



Good Quality GP Services

Task Group, 2015



Report

Executive Summary

Background

Healthwatch St Helens set up the 'Good Quality GP Services' task group in February 2015. We wanted to find out what 'good quality GP service' actually means to people in St Helens.

Discussions with colleagues at St Helens CCG told us that our work would enhance but not overlap what they were already doing around patient engagement.

Why should this be a priority for Healthwatch St Helens?

GP services are generally the first place a patient accesses healthcare. Feedback to both St Helens LINK and Healthwatch St Helens has shown that good quality GP services are high on the list of local people's priorities.

In the work plan priorities consultation that Healthwatch St Helens carried out in 2014, more than half the people surveyed said Good Quality GP services was their top priority.

Consultation method

The survey was conducted from 2nd April 2015 and was originally planned to close on 19th May, with 672 responses. However, responses continued to come in until September and in total there were 730 responses from St Helens residents from online forms and completing paper questionnaires. Completed questionnaires from respondents in neighbouring boroughs have been anonymised and forwarded to the appropriate local Healthwatch.

The survey was sent out to all Healthwatch members, made available on the website, and distributed widely throughout voluntary and public sector partners.

Conclusion

Healthwatch St Helens felt that the number of responses to the questionnaire was significant in illustrating how important GP services are to the people of St Helens. The same consultation methods were used as with previous questionnaires but the number of responses was significantly higher.

Clear patterns have emerged through the comments made which reflect many of the issues that are raised with us regularly.

Introduction

Healthwatch St Helens set up the 'Good Quality GP Services' task group in February 2015. We wanted to find out what 'good quality GP service' actually means to people in St Helens.

Healthwatch has an excellent working relationship with the Engagement and Involvement Team at the Clinical Commissioning Group (St Helens CCG) and through good communication, could make a judgement that the task group's work was not replicating any work that the CCG were doing, but complementing it.

We wanted to make sure that GP practice managers were aware of what we were doing so we arranged an Afternoon Tea that we invited all practice managers and key staff to attend. We wanted to make sure we were working together to identify good practice and highlight areas where services could be improved.

Representatives from the CCG and 8 GP practices attended. We learned a lot about why certain things are the way they are in general practice and we felt this would help us to give clearer information to our members and the wider community of St Helens.

Why should this be a priority for Healthwatch St Helens?

In the work plan priorities consultation that Healthwatch St Helens carried out in 2014, more than half the people surveyed said Good Quality GP services was their top priority. People we spoke to said they felt that their GP service was central to their healthcare.

Healthwatch St Helens was aware that a lot of consultation work was being done in the local area around GP services, including all the work being carried out by the Clinical Commissioning Group (St Helens CCG) and that most surgeries have Patient Participation Groups that allow patients to have a say about how their practice operates.

Rather than focus on statistics and measuring GPs by what services they actually provide, Healthwatch wanted to identify which aspects of what GP practices were delivering made members of the public feel that it was a quality service. We believed this would make it more relevant to the people of St Helens.

How did we engage with people in St Helens?

The survey was conducted from 2nd April, 2015 and was originally planned to close on 19th May, with 672 responses. An interim report was produced from those responses. However, responses continued to come in until September and in total there were 730 responses from St Helens residents from online forms and completing paper questionnaires. Completed questionnaires from respondents in neighbouring boroughs have been anonymised and forwarded to the appropriate local Healthwatch.

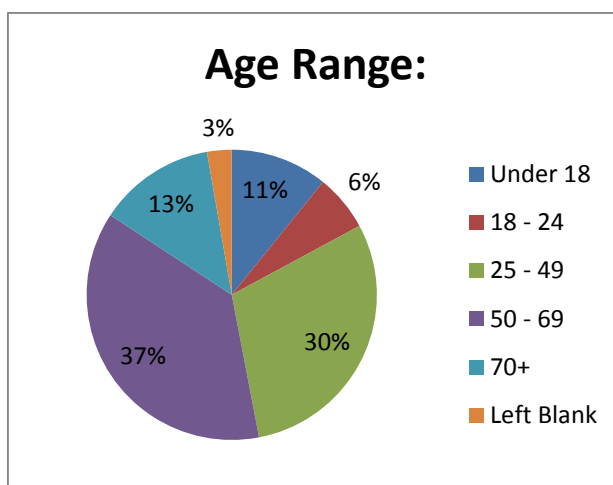
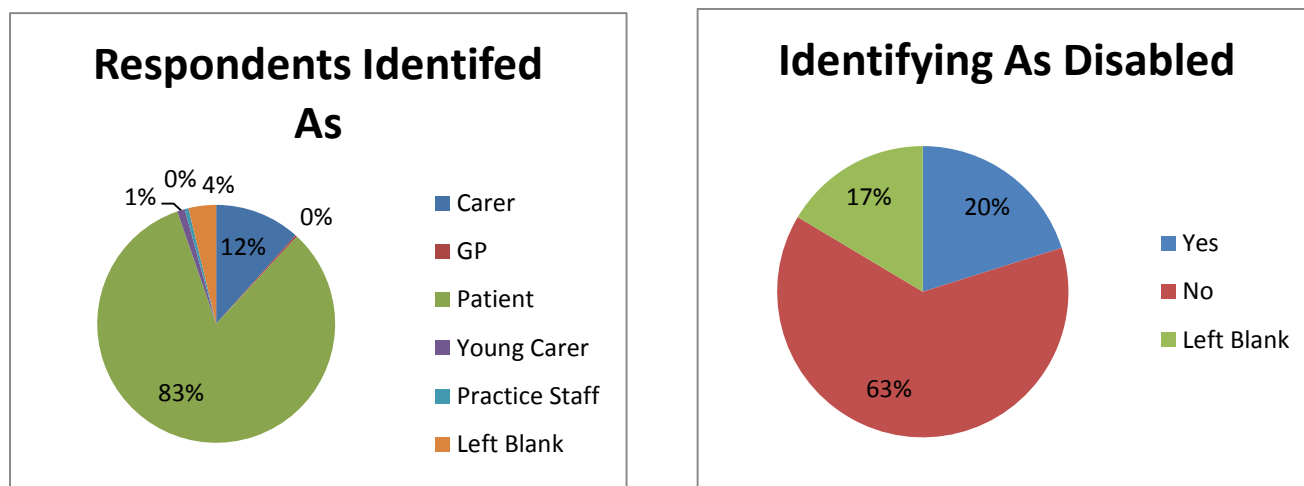
The questionnaire was sent out to all Healthwatch members, made available on the website, and distributed widely throughout voluntary and public sector partners.

Members of the wider community were asked to complete the questionnaire at community events and they were passed out by volunteers to friends and family, colleagues and neighbours.

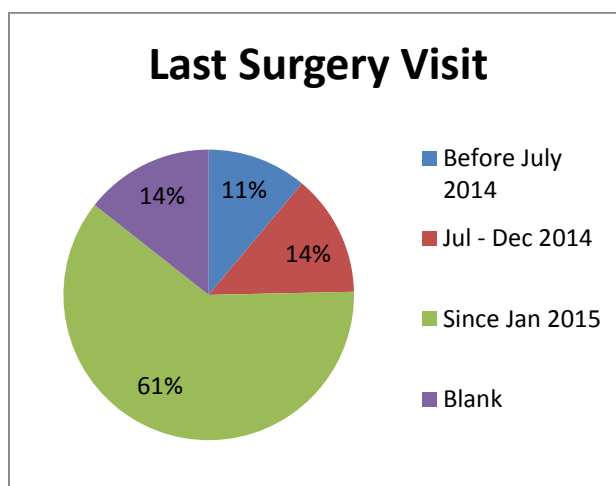
About the questionnaire

The questionnaire used can be found at Appendix A. The following data has been extracted from all 730 responses.

The majority of individuals completing the survey identified themselves as a patient (83%). A full breakdown is seen below:



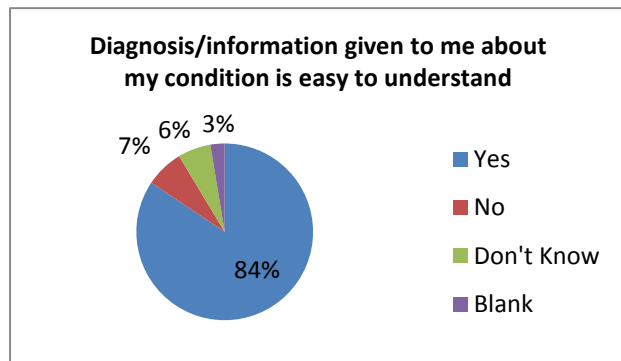
The survey asked individuals to identify the last time they visited the surgery. These have been categorized into three areas as indicated in the chart below:



What are people telling us?

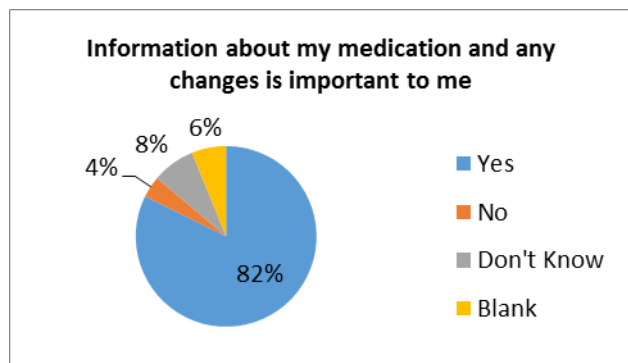
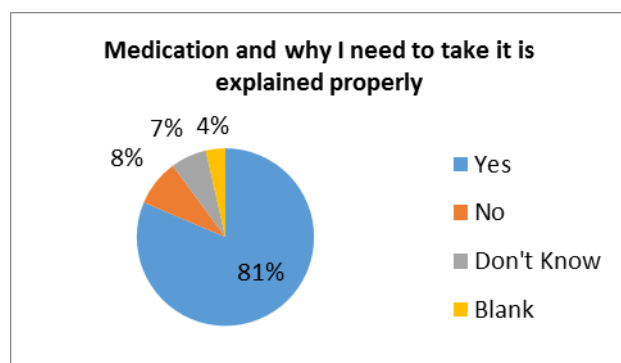
Communication

The first section of the questionnaire was aimed at communication and how individuals felt their GP practice communicates by answering *Yes*, *No* or *Don't know* to a series of statements.

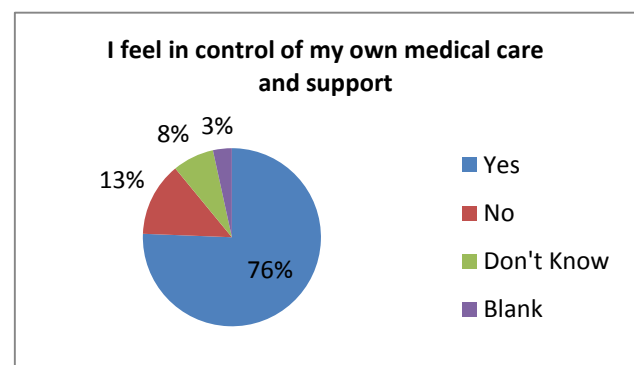
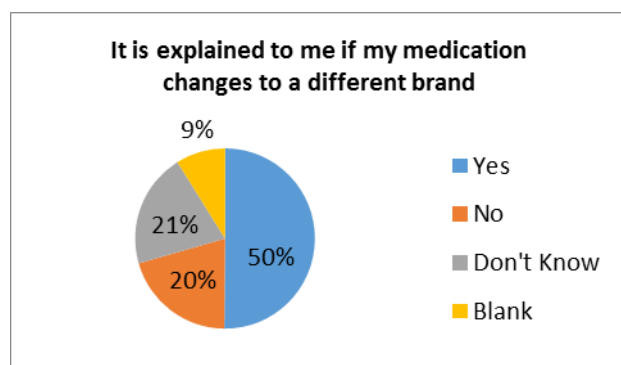


Overall, the majority of respondents (84%) felt that diagnosis / information given to them about their condition is easy to understand.

81% felt that medication and why they needed it was explained to them and correlates with 82% feeling that information about their medication and changes was important to them with 76% feeling in control of their own medical care and support.



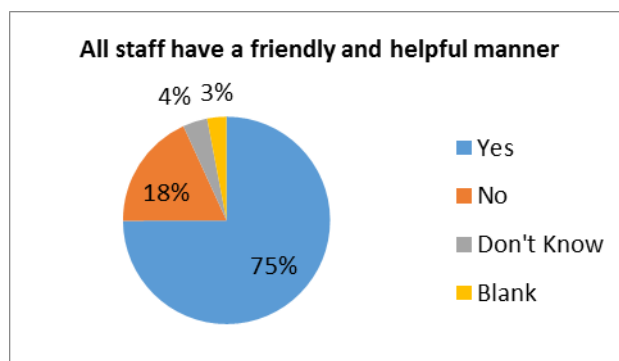
However, only half of the respondents felt it was explained if their medication changed to a different brand.



Less than half of respondents were aware of how to raise a concern, give a compliment or make a complaint. Only 28% were aware if their practice had a patient participation group and less than 30% felt their surgery kept them up to date with the latest medications available to them.

75% of the respondents told us that all staff at their practice have a friendly and helpful manner.

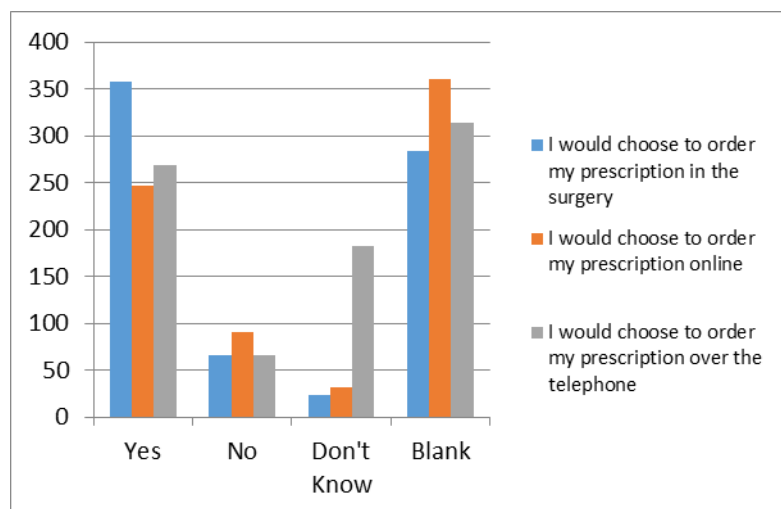
34% of people said that they are made aware that staff are supported to access training and improve experience for patients, with an identical number saying they didn't know. However, 26% said they would like to be made aware, so this is included in our recommendations.



Organisation

The second section of the questionnaire focused on organisation and how well individuals felt their GP practice was run by answering **Yes**, **No** or **Don't know** to a series of statements.

71% of people can book appointments in advance and 60% know of a number of ways to book and cancel appointments. 68% find the turnaround for repeat prescriptions acceptable with 58% aware of a range of ways to request repeat prescriptions.



The **second most popular method** for requesting repeat prescriptions is over the telephone. However, Practice Managers tell us that this is not possible due to guidance from Medicines Management Teams within practices.

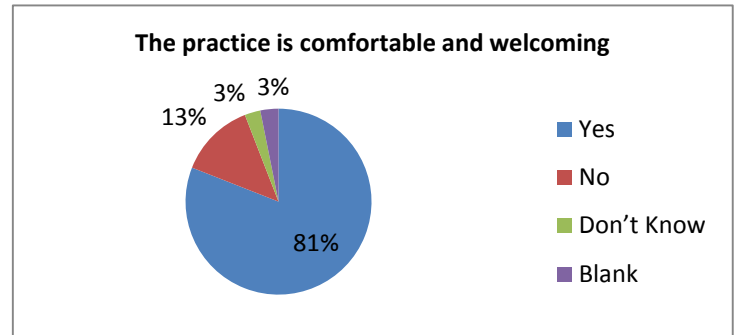
Only 28% of people know whether arrangements are in place for patients with additional needs, however unless patients have the needs themselves, they may be unaware as to what is in place for other patients. 44% believe their GP knows about any special circumstances relating to me, for example if they are a carer, are deaf, have a learning disability or visual impairment.

60% of people feel their practice is up to date about any recent hospital visits, tests and / or changes to my medication and 46% believe their medication is reviewed regularly.

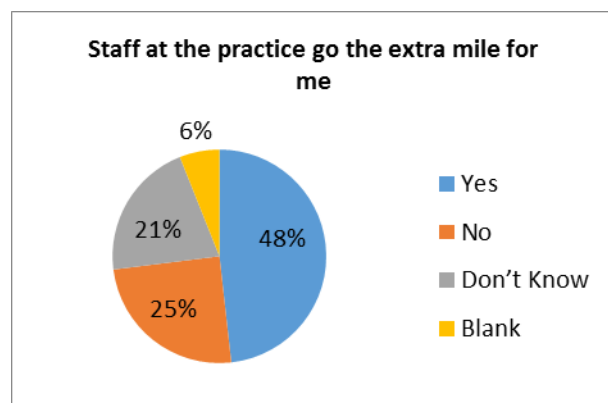
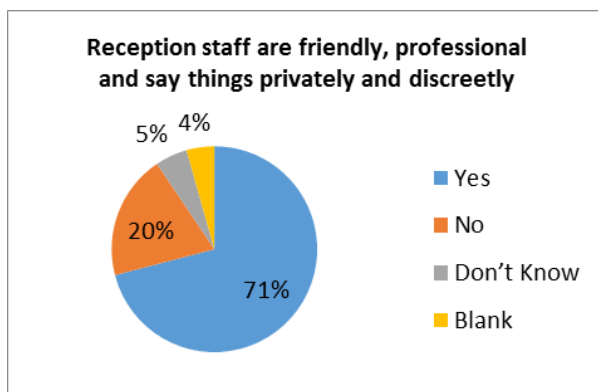
Atmosphere & surroundings

The third section of the questionnaire was based around how patients felt about the atmosphere and surroundings at their practice, by answering *Yes*, *No* or *Don't know* to a series of statements.

81% of respondents told us their practice is comfortable and welcoming, with 89% finding it easy to get in and around the building and 80% considering information on notice boards to be useful, clear, readable and up-to-date.



71% of people said that reception staff are friendly, professional and say things privately and discreetly and 48% believe that their practice staff go the extra mile.



Some common themes...

Appointment systems -

- Waiting time for appointments
- Unable to book appointments in advance

Continuity of care - seeing a different GP each time

Attitudes of staff

In your words...

"You can visit your GP with complete confidence in them"

"To book an appointment is a long process and there are often none available"

"Appointments are easy to get"

"Easy access to amenities within the building."

"Staff are helpful and friendly but there are always errors on my records"

"When I get into the doctors they have always been lovely"

"Being able to book appointments online"

"I really really dislike the automated reception"

"They always have appointments and they listen to me"

"No consistency with doctors – always locums"

"Having to ring at 8.30 to make an appointment, which is difficult when working or taking children to school"

"All staff are caring and nothing is too much trouble"

"Sometimes the telephone manner is not friendly and welcoming - this is more the case when trying to order urgent prescriptions or getting results."

"Reception staff can be snotty over the phone"

"You can always see or speak to a doctor or nurse usually on the same day as you ring for an appointment"

"Always prefer the walk-in centre"

"Very good and helpful"

"All staff are good to talk to"

Conclusions

Healthwatch St Helens felt that the number of responses to the questionnaire (730) was significant in illustrating how important GP service are to the people of St Helens. The same consultation methods were used as with previous questionnaires but the number of responses was significantly higher.

Clear patterns have emerged through the comments made which reflect many of the issues that are raised with us regularly.

The Interim Report included, '*More support required for carers*' as a recommendation. Previous Healthwatch work identified that carers struggle to get appointments which do not clash with school, college, work or caring responsibilities.

However, the implications of improving services for carers is already being addressed through developing initiatives such as the GP Quality Indicators and the primary care Carers' Standard. Therefore, while we feel this is an issue worth identifying we are aware that there are other initiatives in development so will not be including it as a recommendation.

Recommendations

- **GP practices should implement customer service training for all staff.**

Healthwatch believes this is essential as staff attitudes was a recurring theme throughout the LINK project and remains a current issue today. Although 75% of the respondents told us that all staff at their practice have a friendly and helpful manner, and 75% said that reception staff are friendly, professional and say things privately and discreetly, there were *a high number of comments about staff attitudes suggesting that those people who are not happy with practice staff feel strong enough about it to comment.*

- **Raise awareness about support for patients with additional needs.**

It was clear that few patients are unaware of whether their practice goes the extra mile to support patients with additional needs. This could include BSL interpreters, language line and information in large print

- **Educate patients about the system in place of *not* being able to order prescriptions over the telephone.**

Medicines Management Teams had declared this inappropriate for data protection reasons. However, from our survey it is clear that some people would prefer to order prescriptions over the telephone. This suggests that patients would benefit from clear information that this is not an option and the reasons why.

- **Keep patients informed about staff training.**

Although some practice managers felt that this was not feasible, others agreed that displaying a sign saying for example, “*Last month our staff were trained in equality and diversity*”, would not be particularly onerous. It would help patients to feel informed about what practices are doing to improve service and would give some credibility to some practices closing at certain times throughout the week for staff development. Our survey revealed that 34% of people have some awareness around staff training and 26% saying they would like to be made aware.

- **Increase dementia awareness.**

In collaboration with the St Helens Carers Centre and Alzheimer’s Society, and through previous LINK and Healthwatch work, it has become clear that only a few practices have helpful information about dementia, such as details of support groups. The Alzheimer’s society has recently visited all practices with up-to-date publicity, so we would expect to see this displayed.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to:

Jane Dearden - Healthwatch St Helens Management Committee
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Colleagues at Bridgewater Community Healthcare Trust
Practice Managers
Colleagues at Halton & St Helens Voluntary & Community Action
Jayne Parkinson - Healthwatch St Helens support staff
Claire Jones - Healthwatch St Helens support staff

Appendix A

Good Quality GP Services Questionnaire 2015

Are you a St. Helens resident? YES / NO

I am completing this survey as a - (tick all that apply)

Patient ☐

Carer ☐

Young Carer ☐

Practice Staff ☐

GP ☐

I consider myself to have a disability – YES / NO

What is your age range –

Under 18 ☐

18 – 24 ☐

25 – 49 ☐

50 – 69 ☐

70+ ☐

prefer not to say ☐

My GP Practice: _____

My last visit to my GP surgery was on: _____

- The public told us that good quality GP services are their top priority.
Please tell us **what you like** about your GP practice in the space below

Please tell us **what you don't like** about your GP practice in the space below

2. Communication

We understand good communication is important for a good service. We want to know how you think your GP practice communicates using the following statements:-

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Diagnosis/information given to me about my condition is easy to understand			
Medication and why I need to take it is explained properly			
It is explained to me if my medication changes to a different brand			
Information about my medication and any changes is important to me			
My practice keeps me up to date with the latest medication available to me			
All staff have a friendly and helpful manner			

	Yes	No	Don't Know
I am aware whether my practice has a Patient Participation Group			
It is clear how to raise a concern, make a complaint, or give a compliment			
I am made aware that staff are supported to access training and improve experience for patients			
If no, would you like to be made aware?			
I feel in control of my own medical care and support.			

3. How your GP Practice is run

Good organisation is very important for the smooth running of a GP Practice. We want to know how well you think your GP Practice is run using the following statements: -

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Appointments can be booked in advance			
My practice makes me aware of a number of ways to make or cancel an appointment			
Turnaround times for repeat prescription are acceptable			
My practice makes me aware of a number of ways to request repeat prescriptions			
I would choose to order my prescription:			
In the surgery			
Online			
Over the telephone			
There are arrangements in place for people who are deaf / hard of hearing / have learning disabilities etc. to receive a supportive service			
My practice is up to date about any recent hospital visits, tests and / or changes to my medication			
My medication is reviewed regularly			
My GP knows about any special circumstances relating to me, e.g. I am a carer, deaf, I have a learning disability, visual impairment			

4. Practice atmosphere and surroundings

We want to know what you think of your GP Practice using the following statements:-

	Yes	No	Don't Know
The practice is comfortable and welcoming			
Noticeboards have information that is useful, clear, readable and up to date			
Reception staff are friendly, professional and say things privately and discreetly			
It is easy to get in and around the building			
Staff at the practice go the extra mile for me			

5. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

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Are you already a Healthwatch St Helens member? Yes / No

Would you like to become a member of Healthwatch St Helens and receive information about health and social care services? (Please tick)	
Yes please ☐ (Please provide information below)	No thank you ☐

Your contact details - (optional)

Name:	
Address:	
Email:	
Phone number:	
Mobile number:	