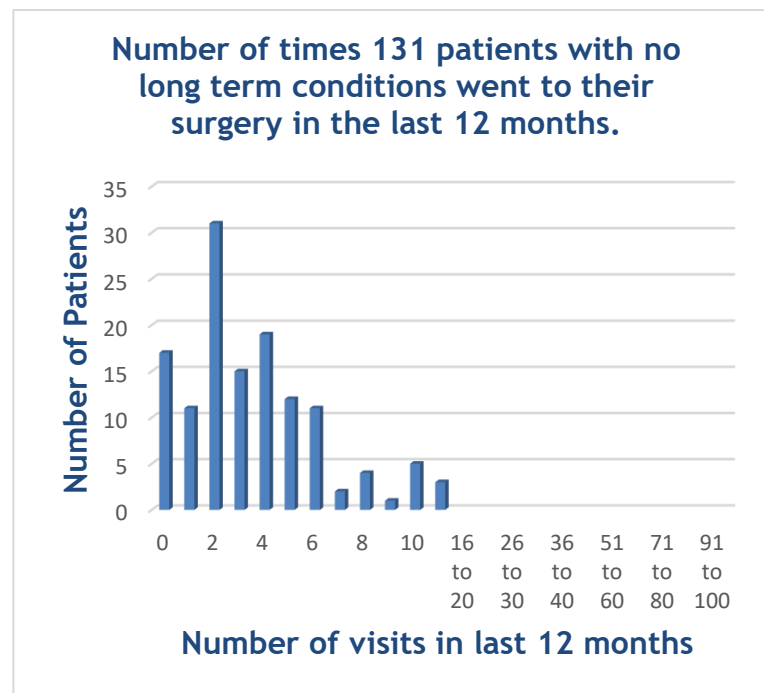
The average figure for patients with no long-term conditions visiting their GP in the last year is almost as high as for those with a long-term condition. This could be for many reasons for example:

- The raised frequency of appointments necessitated by patients trying to get a diagnosis - One such had visited over 50 times.
- Patients receiving an unusually high number of treatments due to an accident or condition this year - broken limbs and pregnancies were most frequent among these.
- Patients may have health anxiety and so don't class themselves as having a long-term condition, but this will increase the number of appointments that they make.

A number of patients noted the frustrations of trying to get a diagnosis especially when visiting different practitioners. The concern is that some are giving up and perhaps losing potential advantages of early diagnosis and access to support/information. Consistency is important to patients in this situation.

In each case, patients expressed the concern that they may be noted as hypochondriacs on medical notes or put off from seeing their GP. Patients believe that they are following publicised public health advice that is supposed to help patients and doctors spot early symptoms of serious conditions.

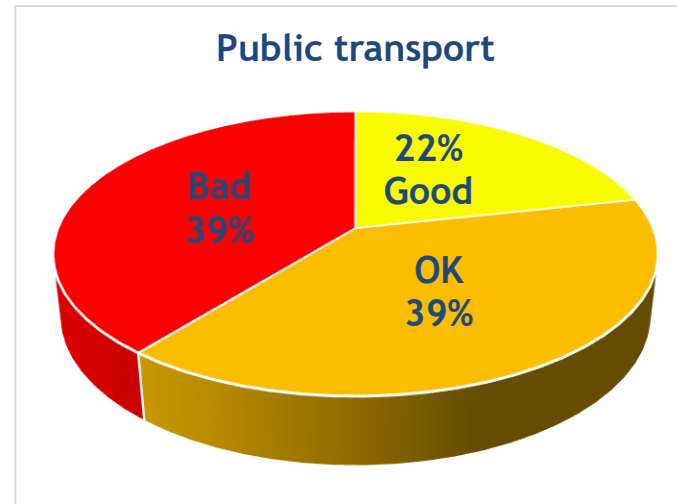
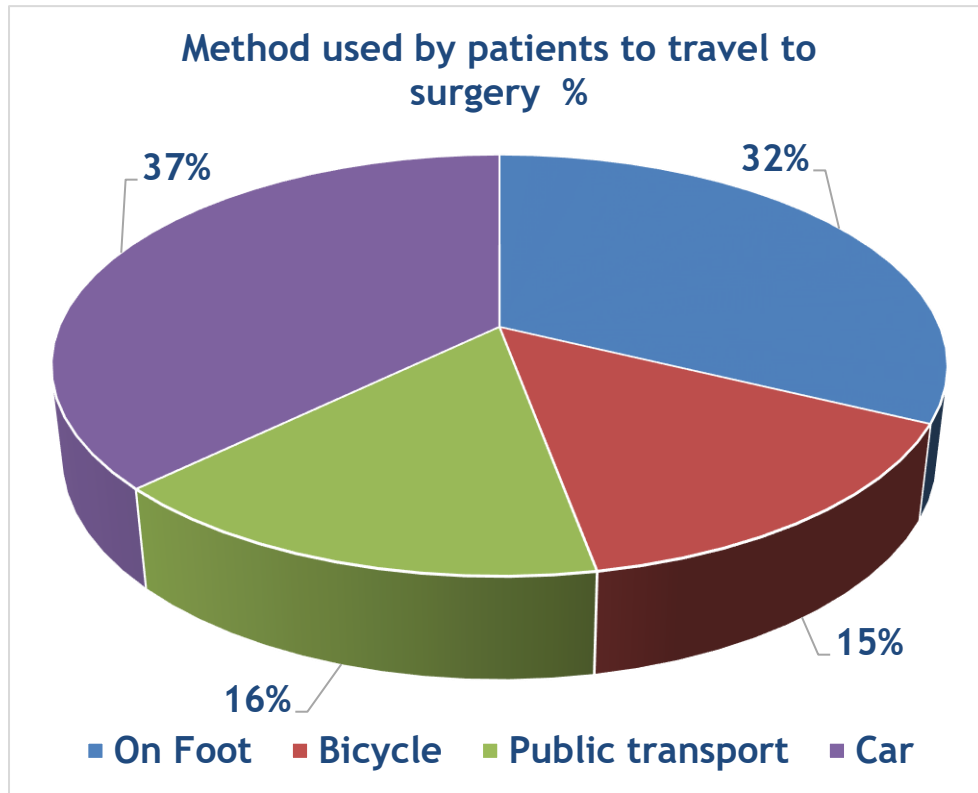
A recent national radio report noted that doctors often don't diagnose health anxiety. It stated that CBT is an extremely effective treatment for this condition and can offer great relief to the distress caused to the patient that has this condition.



7.6 What is your experience of getting to the surgery?

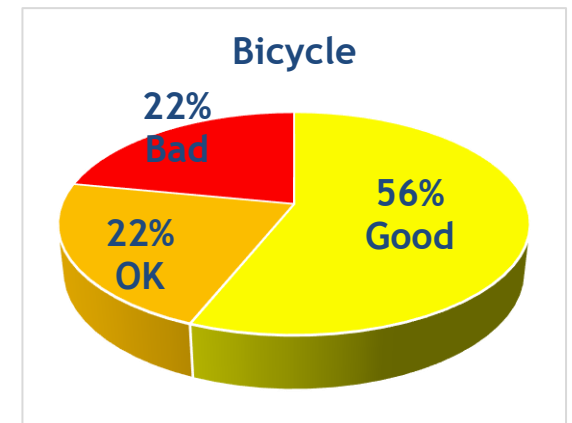
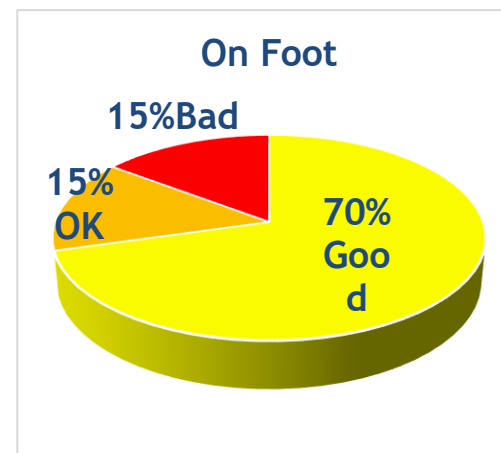
37% travel to their surgery by car, 32% on foot, 16% by public transport and 15% by bicycle.

People's experience of getting to the surgery on foot, public transport or by bicycle was mostly Good or OK.

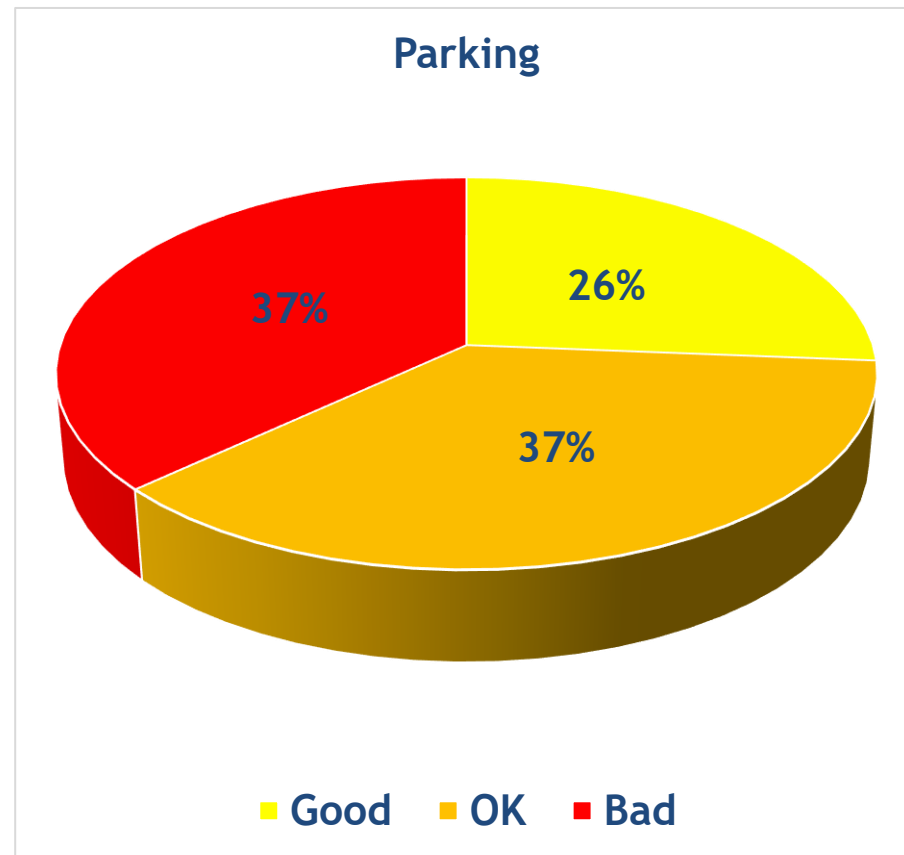
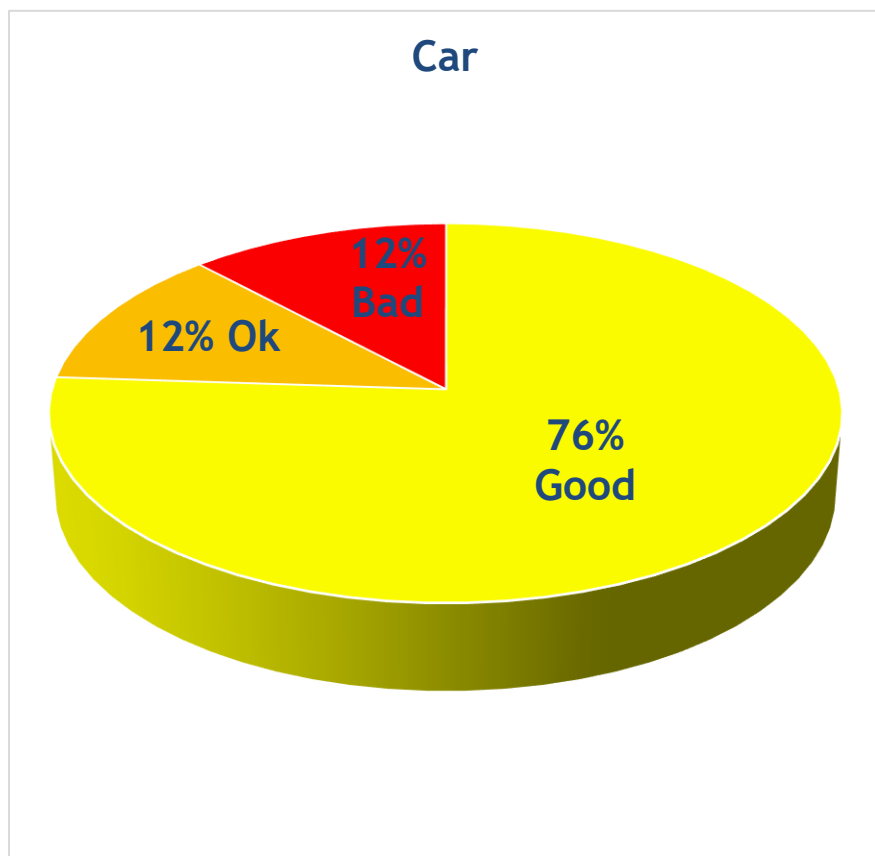


40% felt their experience of public transport was bad.

From comments much of this was due to lack of a service or frequency especially in some of the rural practices.



People's experience of getting to the surgery by car was mainly (88%) good or ok but, parking is 63% good or OK. 37% of people's experience of parking is bad and this was reflected in their comments.



What is your experience of getting to the surgery? - Comments.

A representative selection of comments is in Appendix 1 including mention of some surgeries by name.

The main points patients made about transport were:

- Difficulties getting to their surgery or a different branch or clinic because of not being able to walk (too far), use public transport, or afford a taxi.
- Not having enough notice to find someone to transport them (neighbour, carer, support worker) or to book community wheels.
- There are no public transport options (especially in rural areas).
- Inadequate cycle paths e.g. Holme Lacy Road.

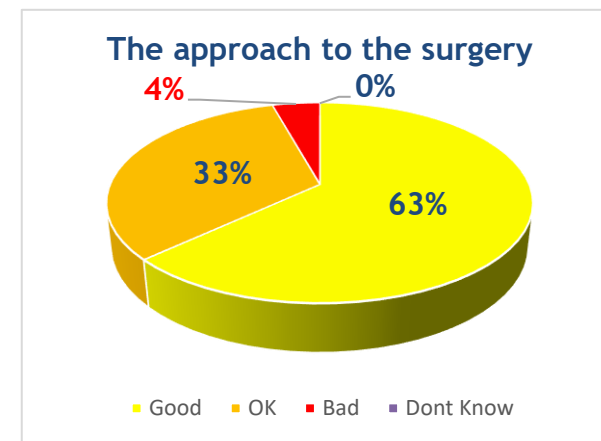
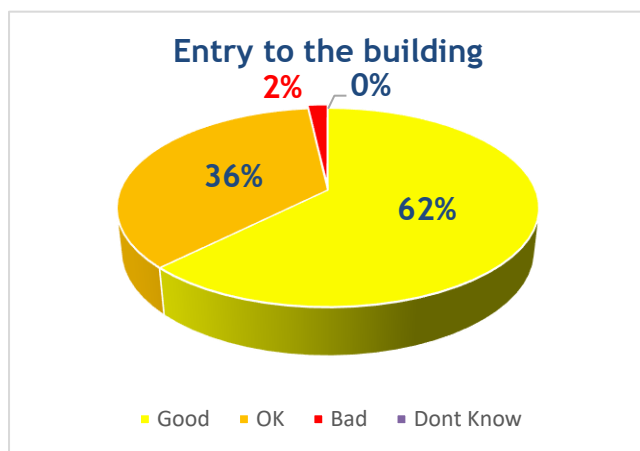
Parking.

The main points patients made about parking were that:

- Some surgeries have very good parking, many surgeries have poor or no parking.
- Some parking spaces are too small, especially when you have children.
- Parking can be difficult even with a blue badge, in other surgeries a blue badge helps.
- Parking charges are not liked, and it can be awkward remembering to bring change.

7.7 What is your experience of access to the surgery?

Patients experience of the approach to the surgery, the entry and the facilities are overwhelmingly Good or OK (98%, 96%, 96%).



A representative selection of comments is in Appendix 1 including mention of some surgeries by name. There were a lot of comments in particular about disabled access.

What patients praised about disabled access:

- Purpose built surgeries.
- Doors - with electronic or specially adapted features or double doors.
- Ramps with easy degree of slope.
- Ground floor access to consulting rooms.
- Accessible entrances with good wheelchair access and room to maneuver.

What patients had concerns about disabled access:

- Unclear signage for partially sighted.
- Toilets that are not ideal for disabled access or baby changing (when there are long waits).
- Heavy doors of limited width. Sets of doors.
- Awkward parking bay angles for disabled parking bays.

- Narrow routes that make wheelchair access difficult both externally and internally.
- Upstairs consulting rooms up steep stairs. Lack of lifts.
- Tannoy system difficult to hear.
- Steps, lack of dropped curbs and steep ramps.
- Insufficient number of disabled parking spaces.
- Difficult pathways, pavements and routes to the surgery from further afield - through town, from bus stop/ drop off points.

What patients praised about facilities:

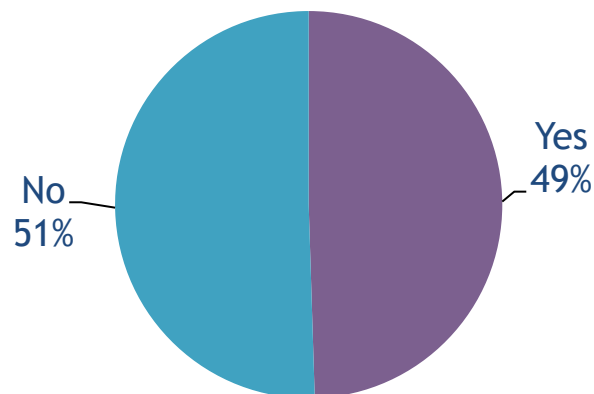
- Spacious/ up market/ tailor-made.
- Clean and comfortable waiting areas.
- Good toilet facilities.

What patients had concerns about facilities:

- Toilets - Opening directly into waiting area/ locked and have to ask for key/ confusing to find/ not clean.
- Lack of confidentiality - At reception/Can hear consultations from waiting room.
- Need for modernization/ looking in need of decoration.
- Uncomfortable upright seating.
- Too much space and not enough staff.
- No water available when you are waiting a long time.
- Not well signposted.

7.8 Have you used the Walk-In Centre at ASDA in the last 12 months?

49% had used the Walk-In Centre at ASDA in the last 12 months.



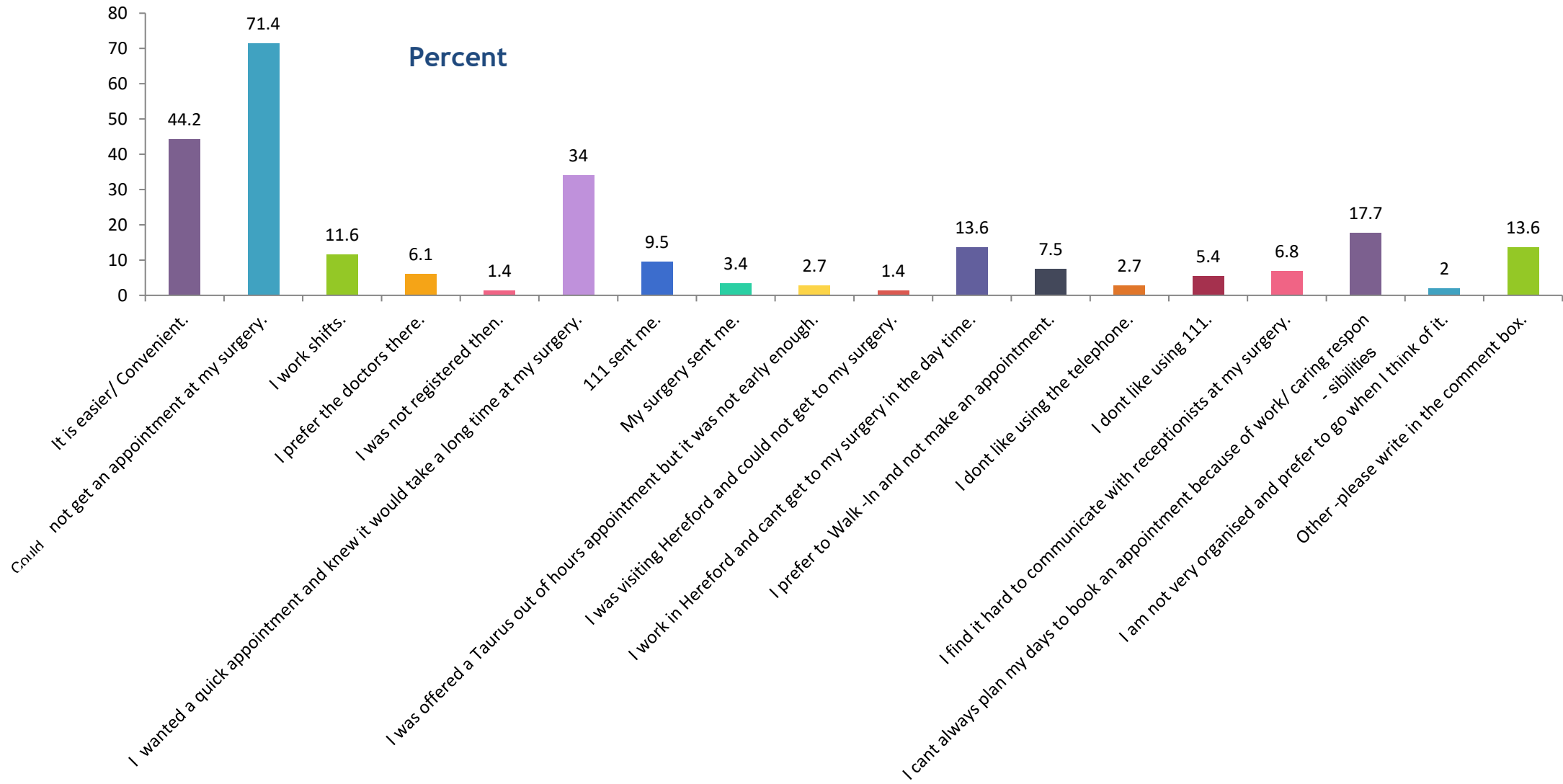
7.9 Why did you choose the Walk-In Centre? Please tick all that apply.

There were many reasons why patients chose the Walk-In Centre:

- 71% said that they chose the Walk-In Centre because they could not get an appointment at their surgery.
- 44% because it was easier/ more convenient.
- 34% I wanted a quick appointment and I knew it would take a long time at my surgery.
- 17.7% I can't always plan my days to book an appointment because of work/caring responsibilities.
- 13.6% selected I work in Hereford and can't get to my surgery in the day time
- 11.6% selected I work shifts.

The following chart highlights other reasons below 10%.

Why did you choose the Walk-In Centre? Please tick all that apply.



Why did you choose the Walk-In Centre?

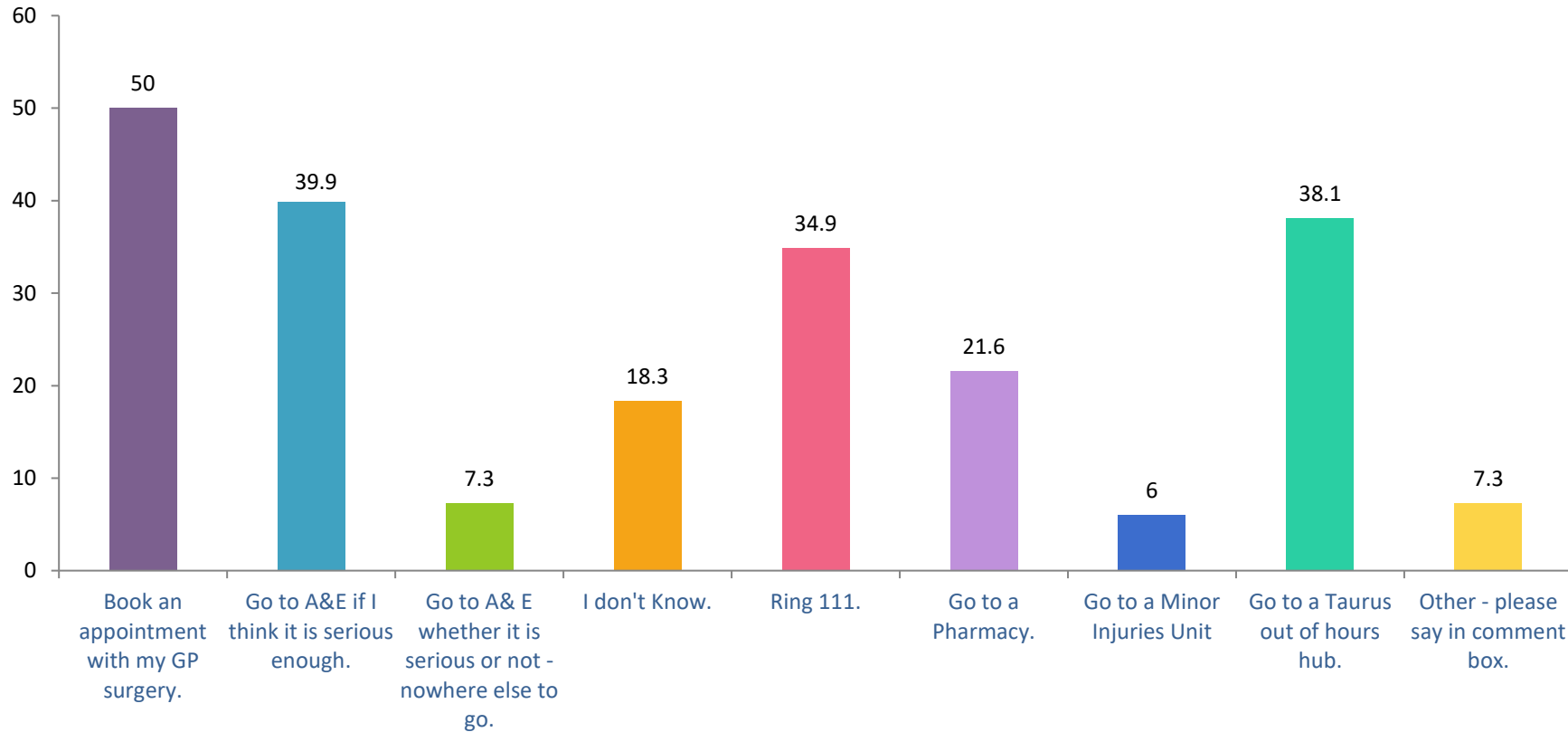
Patient comments revealed further details and stories that explained their reasons for choosing the Walk-In Centre and a representative selection can be seen in Appendix 1. The comments divided into eight main areas:

- **Convenient/ quick** - Patients commented that they were able to get a quick appointment *without any fuss*, and it was very convenient.
- **Out of registered GP surgery hours** - Patients commented that they used the walk in because their surgery was shut or on a weekend or evening. On these occasions it was a *Godsend*.
- **Avoiding 111** - Patients found it easier to go to the Walk-In than access 111.
- **Couldn't get appointment** - Patients commented that they could not get an appointment at their surgery or with Taurus but wanted an urgent appointment.
 - *Chronic pain - couldn't get to see my own GP and couldn't cope, they wouldn't give me urgent app. Every time used was for chronic pain and no GP app.*
- **Expertise, specialist equipment** - Patients comments revealed that some patients were either sent or went of their own volition because the Walk-In had equipment or expertise not available at their surgery. Some patients rated the doctors over their own, preferred them or felt they gained a diagnosis e.g.
 - *Chemist sent me as blood pressure very high,*
 - *111 told me to go as Kington did not have heart monitoring equipment.*
 - *Examined you for what is wrong and diagnose. Very good and thorough.*
 - *I could park there, obliging staff, listened to me, called ambulance, helpful. Treated me like I knew my own body.*
- **Accessible/fits with work commitments** - Patients commented that the Walk-In was easier to use to fit with work and school commitments, was easier to access without a car, more accessible to residents south of the river and people who are profoundly deaf and unable to use a phone.
- **Not registered** - Patient comments flagged up the issue of students home from college and no longer registered locally not being able to get appointments at their previous surgery.
- **Considerate about not going to A&E unnecessarily** - Patients comments indicated that issues were urgent but they were being careful not to use A&E unnecessarily. Some ended up in A&E none -the -less.

7.10 What will you do now it is shut? (Please tick all that apply).

Now that the Walk-in is closed patients indicated that 50% would book an appointment with their GP surgery, 38.1% would go to Taurus out of hours hub, 34.9% would ring 111, 21.6% to a pharmacy, and 6% to a minor injuries unit. Worryingly 39.9% said they'd go to A&E whether it is serious or not, 18.3% say they don't know.

Percent



What will you do now it is shut?

Patient comments revealed further details and stories that explained what they would do now it is shut and how they felt about the Walk-In Centre and a representative selection can be seen in Appendix 1. The comments divided into 10 main areas:

Ignore health problem/ suffer/ avoid going anywhere

- *9 times out of ten, ignore it. Don't know suffer.*

Accessibility issues

- *999 111 - if I could have text phone or something as I have speech impediment.*

Wait for GP appointment

- *I'll have to wait weeks to be seen when I need treatment within days. Also it'll be left until it's really bad hoping it will get better.*
- *If I can't get out of hours I will remain in pain until I can get an appointment*

Community hospitals/ Minor Injuries Unit

- *Can go to Leominster hospital I think... I would have used the local MIU if it had been open at the time.*

A&E

- *I had to attend A+E this week due to my 1 year old son falling and hitting his head. If the walk in was open I would have attended there instead*

Taurus/ Go elsewhere

- *Tried to use Taurus twice since ASDA walk in closure and couldn't get an appointment until 8pm for a child even though I called at 9am.*

Nothing

- *Can't do anything...*

Consider or find out about other options

- *Depends what the issue is. I am informed on what the options are but not confident that I'll always get what I should from all the alternatives*

Ring 111

- *If you ring 111 they always send you to A&E anyway if no appointments which is stupid!*

Self -help

- *I am a health care professional - GP or AE for true emergency. Otherwise treat and look after myself.*

From the comments patients raised questions and issues. Patients don't understand:

- How to access out of hours appointments?
- What Taurus is and how it works?
- What options they have - which they should use and when?
- Where they can go if not registered?
- Negative media attention about GP practices. A feeling that this needs to be countered to encourage people to book through their GP's?
- How to use out of hours pharmacies?
- If it is closed what is being done to increase number of GP appointments and what is being done to extend hours?
- What pharmacies can prescribe and why you have to go through a GP for some medicines? *Went to pharmacy, pharmacist couldn't give me simple facial cream without a prescription, took 3 weeks to get the appointment with GP just to get prescription for this! Extremely backward.*

7.11 Do you have any other comments about the Walk-In at ASDA?

Patient comments made their views clear about the closure with the majority 67 against the closure and minority 3 in favour of the closure.

Reasons given against the closure included:

- Many comments expressing general unhappiness as it was used a lot and valued, was easily accessible with free parking, *disgusting, shame, disgrace. Convenience should be an offer from the NHS.*
- Longer waits in A&E/ Minor injuries units and the view that A&E wont cope especially this winter.
- Lack of appointments at GP surgeries, *nightmare.*
- Patients who said it had saved theirs or their relatives lives.
- Lack of advice at pharmacies.
- A barrier for people with disadvantages including hearing and speech issues, young people (sexual health), people unregistered, people lacking transport.
- Petition ignored.
- A view that it is a money cutting exercise. *It's a penny-pinching move. Our emergency services which are true walk-ins are something that makes me proud to be British.*
- *Necessary for south of river residents.*

Reasons given in favour of closure included:

- Don't have medical records.
- Waste of money.
- Looking forward to Moorfields using premises.

Patients gave lots of positive comments (46) about the Walk-In and commented on difficulties and issues that they had with the Walk-In (13).

Positive:

- *Always found the doctors at ASDA listened well and I never felt rushed in an appointment (which I have, on occasion, at my own GP).*
- *It was a really useful service in the case of minor health emergencies. Also currently I need regular wound dressings and would have used it for out of hour's service. Now I have to drive much further (uncomfortable) or wait for district nurses who don't always turn up due to too many people requiring their services.*
- *It was so handy for out of hours particularly if you have children and they get poorly over the weekend. Particularly things such as ear infections which are painful but not an emergency, I wouldn't want to go to A&E with that but equally wouldn't want my child to be in pain all weekend.*
- *Whenever I used the drop in centre it felt like they cared more and really listened unlike my surgery who prefer a telephone consultation.*
- *They were wonderful, saved my life twice.*

Issues or difficulties in comments about Walk-In Centre

- *It was not very clean and the time kept waiting far too long plus the medics seen did not have access to your patient notes*
- *Having worked there, it was a totally abused service. I am a nurse practitioner.*
- *Unsafe as no access to my records*
- *Had to drive 15 miles and was an emergency, when my surgery is 4 miles away.*

7.12 Other findings

The survey also gave us insights into some complex patient stories. We have anonymised them and will ask services and or commissioners questions about how they support patients facing these scenarios. **Appendix 3.** Issues revealed in patient stories included:

- Lack of Practitioner/Surgery/Reception clinical expertise, continuity and customer care.
- Concerns about out of hours services.
- Concerns about conditions that may not be covered by NHS.
- Are reasonable adjustments being made?
- Lack of clear information.
- Telephone triage concerns.
- Accuracy of medical records.
- Lack of coordination/joint working across health and social care.
-

Patients made suggestions that are in **Appendix 1.**

8.0 Conclusion

The report raised the following questions that Healthwatch Herefordshire will put to commissioners and these give rise to three interim recommendations.

Questions arising from this piece of work:

1. How long should patients expect to wait for an urgent appointment, non-urgent appointment and a routine appointment?

2. What do commissioners do to make sure that Herefordshire patients experience equitable access to GP services no matter which practice they join? Including quality and equitable:
 - Appointment availability and choice.
 - Expertise and variety of practitioners.
 - Staff training and good customer service skills.
 - Associated infrastructure e.g. phone systems, online access/ booking.
 - Reasonable adjustments including consideration for carers.
 - Disabled Access.
 - Parking.
 - Surgery facilities.
 - Registration choice

3. How do patients gain the information and knowledge they need to:
 - Understand what is available.
 - Decide which service is appropriate (Pharmacy, GP, 111, 999, A&E, Minor injuries).
 - Understand what is not available e.g. Earwax removal and Micro suction.
 - Decide what is urgent and what is not.
 - Self-help e.g. to prevent earwax build up.
 - Understand rights and reasonable expectations.

Recommendations

The offer.

9. Act to unify the patient offer to make it equitable across different surgeries and people with different needs, abilities and conditions.
10. Act to make it a standard offer to book follow on appointments at the time of current appointments. If necessary create a bigger window of bookable advanced appointments.
11. Consider commissioning an independent patient experience trip adviser-type platform held independently by Healthwatch Herefordshire to:
 - e) Offer raised commissioner awareness and intelligence about differing patient experience and capacity/resource issues;
 - f) Provide independent feedback and good practice sharing for Medical Practices;
 - g) Offer transparent information and choice to patients;
 - h) Provide impetus and pressure for improvement and change.

Facilities.

12. Improve privacy at surgery receptions (majority) and consulting rooms (King Street).
13. Recommend that named surgeries address disabled access issues specifically mentioned in section 7.7 (Leominster, Hampton Dene, King Street, Wargrave, Aylestone hill).

Information.

14. Require that surgeries offer patients clear information about what services are available including:
 - h) How to access out of hours appointments?
 - i) What Taurus is and how it works?
 - j) What options they have - which they should use and when?
 - k) Where they can go if not registered?
 - l) How to use out of hours pharmacies?
 - m) What is being done to increase number of GP appointments and what is being done to extend hours?
 - n) What pharmacies can prescribe and why you have to go through a GP for some medicines?
15. Require that surgeries offer patients clear self-help and health care decision making guides.

Reasonable adjustments.

16. Give more guidance and resources to GP practices on how they could be making Reasonable Adjustments for patients with additional needs e.g. Autism, Learning Disability, Dementia, Mental Health and for Carers. Offer training (e.g. Mental Health awareness), incentives and monitor it. Share good practice.

9.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 A larger sample of patient comments from Section 7.0

7.1 What is your experience of registering for a GP in Herefordshire?

- *I've been with my surgery for over 60 years!*
- *Easy registration. Welcoming helpful staff. Choice of male or female GP.*
- *Notes came quickly. Because of epilepsy.*
- *Moved from North East - easier to register here. Helpful GP. Registered with Leominster.*
- *Moved here in December registered easily saw Doctor a week later to renew prescription.*
- *I registered years ago at Fownhope surgery in 1969 when I lived in Mordiford and it was our nearest GP. However, I did change surgeries a few years ago to Sarum house as I couldn't get transport to Fownhope and mobility became an issue. I moved into Hereford City and the registration/transfer of practices was quite easy.*

7.2 What is your experience of booking an appointment?

Positive experiences of their surgeries

- *Generally excellent*
- *Generally good.*
- *Having worked at a GP surgery I know that the service I get from Greyfriars is second to none. Very accommodating and efficient, friendly too.*
- *Cantilupe surgery wonderful service throughout my treatment and the surgery is also a pharmacy. Can ring doctor and he'll ring back same day and there is a walk-in surgery -just turn up. I'm on edge of area but doctor came 7 miles to see me.*
- *The Marches is wonderful.*
- *Cantilupe and Hampton Dene - brilliant.*
- *When I needed to access a GP very urgently (receptionist identified urgency) GP was available with 24 hours. GP identified problem, made immediate hospital referral, and I am in the system for cancer treatment. Thank you, Kington surgery.*
- *I have my own health issues and they diagnosed me after going through my symptoms, something other GP's had failed to do.*

7.3 Length of time to get an appointment.

Urgent

- *It is very difficult to see a GP on the day of ringing and needing it!*
- *2 weeks waiting time and even when children were ill found it impossible to book resulting in daughter 4 days later going into hospital for 2 days*
- *Appointments can be 3 weeks away which is crazy. I've tried to get emergency appointments before, called as soon as it opens to be told there aren't any.*
- *I have never successfully booked an appointment for the same day.*
- *If you ring after 11am you will not get an appointment that day.*
- *You are never offered a Taurus appointment either.*
- *Taurus worked well in Leominster, but for people 25 miles from Hereford it is not feasible, can't drive if ill so what can you do, wait till Monday and surgery is jam packed so don't get to see Dr. until Wednesday and by then much worse*
- *Got to Wednesday, couldn't stand pain and asked for urgent appointment, they said we will get a ring back, called me in a.m. (nurse) said a duty Dr. would call and no one followed up yet.*
- *If it's an emergency, you may wait for 3 days!*
- *Very bad - problem with hip, had x-ray didn't find anything, last 2 weeks agony and waited 11 days to get appointment.*
- *I was in agony and ill for 3 months and couldn't get GP appointment, so went to ASDA Walk In Centre, white blood cells not right*

Non-Urgent or Routine

- *Can never get a routine appointment in a reasonable time frame.*
- *Can't get an appointment you have to know three weeks in advance if you are ill.*
- *Impossible to get an appointment whichever option and it is truly frustrating*
- *Impossible to get same day appointment.*
- *It is difficult to get an appointment at the time that it is needed.*
- *Nursing appointments not always available.*
- *NO CONSIDERATION given to patients who have to rely on others to bring them and can't get there the same day or at a particular time. OK now if not elderly or disabled at surgery name.*
- *Took a month to get doctor I wanted to see.*

- *They have a habit of just changing the time of your appointment without letting you know and they don't think this is a problem!*
- *It is difficult to book non-urgent or routine as they only book every two weeks and if there are no appointments you have to ring up again later in the week. It is appalling you cannot book further in advance especially for routine or follow up appointments.*
- *Taurus is inadequate. No nurse's appointments available for dressing change on Sundays. Limited options at other times e.g. having to drive to Leominster from Ross.*
- *What is more worrying, is how long it takes to have a simple blood test - you can wait weeks - which is not at all acceptable if you think you have a serious health problem.*
- *They are doing their best, but it needs reviewing, especially rural families without public transport, if ill weekend or evening you've had it really.*

Telephone.

a. Busy.

- *Call at 8 can take long time very busy. If appointment available will get you in. Feels like pot luck to get through.*
- *Have always had to try calling around 10 times at 8am to get through and most of the time I'm told there's no appointments left and to make sure I call at 8!*
- *Cannot get through to reception so have to go personally to book.*
- *Continually engaged once I rung 45 times!*
- *The phone line is always engaged when trying to call to make an appointment. Appointments can only be made on the day and by the time you have managed to get through on the phone all the appointments are taken.*
- *You can never get an appointment here they don't answer the phones trying to get a prescription is difficult even trying to book an appointment can take weeks I just don't bother anymore.*
- *Can't book ahead only if ring on the day. Then to find phone engaged from 8am and by 8.03am no appointment available.*
- *A nightmare to get an appointment.*
- *Took forever. Wanted to know answer to simple question*
- *Getting through on phone difficult but service is good.*
- *The phones should be answered a lot quicker and not have to keep dialing constantly to get through.*
- *When I was trying to get through on a queue they keep you on a certain time and they kept cutting it off. They said that I couldn't hear them so cut off, took 25 min to get through. Annoying technology let me down.*
- *It's not unusual to ring continually for up to 20 minutes!*

- *Hard to get through, number often busy. Few appointments available.*
- *Often takes 30 minutes or more of repeated calling to get through. Secretaries put you on hold as soon as they've answered and usually wait 5-15 mins (at high cost!) to actually speak to someone.*

b. Timing.

- *Have to wait a long time once in the surgery for my appointment.*
- *It is necessary to phone first thing and hope something is available unless you can wait a long time. It used to be much easier to get an appointment a few years ago.*
- *You can only phone for repeat prescriptions at a fixed time, no good for people you work*
- *It's almost impossible to get an appointment when you need one and when you do they are always running late.*

c. Triage system.

- *Telephone ring back does not offer privacy, flexibility nor planning and might be fine for simple appointment but not for long term conditions.*
- *Walk in and wait system to see nurse practitioner. Soon to be replaced with telephone consultation. Was once told, GP can tell a lot by looking at the patient, face, hands etc. Perhaps psychic vibes over the phone will be enough.*
- *Telephone appointments only is such a waste of time. Every time I have had one I have needed to go in to see the Doctor. Give us the choice of telephone appointments or face to face!*

Reasonable adjustments.

- *It is really difficult for carers when loads of appointments are made for the cared for person. It feels like some could be grouped on one day.*
- *We don't want different doctors. Doctors specialise in certain things -they know you. Brain injuries need person to know individual continuity is very important to you. Find it hard to meet new people so insecure. Need to know people care and understand them. Think it is the same for mental health. Wont book more than a month in advance.*
- *If you don't get in first at 8am you can never even speak to your own GP. NO Continuity of care with same Dr. Can't book ahead so often can't have an appointment as we no longer drive ourselves and have to be taken at time that suits others.*
- *If rota isn't up, you can't book it.*
- *Non-urgent can only be booked for same day so no good if not a car driver and appointment needs to be booked ahead. No exceptions to rule or requests listened to.*

- *It is really difficult for carers when loads of appointments are made for the cared for person. It feels like some could be grouped on one day.*

Patient tactics.

The survey indicates that patients have developed a range of tactics to try to gain appointments that they feel that they need in a time frame that is reasonable and convenient to them and to overcome frustration:

- *Takes a long time on phone if you go in to surgery they don't fob you off like they do on phone.*
- *Sarum house has lots of pre-bookings, not a lot of appointments there. I go to surgery at 7.30 if I get on telephone 30 minutes to get through to surgery. Prefer to wait outside in cold.*
- *If ring first thing 8.00 20 minutes of pandemonium. I use my phone and mobile. Ring Moorfields and Aylestone Hill.*
- *People go to minor injuries because they can't get appointments.*
- *It's not good enough. It's no wonder people cut the GP service and use A&E.*
- *I am registered at my parents address as my husband is registered at the local surgery and always find it very difficult to get appointments.*
- *Resort to private services because of waiting times.*
- *I get appointments 3 weeks ahead and cancel if I don't need them.*

7.4 What options do you know are available at your surgery? (Not all will be available at every surgery). And which have you used?

Positive comments around clarity, choice and options included:

- *Having Dr (Name) as skin specialist means I don't have to go to hospital to see dermatologist which is ridiculously long wait.*
- *At Moorfields they have a heart specialist nurse.*
- *Other: Used to be someone with skin melanomas specialism - was very fast, the warfarin clinic really useful.*
- *Happy to ask the surgery what they have available should I feel I need specific help.*
- *You have to lose half a stone to access healthy lifestyle trainer. I think there is a surgeon at our surgery.*
- *I prefer nurse practitioners can usually get within a week.*
- *There are healthy lifestyle leaflets at surgery. Nurses do some leg treatment I think. Heart clinic is at hospital not at surgery I think. Can do self-referral for Physiotherapist.*
- *Epilepsy specialist nurse there.*
- *Hampton Dene has walk in.*
- *There are three specialists at ours.*

- *Pharmacist - I have used.*
- *Well woman checks/well men checks.*
- *I know I can book more than 10 minutes x6*
- *Increased hours at weekend I do know that.*
- *I've used the physio - very good.*
- *I asked for another doctor as don't like the one given.*
- *There are plenty of alternatives at my surgery like the advanced clinicians who are wonderful.*

Negative comments around clarity, choice and options included:

- *Don't think options are clear. Very limited options on web for booking.*
- *The nurse practitioner does most of the urgent care but not even on the list*
- *Don't like waiting fortnight then being made to see health care worker. Took blood pressure they said need to see GP. District nurses there crowded.*
- *Need committed team of GP's and not locums. Disgrace but poor remaining doctors do their best.*
- *Diabetic Clinics I am told ARE NOT NECESSARY DESPITE BEING Insulin Dependent and having serious kidney problem*
- *Can never get an appointment, the surgery only book appointments up to 2 weeks in advance and these are always full. In an emergency you have to fight the reception staff to get to firstly speak to a nurse over the phone to then be told the nurse will see you if your condition is serious enough, then when you see the nurse she can't deal with you and needs to pass you onto a Dr. anyway. Lots of pointless steps. Things that could be sorted over the phone you are made by reception staff to make an appointment for, lots of wasted time.*
- *Ear Syringing no longer have.*
- *I don't know what they offer x4*
- *Nobody explained procedures or options.*
- *Practice nurse as difficult to see as doctor - the one I had has left.*
- *Problem with ear wax build up - those with long term needs should be covered.*
- *Don't know what a Practice nurse is. Don't know what Community Prescriber is.*
- *Consistently the hardest thing is to get information. 2 years into cancer treatment before knew that there was a Macmillan at hospital.*

Telephone Consultation.

Positive.

- *Telephone consultation useful.*
- *Telephone consultation - ok but depends what it is x6.*

Negative.

- *I had a telephone consultation which was short and sharp but not adequate.*
- *Later occasion I said I was not happy and this doctor listened and was brilliant. Not ideal that have to say to get the attitude you want.*
- *Telephone consultations are available but GPs and nurses often don't call at the specified time, or don't call at all because they are too busy*
- *Telephone conversations appointment don't seem to go anywhere or resolved my issue.*
- *Telephone - is handier for them but difficult for me*

7.6 What is your experience of getting to the surgery?

Transport - Positive comments.

- *I normally walk.*

Transport - Issues and difficulties.

- *Sometimes they can only give me an appointment at a different surgery where I'd sometimes get a taxi*
- *Improved increased cycle paths would help - but sadly even the newer ones are not fit for purpose (please check out the one on Holme Lacy Road!!)*
- *No buses live rurally. Neighbour or community wheels 48 hours before no good if urgent. Don't wish to move.*
- *Takes an hour to walk to surgery.*
- *I am registered at Cantilupe Surgery (a branch of Hampton Dene) as I live in town. The walk-in surgery is only available at Hampton Dene which is on outskirts of the city and I find it very difficult to get there.*
- *I can only get to the GP if a carer takes me.*

Parking - Positive comments.

- *Bobblestock is very good parking.*

Parking - Comments about Issues and difficulties.

- *Parking spaces are tiny and awful when dealing with a young child. Barely any other free parking options so if you don't have change in your car for parking you're basically screwed.*
- *Parking very difficult even with disabled badge.*
- *Moorfield drive around to wait for a parking space.*
- *As a disabled person accessing my GP is difficult.*
- *No public transport and taxis are too expensive to use all the time.*
- *No point using car for my surgery no parking.*
- *Limited parking.*
- *My Blue Badge helps with parking.*
- *Now have to pay to park at the surgery.*
- *Parking is an issue, the neighbours of the surgery don't like it when there are too many cars.*
- *Parking is the major access problem.*

7.7 What is your experience of access to the surgery?

Disabled Access - Positive comments.

- *This surgery is purpose built - all consulting rooms on ground floor*
- *Access is good now Cantilupe has changed entry door.*
- *Toilet facilities are difficult if you have difficulty walking. Waiting rooms pleasant.*
- *All doors electronic Sarum House but no car park.*
- *No point using car for my surgery no parking.*
- *As a disabled person accessing my gp is difficult.*
- *No public transport and taxis are too expensive to use all the time.*
- *Leominster there is a wheelchair ramp but steep and doors are heavy which is difficult.*
- *Tiny path with no room Leominster.*
- *Bobblestock doors are very heavy not good with a wheelchair.*
- *Downstairs good wheelchair access.*
- *Easy wheelchair access.*
- *Doors are really heavy at Hampton Dene and hard to open if you have a pushchair. Parking awful at both surgeries.*

Disabled Access - Issues and difficulties.

- *Approach could be a bit clearer of the surgery especially to help the partially sighted. Only has one toilet in waiting area which isn't ideal for disabled/baby changing.*
- *Average. OK.*
- *Heavy Doors. Car park two 45-degree disabled parking bays are difficult.*
- *Very narrow passage way between brick wall and a garden path walk not ideal. Go around 90 degrees only inch or two wider than wheelchair. 2 sets of doors.*
- *I can't go upstairs, and they have previously booked me into a clinic upstairs.*
- *Bit like an airport terminal rather large.*
- *No elevator to upstairs. No water.*
- *Tannoy system can't always hear it.*
- *Out of hours Wargrave St Owens Gaol Street long narrow path quite difficult to negotiate.*
- *Sarum single door one person at a time.*
- *The disabled parking, two spaces for two surgeries is inadequate and is on a steep slope. Access to the surgeries is bad, very narrow.*
- *King Street not good with wheelchair need more room.*
- *Moorfield drive around to wait for a parking space.*
- *Garden at Wargrave very difficult for a wheelchair 1 inch either side of wheelchair basically a garden path! Very difficult.*
- *Bobblestock doors are very heavy not good with a wheelchair. Bobblestock is very good parking.*
- *King Street not good with wheelchair need more room.*
- *Garden at Wargrave very difficult for a wheelchair 1 inch either side of wheelchair basically a garden path! Very difficult.*
- *Many of the consulting rooms are up a steep flight of stairs, which is not good for disabled access. I can get up and down them, but slowly!*
- *Leominster there is a wheelchair ramp but steep and doors are heavy which is difficult. I padlock my bike to the drainpipe.*
- *There are two disabled facilities and a step.*
- *Tiny path with no room Leominster.*

Facilities - Positive experiences.

- *The building environs are far superior to the old one in Kington. Unfortunately, the investment came too late. The facility looks a bit of a £4M 'white elephant' - a great pity.*

- *Comfortable waiting area.*
- *Excellent*
- *Excellent new building*
- *Good generally and very clean*
- *I find it fine.*

Facilities - Issues and difficulties.

- *Difficult footpath access from Ross town centre, due to width of footpath and poor surface, very difficult for wheelchair and weak walkers.*
- *Don't like the fact that public toilets are in the waiting area, the door to the toilet from the waiting area opens directly into the toilet cubicle.*
- *Very upmarket for what they can offer. All that space upstairs is empty. Disappointing. Not working. Something really wrong.*
- *Would not go to toilet for anything.*
- *Leominster - 1 toilet locked need to ask for key.*
- *Not very private around reception area.*
- *Cantaloupe could do with a modernisation.*
- *Confusing to get to toilets. No water.*
- *Could be difficult for older patients.*
- *Entrance doors at Aylestone hill are double doors - difficult.*
- *King Street surgery you can hear patient's consultations while sat in waiting room*
- *No provision is made in the waiting room for those of us who find sitting upright painful and very unpleasant. All NHS waiting rooms the same - apparently designed for healthy people only.*
- *Safe walking but not well sign posted. Small roads. Nearby bus stop. Small roads and not well signposted, but not far from main road. Plenty of space to park usually.*
- *Although even in a tailor-made surgery confidentiality at the counter was not built in. That seems short sighted.*
- *It has every facility but without any one in it to staff the medical services.*
- *Lack of dropped curbs a problem outside surgery as is lack of sufficient disabled spaces for car. As a wheelchair user it is very difficult for my assistants and they usually have to push me around on the road e.g. to get to the pharmacy in Community*
- *Hospital opposite. Not well thought out for wheelchairs etc.*

- *Marches -steep slope for wheelchair.*
- *Shabby.*
- *No disabled parking. Uneven path. Cramped waiting room with NO facility for disabled seating. E.g. High seated chairs for easy sitting / rising. Crowded waiting room and cannot even get thru entrance door safely on crutches to surgery because of people waiting at reception desk to be attended to. Any wonder blood pressure UP!! Having to stand waiting for appointment. Treatment/consulting room opposite reception the size of cupboard awful place especially for disabled access.*

7.9 Why did you choose the ASDA walk in service?

The comments divided into ten main areas:

Convenient/ quick

- *Asda Walk In used to be local when I was at my previous address.*
- *I last used the Walk-in back in 2014 when my husband was battling cancer and I became unwell. I was able to go and get the treatment I needed quickly and without any fuss.*
- *I was passing and decided to pop in there and not contact my surgery*
- *It is easier to go there and wait instead of trying to get an appointment at your own doctors. And was a lot better on weekends as we work in the week.*
- *Very convenient service, it means no long forms, no formalities, they have access to the NHS system so see your history. Strange that it was shut.*
- *Wanted my son to be seen quickly*

Out of hours

- *Children's illness over weekend and it was flexible around working times school.*
- *Doctors were shut and asda walk in was a godsend but sadly now shut.*
- *I did take my wife on a bank holiday for treatment*
- *I had a chest infection and my doctor/ GP was closed when I needed to go.*
- *I have used it with a poorly child a few times when my surgery has been shut*
- *It was a Sunday.*
- *It was a weekend and my surgery was closed.*
- *Needed to see a doctor out of hours.*

- *On a weekend.*
- *Out of hours.*
- *It was either early or late in the day.*
- *Out of hour's surgery closed.*
- *To see a GP at the weekend or out of hours*
- *When doctor's surgery is closed, mostly weekends*
- *It was a weekend - Saturday morning and options were limited at that time.*

Avoiding 111

- *On a weekend and easier to access than 111.*
- *Out of hours for my then 1 yr. old, needed her to be seen not use 111.*

Couldn't get appointment

- *Chronic pain - couldn't get to see my own GP and couldn't cope, they wouldn't give me urgent app. Every time used was for chronic pain and no GP app.*
- *Could not get an appointment at my surgery or Taurus.*

Expertise, specialist equipment

- *Chemist sent me as blood pressure very high. 111 told me to go as Kington did not have heart monitoring equipment.*
- *Doctors are less obstructive.*
- *Examined you for what is wrong and diagnose. Very good and thorough.*
- *I could park there, obliging staff, listened to me, called ambulance, helpful. Treated me like I knew my own body. My own Dr. told me I was drunk, I was having a stroke!*

Accessible/fits with work commitments.

- *I don't have a car to drive and didn't have time with work.*
- *It was out of hours on a weekend. Accessing medical treatment south of the river is difficult out of hours and unless life threatening would struggle through until GP normal opening hours resumed. Not everyone has access to a car or can afford taxis fares across Hereford. As usual south side forgotten about now the walk in centre as closed.*
- *Profoundly deaf unable to use the phone.*

Not registered

- *Son home from university couldn't get an appointment*
- *Student children are registered at university but needed to see a doctor during the vacation. There is no way of doing this.*

Patient views on closure

- *I have used it in the past. I think it is disgusting it is shut*

Considerate about not going to A&E unnecessarily.

- *Weekend urgent, but didn't want to clog up A+E I'd sprained my ankle badly, I was triaged and seen quickly and sent to A+E for an x-ray to be sure it wasn't broken.*
- *Child needed out of hours care, important but not enough to warrant A&E.*
- *Needed urgent appointment but not A&E.*
- *Partner had a minor accident on a Sunday and it was not serious enough for A&E.*
- *With young children and emergency appointments I have found the drop in centre very useful for out of hour's emergencies that didn't require A&E but need medical attention very quickly.*

7.10 What will you do now it is shut?

Ignore health problem/ suffer/ avoid going anywhere.

- *9 times out of ten, ignore it*
- *Don't know suffer*
- *I try and avoid going if possible.*

Accessibility issues

- *999 111 - if I could have text phone or something as I have speech impediment*

Wait for GP appointment.

- *I would book an appointment with my GP surgery anyway, prefer to go where I'm known and notes available*
- *I'll have to wait weeks to be seen when I need treatment within days. Also it'll be left until it's really bad hoping it will get better.*
- *If I can't get out of hours I will remain in pain until I can get an appointment*

- *Still use walk in if day time. Or Taurus in evening.*
- *Try GP first but would depend on how long it would be to get an appointment before I have to use another facility.*
- *Wait till morning.*
- *They're good on weekend - had to get Dr. on weekend.*

Community hospitals/ Minor Injuries Unit

- *Can go to Leominster hospital I think...*
- *I would have used the local MIU if it had been open at the time.*
- *May send to Leominster.*

A&E

- *I had to attend A+E this week due to my 1 year old son falling and hitting his head. If the walk in was open I would have attended there instead*
- *I wouldn't waste A&E time by going for something minor but it is stupid how long you have to wait for go appointment.*
- *I wouldn't go to A&E because they will send me back to GP, I am stuck in revolving doors so have to suffer. I was concerned about appendix as have grumbling, but not on ultrasound.*
- *Moan. More pressure on A&E.*
- *Out of Surgery hours (very limited!), it will be impossible to avoid using A & E.*
- *Will wait until gp practice re opens or if life threatening go to A & E. Wouldn't bother A&E. Too busy and not appropriate. But I can understand why people do.*

Taurus/ Go elsewhere.

- *Go to Birmingham*
- *I have used Taurus so guess that's the alternative.*
- *Tried to use Taurus twice since Asda walk in closure and couldn't get an appointment until 8pm for a child even though I called at 9am.*
- *Won't go to Taurus they offered me an appointment in Ross or Leominster when I live in Hereford!!!!!!*

Nothing

- *Can't do anything...*

Consider or find out about other options

- *Check availability of services based on time of day, weekday or weekend and see which my best option is.*
- *Depends what the issue is. I am informed on what the options are but not confident that I'll always get what I should from all the alternatives*
- *There are options it's just a matter of knowing what they are and how they operate*
- *I will go wherever I can find help dependent on how serious it is,*
- *I will wait until I can get an appointment somewhere else.*
- *It depends what the problem is. Any of these options could be relevant.*
- *It will depend on problem. Work in NHS so aware of options e.g. Pharmacy first*
- *There are plenty of alternative options*

Ring 111

- *If you ring 111 they always send you to A&E anyway if no appointments which is stupid!*
- *It would depend on the problem. I don't have much faith in 111 having read hundreds of their visit reports as part of my job.*
- *My experience of 111 in the past has not been good so I have never use that service again since, nor would I.*

Self -help

- *I am a health care professional - GP or AE for true emergency. Otherwise treat and look after myself.*
- *Rely on my own common sense*
- *Treat myself if not serious, as no chance of appointment at doctors and minor injury units closing*

Questions/ Issues raised

- *Easy access as within walking distance from home.*
- *I do not know how Taurus appointments work.*
- *It will depend on the degree of illness, as I would only use when put of hours for gp. You can only use Taurus via gp appointment?*
- *Students have to register at university practice so then when are home don't have a registered practice so go to walk in. Nowhere to go at home. Daughter was refused at Quay house so went back to Manchester!*
- *Taurus has been a great addition to GP hours, if it's getting harder to get quick appointments it shows the need for this service. Can their hours be extended or extra Drs taken on to fill the need?*

- *Went to pharmacy, pharmacist couldn't give me simple facial cream without a prescription, took 3 weeks to get the appointment with GP just to get perception for this! Extremely backward*
- *If the media coverage about General Practice continues to be so negative you shouldn't be surprised if there is an increase in attendance elsewhere (e.g. A&E). Why would people even try to use their GP surgery if the media continually gives the impression that it's not worth the effort. General Practice might not be perfect, and sometimes things do go wrong, but it is doing an amazing job with limited resources, often in very difficult circumstances. Recognition of that might be helpful if you want to encourage people to use it!*
- *Now that it closed patient need an idiots guide what they should be using and when*
- *The walking in at ASDA was fab. Easy to use and the docs were so good. But the cleanliness of the place was vile. Unless I had to go there I would use the 111 service as it was so dirty. My only other problem is getting prescription once pharmacies had closed but the walking centre hasn't. You still have to wait until the next day to get your medicine so not that helpful*

7.11 Do you have any other comments about the Walk-In at ASDA?

Reasons given against the closure included:

- *Feel this may cause longer waits in A&E. Now it has been closed.*
- *I have used it in the past. I think it is disgusting it is shut*
- *I think it is a real shame that the walk in centre has closed, it was an excellent facility*
- *It will have negative effects. The Drs are already clogged up and you can't get an appointment. Closing the walk-in centre will just make A&E busier putting more of a strain on somewhere that's at the brink of not being able to cope as it is.*
- *Last time I took my little one to the pharmacy and asked for advice, they told me I had to take her to the doctors because of how young she is... Took ages to get her in at our own doctors, would have been easier to go to Asda walk in and a lot less stressful.*
- *A sad loss, my child was turned down an emergency appointment by GP who said earliest was next day ,a trip to walk in as I had a gut feeling and he was being rushed to hospital ! Saved his life.*
- *Asda walking was fantastic. It's a total disgrace to have been closed down 😞😞😞*
- *BRING IT BACK*
- *Bring it back*
- *Bring it back!!!*
- *Convenience should be an offer from the NHS.*

- *Disgrace it has closed used it for my grandson as he had some serious issues when young and they were extremely helpful*
- *Don't know why they closed it. It was very good.*
- *Don't know why this was closed! It was an essential necessity to the people of Hereford. Our hospital is poor as it is and this is just going to increase the poorly staffed hospital and increase waiting times.*
- *I believe that the Walk-in centre provided a very useful service and should have been retained.*
- *I fear for those hard to access individuals as this will be seen as yet another barrier to service access.*
- *I have considered it because of ease of getting to it and I would mean I wouldn't have to involve family members. I'm very disappointed it is shutting as many young people cannot use their own GP due to transport or family issues - and this will seriously reduce their options for accessing medical care such as sexual health.*
- *I think it provided an excellent service to the community and that it is sorely missed*
- *I think it should be open*
- *I think it was a brilliant service that will be very missed if we need it, it was free to park at Asda for 3 hours and we cannot afford to pay hospital carpark prices also it is a long way from the bus station carpark and feels a bit iffy if you are on your own with a poorly child late at night (obviously Asda was only open until 8pm I know!)*
- *I think the closure of this facility is a loss to Hereford city health care.*
- *I'm sure the people that decided to close it, had never had the need to use it. Although I hadn't used it in the last year, my elderly mother and both of my children (young adults) had. How reassuring we have all found it to know that there was a doctor that you could go and wait to see 365 days a year. My 83-year-old mother is particularly distressed about the Walk-in at Asda closing. It was an old-fashioned way of seeing a doctor but one that totally worked from a patient's point of view. I read that a survey showed that very few of the people attending the Walk-in were not registered with a GP, so the claim that the closure is to encourage people to register is without substance. You've taken a brilliant service, that should have been a flagship to all other authorities to follow suit, and you've got rid of it. Shame on you.*
- *It should never have been closed down!*
- *It should never have been closed, it provided a great service for a huge amount of people.*
- *It shouldn't have closed. Another walking in should be made available*
- *It was a needed service which will be missed.*
- *It was amazing it was my life saver should never have been shut down*
- *It was an excellent facility very disappointing that it has been closed down. A&E he will be a nightmare*
- *It was very valued in Hereford, it's ridiculous that it was closed despite local efforts and petitions to save it.*
- *It's a deep shame that it had to close. Good doctors and ease of actually getting to see one*
- *It's a disgrace that it is shut*

- *It's a penny-pinching move. Our emergency services which are true walk-ins are something that makes me proud to be British.*
- *It's a shame it's closed.*
- *It's a shame it's closed it was very convenient especially for the children or if u cannot get an appointment anywhere in Hereford.*
- *Its closure is not a good idea on so many levels. As a member of staff at Hereford hospital I know how under pressure A&E already is without adding the pressure of all of the ASDA walk in patients.*
- *It's a daft choice to close a service that was well used and handy.*
- *Necessary for south of river residents.*
- *Needs to be kept open.*
- *RIP.*
- *Real shame it has gone as to be able to just walk in from 8am to 8pm was just so convenient.*
- *Ross have walk in A&E Minor Injury Unit can walk in. Daughter registered at university so can't go to a surgery here will have to go up to Manchester! Don't understand decision. Don't know what Taurus is? Do they have Prime Care and Shrop Doc now?*
- *Shame it has gone.*
- *Shame it has gone as it was a great service and doctors there were always very helpful.*
- *Shame it's going I presume by closing additional pressure will fall on A&E.*
- *Shocked it has closed, was a vital service and has been fantastic in the past with my son who has ongoing health problems guaranteed to been seen same day after a wait. Worry about the demand in A&E now ASDA has closed worry. Complete wrong decision to close it.*
- *Should never have closed.*
- *Should never have closed. Never enough appointments available at doctor's surgeries. It was a valuable resource and short sighted to close it. Winter months will see our A & E even more pressurised.*
- *Should not have closed this facility*
- *Since it has closed it is more difficult to get an appointment for Taurus.*
- *Such a shame closing it down especially for children. People cannot be ill to order. Now the gp's and A&E are going to be even more swamped.*
- *Terrible shame. GP surgeries nightmare to get appointment, throughout the night there is no access to GP other than A&E or 111 appointment in Hereford hospital. Terrible decision to close the walk in service.*
- *The best ever stupid shutting it down.*

- *Yes, bring it back!!*
- *It should never have closed.*
- *Pity it closed because there will extra strain on A&E that aren't necessary ...like headaches, earache, sprains and non-important things.*
- *This was an excellent service available to the people of Herefordshire and must have reduced the number of people attending A and E. Short sighted to close it.*
- *This service should never have been closed.*
- *This was an important facility because most surgeries are only open limited hours and you had access to a G P from 8.00am to 8.00 pm and at weekends. I can only see that lots of people will just turn up at A & E. More information of out of hour's facilities would be appreciated. Years ago you could get a doctor at any time, but foolishly it was decided to alter their contracts. It's no wonder emergency departments are so overcrowded. Some people are just using them as an alternative to their surgeries.*
- *Very sad to see it close seemed at step forward in medical out of hour's treatment. GPs are great but accidents and illnesses don't always happen 9-5 especially when children are concerned!!*
- *Very useful to have. Worse thing that happened when closed.*
- *Vital service and was a short-sighted idea getting rid of it*
- *Was an excellent place, worse thing Hereford have done is to shut it!! Fantastic doctors/nurses/receptionist, should reconsider opening it back up*
- *Was very much needed and will be greatly missed by the community.*
- *Will be missed by some, probably at weekends and Monday mornings.*
- *Will miss it as I've got an unpredictable illness which can flare up at any time so can just pop down to Asda walk-in whenever I need to without having to rely on buses as can't walk to far. Asda walk-in was in an ideal location for south side of the river as there is nowhere else to go for an urgent appointment*
- *Wish it would be available again*
- *Yes please open it again children can't wait 7 hours down A&E even when sick and especially when they are sick (receptionists do not like cleaning it up).*

Reasons given in favour of closure included:

- *I used it once in all the years it was open, the public need to use other options like pharmacies and 111 better and not stretch GP and A&E services.*

- *Waste of money. Patients need education about what to bother their GP with. If people didn't go with trivia there would be more appointments if you are genuinely unwell*
- *Looking forward to Moorfields surgery taking over the premises*

Patients gave lots of positive comments (45) about the Walk-In.

- *ASDA was brilliant. I have used it for myself in the past. They were great. My partner had used it too for reactions to bites, they were great with him too. My dad has been ill and we have been there, my dad said they were great with him. My partner's son had an infected finger, they saw him and gave antibiotics even though he was out of county.*
- *Although I never used it many of my family found it to be very good a better service than approaching Sarum house.*
- *Although you had no appointment people were always patient to be seen as they were grateful to be seen.*
- *Always found the doctors at ASDA listened well and I never felt rushed in an appointment (which I have, on occasion, at my own GP).*
- *Asda doctors were great took time to listen to u*
- *Extremely useful as a parent, children can fall ill very suddenly and usually at weekends when own surgery is not open. As 111 can take time to ring you back it was reassuring to know you'd be seen within 2 hrs.*
- *Friend found very useful.*
- *Excellent service. Feeling of safety*
- *I have been to the walk in clinic on numerous occasions for myself, my partner and my children. Trying to get an appointment at the doctors when you feel unwell and require a doctor is impossible. You can phone at 8am in the morning, spend 20 minutes trying to get through to finally find there are no appointments left. Asda was the only option other than A&E.*
- *I know it helped a lot of people.*
- *I understand that it provided a valuable service for those who felt that they could not get a GP apt in a timeframe acceptable to them.*
- *It was a good service.*
- *It was a great help and very simple to use. Helped me on several occasions including when I had appendicitis. Fast and prompt support.*
- *It was a really useful service in the case of minor health emergencies. Also currently I need regular wound dressings and would have used it for out of hour's service. Now I have to drive much further (uncomfortable) or wait for district nurses who don't always turn up due to too many people requiring their services.*
- *It was a very useful service.*

- *It was always a very good service.*
- *It was excellent service and excellent doctors especially later in day when children are taken ill Easy to access and park.*
- *It was handy and very friendly ...x*
- *It was ideal and opened at good hours.*
- *It was really useful and now and we will be full now it has gone.*
- *It was so convenient and efficient. An excellent service.*
- *It was so handy for out of hours particularly if you have children and they get poorly over the weekend. Particularly things such as ear infections which are painful but not an emergency, I wouldn't want to go to A&E with that but equally wouldn't want my child to be in pain all weekend.*
- *It was useful and 9/10 seen within an hour. Appointment wasn't rushed and often prescribed medications which helped.*
- *It was very useful.*
- *It was wonderful to know you had somewhere to go at a weekend that did long hours that wasn't A&E.*
- *It will be sorely missed by myself and my family.*
- *It's amazing. Always really quick to see someone, always had a good outcome; not fobbed off like at the gp surgery. At walk in then want to sort you out. At gp surgery it's like it's too much effort to treat you; you're taking up their time.*
- *Loved that it opened early; on weekends. Very easy to use, never had to wait too long*
- *My daughter has used it as she could not get an urgent appointment at her Hereford surgery and she had pneumonia. Also grandson has been taken as his other grandmother does not live near to his own surgery and all appointments booked for that day.*
- *Reliable, helpful and necessary!*
- *Superb.*
- *The walk in centre was very handy when you have a poorly child and can't wait for the duty doctor to ring you back to see if you need an appointment.*
- *They provided a fantastic service.*
- *Think it was a good thing know others that used it.*
- *This was a good fall back when GP surgery was just not available quick enough. Would possibly have had to go to A&E instead as no Taurus available in working hours.*
- *Very convenient. Helped me a fair few times. Knowledgeable doctors.*
- *Very good doctors.*
- *Walk in at ASDA was a great service. Many families used this especially during school times to get a consultation.*

- *Was useful and helped A&E.*
- *Was very good.*
- *Was very handy and needs to be reinstated.*
- *Whenever I used the drop in centre it felt like they cared more and really listened unlike my surgery who prefer a telephone consultation.*
- *They were wonderful, saved my life twice.*
- *Very convenient if your surgery closed.*
- *I have used the out of hours surgery in the hospital, the wait is usually very long and appointments given over 111 are never on time, at least with the walk in centre I have been able to leave hubby in the car with poorly child until I needed to get them out of the car (I stood in queue and waited).*
- *Great service, especially when no appointments left at own surgery. Shouldn't have been closed, will result in longer waits at A&E.*

Issues or difficulties in comments about Walk-In Centre

- *It was not very clean and the time kept waiting far too long plus the medics seen did not have access to your patient notes.*
- *Having worked there, it was a totally abused service.*
- *As above, I thought it was filthy and felt like a third world country. And the doctor just gave me a prescription without asking me any questions. They didn't know anything about my long term condition and didn't even ask.*
- *Good service but waiting area not pleasant or comfortable.*
- *Have taken work colleagues in the past, rather than use A&E.*
- *I guess, for those who lived near enough and had access to a car, it was a useful facility. I doubt the proposed joint practice will be as flexible.*
- *I had a 3 hour wait there.*
- *It was vile.*
- *Unsafe as no access to my records*
- *Very reliable but waiting time awful*
- *I would never use the ASDA walk in clinic as unlike Taurus they do not have access to my records and this is unsafe!*
- *Had to drive 15 miles and was an emergency, when my surgery is 4 miles away*
- *I never used it, I went once and it was disgustingly dirty.*

Appendix 2 Patient suggestions.

During the course of the survey people volunteered these suggestions.

Patient suggestions.

- *On line access to medicines is not encouraged enough nor is use of electronic prescriptions - telephone poor use of time.*
- *Ideally would like to make next appointment at time of previous appointment x 5*
- *Information centre to find out if need GP or hospital. A Midlands Today slot would be good. Come to groups to inform us.*
- *It's not the length of time but choice and flexibility that concerns me to suit family commitments and work.*
- *Longer surgery opening hours are needed for people needing appointments who work.*
- *There should be the option of within a month as most of my appointments are within in a month, and child immunisations are always booked way over the date they should.*
- *Health Visitors for over 75's have been lost. A huge loss and mistake.*
- *Don't like name Prescriber (community Prescriber) it's the wrong title. Signposting is better.*
- *Good that it dispenses, as we are losing pharmacy in Kington. However, I don't think they will deliver, so how do elderly or housebound who can't get to the surgery get medications? I worry for people without transport. I would like to see the medical practice offering many more services, my (relative) in his 80's has recently joined the diabetes prevention programme, but it is run at the Kington centre in town rather than the surgery. They should be running as many things as possible in the surgery if they want it to become a health hub as they originally said. I think they should offer physiotherapy, podiatry, counselling, other therapies, healthy lifestyles and other services to support healthy lifestyles and healthy living.*
- *My health has been very poor for more than 25 years - M.E. There is no help of any kind; no monitoring (as there is with e.g. M.S. - far less prevalent and better quality of life), no support, no checking of progress of symptoms in case they indicate another condition. As far as M.E. is concerned, the NHS does not exist.*
- *Not easy inside Leominster - used every nook and cranny to get each consulting room in. Have to manoeuvre around. A push chair park would be a good idea.*
- *Sources of information are difficult -knowing where to go when to act. E.g. I had a bad ear problem. I go every 6 months to get dewaxed to surgeon. I was somehow dropped off of list. Now I don't know how to get back on. It should be easier. It is difficult for someone to do that proactive bit. I ask them to print everything about me they have noted so I can remember it. My surgery has a leaflet to put complaints and comments.*
- *Whole of rural medical practice now being run of shoe string with constant cost cutting of services and medication. Two attempts to order asthma medication for my special needs (relative), finally told after second order, medication removed*

from (their) repeat prescription list. No reason given had to wait for doctor to call before prescription given. Sorry practice defines everything that is wrong with our society today.

- *Phlebotomist can only have two tries then have to call nurse then doctor. They always have problems with my veins. Last time an 8.30 appointment to take a few minute blood tests took till 10.00*
- *It's better than up north. But a bit scruffy entrance at Leominster surgeries. Why have two practices so close? Wouldn't it be better to have one with more GP's? Where I lived they had big hubs with more services and then they could do drop ins.*
- *Leg clinic brilliant. Real assets. Age concern do some foot care. Kington football club. Every week. Age concern come in every few weeks. Have clinics Woebley canal road Fownhope Hampton dean church hall. Can tell to see chiroprapist. Can take people off crutches. Can see the difference.*
- *Too much phone activity and much of it can be overheard, the booking in system screen is the sort of innovation that could be used more.*
- *Early evening appointments for those that work would be useful.*
- *Re out of hours at Belmont surgery. Had shingles and was talking to nurses. If you call after 5.30 your call goes straight to nurses. Can't see the hub makes more efficient?*
- *It cost 3 million to build, no regular gp that knows the patients, half the building unused, could it not be better used, with hospitals overflowing could some of it not be used as a place for patients to recuperate after hospital. I feel it could be better organised, and it makes you feel there is no point, even when you are ill going to see a doctor.*
- *Need to make available more online booking appointment options.*
- *Poor web access and too much phone use. Access to medical record would be useful. It's possible but not enabled- it would help long term condition management.*
- *I would like to see more services provided in Kington and a proper OOH Dr. service.*
- *We all have a right to see a GP when we need if you are a U.K. Citizens that pays NI, we should not be treated like we are an inconvenience.*
- *It is not the fault of residents in Herefordshire that they live outside GP practice boundaries, so they should not be treated as a nuisance and penalised. Most of those affected will not be aware of Healthwatch, but are concerned that if they question the provision of healthcare, they will be disadvantaged as has been my experience. It is time that primary care facilities are clearly and publicly stated.*

Appendix 3 Patient stories.

Issues revealed in patient stories:

(To preserve anonymity we have altered some details in blue).

Practitioner/Surgery/Reception clinical expertise, continuity and customer care.

1. A patient moved and had to change surgeries and was concerned the new surgery did not have knowledge of their complex mental health condition. The new surgery admitted they didn't know how to help. What can patients do in this situation? (Note: In this case the surgery was actually "amazing".)
2. *My child had become ill whilst we were away on holiday with strep throat, they could only give me enough antibiotics for a week and said as soon as I get home to go straight to my GP to arrange more antibiotics, they wanted my son to take it for 10 days, went to the surgery the minute we got home, no appointments, I said it was really important, still no help, terrible, rang the hospital that originally saw me, they were quite disgusted.*
3. *Told to visit surgery when I am asking for HOME VISIT. Turned out to be stroke with brain bleed after ambulance called.*
4. *Urgent - they don't see pain as urgent, I've been crying on phone and still had to wait, it's a fortune to go to A&E and I don't want to cost NHS money, so I don't go and just get worse. They don't tell me what counts as urgent. I was down for physio with tennis elbow for a year, I saw (practitioner and surgery) and got exercises, it lasted over 9 months, he said maybe give cortisone, but never did. He put on list and if don't get seen within certain period and then they take you off the list, so if it is recurring you have to start on list again and wait for your turn again. If you are seeing specialist, then why don't they keep you on their books? Exercises physio gave didn't work and had to go round the books again, nurse didn't give real answer at x-ray and just gave high pain killers. Feel I have gone away with chronic pain, and no answer to why I have this pain. I work at weekend and am a carer, when I go back to work it is physical and will make pain worse. Tried everything for pain.*

5. *Filling in the registration forms a year ago, I awaited the promised appointment with the practice nurse. It wasn't arranged, so I made an appointment with a GP to introduce myself to the practice earlier this year, an extremely unhappy experience with potentially disastrous results. Rather than seemingly swimming against the current, I continue to manage my own healthcare to the best of my ability. I will be 80 next year.*
6. *They make you feel like you are wasting their time, and you never have enough time, feels rushed.*
7. *About 12 times, maybe more because of clinic check up's. Always reoccurring, always something needed resolution and never got to the bottom of, except for diabetes. I have had pain last year (so bad was vomiting) from that day on I have had terrible pains, went on for 3 months. They said something about white blood cells not being right, I went to ASDA after couldn't get to see GP so had to go to WIC because it got so bad. I have had ultrasound and x-ray, etc. They said they would get back to me and never did. I feel they should follow up and make a plan to address, another time they thought it was a bacterial gut infection (said a few times due to white blood cells). Have stomach ulcer, and they want to give anti-inflammatory, but I can't take following ulcer. They don't take this into account.*
8. *Recently had health problems, so use once a month. Stressful to go, running around phones going constantly, main issue for my family is they have work experience people on the desk who don't have the right knowledge or attitude and have given me the wrong specimen bottle twice or booked with the wrong people. It is because the surgery are using work experience to do reception. They are not monitored, and you can hear all the phone calls, there is no privacy for reception. It needs more money and better trained qualified front line staff with better life experience. The pharmacy has the same problem, they gave me the wrong drugs. It's not their fault but they are so short of people.*
9. *Following the departure of the Practice lead doctor some four years ago, and the subsequent loss of all 'partners', the Surgery is left with one FTE GP and a number of locums. A totally unsatisfactory state of affairs (but probably a foretaste of the future for many rural practices). As a consequence, many patients have transferred to **surgery name**. I expect that the Surgery will need to merge with/be taken over by **surgery name** in the not too distant future. The Surgery's 'Walk-In' clinic, staffed by Nurse Practitioners, and the Pharmacy, which has just lost an experienced member of staff, are the only redeeming features of a practice balanced on a 'knife-edge'. Patient care must be at risk. Continuity of care is non-existent.*
10. **Practice** *10-minute appointment I embarrassedly went around and about then plucked up courage to say I had found a lump in my breast. He said sorry you've had your 10 minutes you must book a new appointment...*

11. *There is currently only 1 full time GP. There is no hope of consistently seeing the same doctor which is so important when managing a chronic health condition. I have waited over a month for an appointment to change medications that weren't working, only to be told by a locum who clearly hadn't read my notes that I shouldn't be taking any medications for my condition. He subsequently refused to prescribe anything else and suggested I was exaggerating my symptoms. I was forced to wait another 3 weeks for an appointment with a different doctor.*
12. *Practice Nurse took a potentially serious illness very seriously whereas a doctor could not have cared less. I find the attitude of the doctors really poor. Very indifferent and uninterested. One doctor proceeded with a minor procedure on me without bothering to wait for the anesthetic to kick in.*
13. *Students have to register at university practice so then when are home don't have a registered practice so go to walk in. Nowhere to go at home. Daughter was refused at (practice) so went back to (university city)!*

Concerns about out of hours services.

1. *Poor out of hours access in **geographical location**. Needed medical advice on Friday, on a Saturday with pain in chest (pulled muscle) so telephoned NHS 111 for advice. The telephone handler was very nice, but rather than enabling me to speak to a Dr. they asked triage questions and told me they would send someone out to see me. They sent an ambulance with 2 paramedics, who were lovely and caring, but they told me I just needed to take paracetamol and some diazepam as it was a pulled or trapped Trapeze muscle. If there was better out of hour's access to a GP or nurse then I would not have had to call 111 and would not have wasted NHS resources. I felt bad, the ambulance was with me when they could have been at an incident or treating a person who really needed emergency life supporting treatment. Also, if the minor injuries centre in **geographical location** or even **geographical location** was open I could have gone there instead, but there are no out of hours options in **geographical location** except 111!*

Concerns about conditions that may not be covered by NHS.

1. *Ease of appointments - irrelevant; my chronic illness is ignored by the NHS - myalgic encephalomyelitis.*
2. *Earwax removal not available as it was I have very small tubes I'm told and can't help it - what am I supposed to do? I've been going for years. I was asked to fill a sheet - if I don't fit criteria can't go any more. I almost lost my place - apparently 80% can't go any more.*

Are reasonable adjustments being made?

- 1. I think they have a drop in, I can only go to the G.P. at certain times as I am disabled and need my carer to help me down the stairs of my apartment (I live on 1st floor). I told the surgery and they said to come toward the end of the day and they would fit me in, so I sat and waited. My carer left me there and then I had to get the bus home.*
- 2. My elderly relative regularly uses the surgery and I have many friends who are not happy with GP services in named surgery. I am lucky that I am well, if I had health conditions, having heard the issues I would move surgeries. My relative can't due to access, it is too far for them to travel to two named surgeries as they go to the Dr at least 1 - 2 times a month for long term health conditions, plus additional health checks and clinics. If they were more effective they could fit my relative in once a month with one nurse and GP and save a lot of appointments.*
- 3. Recently had condition only detectable by blood sample. Appointment was cancelled because 'THE' nurse was ill. Another appointment was made then they called to cancel again in the morning very difficult to arrange with neighbour and community wheels feel obligated to pay as volunteer driver. Can't get in touch with when last minute cancellation.*

Lack of clear information.

- 1. I was under the illusion that I had to book my own doctor until eventually a receptionist flagged up the Practice Nurse who was excellent. I wish I had known this sooner. However, there are times when I want to see my own female GP who has known me for years for continuity also she is very good. She has left now and I have not been given a named GP. I assume I won't be?*
- 2. Used to have Taurus but doesn't seem happening, no communication. Tried twice now and told only in Hereford and couldn't have appointment Leominster. In the end the GP called from Hereford about medication, but left until very urgent.*
- 3. Recently there were no appointments available with a nurse for a dressing change on the required day.*

4. *Only went once, when I did, was asked did I want any of my medication changed, I suffer high blood pressure, but it wasn't checked, was told I would need to have blood done, but couldn't do it then. I wondered why I had bothered going.*
5. *I feel there should be more effort to empower patients to help them to look after their own health and recovery in a more proactive way by: Giving links to reliable information about their conditions and what to do to improve health. Better rehabilitation guidance e.g. when I broke my leg - had no idea about how long I'd be incapacitated where or who or if I should ask for physio, what I could do to recover, how to trigger being given results of blood tests, bone density results. Breaking a leg is not that uncommon surely a link to advice could be provided readily as well as one for say cataracts etc. I didn't even know how to get a sick note -hospital or surgery? I asked GP for advice re exercising my leg and they referred me to the hospital -but nobody at the hospital had given me a number to call or email -it wasn't encouraged. I understand they have capacity issues but good clear information will help lessen the need for patients to go back, help recovery and lessen the feeling of isolation.*

Telephone triage concerns

1. *Do they still have doctors at GP practices? Couldn't tell you if the person I answered the phone to was a doctor. Number withheld could have been the cleaner or that fraudster calling from India again!!!! (Should surgery staff use identifiable phone number?)*

Accuracy of medical records

2. *I don't like seeing my Dr. after getting a copy of my medical record. I had an issue with following something up from the hospital, so I asked for a copy of my medical record and in it there were a lot of inaccuracies. This spanned a long time, it began in Practice name where the Dr had written that I was a hypochondriac and to take what I said with a pinch of salt. I did complain about what was in my record and named person at PALs helped me with this, but I have never had a full response to everything and they have not changed the records. The reason I would go to the GP is that medical professionals tell you if you have certain symptoms to get it checked out. I lost weight and had condition and I went to see the Dr, I was eventually diagnosed with condition but on the referral to the hospital the Dr. had written that I was a 'hypochondriac' and regular maligner and that it should be checked out to follow procedure but likely nothing. I feel that the notes on my file mean that all Drs do not listen to what I have to say and they have decided before I arrive. They told me that I couldn't get a copy of my records, but once I did there were lots of nasty notes about me being a hypochondriac. The staff and receptionists all seem like lovely people and I don't want to complain about them, but I don't go to see my Dr. because of the notes on my record, I don't want to bother them. I have had help from named person at Pals to complain and ask questions about the notes made in my records but never received the answers.*

Lack of coordination/ joint working across health and social care.

- 3. I also have issues with carers. I had a bad toe, bleeding and oozing with crusting under my nail. I didn't want to trouble the GP so I went to a pharmacist and they gave me Savlon, however the carer agency wouldn't apply the Savlon (I can't reach my feet as disabled) because it wasn't prescribed from a GP even though the pharmacist said it was ok. So, the carer had to get my GP appointment, they prescribed antibiotic cream (not Savlon as wasn't on list) and then I had to make another carer appointment for them to apply the cream. This is a waste of time, money and resources not to mention stressful and dangerous, I had a bleeding toenail with infected gunk for a couple of weeks whilst I waited for a GP appointment. In addition, another care worker wouldn't apply some ointment I have always had because the prescription label was on the box not the tube. It was in my care plan and the agency knew I used this and had it prescribed but she wouldn't do it unless the label was on the tube!*



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