

Access to Primary Care Report

January – April 2024

Contents

About this report	2
Feedback Centre	2
About Us	3
Overall Snapshot	4
Services	5
Categories	6
Sentiment	6
Friends & Family	7
Key Themes	8
GP Services - Overview	9
GP Services – Key Themes	10
GP Services – Reporting Overview	15
Dentists - Overview	17
Dentists – Key Themes	18
Pharmacy - Overview	21
Pharmacy – Key Themes	22
Key Trends	24
Cheshire & Merseyside Healthwatch GP Access Survey	31
Work with Primary Care Networks	31
Conclusions	32

About this report

The focus of this report is Primary Care within Knowsley, and includes comments shared by Knowsley community members between January and April 2024.

The report includes data relating to all services included within the broader definition of Primary Care, namely:

- GP Practices
- Dental Practices
- Pharmacies
- Opticians

There were 414 comments received about Primary Care Services within Knowsley.

All comments used within the report are the actual words of the people who shared them with Healthwatch Knowsley and have not been changed in any way.

Healthwatch Knowsley would welcome any feedback relating to the information contained within this report and encourage Primary Care Services to utilise the Feedback Centre to provide responses to the reviews to create communication between the service and patients.

Feedback Centre

This report has been compiled using the Healthwatch Knowsley Feedback Centre. This web based tool enables members of the public to provide patient experience and feedback and rate the services that they use. Real time analysis of the feedback, enabling early identification of trends and issues is available through the system.



About us

Healthwatch Knowsley is your local health and social care champion.

Healthwatch Knowsley is your local health and social care champion. From Kirkby to Halewood and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

Healthwatch Knowsley will be an effective and clear voice for the community of Knowsley in relation to health and social care service provision and commissioning.



Our mission

Supporting you to have your say

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.

Providing a high quality service

We want everyone who shares experiences or seeks advice from us to receive a high quality service and understand the difference their views make.

Ensuring your views help improve health & care

We want more services to use community views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



Our values are:

Inclusive – working with all communities across Knowsley

Influential – we are responsive, setting the agenda and making change happen

Independent – we act on behalf of the local community, listening carefully then speaking loudly on their behalf

Credible – we value knowledge, seeking information and challenging assumptions with facts

Collaborative – we work in partnership with health and social care organisations to keep the debate positive and we get things done.

Overall Snapshot

The snapshot below shows that between January and April 2024 there have been 414 comments received relating to 45 Primary Care Services. GP's, Dentists and Pharmacies are highlighted individually within this report (please note there were no comments received regarding Opticians during this reporting period). In some cases, the name of the service has not been identified, or the service name cannot be recalled. This feedback is recorded under an unknown category. The overall rating during this period is just over 3.9 stars (Good), the average individual ratings are between 3 – 4 stars.

414

Reviews for this period

45

Services reviewed this period

Average Rating:



Average rating for this period (3.9879)
Based on 414 reviews



Overall average

Average Individual Ratings

Quality of care
based on 382 responses



Quality of treatment
based on 379 responses



Staff
based on 389 responses



Cleanliness
based on 364 responses



Food & Drink (if applicable)
based on 0 responses



Communication
based on 387 responses



Discharge
based on 248 responses



Accessibility
based on 343 responses



Safety
based on 326 responses



Appointment (Waiting times)
based on 361 responses



Services

The table below shows those services that received the most comments from January to April 2024. GP practices occupy the top 15 places in terms of volume of feedback generated and work continues to try and lift the level of feedback from other areas of primary care. Dinas Lane Medical Centre has received the most comments with 119 reviews and an overall rating of 4 stars (good). Other services include Manor Farm Road Surgery (70 reviews), Roseheath Surgery (42 reviews) and Gresford Medical Centre (36 reviews). The rating for each service is included below.

Service	Service Type	Reviews	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Rating
Dinas Lane Medical Centre	GPs	119	75.6%	9.2%	10.1%	★★★★☆
Manor Farm Road Surgery (Aston Healthcare)	GPs	70	44.3%	34.3%	11.4%	★★★★☆
Roseheath Surgery	GPs	42	64.3%	21.4%	7.1%	★★★★☆
Gresford Medical Centre (Aston Healthcare Limited)	GPs	36	69.4%	25.0%	5.6%	★★★★☆
Camberley Medical Centre (Aston Healthcare)	GPs	21	81.0%	9.5%	4.8%	★★★★☆
Cornerways Medical Centre	GPs	16	62.5%	25.0%	0%	★★★★☆
Dr Maassarani and Partners (Towerhill & Melling Surgery)	GPs	12	75.0%	16.7%	8.3%	★★★★☆
Knowsley Medical Centre (Aston Healthcare)	GPs	9	44.4%	44.4%	11.1%	★★★★☆
Wingate Medical Centre	GPs	8	37.5%	37.5%	25.0%	★★★★☆
Primrose Medical Practice	GPs	6	50.0%	0%	0%	★★★★☆
Stockbridge Village Medical Centre (Dr P Rigby and Partners)	GPs	6	50.0%	33.3%	16.7%	★★★★☆
Dr Maassarani & Partners (St Chad's) formerly Trentham Medical Centre	GPs	5	40.0%	60.0%	0%	★★★☆☆
Prescot Medical Centre (Dr Heath)	GPs	5	60.0%	40.0%	0%	★★★★☆
The Health Centre Surgery (The Halewood Centre) Dr Simo	GPs	4	50.0%	50.0%	0%	★★★★☆
The MacMillan Surgery (St Chads Centre)	GPs	4	50.0%	50.0%	0%	★★★★☆

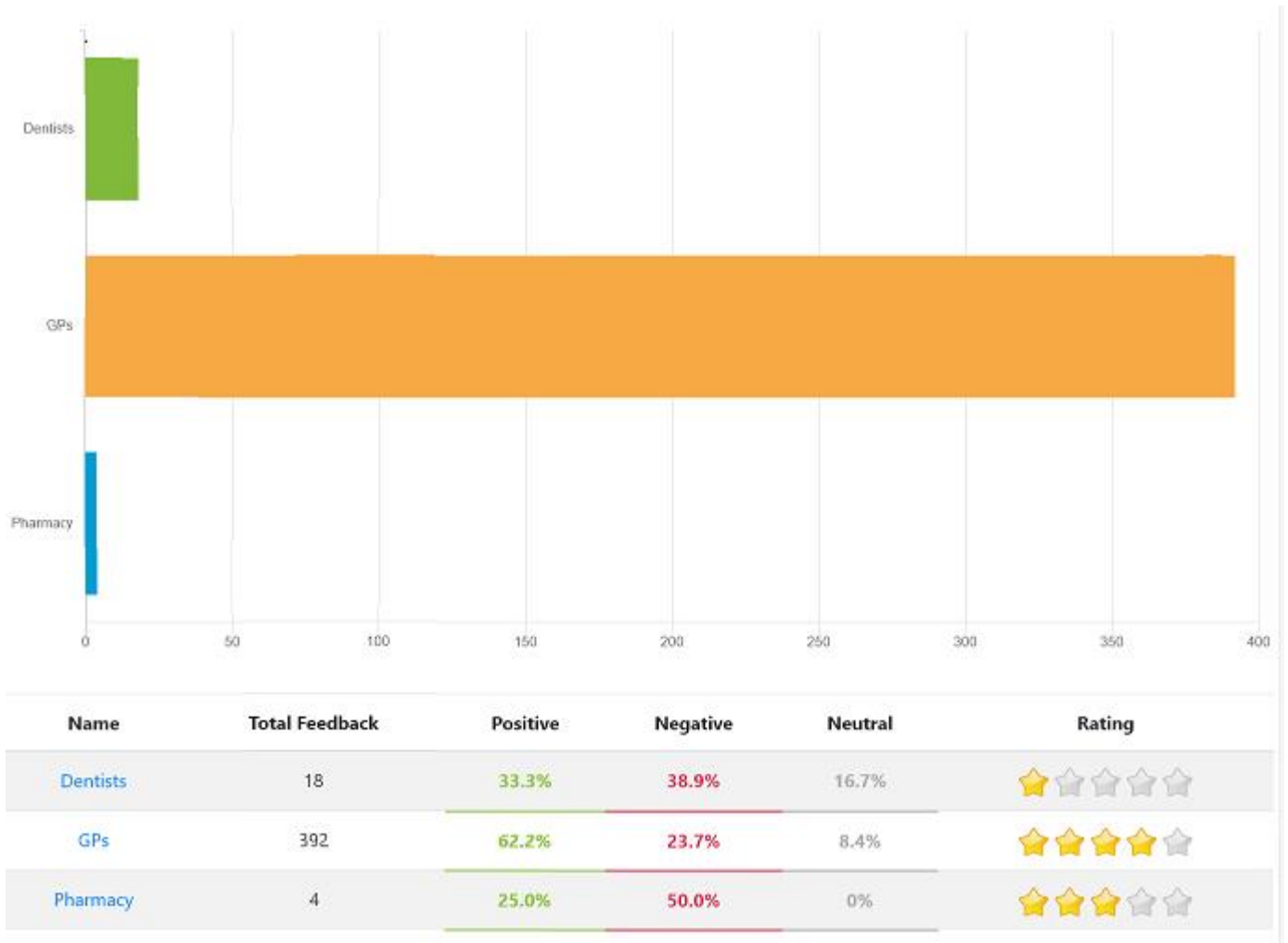
and Gresford Medical Centre (36 reviews). The rating for each service is included below.

* Please be aware that system does not show 100% of the sentiment, as the system will only show positive, negative and neutral, the remaining % accounts for any mixed responses, which is a combination of positive, negative and neutral.

Those primary care services that have received fewer patient comments on the HWK feedback centre have limited data on which to self-assess and identify any areas of success or others which may require improvement. It's also possible that the small volume of feedback provided voluntarily may represent a bias toward those patients who have had an unhappy experience.

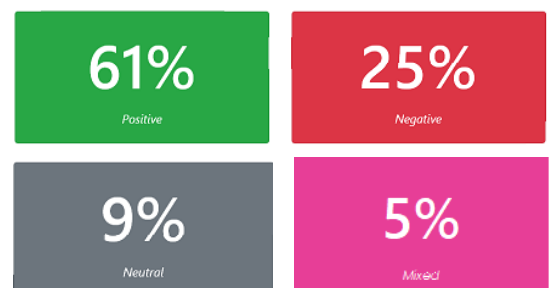
Categories

The category that has received the most feedback has been GP services with 392 comments (478), Dentists receiving 18 comments (9) and Pharmacies receiving 4 comments (3). Numbers in brackets represent volume of feedback in the previous 4 months. The table below also shows the sentiment and rating for each category.

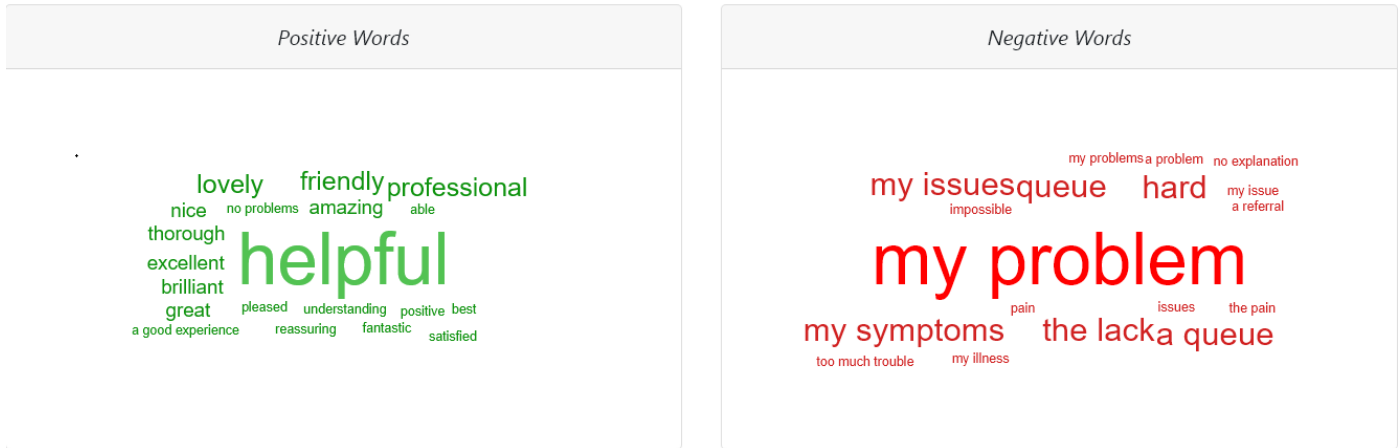


Sentiment

As well as providing an overall star rating which is based on the ratings given by local people, our feedback centre also uses sentiment technology which looks at each piece of anonymous feedback shared and reviews the positive, negative and neutral sentiments. Analysis of this reporting period shows that comments overall are 61% positive, 25% negative, 9% neutral and 5% mixed (this includes comments that are a mix of positive, negative and neutral).

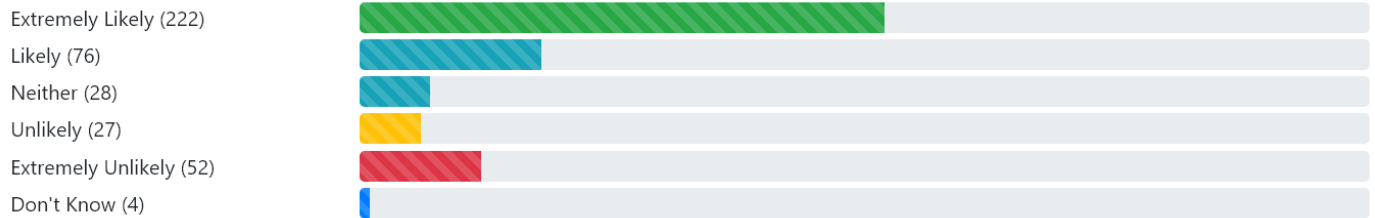


The word clouds below highlight some of the most used phrases within the comments received, the most used positive word is 'helpful' and the most used negative phrase is 'my problem'.



Friends & Family

Patients were asked if they would recommend the services to their friends and family, with 409 respondents answering this question. 222 people said they would be extremely likely to recommend; 76 stating they would be likely to recommend; 28 stated neither; 27 would be unlikely to recommend, 52 stated they would be extremely unlikely to recommend and 4 people didn't know.

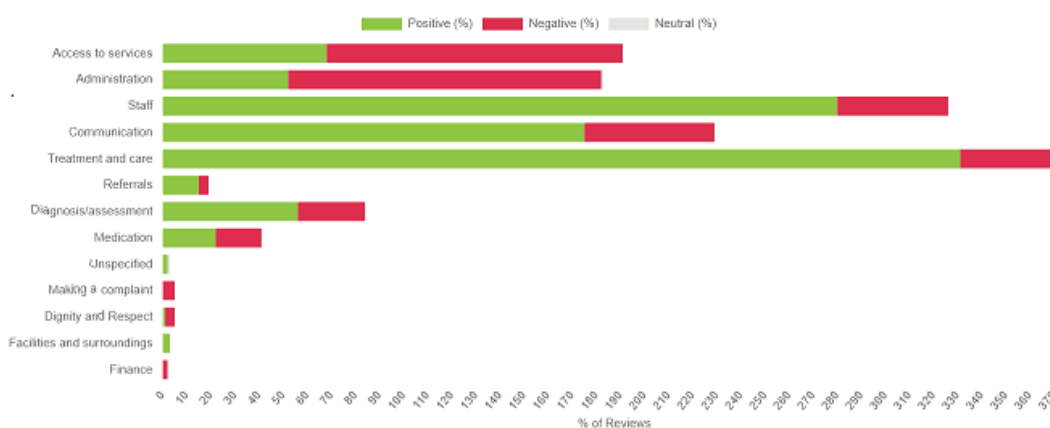


Key Themes

A number of key themes have been highlighted during production of this report where elements of the services have scored particularly well or poorly by significant numbers of respondents.

These include:

- Of 373 comments relating to treatment and care 89% scored this **positively**
- Of 326 comments relating to staff 86% scored this **positively**
- Of 229 comments relating to communication 76% scored this **positively**
- Of 191 comments relating to gaining access to the service 64% scored this **negatively**
- Of 183 comments relating to administration issues 71% scored this **negatively**

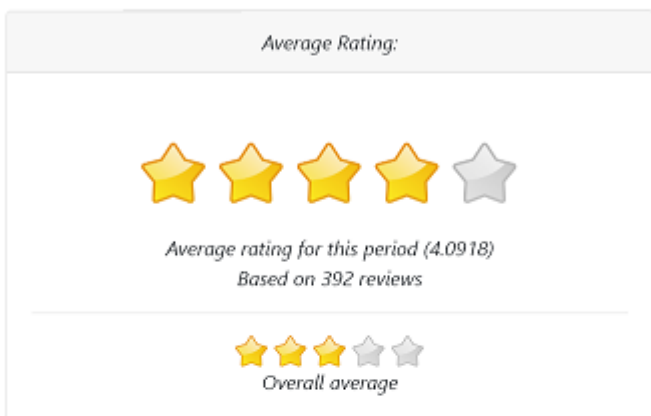
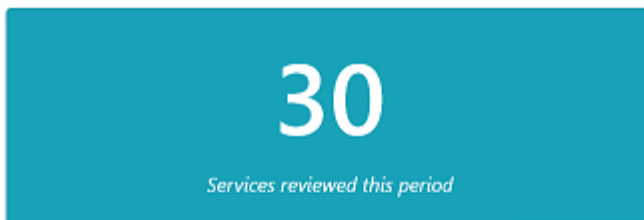
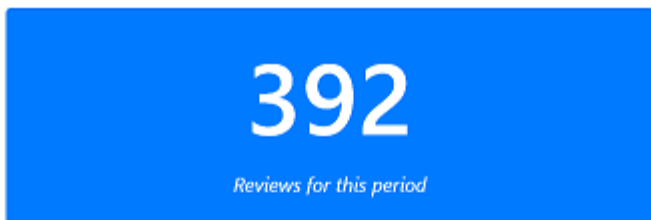


Please note comments may include multiple themes.

Theme	Count	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Subthemes
Access to services	191	36%	64%	0%	Sub-Themes >
Administration	183	28%	71%	1%	Sub-Themes >
Staff	326	86%	14%	0%	Sub-Themes >
Communication	229	76%	24%	0%	Sub-Themes >
Treatment and care	373	89%	11%	0%	Sub-Themes >
Referrals	19	79%	21%	0%	Sub-Themes >
Diagnosis/assessment	84	67%	33%	0%	Sub-Themes >
Medication	41	54%	46%	0%	Sub-Themes >
Unspecified	3	67%	0%	33%	
Making a complaint	5	0%	100%	0%	Sub-Themes >
Dignity and Respect	5	20%	80%	0%	Sub-Themes >
Facilities and surroundings	3	100%	0%	0%	Sub-Themes >
Finance	2	0%	100%	0%	Sub-Themes >

GP Services - Overview

There have been 392 comments received relating to 30 GP Practices. The overall rating during this period is just over 4 stars (Good), the average individual ratings are between 3 – 4 stars.



Average Individual Ratings

Quality of care based on 362 responses	★★★★☆
Quality of treatment based on 359 responses	★★★★☆
Staff based on 369 responses	★★★★☆
Cleanliness based on 344 responses	★★★★☆
Food & Drink (if applicable) based on 0 responses	☆☆☆☆☆
Communication based on 367 responses	★★★★☆
Discharge based on 234 responses	★★★★☆
Accessibility based on 324 responses	★★★★☆
Safety based on 308 responses	★★★★☆
Appointment (Waiting times) based on 342 responses	★★★★☆

GP - Key Themes

Treatment & Care

In terms of treatment and care the table below shows that a majority of the comments received were positive, with 'experience' being the sub-theme mentioned the most frequently during this reporting period.

Treatment and care	356	91%	8%	0%
Experience	327	91%	9%	0%
Safety of Care/Treatment	1	0%	100%	0%
Treatment Explanation	28	100%	0%	0%

Below are some examples of the comments received within the treatment and care theme.



"It was a good experience from booking the appointment to being seen. The clinician was very knowledgeable and efficient."

"Dr (name omitted) was great at supporting me post-natal and not letting me fall through the cracks, she offered great support that suited me and helped me get the help I needed."

"I still cannot believe how lucky I am to be a patient of this practice. I experienced very poor service from my previous GP practice and the difference in service provision is simply amazing. Pleasant professional reception staff who are always helpful. I have always been happy with GP intervention, however my most recent face to face and follow up appointment was faultless. The GP listened carefully to my explanation re my symptoms and carried out a thorough examination. A face to face follow up was the arranged to monitor and review the situation. This GP practice is superb."

"I was seen a few days ago by Dr (name omitted) who was really helpful, provided lots of assurance, listened and provided information about the next steps that we have to make. Overall really happy with the advice and the steps we are taking."

"Had doctor's and nurse appointments two days apart. All problems professionally sorted. A real pleasure and informative."

"I feel the Dr really cares and is doing all he can to find what my problem is and treat me."

Staff

The majority of comments received that related to staff members have been positive, with 'Clinician' being the main sub-theme (155 comments). Staff attitude (111 comments) is also mentioned positively in the comments received, some examples are included below:

Staff	Count	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Staff	309	89%	11%	0%
Attitudes	111	86%	14%	0%
Training and development	4	25%	75%	0%
Clinician	155	93%	7%	0%
Reception Staff	37	89%	11%	0%
Staffing levels	1	0%	100%	0%
Continuity	1	0%	100%	0%



"I have found every single member of staff in the surgery to be very helpful. All of the Doctors and Nurses are extremely professional and thorough with my care, and I have not had too much difficulty with getting timely appointments. I feel grateful that both me and my family are with this surgery."

"Reception staff were helpful on arrival with great communication Dr was friendly, aware of my last visit, put an immediate health plan in place with immediate treatment & next steps."

"The Dr I saw Dr (name omitted), I think his name was, was very good. I felt heard and put at ease. Also he referred me to the hospital and the appointment came through the same day."

"All staff an doctors always take everything very serious and always listen I thank them all for what they have done for my family over all the years."

Dr (name omitted) I went above & beyond with trying to help me with my issues, as he understands because he is kind & considerate."

"Finally somebody sat and listened to my fears and concerns as well as doing review. (Name omitted) was amazing."

"Reception staff were helpful on arrival with great communication Dr was friendly, aware of my last visit, put an immediate health plan in place with immediate treatment & next steps."

Communication

The majority of communication themed comments (215 comments) received related to 'general' and have been positive. Some examples are included below:

Communication	215	80%	20%	0%
General	191	90%	10%	0%
Lack of	24	0%	100%	0%



“My father’s problem was sorted in a friendly manner by staff, communication was very good.”

“I seen a lady doctor who was very informative, told me step by step everything she was going to do and asking was I ok with it, all the doctors I have seen have been good but she was particularly attentive.”

“Dr didn’t introduce herself and then sat and stared at us as if we could read her mind. Wasn’t overly confident in her approach kept asking what the Hospital would do and left saying go to the hospital if things don’t improve. Felt it was a disappointing appointment in terms of bedside manner and reassuring the patient.”

“The doctor was very reassuring and took the time to talk to me and explain matters. I liked his honest and straightforward communication skills.”

“Doctor listened, examined and then went over thoroughly of what to do next.”

“Reception staff were helpful on arrival with great communication Dr was friendly, aware of my last visit, put an immediate health plan in place with immediate treatment & next steps.”

“My experience was very good. The appointment and communication work well.”

“Called to book an appointment to discuss results. Appointment arranged within 2 weeks. Dr called between time allocated. Dr was through, helpful and explained in detail options.”

Access to Services

We continue to see mixed experiences in those areas relating to **Access to Services**. There is a notable variety of sub-themes within this area including lack of access, telephone systems and information and advice, as highlighted in the table below:

Access to services	183	37%	63%	0%
Lack of	55	0%	98%	0%
Telephone Systems	25	12%	88%	0%
Information and Advice	23	96%	4%	0%
Use of digital services	12	25%	75%	0%
Telephone Appointments	14	50%	50%	0%
Face to Face appointments	14	79%	21%	0%
Waiting times	22	41%	59%	0%
General	9	100%	0%	0%
Convenience/Distance to travel	1	0%	100%	0%
Patient choice	9	44%	56%	0%

Examples of comments are included below:

“I was given a telephone consultation time for 3.30pm for when I finish work as I cannot answer during working hours. They decide to ring me at 2.20pm when I can't answer my phone. I ring them at 4.20pm to ask why they rang me at that time and that I couldn't answer. They tell me they have rang 3 time. The other 2 times are whilst I am on the phone to them in a queue for 19 minutes wanting to know why they rang at 2.20pm. Such incompetent people.”

“I moved to this doctors last year sometime as had a terrible time with previous gp. Since I've came here everything I've been waiting years for to get sorted, I've had appointments and referrals done in a matter of months. Nurses, receptionists and doctors are all very polite, don't rush you and lovely to speak with. Couldn't recommend enough and glad I moved here.”

“Very poor doctors. Having been a patient for nearly 5 years, you are more likely to win the lottery than get an appointment. You can ring 8am, however by 08:00:01 there are no appointments at all. I have at times just suffered through pain, ignoring symptoms because it is impossible to be seen by a clinician.”

“Phoned up for an appointment and was told all had gone but they would phone if a cancellation was made and 10 minutes later I had an appointment. Reception staff where great.”

Administration

‘Administration’ continues to be an area of concern for patients with 71% of the 180 comments received being negative, with a number of people struggling with appointment availability and having issues when booking appointments.

Administration	180	28%	71%	1%
Appointment availability	92	37%	62%	0%
Booking appointments	85	19%	79%	1%
General	1	0%	100%	0%
Management of service	3	33%	67%	0%
Medical records	1	0%	100%	0%

Examples of comments are included below:



“There needs to be a more efficient appointment system, releasing appointments on the day with no triage is not effective. I made 119 attempts to call at 8am on Monday and couldn’t even get in the call queue. Other times I’ve called and by the time I get through the appointments are gone. My daughter is 10 months old and this causes me a lot of stress when she is poorly and can’t be seen.”

“Have to phone or be present at the surgery for 8am to get an appointment.”

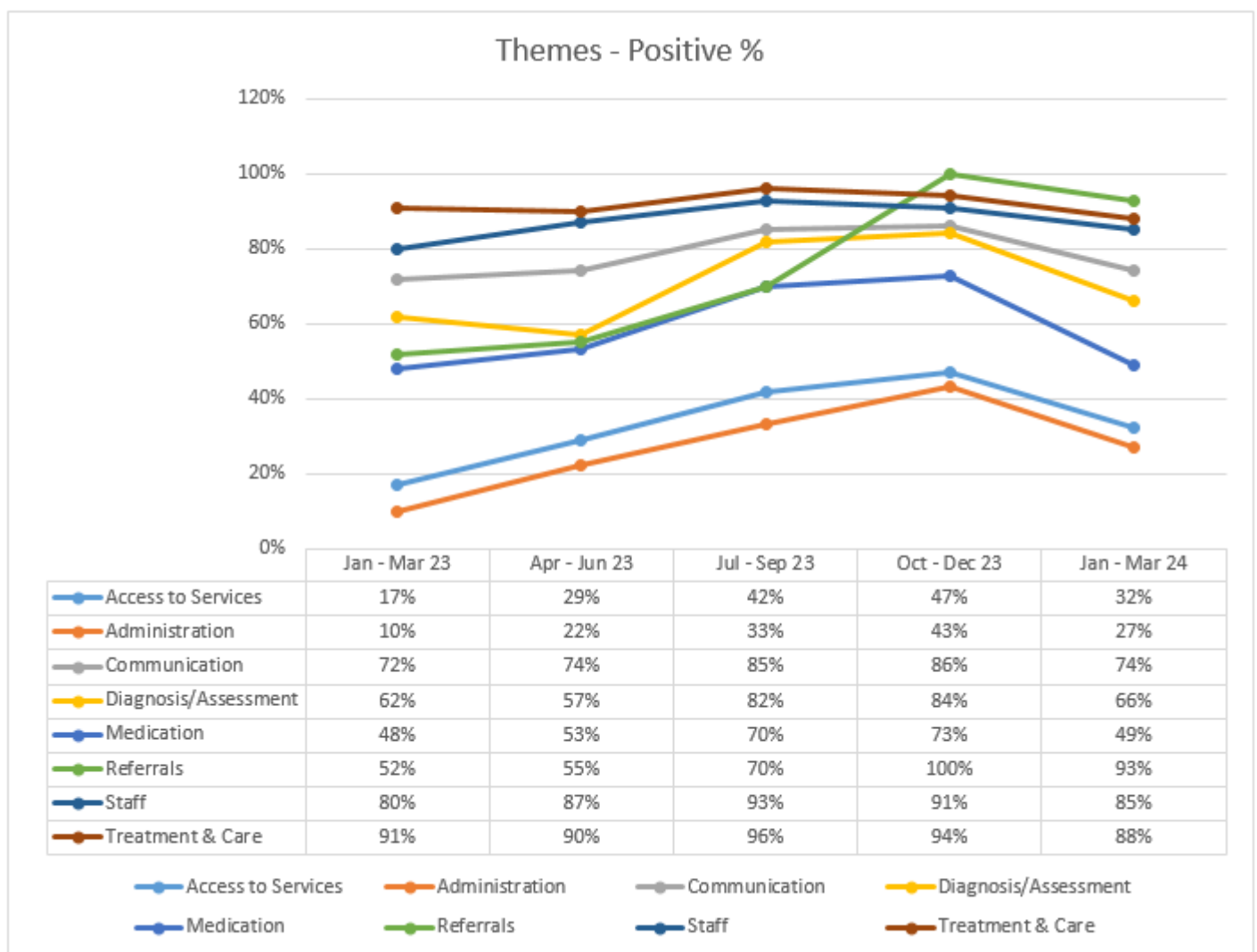
“Telephoned as the policy states between 8am-10.30. Request an appointment which I am given over the phone after explaining my “problem” over the phone to the receptionist. I am given a tel app in a week’s time. Unfortunately their policy is tel first even though I am concerned about a lump. A nurse phones a week later who tells me I need to be seen by a dr and goes away to see if she can “unblock” an app telling me she will call back in 5

minutes. 3 hours later I receive a txt with a GP app in just under 3 weeks. Call receptionist explain I can't wait this long - told that's all there is! Really??!!"

"If you want an appointment to see a doctor you have to go to the surgery in person before 8am to get one as you cannot get an appointment over the phone as they have usually gone by the time you get through and as I work full time this is extremely frustrating. There should be a slot were you can book an appointment if you are working."

GP – Reporting Overview

The graph below provides an overview of the % of positive comments relating to the most popular themes between January 2023 and March 2024:



The image shows that overall there has been a small decrease in the number of positive comments received. It is worth noting that there was a small difference in the number of comments received,

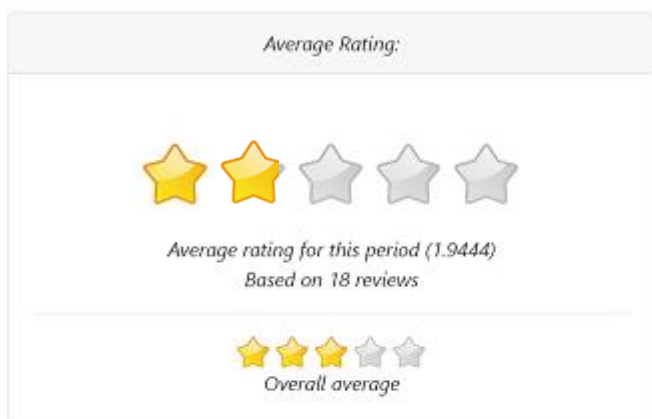
Responding to Patients

The Healthwatch Knowsley Feedback Centre gives the opportunity for service providers to directly respond and communicate with patients. From the 392 comments received relating to GP Services, a total of 372 comments received a response from the provider.

When we receive low rated reviews or particularly negative reviews, we will contact the reviewer with information about raising their concerns with the Practice directly, as well as information about the Advocacy services within Knowsley to support any complaints relating to health care.

Dentists - Overview

There have been 18 comments received relating to 12 Dental Practices. This is an increase on the volume of feedback received for the previous 4 months, although the overall rating during this period is just over 1.9 stars (Poor), the average individual ratings are between 2-3 stars.



Average Individual Ratings

Quality of care based on 17 responses	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Quality of treatment based on 17 responses	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Staff based on 17 responses	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Cleanliness based on 17 responses	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Food & Drink (if applicable) based on 0 responses	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Communication based on 17 responses	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Discharge based on 12 responses	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Accessibility based on 16 responses	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Safety based on 15 responses	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Appointment (Waiting times) based on 17 responses	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dentists - Key Themes

Treatment & Care

In terms of treatment and care the table below shows that a majority of the comments received were negative, with **'experience'** being the sub-theme mentioned.

Treatment and care	14	29%	71%	0%
Experience	13	31%	69%	0%
Treatment Explanation	1	0%	100%	0%

Below are some examples of the comments received within the treatment and care theme.

6 ***“Dentist really dismissive and huffed and puffed all through treatment. Didn’t bother explaining treatment plan to me.”***

“My girlfriend was having severe toothache so she called 111 and got an appointment at dovecote dentist. I waited outside while she went in. When she came out she was crying in pain she said the dentist was horrible with her. He never gave her pain relief until after he pushed the filling onto her tooth, which hurt her so much. The only advice he gave her was to find a dentist.”

Staff

The majority of comments received that related to staff members have been negative, with **'attitudes'** being the main sub-theme (6 comments), some examples are included below:

Staff	14	36%	64%	0%
Clinician	4	75%	25%	0%
Attitudes	6	33%	67%	0%
Staffing levels	1	0%	100%	0%
Reception Staff	3	0%	100%	0%

6 ***“Went to the dentist as a nervous patient, reception staff where great and kept me calm, dentist and nurse where also really kind and calming, talked me through all what they were doing. 100% would recommend this dentist.”***

“Reception staff are not interested in the patient they could all do with going on a customer care course.”

Communication

There have been 11 comments received that related to **'general'** communication, a majority of which are negative.

Communication	11	27%	73%	0%
General	8	38%	63%	0%
Lack of	3	0%	100%	0%

6 **“Towerhill closed and didn't inform patients less than a week of closing. Towny dentist still hasn't gave letters. Communication is terrible.”**

“I am a very anxious patient when going the dentist and when making the appointment I asked if I could see the most experienced member of staff available. I could of had an appointment in 2 weeks, but chose to wait almost 2 months for an appointment for the sake of being seen by a more experienced member of staff. When I attended the appointment, a young dentist no older than 30 was seeing me. He did not greet me in a friendly manner and was trying to stick his fingers in my mouth before talking to me. When I told him my concerns about my teeth he ignored everything I told him and said we can just do a filling, to which I told him a filling has already fell out twice before, but he was insistent in me consenting to treatment I did not want. I eventually spoke to reception and asked if I could see another dentist to where they were no help. I explained my anxious issue and how I did not feel like he was the correct dentist for me. They told me it was treatment with that dentist or nothing at all. I was not happy regarding the situation so asked if the manger could ring me. The manager never did ring me and I am now stuck in a situation where I have no dentist unless I go with a practitioner I am uncomfortable to have treating me.”

Access to Services

In terms of **Access to Services** for dental care, there have been 7 comments received via the feedback centre, however, lack of access to this service is captured through our signposting and information service. Further information relating to access to dental care is included within this report on page 30.

Access to services	7	0%	100%	0%
Lack of	6	0%	100%	0%
Patient choice	1	0%	100%	0%

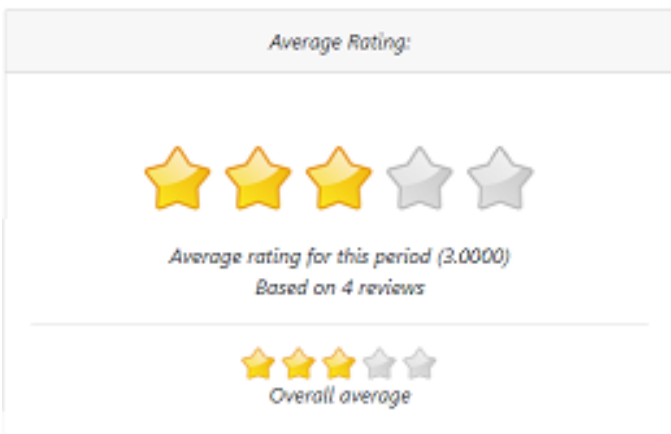
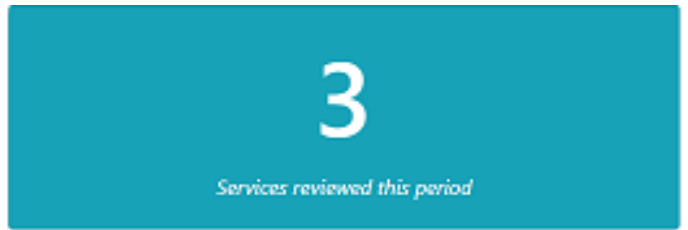
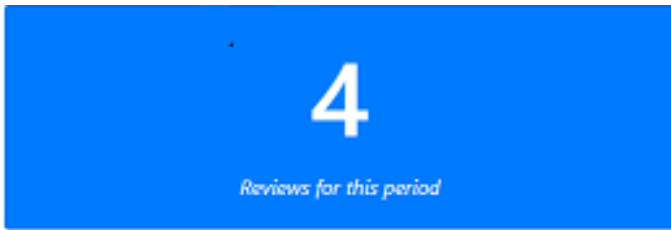
Examples of comments received are included below:

6 *“My son had been registered since birth then had to leave when joining army he attempted to register and was told he was unable to do so. I spoke to dentist direct and she then added him back on. Need to employ more dentists.”*

“Joined 1967 and 18 months ago asked to go private or leave at £20 per month.”

Pharmacy - Overview

There have been 4 comments received relating to 3 Pharmacies. The overall rating during this period is 3 stars (OK), the average individual ratings are 3 stars.



Average Individual Ratings

Quality of care based on 3 responses	
Quality of treatment based on 3 responses	
Staff based on 3 responses	
Cleanliness based on 3 responses	
Food & Drink (if applicable) based on 0 responses	
Communication based on 3 responses	
Discharge based on 2 responses	
Accessibility based on 3 responses	
Safety based on 3 responses	
Appointment (Waiting times) based on 2 responses	

Pharmacy - Key Themes

Treatment & Care

In terms of treatment and care the table below shows that all three comments received were positive, with **'experience'** being the sub-theme mentioned.

Treatment and care	3	67%	33%	0%
Experience	3	67%	33%	0%

Below are the comments received within the treatment and care theme.

“Good Service the only fault we have they will not answer the phone when busy.”

“Many many times they haven't had meds. This time they told me to go to 111 which took 5 hours to speak to a doctor, because they didn't have the item, even though it was over two weeks I ordered it. Worst pharmacy in Liverpool, do not let your doctor send them there. My meds are for epilepsy, they aren't something I can ignore or do without. If possible I would give this pharmacy zero stars.

Staff

The majority of comments received that related to staff members have been negative, with **'Attitudes'** being the main sub-theme, some examples are included below:

Staff	3	33%	67%	0%
Attitudes	3	33%	67%	0%

“They will always try to help. Friendly and no matter how long the que is they get the job done .very professional I live quite away bus ride away but will always use (name omitted).

Communication

The comments received relate to 'lack of' and 'general' communication and were negative. Please note that the low number of comments may skew the results within this theme.

Communication	3	0%	100%	0%
Lack of	2	0%	100%	0%
General	1	0%	100%	0%



"I get very angry when my meds don't come and they don't answer the phone when you try to find out what is happening."

Key Trends

In terms of access overall there are some important areas that have been highlighted through the comments received. This includes the systems in place for patients to access the surgery and appointments with a clinician. Examples are highlighted below:

Accessing online GP services

A key area that has arisen during this period is the mixed experiences of patients accessing online services, whereas some people are finding these systems easy to access and responsive, some people have stated that they have struggled to access these services in within their surgery:

6 *“My husband needs a non-urgent face to face appointment. Rather than spend a long time phoning up and since he was unable to go into the surgery at 8am due to other commitments he tried to submit request for an appointment via email since your Patches is not working yet. In the past we have submitted information via email and obtained an appropriate appointment which has been very helpful. When sending an email he was told to phone at 8am or come to the surgery reception-it needs to be Monday or Wednesday since there are only doctors in Knowsley Village on these days. I would be grateful if you could let us know when access will be improved with online services, to obtain appointments for non-urgent problems, which would especially help those who are working. This would also help you rather than your phone line getting clogged up at 8am. Many thanks.”*

“I have used e consult several times recently and had an excellent response which both helped resolve issues and provided reassurance.”

“I cannot make an appointment. I have phoned early starting at 7.50 manage to get through by 8.01 and am 23 in the queue and there are no appointments for the next week! Rang for three consecutive days with almost identical results. Tried Patchs but the surgery are not taking messages! Finally I have sent an email I wait an answer.”

“Fantastic surgery, could do with an online consultation like they used to. But no complaints staff and doctor are amazing.”

“Can’t get a Face to Face appointment and struggle using patchs. Requesting prescriptions and having them dispensed takes a while.”

“Used the patches system and received a quick response and appointment the same day.”

“Unable to use the on line service to book appointments and for advice etc.”

GP Appointment Process

Some patients continue to be frustrated about the process they have to follow in order to try and get an appointment. With most surgeries asking patients to call at 8am for an appointment, this has meant an increase in the number of patients trying to get an appointment at the same time and if they are unsuccessful, repeating this process the next day, or needing to use alternatives such as Walk in Centres. During this reporting period more people have highlighted that in order to get an appointment they have had to physically attend the surgery rather than try the 8am “lottery”:

G *“Using the call after 8am lottery system to make an appointment proved difficult. Once appointment was made I was seen by professional and courteous GP. Facilities are very good and spotlessly clean. Would prefer the days when you could walk in and book an appointment for the following day/week etc. In summary once you have secured an appointment the service received is very good.”*

“Tried to get a telephone appointment with doctor, was told ring at 8am all appointments for the week have gone. The management at this (name omitted) are a joke. They say they take patients seriously, try get to talk to the manager. I have got more chance of winning the lottery for every draw for the next 12 months.”

“I feel that the service at present is improving. It’s still frustrating that you can’t book an appointment either face to face or by telephone for a day or two ahead. The business of calling at 8am every morning for the golden lottery of appointments is crazy. On the plus side however staff are always pleasant and polite.”

“It’s a disgrace to get an appointment you have to queue outside while you’re sick at 7.15 till 8.00 hail rain cold and when you finally get in to be told NO they’re gone or you can only see a nurse. DISGRACE.”

However, despite there still being a number of negative comments, some patients have mentioned finding booking and accessing appointments easier. Some comments include:

G *“I can’t fault it, I don’t think it could improve, have no problems getting appointments.”*

“From booking my appointment that morning to meeting with the doctor - I’ve got to say that this is probably one of the most pleasant experiences I’ve had with (name omitted). The ring back was minutes, the operator was friendly and helpful, sign in at the doctors (not my surgery) was smooth and even made me

aware that the doctor was running 5 minutes behind which is useful and the doctor is the nicest doctor I have seen since the last compliant I placed for a locum doctor in (name omitted)."

"My two year old son is always seen and treated in a timely manner he has recurring ear infections and throat infections the doctors always see him the day we ring."

"Was surprised that I managed to get a same day appointment as have been unable to in the past."

GP Telephone Systems

There still appears to be an issue with people accessing appointments at 8am via the telephone, despite some surgeries utilising a call back service people have shared their difficulties with this system:

G *"Several numbers, long messages about texts one redirects one hangs up on you the other sends you around a selection menu. One option is to digitally book appts but there are none. Queue will always be around 30 on the phone because all appts go to those well enough to go into the surgery or are lucky to have someone go for them. If you can get to speak to anyone they are generally nice and doctors are helpful but if you need help urgently best go and sit in the walk in."*

"Trying to get same day appointment normally ends up getting through on the phone then getting cut off and not being able to get through again."

"Unfortunately, trying to get an appointment is a difficult and extremely stressful task. You cannot book one online despite answers suggesting otherwise. My last two attempts to book one via phone were as follows: for through straight away and informed I was sixth in the queue. Within five minutes I was number one in the queue. Forty minutes later I was still number one in the queue. Finally answered and told no appointments left so I have to try again the next working day. Next working day called twenty plus times from 8am only to get 'line busy'. Visited the surgery in person just after nine to be told nothing can be done and to try again the next day. Abysmal."

"Takes a while to get through on the phone. Rang over 40 times before I got through. Experience of appointment was good and referred on for X-rays etc."

Experiences of Treatment and Care (GP/Clinicians)

During this reporting period a small number of patients have raised concerns regarding the treatment they have received particularly from their clinician, highlighting a lack of empathy and their attitude towards their care needs:



“Basically GP was not interested in my mental health post COVID. Felt totally unlistened to and they just wanted to get me out the surgery. The long COVID clinic referred me to mental health services back in Dec 22...still waiting. Asked for an increase in my meds as felt bad before Xmas, GP just told me know and come back in a few weeks if I didn't feel better then told me off for not booking 2 appointments instead of one if I wanted to talk more.”

“Apparently Whiston hospital got in touch with my GPS as I had a heart attack on the 22nd December. I was asked to come in and chat on my medication the doctor asked what am I hear for. I wanted to ask questions but I felt rushed I got home disappointed that I didn't get all the information I wanted. I normally get a good service from this practice.”

“After calling multiple times at 8am and only being 10th in the queue all appointments had gone. I was told to visit the walk in. Unfortunately I have a full time job and don't have hours to sit in the walk in. Since when is going in the walk in standard instead of getting an appointment at your drs? The walk in used to only be used for out of hours or weekend care. The dr also made myself and my son feel really uncomfortable. They looked both of us up and down, very uncalled for. What a strange experience.”

“Felt rushed doctor wasn't making no eye contact with you felt I was talking to someone back.”

“Dr didn't introduce herself and then sat and stared at us as if we could read her mind. Wasn't overly confident in her approach kept asking what the Hospital would do and left saying go to the hospital if things don't improve. Felt it was a disappointing appointment in terms of bedside manner and reassuring the patient.”

Accessing Menopause and Perimenopause support

Another small trend that has come through relates to patients accessing treatment and care for Perimenopause and Menopause symptoms, with patients feeling there is a lack of understanding about this issue:



“Had to go to (name omitted) as my surgery had no appointments appointment was 11:45 did not get seen until 12.25 with no apology for my wait. Then visited (name omitted) today regarding my Mental Health due to Perimenopause tried to explain to the doctor how I am feeling etc. to be told that I had advised him on 3 different things

and he was 'on limited time'!!!! I was appalled at how someone in his line of work could be have such a shocking bedside manner!!!! He completed a few generic questions then prescribed me HRT and 'maybe' a call to local authorities regarding getting counselling.....which I think I need after that appointment!! Definitely will not be seeing him again!!The member of staff at reception was lovely and apologetic so let's just say your administration staff are more supportive and sympathetic then your GP's."

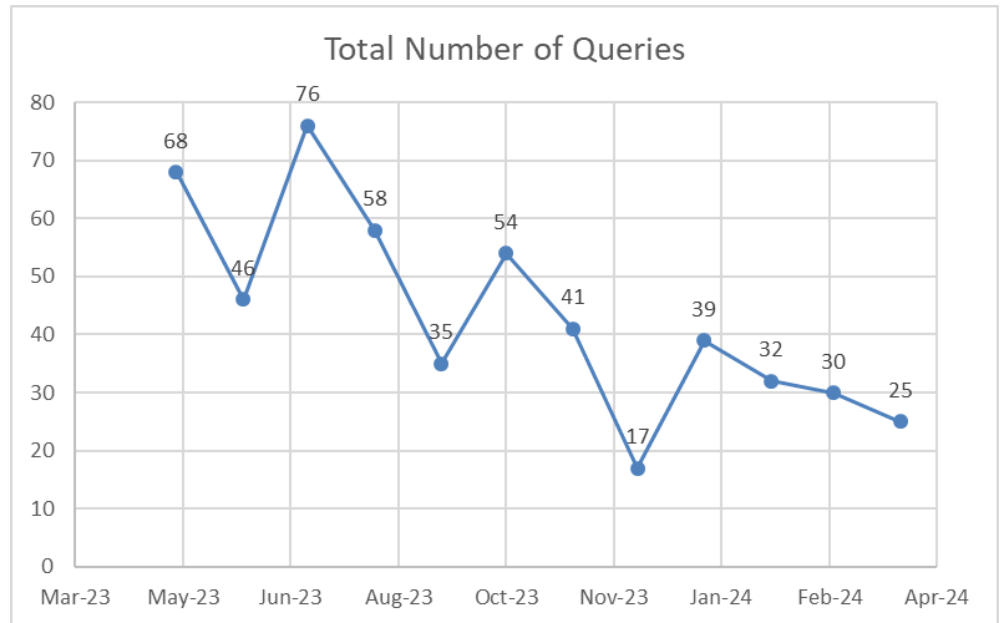
"I want to highlight my difficulties and varying advice and help relating to the perimenopause at this surgery. I have done a great deal of personal research in this area to support myself and my understanding of my needs. I was refused any treatment 3 times but 2 doctors in the past telling me I didn't need HRT. They both insisted that I have the blood tests and still continued to tell me I am not in need of additional hormones. I know from my research that blood tests are not an accurate way to understand perimenopause symptoms and that there are a variety of symptoms that should be looked at. Finally I saw a very understanding clinician who completely agreed I needed hrt and and another doctor who prescribed it for me - they were great. Recently I have been back to review my prescription and was unable to get an appointment with the lady doctor I would prefer to speak to about this. The doctor I did see told me my hrt can cause cancer - this is not correct information and I think it's very concerning that this is a message being given out to women that may not know what I know given my research. There is an obvious need for training in this area for doctors at this surgery because women and nationally not getting the understanding or treatment they require for perimenopause and menopause."

"Came in to see the doctor as I have been struggling with my Mental Health due to Perimenopause. 'Tried' to explain all of my symptoms to the GP and when finished was advised that I had to many symptoms and he was on limited time so basically I was to just go in with 1 ailment although everything and any symptom I am feeling and trying to understand does count as 1 ailment!!!! He was insensitive, showed no empathy, very dismissive and basically made me feel that I had no right to explain anything to him as his time was important and he was on a busy schedule!!!! Even thou my appointment (which took over a week to get) is the time I was allowed to explain my symptoms. This is the 2nd time now that I have had this doctor say the exact same thing to me regarding his limited time it's not acceptable!!!!"

Accessing Dental Care

Access to dental care continues to be one of the highest most requested signposting queries received by Healthwatch Knowsley, with people struggling to get a dentist within the area, as well as people requiring both emergency and specialist care. From May 2023 to April 2024, Healthwatch Knowsley received 521 queries relating to dentistry (as highlighted in the graph and table below). Between January - April 2024, there were 126 queries from people struggling to access NHS dental care, which shows a small decline in the number of queries received in comparison the previous reporting period (146 queries).

Date	Total Number of Queries
May-23	68
Jun-23	46
Jul-23	76
Aug-23	58
Sep-23	35
Oct-23	54
Nov-23	41
Dec-23	17
Jan-24	39
Feb-24	32
Mar-24	30
Apr-24	25
Total	521



Healthwatch Knowsley have regularly contacted all dental surgeries within Knowsley to understand their capacity for taking on new patients, accessing emergency appointments, as well as any waiting lists for appointments. Despite a few dentists taking on new patients initially this has quickly changed due to high demand in the borough. The most recent call around for all dental surgeries has shown there was one surgery taking on a limited number of NHS patients, however no other Knowsley dentists are currently taking on new adult patients.

In relation to signposting people, we suggest that people contact local dental surgeries to be added to their waiting lists, or provide contact for other Healthwatch organisations in other areas to check availability. Information has also been shared about dentists offering private dental care, as well as the surgeries who offer payment plans. If the person is in pain or struggling to eat we will signpost them to the emergency helpline to get support with accessing an emergency appointment.

Responding to Community Concerns

A flurry of enquiries from patients reporting the sudden closure of Tower Hill Family Dental Centre prompted us to flag this to commissioners. A briefing paper has now been circulated highlighting that this is now a matter being addressed through the formal contract monitoring process.

Cheshire & Merseyside Healthwatch GP Access Survey

Healthwatch Knowsley have been working with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and other Healthwatch organisations in the Cheshire and Merseyside side area to develop a survey to understand people's experience of their GP Practice and if it has shown any improvement over the last 12 months. The survey particularly highlights people's experiences of accessing their surgery to understand that if improvements have helped both patient's access and their overall experience at their surgery. The survey is currently in the development stage and all local Healthwatch organisations involved in the project will be utilising the survey through online activities, face to face activities and via outreach opportunities. Findings from this activity will be reported once the project has been completed.

Working with Primary Care Networks

Patient Forums

We continue to support the development of PCN Patient Forums. At the meeting of the West forum (8th Jan) information was shared around launch of the national Pharmacy First initiative and how this relates to Knowsley.

Participants were concerned whether local participating pharmacies had capacity given that it is generally known they are under pressure. Concerns were also raised around turnaround of prescribed medications – patient insight is suggesting increased delays even before the demands of a new service on pharmacies.

Phlebotomy continues to attract relatively high numbers of comments and HWK has been able to start reporting the positive outcomes from our own research as well as review data from providers and commissioners.

Providers have also responded to the report highlighting actions they are looking to implement as improvements to the service. We have previously reported an absence of children's phlebotomy services within Knowsley but have now been advised of a service provided at Whiston hospital. However, this is accessible only via GP practice referral

Conclusions

This report identifies a number of key themes and highlights some concerns raised in relation to accessing Primary Care services.

Treatment & Care

Treatment and care has continued to be the most highly rated theme. Healthwatch Knowsley regularly receive a consistent number of positive comments relating to the treatment received, showing that despite some people stating they have struggled with access, when they do receive care it has been a positive experience.

Staff

Staff has been an area that has been mentioned most often, with patients highly rating the care received from staff throughout the practice, stating in some cases that staff have gone 'above and beyond' to support them. However, a small number of patients have shared their negative experiences with their clinician during this reporting period. There has also been some patients raising concerns when trying to access support and advice relating to perimenopause and menopause, with patients feeling there was a lack of understanding and empathy from the clinician.

- Improvement of customer service skills for all staff, including clinicians.
- Further skills and training in perimenopause and menopause to ensure clinicians are able to support and advise patients.
- Clear communication about accessing other clinicians within surgeries, such as pharmacists, physiotherapists or advanced practitioner nurses.

Access to Services

General Practice

In relation to access, the majority of concerns emerge from trying to contact their surgery at 8am to obtain an appointment, relaying their frustration in having to call the surgery numerous times only to be told all appointments have gone and therefore have to repeat the process again the following day. Patients have also highlighted some issues with telephone systems and issues calling their surgery at 8am process.

Some suggestions about improvements to services have been included below:

- Ensuring that telephone systems are tested to ensure they are effective and meet the needs of the intake of calls.
- Clear communication about the appointment process within each surgery, including the process for patients who require a follow up appointment.

- Avoiding patients getting lost in the gap through repeatedly trying each day to access an appointment – offering an option for all patients who access the service.
- To continue the use of alternative methods to treat and connect with patients, triage, telephone consultations and digital services to meet all patient's needs.
- Improvements to support carers and people in employment to access services to meet their needs, e.g. providing a time for telephone consultations.
- Continued use of digital services and support for people who need additional help accessing services online and ensuring that this is readily available to patients who require this service.
- Understanding that not all people will or are able to access services online.

Some practices have both promoted and utilised the Healthwatch Knowsley Feedback Centre with patients and have also been able to respond to comments in order to directly communicate with patients, specifically relating to current services and options in place to support the needs of patients. HWK would encourage practices to use any communication opportunities to relay these options and services to their patients to raise awareness, therefore helping to improve access to their services.

Healthwatch Knowsley are aware that there are significant pressures and demand for primary care services. It is hoped that this information can help inform the ongoing work to respond to patient needs.

Dental Care

In relation to access to NHS dental health care, this continues to be an ongoing issue with Knowsley residents, with people struggling to find dental care within their locality. From the queries received more and more people are having to opt to receive private dental care. In this case patients would benefit from a clear price plan and where possible payment options to support people who are not able to pay for their care in one lump sum.

It is hoped that the Government's Dental Recovery Plan will help to improve access to affordable NHS dental treatment, although we are aware that this will not be an overnight fix. Healthwatch Knowsley will continue to contact all dental surgeries within Knowsley to monitor their availability for both NHS and private patients.

healthwatch Knowsley

Healthwatch Knowsley
The Old Schoolhouse
St Johns Road
Huyton
Knowsley
L36 0UX

www.healthwatchknowsley.co.uk

t: 0151 449 3954

e: enquiries@healthwatchknowsley.co.uk

🐦 @HWKnowsley

📘 [Facebook.com/Healthwatch.Knowsley](https://www.facebook.com/Healthwatch.Knowsley)



**Committed
to quality**

We aim to provide the best service we can to our community and to make the greatest difference we can to local people. Every three years we undertake a comprehensive assessment of our work to understand what we are doing well and where we might need to improve.