

Living in Chipping Norton



A report about what it is like living in the town and surrounding villages with particular focus on people's experiences accessing health, care, and community services.

March 2022

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Thank you to all the residents of Chipping Norton and surrounding villages who took their time to speak to us and complete our survey.

Welcome to Healthwatch Oxfordshire – we listen, we influence, we ensure your voice is heard

We are the county’s independent health and social care watchdog. We collect your opinions and experiences to inform and influence those who run your health and social care services. We can also provide help and advice if you have a question about local health services – please get in touch!

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Background




Healthwatch Oxfordshire have been conducting research projects in towns across Oxfordshire since 2017. In October 2021 we started our outreach in Chipping Norton to listen to and hear from people about what it is like living in the town and surrounding villages. We were interested in their experiences accessing health, care, and community services.

Chipping Norton is a market town in West Oxfordshire. The Chipping Norton Health and Wellbeing Profile JSNA 2021 reported in 2019 there was a population of 6,918 residents. The profile also states that Chipping Norton has a higher proportion of people aged 65 and over than its district, regional and national averages. There is also a relatively low proportion of its population from a minority ethnic background (8% compared with 16% in Oxfordshire).¹

In total we heard from 204 people, via an online and paper-based questionnaire. The majority of people we heard from identified as female 75% (n 133). There was a fairly even split of age bands with 32% (n57) over 65 years old, 38% (n67) between 50-64 years old and 30% (n53) between 25-49 years old. 5% of respondents identified as from a minority ethnic background.

It should be noted that not all respondents answered all questions and that there were questions where respondents could choose more than one answer.

The questionnaire was promoted via the Healthwatch Oxfordshire news briefing and our social media pages, through the area's Patient Participation Groups and articles in local newspapers:

-  Oxford Mail
-  Banbury Guardian
-  Witney Gazette
-  Chippy News

We provided the link to the questionnaire to Chipping Norton Town Council and local councillors and asked them to help promote it locally. One of the local schools promoted it in their newsletter to parents. Requests were also received by telephone for paper copies of the questionnaire which were returned by Freepost to Healthwatch Oxfordshire.

¹ https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/ChippingNorton_JSNA_profile_Aug21.pdf

During November and December 2021, we had a stall at the Chipping Norton Market though we didn't speak to as many people as we had hoped due to the bad weather. We made three other outreach visits to Chipping Norton community venues:

1. Connect Café, via The Branch at St Mary's Church, Chipping Norton
2. Chippy Larder
3. Chipping Norton Library

We have completed 3 Enter and View visits to:

1. Chipping Norton Covid Vaccination Hub
2. Chipping Norton Outpatient Unit
3. Integrated Primary Care Service (formally the First Aid Unit)

Enter and View is a visit to health or social care settings that lasts approximately four hours. This allows us to make observations of the environment and staff activity, patient interactions as well as talk confidentially with service users, staff, and relatives.

The reports from these Enter and View visits are published on our website <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-work/enter-and-view-reports/>

Living in Chipping Norton and surrounding area

Of the 204 respondents to our survey just over 71% (145) lived in Chipping Norton, nearly 5% (10) lived in Enstone and just over 3% (7) lived in the villages of Charlbury and Hook Norton.

People also lived in the surrounding area, specifically:

Ascott	Churchill	Heythrop	Milton under Wychwood
Bledington	Deddington	Kingham	Over Norton
Bloxham	Fifield	Long Compton	Salford
Chadlington	Finstock	Lower Oddington	Sandford St Martin
Chastleton	Great Rollright	Middle Barton	

People we heard from tended to have lived in the area for more than five years (87%, n176), a further 24 people (12%) for between one and five years and 2 (1%) for less than 12 months. 28 people had lived in Chipping Norton all their life. This indicates a fairly settled population.

We wanted to understand why people moved into the area – the main reasons given were:

- For work (n43, 23%)
- To be near family (n26, 14%)
- Liked the area (n15, 8%)
- Cheaper / more affordable property (13n, 7%)

Other reasons for moving to Chipping Norton included:



146 people told us **what it was like living in the area**. Many people commented that they enjoyed the countryside and the rural life that Chipping Norton offered, whilst still having the convenience of access to shops, supermarkets, and other amenities such as the theatre and leisure centre.

One thing that became apparent when reading comments was the overwhelming sense of community in the town.



This sense of community was also heard when listening to people at the outreach visits and how the community supported individuals and each other during the COVID-19 pandemic. People and businesses came together to support each other, the leisure centre became a base for the Chippy Larder to distribute food to people, and the local pharmacist delivered prescription to its customers.

People told us that some aspects of living in the area could be improved.

Public transport could be better to support the town. One person commented that:

'it had deteriorated hugely over the last five years and causes a real problem for older people in our villages, also for students and workers trying to get to college and work on a daily basis.'

Other comments about public transport included:

*Buses not being regular enough, being too expensive
Better transport links needed to Oxford and Banbury*

Public transport links to surrounding towns and cities are quite poor considering the number of people who rely on them

Transport to health centre not good

Encouraging use of bus services. Inc frequency to Stratford, Witney, Moreton - 2-3-hour gaps discourage use. Shared season tickets across all private bus companies etc...

Traffic was cited by 20% of the respondents as an issue. HGVs and impact on the environment, safety in the town being of concern. This was sometimes linked to housing growth in the area.

Traffic. Hundreds of new houses (approx 2 cars each house) but roads remain unchanged.

Facilities for **older children/ teenagers** were also identified as missing in the town.



Summary

The rural environment together with the town's services appears to attract people to the area and is a reason why people stay in Chipping Norton – some all their lives. Many people choose to live in the area because of access to employment and affordable housing. There is a great sense of community that was even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whilst people generally enjoyed living in the town and surrounding villages, we heard that the downside of a rural community also apply to this community:

- Public transport could be improved
- Facilities for older children and teenagers / young people are few
- Traffic was a concern with the number of HGVs and cars driving through the town

The changes to GP services, including both GP surgeries being out of town, are liked by some and not by others. This is no different to other listening research Healthwatch Oxfordshire has conducted over the past two years.²

Accessing and using services

We asked people how they found out about services (they could choose more than one option); 186 people responded. Generally people already knew about the service, were referred by a professional or used an online search to find out.

Primary and community care services

- Most people were already aware of doctors, if not they searched online for information.
- How people found out about maternity care was evenly spread between already knew, health professional recommendation and online. Similar information sources were used to access health visitor care.
- Information about physiotherapy services was either found by referral, or by a professional or online.
- Interestingly the most common way of finding out about district nursing service was by online search, followed by recommendation by a health professional.

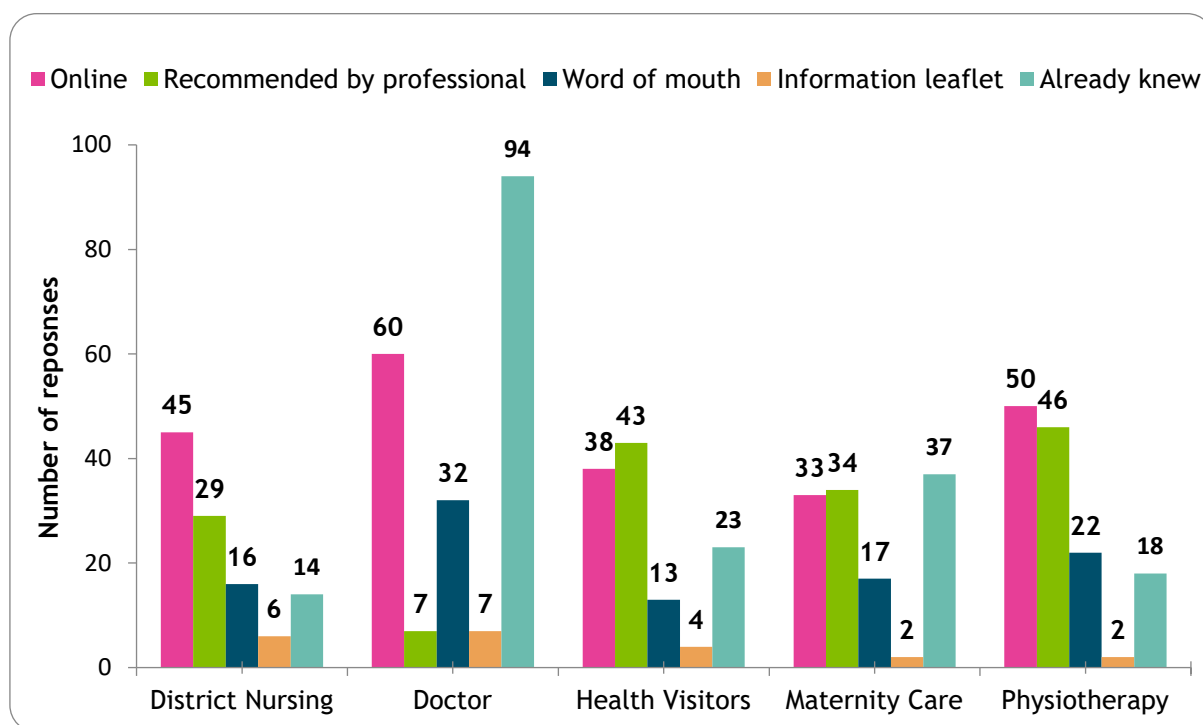


Chart 1: How people found out about primary and community care services

² See Healthwatch Oxfordshire website <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-work/research-reports/>

Health, social care services, community, and religious services.

- Most people already knew about how to access A&E, if not they tended to use an online search to find out where to go.
- People, who were not referred by a professional, accessed the internet to find information about Mental Health services both for Children Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Adult Mental Health Services.
- We heard from 98 people who said that they were already aware of pharmacy services in Chipping Norton.

People complimented Topside pharmacy in the town. We also heard this from people during the outreach visits.

Topside pharmacy has been the go to first choice for cuts, masks etc. Have used Topside pharmacy for help as could get no help at Chipping Norton Health Centre.

Don't know what we would have done without the pharmacy. Topside pharmacy has helped us the most, they have gone above and beyond to help.

Pharmacy in town is a great help

There was a comment made about there being

'No out of hours pharmacy on Sunday after 4.30pm'.

For more detail see Chart A in Appendix A – How people found out about other health and social care services.

Community and faith groups

Searching online or word of mouth were the most common sources of information about community and faith groups. Most people searched online for information about bus services. See Appendix A, Table B How people found out about community and faith groups for more detail.

General comments about how people found out about services included:

For me personally first point of call is always Google

The Chipping Norton News, which is run by volunteers and appears once a month, is invaluable

Used to use the info centre at the Guildhall in Chipping Norton – very helpful and knowledgeable, shame it was closed down

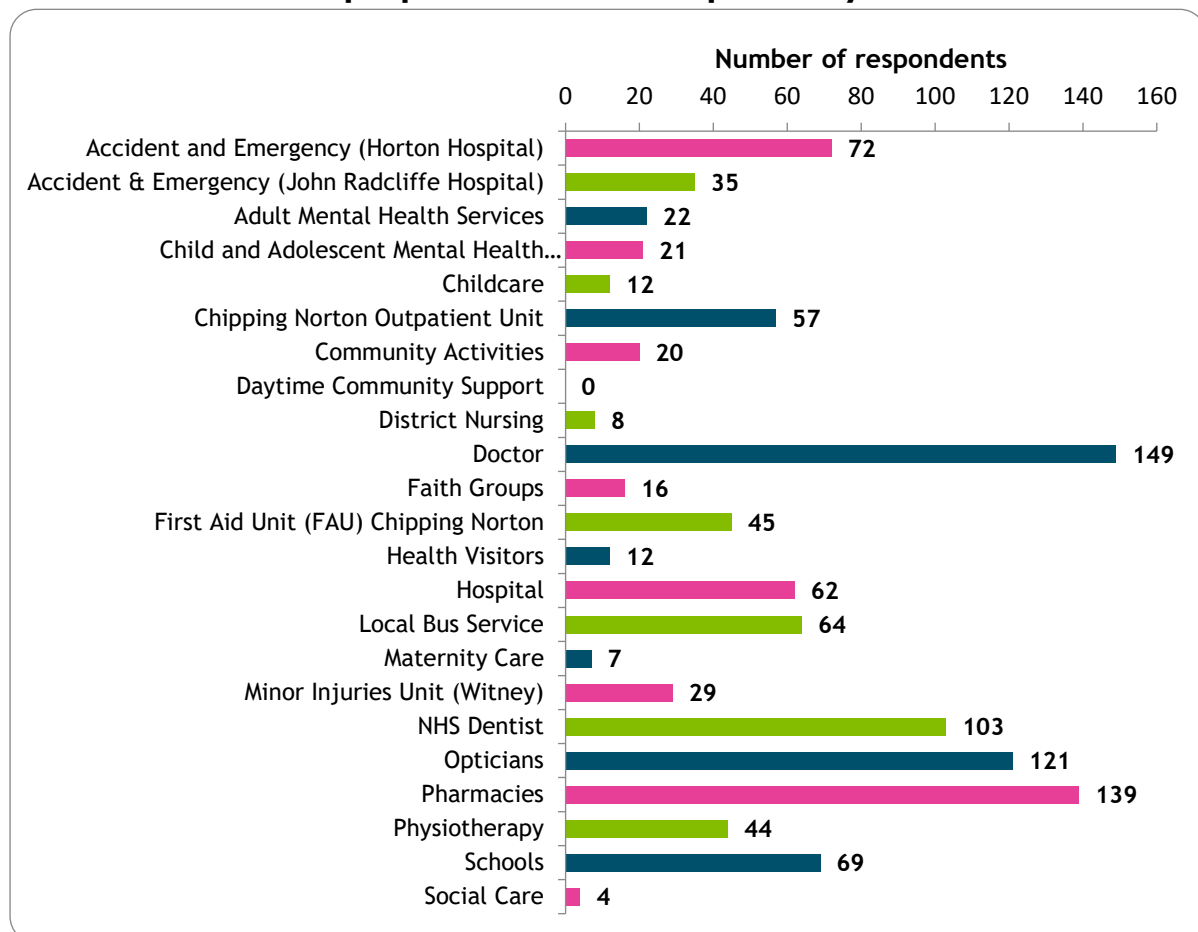
Too much having to find online. Should be central hub to be able to signpost

Difficult to find information for affordable activities, support and housing for the elderly and disabled in the area and this situation has been made worse by COVID which limits options for the physically vulnerable

Services that people have used in the past two years

Note – the survey was conducted at the end of 2021 and this period covers mainly the COVID-19 pandemic years 2020-2021.

Chart 2: Services that people have used in the past two years



The chart above shows the responses received when asked about using services in the past two years, 185 responses were received (more than one answer could be provided). Interestingly Day Time Support (n0) and social care services (n4) were the least used by respondents.

Key **health** services used were:

- Doctors (149)
- Pharmacies (139)
- Opticians (121)
- A&E (107) – Horton GH (72) and John Radcliffe (35)
- NHS Dentist (103).

- Minor Injuries/First Aid Units (74) – First Aid Unit Chipping Norton (45), Minor Injuries Unit Witney (29)
- Hospital (62)
- Mental health services (43) – Adult Mental Health Services (22), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) (21)

Two comments received around mental health were:

With covid it's been a struggle to get help. Waited 18 months for first appointment with CAMHS.

Extremely difficult to get any mental health help

Other comments received about finding and using services include:

Yes, I'm disabled and 50 there are no support groups anywhere nearby or place to meet others. I've had no help from social services struggle everyday

Need more local bus services – especially on weekends for young people starting to become more independent

We also received requests for copies of the questionnaire by telephone which were returned by post. The next two comments are taken from paper copies of the questionnaire i.e. not completed online.

Not online so have no idea how to find services, am 80 and feel invisible

Although we know all these services – if there is anything we need to find out – being told to go online is a nightmare, we don't have a computer and I can't use one. AND we are not the only people

During one outreach visit we heard from one gentleman about his experience of using services and the support in Chipping Norton.

After working in [xxx] for many years, I needed a change of scene and lifestyle. I randomly picked Chipping Norton and decided to move to the area, I found myself homeless 4 days before lockdown in 2020. I knew nothing about any support in the area and didn't know who to speak to, I contacted Oxfordshire County Council who put me in touch with Emma Kennedy at The Branch – they have been my lifeline, nothing but supportive – without them I wouldn't be here today. The Health Centre have also been so supportive to me

Chipping Norton Outpatient Unit

Chipping Norton Outpatients Unit at the Chipping Norton Community Hospital provides services delivered by both Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHT) and Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUHT). We asked which

departments people had attended and, 52 people responded (26% of total responses) citing 26 different outpatient departments.

- Xray being the most used by the greatest number of people (n21).
- Bladder & Bowel (adult & paediatric) (n7)
- Physiotherapy (n6)
- Talking Space (n6)
- Podiatry (n5)
- Audiology (adult & paediatric) (n4)
- Orthopaedics (n4)

Other departments attended by fewer than 4 respondents included:

- Rheumatology
- Paediatric Orthopaedics
- Respiratory
- Diabetes
- Clinical Genetics
- ENT
- Memory
- Speech and Language
- Community Paediatrics
- Gastroenterology
- Paediatrics
- Gerontology
- Heart Failure
- Neurology

Other departments mentioned by respondents:

- Mammograms
- Dermatology
- Oncology
- Covid and Flu Vaccinations
- Emergency First Aid

Hospitals

Not all outpatient appointments are available at the Chipping Norton Outpatient Unit, people have to travel to Oxford or Banbury. 130 people told us that they attended a variety of hospitals for outpatient treatments (people were able to indicate more than one hospital). People from the area visit all Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust hospitals and also the local Chipping Norton Outpatient Unit. An analysis of the data collected shows the number of people (n) who used the 5 hospitals as follows:

- John Radcliffe Hospital (80)
- Horton Hospital (72)
- Churchill Hospital (39)
- Chipping Norton Outpatient Unit (26)
- Nuffield Orthopaedic Hospital (24)

Most people drive to their appointments (115 respondents out of a total of 129). A number of people commented that parking on the hospital site for appointments is challenging:

Parking is a nightmare

However, using public transport and park and ride services is also challenging for some patients:

Public transport makes going to the hospital a whole day event

Getting to the JR by 2 buses is a hassle

Bus services to Kingham and Oxford have been cut, otherwise I would prefer to use these

Public transport is infrequent and inconvenient. I work and cannot afford the time to use it

A nightmare from start to finish. Takes 2 hours to get to JR hospital. Am 80 would like to know more about patient transport or volunteers transport, as find the bus a problem if have to go upstairs

One person commented how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected their travel – *Bus when not in pandemic, drive more recently.*

The following comments were received from paper surveys returned by post i.e. not filled in online.

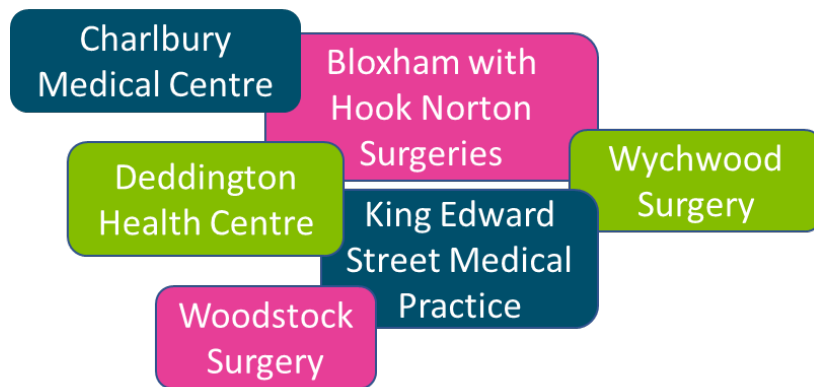
Go with my husband to ENT, is a nightmare have to allow 2 hours to get there, he is 80, we need voluntary transport or patient transport would help as I don't drive, but don't know how to access it as not online. Have to keep phoning to get his appointments so stressed out makes us ill, it takes weeks.

Have to keep phoning for my appointment for weeks on end, keep saying they will phone but don't, it makes me ill with stress. I can't deal with it at 80 years old. Have no family left to help.

GP Surgeries

157(85%) people said they were registered with a GP at the Chipping Norton Health Centre.

Other surgeries mentioned included:



Most people drive to their GP surgery (n134) with walking the choice of 86 patients. Other methods of transport include bus (n12), and a lift from a friend (n5). One person said they travelled to the surgery by bicycle. Other modes of transport included, taxi, electric car and using the community transport minibus – The Villager – which is free for those over pension age and £1 for anyone else.

Comments made about how convenient it is to **travel by car**:

At present very convenient, but not when all the new housing is built, and more cars will clog up the roads within the town

The health centre is in a good location with excellent car parking

It is convenient although the recent building works next door have made things much more difficult

This has become quite expensive now that I am on a low income

Convenience is fine but when we become unable to drive there is only one village bus each hour

Become increasingly difficult to reach ...have contact with surgery Awful service compared with how it used to be. Covid used as an excuse

Other comments about the **ease of access to the GP surgery in Chipping Norton** included:

Chipping Norton Health Centre – several comments mentioned that “when the two surgery buildings became one everyone thought it would be a good thing but how wrong we were”.

The doctor’s surgery has gone downhill but swapping to another surgery is going to be very inconvenient due to having to travel by car rather than walking there

The Chipping Norton Health Centre needs to get back to how it was before Covid!

Go back to the old two surgeries with full time GPs! All GPs now only seem to be 2 days a week! no continuity of treatment

Extremely convenient as we live in the town

Extremely inconvenient, it's the worst location possible for a health centre. At least when it was in the town centre local bus services could be used and it was accessible to everyone

Very inconvenient as elderly with a disabled husband. Almost impossible as walking up there very tiring and makes you breathless and then wait for bus is too long

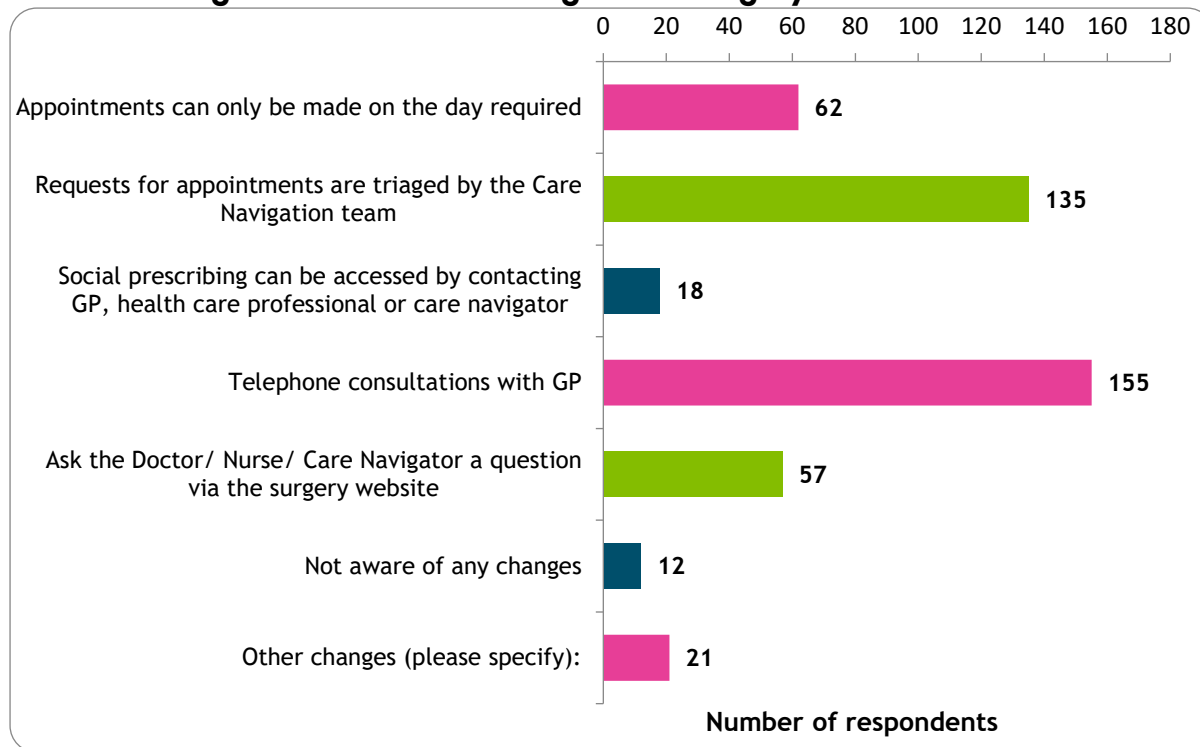
Heath Centre should be in town not outside. Also, nowhere near enough parking up there for people that go by car

Its 1.5 miles away I would like to use my motorised wheelchair to get there but the pathways are so dangerous it means I'm trapped at home unless someone is with me

Most inconvenient for people without cars. Indeed, I started a local bus service called Chippy Shuttle Bus which takes people to the hospital and doctors. 8 times/ day. Too far to walk if unwell

Over the past two years there have been **changes in the way that people can contact their GP** including telephone triage, telephone consultations, and online methods of getting advice. We asked people about their awareness of these changes. People are aware of changes particularly around telephone consultations, and requests for appointments being triaged by the Care Navigation Team. Chart 4 below shows the level of awareness for known changes.

Chart 4 Changes made for contacting the GP surgery



Many people commented that it was difficult to access someone on the phone, including:

The phone not being answered”, there is a “long pre-recorded message which is followed by being in a long queue”, and “that many times when you do get through to the care coordinator you are told that there are no appointments available

One person said that they felt *“There is a lack of privacy that goes alongside the way appointments are managed, a huge amount of repetition as you go through the chain of professionals before you reach a doctor. There is no time given for a call back, it is all morning or all day, when the doctor calls you back you could be in the supermarket or with friends, or out anywhere, where you may not want to discuss intimate issues.”*

With another commenting *“I don’t like the fact we have to wait for a doctor’s phone say it’s like 1pm to 6pm I work in retail and can’t rely on that time as not allowed phone on me and can’t stop my job to get the call.”*

There were other comments where **people appreciate the changes:**

*Mostly beneficial. Very pleased with phone consultation where possible rather than wasting time traveling and waiting at surgery
More helpful and kind GP’s and more available appointments when needed without brushing people under the carpet! Dr surgery feels v overwhelmed*

Getting an appointment with a GP, who will see you face to face

There is nothing whatsoever to give patients the idea that they are cared about at all and, indeed, rather the opposite. Individual doctors and nurses are very caring but the whole ethos isn't

We also heard from a few people who don't own mobile telephones or computers so feel that they are totally excluded.

Dentistry

182 people told us whether they were registered with a dentist and if this was an NHS or private dentist.

- 96 (53%) said that they were registered with an NHS dentist in Chipping Norton
- 24 (13%) were registered with an NHS dentist elsewhere
- 15 (8%) of respondents were registered with a private dentist in Chipping Norton
- 30 (16%) were registered with a private dentist elsewhere.
- 17 (9%) said they were not registered with a dentist

Most people are registered with a dentist that is close to where they live (79% n94), others said they did not know if it was the closest (6% n7) or that it was not the closest dentist (15% n18).

- Six people said that they couldn't register with an NHS dentist locally.
- Two people said that they had been registered as an NHS patient but were removed from the list:
 - one without being informed at all
 - the other person was given the reason that they were removed as they hadn't attended for two years, they explained that this was due to Covid-19 but were told they wouldn't be reinstated as a patient.

We also heard from one person who said that they had to pay for private dental treatment for their twelve-year-old child.

When registering with a dentist and access to appointments we heard a mixture of experiences:



Other comments received were:

Very good they don't seem to be hiding behind Covid!

It's impossible to find a dentist taking NHS patients

No notification that if you didn't attend for a check-up, you could be removed from the list- I have visited regularly for private hygiene appointment and receive reminders for those, but no notification that because of their back log due to COVID that you would no longer be allowed to stay registered if you haven't been in 2 years, without any notice

NHS dentist is impossible to get in Chipping Norton was on waiting list a year but had to change to private to get checked and fillings etc which is £££ and irritating when I'm paying my taxes for NHS

Travel to the dentist was evenly split between by car (n64) and walking (n63). Others used a Taxi and train. The chosen method of travel was considered very or fairly convenient by 50% of people who responded to this question (n65).

Comments received:

Not at all convenient, as the only NHS dentist I could find is Oxford Brookes in Oxford. But it saved me a lot of money. The dental practice in Chipping Norton quoted me more than £2000 for a procedure, Oxford charged me £41. Go figure.

It's far and have to pay for parking. Shortages of NHS dentists over the past decade have not encouraged us to change to another dentist practice (should one have spaces available).

Not very, but then I don't often go as my dental health tends to be fine and I can't afford regular checkups!

Appendix A Tables

Table A How people found out about other health and social care services

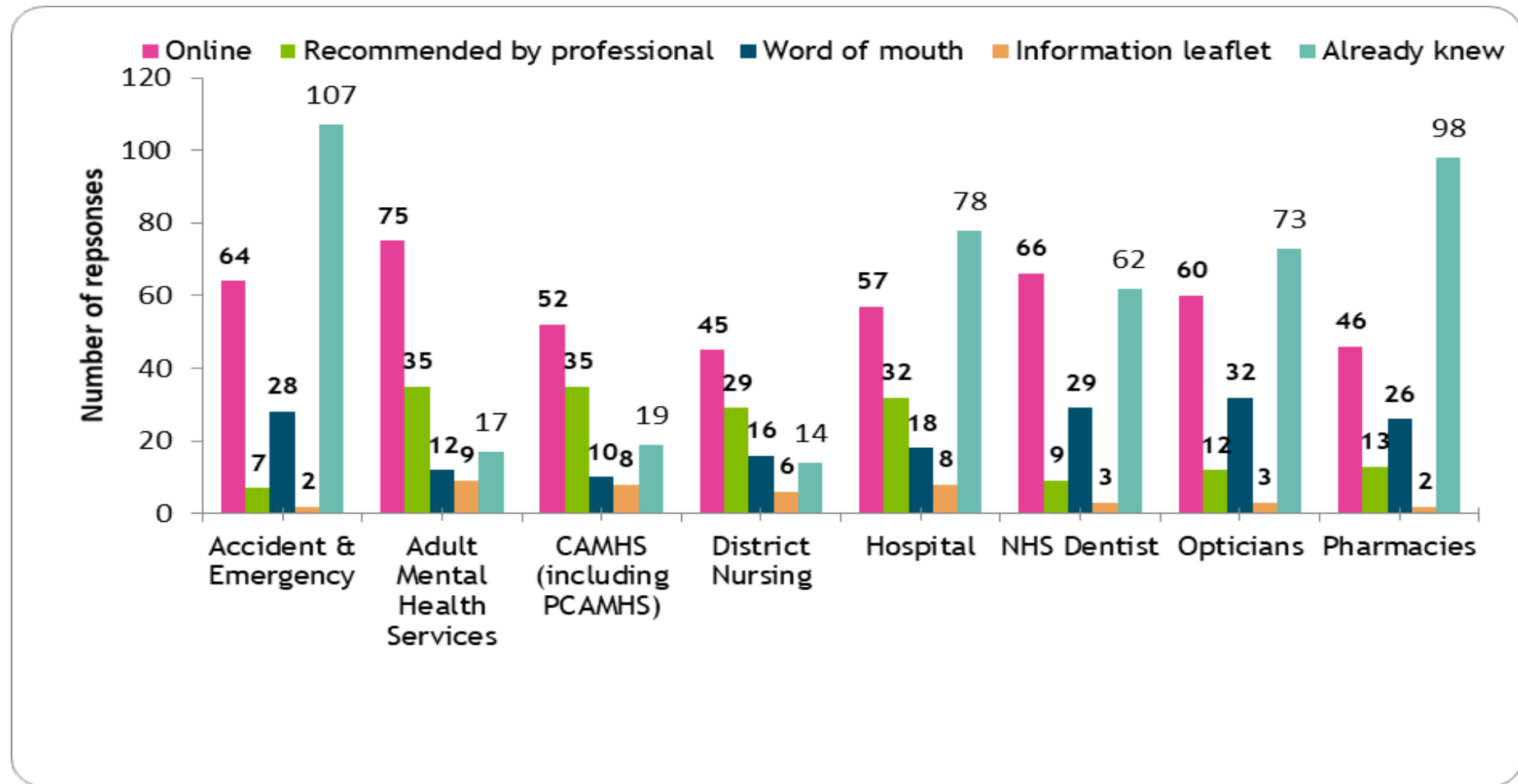


Table B How people found out about community and faith groups

