

Thank you for asking!



**Boaters' experience of
accessing health and
social care services**

February 2020

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Thank you to all boaters and boatyard staff and others that took time to complete the survey, talk to us, and share their comments.

1 Executive summary

Intelligence heard by Healthwatch Oxfordshire, whilst on the ground, raised the question and concern about ‘How do boaters¹ experience access health and social care in Oxfordshire?’ Further investigation showed that there was little information about this community, and we decided to look at the issue in more depth.

People living on boats in Oxfordshire along the canals and rivers have the same rights as the general population when it comes to accessing healthcare. The principles outlined in the NHS Constitution for England ensure that the NHS provides a comprehensive service, available to all irrespective of background or income (Department of Health 2015).

In addition, NHS England Standard Operating Principles for Primary Medical Care (NHS England 2015) on patient registration sets out principles for a standardised patient GP registration process. This aims to ensure fairness and equity to all includes the statement ‘*When applying to become a patient there is no regulatory requirement to prove identity, address, immigration status or the provision of an NHS number in order to register*’.

However, from our work, we found that:

- **60% of boaters who responded to us had experienced problems accessing healthcare in Oxfordshire.**
- **More than 50% had experienced problems accessing a GP.**
- **Access to health and social care was harder for those with no fixed address, or on the move.**

1.1 Who Healthwatch Oxfordshire spoke to:

In October 2019, following initial meetings with stakeholders, Healthwatch Oxfordshire launched a survey to enable members of the boating community to tell us about their experiences of health and social care.

More than 400 questionnaires were distributed by hand to boaters along much of the Oxford Canal and River Thames. We heard from more than 65 people: from 48 boaters via our questionnaire and conversations with others on the towpath, as well as with some of the regulatory and support agencies working with boaters. We also carried out a ‘mystery shopper’ exercise, contacting all GP surgeries in the county, posing as either boaters or travellers with no fixed address.

¹ The term Boaters is used throughout this report to refer to all people who live on the water

'You are half homeless on a boat...you are seen as having 'no fixed abode' but you have got an abode...so if you are on the move all the time you are in a half- way house. A lot of people have difficulty accessing healthcare if they are travelling and they don't have a postcode'

1.2 Our main findings:

- Boaters seem to be a 'forgotten' group - there is no targeted information and support and limited understanding of the issues facing boaters when accessing and using healthcare.
- 60% of boaters who responded told us they had experienced problems in accessing health and social care in Oxfordshire.
- 23 boaters (more than 50%) had faced problems registering with a General Practitioner (GP)- often the main gateway to other services. Reception of boaters and information given to them about how to register varied considerably (see also Appendix 2 Mystery shopper).
- Reasons cited for not being able to access a GP were mainly related to lack of residential or postal address, requests for identification, gatekeeping by receptionists and administrative and attitudinal barriers.
- Using post is difficult for boaters, especially with no permanent address. Communication with GPs could be challenging as a result; most boaters would prefer text or email contact. Letters for appointments at hospitals and GPs were often missed due to these constraints.
- When boaters did have a GP, these could be out of county or long distances away, causing great inconvenience to access- especially if using public transport.
- Awareness and uptake of NHS screening offers was mixed - with some boaters missing out on opportunities to look after their health.
- Boaters who were 'continuous cruisers', travelling or without authorised moorings, faced greater challenges to accessing health and social care support they needed, and continuity of care across borders.
- Hidden mental health issues are apparent on the waterways, with some people actively choosing to live on boats for solitude or as a result of life events. Lack of mental health awareness and early engagement with support agencies was identified as a gap, and could prevent people reaching crisis point.

- Wider social factors proved a challenge for some, with concerns about insecure moorings, poor health, financial and other worries contributing to mental health issues.

When Healthwatch Oxfordshire carried out a ‘mystery shopper’ exercise (December 2019), contacting GP surgeries posing as boaters or travellers with no fixed address, some findings were similar. Whilst overall many GP receptionists were helpful and we experienced no overt barriers to registering with a GP, we found again that there was:

- Inconsistent information, advice, guidance and understanding across GP surgeries in Oxfordshire as to how to register as someone with no fixed address. This included varied requests for different types of ID, local fixed address and postal address, contrary to NHS Guidance (2015).
- Of 55 GP practices, 43% (24) were happy to register us, with 13% (7) unable or unwilling to do so. 25% (14) offered Temporary registration and a further 18 % (10) were unclear, unavailable or ‘not on take’.
- 58% GP practices told us we needed ID to register (where 50 GP practices gave information).
- ID types required varied across GPs; the main request being for photo ID (38%), along with other types of ID, such as birth certificate or driving licence. Four practices asked for two types of ID, (of 24 where information given).
- 46% told us we needed proof of address to register (of 29 where information given).

When you go to a doctor's and say 'I live on a boat' they really have no idea what to do with you'

1.3 Based on what we heard, Healthwatch Oxfordshire recommends:

1. A targeted, strategic, proactive and coordinated engagement with boaters by health and social care support agencies in the county. This would include providing relevant information about rights to access, services and support available. Agencies that could address this include Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, local and district councils, Oxford Health NHD Foundation Trust, Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, Oxfordshire Universities Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and the Canal and River Trust.
2. Health and social care agencies to improve understanding of health needs of boaters. This should include education and awareness raising among professionals and gatekeepers about administrative and

- attitudinal challenges faced by boaters when accessing healthcare, and about boaters' way of life.
3. Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure that GP surgeries are aware of boaters' challenges in accessing services. To provide clear reminders of guidance on administrative process for registering people, especially those with no fixed address.
 4. For health and social care agencies including Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to address the barriers faced by some boaters in both registration and communication as a result of having no permanent address.
 - a. To facilitate easy communication via text or email over and above written letters.
 - b. To enable appropriate administrative process to remove 'box ticking' barriers to access.
 5. That health, social care and boater support agencies undertake practical measures including:
 - a. Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to work with the Canal and River Trust to develop, locate, support and acknowledge 'boater friendly' GP surgeries along key points of the Oxford Canal. To highlight this to boaters using a map.
 - b. Explore ways in which targeted health, mental health and social care support can be offered to boaters. This might include occasional 'pop up' or 'mobile' clinics and one stop shops along key points on canal and river network.

To start the conversation and collaboration between the boater community and agencies Healthwatch Oxfordshire will:

- Bring together key stakeholders to highlight findings in the report, and support ways for a collaborative way forward to improve boaters' awareness of and access to health and social care.

Section 2 - 4 of this report brings together key themes from all that we heard. Section 5 recounts boaters' experiences that we have permission to reproduce in this report.

2 Background and context

2.1 Who are the boating community?

People live on boats for many different reasons and in different ways - in part governed by the type of mooring licence they have and the lifestyle they choose. The boating community is mixed, some may have retired to follow a life-long dream of boating, others have chosen to live a simpler life, a more affordable option to housing, and others just prefer living on a boat. Some boaters identify as part of the Gypsy and traveller or 'New Traveller' community (Friends Families and Travellers 2019). Some never move, some travel occasionally or seasonally, whilst others 'continuously cruise' across the network of national waterways.

2.2 How many boaters are there in Oxfordshire?

It is hard to know how many boaters are in Oxfordshire on the canal and river networks at one time - there is no national or local data collected, and many boaters are on the move.

Oxford City Council carried out an Oxford Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment in 2018, as part of the preparation of the Local Plan (2016-36) and evidence base for planning and policy decisions (Oxford City Council 2018; Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2019)². The report that showed there remains a clear demand for more regularised moorings - both permanent moorings along with better services for those living more transitory lifestyles. While it attempted to quantify that demand, it remains a challenge. Importantly, the report referenced that access to health care may be an issue for some boaters.

Oxford City Council has undertaken further efforts to monitor numbers of boats being used for residential purposes within the city boundaries. It estimates in this location, approximately 180 households³ live permanently on a boat, using a mix of regularised permanent moorings, along with an increasing number of boats moored in non-regularised mooring sites. However, no detailed research has been undertaken to date.

2.3 Mooring and regulation

Licensing, registration of boats and waterways management across Oxfordshire on the Oxford Canal and River Thames is carried out by the Canal and River Trust

² Local Authorities must consider the housing needs of people living in boats as outlined in both the Housing and Planning Act (2016) and additional guidance (Gov.UK 2016; DCLG 2016).

³ Source: Oxford City Council by email

(CRT), or Environment Agency, depending on the waterway. All boats must have a current safety certificate and hold a relevant navigation licence. The rules and arrangements with regard mooring of boats is complex. Regulations and enforcement regimes vary, dependent for example, on the waterway, the relevant navigation authority, landowner permissions, Public Right of Navigation.

For the purposes of this report we found that boat-dwellers fell into broadly two groups:

- Those **with** permanent residential mooring - with permission for official, permanent, residential moorings on canal or river. This includes marinas, private landowner operated moorings on the Thames, and permanent moorings on the canal. These will have an established, fixed postal address for communications.
- Those **without** permanent residential mooring. This includes those who are actively moving as ‘continuous cruisers’⁴ for varied reasons- travelling or as part of a lifestyle choice. It also includes those who are moored longer term, without moving, in areas which have not been regularised as formal permanent moorings. These moorings often have limited or no services. These will not have a fixed postal address for communication at the site they are moored.

Boaters can claim housing benefit if on fixed moorings.



Some discretion may be used on mooring rules for continuous cruisers, for example if a person is unwell, having hospital treatment or has a broken-down boat. The Canal and River Trust can make licence ‘adjustments’ based on evidenced requests, to allow for mooring time to be extended or placed in a suitable location.

Also applied is the case for ‘reasonable adjustments’ for disabled people and others under the Equalities Act (2010). This can be applied in some cases to use of towpath and canal, or to adaptations to boats.

⁴ See the Canal and River Trust rules for Continuous Cruisers Appendix 1 to this report

2.4 Access to health and social care

Boaters have the same rights as the general population when it comes to accessing healthcare. The principles outlined in the NHS Constitution for England ensure that the NHS provides a comprehensive service, available to all irrespective of background or income (Department of Health 2015).

NHS England Standard Operating Principles for Primary Medical Care (2015) on patient registration sets out principles for standardised patient GP registration process, to ensure fairness and equity to all.

‘When applying to become a patient there is no regulatory requirement to prove identity, address, immigration status or the provision of an NHS number in order to register. However, there are practical reasons why a practice might need to be assured that people are who they say they are, or to check where they live, so it can help the process if a patient can provide relevant documents. There is however no contractual requirement to request this, and nor is establishing an individual’s identity the role of general practice’ (NHS England 2015)

If a practice does ask for documentation, this request must be applied equally across all patients requesting registration. GPs may refuse registration if their lists are full, or if a person lives outside the practice boundary. However, *‘registration and appointments should not be withheld because a patient does not have the necessary proof of residence or personal identification’* (NHS England 2015). People moving in and out of an area can also be offered ‘temporary registration’.

Whilst many boaters have no problems, there is some evidence that some do face barriers when accessing and using healthcare (BNES 2013; Healthwatch Cheshire West 2018, Canal and River Trust anecdotal). We wanted to find out if this was the case in Oxfordshire.

3 What we did

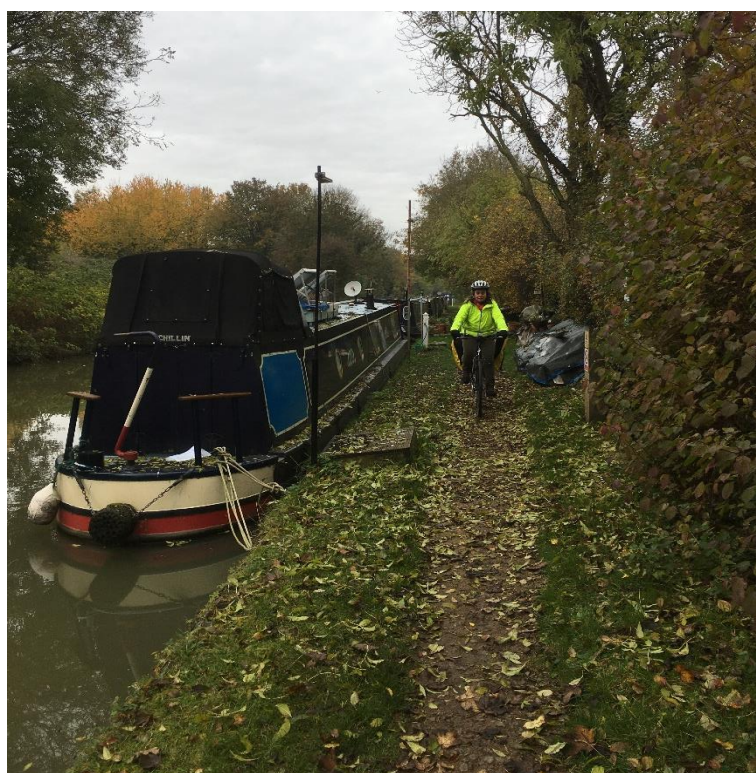
3.1 Aims of the study

To find out about boaters' experiences of access to health and social care in Oxfordshire

3.2 Initial steps

At the start, we explored some of the potential issues which might face the boating community in accessing health and social care. Of use were documents, reports, web resources, boaters' blogs and social media from a range of sources including Oxford City Council Accommodation Needs Assessment (Oxford City Council 2018), Friends Families and Travellers (2019a, 2019), National Bargee Traveller Association⁵ and Healthwatch Cheshire West (2019).

We also spoke to local and national groups linked with boating issues and health, including the Canal and River Trust, Waterways Chaplaincy⁶, Friends Families and Travellers, and Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, and Oxfordshire County Council Public Health. Before launching our questionnaire, we became aware that Friends



Healthwatch staff out on their bikes

Families and Travellers had just launched a similar survey aimed at boaters nationally. Linking up ensured we shared information, findings, lessons, and survey distribution. The report on boaters' access to health nationally, compiled by Friends Families and Travellers can be found on their website. The final questionnaire was developed with input from all of the above.

⁵ <http://www.bargee-Traveller.org.uk/>

⁶ <https://www.waterwayschaplaincy.org.uk/>



Notice put up on the canal side informing boaters and bargees about our survey.

Oxford City Council made links with us and was keen to build on the findings around health access from its boaters' Accommodation Needs Assessment. Together with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group they produced an information leaflet for boaters, outlining rights to access GPs and other support within Oxford city.

In October 2019 we jointly launched a pack including the information leaflet, Healthwatch Oxfordshire's questionnaire and Healthwatch Oxfordshire's 'Know your rights' waterproof card to all boaters in Oxford city (Oxford Mail 2019).

3.3 How we did our research and who we heard from

Healthwatch Oxfordshire distributed 450 questionnaires with 'freepost' envelopes to boats by bicycle and on foot along the Oxford Canal and River Thames in two phases in October and November 2019.

A total of 45 questionnaires were returned prior to writing this report (10%), and we spoke to a further 15 boaters on our travels, as well as interviews with associated professionals linked to boaters. A further three questionnaires were

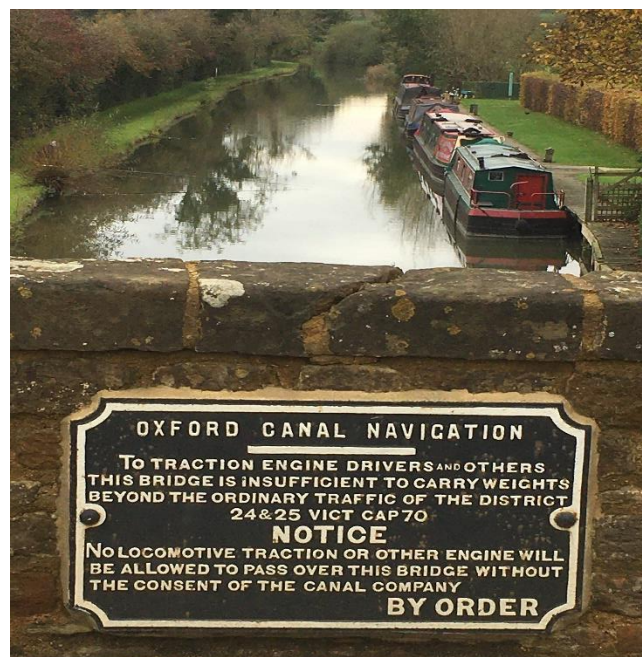
returned after data analysis, and have not been included in the graphs below, although some comments are included.

- Oxford city: 250 questionnaire packs distributed along the Oxford Canal, and River Thames within the boundaries of Oxford city and up to Dukes Cut. This was done working with Oxford City Council Waterways Coordinator and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.
- Oxford Canal: A further 200 Healthwatch Oxfordshire questionnaires and cards were distributed by us along the Oxford Canal outside Oxford. We covered north to Cropredy and south from Banbury, Aynho, Enslow and Thrupp. We also put up laminated posters with the online survey link along the canal.
- Online ‘smart survey’ link promoted to boaters across the county via press and social media pages, boaters’ and travellers’ groups, the Canal and River Trust, Oxford City Council and Healthwatch Oxfordshire, as well as press articles.
- We spoke to 15 boaters in person, and otherwise left waterproof questionnaire packs on deck. We also spoke to eight staff in working boatyards and marinas along the route, as well as professionals in the different agencies linked to canal and river boating.
- In addition, in December 2019 we carried out a ‘mystery shopper’ exercise, approaching 55 GP surgeries across Oxfordshire. We posed as a boater or traveller trying to register with a GP. (This used methodology kindly shared by Friends Families and Travellers for their report ‘No room at the Inn’ (2019)). Summary report from this activity is in Appendix 2.
- See Appendices 3 & 4 for questionnaire and respondent data.

A number of boaters thanked us for asking them about their health, and for making the effort to reach them.

‘I am simply delighted that you are doing something at last to help us feel like respected citizens. I hate lying about where I live. (I have been a constant cruiser for 10 years!) Thank you! :-)’

Topics from people’s comments from all sources were used for report findings below, with graphs taken from 45 questionnaire responses, received at the time of data analysis.



4 The findings: What boaters told us.

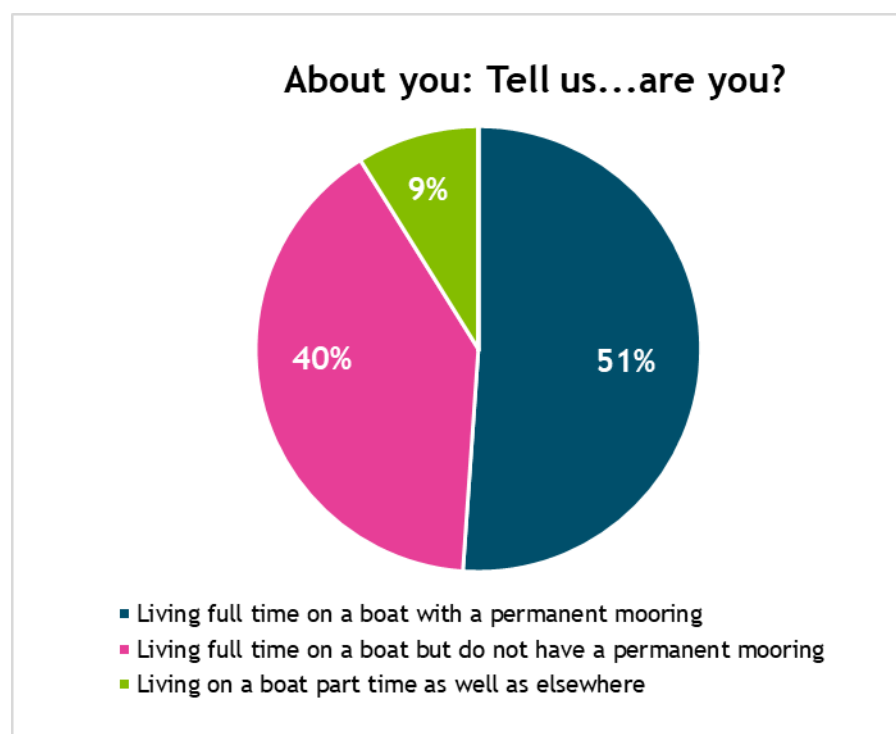
4.1 About boaters

We asked boaters to tell us about themselves, so we could understand more about their current lifestyle and situation. The demographic profiles are found in Appendix 4.

4.1.1 Mooring status

We asked boaters to tell us where they were living and what type of moorings they had. Ten boater respondents were ‘continuous cruisers’ moving all the time. Twenty-three lived on a boat full time and had permanent moorings, and 18 had non-permanent moorings. Four lived on a boat part time.

Twenty-one told us they were currently on Oxford Canal, and three on the river. Throughout, we found that those who were continuous cruisers faced more problems in accessing health care.



4.1.2 Living on a boat

We asked what challenges boaters faced keeping healthy whilst on a boat. Most people commented on it being a healthy lifestyle with lots of exercise, fresh air, and activity involved in keeping the boat going day to day. People valued the support of other boaters and the sense of shared community.

‘living on a boat is very peaceful, active way of life, and probably helps me to stay healthy. My experience now, on a mooring is different to when I was always on the move without a mooring - then always being able to access fresh fruit and vegetables could be a challenge, but lots of exercise, cycling/ running to the shops as a result’

However, several people commented that the work involved in daily living as a boater could be challenging, especially when ill or getting older.

‘Difficulty with boat chores if ill - fetching and filling water tank, changing gas bottle, etc. Also, if ill while cruising - no-one knows where you are - often not much mobile phone signal on canal (I live alone)’

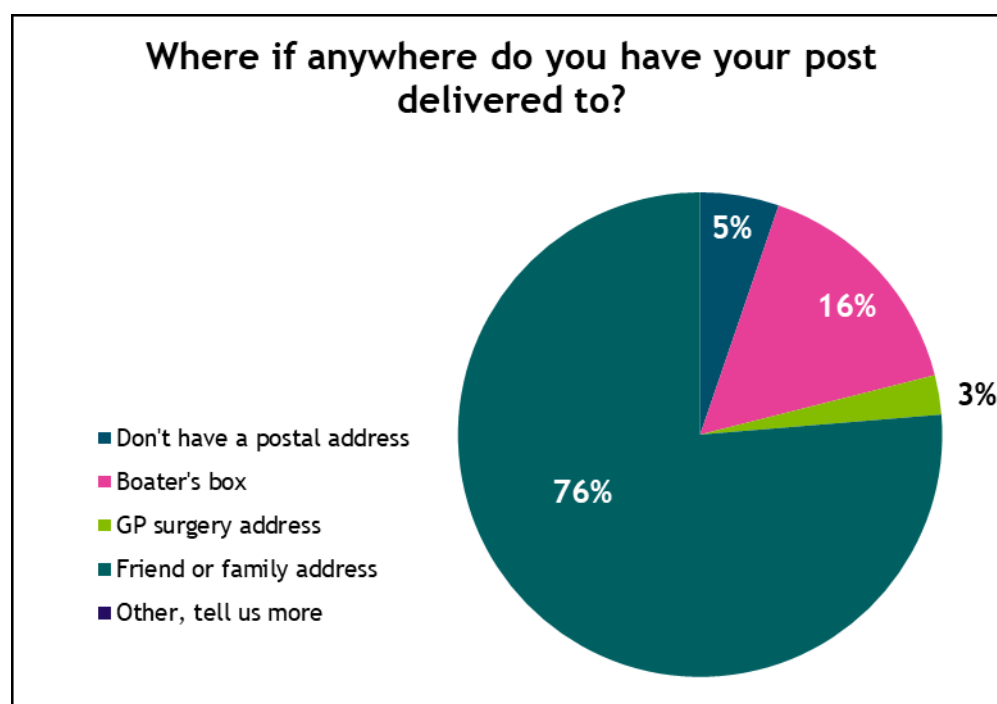
Lack of facilities on the towpath and secure moorings was also seen as an added stress.

‘lack of facilities (water, taps, bins, recycling bins) puts a time pressure on you which is touching on mental health, along with a lack of mooring - short and longer term, that would allow you to care for yourself better as living on a boat is time consuming. If you have a full-time job, it’s a stressful balance’

Others mentioned respiratory problems from damp and fires, access to fresh food, lack of refrigeration, extremes of heat and cold winters with frozen pipes. Back problems from lifting and cramped posture were also mentioned.

4.2 Postal and residential address

We asked boaters to tell us if and how they received post.



A postal address can be important in order to receive communications from health and social care services, but also can be used as a registration address.

Thirty-six boaters told us they use a variety of places for personal post, including workplaces, local parish council, *poste restante* and marinas and occasionally locks if moving. Some on permanent moorings had access to a shared ‘boater’s box’ which acted as an address.

The majority 76% (29) used friends and family addresses. Some said that this was out of county and often many miles away (e.g. Yorkshire, London), meaning difficulties collecting post regularly, especially if no transport or travelling. Others commented on mail being lost, or on concerns about confidentiality if using workplace or shared post box addresses. The challenges of receiving post were more for continuous cruisers.

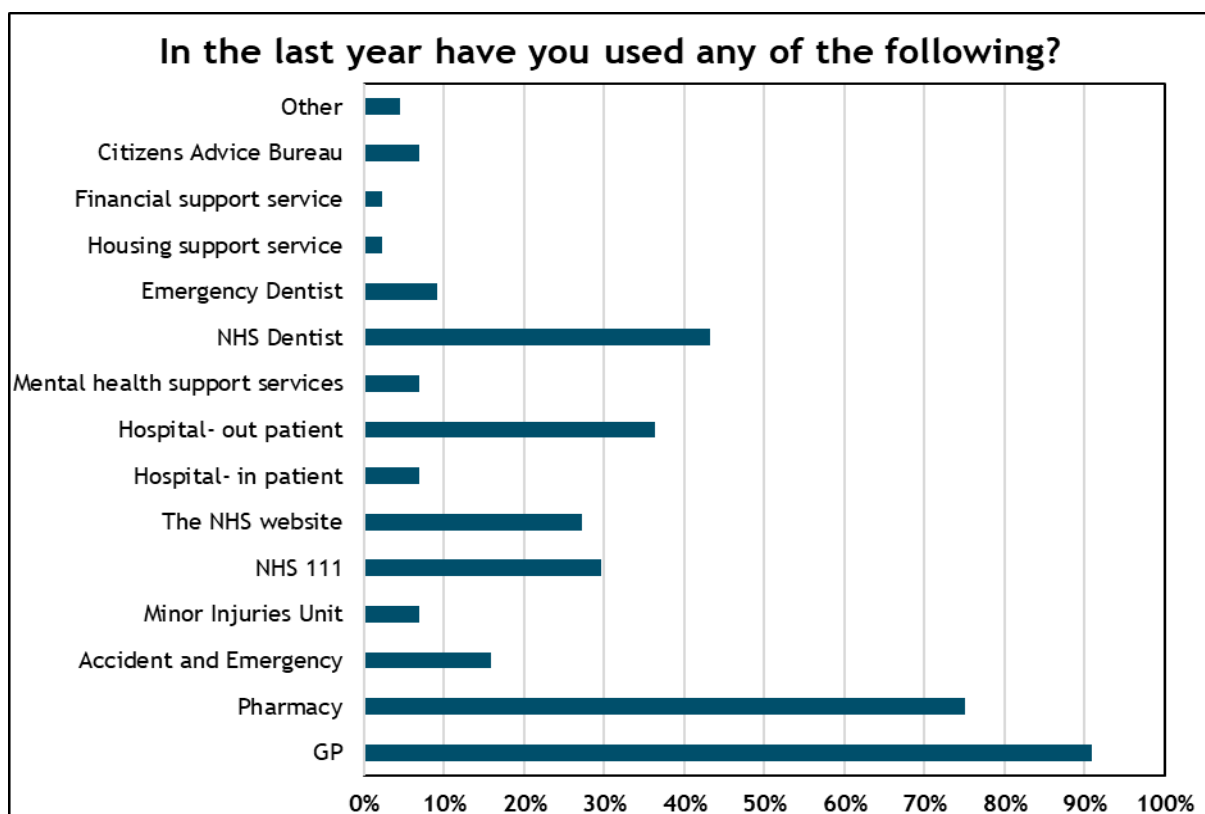
“Postal address is not Oxfordshire, and this has created many problems in relation to healthcare”

“Parents’ address in Stratford-on-Avon - pick it up about four times a year”

“Work address for health. Friend for everything else- not accessible by public transport so a nightmare to get to if I had GP here!”

4.3 Using health and social care services as a boater

We asked boaters to tell us about the range of health and social care services they used in the last year. Among the 44 boaters who commented they reported a total of 160 different interactions across 15 different services in this time - by far the highest was the GP (90%), and pharmacy (75%).



Experiences of services were mixed. Many were very positive about the support they received from NHS and other services.

‘I am so grateful to the NHS including the mental health services over the last decade or so but particularly my GP. I can always talk and feel able to do so easily any time. I mostly stick to my scheduled appointments which have been so good I cannot thank them enough, and all the reception staff’

‘I had my daughter on a boat and was scared of health visitors being judgemental - they were great!’

Other comments indicated access and perceived attitudinal barriers to boaters

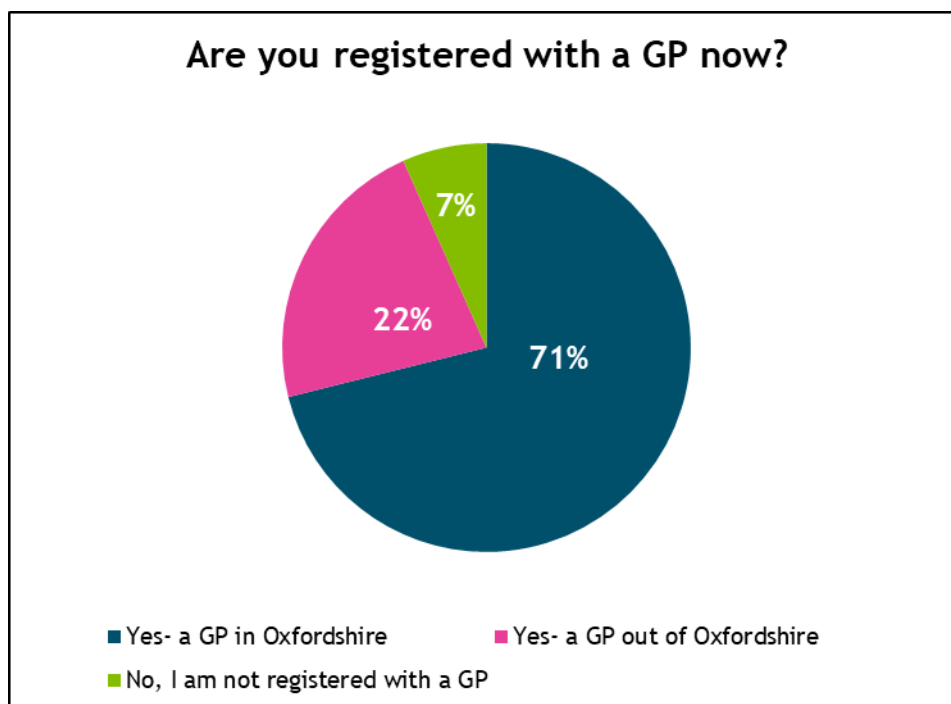
‘Everything that I have needed has been out there. Accessing it was the problem. Getting signed on at a GP Surgery was the catalyst which set the ball rolling’

‘NHS helpline, who don’t seem interested when you tell them you are a constant boat cruiser’

‘Fine once registered (My dentist thinks I live in a house....so I don’t get their letters. Not telling them in case they de-register me)’

4.4 GPs

We asked boaters if they were registered with a GP. Of 47 the majority (71%) were registered with a GP in Oxfordshire, or out of county (22%). Some respondents stated they were not registered with a GP (7%).



“My GP practice is stunning in the support they provide.”

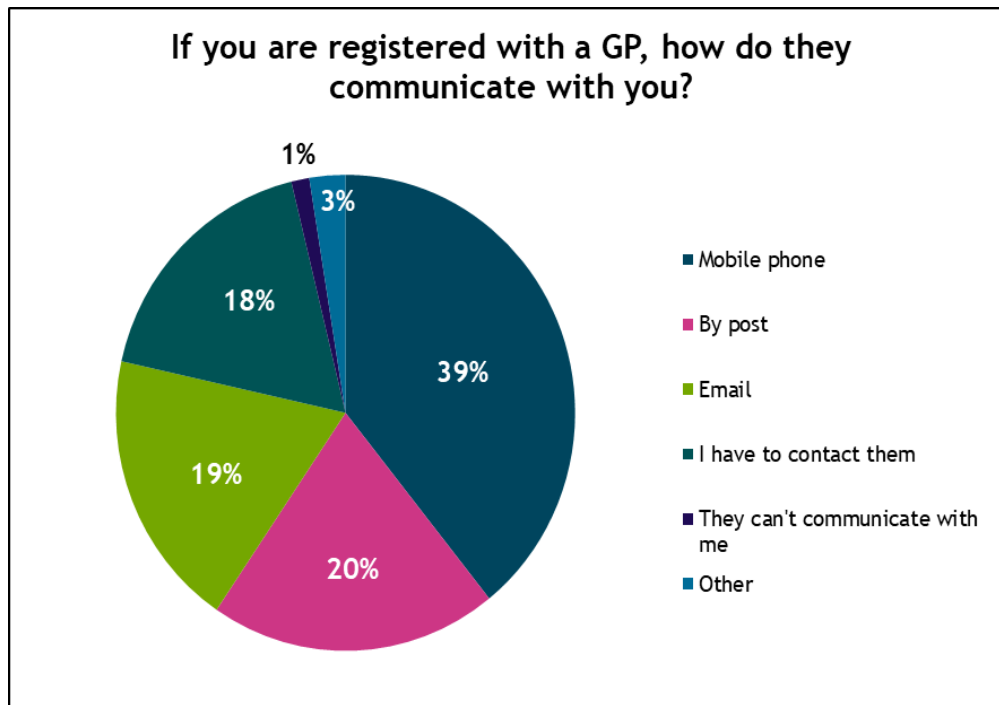
Seven people commented on where they seek support when not able to access a GP. Of these, boaters used pharmacy (4), A&E (2), NHS 111 (1). Others mentioned they ‘don’t seek help’ (2) or ‘look after myself’ (4) or ‘try not to get ill’. Again, it was clear that travelling and distance made access to GP support a challenge.

‘I am registered with a GP but its 200 miles away and they won’t let me pick up my medication from Banbury except from the surgery. When I am ill I don’t know where to go’

‘My husband and I look after ourselves and only access the NHS when necessary. In the past we have made a 500-mile round trip to see our "home" GP in order to maintain continuity of care. Also have a reluctance to have my medical records transferred between counties with more chance of records being lost’

4.4.1 Communicating with a GP

Those that were registered with a GP told us how they communicate with them. People used a combination of ways, including post, email and mobile phone. Some boaters had to contact the GP themselves if needed to find information about their care. Mobile phone (39%) was the preferred method of contact.

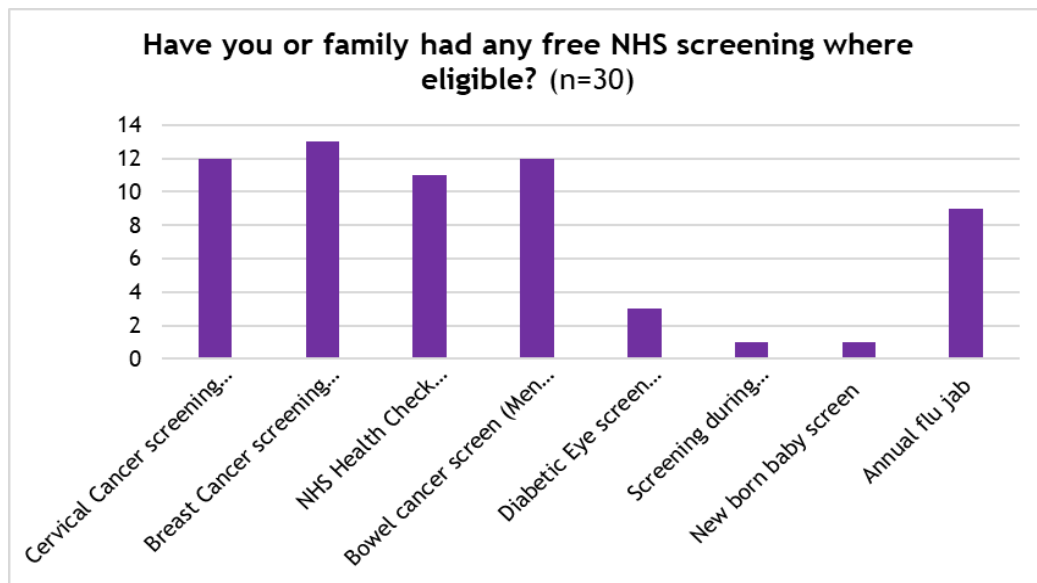


‘My doctor is the one from my last permanent address, and over 150 miles from any of the canals I regularly cruise, so while I can contact them it is not practical to use them unless I am back visiting a relative in the area (2 or 3 times a year)’

‘Messages sent out by email and mobile texts to make sure I don't miss them in case no internet/ phone signal...sometimes too busy to always see either texts or emails and 2 methods less likely to be missed’

4.5 NHS screening

We informed people of eligibility for free NHS screening services and asked if they had accessed these - 30 respondents told us they had accessed 62 reported screening checks.



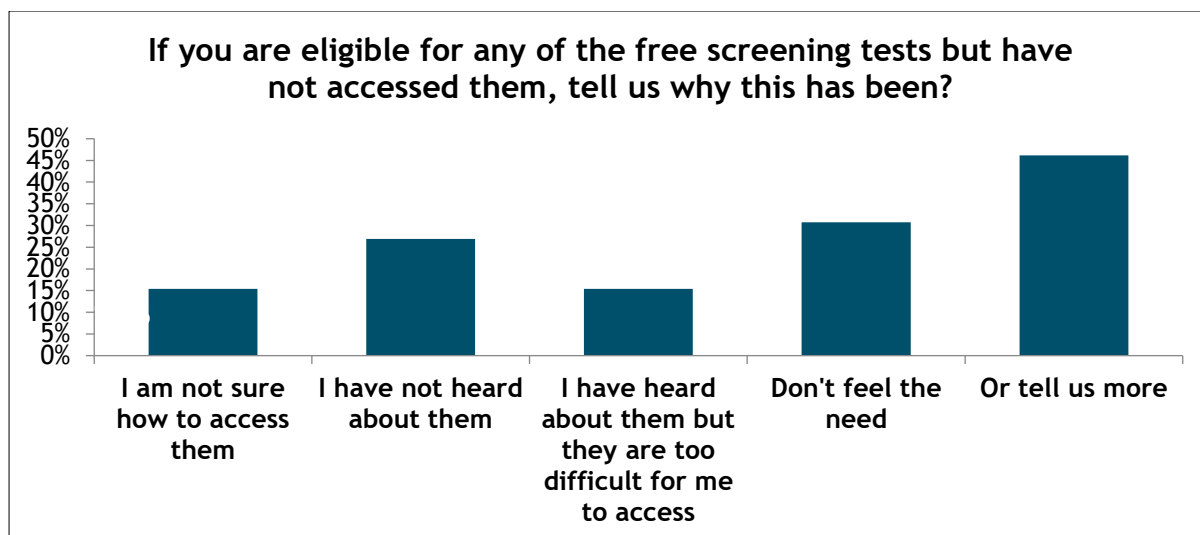
If they did not access screening if eligible, we asked why this was. Of 26 respondents who had not accessed screening, 31% commented they ‘don’t feel the need’. 27% said they had not heard about screening, 15% were not sure how to access and a further 15% found them ‘*too difficult to access*’.

Comments indicated that boaters need more information and awareness about the value of screening, and how to access it. Some boaters are missing out on invitations to screening, as a result of issues with receiving NHS communications.

‘Did not know about NHS Health Check and Diabetic Eye screening, didn’t feel the need for the flu jab’

‘Flu jab - not able to travel to Hampshire’

‘I am 60 and missing out on vaccinations due to the distance to my surgery’



4.6 Mental health support

The survey asked if boaters had ever accessed mental health support in the county. Of the 39 respondents who answered this question, nine (23%) said they had accessed mental health support in Oxfordshire, including the GP, Mind Oxfordshire, Connections Support, Talking Space Plus, the Adult Mental Health Team and outpatients. Respondents overall had found the support they received helpful. However, some commented on barriers to access especially with transport and distance from services.

We also heard from support agencies how there were *hidden mental health issues* on the waterways. Some people who are already experiencing mental health issues seek a boater lifestyle in order to find solitude. Others may end up living on boats in insecure conditions, driven by issues with debt, or benefits challenges, drug and alcohol addiction, or family problems. Some are ex-military and may be experiencing mental health issues as a result of their experiences.

“Mental health is a whole different ball game, when people might not even be aware they have mental health conditions, or if they are aware, they think the solitude is a better place for them, but with that choice still comes the same concerns or problems, a lot of it links to money and benefits” (Canal support agency)

Others said that worries linked to insecure moorings, or constant moving, and rigorous enforcement of the 14-day rule also contributed to poor mental health. This was seen also to lessen the ability of boaters and others to ‘keep an eye’ on each other, increasing both isolation and chance for issues to worsen a point of crisis.

“We are getting more suicide conversations now than we have ever had, people coming to us...some of that is over debt, debt and universal credit are key factors, or people are just not coping” (Canal support agency)

Experience of cross-border working and support for mental ill health for travelling boaters was not positive

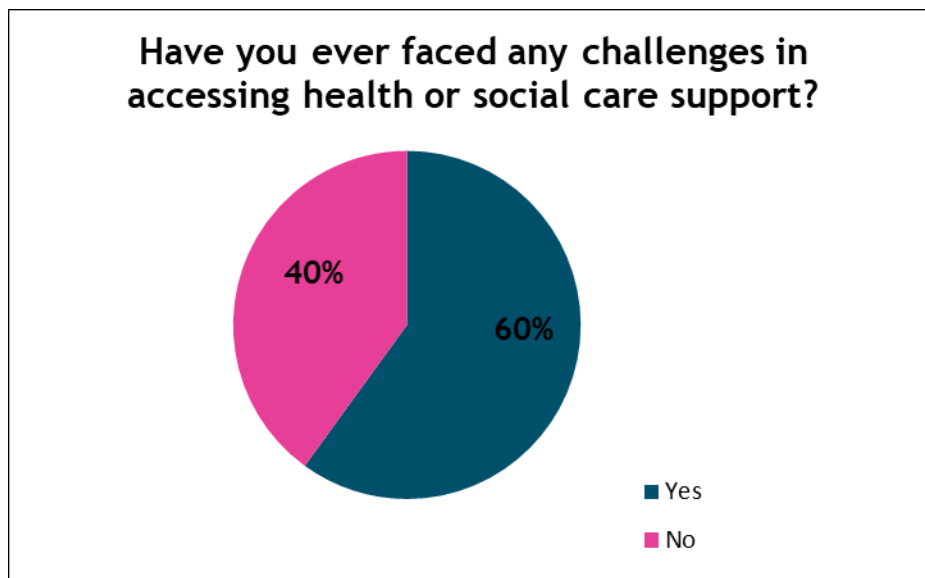
“...no one would accept them, either side (of the border), for their mental health issues”

However, support agencies such as Waterways Chaplains, boatyard staff and the Canal and River Trust welfare officer and boaters themselves, played an important role in identifying people in crisis, signposting, providing care and additional support. Mooring licence adjustments could also be offered to those experiencing mental health crises, if they let people know.

4.7 Challenges to accessing health and social care

4.7.1 Accessing general health and social care

Of 45 respondents, 60% told us they had had faced challenges accessing health or social care support.



Of 26 comments about overall service access, nine general comments related to physical access both to and by health services, access to NHS dentists, problems of describing remote locations to NHS 111 or emergency services, and of being referred to use homelessness services. A number of respondents mentioned lack of access to dentistry.

‘Recommended using homeless services until I called using my title. Had to use work address’

‘Poor access to NHS dental services. Forced to go private, very, very expensive, £175 for extraction!’

‘We had a family give birth and they rang the ambulance they were on the towpath close to the road, and the ambulance said they couldn’t get

there, so said they would talk through the birth on the phone...' (boater support agency)

'In describing my location when I've used 111 out of hours'

'We spend half of our time living aboard but access health and social care almost exclusively via our landlubber address. As both of us have long-running health issues, this is one reason we haven't given up the house to live aboard full time'

4.7.2 Prescriptions and medication

A number of people mentioned problems with getting ongoing medication, and faced logistical problems collecting prescriptions.

'I am registered with a GP but its 200 miles away and they won't let me pick up my medication from Banbury except from the surgery. When I am ill I don't know where to go'

'We have difficulty getting regular supply of medication. Our pharmacy will only issue 1 month's supply. We then have to arrange for them to send prescription to chemist out of the area. This has proved problematic as they either don't send to requested chemist or some items are missing making it a stressful experience each month. None of our medication are controlled substances'

'Doctors to stop treating us as Tourists and giving us our month's supply of medication rather than 2 weeks supply'

4.8 Barriers to accessing and registering with a GP

Of the 26 comments about overall access to healthcare, 17 related specifically to challenges in accessing a GP surgery.

Answering a later question '***Have you faced any difficulties registering with a GP?***' 23 boaters (over 50%) said they had.

We heard that some boaters, particularly those on the move had been refused registration at GP surgeries, or faced significant barriers. These difficulties impacted on access, quality and consistency of care, and meant that some people missed opportunities for early identification of problems. The barriers boaters mentioned are:

- **Lack of residential, postal address or ID**

This was cited as the main barrier to GP registration, and there was inconsistency across the county about what was needed to register.

'Don't have postal address...went to medical centre in Banbury who said I couldn't register without a fixed address, 'what's the use of a fixed

address, I live on a boat...they refused point blank to register me' so I registered elsewhere'

'I was able to successfully register with my GP however it was a long and awkward conversation to explain that my parent's address in Yorkshire is my correspondence address and that I cannot give a residential address'

'When I used my friend's address for post in South Wales, I was informed I could no longer access GP healthcare in Oxford and would have to register there, even though I don't live there'

'It's always about not having a permanent address. There is no box for them to tick on their questions for registering for that and you can't go any further. They basically have to ask you to lie to get access to a doctor! I am still currently registered to the doctors near my parent's house, due to this problem. They live 2 hours' drive from me!'

- **Gatekeeping and unclear information from reception staff**

'Yes...too tedious to explain. Lack of address. GP receptionist deciding as one boater had an address all did...blah blah! Computer says 'no' whereas legal and mariners and rights say YES'

'I was anxious about registering but after a long discussion in front of the waiting area, I was able to do so. I was behind a young homeless person in the queue who tried to register and they were asked a number of irrelevant questions, such as 'why can't you go home to your parents?'

'Although I was able to register as a 'temporary resident' with a GP in Oxfordshire I had persistent issues with the GP admin staff, as they insisted on using the GP address as my address for correspondence (even though they would not contact me if I received a letter from the hospital to let me know I had a consultant appointment to attend) I explained I had a postal address outside Oxfordshire where I would be guaranteed to receive letters informing me of appointments but they refused to put this address in the system...I missed appointments in the hospital because of this situation'

'The manager of a surgery in Banbury who had refused to register me once said (after I had shown her best practice guidelines) 'I know its best practice, but I'm not obliged to follow it''

'I did not feel unwelcome as a boater, however reception staff did not handle the request to register very well professionally; they were surprised and asked a lot of questions about where I normally am and repeatedly said 'soyou don't have an address???' as if they couldn't believe it. If I say I need to register as a person with no fixed abode I don't expect lots of personal questions'

- **Refusal and barriers**

‘Local surgery refused to register boaters’

‘Prejudice. Having to know the system better than the registrar’.

‘It took me over a year to find a Doctors surgery that would sign me on as a registered patient’

‘Been told it takes 10 days to temporary register, then no appointments for 2 weeks by which time the 2 weeks temporary registration will be up. No one available, ring 111 after 1pm? I then realised they closed at 1pm Can't do the tests you need because you can only temporary register for 14 days. Can't do the tests because your GP is out of the county’

‘I had a doctor in xxx [*Oxfordshire practice*] but when I tried to make an appointment I found he had de-registered me because I had not seen him for a year.

I now have a doctor in Rugby and no longer go to the Oxford area’

One 77-year-old continuous cruiser told us:

‘Went to a GP when ill, not registered, not keen to see me, couldn't see me until 5pm so as ill told me to go to hospital, as worried it was pneumonia, had to get a taxi to hospital £70 from boat to GP and then to hospital in Oxford’

- **Continuous cruising**

Being always on the move was challenging. Some boaters were not aware that communication with the Canal and River Trust if needing longer treatment, they could give some dispensation on mooring.

‘It was also problematic that I am not always in the GP's catchment on the canal, as I have to move every 2 weeks (minimum) as a continuous cruiser. It is not feasible to re-register every month with a new GP!’

‘the CRT stipulate that you can only stay in one place for a maximum of 14 days, this is difficult if you have/need long term treatment’

- **Negative health stories**

If boaters experienced problems, these experiences not only could put boaters off going back but were often shared as stories - putting others off as well.

‘...everyone here was saying it was hard to register for a doctor, so I didn't bother trying when I moved here a couple of years ago, so my doctor has been in London. That means I've missed out on regular check-ups although I haven't had any pressing need for a doctor in this time’

“...you have people whose health experience has been quite poor so then they are reluctant to go back if they are in a different area - there was a chap I was working with a while ago who was misdiagnosed ... and that message spread to all the boats around him, all of a similar kind of age” (canal organisation)

- **Boaters’ knowledge of how to access GP**

‘I was turned away from two GP surgeries before I was accepted. However, I have since learnt that may have been because at the TIME, we were not in the catchment area’

‘Never thought about it, about what happens if I get ill when I am travelling - haven’t needed to yet’

4.8.1 Communicating with health services

Being on the move or using distant postal addresses causes communication barriers with all health services, sometimes leading to missed appointments or failure to get results.

‘Although I made it clear to the people, I spoke to that there was to be no post sent to Eynsham Lock as I don’t live there a letter was still sent out by the John Radcliffe rescheduling an appointment. I turned up at the JR to find this out, hadn’t had a letter. If it had gone to the GP I would have been contacted’

Even if using GP addresses, we heard that the surgery would not communicate with the boater regarding post.

‘! but letters are sent to themselves!! I really think it Kafkaesque for the GP to insist I use their surgery as an address and for them not to tell me they have received mail for me. Using email, mobile phone/ text or my postal address outside of the area would have resolved things’

4.8.2 Accessing healthcare and continuity of care whilst on the move

Twenty-six boaters commented on how they accessed healthcare when travelling out of county. For some, this involved careful planning, and travel of some distance particularly if they had a long-term condition, need continuity of care, or ongoing medication.

‘Either make a 500-mile round trip to our "home" GP in order to keep continuity of care. or I would contact the NHS trust in the county we are in. This took several phone calls and delays in getting an appointment as my details had been missed’

‘We are often moored in isolated spots where the nearest bus stop could be a long way away, and then needing to use more one bus to get there’

A number said they just would not 'get ill' and might wait until they got back to Oxfordshire if needing to see someone

'I don't, I try not to get ill'

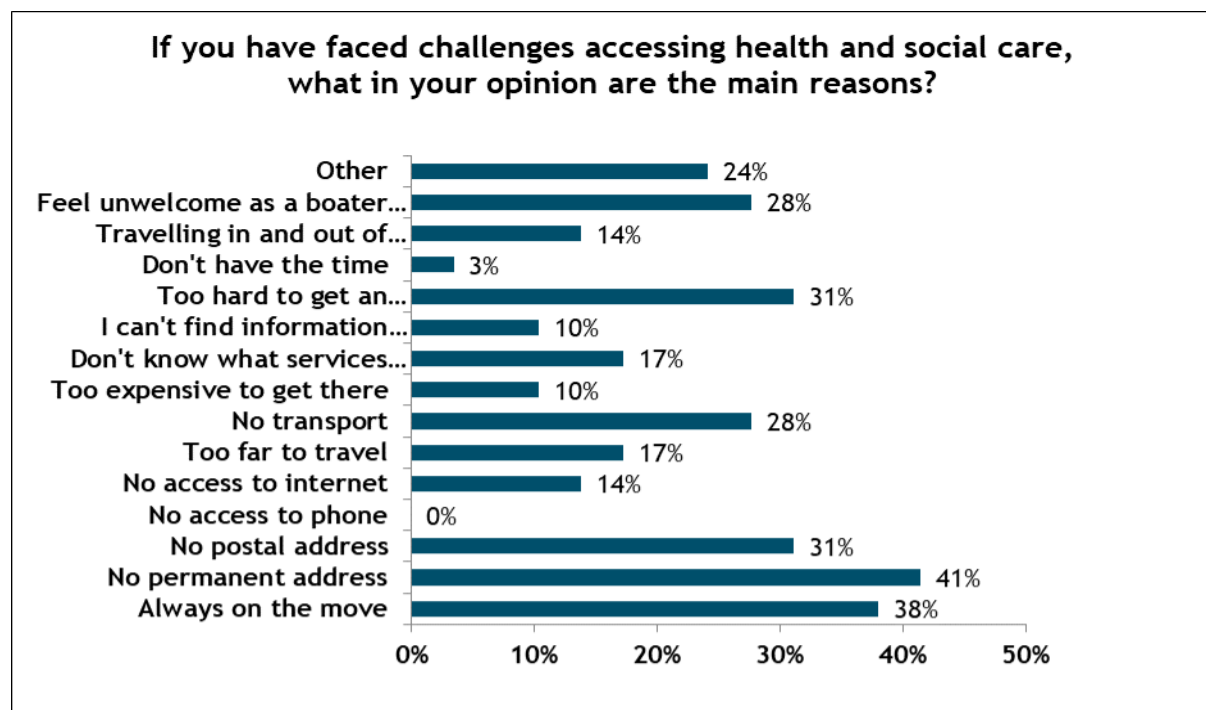
Others echoed previous comments on challenges of getting to a GP.

'The issues are the samehit and miss getting past reception in doctor's surgery'

'With equal amounts of difficulty as I found in Oxfordshire, some are ruder than others. Occasionally you find one that astounds you'

Others used options such as Accident and Emergency, Pharmacy, Walk-in Clinic, NHS 111 and private health insurance whilst on the move.

4.9 Barriers to accessing care - what do boaters think?



We asked boaters to tell us why they thought they faced barriers to accessing health and social care. Twenty-nine boaters answered this question with 'no permanent address' cited by 12 (41%) respondents and 11 (38%) people said 'always on the move'. Lack of physical access including distance and lack of transport were also seen as important. Eight boaters commented that they 'feel unwelcome as a boater'.

- **Attitudes to boaters and boating**

Comments about feeling 'unwelcome as a boater', were echoed in comments throughout. Awareness and attitudes of health and social care professionals to boaters and boaters' lifestyle varied. Some boaters commented that greater understanding would have made a difference to the care and support they received. Boaters commented:

‘A bit more compassion and understanding especially of what it is like to be a boater. I have no heating, only just got a cooker, no hot water, lighting comes off solar, they have no idea what it is like...they say ‘go home and get cosy and wash your clothes’....I don’t have a fridge’

‘I consulted CAB concerning some renter’s issues (I rent my boat) and they had no knowledge of renter’s rights in regard to live-aboard boaters’

‘Discriminated against for not having a car, being from another county, seen as a Gypsy and NHS services being over stretched’

‘Trying to explain my circumstances to people who are unfamiliar with boats, canals, and their systems don’t have an option to take that into account’

‘Judgement and prejudice against our way of life’

4.10 What would make a difference?

Finally, we asked boaters to tell us what would improve boaters’ access to health and social care.

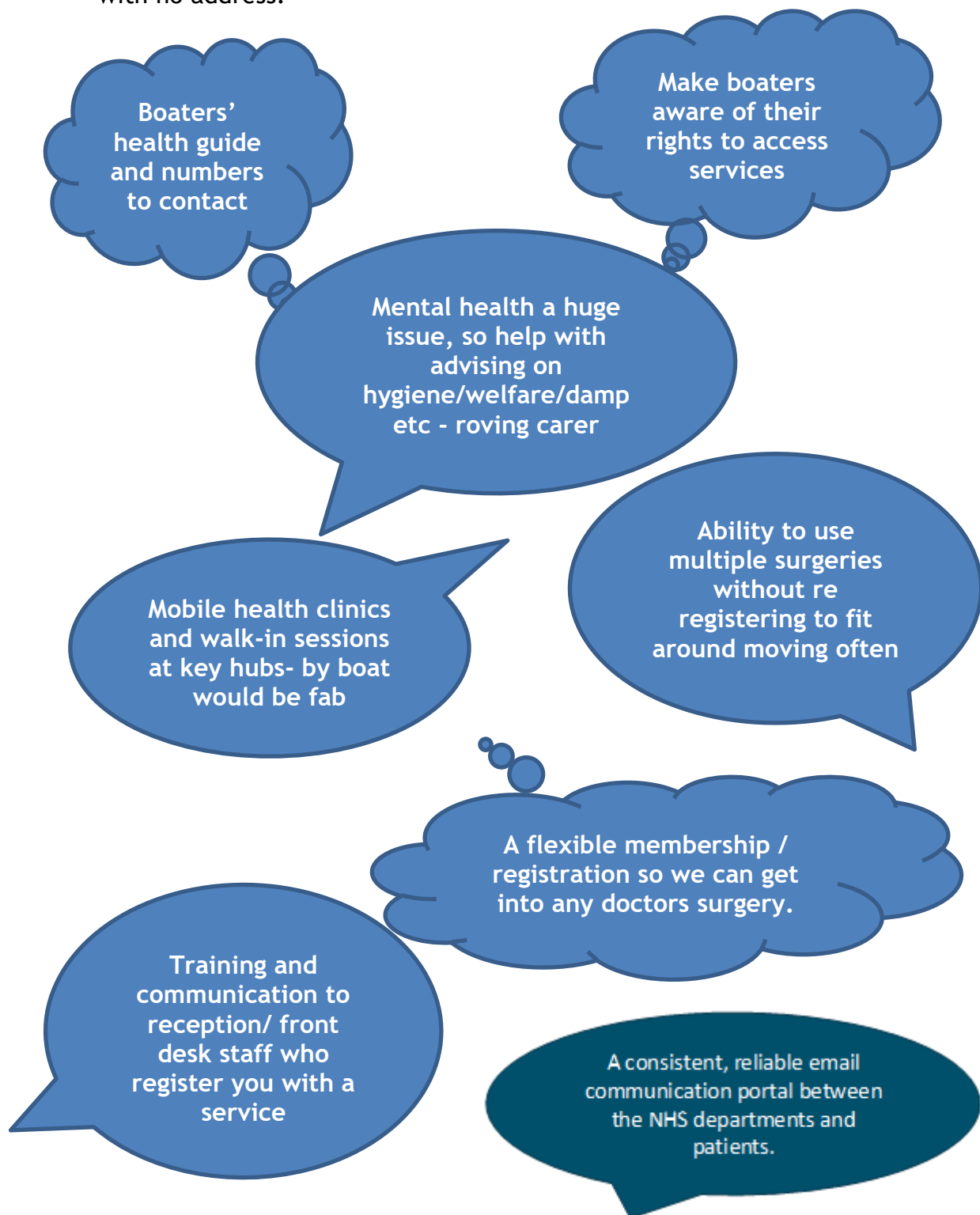
Boaters suggested many improvements - which can be briefly summarised as follows:

- **Better information, attitudes, awareness and knowledge**
 - For boaters about what, how, where and when to access healthcare- including specific screening opportunities and rights to access GPs.
 - Education for GPs, receptionists and others about boating life.
 - Work with providers and support agencies to improve information on healthcare for boaters in Oxfordshire.
- **Better communication**
 - By email or phone as a preferred medium.
 - Understanding needs of travelling boaters without postal access.
 - Avoiding missing important health appointments by not insisting on often unreliable postal communications.
- **Better access**
 - Flexibility of access and care.
 - Better access to GPs.
 - Continuity of care and treatment across boundaries.
 - Improved rural transport.
 - Flexible healthcare services suited to canal boat dwellers e.g. ‘drop-in clinics’ or ‘floating’ support.



- **Better processes**

- Standardised and clear GP registration procedure and guidelines.
- Improve processes to build in flexibility for travelling boaters or those with no address.



5 Stories from the towpath

Boater experience

'Back in March I had a hospital appointment, it was a check-up on my condition. I then developed a urine infection, being away from my registered GP I went to the one nearest to us. I explained the situation to the receptionist who told me to go to the local pharmacy, they could test my urine and prescribe me antibiotics, I did this, but after the test and confirmation of the infection they said they were unable to prescribe me as I did not live in the county.

I returned to the GP with the results, and explained their error nicely, they then allowed me to see a GP and I got a 3-day prescription.

After the 3 days, we'd moved on, I did feel better but not 100% so when we got to the next village, with a GP, I visited the surgery. This time I was told I could temporarily register, but that it would take 10 working days and I couldn't be seen until then. So we moved. The next receptionist told me they couldn't see me as they had no appointments left, to ring 111 but not until after 1pm. I was feeling quite poorly by now and didn't question her, it was my husband outside that realised when I told him what I'd been told, the surgery closed at 1pm.

We then took a bus to the nearest town to a walk- in centre, who prescribed me antibiotics, again they helped but did not cure the infection.

This sort of response continued, I even asked to see a prescribing nurse if no GP was available- I then ended up in A+E feeling like a fraud but desperate. In total it took me 4 months for a simple urine infection to be cleared.

This problem isn't just along the Oxford Canal, I and others I've spoken to have found it all over the canal network. I am fortunate that I am still registered with a GP if I wasn't, I've been told, some GP's won't see you at all.

I do know GP's are under far too much pressure, with the increase in population, most only allocate 5 minutes per patient, is it any wonder there trying to get you to leave before you're in the room'.

Boater experience

Was registered at a GP...ok when used Mum's address...but when changed to another address -problems. 'You're not in the catchment area-you gotta go' - no matter how many times I told them I live on a boat- not interested. Went to get my repeat meds one day-not there. I was just took off their register- I was given an emergency prescription and told I had a month to find another doctor. All came to a head when I needed repeat meds- so I changed my address on my driving licence to another family member to register with a new GP. Had to do this because they wanted proof that I lived there- so far so good...When I registered I had two choices- do I tell them I live on a boat and risk being told 'No sorry' or do I say 'I live locally?'...I chose the latter...

Canal and River Trust (CRT) experiences (examples are not all Oxon but illustrate some of the challenges faced by Boaters and those trying to access support)

- 70-year-old was not cruising his boat and was sent a letter by CRT advising him he was overstaying, this prompted a conversation to tell us he thought he had COPD and wasn't able to move. He wasn't registered to any local services, but CRT helped him link with a local GP who initially refused his registration. After support from a local waterway chaplain he finally got registered. Tests then determined that his COPD was more serious needing some extensive treatment and time in hospital. Sadly, the individual passed away before the treatment was finished.
- A boater being treated for a mental health condition. Moved onto a boat for a calmer more relaxed lifestyle but mental health team then disengaged as they wouldn't come out to the boat. Further difficulties getting registered with the GP as told lack of postcode meant that unable to register or to access support groups. Multi agency meetings took place and the only way to get help again was for CRT to raise a safeguarding referral to local authority - in the meantime boater was at risk and unable to cope with their condition and self-medicating with alcohol and drugs.
- Boater with severe anxiety and depression, unable to access support groups as moves between two or three boundaries, was advised would need to stay in one county. CRT offered a reasonable adjustment to allow this, but boater likes to move as this helps with their depression, each local authority advises not in their location so unable to help. Often falls between different service providers, went with nil income for over a year as benefits had stopped even though there was no reason for this.

- Older boater living on his boat in a marina, poor health and mobility problems meant unable to cook, clean, wash or use toilet facilities. Requested help from a GP service that hadn't been accessed in many years. Furthermore, requested a home visit but this never happened, boater had no family or friends for support, so CRT visited the boater and raised a safeguarding concern. Services did make contact and helped to put in place support to allow them to live more comfortably on their boat, as time went on housing options were explored and supported living accommodation was found and taken.
- We were aware of a boater that was unlicensed, had no boat safety and the insurance cover had expired, the local team was trying to work with them to resolve the issues. The boat had occupation of a mooring in breach of their terms and conditions. Local officers visited the boater where we were told they had dyslexia and couldn't read their letters and was waiting to see a friend who could read them. Once aware of this situation we tried to provide help and support, linking in a waterway chaplain who could provide some hands-on assistance. The local team would constantly call in at the boat and see if the support needs were being met. Benefit applications were put in place to help pay for the license and help increase their income, medical support was needed, and the waterway chaplain helped in arranging appointments.

Boatyard story

'I think we see so much of it- mental health issues on the water. People are on the water for a range of reasons, wealthy, retire, a bit of fun...but also other reasons. One of the biggest issues we see on the water is the mental health, a lot of men living alone, might have had a divorce, or did not fit in elsewhere...or ex-military.

The 14 day 'moving on' rules have been enforced more strictly by the Canal and River Trust in the last few years. We used to have more of a community of boaters around, as they stayed longer, and people would know and support one another, and we would keep an eye on them. Now, the rules have sadly made some more vulnerable, and we can't now keep an eye on some who come by, and you think, 'they need a bit of care' and are not people who want to come into our marina. It could be a year before you see them again.

A lot live on their own, we can see the issues they have. If they come in and visit the boatyard- anyone can come here and talk to us- we try and point them in the right direction or drive them to wherever they need to be if they need help. Some also need help filling out forms, carers allowance, benefits and disability,

it's tricky. Often, they don't want to go to the usual places, as its almost seen as going back to the 'real world' which they have run away from. A lot is about trust. One person, I could see had issues, so I sat them down and asked them to trust me...talk to me, and we went to the GP, who were really good, gave them what they needed to help sleep, and he got better.

A minority, those that struggle, we have respect for- it's not an easy way of life. It's really hard work, just the day to day keeping the boat warm. If you have to move on its really hard keeping a vehicle going, moving the vehicle and the boat at the same time. Lots of those people have had to let go of having a vehicle and are now just moving the boat. It becomes tricky... we are not sure if we will be allowed to sell Red Diesel in the future, which people need just to keep the boat warm.

Some people have escaped from their lives, jumped onto a boat, the river, they have not really faced their issues and just tried to carry on with daily life which is not easy...keeping moving on, those pressures. It's a challenge, especially in the heat or cold.

If they could have little 'pop up' clinics along the canal, in a pub, community hall, not far from towpath- say every few months, where they could go for someone to talk to about things...just to say 'that's normal', or 'you could do with some help'...someone who knows their stuff...so people can talk about their issues'.

Appendix 1: Canal and River Trust Guidance

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/buy-your-boat-licence>

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/buy-your-boat-licence/continuous-cruising>

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnail/633-guidance-for-Boaters-without-a-home-mooring.pdf>

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnail/30348-continuous-cruising-faqs.pdf>

Summary of guidance for boats without a home mooring:

Boats without a home mooring must be engaged in genuine navigation throughout the period of the licence.

- They must not stay moored in the same neighbourhood or locality for more than 14 days.
- It is the boater's responsibility to satisfy the Trust that they meet these requirements.
- Continuous cruiser - boats must be engaged in 'genuine navigation' throughout the period of their licence, moving from place to place over a total range of 20 miles, and must not stay moored in the same neighbourhood for more than 14 days. There is some flexibility for boaters in a vulnerable position, for example needing local health care, or if their boat has broken down. Communication with the support team at the Canal and River Trust can lead to temporary licence adjustments, enabling someone to moor in one place for an agreed time.
- Failure to move on if no reason for adjustment can result in removal of the boat from the water, following a fair warning procedure.

(Source: Canal and River Trust)

Appendix 2: GP mystery shopper

December 2019 - Boaters and Travellers access to register with a GP.

In December 2019 Healthwatch Oxfordshire carried out a ‘mystery shopper’ exercise. We phoned 55 GP practices across the county. We posed as either a traveller or a boater, depending on the location of the GP surgery, and asked to register with a GP.

National advocacy group Friends Families and Travellers (FFT) kindly shared the questions used in their mystery shopper exercise. Their survey in 2019 of 50 GP practices nationally found that of these, 24 (48%) would not register the person either as a permanent or temporary patient (www.Gypsy-Traveller.org).

Healthwatch Oxfordshire asked:

- Can we register to see a GP?
- What do we need to do to register?
- We revealed we were a traveller or boater.

We then:

- noted information from the call, including;
 - if we were able to register and if so, how we could do this?
 - whether we were asked for proof of address or identification (ID).
 - if we were offered temporary registration as an alternative.
 - any other issues raised as a result of us being a traveller or boater.

Summary of results - what did we find?

- Of 55 GP practices, 43% (24) were happy to register us, with 13% unable or unwilling to do so (seven). 25% offered temporary registration (14) and a further 18 % were unclear, unavailable or ‘not on take’ (10).
- 58% GP practices told us we needed ID to register (where 50 GP practices gave information).
- ID types required varied across GPs; the main request being for photo ID (38%), along with other types of ID, such as birth certificate or driving licence. Four practices asked for two types of ID, (of 24 where information given).
- 46% told us we needed proof of address to register (of 29 where information given).

According to NHS England Patient Registration Standard Operating Principles in Primary Medical Care when a patient is asked for ID or proof of address, this should

be a consistent rule for anyone who is trying to register (NHS England 2015)⁷. We revealed we were a traveller or boater usually in response to request for identification or address and were not able to ascertain whether requests for information would be consistent for *any* patient trying to register, irrespective of background.

Overall all staff were extremely helpful to us, with only one or two exceptions. However, it was clear that not all knew the process to manage registration for someone with no fixed address, or without ID, and sometimes had to clarify procedure or were unable to make a decision immediately.

Recommendations

- Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) to ensure GP practices are operating consistent registration processes to all prospective patients, irrespective of background and status.
- OCCG to offer information and guidance on registration for people without fixed address or ID, with reference to NHS England guidance on registration (NHS England 2015), and to ensure GP practices have appropriate procedure in place.
- Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure GP practices are aware of the status of, specific needs and barriers to access faced by traveller and boater community.

Analysis of results

Is it possible to register?

Total responses	55	%
Yes	24	43%
No	7	13%
Temporary registration	14	25%
Other (unclear/'not on take'/unsure	10	18%

Additional comments:

- Was told would have to register at Luther Street⁸.
- 'No appointments available until January'.
- Emergency only-but 'nothing until January' - suggests going 'back to your GP'.
- Suggested ring next day to clarify process with Practice Manager.
- 'Go to local walk-in, we don't accept 'walk-ins''.

Do you need ID to register?

⁷ NHS England (2015) Patient Registration. Standard Operating Principles for Primary Medical Care (General Practice)

⁸ Luther Street is a GP surgery providing medical care to people experiencing homelessness in Oxford City. <https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk>

Total responses	50	%
Yes	29	58%
No	12	24%
Other	9	18%

ID Type requested

Total responses	24	%
Any form of ID	1	4%
Two types of ID	4	16%
Birth Certificate	3	13%
Driving Licence	4	16%
NHS number	1	4%
Passport	2	8%
Photo ID	9	38%

Proof of address needed?

Total respondents	39	%
No	17	43%
Yes	18	46%
Other	4	10%

Of those who said 'Yes', two added 'Yes, if possible' and one offered an alternative.

Other:

- No registration without a postcode- find postcode of person who receives mail and use that.
- Needed to know EXACTLY where traveller was parked 'you must know where you are'.
- One suggested to bring Council Tax or proof of mooring.
- Need to get friend to 'write a letter' saying you are staying at their address locally.
- Suggest using friend's address.

Appendix 3: Questionnaire.

Boaters' and bargees' access to health and social care

Healthwatch Oxfordshire wants to hear from the boating and bargee community about what it's like for you or your family to access and use health and social care services in Oxfordshire....that's GPs, hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, mental health, physiotherapy, care at home and all other types of NHS care and support! Tell us what it is like and what could be better? What we hear from you will be used to tell those who plan and pay for NHS support, what you think, and to help improve things. Healthwatch Oxfordshire is an INDEPENDENT watchdog for health and social care- we are there to help make sure the voice of people who use health services is heard. If you would like to have a chance to win a £30 VOUCHER for taking part don't forget to leave your contact details at the end of the survey!
If it's easier to fill the survey in on-line, follow this link to complete

This survey is anonymous. This means you don't have to say who you are. Healthwatch Oxfordshire does make use of people's comments in reports or on our website - we aim to try and make a difference by representing your views. We need to know if you are happy for your anonymous comments to be used in this way.

- Yes, I am happy for my direct comments to be used in reports
- No, I don't want my direct comments to be used in reports

2. About you- Tell us...are you? (Tick any that apply to you)

- Living full time on a boat with a permanent mooring
- Living full time on a boat but do not have a permanent mooring
- Living on a boat part time as well as elsewhere
- Travelling all the time
- Currently living on the River
- Currently living on the Canal
- Please tell us first part of the current postcode where you are moored e.g. OX4

3. Where if anywhere do you have your post delivered to?

- Don't have a postal address
- Boater's box

- GP surgery address
- Friend or family address

Other, tell us more

4. Have you ever faced any challenges in accessing health or social care support?

- Yes
- No

If yes, tell us more about this

5 . If you have faced challenges accessing the health and social care support you need, what in your opinion are the main reasons?

- Always on the move
- No permanent address
- No postal address
- No access to phone
- No access to internet
- Too far to travel
- No transport
- Too expensive to get there
- Don't know what services are available to me
- I can't find information about the services available
- Too hard to get an appointment
- Don't have the time
- Travelling in and out of Oxfordshire
- I feel unwelcome as a Boater or bargee
- Other

Please tell us more about you experience of this

6. Are you registered with a GP now?

- Yes- a GP in Oxfordshire
- Yes- a GP out of Oxfordshire
- No, I am not registered with a GP

If you are not registered with a GP tell us why not

7. Have you faced any difficulties registering with a GP? If you have, tell us more about this and why this was

8. If you are registered with a GP, how do they communicate with you?

- Mobile phone
- Pay phone
- By post
- Email
- I have to contact them
- They can't communicate with me
- Other

Please tell us more about this, and what would be the best way to communicate with you?

9. If you are not registered with a GP tell us where you turn for healthcare support when you need it? (Tick any that apply to you)

- Pharmacy
- Accident and Emergency
- Minor Injuries Unit

- NHS 111
- The NHS website
- Social care support
- Children's Services
- Mental health support services
- Friends and family
- Community or faith group
- Don't seek help unless its urgent
- I look after myself
- Other

Tell us more

10. In the last year have you used any of the following?

- GP
- Pharmacy
- Accident and Emergency
- Minor Injuries Unit
- NHS 111
- The NHS website
- Hospital- in patient
- Hospital- out patient
- Social care support
- Mental health support services
- NHS Dentist
- Emergency Dentist

- Social Care Support
- Turning Point Drug and Alcohol Service
- Children's Services
- Housing support service
- Financial support service
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Other

Tell us more about your experience

11. If you are currently receiving support for your health or social care needs in Oxfordshire how do you make sure you continue to have this support if you are travelling out of county?

12. The NHS provides the following free screening for specific groups and health conditions: Please tick the box if you or one of your family members living on your boat have had one of these. (for more info see <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-screening/>)

- Cervical cancer screening (Women 25-64 years)
- Breast cancer screening (Women 50-70 years)
- NHS Health Check (Men and Women 40-74 years)
- Bowel Cancer screening (Men and Women 60-74)
- Diabetic Eye screening (Men, women and children with diabetes)
- Screening during pregnancy (Pregnant Women)
- Screening for newborn babies (physical examination and hearing test)
- Annual flu jab

13. If you are eligible for any of the free screening tests but have not accessed them, tell us why this has been?

- I am not sure how to access them
- I have not heard about them
- I have heard about them but they are too difficult for me to access
- Don't feel the need

Or tell us more

14. When you are travelling out of Oxfordshire how do you access health and social care support you need?

15. What 3 things in your opinion present the biggest challenges facing Boaters accessing health and social care support?

1

2

3

Comments:

16. What three improvements do you suggest to help Boaters access health and social care services more easily?

1

2

3

17. Is there anything that makes it difficult for you to stay healthy when living on a boat? If so, tell us about this

18. Have you ever accessed support for your mental health in Oxfordshire?

Yes

No- go straight to Question 23

19. Can you tell us the name of the mental health support service(s) you used?

1

2

20. Please tell us more about your experience of using mental health support services

21. Did you find the support you received helpful?

Yes

No

Please tell us more

22. Tell us what could be improved about the mental health support you received?

23. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience as a Boater or Bargee trying to access health or social care support in Oxfordshire?

24. Are you?

- Male
- Female
- Non binary
- Prefer not to say

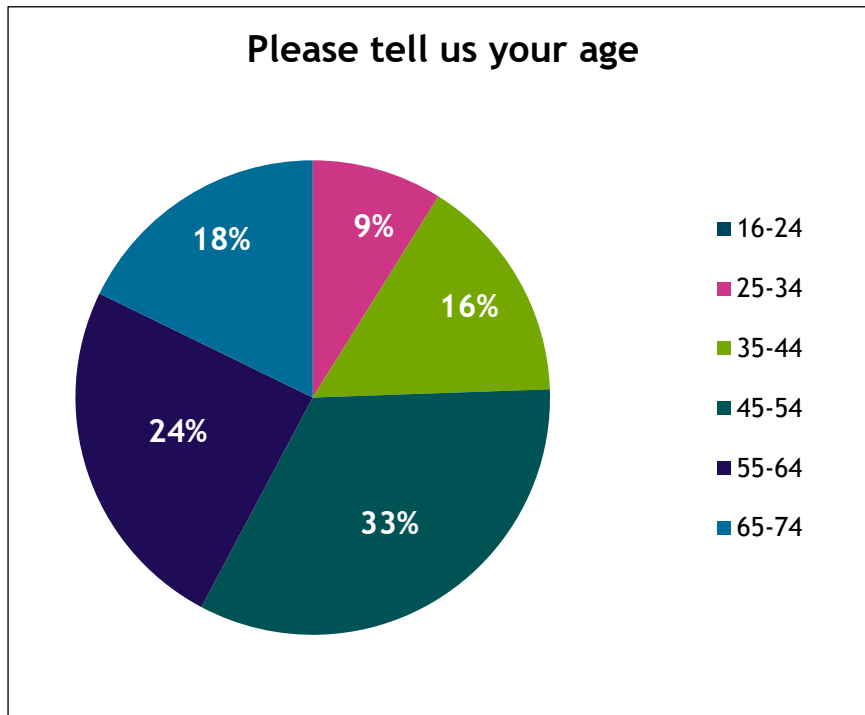
25. Please tell us your age

- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+
- prefer not to say

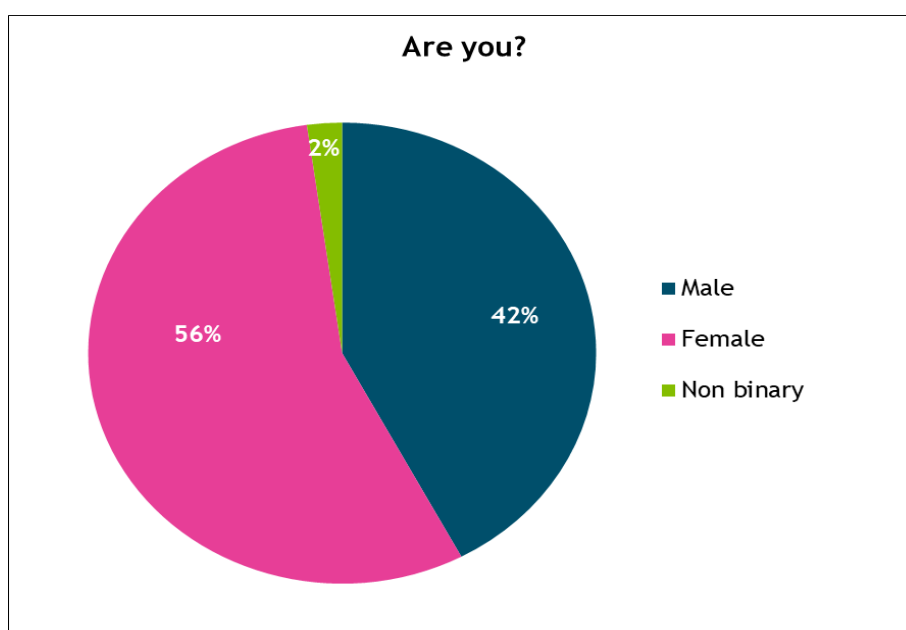
26. Please tell us your ethnicity

Appendix 4: Summary of responses

The majority of the respondents came from the 45-54 age group and we had no respondents to this survey from the 16-24-year-old or the 75 plus age groups.



The majority of the respondents to this survey were female (56%) with 2% of respondents identifying as non-binary.



Acknowledgements

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