

Patient Experience Survey – Sutton 2020-2021

Introduction

This report shares insights from our work done in Sutton (in conjunction with the local primary care team, practices, Healthwatch Sutton and NEL CSU Business Intelligence team) to understand patient experience of access and consultations with their GP practices since March 2020. The rationale for this research was a lack of information around this patient experience since the national lockdown in March 2020 (with the National GP Patient Survey 2020 having been done prior to this period) and the change in how GP practices were operating in light of the pandemic (as per national guidance and local context).

In terms of access since March 2020, there was a change in how the different modes of access were utilised with majority of patients relying on telephone to make their first point of contact with their GP practices, rise in online consultations and decreased walk-in to the surgery premises. Delivery of consultations also changed with a sharp rise in telephone consultations, increase in video consultations and reduced face-to-face consultations. In light of these changes, this research aimed to understand patient experience, seek feedback and inform recommendations to General Practice across South-West London.

Method

A patient survey was co-created with patients through Healthwatch Sutton, Sutton Primary Care team, Sutton Quality Lead and colleagues from South-West London CCG. Many of these were mapped to the National GP Patient Survey to allow comparison to pre-pandemic findings. Additionally, this survey allowed patients to provide both free-text responses as well as answer closed questions. This was distributed to patients through their individual surgeries across Sutton (all 23 practices in the borough participated under the Engagement Scheme) as well as through local charities so as to ensure responses from a wide range of patient groups. Majority of the respondents had completed the survey online with over a 100 having completed this on paper. This survey was carried out from September – December 2020.

Overall, 3004 patients completed this survey split across the 23 GP surgeries. Results were reviewed and analysed by the NEL CSU Business Intelligence Team. These were segregated into key aggregate findings as well as individual practice level feedback. Individual practice level feedback has since been utilised to have meetings (led by Healthwatch Sutton) with practices and their patient participation group to identify areas of good practice, areas of improvement and to create an action plan on how to continue to improve the service offered. Practices have until March 2022 to implement action plans that have been derived. Key findings and recommendations from this work have been shared below.

Key Findings – Aggregate

- Patient Profile

3004 patient responses were received. The majority age group of the respondents were between 45 to 64 and this was closely followed by the 65 to 84 cohort. 75% of the respondents were White British and a large proportion had self-identified to having a long-term condition (over 30%). One in ten also indicated having a mental health condition.

- Access to Primary Care Services

From the 3004 patients, 89% of patients had contacted their GP surgery since the lockdown period commenced in March 2020. From the patients that did not contact their GP, 84.5% felt that they did not need to. 15.5% who wanted to contact their GP but did not do so felt that they did not want to disturb the surgery (0.5%), were following COVID-19 rules (11%) or thought that their surgery was closed (4%).

Patients had largely contacted their GP surgery via telephone (71%). Other modes of contact used by patients included online (4%), face to face (14%), video consultation (3.5%), email (5%) and other (2.5%). **76.5%** found it easy to contact their GP surgery with 10.5% indicating that it wasn't so easy. In the 2020 National GP Patient survey, 77% found it easy in Sutton, 72% in SWL CCG and 65% in England and Wales. Of patients that didn't find it easy, the main reasons included long waiting times on the phone (34.9%), phone not answered in the practice (13.5%) and long introductory message (5%).

- Patient Experience

Most patients responded that they were not given the choice of appointment although 61% were happy with their appointment type, this figure moves up to 90% if considering the number that selected 'not applicable'. Those who were unhappy with the appointment type offered, indicated that they wanted a face-to-face appointment as they thought a phone appointment was not as effective.

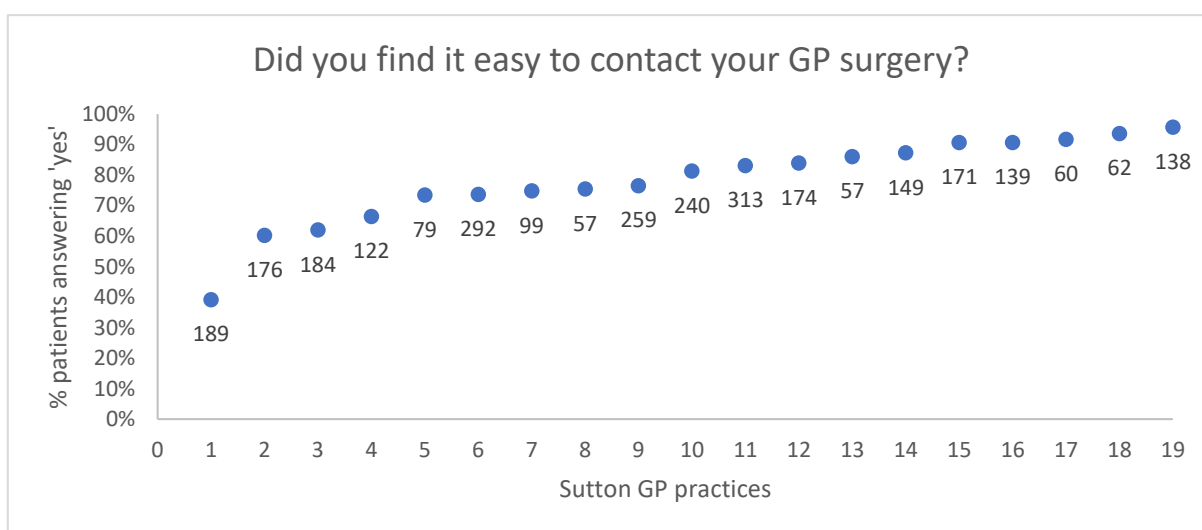
70% of the respondents felt that overall safe and effective care had been received. Of those who answered 'No', the primary concern was around difficulty in getting an appointment. Additionally some would rather have had a face-to-face consultation and/or believed that a phone consultation would not have met their needs.

Key Findings – Practice Level

19 of the 23 practices in Sutton received a results report summarising the responses from their patients. Practices received between 57 and 313 responses. Please see the Appendix for an example results report.

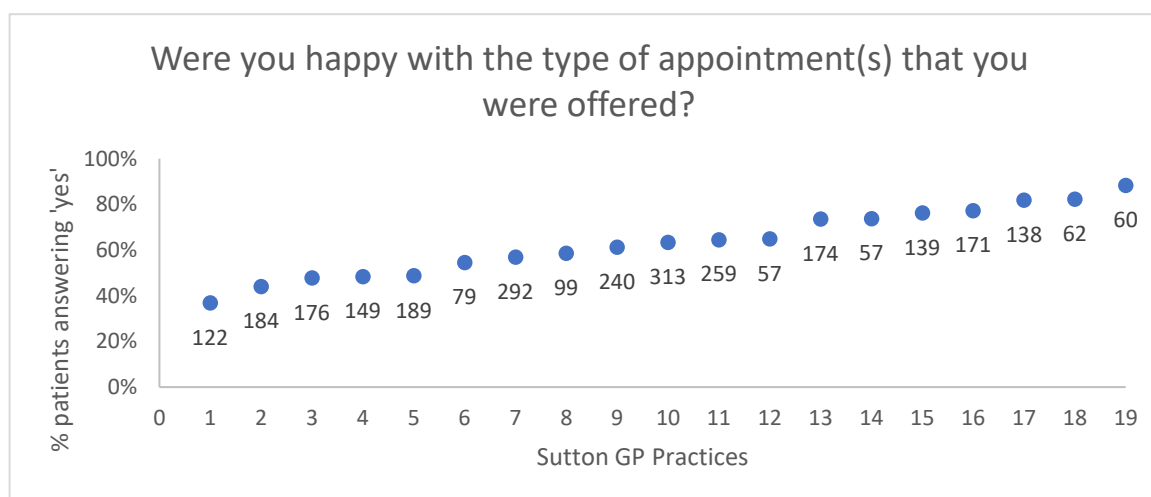
Contacting GP surgeries

- The percentage of patients who found it easy to contact their GP surgery ranged from 39% to 96%,
- The average was 78%.
- The numbers underneath the blue dots show the total number of all responses each practice had to this question.



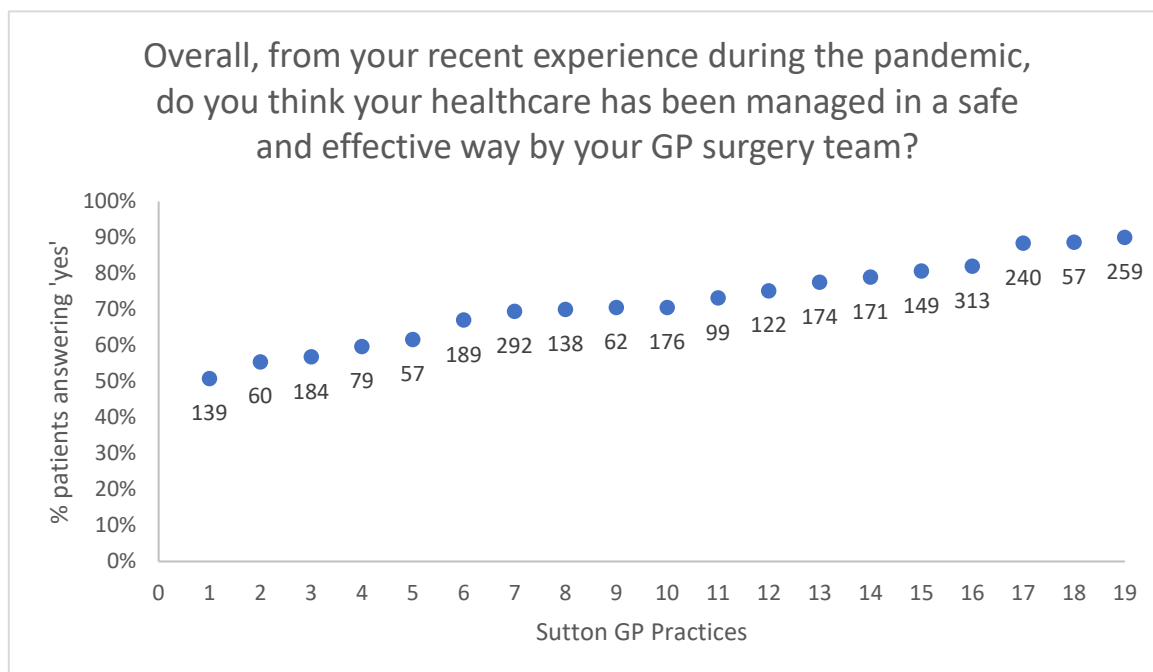
Type of appointment

- The percentage of patients satisfied with the appointment(s) type they were offered ranged from 37% to 88%.
- The average was 63%.
- The numbers underneath the blue dots show the total number of all responses each practice had to this question.



Satisfaction with healthcare

- The percentage of patients who thought their healthcare had been managed safely and effectively by their GP surgery team ranged from 51% to 90%
- The average was 72%.
- The numbers underneath the blue dots show the total number of all responses each practice had to this question.



Other feedback

- Practices also received patient feedback on what they were doing well and what they could change or improve.
- This consisted of individual comments and was not quantified. These comments were shared with practices and formed a key part in discussion between practices and patients (PPG) led by Healthwatch Sutton. This allowed action plans to be developed focusing on how services could be further improved.
- The results above are comparable to the results seen in the National GP Patient Survey 2021 which was released in July 2021. The national survey showed that in South-West London CCG, 76% found it easy to get through to the practice on the phone and 71% of respondents were satisfied with care (78% and 72% respectively in our survey).

Key Recommendations

These are drawn from feedback from survey followed by discussions between practices, patients and Healthwatch Sutton:

1. Maintain traditional alongside remote modes – personalised offer and choice on appointment modes

- Face-to-face appointments to be offered when visual examination is needed if visual technologies (photo sharing and video appointments) are not adequate or suitable for the patient.
- Video appointments /photo sharing could be offered more widely to patients who are able to utilise this.
- Video or face-to-face appointments to be offered when needed to build rapport / when clinicians need to pick up on physical clues.
- All appointments for an individual may not need to be face-to-face, particularly for straight forward aspects of their care, but overall oversight of a person's care may need to utilise visual appointment as part of their care.

2. Contacting the surgery to book appointments

- Publish explanation of booking system.
- Consider including:
 - Size of reception team
 - How the telephone queue works and other modes to make appointments or discuss queries
 - Proportion of appointments which are routine clinic and 'book on the day'
 - When and how to book each kind of appointment
 - Any new technology introduced to help the practice respond to demand
- This information could be online, sent via email and available in hard copy at the practice.

3. Face to face appointments

- Publish an explanation of the triage system.
- Highlight the point that having an initial telephone triage appointment does not rule out having a face to face appointment later on.
- Publish data on proportion of appointments that were face-to-face at regular intervals.
- This information could be online, sent via email and available in hard copy at the practice.

4. Explain how the practice plans to operate as the pandemic evolves

- Explain how the practice plans to deliver services as the pandemic evolves.

NB: Many practices' websites already show this information. Examples of highlighted good practice in Sutton included:

- Green Wrythe Surgery's 'Noticeboard' (on its home page)
- The Old Court House's 'Appointments' page
- Robin Hood Lane Health Centre's 'Important Update For Our Patients' (on its home page)
- Shotfield Medical Practice's use of information videos on some of its pages

5. Clear, visible and regular communication from practices

- Practice websites should contain clear information about how the practice is operating including information on how to best access local services.
- Latest National GP Patient Survey showed 76% found it easy to use their practices (of those who used practice websites in South-West London CCG). However, 44% of patients had not used the websites to get information about the practice. Practices could promote this further.
- Identify best modes of regular communication with their patient groups.
- Introduction of access leaflets for practices/PCN/boroughs about services at both practice level as well as additional local services (can include local arrangements for counselling or musculoskeletal services if delivered at-scale locally).

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Sutton would like to thank Sutton Primary Care staff and PPGs for engaging with the survey, and colleagues from the CCG for organising the Engagement Scheme

Appendix

1. Results report example:



Results report
example.docx

2. Action plan template:



Action plan
template.docx