

# Access to Primary Care Report

September - December 2023

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# About this report

The focus of this report is Primary Care within Knowsley, and includes comments shared by Knowsley community members between September and December 2023.

In a change to previous similar reports, the report on this occasion includes data relating to all services included within the broader definition of Primary Care, namely:

- GP Practices
- Dental Practices
- Pharmacies
- Opticians

There were 492 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 September and December 2023 there have been 492 comments received relating to 36 Primary Care Services. GP's, Dentists, Pharmacies and Opticians are highlighted individually within this report. 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 4.3 stars (Good), the average individual ratings are between 3 – 4 stars.

492

Reviews for this period

36

Services reviewed this period

Average Rating:



Average rating for this period (4.3293)  
Based on 492 reviews



Overall average

Average Individual Ratings

Quality of care based on 478 responses	★★★★☆
Quality of treatment based on 467 responses	★★★★☆
Staff based on 479 responses	★★★★☆
Cleanliness based on 442 responses	★★★★☆
Food & Drink (if applicable) based on 0 responses	☆☆☆☆
Communication based on 473 responses	★★★★☆
Discharge based on 334 responses	★★★★☆
Accessibility based on 438 responses	★★★★☆
Safety based on 420 responses	★★★★☆
Appointment (Waiting times) based on 453 responses	★★★☆☆

# Services

The table below shows those services that received the most comments from September to December 2023. These are all GP practices. Dinas Lane Medical Centre has received the most comments with 146 reviews and an overall rating of 4 stars (good). Other services include Manor Farm Road Surgery (101 reviews), Park House Medical Centre (71 reviews) and Camberley Medical Centre (39 reviews). The rating for each service is included below.

Service	Service Type	Reviews	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Rating
Dinas Lane Medical Centre	GPs	146	82.9%	4.1%	4.8%	★★★★☆
Manor Farm Road Surgery (Aston Healthcare)	GPs	101	69.3%	16.8%	7.9%	★★★★☆
Park House Medical Centre	GPs	71	59.2%	16.9%	7.0%	★★★★☆
Camberley Medical Centre (Aston Healthcare)	GPs	39	76.9%	12.8%	10.3%	★★★★☆
Dr Maassarani and Partners (Towerhill & Melling Surgery)	GPs	28	78.6%	7.1%	14.3%	★★★★☆
Cornerways Medical Centre	GPs	17	70.6%	11.8%	11.8%	★★★★☆
Roseheath Surgery	GPs	12	66.7%	8.3%	25.0%	★★★★☆
Knowsley Medical Centre (Aston Healthcare)	GPs	11	36.4%	45.5%	9.1%	★★★★☆
Whiston Primary Care Resource Centre (Aston Healthcare)	GPs	9	100.0%	0%	0%	★★★★☆
Stockbridge Village Medical Centre (Dr P Rigby and Partners)	GPs	9	33.3%	44.4%	11.1%	★★★☆☆
The MacMillan Surgery (St Chads Centre)	GPs	6	66.7%	0%	0%	★★★★☆
Bluebell Lane Medical Practice	GPs	5	80.0%	20.0%	0%	★★★★☆
St Laurence's Medical Centre (Dr RI King's Practice)	GPs	3	0%	100.0%	0%	★★☆☆☆
Wingate Medical Centre	GPs	3	66.7%	33.3%	0%	★★★★☆
Prescot Medical Centre (Dr Heath)	GPs	3	0%	66.7%	0%	★★★☆☆

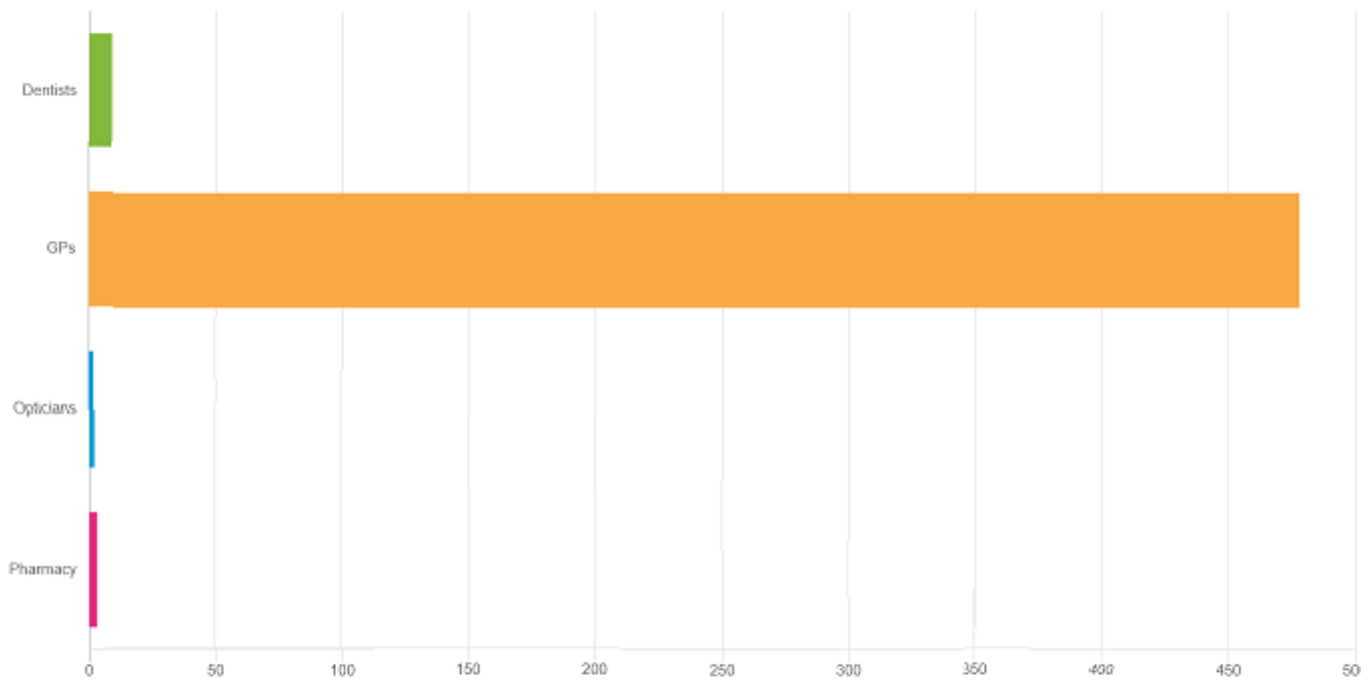
\* Please be aware that system does not show 100% of the sentiment, as the system will only show positive, negative and neutral, the remaining % accounts for any mixed responses, which is a combination of positive, negative and neutral.

Some services have received far fewer patient comments on the HWK feedback centre than some of the other Primary Care Services in Knowsley. This means those services 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 478 comments, Dentists receiving 9 comments, Pharmacies receiving 3 comment and Opticians receiving 2 comments. The table below also shows the sentiment and rating for each category.

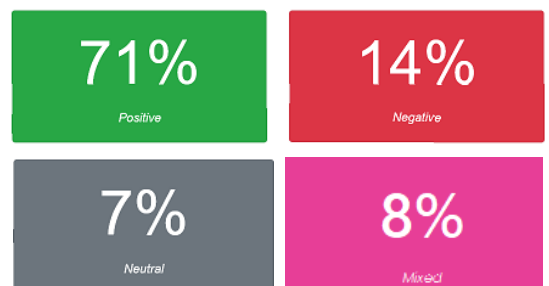
Categories



Name	Total Feedback	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Rating
Dentists	9	66.7%	22.2%	0%	★★★★☆
GPs	478	70.9%	13.8%	7.3%	★★★★☆
Opticians	2	100.0%	0%	0%	★★★★★
Pharmacy	3	66.7%	0%	0%	★★★★☆

# Sentiment

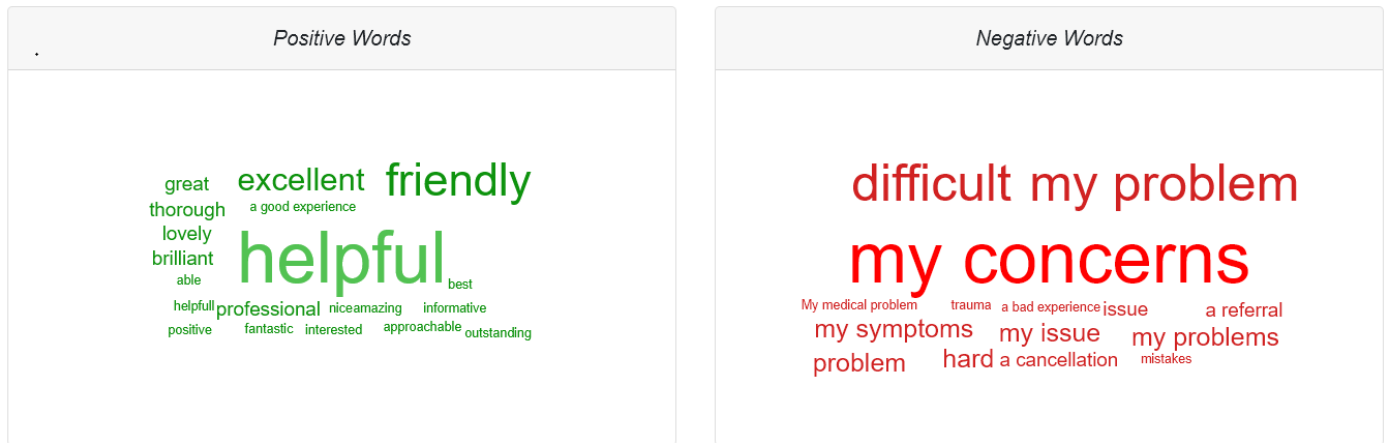
As well as our Feedback Centre providing an overall star rating which is based on the ratings given by local people, the online service also uses sentiment technology which looks at each piece of anonymous feedback shared and reviews the positive, negative and neutral sentiments. Analysis of this reporting period shows that comments overall are 71% positive, 14% negative, 7% neutral and 8% mixed (this includes comments that include both 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 concerns'.

### Sentiment Word Clouds

These words have been pulled directly from feedback using our sentiment analysis tool



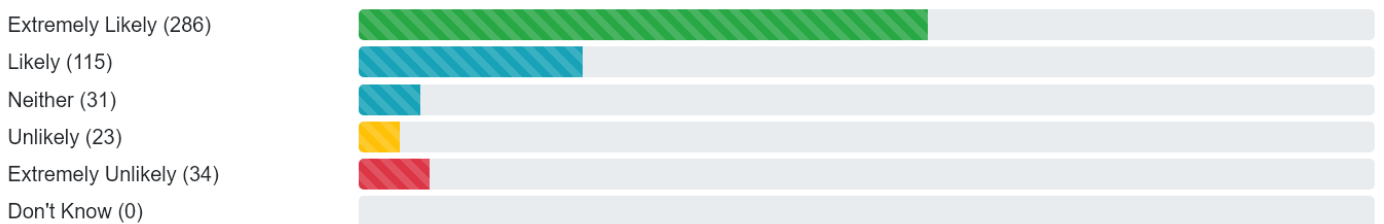
## Friends & Family

Patients were asked if they would recommend the services to their friends and family, with 486 respondents answering this question. 286 people said they would be extremely likely to recommend; 115 stating they would be likely to recommend; 31 stated neither; 23 would be unlikely to recommend and 34 stated they would be extremely unlikely to recommend.

### Friends and Family Test



How likely are you to recommend this organisation to friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment?





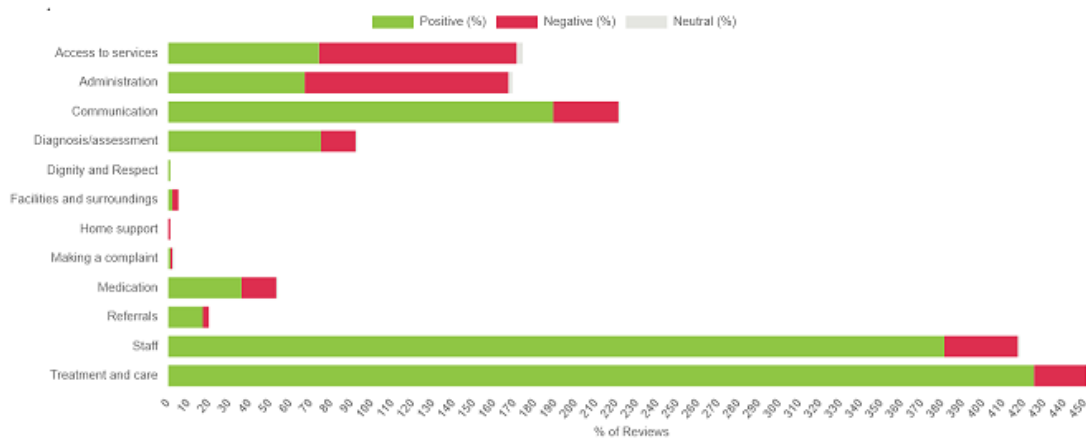
# Key Themes

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 451 comments relating to treatment and care 94% scored this **positively**
- Of 418 comments relating to staff 91% scored this **positively**
- Of 222 comments relating to communication 85% scored this **positively**
- Of 174 comments relating to gaining access to the service 56% scored this **negatively**
- Of 169 comments relating to administration issues 59% scored this **negatively**

Please note comments may include multiple themes.



Theme	Count	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Subthemes
<a href="#">Access to services</a>	174	43%	56%	2%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<a href="#">Administration</a>	169	40%	59%	1%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<a href="#">Communication</a>	222	85%	14%	0%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<a href="#">Diagnosis/assessment</a>	93	81%	18%	1%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<a href="#">Dignity and Respect</a>	1	100%	0%	0%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<a href="#">Facilities and surroundings</a>	5	40%	60%	0%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<a href="#">Home support</a>	1	0%	100%	0%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<a href="#">Making a complaint</a>	3	33%	33%	33%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<a href="#">Medication</a>	54	67%	31%	2%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<a href="#">Referrals</a>	20	85%	15%	0%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<a href="#">Staff</a>	418	91%	9%	0%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>
<a href="#">Treatment and care</a>	451	94%	6%	0%	<a href="#">Sub-Themes &gt;</a>

# GP Services - Overview

There have been 478 comments received relating to 24 GP Practices. The overall rating during this period is just over 4.3 stars (Good), the average individual ratings are between 3 – 4 stars.

478

Reviews for this period

24

Services reviewed this period

Average Rating:



Average rating for this period (4.3494)  
Based on 478 reviews



Overall average

Average Individual Ratings

Quality of care  
based on 465 responses



Quality of treatment  
based on 454 responses



Staff  
based on 466 responses



Cleanliness  
based on 428 responses



Food & Drink (if applicable)  
based on 0 responses



Communication  
based on 460 responses



Discharge  
based on 324 responses



Accessibility  
based on 426 responses



Safety  
based on 408 responses



Appointment (Waiting times)  
based on 441 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	440	95%	5%	0%
Experience	404	94%	6%	0%
Treatment Explanation	34	97%	3%	0%

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

6 “Excellent service offered got the help and assistance and more that was required:”

“Service I have received this morning is exactly how a surgery should be. For the first time in years I didn't have to battle to speak with a doctor. The doctor was very helpful and informative and actually listened to me. 10/10.”

“Booked in for a double appointment for me and my new born for our post-natal check. The appointment was 15 mins behind, which I was fine with despite having an upset baby. The doctor did the “tick box” checks of baby, and then my check just consisted of him asking another tick box question of how I was feeling. My feelings were not listened to and no care was taken to check/discuss anything to do with my C-section. I then tried to discuss a number of things I wanted to ask and the doctor kept getting up out of his seat to walk me out the room, twice he had to sit back down as I was trying to explain. When I left the room I was close to tears. As a new mum I couldn't have felt any less cared about and to top it off the prescription I asked for baby wasn't sent through so I had to walk back and forth from the chemist trying to sort it out.”

“I attended my HRT review recently and feel very fortunate to have a Doctor and her colleague who listened to my menopause journey without feeling rushed, guided me and prescribed without any problem the HRT that was right for me. I really do feel fortunate to have this knowledge and service at our practice.”

“Even though NHS services are overwhelmed at the moment the surgery and practitioners continue to provide the best care.”

## Staff

The majority of comments received that related to staff members have been positive, with '**Clinicians**' being the main sub-theme (224 comments). Staff attitude (124 comments) is also mentioned positively in the comments received, some examples are included below:

Staff	406	91%	8%	0%
Attitudes	124	94%	6%	0%
Capacity	3	0%	67%	33%
Staffing levels	1	0%	100%	0%
Training and development	3	33%	67%	0%
Continuity	5	20%	80%	0%
Clinician	224	97%	3%	0%
Reception Staff	44	75%	25%	0%



*"I called up on behalf of my wife today and spoken to one of the rudest individual I have spoken to for a while. It's a shame because the Practice Nurse is amazing."*

*"Dr (name omitted) was amazing...as always. Took everything on board that I told him I was worried about and within the hour, came back to me, with everything I need and everything put in place. Dr (name omitted) listens and is empathetic... (Hope that's the right word) ...with his patients. You can trust him with your life.... literally. Thank you Dr (name omitted)."*

*"I feel like there have been big improvements the last few weeks at the surgery. Reception staff are much friendlier it's easier to get an appointment I was considering changing but feel that things are much better lately!"*

*"(Name omitted) the practice nurse is a very professional and competent practitioner. She enabled the normally anxious experience of gynaecological examination, to be efficient and careful. She listened to my concerns and I felt safe in that she was experienced and confident. (Name omitted) has a very pleasant non nonsense nature."*

*"I feel that the surgery receptionists really went out their way to help me get an appointment. They were really helpful and understanding. Dr (name omitted) listened and was extremely empathetic and understanding."*

## Communication

The majority of comments (204 comments) received that related to 'general' and have been positive, some examples are included below:

Communication	220	85%	14%	0%
General	203	93%	7%	0%
Lack of	17	0%	100%	0%



*"The nurse I seen was very helpful she listened then tried to help me with everything we spoked about."*

*"Dr (name omitted) was excellent doctor he explained about issue I have very well and his bed side care was best."*

*"I felt listened to by the Doctor. She gave good advice and guidance and I felt she was genuinely interested."*

*"I was contacted by (name omitted) re my adverse reaction to a particular medication. He listened patiently and summarised my condition. He then proposed alternative prescription meds. A very positive outcome for me so far."*

*"The Doctor listened to me and was interested in what I had to say."*

*"My experience was so good because the female gp was very understanding. She was very thorough in her examination, she listened to me and I felt she took me seriously."*


*"Receptionist cared to ask right questions to ensure I got the right medical attention. The nurse practitioner was caring and also ensured emergency action taken."*

## 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 appointments and face to face appointments, as highlighted in the table below:

Access to services	168	43%	55%	2%
Convenience/Distance to travel	1	0%	100%	0%
Information and Advice	15	87%	13%	0%
Lack of	47	2%	98%	0%
General	14	86%	7%	7%
Patient choice	5	0%	100%	0%
Service Delivery/Opening Times	1	0%	100%	0%
Waiting times	21	62%	38%	0%
Use of digital services	9	22%	78%	0%
Face to Face appointments	21	71%	29%	0%
Telephone Appointments	20	75%	15%	10%
Telephone Systems	14	7%	93%	0%

Examples of comments are included below:

 “Getting an appointment with a doctor is extremely difficult. When you see the doctor the attention is superb.”

“I've always managed to get an appointment when really needed, and the doctors are always friendly and informative.”

“It's not a good system that you carry out an eConsult and then the Dr says they want to see you so then you have to ring up every morning at 8am to try and get an appointment. The Dr or staff should be able to just book an appointment for you if the Dr wants to see you. It is like there's no point doing an eConsult because you still have to try and ring every morning to get an appointment. Also the recording says there's weekend appointments available but we have never ever been able to get one and we work full time.”

*"I have been ringing since Monday 4th September 2023 each day at 8am. It's still the same at 8.15am Monday 11th September 2023. No one answers the phone rings----then goes dead? Totally useless."*

*"Had problems on my NHS appt to make appt decided to ring 8am engaged for 15mins then told I was in queue 18 as I was in work couldn't stay on phone for that length of time so hung my friend rang for me stayed on line que 23 finally got to speak to some reception staff told me one appt left for that day 3pm so I said yes. Arrived on time got seen very quickly the Dr was very helpful explained everything to me and showed me pics of my condition, he was very polite calming and helpful I have seen this Dr before and he was exactly the same."*

## Administration

'Administration' continues to be an area of concern for patients with 59% of the 169 comments received being negative, with a number of people struggling with appointment availability and having issues when booking appointments.

Administration	169	40%	59%	1%
Appointment availability	103	47%	51%	2%
Booking appointments	60	30%	70%	0%
General	6	17%	83%	0%

Examples of comments are included below:

6

"I found getting an appointment today simple. I have never struggled to get an appointment as long as I ring continually at 8am. I was delighted that my appointment was with Dr (name omitted). He is a very approachable doctor with the kindest demeanour. The reason I came was sorted quickly & prescription sent to pharmacy."

"Once again had to go to surgery at 7.30am and queue to get an appointment. By the time the doors opened at 8.00am there were 15 in the queue."

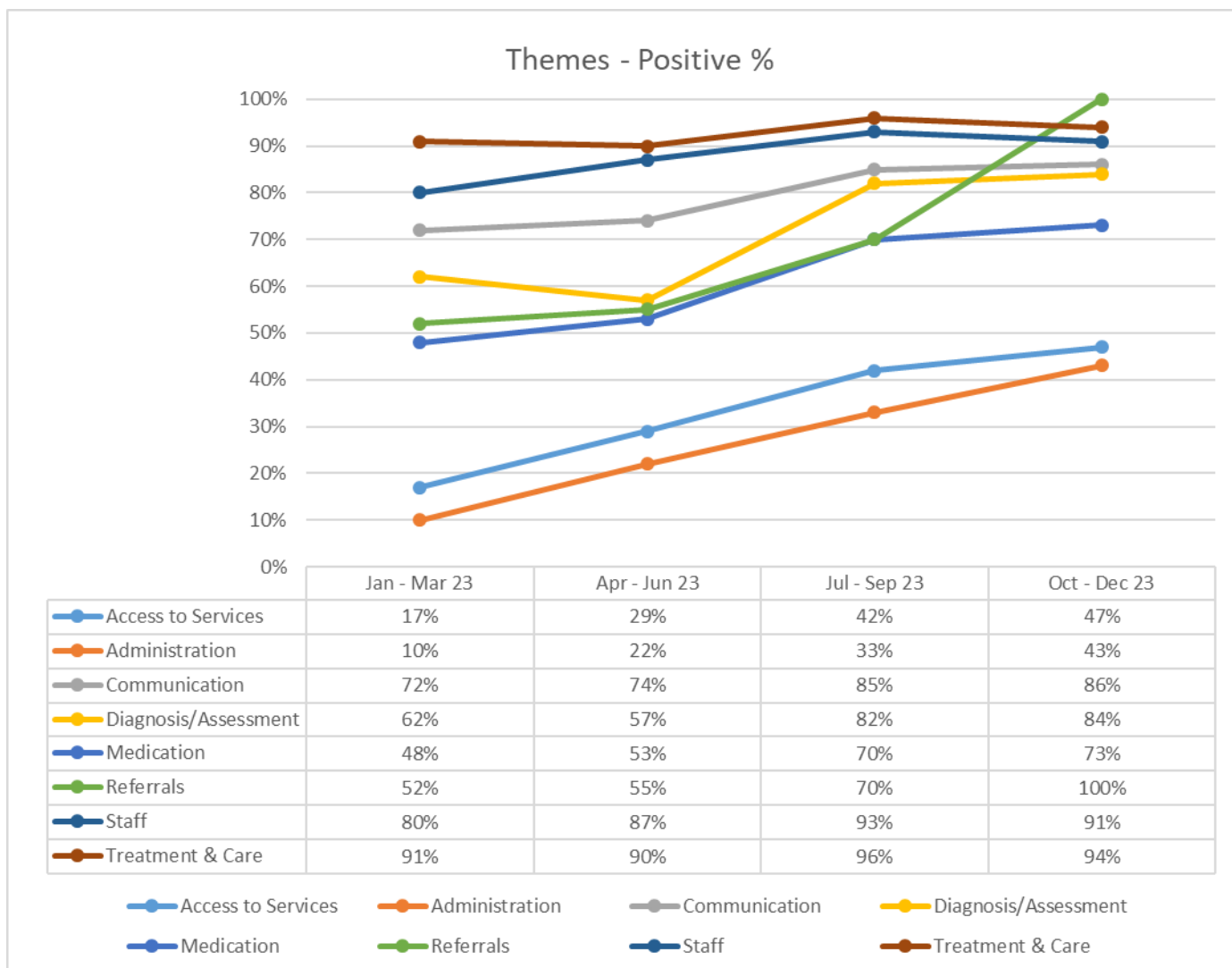
"The process of booking the appointment. I dial the Surgery's telephone number about 130 times in the morning before I got through to book the appointment. When I went for the appointment the reception was great and the doctor was excellent in examining me and given me the right information and requested all the necessary blood test."

"If you are lucky enough to get through at 8am and make an appointment to see a Doctor then all good."



# GP – Key Themes Annual Overview

The graph below provides an annual overview of the % of positive comments relating to the most popular themes:



The image shows that overall there have been some notable increases in the number of positive comments received. This is particularly in relation to access to services, which had only received 10% of positive comments and has shown an increase of 30% over the 12-month period. Administration, which includes appointment availability and booking appointments, has also shown an increase of 33% since January 2023. Other areas that have shown an increase include referrals, medication and diagnosis/assessment.

# Dentists - Overview

There have been 9 comments received relating to 7 Dental Practices. The overall rating during this period is just over 3.3 stars (Good), the average individual ratings are between 3 – 4 stars.

9

Reviews for this period

7

Services reviewed this period

Average Rating:



Average rating for this period (3.3333)  
Based on 9 reviews



Overall average

Average Individual Ratings

Quality of care based on 8 responses	
Quality of treatment based on 8 responses	
Staff based on 8 responses	
Cleanliness based on 9 responses	
Food & Drink (if applicable) based on 0 responses	
Communication based on 8 responses	
Discharge based on 6 responses	
Accessibility based on 7 responses	
Safety based on 7 responses	
Appointment (Waiting times) based on 7 responses	

# Dentists - 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.

Treatment and care	6	83%	17%	0%
Experience	6	83%	17%	0%

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

“We have a new dentist after many years of our previous dentist. He is a true gentleman and professional very helpful and explained everything about what he is going to do. He is so kind and helpful. Also all the dentist assistant and all reception staff. Thanks for a good experience.”

“In an out in no time, always a warm and friendly welcome.”

## Staff

The majority of comments received that related to staff members have been positive, with **'attitudes'** being the main sub-theme (4 comments), some examples are included below:

Staff	7	86%	14%	0%
Attitudes	4	75%	25%	0%
Clinician	2	100%	0%	0%
Reception Staff	1	100%	0%	0%

“I first came here just under 3 years ago after seeing some of their positive reviews by other patients, so I thought I'd try here myself after having had a bad experience at the last Dentist I was at, now there may have been a little mix up with the Dentist I was supposed to be seeing which made me rather nervous, but within minutes of seeing (name omitted) the Dentist I immediately started to relax and couldn't believe how nice and friendly she was, now sadly she left this practice when she moved to another area, but the Dentist who has replaced her has been just as nice, and a credit to her profession.”

“Lady on desk has no people's skills. Attitude terrible telling everyone who waits forever for appointment your just NHS patients you will have to wait,

*whilst they take patients who aren't on the books first. I'm not being funny but I work for a living been coming to this dentist for years and never been spoken to like this before. The normal receptionists are lovely and try to accommodate you."*

## Communication

The one comment received that related to **'general'** communication was negative


Communication	1	0%	100%	0%
General	1	0%	100%	0%

## Access to Services

In terms of **Access to Services** in relation to dental care, there have been 4 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 27.

Access to services	4	25%	75%	0%
Lack of	3	0%	100%	0%
Waiting times	1	100%	0%	0%

Examples of comments received are included below:

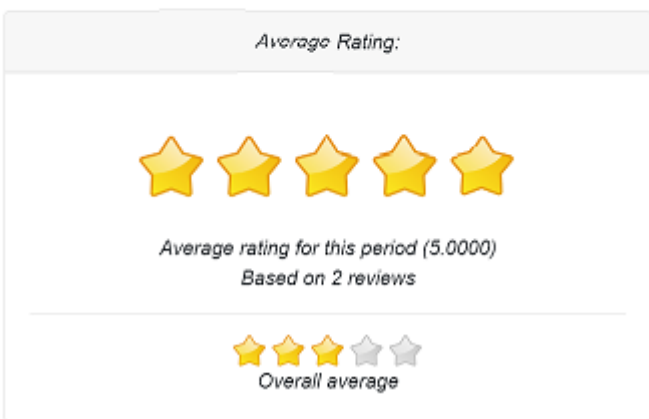
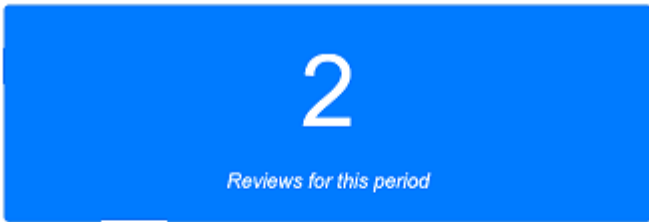
 *"Blacklisted from mistakes I made when I was 16 and going through trauma at the time, I now can't get an appointment with the practice."*

*"Took off the books after Covid."*

*"When I last went to see my dentist before Covid - It was OK experience. Have been trying to find one that takes on new patients."*

# Opticians - Overview

There have been 2 comments received relating to 2 Opticians. The overall rating during this period is 5 stars (Excellent), the average individual ratings are also 5 stars.



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


# Opticians - Key Themes

## Treatment & Care

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

Treatment and care	2	100%	0%	0%
Experience	2	100%	0%	0%

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

 "Service they offer is exemplary. Wouldn't go anywhere else for my eye are needs."

## Staff

The one comment received that related to staff mentioned **'Clinicians'** and is 100% positive.

Staff	1	100%	0%	0%
Clinician	1	100%	0%	0%

 "Great optician they work with you to provide the best glasses for you. Also did my last diabetic eye test swiftly and professionally done."

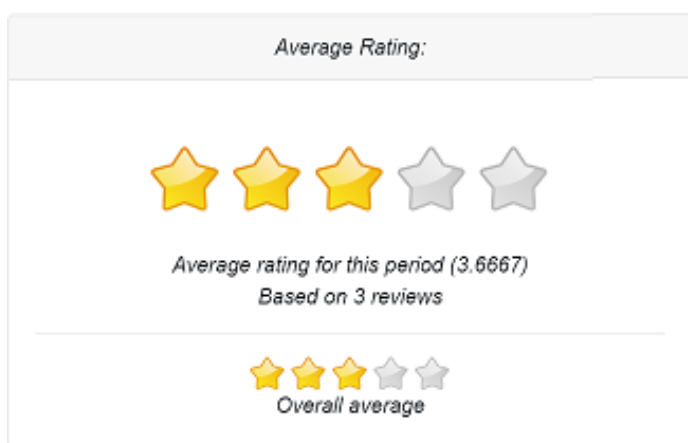
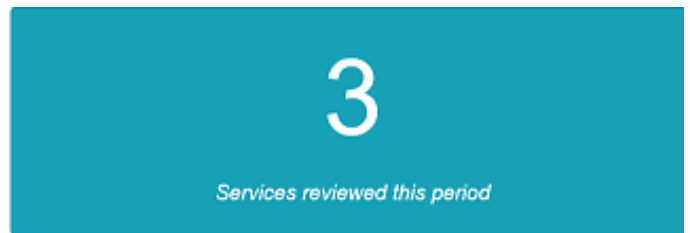
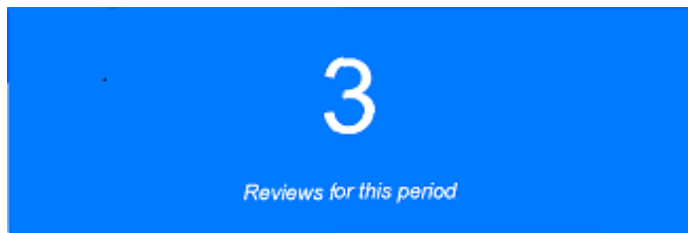
## Access to Services

There was one response relating to **Access to Services**, which was 100% positive, as highlighted in the table below:

Access to services	1	100%	0%	0%
Convenience/Distance to travel	1	100%	0%	0%

# Pharmacy - Overview

There have been 3 comments received relating to 3 Pharmacies. The overall rating during this period is just over 3.6 stars (Good), the average individual ratings are between 3 – 4 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 3 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.

6 “Ever since (name omitted) has left this chemist, it has gone right down. This place used to be really helpful & nice. They would order special baby milk in for me when my baby was young, but now! You're lucky if you get everything that's on your script because half the time they haven't ordered it in or 'haven't got it' with a shrug & an attitude. There are 2 in particular! The pharmacist is really sound & helpful. But the others, I would give you 2 a penny for how much of a service they provide. My poor mum has waited over a week for them to order a pain patch in & when she went in today, all she got was excuses & attitudes. I have known so many people to have left here because of these 2!! Sort it out (name omitted) pharmacy!!!!

## Staff

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

Staff	4	75%	25%	0%
Attitudes	3	67%	33%	0%
Clinician	1	100%	0%	0%

6 “No matter what you require staff go out of there to help so glad I live near.” (Pharmacy)

“I get my medication delivered. The staff are always very kind and helpful and they listen to you and always try to help with your problems.” (Pharmacy)



## Communication

The one comment received that related to **'general'** communication and was positive.

Communication	1	100%	0%	0%
General	1	100%	0%	0%

## Access to Services

The one comment received that related to lack of **Access to Services** and was negative.

Access to services	1	0%	100%	0%
Lack of	1	0%	100%	0%

## 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 follow up GP appointments

A key area that has arisen during this period is the difficulties patients have faced when told they need follow up care with a clinician and not being able to access a pre-bookable appointment. Patients are then having to go through the process of contacting the surgery at 8am to book a further appointment. Some examples of comments are included below:

*“Being told that I needed to see GP by text and phone at 8am for appointment was not helpful when the service is telling me an appointment is required! Why couldn't I have been contacted and an appointment made for me? I work and it is very difficult trying to phone at 8am.”*

*“After doctor saying I needed a face to face appointment with a doctor I was in pain and told receptionist couldn't make appointment and for me to attend next morning at 8 AM I arrived 7.50 about 8 / 10 people before me by the time it got to me all appointments had gone despite it saying on my records needed seeing by doctor, how does that happen all appointment s gone?? I saw nurse who was very nice referring me to orthopaedic dept. but she said wait is around 6/9 months. I need bloods taking earliest days at surgery was about 3 weeks away. Since Covid the system is ridiculous try phoning at 8am after about 70 tries get through at 8.10 and all appointments are gone, ridiculous.”*

### GP Face to Face Appointments

There has been a notable increase in the percentage of positive comments regarding face to face appointments. Comments within the previous report in this area had been 43% positive (21 comments), this period comments are 71% positive (21 comments):

*“Good listener's great pharmacist able to speak to a doctor when I needed to. And now the face to face appointments are getting easier I feel much better seeing a doctor.”*

*“I had a phone consultation with Dr (name omitted) this morning, he listened to my concerns and recommended blood tests, the consultation was not rushed and he answered all my questions, and booked me in for a face to face appointment next week.”*

*"Phone consultation after patches which led to a face to face consultation."*

*"Discussed my medication, and was made aware of some why I needed to take certain ones. Discussed my concerns and have been given a face to face appointment with doctor. So a very good outcome."*

*"Very quick to ring for a phone consultation and then very quickly to get me in for a face to face appointment. Very friendly and helpful."*

## 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. In some cases, patients mention having to attend the surgery and wait outside in order to get an appointment.

**G** *"If you need an appointment then you have to play telephone roulette at 8am. If you are lucky and your call is answered in the 4 minute window you may get an appointment. Once past this stage the medical treatment is quite good."*

*"Ring at 8 am but always fully booked every day and this has been going on for 3 years since start of Covid. Having a family with young children is a problem. At times the receptionist appears to be moody and unhelpful."*

*"Very stressful to book a G.P appointment."*

*"Horrendous to actually get this appointment I suffer from bad mental health and kind of feel let down by the system not being able to get appointments despite ringing from 8am."*

*"The positive is that the doctors and nurses are friendly. But trying to actually get in to see them or get through on the phone is impossible and prescriptions are hard to get sent to the pharmacy as they either don't get done on time or they turn out to be waiting at the desk. For young babies appointments should be readily available not have to go through the rigmarole of ringing every day or calling 111."*

*"Don't have to wait too long to see the doctor only bad thing is you have to get up early to be able to queue for an app."*

*"Firstly I had to travel to the surgery at 7.30am to queue for an appointment. Absolutely no point in ringing at 8am as they suggest as no one ever answers the phone and by the time they do, the appointments have all gone. Was 4th in the queue so got an appointment for 10.40am with Dr Baker who is lovely"*

*and dealt with my problem quickly and efficiently. However, there is now a sign in reception stating that you can no longer go to the surgery at 8am to queue for an appointment- you have to ring at 8am. I have tried repeatedly to ring this surgery at 8am and the phone just rings out. If you have an ongoing complaint, why can you not just book an appointment in advance as we all did before Covid???* It happens with Vets and Dentists so why are GPs so different???"

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

*"I called the surgery at 8am concerned over sudden hearing loss for my 4 year old Son. Was promptly given an appointment for 9:30, he was seen on time and given a good examination. Antibiotic drops were issued and an information sheet."*

*"After developing a chest infection. I phoned a doctor and received a cancellation within an hour and received a longer than normal consultation. The appointment system working well."*

*"I found getting an appointment today simple. I have never struggled to get an appointment as long as I ring continually at 8am."*

## GP Telephone Systems

During this reporting period patients highlighted their issues with the pre-recorded messages used when accessing their GP surgery via phone, examples included:

*"Very difficult to get an appointment, phone queues are unbearable, 10 minute pre-recorded monologue when you ring is annoying. When you are lucky enough to get an appointment the doctors are excellent."*

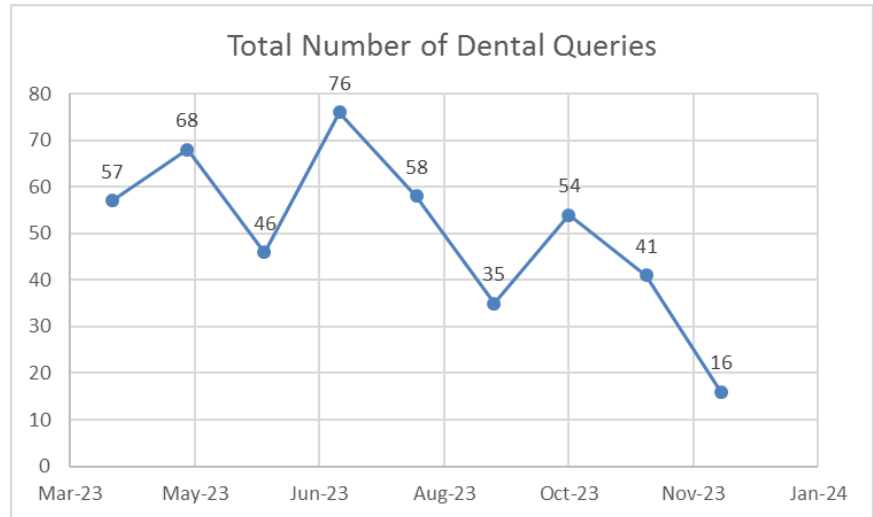
*"Getting an appointment is horrendous (and detrimental to health). The pre-recorded message is far too long and, quite frankly, insulting to hear threats of being banned from the practice before even having had access to the practice is not what you want to hear when you haven't even spoken to a real person about why you're calling! Frustrating and not good to health, likewise the wait on the phone after the message."*

*"Hard to get through on phone every time with answer message taking over 2 minutes as well. Doctor didn't make me feel rushed, had time to go through my ailment. Listened and provided satisfactory treatment for condition."*

## Accessing Dental Care

Access to dental care continues to be one of the highest most requested signposting queries, with people struggling to get a dentist within the area, as well as people requiring both emergency and specialist care. From April to December 2023, Healthwatch Knowsley received 451 queries relating to dentistry (as highlighted in the graph and table below). Between September and December 2023, there were 146 queries from people struggling to access NHS dental care.

Date	Total Number of Queries
Apr-23	57
May-23	68
Jun-23	46
Jul-23	76
Aug-23	58
Sep-23	35
Oct-23	54
Nov-23	41
Dec-23	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>451</b>



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 are currently no dentists taking on new adult patients, although in some circumstances they will take on children as patients or to provide emergency care.

Some of the concerns raised by the community:

- Emergency Care
- Follow Up Treatment
- Financial Issues
- No access for new patients
- Removal from dental lists
- Pressures on the emergency helpline
- Dental practices going into private care

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.

# Working with Primary Care Networks

## Patient Forums

The three Primary Care Networks in Knowsley have each been looking at ways of engaging with representative patients around Capacity and Access plans, changes to local and national health systems and common issues experienced across member practices.

Many practices already have PPG's and it is envisaged that these will continue to look at specific issues relating to individual Practices. In addition to these, PCN Patient Forums might be described as 'Super-PPG's' where issues and best practice can be shared across the PCN as well as details of common work and objectives being discussed and cascading back to practices and patient populations.

A Patient Forum at the Kirkby PCN has been operating since 2021 facilitated by Healthwatch Knowsley. More recently a similar Patient Forum has been established at West PCN with support from Healthwatch, and independently at South and Central.

Typically the patient forums are meeting between 4 and 6 times a year featuring a focus on a relevant and topical key service, as well as reporting progress against Capacity and Access plans, airing of patient queries and updates from each practice. The forums are also contributing to the development of a more frequent survey of GP patients to supplement data obtained from the annual NHS survey.

The Patient Forums have been instrumental in identifying several topics on which there appears to be widespread confusion among patients and in response pulling together useful information to help clarify these areas for a wider population. Examples recently undertaken include the development of information around Walk-in Centres/Urgent Treatment Centres and around the range of health technologies (Patch's, e-consult, NHS app etc.) available to patients to help alleviate the pressures on GP's.

# 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. Previously there had been some trends relating to people's negative experiences with reception staff, however there have been more positive comments made with people highlighting how helpful reception staff had been. Surgeries should continue to educate patients about the changing roles of practice staff.

- Understanding the changing roles of staff – education and communication to patients about the change in any roles
- Improvement of customer service skills
- 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. People are also often unaware whether they are able to book non-emergency or pre-bookable appointments with the surgery.

A new theme arising throughout the comments is the difficulties people are facing when being told they need to book a further appointment. Patients have highlighted the difficulties in having to go through the 8am process to book a follow up appointment or an appointment that has been requested by their surgery.

Some suggestions about improvements to services have been included below:

- 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.
- Use of alternative methods to treat and connect with patients, triage, telephone consultations and digital services.
- Telephone systems in place to meet the needs of the population of patients.
- Surgeries look to look at the experience that patients face when contacting the surgery via phone, particularly pre-recorded messages, phone queueing systems, etc.
- Opportunities for patients to access non-emergency appointments and clear communication about their availability.
- 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.
- 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 opting to go private to receive 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.



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**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.