

What you told us about GPs

April 2024 – March 2025



May 2025

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Summary

This brief report gives a summary of feedback to Healthwatch Oxfordshire from members of the public about GP practices in Oxfordshire. Between April 2024 and March 2025, we heard from **354 people** by phone and email, our Feedback Centre, via paper 'Have your say' forms and through face-to-face outreach across the county.

We heard that:

- Many people faced **barriers to accessing care** from GP practices – including difficulty making appointments, waiting for appointments, challenges navigating online services, or a lack of support for people with additional communication needs. When practice staff and systems enabled people to overcome these barriers, this made a real difference.
- People told us they valued the **high quality of care** they received, and appreciated support from compassionate, knowledgeable and helpful staff – including health and care professionals as well as non-clinical staff. We heard about challenges around a lack of joined-up care or continuity of care.
- We heard that, as people get used to changes in how GP care is provided, **good communication** makes a big difference – for example, by supporting people to understand why they were being triaged by a patient care navigator or seeing a health professional who was not a GP.

This report and patient feedback will be shared with the **Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB)** to inform their commissioning of GP services in Oxfordshire and the continued development and delivery of their Primary Care Strategy, and with the **Oxfordshire GP Network**.

Thanks to all who took time to share their views.

Background

For most people, when they are unwell, the main place they seek medical help is from their local GP practice. GP practices are independent, private businesses that are contracted by the NHS via integrated care boards. This means that, while the main services that GP practices provide and the targets they have to meet are the same, there are differences in how these are delivered.¹ Oxfordshire has 64 GP practices, with commissioning via Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB).

The way that GP care is provided has changed in recent years. For example, pharmacies are now able to provide care for more minor illnesses through Pharmacy First², some aspects of care have been joined up between GP practices through Primary Care Networks, and more people are using digital tools like the NHS app and online consultation forms to contact their GP practice. More people need support from GP practices, and more of these people have complex health needs such as having several ongoing health conditions. In response to this, GP practices have been encouraged to adopt a model of 'modern general practice'³ which focuses on getting the right information from patients to be able to connect them with the most appropriate support. Locally, a key priority of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board's draft primary care strategy (2024) is improving how patients are triaged and supported to get help for health concerns that need attention that day but are not complex, such as urinary tract infections.⁴

Since the covid-19 pandemic, people have faced growing challenges in being able to contact their GP practice and make a GP appointment, contributing to growing rates of public dissatisfaction with GP services.⁵ Changes to the new GP contract in 2025-6 work to address this, for

¹ [NHS England long read: GP Contract](#)

² [NHS England article on Pharmacy First](#)

³ [NHS England guidance on Modern General Practice Model](#)

⁴ [BOB ICB: Transforming Primary Care](#)

⁵ [GP patient survey](#) ; [Kings Fund blog: Public satisfaction with the NHS and social care](#)

example by ensuring patients can make appointments online, over the phone and in person, and that online forms are open during practice opening hours “to end the 8am scramble”. Other changes to the contract include the introduction of a patient charter and improving sharing of medical records between health services.⁶

Healthwatch Oxfordshire hears more about GP services than any other health or care service. Access to GPs also came through as a clear priority in our annual priorities survey – over a third of respondents (74 of 200, 37%) mentioned access to GPs as a key issue. This report briefly summarises what we have heard about GP practices over the past year.

Who did we hear from?

From April 2024 to March 2025, we heard from **354 people** about GPs:

- 242 people who shared feedback via our online Feedback Centre or via our paper ‘Have your say’ forms
- 90 people who contacted us by phone or email
- 22 people who shared a story with us during face-to-face outreach across the county, including at Play Days, community events and meetings of Patient Participation Groups.

We also heard about GP services through our research surveys, including those focused on hearing from men, women’s health services, health and wellbeing in Wood Farm, and navigating urgent and emergency care. Patients also shared their views and experiences during our Enter and View visit to the White Horse Medical Practice, Faringdon, in September 2024 (see our full [Enter and View report](#) for more information). See [Appendix – demographics](#) for more information about who we heard from.

⁶ [NHS England long read: Changes to the GP contract in 2025-26](#)

What did we hear?

We heard that most people are happy with the care they receive from their GP practice, but that many people face challenges getting access to this care. In this section we discuss the ratings people gave their GP practices, before looking at the key themes that emerged from the qualitative insight that people have shared with us.

Ratings

We asked people who shared feedback via our online Feedback Centre or paper 'Have your say' forms to rate their experience of their GP practice. People gave scores out of 5, where 1 is 'terrible' and 5 is 'excellent'. Nearly half of people (116 people, 48%) gave a rating of 5, 'excellent'. The next most popular answer was 1, 'terrible' (20%). Similar numbers of people gave ratings of 2 (28 people, 12%), 3 (24 people, 10%) or 4 (25 people, 10%). This indicates that while many people are happy with their experience of GP practices, this is not consistent.

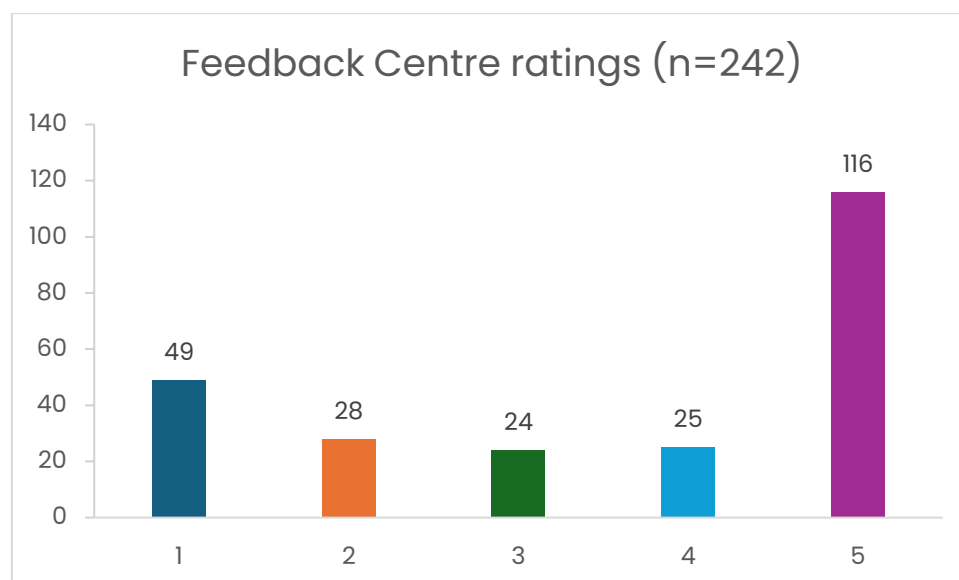


Figure 1: Bar graph showing feedback ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'terrible' and 5 is 'excellent'. (n=242)

People also rated their experience against different aspects of their care: how easy it was to get an appointment, if they received helpful information,

if they felt listened to, if the environment was comfortable and if they felt they received quality care and treatment. Again, responses were split, and the most common rating for each question was 5 (most positive), with the next most common rating 1 (most negative). The question with the highest proportion of 'most negative' ratings was 'Did you find it easy to get an appointment?' (69 people, 30%, scored it a 1).

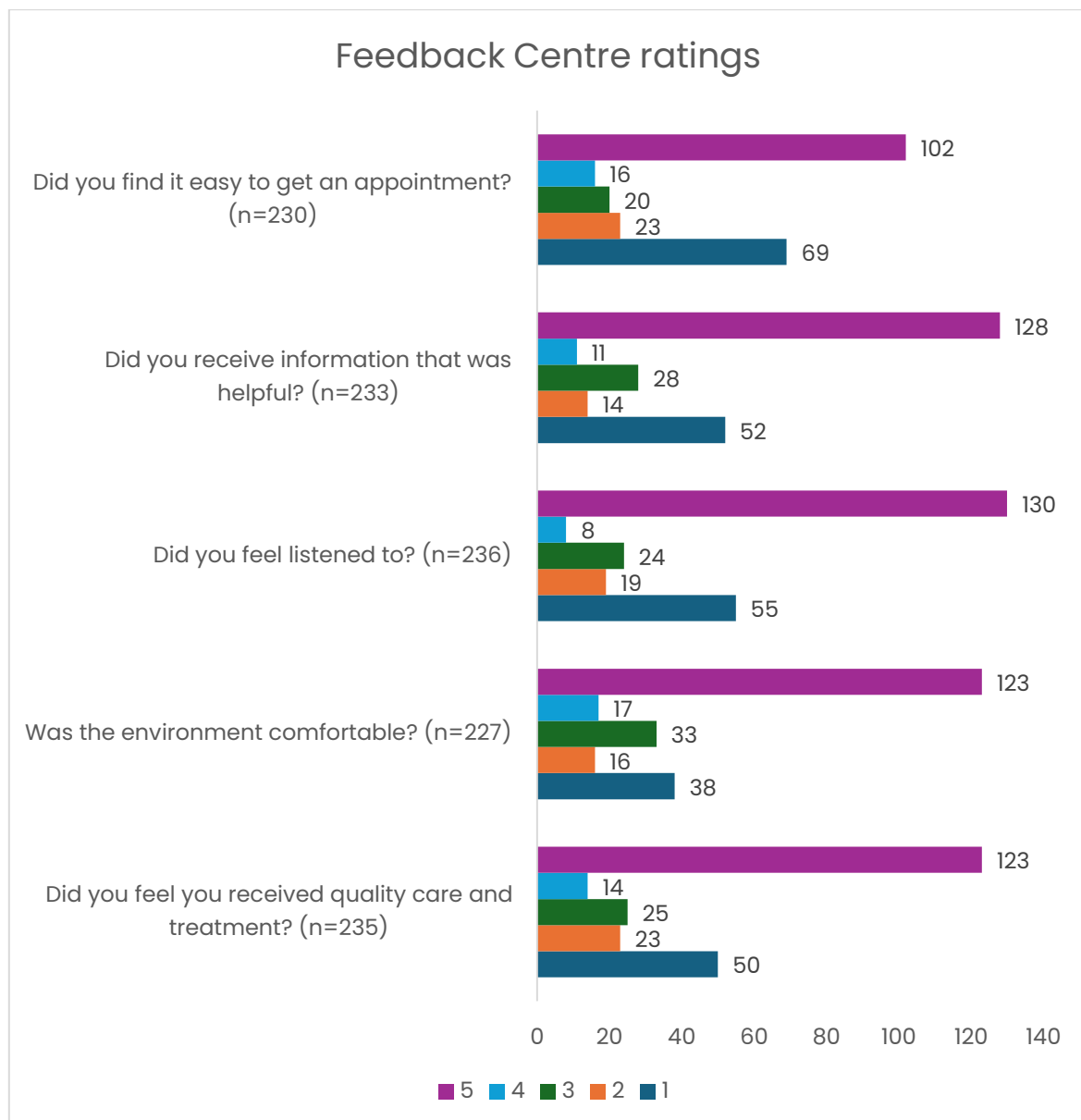


Figure 2: Bar graph showing the ratings people gave GP practices in the Healthwatch Oxfordshire Feedback Centre and via paper 'Have your say' forms.

We also asked people how likely they were to recommend their GP practice to friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment. Again, responses followed a similar pattern – nearly half said they were ‘extremely likely’ to recommend their GP practice (111 people, 47%) but a significant number said they were ‘extremely unlikely’ to recommend it (49 people, 21%).⁷

Comments and insight

Similarly, the feedback people shared with us was mixed, reflecting both good and bad experiences of GP practices. We heard particularly about **difficulties getting appointments** and **accessing digital services**. We heard praise for compassionate, knowledgeable and helpful health and care professionals, but also heard about gaps where people’s communication or health needs were not met or they did not feel listened to. Throughout, we heard about the positive difference made by a person-centred approach to communication and care, making it easy for people to access the care they need. Where ways of delivering GP services have changed, we heard it made a difference when people experience and understand the benefits of these changes.

Appointments

Most feedback we heard about GP practices related to appointments: being able to book appointments, the availability of appointments, the system for getting appointments, waiting times for appointments and challenges with phone appointments.

Difficulty booking appointments

We heard that many people experienced challenges making appointments with their GP practice. The main barriers people told us about were a lack of available appointments, and issues with their practice’s appointment booking system. Some people observed that this had become a problem since the covid-19 pandemic.

People told us about experiences of contacting their GP practice to be told there were no appointments left. In some cases, people told us about

⁷ Note that, depending on where they live and the catchment areas of local GP practices, people often do not have a choice of GP practice.

waiting at the practice in person or phoning the practice as soon as it opened to try to get an appointment before they were all taken for the day. This makes booking appointments particularly difficult for people with additional needs or caring responsibilities.

"No appointments left when I phone. People waiting outside to get appointments - my daughter saw 20 people." (signposting)

"The insane process of having to ring at 8am on the dot. Then not being able to get an appointment. Not being able to book an appointment in advance." (signposting)

"(Family member) has a health condition and just can't physically get up in the morning at that time to make an appointment." (Enter and View visit)

"Calling at 8am is difficult when you have children to get ready for school." (feedback collected at the Sunshine Centre, Banbury)

We heard about challenges making a non-urgent or routine appointment, as at some practices, only urgent same-day appointments seemed to be available. In our research into experiences of women's health services, we heard this can particularly affect people needing help with concerns like contraception, perimenopausal symptoms or menstrual disorders, which are not considered urgent but can have a significant impact on someone's quality of life.

"I have just spent over an hour trying to make a routine, non-urgent appointment to have a nurse check a mole. Eventually I got through to a reception on the telephone, who explained that I can only keep trying Engage Consult. When I do that, I get a message saying there are no more appointments available for today. But I don't want an appointment for today! It can be next month as far as I'm concerned." (Feedback Centre)

"It isn't likely that a women's health issue is an "emergency", so it means getting a "routine" appointment, which means waiting weeks and weeks..." (women's health survey)

People told us about experiences of not being able to get appointments at their GP practice and going through NHS 111 or other services such as pharmacy before getting a GP appointment.

"I phoned my GP surgery at the start of day. It took me some time to get a line in and the helpful receptionist could only give me the following options because all urgent appointment slots had already been taken,

- Keep trying every morning to get a same-day appointment.*
- An appointment with my GP over three weeks later.*
- Phone 111.*

I chose to phone 111 [who] referred me to a local pharmacy. [...] The pharmacist went through a range of questions some of which were repeating those from the '111' contact and reached similar conclusions. She [phoned the GP surgery] and was able to arrange for me to have a phone conversation with one of the practice GPs. I had a brief chat with the GP, and she concluded, surprise, surprise, that it probably wasn't serious, but I need to see a GP. She arranged an appointment with my normal GP for the end of the week. This is all I wanted in the first place." (signposting)

"Even as a patient with T4 Locally Advanced Prostate Cancer there is no access to GP services without having to jump through multitudinous hoops. For example, I needed to get a change in pain relief medication. Tuesday, no appointments, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday all the same; no access to e-consult all week. This week exactly the same. Eventually I was forced to call 111 (a receptionist told me to) and they helpfully arranged a GP call back." (signposting)

"Sometimes it's best to ring NHS 111 if you can't get an appointment, and they get you an appointment at the health centre." (Enter and View visit)

"Trying to get an appointment is a nightmare – I had to call NHS 111 just to get an appointment for my youngest. But can't fault when get through." (feedback collected at Didcot Play Day)

We heard that difficulty making appointments could result in people having to use urgent and emergency care services.

"You have to ring that morning, they take 25 calls then shut the service until following day and start again. Could not get a doctor's appt. Ended up in A&E with a severe chest infection." (signposting)

"After a very frustrating morning trying to organise an appointment, I ended up going to Hospital Emergency and, after a 3hr wait, the condition was diagnosed and I was prescribed drugs to treat it. A GP could have easily looked at this earlier and prescribed the necessary drugs to alleviate my pain and discomfort. The condition could have been extremely serious if left untreated. I felt under-valued as a customer and felt the centre lacked care or empathy. The hospital staff on the other hand were excellent." (Feedback Centre)

People told us about challenges using online consultation request forms, including the form not being clear, difficulty explaining their request with the limited options on the form, or the form closing early once appointments slots for the day have all been filled. Problems related to digital access are discussed in more detail under [Digital Inclusion](#).

"I find it difficult to get through. No 8 [in the queue] – that's a long time to wait and hold when you have difficulty with holding. Their web [form is] also not clear, some things are not included. So why not leave it blank and let patients fill in what is appropriate. I have basic knowledge of PC, what happens to others who don't have a PC?" (signposting)

"One of my relatives has been trying to make an appointment for several weeks now. He attempted to use the Engage Triage System but got [a message to say it was closed late morning]. He has tried calling by telephone, selecting the appointment option – only to be told that he needs to use the Engage Triage system. Unfortunately,

as he goes to work at 6am – it is not easy for him to use either system but had made time for the phone call.” (signposting)

“They only let you make appointments or get help or advice or a prescription online via their online form, but it becomes out of service each day after the first 100 submissions, normally by 9am. So you can't contact them for anything because their form stops. It's 11am and it's no longer available. They have no email you can use. And if you can't use online services well, like my mum, then there is no alternative.” (signposting)

“Engage Consult [is] long winded and not particularly helpful, not good for older or disadvantaged people. If you tick 'face to face' you still get a call from a nurse or someone you are not expecting instead of a face-to-face appointment.” (signposting)

“I had a call saying GP would like to discuss blood tests and I needed to book to talk to them, but they couldn't book, and I had to ring by 8am and they said that they were only doing urgent and face to face appointments ... the same happened the next day ... I got up at 7am to do it online and got an e-mail saying they would get back in touch and then an e-mail later to say, 'too busy, urgent, only face to face, ring back again' and told very busy and told to ring on the Monday.” (Enter and View visit)

Some comments suggested that messaging about how GP triage works – that reception staff are triaging rather than gatekeeping access to appointments⁸ – has not been effectively conveyed to everyone.

“Extremely hard to get an appointment. They say the waiting time for a routine appointment is 4 weeks which is unacceptable. If you phone in the morning and your problem is not bad enough for the receptionist then you don't get an appointment.” (signposting)

Other barriers to making appointments included:

- Not being able to speak to someone in order to book appointments

⁸ [Oxford Community Champions video: GP receptionists](#)

"I have been waiting seven months to get an appointment. I can never get through to reception." (feedback collected at The Hill Community Centre)

"Cannot get hold of anyone – no reception, no doctors available, no appointments, everything online sending you in circles." (Feedback Centre)

- Not being able to get an appointment
"It was extremely difficult to get an appointment. I have been trying to book a cervical screening for a year now with no success. Very poor communication from the surgery." (feedback collected at the Sunshine Centre, Banbury)
- Not being able to make appointments by attending the practice in person
"Before it was easier, you could make an appointment at the desk, but now, they send you home if you walk in." (Enter and View visit)
- Language barriers and lack of interpreting support for making appointments
"I find it very hard to book appointments for me and my family. My English is not very good." (feedback collected at The Hill Community Centre)

Waiting for appointments

People told us about waiting for non-urgent or routine appointments, with wait times ranging from a week to 8 weeks. We heard that waiting times were usually longer to see a named GP, a female health professional or to have a face-to-face appointment.

"Impossible to get a routine GP appointment within a few weeks. I had to wait 8 weeks to see my doctor however, the quality of care is excellent." (signposting)

"I had to wait over 4 weeks to get a face to face appointment."
(feedback collected at Wantage Library)

"Doctors are good; on the other hand the waiting time to see your doctor is 14 days and to see any doctor is 7 days." (Feedback Centre)

Phone appointments

We heard that phone appointments do not work well for everyone – particularly those with work commitments, access needs (such as for d/Deaf people or those who are hard of hearing), or who live in parts of the county with poor mobile network coverage. A recurring theme was the difficulty of not knowing when the call would come.

"Phone appointments are seldom at the expected time and therefore missed. Sometimes they are not even expected." (signposting)

"You have to be attached to the phone all day with no idea when you'll get a call and it's really hard if you've got poor reception you can't book in advance for a GP." (Enter and View visit)

"I was offered a phone consultation which is not good for older people as I cannot hear very well. I prefer a face to face appointment." (feedback collected at Oxford Older People's Day)

"You are offered phone appointments which are not good because I am at work and rarely answer the phone quick enough and I miss my appointment with my GP." (feedback collected at Bicester Library)

We heard concerns that some GP practices are over capacity, including in areas with major housing developments, and the impact of this on appointment availability.

"It's almost impossible to get an appointment here, this is not due to the staff, but the lack of GP surgeries in the area. This is the only surgery we can register with but they are already way past their capacity. They often close the online e-consult early and getting through on the phone is nearly impossible. My prescriptions always

take a long time to get approved. After a miscarriage, I was referred for a scan that never happened.” (Feedback centre)

Appointments – what makes a difference?

- Being able to contact the GP practice easily

“I’ve never not been able to get a doctor’s appointment – if you ring up in the morning, you get an appointment the same day or the next day.”
(feedback collected at Berinsfield Play Day)

“It is very easy to get appointments at the practice and I always get through on the phone when I call.” (feedback collected at Wood Farm Health Promotion Event)

- Being seen or responded to quickly

“Extremely helpful, quick call backs and can either get help over the phone or willing to see you quickly.” (Feedback Centre)

- Being able to get face to face appointments when needed
- Good communication – e.g. being told where you are in the phone queue

“I like the new answering system as it tells you where you are in the queue.” (Feedback centre)

- Punctual phone appointments
- Where appropriate (e.g. for people who need regular tests or follow-ups), booking the next appointment during the current appointment

“My GP is very attentive/thorough/very reliable – would ring me for telephone appt exactly when said and set up quickly the next required appt I needed when in room with her.” (Feedback Centre)

Digital inclusion

Several people told us about barriers to accessing GP services as appointment booking and other functions are increasingly done online or using the NHS app. This was especially a concern for people who do not have access to online tools – whether because they do not have a smartphone or computer, do not have internet access, or are not confident using these.

"It's discrimination against older people who can't use phones or computers- I feel forced into doing it that way, but I don't have a computer, I feel like a dinosaur" (feedback collected during outreach with Bullingdon Community Association Lunch Club)

"The only concern I have is the telephone system -it directs people online and I can't do online -it is a real barrier." (feedback collected at Didcot Garden Party)

"I can't use the phone to make an appointment or online so I have to go into the surgery. I queue up first thing and if I get to the front of the queue and the appointments are gone then I have to go home and come back the next day to queue again." (feedback collected at Didcot Garden Party)

"I moved into the area and wanted to make a GP appointment, I did not have any internet access so I went to the surgery and spoke to the receptionist. She wouldn't make me an appointment but told me to sit in the waiting room and use their free wi-fi. She made me feel like a nuisance." (feedback collected at Didcot Garden Party)

"We are finding it impossibly difficult to make contact with the surgery. It is very hard for people who are not internet users to understand this system. You cannot speak to the practice and it precludes people from trying to use the system. I've heard neighbours state that they just don't/can't be bothered & will suffer because they can't use Engage Consult." (Feedback Centre)

We heard about some of the inequalities in digital access, which includes patchy network coverage, people using older devices that are not

compatible with new software, different levels of confidence, or navigating the processes of verification and authentication for the NHS app.

"From today, all patients will have to request repeat medication using the NHS app or an online form or contact a participating pharmacy. I am disabled and not well at present. I was unable to go to technical support as I had an important hospital appointment. I live in a village and there are issues with broadband via landline and Ofcom describe the network coverage as limited. The NHS app sends one-time codes to check identity. Many weeks ago, I asked my GP surgery to confirm my identity for the NHS app as I do not have photo ID but they have not done this and said they had no record of my request. [...] I may come to some harm if I cannot get my repeat medication from my G.P. Not everyone is computer literate and the online form does not work on older devices."
(signposting)

We heard about the impact this had on people's wellbeing and sense of control over their healthcare.

"My mum cannot use a computer, and her GP practice has moved to an online triage service, this means when she wants to see a GP we have to do the online triage section for her. This results in her loss of privacy, and she is being disempowered from controlling her own access to her GP. She is feeling really upset about this."
(signposting)

We also heard that some people prefer being able to make appointments online and would like to see more appointments available to book in this way.

"The online appointment system works well for me." (feedback collected at Abingdon Library)

"I don't like telling my health problems to staff when I call. They should have more appointments online. I prefer this as it saves time." (feedback collected at Cherwell Larder)

Digital inclusion – what makes a difference?

- Support from practice staff to access and use digital tools

“The receptionists are kind, helpful, even set the NHS app on my phone for me.” (signposting)

My most recent experience was that I needed advice re NHS app. The young lady providing help was extremely pleasant and patient. Huge thanks.” (Feedback Centre)

- Easy-to-use digital tools

“Face to face appointment always offered with GP. Same doctor caring for me. Short wait for appointment. Receptionist helpful but online site easy to use when requesting appointments or prescriptions.” (Feedback Centre)

“I contacted the surgery online – the Accurx platform now used is a huge improvement on the previous EConsult. I find it much easier than phoning.” (Feedback Centre)

Accessible communication

We heard from some people whose communication needs had not been met by their GP practice. These included people who do not have English as their first language, D/deaf people and people with a learning disability.

“I have tried making double appointments, but I was told they don’t have any available.” (feedback collected during outreach with Caribbean elders group, OX4)

“The phone lines have too many options, very confusing for people with a learning disability.” (feedback from My Life My Choice Health Voices Group)

“I am a member of the D/deaf community and I have implants which sadly are not compatible with my telephone. When I need a GP appointment they give me a phone appointment, this means I have to have a family member with me when the doctor calls and they relay the information between us. Where is my dignity and

respect –they know I have this problem but still won't give me a F2F appointment.” (feedback collected at Didcot Garden Party)

“The doctor’s jargon and too much information is hard to take in.”
(signposting email from a person with a learning disability)

Accessible communication – what makes a difference?

➤ Good interpreting support

“My GP is very good – he speaks Urdu so he can explain everything to me and I can ask questions.” (feedback collected at Refugee Resource Women’s Group)

“I have diabetes and the GP is very good, always checking up on my situation, regular appointments. I bring my son with me as interpreter or they provide an interpreter. They should put it on your record if you need an interpreter.” (feedback collected at Refugee Resource Women’s Group)

➤ Making reasonable adjustments

“Reasonable adjustments for my son, who has a learning disability, have been excellent.” (signposting)

• Explaining treatment in a clear, accessible way

“Dr [name] was so fabulous with my son and was very kind and caring with him, explaining everything and asking him questions, making sure he understood everything.” (Feedback Centre)

“The GP listened to my concerns, didn’t hurry me, and explained the tests, procedure and plan. Kept in contact each step and made me feel I could contact if needed.” (Feedback Centre)

“[Name of staff member] fully explained why they did the smear test, what was being tested and the full list of potential outcomes. Really helped understanding and potentially unnecessary stress.” (Feedback Centre)

Quality of care

As noted above ([Ratings](#)), many people were happy with the quality of care they received. We heard about many good experiences of getting help, particularly with urgent conditions.

"I went to reception somewhat distressed with a painful condition. As usual I was treated with sympathy and understanding, and they must have gone the extra mile to accommodate my need because I was given an appointment the very next day." (Feedback Centre)

However, we also heard about examples where people were not getting the care they needed from their GP practice. In many cases, this was due to the barriers to making appointments noted above. Other challenges included a lack of continuity of care, variable levels of care and compassion provided by different members of staff, or a lack of joined-up care between the GP practice and other services.

"Incorrect diagnosis despite 5 visits seeing different GP each time which lead to semi-permanent disability." (signposting)

"[My surgery] varies considerably these days, some occasions staff are pleasant and helpful, other times - exasperating and decidedly NOT helpful. Reception staff are definitely variable - heart sinks when some of them answer the telephone, other members of staff are super. The GP'S - variable - some times truly caring, other times patients, and this goes for other people I know who are patients there, feel uncared for, and feel a GP can't be bothered."
(signposting)

"Only issue I've had recently is where the JR hospital and GP surgery systems don't talk to each other, so tests requested of the GP practice by the hospital couldn't be easily shared between the two."
(Feedback Centre)

People told us about experiences of not feeling listened to or taken seriously by doctors. We heard that this sometimes seemed to be caused by unconscious bias related to people's gender, age, ethnicity, weight or pre-existing health conditions.

"I've stopped going to the doctor's for myself because they won't prescribe antibiotics for tonsillitis, only painkillers. So usually if I have tonsillitis I call 111 and end up going to Abingdon hospital. I had a cyst on my leg and the GP said there was nothing they could do about it, but it hurts and gets worse. They gave me a cream but it didn't work. If it's you, it's like, "Are you sure you need it?" We're parents of kids with additional needs, so we put off going until it's really serious."
(feedback collected at Berinsfield Play Day)

"The way [the GP] dealt with my friend made them feel very disregarded and as if their mental state was minor or unimportant."
(Feedback Centre)

"I saw my new GP for the first time. I was already taking medication for a previous condition and my old GP had said if it didn't work they would try an alternative. I told my new GP practice this and they just ignored this and said I didn't need any medication and if I felt I needed something I could go on Amazon and order something."
(feedback collected at Didcot Garden Party)

"The GPs I saw really weren't interested and in my notes they entered the pain was 'moderate' when in fact it was level 10. The pill I was given did nothing and when I went back for more help the GPs simply said increase the dose or take more paracetamol with it. This went on for 5 months. My life was made of constant pain. I couldn't drive or do anything and because I walked so oddly with one or two walking sticks I put unnatural pressure on other joints and muscles with long term effect. Eventually I saw a GP who diagnosed the problem correctly. He was the first GP to actually listen to me. He prescribed [medication] and within 5 weeks the problem was resolved." (signposting)

"The practice doctors dismiss everything I say, regardless of what I go there for and just tell me it's because I'm overweight. Even when I had an earache. When I went to [the GP] because I was struggling to lose weight, she told me it was because I was too fat."
(signposting)

We heard how challenges around communication and making appointments resulted in a lack of care for some people with chronic or long-term health conditions.

"Can't get an appointment or any help with painful osteoarthritis or anything else. I'm struggling to do my job and they don't seem to care. I've sent request for an appointment which was ignored. They are frequently shut during working hours. They are really not helping me at all and I'm very distressed about it." (signposting)

"Although I have serious medical conditions I am just left, no one takes the initiative to ask how I am or call me with results. I worry because I don't know what to do for the best." (Feedback Centre)

"The barriers to accessing a GP mean I have medical problems that I don't contact the practice about as I don't believe they will help e.g. arthritis." (Feedback Centre)

People told us about the impact of a lack of time, knowledge or flexibility on their care and wellbeing.

"I had problems with ear wax. The surgery did not have the knowledge and advice of where I needed to go to remove the ear wax." (feedback collected at Bicester Library)

"I contacted the surgery for a meeting with one of the doctors. The receptionist insisted on explaining the very rigid online booking system, when I had already stated that I wanted to set up a meeting, as advocate for a friend with learning disabilities. They do not accept enquiries by email, in fact the automated response is quite intimidating, in my opinion. The online form is quite often suspended when capacity has been reached for the day and [you are] advised to try again at 8am the next day. It took me a whole week to speak to someone who could help me set up this meeting. The GP was very helpful when I finally managed to meet with her." (Feedback Centre)

"Whenever I call the surgery the staff just do not have the time to talk to me about the issues I am having." (feedback collected at The Hill Community Centre)

Quality of care – what makes a difference?

- Proactive care

"Have support from diabetic nurse – wonderful support – she keeps reminding me about how to look after myself and follows me up." (Feedback Centre)

- Key role of non-clinical staff in helping patients to navigate care effectively and compassionately

"The lovely receptionist that I spoke to was excellent, so helpful and understanding. She then passed my details to the doctor, who called within a few hours and listened to my concerns. I feel I have been given great advice and care." (Feedback Centre)

- Continuity of care, for example through being offered appointments with a named GP

"When possible, one is given an appointment with one's own GP, resulting in continuity." (Feedback Centre)

- Person-centred care

"There's not one time I've rung the doctor's and couldn't get through. My partner ran out of medication and they managed to fast track it for him. The doctors came to the house for my father-in-law when he was dying, and worked hand in hand with the vicar." (feedback collected at Berinsfield Play Day)

"[Name of doctor] and the [staff member] were fantastic at calming my 5 year old daughter down who was really upset and nervous. What a brilliant compassionate doctor." (Feedback Centre)

- Seeing health and care professionals who are compassionate, helpful and knowledgeable

"The care is always compassionate and friendly. I think the staff do an amazing job under difficult circumstances." (Feedback Centre review)

"Very caring and quick to act on caring for their patients and I feel very impressed with the level of care I get from the practice." (feedback collected at Rose Hill Health Promotion event)

"The nurse was welcoming, kind and made me feel very at ease whilst having my vaccinations. She went above and beyond to fit me in for an appointment quickly and was very knowledgeable, and gave me excellent advice. A first class service from a fantastic nurse!" (Feedback Centre)

"My doctors always respond quickly when my disabled daughter is ill. As her carer they are equally as supportive of me." (feedback collected at Barton Library)

Seeing health professionals

We heard mixed responses about contact with health and care professionals. Some people expressed a wish to speak to a doctor rather than other health professionals and highlighted the importance to them of seeing a GP face-to-face for some conditions or concerns, and frustration with being directed towards another health or care professional.

"Would just be nice to be able to speak to a doctor. Nurses are fantastic and receptionists are all lovely, it's just very hard to get to see a doctor." (feedback collected at Eynsham Play Day)

"Unable to get a face-to-face appointment. The last time I tried a paramedic rang me, no disrespect but I would like to see my GP face-to-face, especially for my mental health." (feedback collected at Bicester Library)

"Not a great service, sometimes it is very hard to get an appointment mostly been told 'you do not need to see a doctor for

this illness.” (feedback collected at a Wood Farm Health Promotion event)

Seeing health professionals – what makes a difference?

- Good communication with patients about who they are seeing and why

“I am registered with a named doctor but have seen a doctor with more specialist experience for different health problems and the change of doctor was explained.” (signposting)

- Being given an appointment with a health professional who is not a doctor – if the professional is able to provide the support needed, or this enables the person to be seen quickly

“We phoned the surgery, the receptionist could not have been more helpful. We were given an appointment with a paramedic that morning. The paramedic was very professional and sympathetic to our needs. She contacted the doctor who prescribed antibiotics there and then and emailed it to the local chemist. From arriving at surgery we were collecting the antibiotics within a hour.” (Feedback Centre)

“I was really impressed with the physician’s associate system – the person I saw was knowledgeable, very professional and kind and was great on checking things with the GP. I would be really happy to use this system again.” (Feedback Centre)

Other concerns

Other concerns people told us about included:

- Issues around **patient feedback** – for example, some people said they were reluctant to give feedback about their GP practice because they were concerned about repercussions for their care. We also heard from some people that they had given feedback but had not had a response from the practice

“I had a call with a new doctor which I was not happy with at all. I raised my concerns with the health centre and also made a formal complaint about this in writing, in a letter I hand-delivered to the

surgery but I've had no correspondence back, and they just don't seem to be doing anything about this.” (signposting)

“I gave feedback, but it wasn't clear what process was being followed, I didn't really get an acknowledgement, I wanted some feedback on what would happen and how things would change – I didn't want to make a formal complaint.” (Enter and View visit)

- Difficulty getting support for **administrative requests**, for example a certificate for council tax exemption
“They charge £45 if you need the doctor to fill out a blue badge form or bus pass form or write a letter confirming your disability and that you can't walk far, which you need for PIP etc. Absolutely shocking.” (signposting)

- Challenges around **prescriptions**, such as being directed to buy over-the-counter medicine rather than getting a prescription, and an issue with changes to repeat prescription orders

“The GP said for me to purchase Amorolfine 5% from the pharmacy. I have just purchased [this] at the cost of £33, which is a rather big chunk of my pension. Is there any way I can claim some or all of this? as if I had been given a prescription this would have been free.” (signposting)

“Tried to get repeat prescriptions on the website and found that 4 long standing drugs were missing from the list. No way to add these on the website. Previously used Boots website to re-order prescriptions. Practice will not support this anymore.” (Feedback Centre)

- **Access and transport** – particularly for residents of rural areas without access to a car
- **Parking**
- **Accessibility** of GP practice premises for people with mobility impairments
- Concerns about **data protection**
“I requested a copy of my medical notes and was sent information about 12 other people as well. I contacted my GP surgery and spoke

to the practice manager, and she said it is not their fault as they use a 3rd party company. She couldn't say if my data had been shared elsewhere." (signposting)

- **Being removed** from the patient list
"I was told I'm not in the catchment [for my GP practice] after 20 yrs. Unclear about why and letter didn't explain." (signposting)
- **Vaccination programmes** – praise for efficient booking and provision, and concerns about waiting despite being eligible.
"I had my flu and Covid vaccines and the surgery were brilliant. Got there a bit early but went straight in and was out again in about 5 minutes. Very friendly staff and hardly felt the injections." (signposting)

Useful Links

- [Enter and View report – White Horse Medical Practice, Faringdon](#)
- GP surgeries: it's all about teamwork – [Healthwatch Oxfordshire webinar recording](#)
- Explainer video on GP receptionists – [Oxford Community Champions video](#)
- Understanding language support at your GP practice – [Oxford Community Champions video](#)
- How to give feedback or complain to your GP practice – [Healthwatch Oxfordshire webpage on giving feedback](#)
- Have your say on a local service – [Healthwatch Oxfordshire feedback centre](#)
- Information about Patient Participation Groups – [Healthwatch Oxfordshire webpage on PPGs](#)

Feedback reviews – note on data

Not all the reviews we receive are published for public view, as they may contain information which is difficult to anonymise. Where someone has had a particularly poor experience, we will make every effort to enable the provider to give direct feedback to that person with their permission, and to help respond and resolve the issue together.

The nature of feedback can mean that people will give feedback when they want to comment on a particular poor experience, or a very positive experience, so overall this may present a less representative view. However, analysis of patient comments brings out common themes, giving insight into experiences of GP practices, and highlighting areas for potential improvement and change.

Appendix – Demographics

Of those who told us about themselves:

- We heard from people of all ages, but particularly those aged 25–49 (102 people, 33%), 50–64 (69 people, 22%) and 65–79 (102 people, 33%).

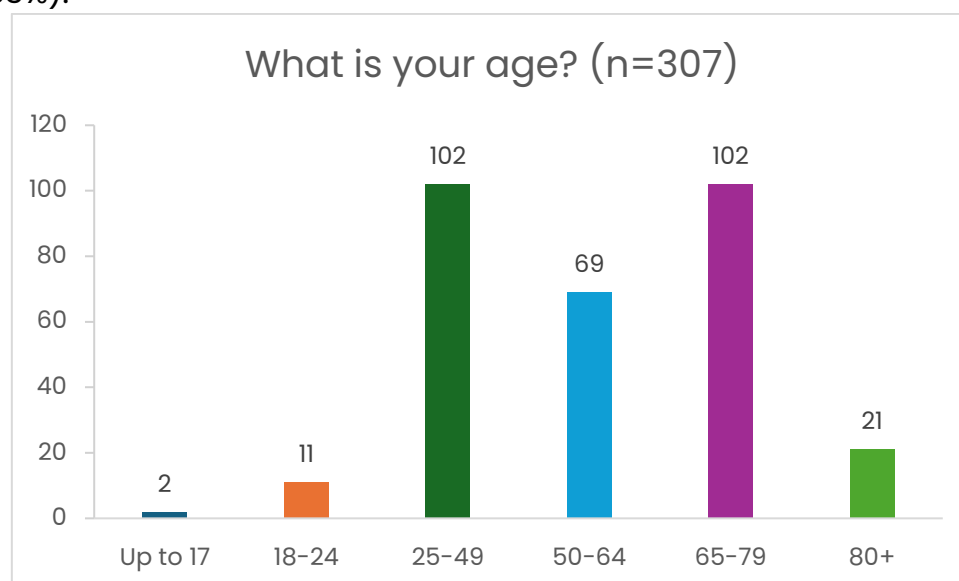


Figure 3: Bar graph showing the ages of people who shared feedback about GPs with Healthwatch Oxfordshire, April 2024–March 2025. (n=307)

- Most were women (252 people, 80%). We also heard from 62 men and one non-binary person.
- Most were White British (248 people, 83%). We heard from people from ethnic groups including Asian/Asian British: Indian (7 people, 2%), Asian/Asian British: Pakistani (5 people, 2%), Asian/Asian British: Any other Asian/Asian British background (5 people, 2%), Black/Black British: Caribbean (4 people, 1%), Arab (4 people, 1%) and White: Any other White background (21 people, 7%).
- We heard from similar numbers of people from Cherwell, Oxford City and South Oxfordshire (42 people, 20%). We heard from more people from West Oxfordshire (62 people, 28%) and fewer from Vale of White Horse (14%).

Healthwatch Oxfordshire our friendly staff are here for you to help answer questions or give you information on health and care services in Oxfordshire. If you need more information or advice call us on **01865 520 520** from 9–4 pm Monday to Friday
Visit our website www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk (with translation facility)
email us on hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk

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Vizita ami-nia sítiu www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk (ho facilidade tradusaun)
haruka email mai ami iha hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk

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