



# GP Access in Bury

Healthwatch Bury Survey Report

January 2019



**Healthwatch Bury GP Access in Bury report**  
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# Healthwatch Bury GP Access Report

## Executive Summary

During 2017/18, GP Practices represented one of the most common areas the people of Bury were telling us about. A significant proportion of this feedback related to the experiences in accessing an appointment with a GP.

In response to public feedback, Healthwatch Bury met with a number of local community based groups and produced an online survey to understand people's experiences of accessing an appointment with a GP in Bury 350 people completed the survey.

This is what the results revealed:

### Accessing Non urgent and Urgent Appointments

- 23% of those who responded found making an urgent appointment difficult with a further 17% finding it very difficult
- 22% found making a non-urgent appointment difficult with a further 10% finding it very difficult
- 56% were given an urgent appointment the same day
- 25% were given a non-urgent appointment within 1-2 weeks

### Telephone Contact and On-Line Communication with GP Practice

- 37% rated getting through to their GP practice on the telephone as fairly good
- 15% of respondents didn't know what on-line services their GP practice offered. Of those that did 32% of respondents had not used any online services in the past year
- 49% had never tried to book an online appointment, but of those that had 21% had found it very easy
- 46% had never tried to look for information or access services online

### Medical Reception Staff and Opening Hours

- 69% had been asked by their receptionist why they needed to see a medical practitioner.
- 20% did not understand why the receptionist asked their reason for booking an appointment.
- 26% of respondents found the appointment time offered wasn't suitable as it wasn't with their preferred doctor
- 27% didn't know the opening time of their surgery.
- 31% didn't know about extended opening hours

## 1. Context

- 1.1 Healthwatch Bury is the independent consumer champion for Health and Social Care in Bury, and it exists to help improve local health and social care for all people living within Bury MBC and to ensure health and social care services in Bury are the best they can be for people of all ages, now and in the future.
- 1.2 Healthwatch Bury also forms part of the national network of 148 Healthwatch, across England, which were established by the Government (Health and Social Care Reforms 2012) and which are funded by the Department of Health.
- 1.3 Every Healthwatch is independent of the NHS and local authority and plays a crucial role in ensuring patients across their locality have a stronger voice in how their services are designed and delivered.
- 1.4 Healthwatch Bury does this in a number of ways which includes gathering views and opinions captured through focus groups, online surveys and outreach events across the borough. By listening to service users' experiences of publicly-funded health and social care services we are able to inform decisions made by the commissioners and providers of services.
- 1.5 During 2017/18, general practice represented one of the most common areas the people of Bury were telling us about. A significant proportion of this feedback related to the experiences in accessing an appointment with a doctor. The term 'access' comprises of factors such as: timely access, physical access, ease of booking and choice. It is important to consider a range of factors which may influence people's experiences when accessing an appointment with a GP.
- 1.6 The Care Quality Commission, which is the regulator of health and social care provision in England and Wales, has rated 90% of GP Practices in Bury as 'Good'. The National GP Patient Survey data 2018 results presented by Bury Primary Care Commissioning Committee meeting in August 2018 shows GP services in Bury are regarded by patients as better than the England average<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.7 Nationally, pressures on general practice are frequently portrayed in the media for example, the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) anticipate the number of occasions in which patients having to wait more than a week for an appointment with a doctor, will rise from 80m in 2016/2017 to 102m in 2021/2022<sup>2</sup>. Due to the fact that people are living longer, with more complex, long-term health conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.buryccg.nhs.uk/download/26/AI-5-GP-Patient-Satisfaction-Results.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rcgp.org.uk/about-us/news/2016/july/patients-to-wait-more-than-one-week-to-see-gp-on-100m-occasions-by-2020.aspx>

- 1.8 There is a shortage of General Practice doctors (GPs) nationally and locally – demand is increasing while the number of doctors being recruited is not. The British Medical Association (BMA) wrote that *from March 2016 to March 2017, the total number of FTE (full time equivalent) GPs fell by 678 (-2.3%) and that not enough doctors are choosing general practice as a career and many GPs are reducing their time commitment or leaving altogether*<sup>3</sup>.
- 1.9 Increasingly there are initiatives to move care from hospitals back into the community setting. For example the Transforming Health and Social Care in Bury, 2017-2021, Locality Plan as an example of this stating that *‘over time, by developing an enabled and engaged population who are living in thriving communities, we will see a shift in demand and activity away from Hospitals and specialist services, and into local Neighbourhoods and Primary Care settings*<sup>4</sup>.
- 1.10 Nationally it has been recognised that there needed to be a change to meet demand on GP services. Through NHS England’s General Practice Forward View 2016 (NHS England, 2016) Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) were able to extend access to GP services, to include routine evening and weekend appointments with 100% of the population having extended access by 1 October 2018 (NHS England and NHS Improvement, 2018).
- 1.11 The aim of Healthwatch Bury’s 2018 ‘GP Access and Appointments’ survey was designed to understand people’s experiences of accessing an appointment with a GP in Bury, along with their expectations and preferences, to help inform and shape future plans. The survey was co-designed in partnership with Bury CCG and Healthwatch England who will receive our report and findings to help inform decisions about current and future provision of services across Bury.

## **2. Methodology**

- 2.1 The survey was the main research phase. This was promoted through social media via Twitter, Facebook, our website, and partner organisation newsletters. Primary data was collected by conducting face to face surveys at popular community locations such as the Jubilee Centre (Age UK Bury), Bury Carers Centre coffee morning and other community events in the Bury Borough area. We also worked with partners such as the Victoria Centre in Whitefield, Communic8te Bury, Buddy’s for Children with Autism and the Veterans Group at the Mosses Centre, who agreed to distribute and collect surveys for us within those venues.

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<sup>3</sup> British Medical Association, Saving General Practice, November 2017

Transforming Health and Social Care in Bury, 2017-2021, Locality Plan;  
<https://www.bury.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=19126&p=0>

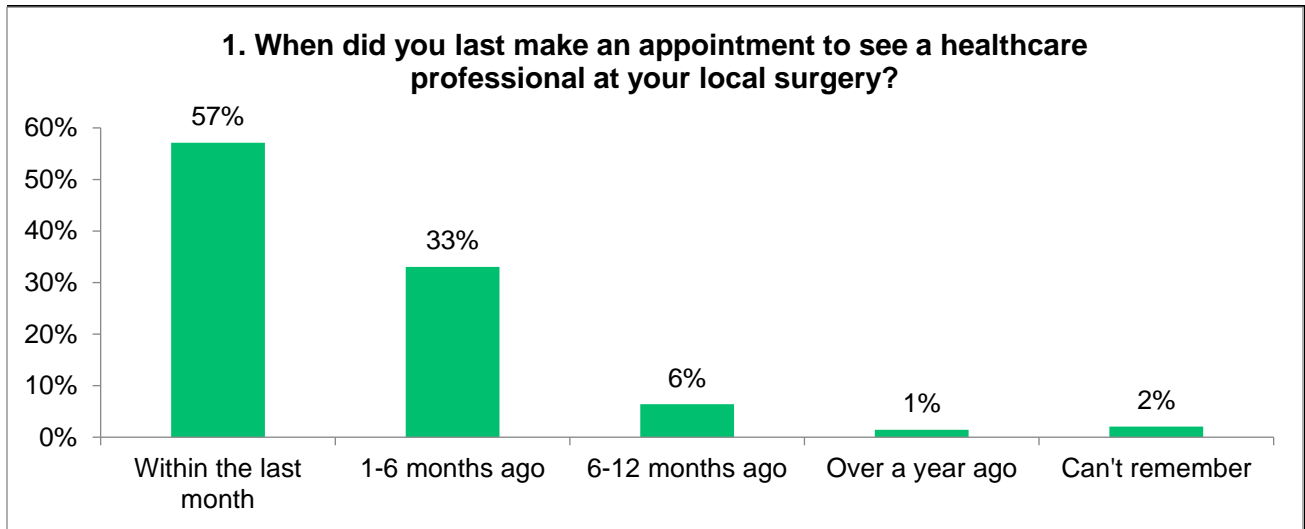
- 2.2 This approach reflected our commitment to interview people in neutral settings, enabling an unconstrained view of their experiences and increasing the value of our findings. Surveys were also circulated to the GP Practice Managers for distribution.
- 2.3 In order to ensure we heard from 'hard to reach' groups of people who may not be able to access or complete the online survey, we ran eight group sessions. These included; Bury People First, Ambition for Ageing, ADAB, Women of Worth, Bury Red Door, Bury Society for the Blind and Eagle's Wing.
- 2.4 These semi-structured discussions were conducted by members of the team and supported by the person/group leader who normally facilitated each group. These discussions were recorded and thematically analysed. Although compared to content analysis, this can be considered less reliable, we were keen not to constrain the data provided and to maintain its richness.

### 3. Findings

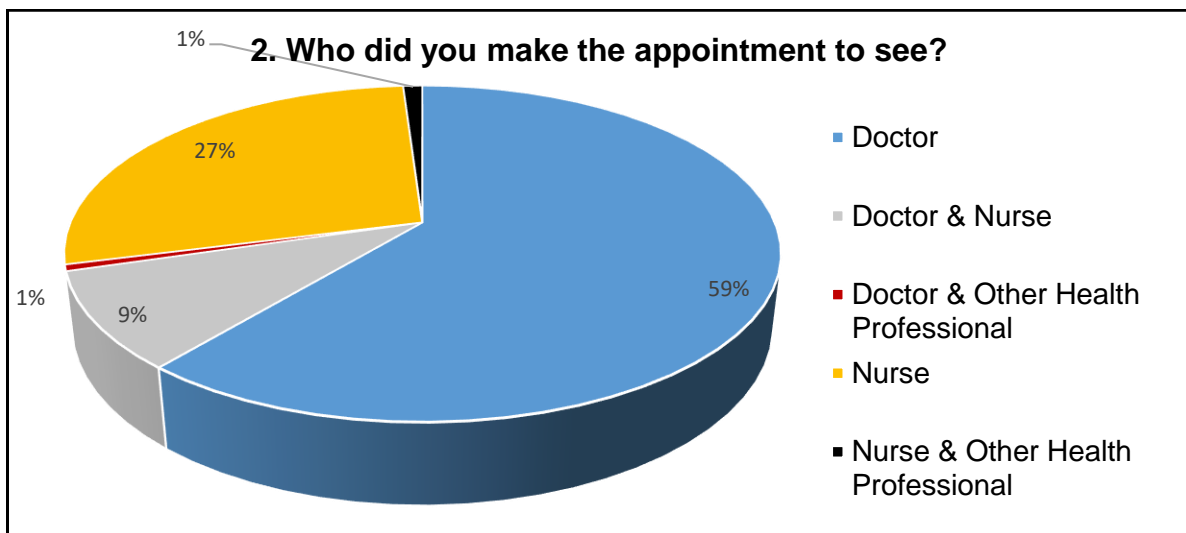
3.1 The following paragraphs outline the findings from the surveys and group discussions

### 4. Appointments

4.1 We received 350 survey responses. Table 1 below shows that 57% of respondents had been to their local surgery in the last month of them completing the survey.

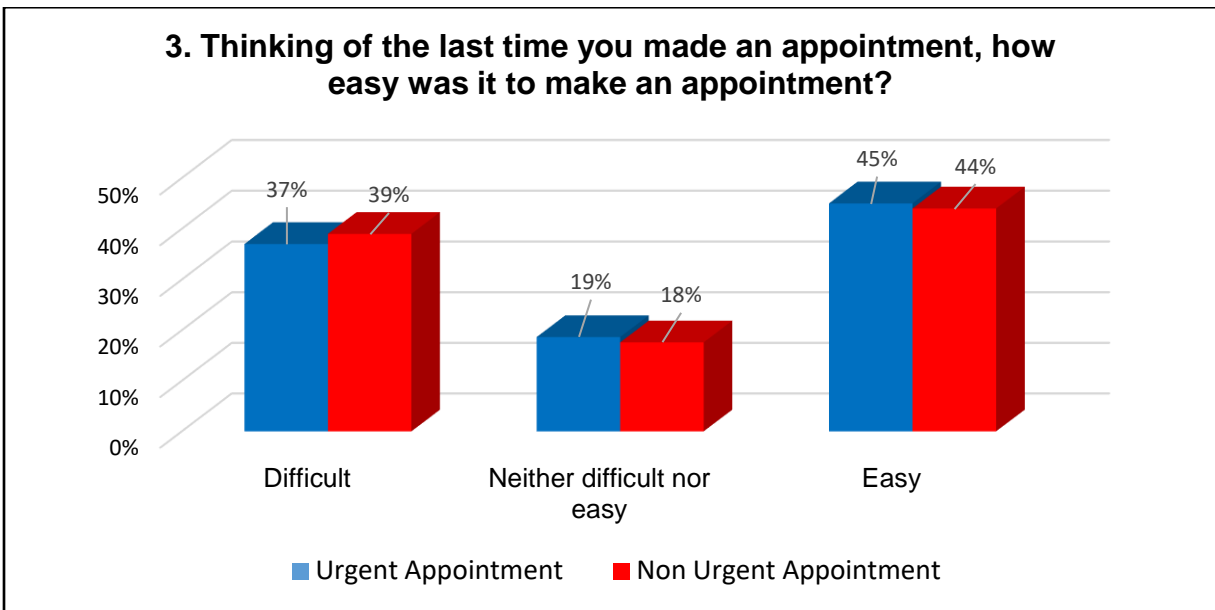


4.2 Although some made an appointment with more than one health professional table 2 shows that 59% of respondent's appointments had been to a doctor only.





4.3 When asked how easy it was to make a non-urgent and urgent appointment the results were very similar with around 37% of respondents finding it difficult and 45% easy:



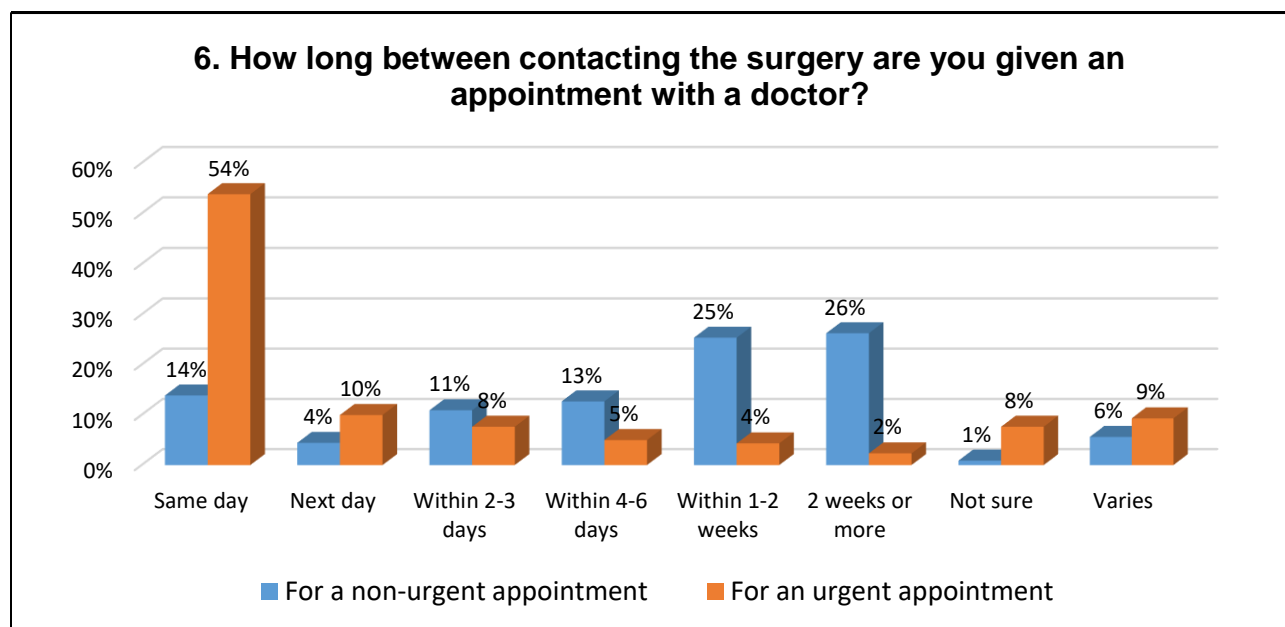
4.4 When broken down by age the split for both the 26-40 and 41-65 age bracket is fairly even between those who found it easy and those who didn't. 50% from ages 16 to 65 found making non urgent appointments difficult but the low respondent numbers need to be taken into consideration when considering this result. The over 66 age group found it easier.

4. Non Urgent Appointments												
Ease	Age											
	16-25		26-40		41-65		66-75		76+		Total	
Difficult	50%	4	44%	22	43%	64	32%	27	26%	9	38%	125
Neither difficult nor easy	12%	1	14%	7	17%	25	16%	14	31%	11	18%	58
Easy	37%	3	41%	20	41%	61	53%	45	42%	15	44%	144
Total	99%	8	99%	49	101%	150	101%	86	99%	35	100%	327

4.5 For urgent appointments it is the 26-65 age group that appear to find making appointments difficult with over 40% finding it difficult. For the 41-65 age group it shows an even split.

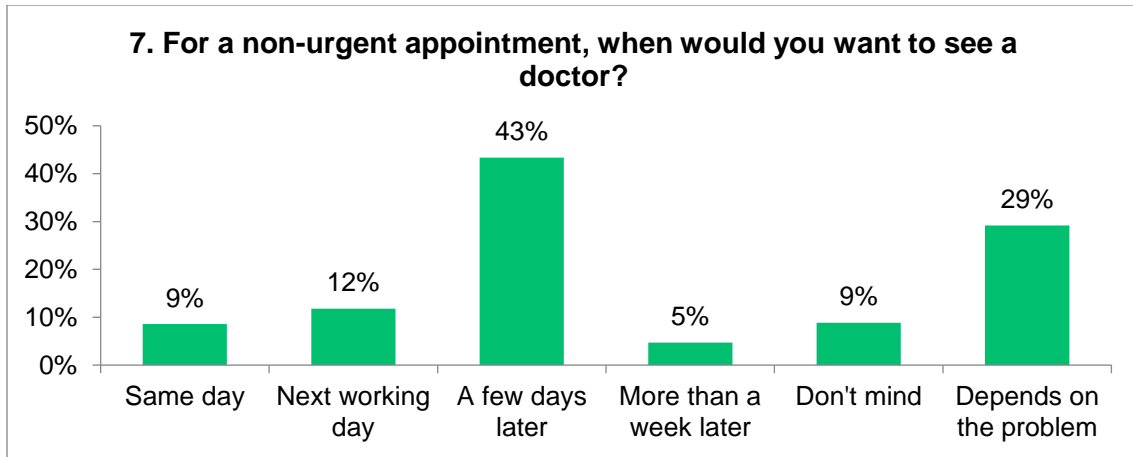
5. Urgent Appointments												
Ease	Age											
	16-25		26-40		41-65		66-75		76+		Total	
Difficult	38%	3	48%	22	41%	60	29%	24	30%	10	38%	118
Neither difficult nor easy	38%	3	13%	6	17%	24	25%	21	15%	5	19%	59
Easy	24%	2	39%	18	41%	60	46%	38	56%	19	44%	137
Total	100%	8	100%	46	99%	144	100%	83	101%	34	100%	314

4.6 The following table shows how long between contacting the surgery that respondents were given an appointment for non-urgent and urgent appointments.



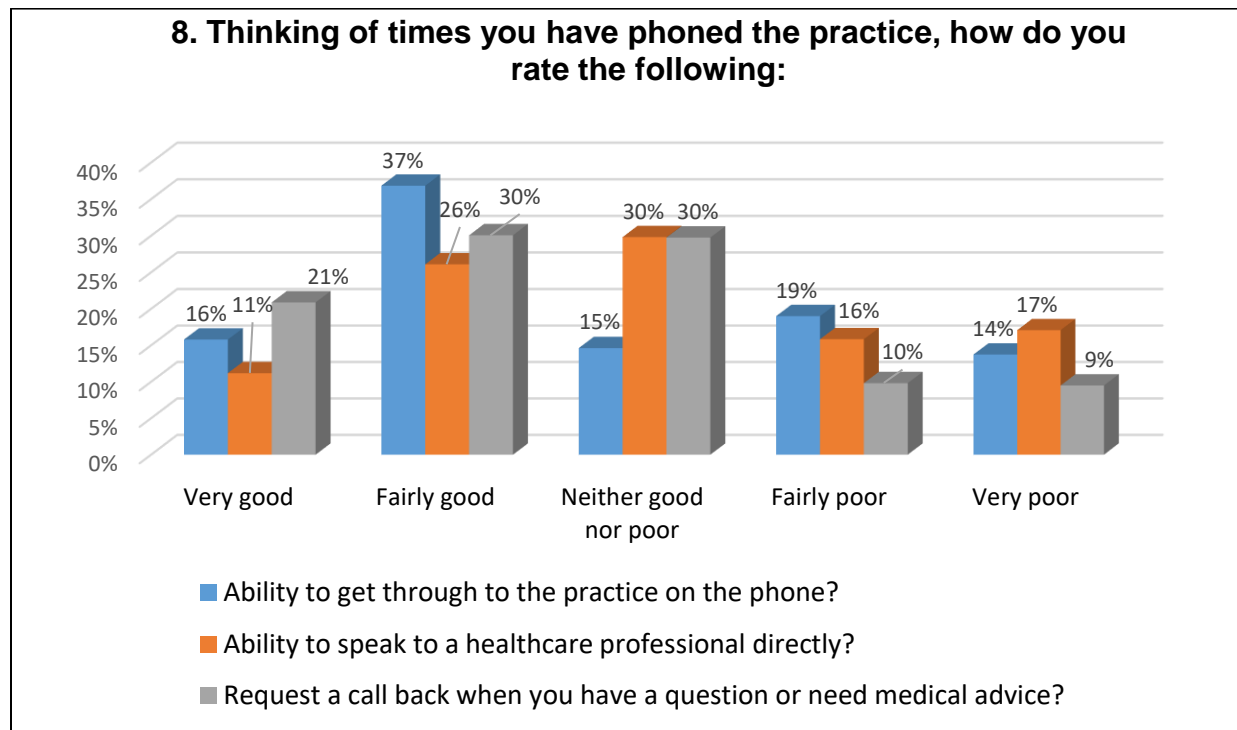
4.7 The data has been broken down further to show by GP practices in the north, south, west and east of the Borough this is attached at appendix 1.

4.8 The table below shows that 43% of respondents stated they would want to see a doctor for a non-urgent appointment within a few days with only 5% stating a week or more, 29% did state that it would depended on what the problem was. Our feedback shows that 26% waited 1-2 weeks before their appointment and a further 26% had to wait 2 weeks or more.



**5. Telephone Contact**

5.1 When asked how they rated contacting the practice by telephone respondents rated their practices as:



5.2 The results are lower than the national survey with 53% saying it was fairly good or very good getting through to the practice on the phone as against 70% in the national GP survey saying it was easy to get through.

## 6. Online Services

6.1 In order to understand if people used the online services we asked which online services their GP practice offered:

9. As far as you know, which of the following online services does your GP offer?												
	Booking appointments online		Ordering repeat prescriptions online		Accessing my medical records online		None of these		Don't know		Total	
16-25	75%	6	75%	6	38%	3	0%	0	0%	0	2%	8
26-40	59%	29	63%	31	10%	5	4%	2	27%	13	15%	49
41-65	68%	101	69%	103	17%	26	5%	7	16%	24	46%	149
66-75	70%	61	77%	67	30%	26	3%	3	10%	9	27%	87
76+	76%	26	82%	28	32%	11	6%	2	6%	2	10%	34
	68%	222	72%	234	22%	71	4%	14	15%	48	100%	326

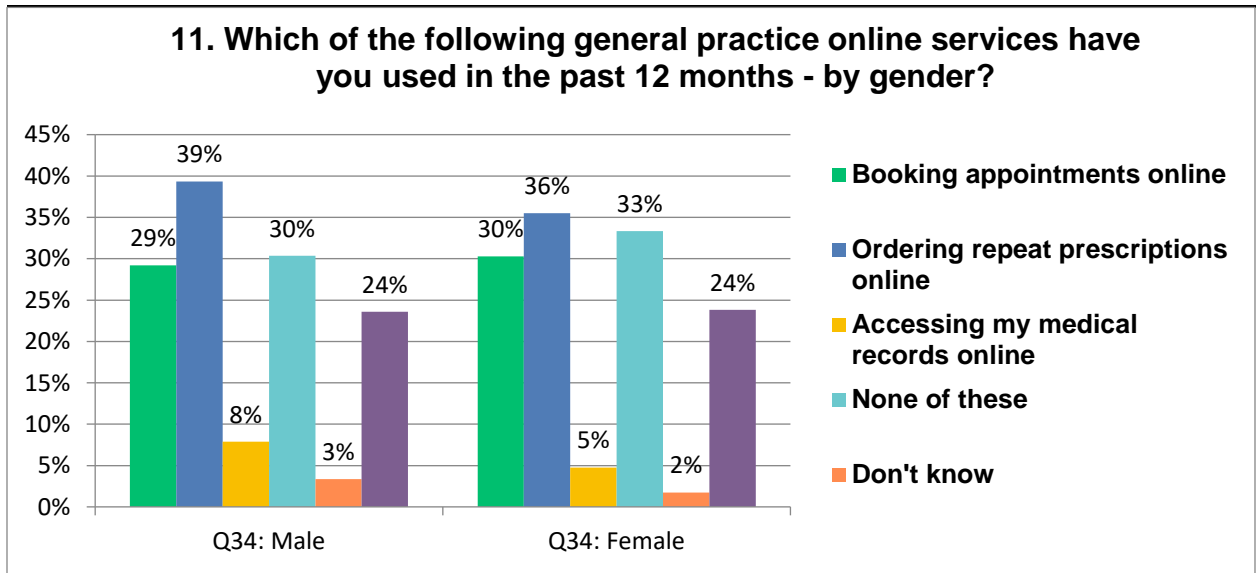
6.2 The results showed a fairly even understanding across ages about the services offered with a lower awareness about accessing medical records online. However, 27% of respondents between the ages of 26-40 who indicated they didn't know what online services their GP surgery offered.

6.3 When asked which of the online services they had used over the past 12 months the results showed a lower take up of online services by the 26-40 age group.

**10. Which of the following general practice online services have you used in the past 12 months?**

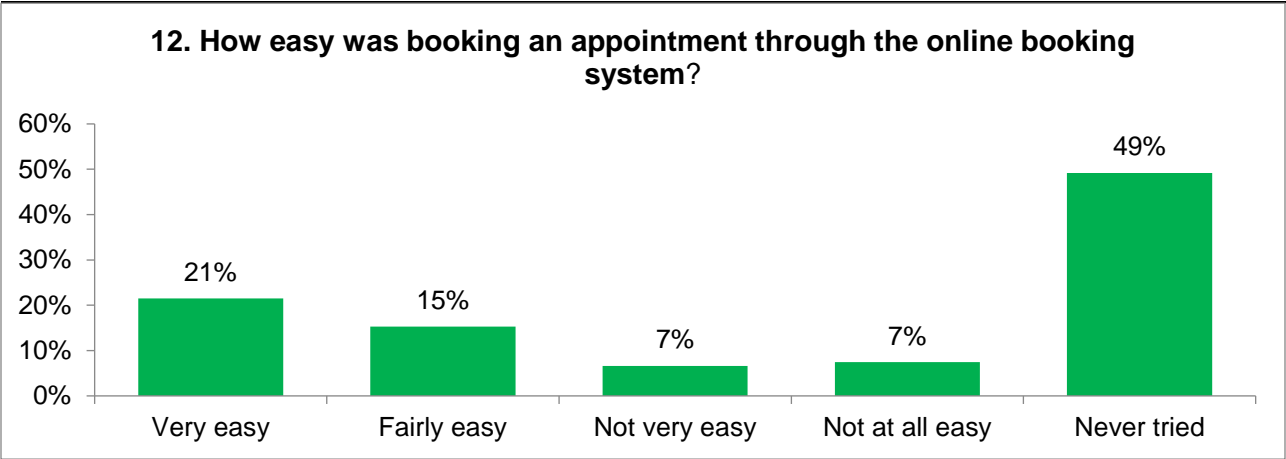
	Booking appointment online		Ordering repeat prescriptions online		Accessing my medical records online		None of these		Don't know		Not registered to use online services		Total	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
16-25	50%	4	38%	3	0%	0	25%	2	0%	0	13%	1	2%	8
26-40	23%	11	23%	11	2%	1	42%	20	6%	3	27%	13	15%	48
41-65	32%	48	39%	57	5%	8	31%	46	1%	2	23%	34	46%	148
66-75	34%	29	48%	41	10%	9	26%	22	2%	2	19%	16	26%	86
76+	14%	5	22%	8	3%	1	44%	16	0%	0	33%	12	11%	36
Total	30%	97	37%	120	6%	19	32%	105	2%	7	23%	76	100%	325

6.4 The table below showed that there is very little difference between which on-line services male or females used.



6.5 Attached at appendix 1 is a table showing the percentage uptake for online appointments and repeat prescriptions by GP practice, plus a summary of information and guidance available on how to access online services. The average online uptake for both appointments and repeat prescriptions is 24%.

6.6 We then asked those who had used the online services how easy it was to book an appointment online.



6.7 When broken down by age it can be seen that a high percentage of the working age group who had responded to this question had not tried the online booking system. From the table below it can be seen that of the 36 who responded from the 26-40 age group 69% had never tried the online booking system.

**13. How easy was booking an appointment through the online booking system? (broken down by age)**

Age	Very easy		Fairly easy		Not very easy		Not at all easy		Never tried		Total	
16-25	14%	1	14%	1	14%	1	14%	1	43%	3	3%	7
26-40	14%	5	14%	5	0%	0	3%	1	69%	25	16%	36
41-65	24%	25	15%	16	10%	11	10%	10	41%	43	46%	105
66-75	26%	17	15%	10	6%	4	8%	5	45%	29	28%	65
76+	17%	3	22%	4	0%	0	0%	0	61%	11	8%	18
Total	22%	51	16%	36	7%	16	7%	17	48%	110	100%	230

6.8 Feedback from the groups would indicate further communication about the service, what the offer is and how it works is also needed:

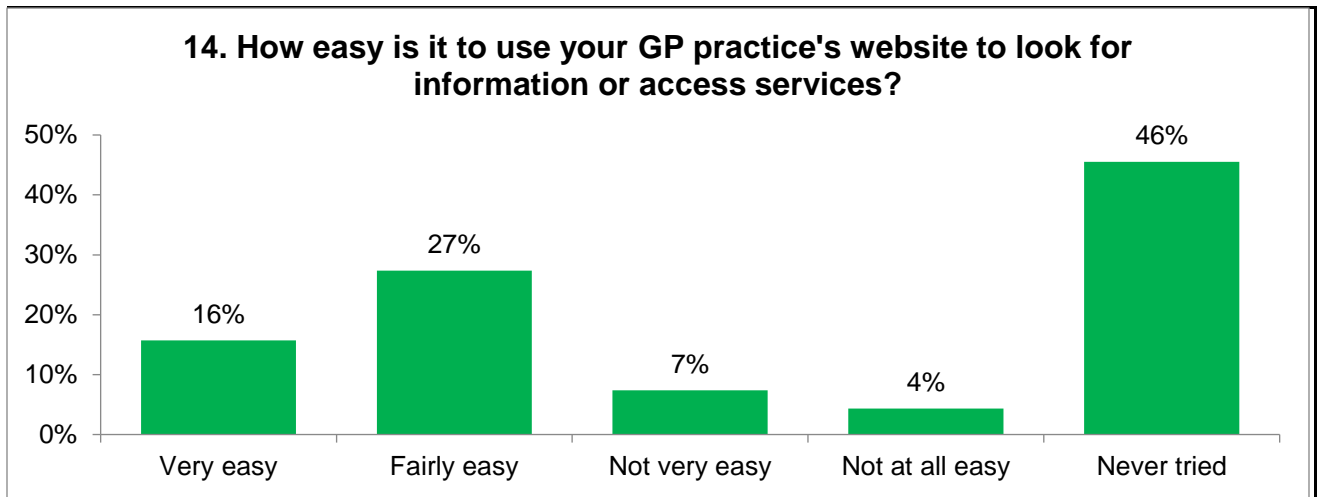
*'I made an appointment online and I was asked on the form why I wanted to see the GP. The GP did not have a clue why I wanted to see him when I got there. Does anyone actually monitor that or do the receptionists pass this information onto the doctors?'*

*'You can't book a double appointment if booking online.'*

*'Is it possible to access my medical records and blood test results online? How do patients go about doing it? What information is patient entitled to immediately?'*

*'I had lots of blood tests done at one point of my life and the receptionist would not provide me with my blood test results. She said I wouldn't understand them even if I had them. I have been a nurse all my life, she made a false assumption about me. The blood results should be available by email.'*

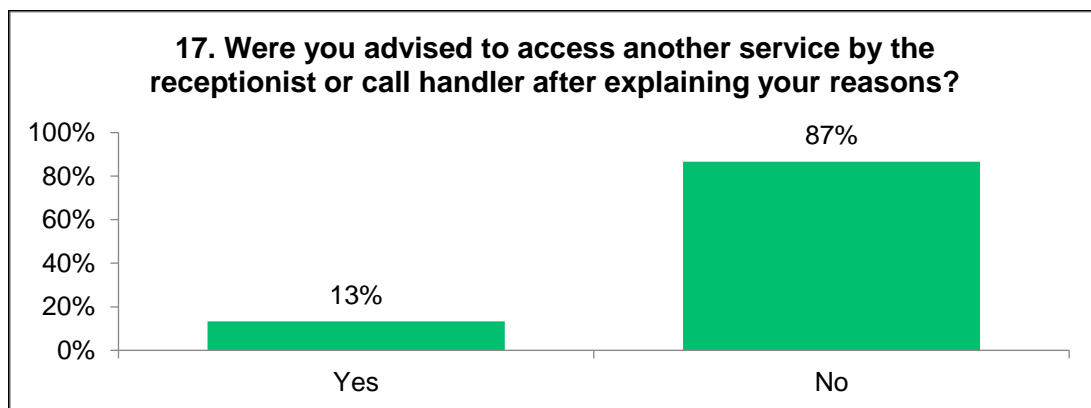
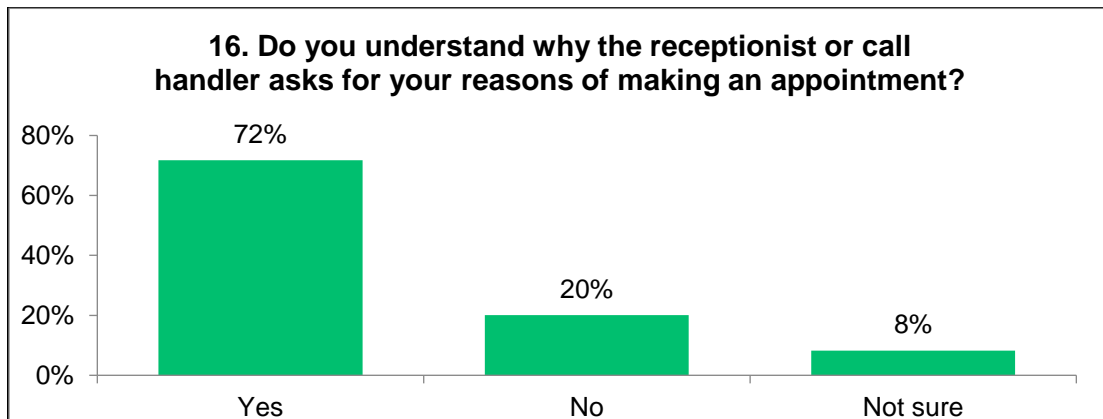
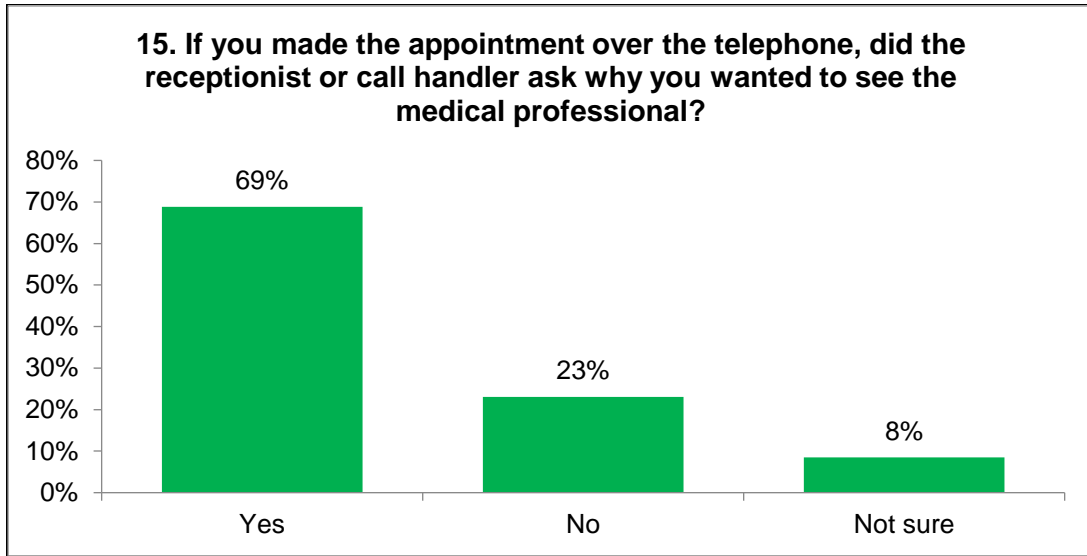
6.9 We asked how easy is it to look for information or access services through their GP practice website.



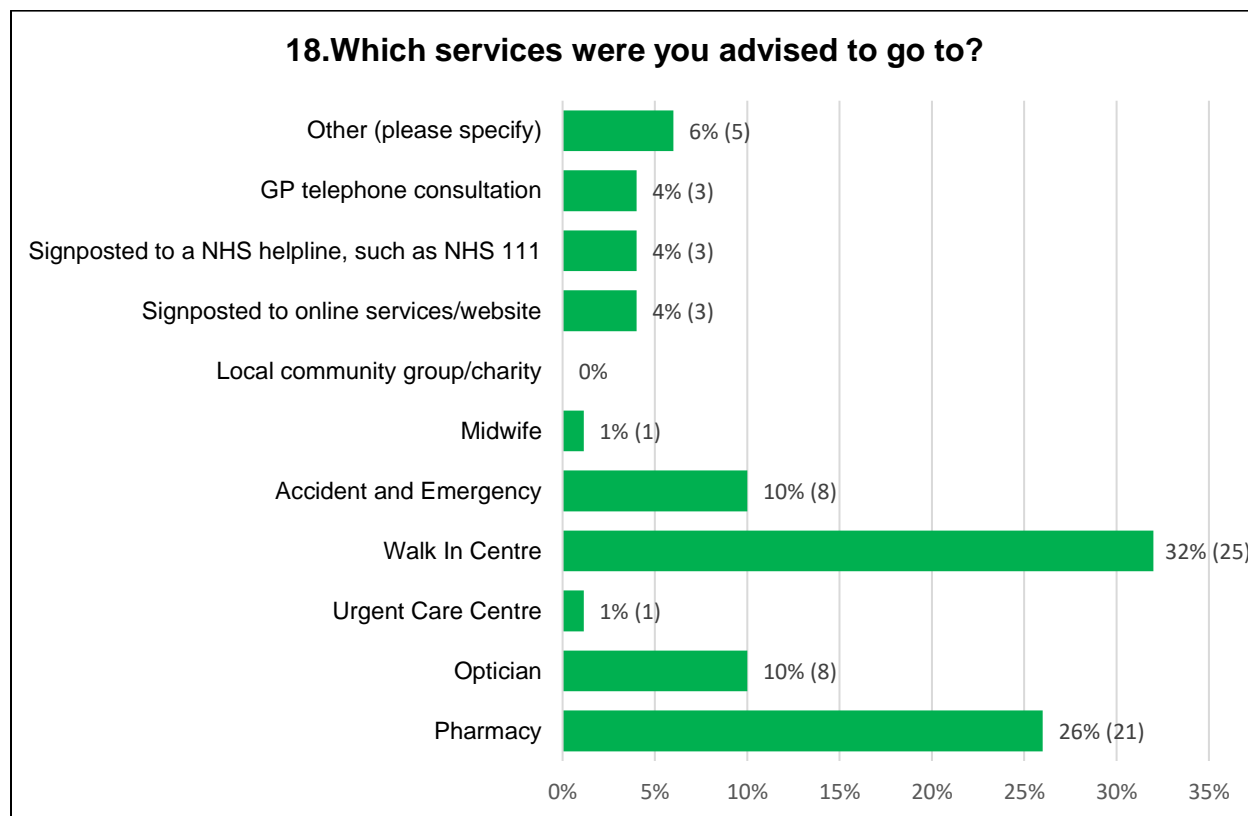
6.10 As the population becomes even more IT savvy and more online services are created an informative and user friendly web site will be key. However, around 46% of respondents had never tried the GP websites which would indicate they still prefer direct contact with their GP practice.

## 7. Receptionist

7.1 Healthwatch Bury often receive negative comments about receptionists triaging patients over the phone so to get more understanding about the issues we asked the following questions:





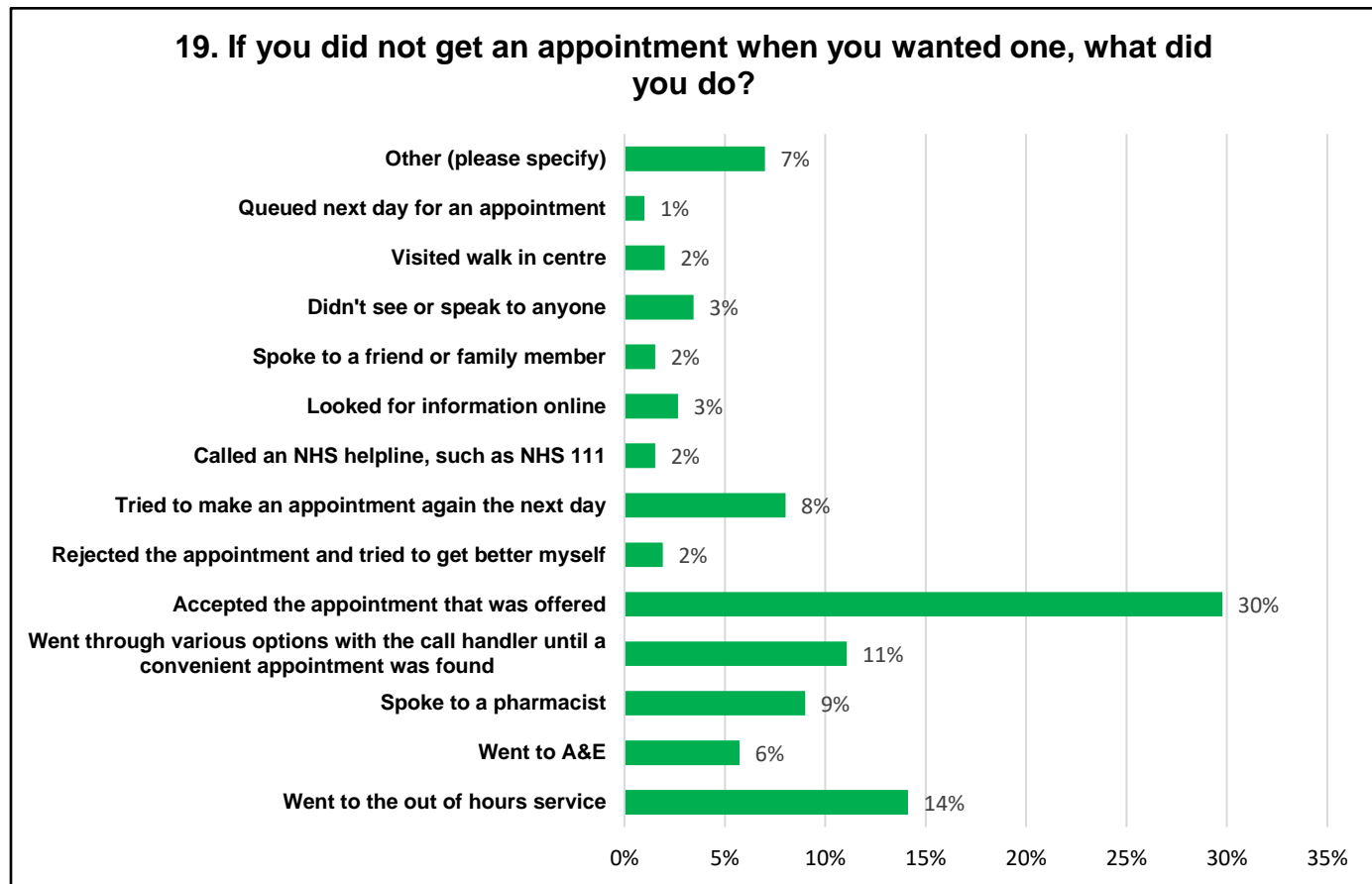


- 7.3 NHS England<sup>5</sup> calculate a reduction of around 5% of demand for GP consultations<sup>7</sup> in most practices when receptionists are trained and able to direct patients to the most appropriate source of help or advice.
- 7.4 It is clear from the results that a number of people are still unsure why receptionists ask this question, more needs to be done to communicate with patients why receptionists ask about the reasons for their appointment to help reassure people that staff are trained and able to advise.
- 7.5 Healthwatch Bury acknowledges the difficult and demanding job that receptionists have and that they often bear the brunt of a patient's frustration, so the more that can be done to help explain to patients why they ask the reason for wanting to see a doctor can only help improve their reputation and patient understanding.

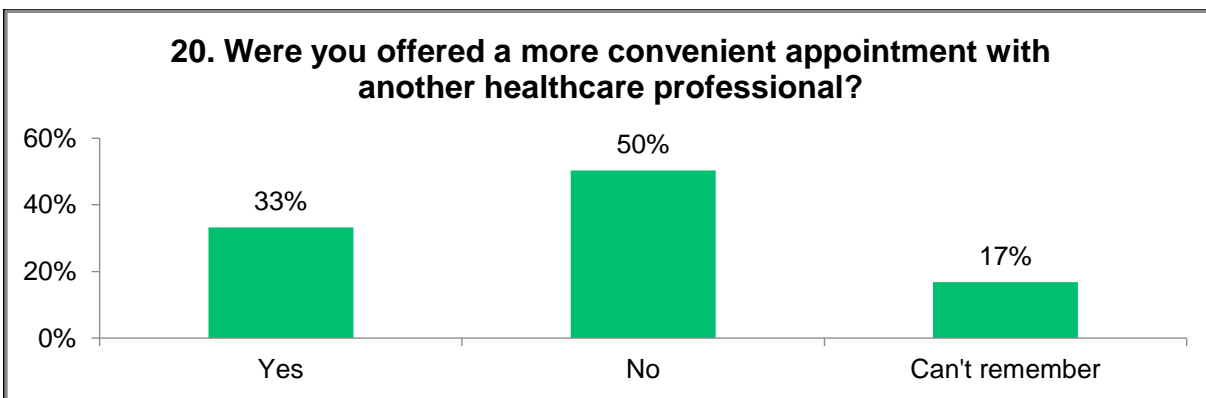
<sup>5</sup> General Practice Forward View - Training for reception and clerical staff, April 2016

## 8 Alternative Action to Appointment

8.1 When patients were asked what they did if they didn't get a GP appointment when they wanted, 250 responded with:



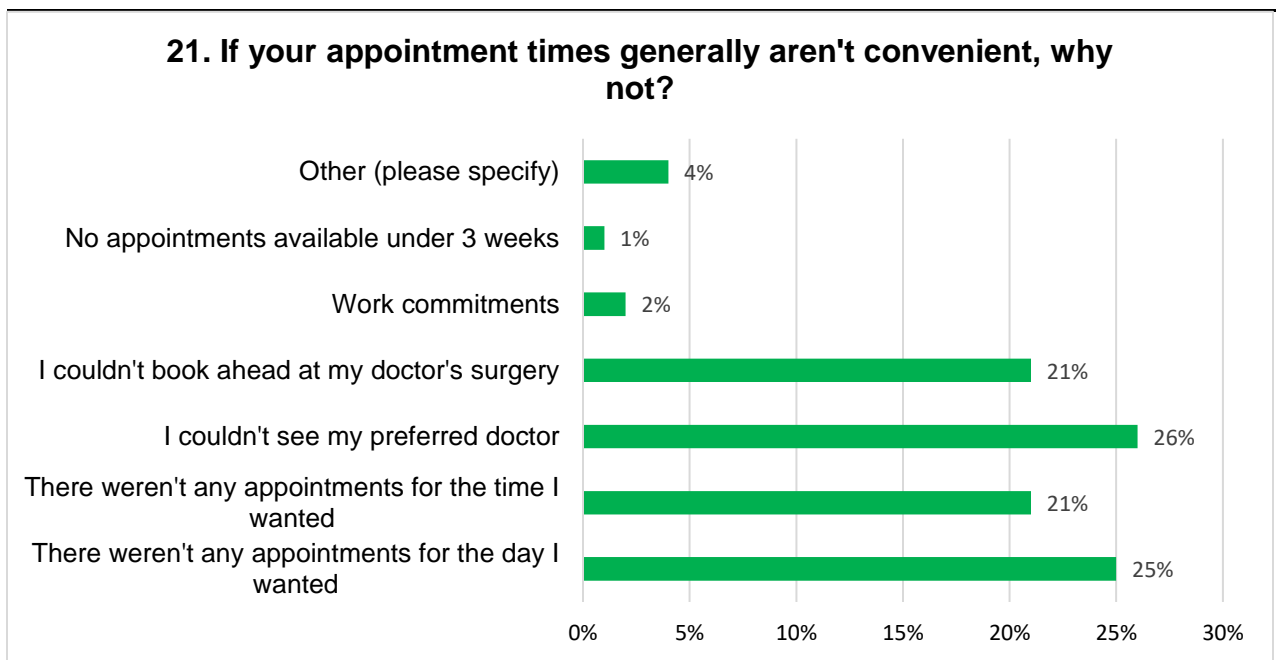
8.2 As shown in the table below only 33% of the 250 respondents to this question were offered an appointment with another healthcare professional when unable to get an appointment with their doctor.



8.3 The NHS long term plan<sup>6</sup> indicates greater commitment and funding to social prescribing which will provide further opportunity to expand and increase the Bury offer across both clinical and voluntary services. To help ensure the offer meets patient needs it will be key to engage them in the design of new initiatives such as social prescribing from the start and to ensure that part of the planning includes how to meet all communication needs.

## 9. Convenience

9.1 To try and understand the issues around appointments we asked whether inconvenient times were a contributing factor. We had 209 responses with the following:



9.2 Of those respondents 26% (56) indicated that they couldn't see their preferred doctor and of those 61% (34) had a long term health condition.

9.3 Research in 2003<sup>7</sup> showed that continuity of care was a higher priority for people with a long term health condition, older people and more vulnerable people.

<sup>6</sup> NHS Long Term Plan, January 2019, <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/nhs-long-term-plan.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Nutting PA, Goodwin MA, Flocke SA, Zyzanski SJ, Stange KC (2003). 'Continuity of primary care: to whom does it matter and when?'. *Ann Fam Med*, vol 1, pp 149–55

More recent research published online in June 2018, from the University of Exeter and University of Manchester found *“that that increased continuity of care by doctors is associated with lower mortality rates. Although all the evidence is observational, patients across cultural boundaries appear to benefit from continuity of care with both generalist and specialist doctors. Many of these articles called for continuity to be given a higher priority in healthcare planning. Despite substantial, successive, technical advances in medicine, interpersonal factors remain important”*.<sup>8</sup>

- 9.4 Feedback from the group sessions also support the views that patients with long term health conditions and those who are elderly prefer to see the same GP :

*“I have had a good service from my GP and I see the same doctor. They know my background and my heart problems.”*

*“Every time I go I see a different GP, with long term health conditions this is difficult as unsure what they know. I have to start again at every appointment.”*

*“Lack of consistency around the GP which you see, can impact further, inappropriate medication can be prescribed leaving the patient struggling and having to make another appointment and it can affect the Personal Independence Payments which can have a huge impact on the patient.”*

*“There is no consistency and I often see locum doctors. I saw a locum doctor on Saturday morning and they were unable to access my medical history and medical records. How can they make a judgement about me without knowing my medical background?”*

- 9.5 While continuity of care in general practice is valued, it is in decline in England. The National GP Patient Survey 2018<sup>9</sup> revealed the proportion of patients in England who were able to see their preferred doctor fell from 65.3% in 2012 to 50% 2018 (Ipsos MORI, 2018). Given the growing prevalence of complex, long-term health conditions, ageing population and increasing frailty, there is an ever growing need for improved care coordination and continuity.

- 9.7 A report from the Health Foundation (a charity providing grants for healthcare research and policy analysis) found *that continuity of care is an aspect of general practice valued by patients and GPs alike. However, it seems to be in decline in England. .... This comes at a time when there is a need for better coordinated*

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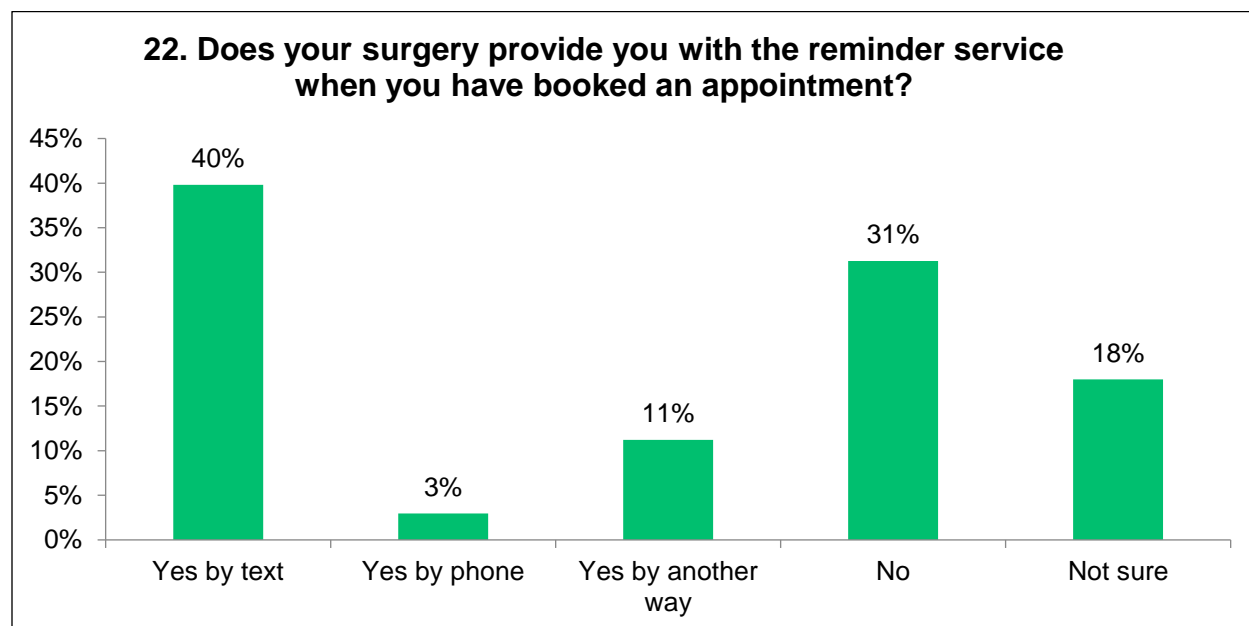
<sup>8</sup> Gray DJP, Sidaway-Lee K, White E, et al. [Continuity of care with doctors—a matter of life and death? A systematic review of continuity of care and mortality](#), BMJ Open/ Published online June 28 2018

<sup>9</sup> 2018 GP Patient Survey; <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/2018-gp-patient-survey-results-released>

care, particularly because of the growing prevalence of long-term conditions and an increasing number of frail and older people<sup>10</sup>.

## 10. Reminder Services

10.1 When asked if their GP practice provided a reminder service 31% stated no with a further 18% unsure.



## 11. Communication Needs

11.1 When asked if they required assistance when attending their appointment only a small proportion 9% (32) required support from a family member, friend, carer or someone else and only 1% (3) required a BSL interpreter.

11.2 We asked respondents if their GP practice met their communication needs of which 5% (16) said no and 5% (17) said sometimes:

<sup>10</sup> Deeny, S., Gardner, T., Al-Zaidy, S., Barker, I., Steventon, A. (2017). Reducing hospital admissions by improving continuity of care in general practice [online]. London, The Health Foundation.



11.3 Although on the whole most found their communication needs met we received a number of comments that for those who have hearing impairment it can be quite difficult:

*“Hard to lip read”*

*“Very hard to lip read doctor”*

*“Didn’t face me when talking sometimes*

*“Due to deafness, need doctor to face me before they talk”*

*“I wear hearing aids in both ears, there is no working loop system as far as I am aware and the staff do not seem to have had deaf awareness training”*

11.4 We also received comments that showed for some who have mobility issues accessing the surgery can be problematical:

*“I use a wheelchair for mobility. I can walk a small amount but one of the actual surgery rooms is inaccessible for a wheelchair so my husband parks me outside the room and I walk in. I don’t think the Dr. is even aware I use a wheelchair which they need to do if they’re ever contacted by the DWP”.*

*“Access is not good for wheelchair users impossible by side entrance pathetic ramp at front”.*

11.5 For the homeless it can also be difficult. A support worker explained that many of their service users are complex cases with mental health issues, and struggle to access any help. They felt that the only mental health service in Bury seemed to be Healthy Minds which have very long waiting times. He felt that service users do not seem to receive much help and support workers go along with them to ensure they are being listened to. He also observed that when Support Workers accompany the service users, the attitude of the health professionals towards them (service users) is completely different.

11.6 Dual diagnosis was also highlighted as an issue for the homeless. The service users with mental health issues find they cannot get any help for their mental health condition if they also have other existing addiction(s).

11.7 Overall the group of refugees and asylum seekers had over all positive experiences with getting interpreters:

*'I am registered with the X practice. I went to see the receptionist and made an appointment. I booked an interpreter but they weren't there when I went to see m GP. I was unable to explain myself without an interpreter.'*

*'I speak Suahili and rang the receptionist at the Y Surgery. I wanted to book an interpreter and when I got to my appointment the interpreter was there, the interpreter was great and so was Doctor J. The receptionist was really friendly.'*

*'I am registered with the XX and go with my son. I find it easy to book an interpreter.'*

*'I am with the XX and also find it easy to book an interpreter.'*

*'I come from Rwanda and I am with the doctor at the XX. I speak French and usually use the Language Line and have had good experiences.'*

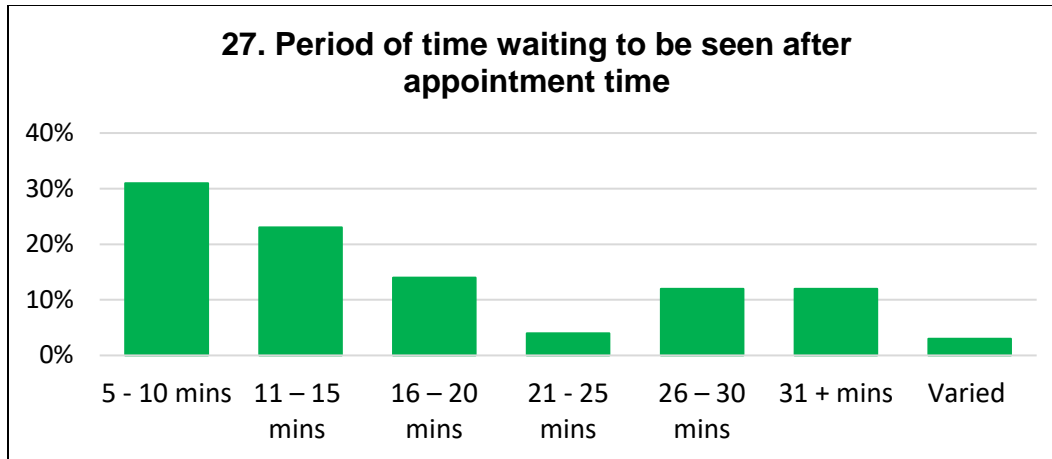
11.8 The group leader felt that a weekly drop in for people who can't speak English where they would be able to get help with completing forms and making appointments with the doctor, hospital or social worker would be beneficial.

11.9 One patient had very positive experience *"I used to be with xxx when I lived in Bury and the receptionists and doctors were fantastic. They were aware of my mental health issues and made sure I was sat away from other people and felt comfortable.'*

11.10 One respondent specifically asked to have *a confidential booth to speak with the receptionist at the Health Centre*, the comment was very detailed and although not printable showed how uncomfortable people are in having to explain what they want to see their GP about when other patients can hear them.

## **12. Waiting Times**

12.1 We asked people to indicate the time they had to wait to see their GP if their appointment was not on time, 178 responded. The table below shows that the majority of those waited between 5-10 minutes:



- 12.2 In 2016 the British Journal of General Practice<sup>11</sup> wrote *“the key belief we formed was that the waiting room is much more than a transit zone between home, the outside world, and the GP. The waiting room environment deserves to be considered from a variety of psychological, philosophical, spiritual, and architectural angles to reduce the possibility of feelings of loss of control, fear, and anxiety and to promote calm and readiness to engage in health matters”*.
- 12.3 So given the amount of time people are in GP waiting rooms it may well be worth considering the Journals advice for *“more careful attention to be paid to the effects of surroundings on the waiting experience and smarter use of this ‘dead’ time could result in individuals’ better attunement to their health needs and their solutions, greater clarity about what to ask of their GP, and a reduction in stress. Together with a greeting and show of hospitality this could make for a more therapeutic, less passive healthcare conversation”*.
- 12.4 Certainly feedback from the groups indicated that more was needed to make waiting rooms more attractive and designed to be dementia, autistic friendly. For example computerised touch screens are not suitable for the majority of people with learning disabilities, they are unable to use them without their parents/carers assisting them.

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<sup>11</sup> The GP waiting room under examination - Gary Clapton, Br J Gen Pract 2016; 66 (646): 260. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp16X6>



### 13. Telephone Consultation

28. Have you ever had or been offered a telephone consultation with your GP?								
Age	Yes		No		I did not know it was an option		Total	
16-25	63%	5	38%	3	0%	0	2%	8
26-40	65%	32	31%	15	4%	2	15%	49
41-65	79%	115	19%	28	2%	3	45%	146
66-75	74%	62	24%	20	2%	2	26%	84
76+	86%	30	9%	3	6%	2	11%	35
Total	76%	243	22%	69	3%	9	100%	321

- 13.1 Research<sup>12</sup> showed into the telephone first approach “shows that many problems in General Practice can be dealt with over the phone. The approach does not suit all patients or practices and is not a panacea for meeting demand. There was no evidence to support claims that the approach would, on average, save costs or reduce use of secondary care”.
- 13.2 76% of respondents were offered a telephone consultation with only 3% not being aware it was an option.

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<sup>12</sup> Evaluation of telephone first approach to demand management in English general practice: observational study, BMJ 2017; 358 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.j4197> (Published 27 September 2017)

## 14. Opening Times & Extended Hours

- 14.1 From table 30 below it can be seen that just over a third of respondents between the ages of 26 and 65 were not aware of the opening times of their GP practice.

<b>29. Do you know the opening times of your surgery?</b>						
	Yes		No		Total	
16-25	88%	7	13%	1	2%	8
26-40	67%	33	33%	16	15%	49
41-65	64%	94	36%	54	45%	148
66-75	80%	70	20%	17	27%	87
76+	94%	34	6%	2	11%	36
Total	73%	238	27%	89	100%	327

- 14.2 When asked if they had heard about the extended opening hours over a third of respondents across all ages were not aware.

<b>30. Have you heard about the extended opening hours to GP services across Bury?</b>						
Age	Yes		No		Total	
16-25	25%	2	75%	6	2%	8
26-40	57%	28	45%	22	15%	49
41-65	61%	91	39%	58	46%	149
66-75	65%	55	35%	30	26%	85
76+	69%	24	31%	11	11%	35
Total	62%	200	39%	126	100%	325

- 14.3 Although 62% of respondents had heard about extended opening hours only around 17% had utilized that service. There appeared very little difference when looked at by gender with 41% of men and 38% of women not having heard about the extended opening hours.

<b>31. Have you ever booked an appointment with your GP for during the extended opening hours (6.30-8pm on a weekday or 8am - 6pm at weekends?)</b>								
Age	Yes		No		Occasionally		Total	
16-25	13%	1	88%	7	0%	0	2%	8
26-40	24%	12	73%	36	2%	1	15%	49
41-65	17%	25	79%	118	4%	6	46%	149
66-75	16%	14	82%	70	1%	1	26%	85
76+	11%	4	83%	30	6%	2	11%	36
Total	17%	56	80%	260	3%	10	100%	326

14.4 There was a slight difference when compared by gender with more women using the extended hours service.

<b>32. Have you ever booked an appointment with your GP during the extended opening hours (6.30-8pm on a weekday or 8am - 6pm at weekends?)</b>								
	Yes		No		Occasionally		Total	
Male	14%	12	85%	75	1%	1	27%	88
Female	19%	44	77%	181	4%	9	73%	234
Total	17%	56	80%	256	3%	10	100%	322

14.5 When asked why they hadn't used the extended opening hours around 30% of respondents didn't know about the extended opening hours and around 45% stated they had never needed to use them.

14.6 When broken down by ages it can be seen that that there was a higher percentage of people in the working age bracket that didn't know about the extended opening hours, which would indicate a need to raise awareness of the service to that age group.

33. Why people haven't used the extended opening hours														
Age	I did not know about the extended opening hours		I can only get to my GP surgery during the usual opening hours (8am - 6.30pm)		I prefer accessing the GP surgery during the usual opening hours (8am - 6.30pm)		Never needed to use the extended opening hours		Never offered		Other		Total	
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
16-25	71%	5	0%	0	0%	0	25%	2	0%	0	0%	0	3%	7
26-40	45%	17	8%	3	3%	1	34%	13	5%	2	5%	2	14%	38
41-65	34%	41	5%	6	15%	18	36%	44	2%	2	8%	10	45%	121
66-75	18%	13	3%	2	11%	8	63%	45	1%	1	3%	2	27%	71
76+	24%	7	3%	1	17%	5	55%	16	0%	0	0%	0	11%	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>266</b>

**15. Improving Services**

15.1 We asked respondents what they felt could improve the process of making an appointment. Many recognized that demand outstrips GP capacity and accepted that this would have an impact on how soon they could get an appointment.

15.2 The patient suggestions have been grouped into the following themes:

- A queuing system for telephone calls**  
 There were a high number of respondents who stated that having a queuing system for the phone calls would improve the process of making an appointment. It would also help people to know how much longer they have to wait.

Note: Some GP surgeries in Bury already have that system in place.

- Extra phone lines**  
 This was one of the most frequent answers, patients felt that this would resolve the issue of being on the phone for a long time when trying to book an appointment.

- **Easier access to online appointments and being able to manage GP appointment via mobile application**

Many patients stated that easier access to online appointments would improve the process of making an appointment. Booking appointments online is currently provided by all bar one of the GP practices in Bury.

When registering for online services patients are required to take their identification to be verified at their practice. It is understandably important to ensure the right people access the services but often the patient will have to go back to a surgery with the relevant identification (ID) which can delay the process with people simply forgetting to take their ID with them the next time they have an appointment if they hadn't made a specific effort to go.

- **A mechanism to offer cancelled appointments to patients who need them and bring in penalties to those who do not cancel their appointments.**

- **More telephone consultations available and offered to patients**

A number of patients would welcome telephone consultations with their doctor as it would save time spent on travelling and waiting at the surgery.

- **Appointments available in the evenings and weekends.**

This is the service that is already being offered by the GP surgeries in Bury. More awareness raising might be helpful as it could reduce the waiting times and give people more flexibility.

- **Review GP receptionists' training**

This was suggested on a number of occasions. The main issues stated were about improving staff attitude and raising awareness of different communication and access needs.

- **Make a triage process more patient friendly**

As previously highlighted, some patients do not fully understand the reasons behind receptionists asking personal questions when making an appointment. Some people stated that knowing why the receptionist has to ask about the reason for them wanting to see their GP via a phone message or poster at the surgery would help to make it more acceptable. A number of respondents would prefer having a qualified clinician to carry out the triage.

- **Continuity of care**

As previously highlighted, having an option to see the same GP was really important for the patients. It makes a significant difference to the care for people who are elderly, have a caring responsibility or have long term conditions.

- **Waiting rooms suitable for different needs.**

This was particularly important for people with learning disabilities, autism, mental health issues, people who have a hearing impairment or a visual impairment.

- **Updating support groups and local charities**

A number of individuals and local community group representatives were interested to find out about extended GP Opening hours and different ways of getting in touch with a doctor. A number indicated that they would welcome a representative from the NHS/CCG to meet with them and present to their members regular updates on new initiatives such as e-consultation, telephone consultations and the online booking system. They asked for this to include training appropriate for their needs so that their members could fully understand and know how to access any new initiatives which they would otherwise miss out on without such bespoke support.

## **16. Conclusion**

The demand on GP's practices is ever increasing, there have been a number of initiatives introduced to help in managing this pressure, such as extended opening hours. The results from the survey show that more is needed to communicate any new services to patients, particularly those of working age. For patients with particular impairments, such as sensory, additional face to face advice and training would be welcomed.

Changing how services are delivered will help improve patient care but will not meet patient need, if they are not aware or involved in designing the services. Greater co-production with patients is key to ensuring services meet and deliver the impact expected, for both GP's and service users.

## 17. Recommendations

Healthwatch Bury recommend the following:

- i. Build into the equality impact assessment how patients:
  - a. will be informed about new initiatives and services on offer at GP Practices.
  - b. include any identified training needs to support people to access those services
- ii. Ensure patients and local groups are integral to the development and co-production process, including how best to educate patients in using those services
- iii. Provide regular briefings on GP practice services to Healthwatch Bury and the Voluntary, Community and Faith alliance (VCFA), so this can then be circulated across the third sector and other relevant groups
- iv. Provide regular briefings and communication resources such as posters on GP practice services to businesses so they can then be circulated through their internal communication channels such as intranets and team meetings
- v. Improve awareness on why receptionists triage patients through all healthcare websites, in the practices and wider health organisations such as pharmacies and opticians to help patients understand why they may be redirected to other services
- vi. When redesigning or updating waiting rooms for GP practices to liaise with PPGs, local groups and charities to help ensure their needs are built into the design process

## Appendix 1

GP Surgery	Info and Guidance how to access GP surgery online services	Data from the NHS Choices website – as at 31.1.19		
		Notes	Uptake for online appointments	Uptake for repeat prescriptions
<b>Minden Family Practice (Anchor, Yacht and Wave)</b>	Easy to find information regarding online appointments and repeat prescriptions services. FAQ available on the website.		29.54%	27.04%
<b>Rock Healthcare</b>	Easy to find information regarding online services. Clear instructions for booking appointments and registering with the surgery.		25.01%	25.41%
<b>Walmersley Road Surgery</b>	Easy to find information re: online booking appointments, FAQ available on the website.		0.03%	The service is not available.
<b>Peel GPs</b>	Very clear instructions, very easy to find information regarding online appointments, repeat prescriptions and medical records.		17.93%	17.83%
<b>Ribblesdale Medical Practice</b>	Very clear instructions, very easy to find information re: online booking appointments and repeat prescriptions. Info available on the front page and in categories with pictures.	Patient survey on the website. Also info re: Summary Care Records	29.14%	26.30%

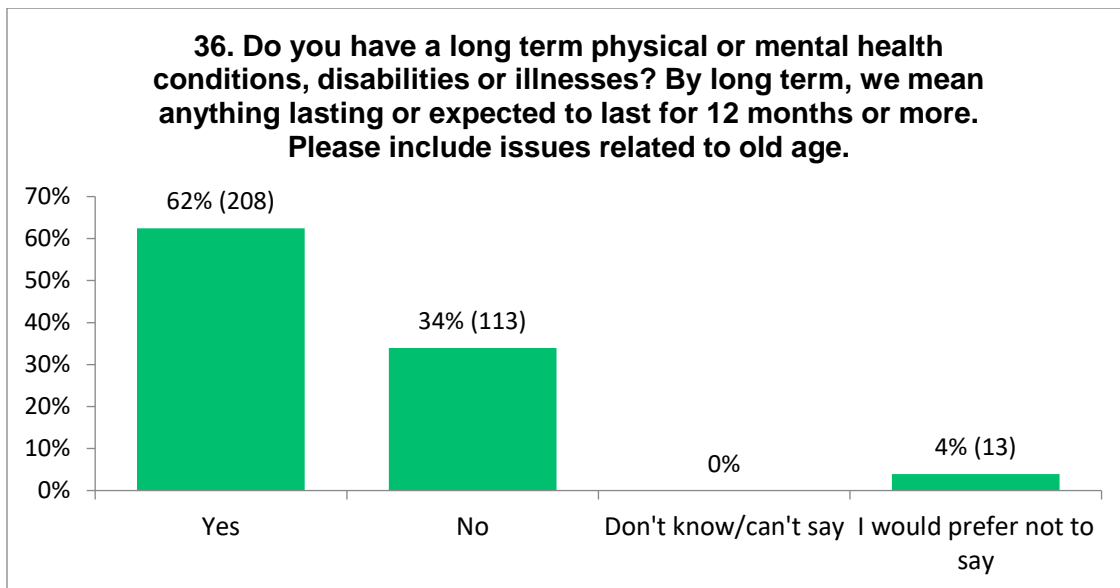
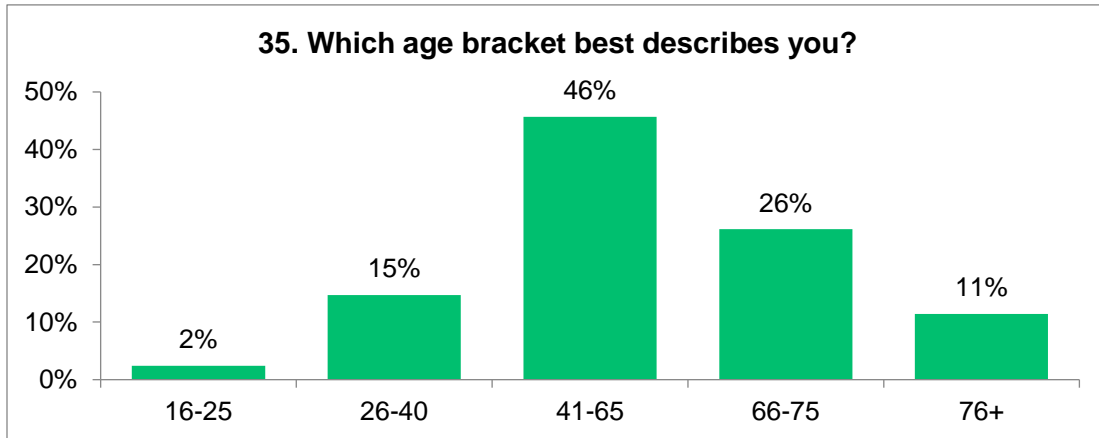
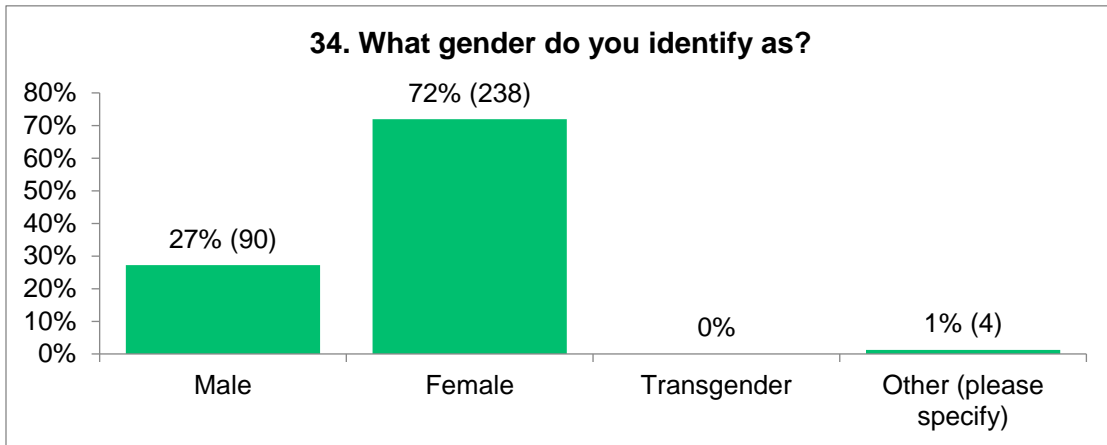


<b>Townside Surgery</b>	Very clear instructions, very easy to find information re: online booking appointments and repeat prescriptions. Information available on the front page and in categories with pictures.		24.02%	24.14%
<b>Knowsley Medical Centre</b>	No website but online booking system available via the NHS Choices or visiting patient-services.co.uk		7.92%	7.14%
<b>Huntley Mount Medical Centre</b>	Information re: online services easily accessible and visible	Currently moving from Vision Online to Patientservices.co.uk website.	5.64%	4.49%
<b>Woodbank Surgery</b>	Easy to find appointments but two hyperlinks on the page and one redirects patients to the Vision Online and the other one to the Patient Services .... Might be confusing for the patients. Not much info regarding online booking system on the website, suggests patients contacting the surgery. Information re: repeat prescriptions clear and easy to understand.	Extended opening hours only offered on Tuesdays.	27.65%	27.65%
<b>Blackford House Medical Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		22.91%	22.92%

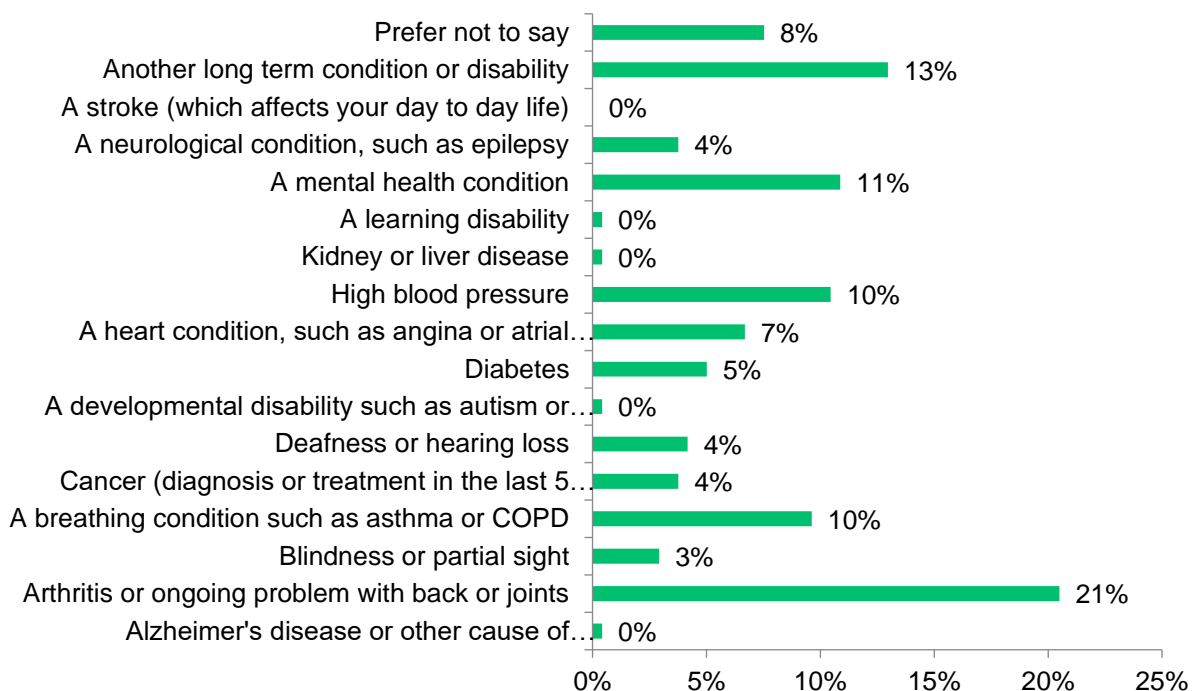
<b>Mile Lane Health Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.	Online services available Vision Online services	9.54%	9.00%
<b>Monarch Medical Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		21.77%	21.29%
<b>Tottington Health Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.	Practice website noticeboard had a message on to say that patients might experience difficulties with their online booking system.	35.57%	25.03%
<b>Unsworth Health Centre</b>	Easy to find the link for booking appointments online although couldn't find anywhere on the website information in regards to registering with online services.	The website had info on re: online appointments soon be available on the mobile apps.	36.85%	36.33%
<b>Spring Lane Medical Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		Not available	Not available
<b>Greenmount Medical Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		35.57%	25.06%
<b>The RLC Surgery</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		25.01%	25.48%
<b>Radcliffe Medical Practice</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		14.40%	14.41%
<b>Redbank Group Practice</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		25.98%	25.50%

<b>Garden City Medical Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website. Information in categories and visually attractive.		30.31%	29.65%
<b>The Elms Medical Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.	E consult available on the front page for patients	15.37%	14.21%
<b>The Uplands Medical Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website. Information in categories and visually attractive.		37.30%	32.94%
<b>Ramsbottom Group Practice</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		27.58%	22.42%
<b>The Birches Medical Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		24.89%	24.93%
<b>Greyland Medical Centre</b>	Online appointments are not yet available. Information regarding online repeat prescriptions easily accessible on the website.		Online Booking is not available yet	32.93%
<b>Longfield Medical Practice</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		29.27%	29.57%
<b>Fairfax Group Practice</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		31.69%	29.56%
<b>Whittaker Lane Medical Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		43.50%	43.99%
<b>St Gabriel's Medical Centre</b>	Online services easily accessible and visible on the website.		18.03%	18.07%

## Demographics

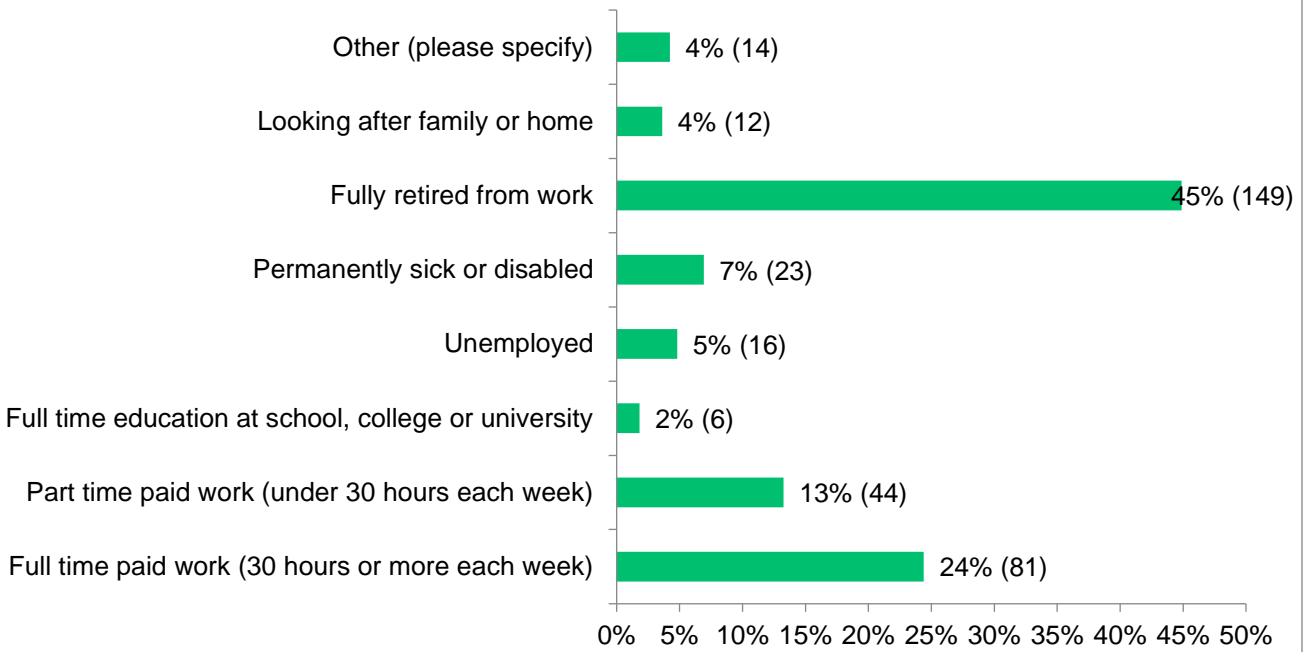


**37. If you answered 'Yes' to Q36 please choose from the options below which of the following long term condition(s) do you have?**



<b>What is your ethnicity?</b>		
Answer Choices	Responses	
White British	88%	289
Irish	2%	6
Gypsy or Irish traveller	0%	1
Any Other White Background	2%	6
White and Black Caribbean	0%	1
White and Black African	0%	1
White and Asian	1%	4
Any Other Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Background	1%	3
Indian	0%	1
Pakistani	3%	11
Bangladeshi	0%	0
Chinese	0%	0
Any other Asian Background	1%	2
African	0%	0
Caribbean	0%	0
Any Other Black/African/Caribbean Background	1%	2
Arab	0%	0
Any Other Ethnic Group	1%	3

**39. Which of these best describes what you are doing at present?**



**40. Are you a parent or a legal guardian for any children aged under 16 living in your home?**

