



GP Access Report 2022

March 2023



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Summary

The pressure on all areas of the NHS, including General Practice, has been unprecedented over recent months as people and services continue to manage the additional demand and constraints of the pandemic, alongside a significant increase in demand from patients requiring health interventions.

Across Northamptonshire there were 4,031,560 GP appointments carried out between January 2022 and November 2022: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/appointments-in-general-practice/december-2022>

There are frequently times when the demand for appointments is more than the capacity available and this can be frustrating for patients, carers and staff. At times patients have struggled to get through to their GPs due to demand or been offered alternatives to face to face appointments.

This short survey completed by 266 people across Northamptonshire (appendix 2) is a snapshot aimed to try and find out more about what the public thought was working well and where they thought improvements could be made in accessing GP services in the county.

Additionally, between April 2022 and December 2022 Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire received 51 complaints and 2 pieces of positive feedback about GP services. We have redacted this feedback so as not to identify any individuals or GP practices and included it as appendix 1 as supporting information.

This was also a follow up survey to the one we carried out in 2015 which highlighted much the same issues then as now:

<https://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2015-05-12/patient-experiences-gp-services-northamptonshire>

As part of our report process, we sent the draft report to both commissioners and providers of NHS services in Northamptonshire on 5th January 2023.

No formal response to the report has been received to date (23rd March 2023).

Key Findings

These findings are based on the personal views of 319 people across Northamptonshire. It is however only a snapshot of a much larger, more complicated picture that is happening nationally.

Healthwatch England highlighted the public's concerns about GP access in October 2022 and more information can be found at: <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2022-10-14/our-position-gp-access>

We found the main concerns in Northamptonshire were related to difficulties in getting a response to telephone calls. The line often being continuously engaged. Also, the inability to get pre-booked face to face appointments. The survey also highlighted concerns about having a long wait for an appointment and the inability to see the practitioner of their choice.

Appointments

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) made an appointment by telephone; 41% told us it was 'very difficult' to get an appointment and only 35% got a same day appointment.
- 68% of respondents preferred a face-to-face appointment.
- Concerns regarding GP appointments included: not being able to secure an appointment with the person requested, no appointments available, being advised to visit A&E instead of getting an appointment, not being listened to by receptionists, difficulty getting through on the telephone and an inefficient and inadequate telephone system to book appointments.
- Some positive feedback included: opportunities to share concerns at the appointment, the introduction of an 'App' as an effective way to manage appointments and caring and knowledgeable staff making the experience positive.
- 69% of respondents told us they booked an appointment with the practitioner they wanted to see. The majority of people said they saw a GP, but several people saw a nurse practitioner. People were concerned that seeing a GP unknown to them would affect their continuity of care, due to the GP not being fully aware of their health conditions.

Improvements to GP services

- Many people mentioned improvements would include: not having such a long wait when telephoning for an appointment; more face-to-face GP appointments, the facility to book online, better support for those with long-term conditions in securing appointments and facilities for wheelchair users.
- Some people describe their surgery as efficient, supportive, organised and accommodating when it came to appointments.



Medication

There were concerns about medication prescribed over the phone, long delays to access prescriptions from the chemists and concerns over prescribing nurses lack of knowledge.

Lack of empathy

People were concerned over the lack of compassion by GPs, feeling rushed during appointments and coming away feeling underwhelmed by the lack of support.

Older people/vulnerable patients

- Older and vulnerable patients, with a lack of support, felt their experience would be better if they could see the GP face-to-face, rather than having telephone consultations.
- More understanding of older people's lack of confidence in booking appointments online was mentioned.
- People were concerned that older people's health is being put at risk.

Poor management of health conditions by GP practices

There were concerns over health conditions not being managed adequately by GPs, resulting in patients visiting A&E and it was felt this could be prevented.

Cleanliness and the surgery environment

- Some people told us their GP practice was not clean and there was poor infection control in place.
- Other issues include: lengthy queues; lack of signage and absence of a quiet space to wait.

Access to GP care

There were issues for people being able to register at their practice of choice and confusion over proof of ID documents required for registration, in line with guidance.

Consequences of population increase on GP care

People described growth and expansion in various areas, but without the additional GP surgeries to accommodate this.

Effect of COVID on GP services

People told us that they sensed the pandemic was being used as an excuse to avoid face to face appointments and the repercussions have been evident beyond the pandemic.



Communication

- *Information-sharing*: it was felt there was a lack of information shared between professionals.
- *Being listened to*: people experienced being directed to A&E without the receptionists listening to them and understanding their health conditions.

Lack of support of PPGs (Patient Participation Groups)

Only 56% of respondents were aware of their PPG. Despite individuals trying to join PPGs, there has been a lack of interest in some surgeries. Some people mentioned that practice managers do not listen to issues that are raised.

Disheartened with whole service

There is a sense that due to poor GP service, being unwell is a frightening experience. People are disheartened with the experience and do not attempt to contact their GP due to the hassle.

Recommendations

We refer back to the Healthwatch Northamptonshire report of 'Patient Experiences of GP Services in Northamptonshire' undertaken in 2015 where some of our recommendations reflect our findings in 2022

1. GPs should align all patient feedback, including this report, to develop action plans to improve patient experience
2. Practices should consider how they can improve access to the surgery, particularly by ensuring they have the appropriate number of telephone lines and the staff to answer them. A dedicated line for telephone consultations would be helpful and should be considered
3. Practices should enable people to book in advance for non-urgent appointments, thus freeing the space for more urgent patients on the day
4. Practices should consider ways to enable people to see the doctor of their choice
5. There are still a number of practices where there is no PPG. We suggest that surgeries should encourage patient participation to improve communication between the surgery and the patients

Other things to consider

1. If there are positive outcomes for patients using the Doctrin App, are there plans to introduce this in other GP surgeries?



What people told us?

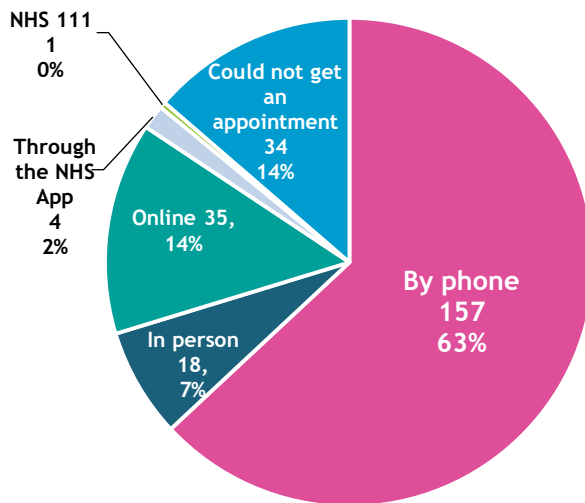
Registering with a GP

Are you registered with a GP?

- 80 survey respondents answered ‘yes’ to this question.
- 69.55% of respondents confirmed they were registered and named their GP surgery.

Making appointments

Thinking about your last appointment with your GP, how did you make that appointment?



Nearly (two-thirds) of respondents made an appointment by telephone; some respondents fixed their appointment online and a smaller proportion in person. 14% of respondents were unable to secure an appointment.

The Main concerns that were reported included:

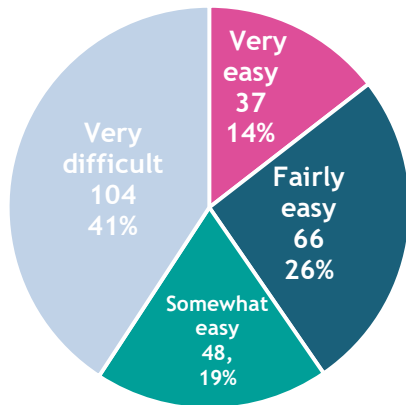
- Not getting an appointment with the person requested.
- Being advised to go to A&E.
- Being unable to book an appointment, as all slots were full.
- Lack of empathy (for instance: when a patient phoned to re-arrange an appointment due to a family member’s funeral, they were asked to call back the next morning at 8am).

Positive outcomes include:

- Surgery contacted patients to ask them to make an appointment.
- Opportunities to bring up concerns when patient attended for a routine treatment.



How easy was it to get the appointment?



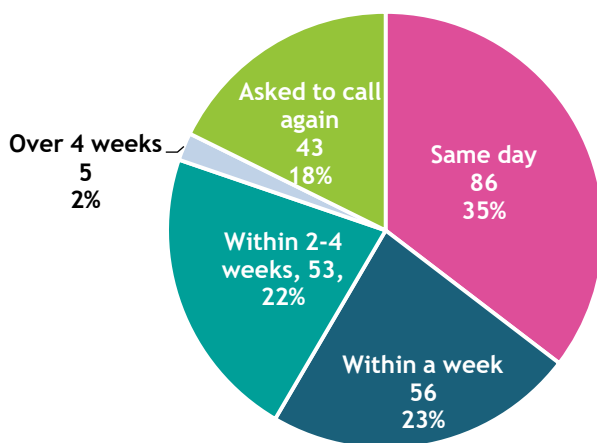
Main concerns about booking an appointment:

- The inability to get through on the phone to book an appointment.
- It took some people weeks before they could speak to somebody to make an appointment.
- Long waiting time for calls to be answered.
- Discovering that when calls were eventually answered, there were no appointments available on that day and individuals had to phone in again the next morning from 8am.

Positive outcomes related to booking appointments:

- Two people mentioned ‘Doctrin’ (an App used by patients at the Lakeside PCN in Corby). Doctrin is a secure online consultation platform designed to provide enhanced services for patients. Responding to the targeted questionnaire provides the surgery the information required before starting the appropriate consultation.
- There was a comment about a very helpful receptionist.

How long after contacting the Surgery did you get an appointment?





Main Concerns

The telephone systems appear to be inadequate. Several patients spoke of long waits for a response - sometimes up to an hour, only to be told there were no available appointments and to ring back the next day:

“Because the next morning and subsequent mornings when I called, they said the same thing - all slots have gone and to call back in the morning.”

Patients with non-urgent conditions said that they would have been happy to have a pre-booked appointment but accepted an on the day slot as that was all that was on offer:

“I didn’t need same day, but there was no other option and I was working and it wasn’t convenient, but I had no choice but to attend.”

There were occasions where patients tried to explain why they needed an appointment but were not listened to by the receptionist:

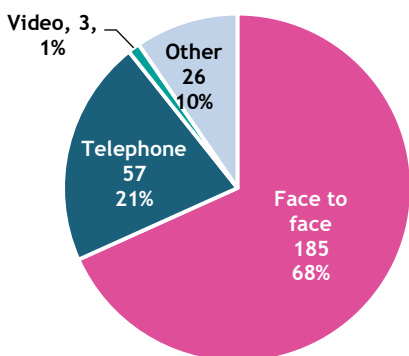
“I’m a nurse and only call when I need to be seen. The GP needed to physically examine me, but the receptionist still put it down as a telephone consultation, even though I explained and it was obvious it would need looking at. I was then given an appointment with a nurse who then said I need to see a GP, but she couldn’t book the appointment, so I then had to start the process of calling to book to see a GP.”

Patients said waiting to be given an appointment and no indication when that would be caused anxiety:

“Whilst I would be happy to be given an appointment in two weeks’ time for a non-urgent appointment, I am not happy that the surgery has a waiting list for such appointments and be given a vague timeframe after which I will be called to arrange an appointment. This is anxiety inducing, as I have no idea when I am likely to have a call back or an appointment. I suspect that when faced with this scenario many patients just ring at 8am the next day and say the issue needs an urgent appointment...causing further pressure on the system.”

160 respondents thought that this system of process of securing appointments was acceptable and 102 people thought it was not.

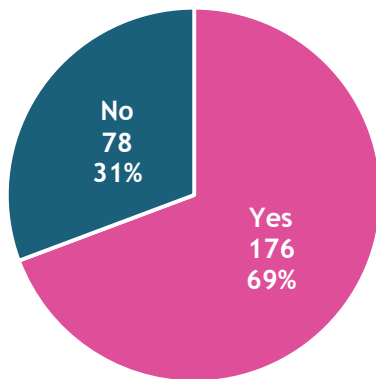
What type of appointment did you want?



The majority of respondents would like a face-to-face appointment, but nearly a quarter would also be happy with a telephone appointment.



Was your appointment with the person you wanted to see?



The majority of people said they saw a GP, but several people saw a Nurse Practitioner

Exceptions to this included:

- COPD Nurse for a parent
- Diabetic Nurse
- Pharmacist
- GP Trainee
- Phlebotomist
- GP who specialises in menopause
- Registrar - (“someone who had not looked at my records at all before speaking with me as was misinformed and incorrect which they later called and apologised about”)

Some respondents had no preference from the medical team that they wished to see:

“I did not request anyone. I believe I spoke to a GP.”

“I didn’t want to see anyone in particular as it was just to discuss results”

“GP, but I would have been happy to see any other qualified HCP.”

Respondents told us about difficulties and concerns:

“No appointment made. I gave up.”

“Professional who had not looked at the patient’s records before the consultation began.”

However, one positive experience is as follows:

“Appointments were given when needed for specialist practitioner.”

Who did you want to see?

“Would prefer to talk to a GP that I have been with for several years.”

“I wanted the same GP for continuity of care and their expertise.”

“A locum doctor rang me who did not know me or my problems. I would have preferred speaking at least to a doctor that had first discussed my problems.”

“A GP but this man was a GP trainee.”

“I saw a GP but not a name I was familiar with; there is no continuity.”



“GP or someone with knowledge of medications.”

“I wanted to see a doctor but did not even manage to speak to anyone on the phone.”

People are concerned that by seeing GPs unknown to them affects their continuity of care, which would be in place if they saw their own GP who would be aware of their health conditions.

Improvements to GP services

If you could change one thing to improve GP services, what would it be?

The largest number of responses were about having to wait a long time for a response when telephoning for an appointment.

“Cut down on waiting times to speak to someone, employ more admin to pick up the calls. The length of wait is unacceptable.”

A good proportion asked for more face-to-face appointments with their GP:

“Back to face-to-face appointments. Stop limiting the schedule to only two weeks in advance. If appointment is needed in a month, for example a meds review, then let us make that appointment.”

Some asked for the ability to pre-book appointments online:

“Online bookings for appointments to come back.”

“Being able to make an appointment online again and for in advance. Currently have to phone at 8 a.m. or 2 p.m. and wait in a long queue and am often cut off after waiting a while on hold.”

Several suggested the system of phoning at 8am. for an on the day appointment should be abandoned because of the poor response time rate:

“Get rid of the process that everyone needs to call at exactly 8am to get an appointment. I am happy to get an appointment the next day or during the week in most cases, but I want an appointment. 8am is only delaying getting an appointment. I ended up calling A&E several times unnecessarily because I could not get an appointment within a reasonable time. A waste of NHS resources.”

People with long-term conditions felt they should be able to pre-book appointments with their GP:

“When you have an ongoing health issue it would be good to have the same GP and also ongoing appointments.”

“That you can see a GP if you have a long-term-conditions, where at the moment the appointments are all for crisis.”

It was pointed out that older people do not always have technology such as mobile phones and laptops. Some said they were happy to receive a phone call if it was appropriate to their need:

“I am happy to receive a phone call if appropriate but at that time I would like to be considered sufficiently grown up to know when I need to be seen.”



Respondents mentioned issues regarding equipment for Wheelchair users:

“One wheelchair user told us that he needed a hoist to get him out of his wheelchair for the GP to carry out an examination. The surgery did not have a hoist and the surgery would not get one from community services.”

Concerns people are experiencing

- The number of people who reported long waits for a response to a telephone call
- Lack of compassion for a wheelchair bound patient
- The number of people who were unable to pre-book a non-urgent appointment for a necessary but non-urgent condition
- Pre-booked online appointments not allowed

Positive Outcomes

Some responses are as follows:

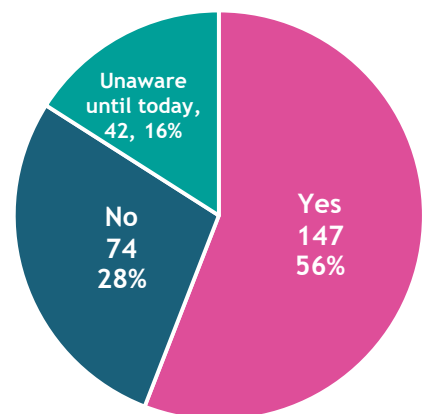
“If all GP services were as efficient as mine you probably wouldn’t need to be doing a survey. The Surgery I attend are efficient, supportive, and organised. If you require an appointment, they work with you to meet your needs and are always pleasant.”

“I am very satisfied with my GP Practice.”

“Very thankful for GP services.”

Patient Participation Groups

A Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a group of patients, carers and GP Practice staff who meet to discuss practice issues and patient experience to help improve the service. A PPG is open to every patient on the GP Practice list. All communities, groups, genders, ages, ethnicities, and disabilities representing the patient list are encouraged to join. Just over half of respondents were aware of PPGs and over quarter were not. 16% were unaware until responding to this survey.





General feedback about GP practice experience

Is there anything else you wish to tell Healthwatch about your experiences attending your GP Practice?

- Healthwatch included this open-ended question to provide people the freedom to tell us about their experiences rather than answer a prescribed question.
- The responses varied from praise for a very good surgery to answers such as “my surgery is good once you can get through on the telephone to make an appointment.”
- Out of the people who responded to this question 26 said the experience they have had of their GP surgery was good:

“My GP practice has always provided a good standard of care and accessibility for both myself and my children.”

“Always helpful admin/reception staff and very caring knowledgeable medical staff. Been with the practice for over 30 years and am very happy with the way they run things.”

“My GP practice has a good reputation in our village judging by comments on one of the village websites.”

14 people said their experiences were good once they got past the long waits to make an appointment:

“When I actually get to see the GP, I cannot fault the service and care provided although the wait lists are long.”

There were also a variety of concerns. A lot of the responses were about the telephone systems and the need for improvement in the waiting times for a response to their calls. This in particular for people who are constantly getting an engaged signal or once they get through, having a long wait to actually speak to someone.

Medication

There were concerns about medication prescribed over the phone and long waits to access prescriptions from the chemist:

“My surgery has become a complete farce and they dish out medication on the phone without even seeing the patient.”

“Accessing prescriptions from the chemist can be an issue - sometimes waiting 40-60 minutes for emergency/new prescription.”

“The staff most of the time do a great job under stress. However, some of the prescribing nurses have no idea of what they are prescribing - this from personal experience!”

Lack of empathy

“I was undiagnosed for a long time and told by my GP that it was all in my head and I wanted to be ill and to go away... only to become very ill and they found my condition was a birth defect.”

“On a recent visit with my fifteen-year-old, the locum doctor was very short with me. Did not give me time to discuss the symptoms my child was experiencing, he asked me to focus on the most pressing issue (even though these were all related) and said he could talk to me for seven



minutes! We came out of that appointment feeling very underwhelmed by the lack of care and empathy.”

“During the pandemic, I was desperate for an appointment for my Downs Syndrome child, but they would not see us or phone us. Later I told them I was a carer and was very depressed - still no appointment.”

“I am autistic with selective mutism. I NEED to be able to walk in and book an appointment face-to-face, my life and health rely on this simple accommodation.”

Older people/vulnerable patients

People responded about no exceptions or sympathy for older people:

“I would appreciate the possibility of asking to be seen face-to-face. I live alone having been widowed in April. I am elderly and have no family.”

“My parent had a bad cough and didn’t feel well and had a telephone consultation and was told to suck Strepsils. After a week of still feeling poorly they managed to get a GP appointment and was diagnosed with a bad chest infection. They are 83.”

“I worry greatly about more vulnerable people than me who need to see GPs, but I fear they are lacking the necessary contact because of the appointment system is so difficult to access.”

“Though not the fault of anyone, it is very difficult sometimes for an older person to understand some GPs whose English is not always clear, especially when wearing a mask.”

People felt older people’s health is being put at risk

“I wouldn’t be surprised if people’s health is being put at risk by the difficulties, we have getting an appointment. I know my 80-year-old parent has given up after waiting for forty minutes to get through to the surgery to book an appointment. I booked it for them through the website but what if some elderly people don’t have someone to do this for them?”

Poor management of health conditions by GP

“Health conditions are not being managed well by the GP and patients ending up going to A&E.”

“The surgery is too quick to sign post to NHS111 and A&E, which is often extremely inappropriate and putting additional pressure on A&E. In my view GP surgeries are there for the community as a preventative measure to using the A&E services.”

“I have only just had a medication review in four years and my child has their first at aged five. They have always been on some form of medication.”



Cleanliness and the Surgery Environment

“The practice was dirty. Poor infection control measures in place. The queues to check on for an appointment were lengthy. Signage in waiting areas was removed and it was unclear where to go.”

“Another barrier is the sensory environment - radio, fans, windows open, talking and no option to sit in a quieter space when you would prefer a face-to-face appointment.”

Access to GP care

“My partner wants to join my practice, but they say their list is closed and other surgeries say the same.”

“I have heard new patients being told they can’t register with the practice without proof of ID and address. This contravenes the NHS guidance on registration with GP practices.”

Consequences of population increase on GP care

“The area in Duston has so many houses being built but no additional doctors.”

“This area is and has been expanding rapidly with thousands of new houses and there just isn’t enough GPs to serve the huge number of patients already registered. It’s an absolute disgrace!!!!”

Effect of COVID on GP services

“Stop using the pandemic as an excuse for not meeting face-to-face”

“Get more COPD nurses on site and not one who has COPD and doesn’t want patients aspirating in front of them. I could not believe what I was hearing. My parent has COPD and hasn’t been seen for three years and I have had to fight for this next consultation.”

“Since Covid it has become more and more difficult to get an appointment and especially face-to-face with a GP.”

Communication

Information-sharing:

“Shocked by how little information is shared with allied health professionals and the hospital.”

Not feeling heard

“The receptionist advised me to go straight to A&E without listening to my medical condition.”

“There is a lack of communication or understanding of patients’ personal issues. I am made to feel as if I am on a conveyor belt being processed!”



No support for PPGs

“I used to be a member of my PPG, but I and most others had to resign because the Practice Manager would not listen and discuss things correctly.”

“I have tried to join the Surgery PPG - however the Deputy Practice Manger (who was setting it up) did not receive enough interest from patients - extremely disappointing.”

Disheartened with whole service

“It has been helpful to ventilate the poor service being experienced by people now. It’s frightening and fearful to become ill.”

“Very poor service in general. I have reported this to the CQC in the last 12 months!”

“Disheartened with the whole service. I am sure there are people that are ill and don’t bother to contact their GP as it’s so much hassle.”



Appendix 1: Feedback on GP services received by Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire (April to December 2022)

There were two extracts of positive feedback (relating to good care and communication, availability of appointments and efficiency).

There were 51 complaints mainly relating to poor communication, such as being unable to get through by telephone, calls not been returned, being stuck in a phone queue, lack of information about patient results or general poor communication from staff. People also told us they were struggling to get a face-to-face GP appointment (or any appointment generally). Other themes include: poor care, with patient concerns not being taken seriously; unsympathetic staff, lacking empathy; issues with medication and prescribing errors; delays; errors with patient records and registering with a GP practice generally.

Positive feedback (2)

1. *XXXXX surgery, Corby*: an individual's partner had health issues and they were able to secure a same day appointment; checks-ups and suitable medication. Their results came back soon, and communication was good (May 2022).
2. *XXXXX Surgery*: we received a website submission calling this surgery "superb" (June 2022).

Complaints (51)

Poor communication/unable to see a GP/getting appointments (20)

1. An enquirer said their parent had high blood pressure, contacted their GP and they did not call back all day. A few days later the individual contacted them about medication and they did not call back again all day (April 2022).
2. *XXXXXX Surgery*: an individual contacted their GP surgery by telephone, and it took nearly an hour to get through; they were on hold only to be told to call back the next day. They also wondered why they cannot see a GP and cannot understand why things have not progressed since Covid (April 2022).
3. An individual mentioned that the GP is not answering the phone and prescribing the incorrect medication [also Medication] (April 2022).
4. *XXXXXX Surgery*: an enquirer required codes to access their medical record. They therefore requested a telephone call to discuss this and said this was declined [also Patient Records] (May 2022).
5. An enquirer said they felt overpaid GPs are still using Covid as an excuse to not bother seeing patients face to face. There are locums to make phone call



- assessments who have no idea who their patients are. The enquirer said there are longer GPs, just '9-5 medical shops' (May 2022).
6. An individual said it is impossible to speak to their GP. The individual said they had a large lump at the front of their throat and said two hours after, they arranged a phone appointment, but had still not heard from the GP. They phoned reception and asked if they could see a GP and the answer was 'no', as their time had passed. In the end, their COPD nurse had to fix a GP appointment for them (July 2022).
 7. XXXXX Surgery: an enquirer required forms to be completed by their GP and said for two months they had been calling the surgery, with no success. They have also been asking for a referral which had not been done (August 2022).
 8. XXXXX Surgery: an enquirer's elderly relative experienced breathing problem, but their GP would not offer medication or an appointment. They were advised to call the ambulance, as sepsis was suspected. The enquirer said they could not speak to the GP, only the receptionist. The individual said that if the GP had spoken to them over the phone and explained the self-management protocol, the visit to hospital and the need for an ambulance could have been avoided. The individual said that the paramedics told them that it has become common practice for GPs to cite sepsis as a way of getting their patients admitted to hospital, so they do not have to deal with them (August 2022)
 9. XXXXXX Surgery: an individual told us they were experiencing issues getting a GP appointment. Last year they had a few telephone appointments, but nothing is helping their condition. When they eventually got a face-to-face appointment, the GP did not examine them at all but referred to them ENT Department. When the individual did contact their surgery online, they were told it would be passed to the GP weeks ago but did not hear anything. They also said the doctor prescribed them incorrect medication, which made them unwell [also Medication](August 2022).
 10. An enquirer said their GP was meant to contact them, but called the incorrect number, leading to a 'missed appointment' Their partner was in pain, so the individual drove them to the surgery asking for support, but said this was termed 'abuse' (September 2022)
 11. XXXXX Medical Centre: an individual was referred by their doctor for an endoscopy but was then informed by the hospital that this procedure is not for people of their age group (September 2022).
 12. An individual said they had tests at their GP eight years ago and was not contacted regarding their results. They have since changed GP surgeries and said their new GP said they should have been informed (September 2022).
 13. XXXXX: an individual said they are experiencing difficulties in getting through to surgery to make an appointment (September 2022)



14. *XXXXX surgery*: an individual said that they called the surgery between 8:00am and 8:10am and the message stated: **“no appointments available today”**. They said this **requires improvement** (September 2022).
15. *XXXXX surgery*: an enquirer said they have **complained about a two week wait before even speaking to a GP** and why there is such delays [**also Delays**] (October 2022).
16. Issue regarding a surgery in Wellingborough: an individual told us **often by the time people get through all appointments for that day are gone and they have to start the process again the next day**. Those who are **disabled or otherwise need to book a community transport service** usually need to give at least 24 hours' notice and may have **problems getting to a same day appointment** (October 2022).
17. *XXXXXX Medical Centre*: **unable to get through and them all appointments gone** (October 2022).
18. *XXXXX Corby*: an individual suspected they may have cancer but said **they could not get an appointment**. They have explained all their symptoms to the receptionist but there are never appointments available (November 2022).
19. An individual has written to their GP surgery, providing details of their current health issues and were hoping for an appointment. However, they received a text message to say they need to phone and when they did, it **they ended being number 40 in queue** (November 2022)
20. *XXXXX Medical Centre*: an enquirer completed an 'E-consult', **but this was not responded to**. They visited the surgery and was met with **an unhelpful response from the receptionist** (December 2022).

Poor care (12)

1. An enquirer felt their experience with their surgery resulted in an infection. (April 2022).
2. An individual had a problem with the GP surgery [no further details] (April 2022).
3. *XXXX Medical Centre*: website submission briefly describing **poor care** (April 2022)
4. *XXXXX Surgery*: an enquirer **got diagnosed without a professional physically looked at and general poor service** (April 2022).
5. An enquirer's family member has been seen by three hospitals **and their GP**, due to bruising, weight loss, body pain and sickness. There are no results, prognosis, or follow up. **The enquirer is concerned over the level of care** (May 2022).
6. *XXXXX Medical Centre*: website submission of poor level of care (May 2022)
7. An enquirer mentioned that they were diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease last year and have been with their surgery for nearly 40 years. **They said they have not received any support, empathy or contact from them regarding the diagnosis** (July 2022)



8. A member of the public mentioned a complaint they had raised about their child's treatment. **The issue relates to various doctors, nurses and health visitors** [no further details on this] (July 2022)
9. We were contacted by an individual who had a slipped disc. They said that last year **they informed their GP that they were very weak and breathless, but the doctor did not do anything.** The enquirer said **the GP did not diagnose chronic stress that they had been experiencing for four years.** The stress affects their blood pressure [**also Diagnosis**] (August 2022).
10. *XXXXXX Medical Centre*: an individual completed a webform to indicate **their experience of care was poor and it was difficult to access to support** (August 2022).
11. A caller said they were **unhappy with the treatment of their parent by their GP.** [they were not more specific] (September 2022).
12. *XXXXXX Medical Centre (comes under Parks Medical Practice)*: an individual said they are in a **lot of pain and said that they not being taken seriously.** The had spoken to several different doctors and **felt that no one is taking an overarching view of their symptoms** (September 2022).

Staff attitude (8)

1. *XXXXXX Medical Centre*: an enquirer had an issue with **rude staff and medication that they felt was not appropriate for them** [**also Medication**] (April 2022).
2. *XXXX Surgery*: An individual said the receptionist staff were rude, bad mannered and unhelpful (April 2022).
3. *XXXXXX Surgery*: an individual with mental health issues was **looking to make complaint about the rude manner in which they were spoken to by receptionist staff.** The said the **staff member caused distress by persistent verbal abuse. They were patronising and refusing to provide medical assistance.** They also said the reception staff spoke too openly about their condition in an open environment, **which could be overheard by others.** They said it would therefore be classed as a breach of personal data [**Also Confidentiality**] (May 2022).
4. An individual told us that they were subjected to a **degrading and humiliating experience at their GP surgery by a receptionist and nurse.** They said they asked the surgery to deal with this complaint, but the surgery is not responding [**also: Complaint procedure; Staff attitude; Communication**] (August 2022).
5. An individual told us that they had a bad experience with their GP. They said the **GP was unsympathetic** (August 2022).
6. An individual felt their **GP prevented them from obtaining a referral, a diagnosis or any treatment** and when they did manage to see a professional, **they treated them with contempt because of the notes that his GP had forwarded to them to “warn” them.** The caller said they are **insulted, ridiculed and treated like a liar,** which is why they suffer from PTSD and anger management issues. They transferred to another GP after the original one “struck them off” but now they said the current GP being difficult because of what the first GP has told them (October 2022).



7. *XXXXX Medical Centre*: an individual required an appointment and was asked to fill in an online and was informed someone would contact them. They waited a week and then called the surgery and said the receptionist was rude to them [***also Appointments***] (November 2022)
8. *XXXXX Medical Centre*: an individual had an **issue with their prescription for cancer treatment**. They had experienced this issue a few weeks back, resulting in them going without all their medication, including cancer treatment for four days. They **received a hostile response from the receptionist staff, who then hung up on the individual**. There was a similar response from the Practice Manager. The caller said their physical condition deteriorated due to that stress. They asked to be seen by the doctor but both receptionist staff came out and told **them that the doctor would not be able to see them, as practice is closed and they need to leave**. The caller said the **staff listened to them struggle and took no action** [***also Medication; Care***] (December 2022).

Medication (5)

1. *XXXXX Surgery*: An enquirer **asked their GP for medication, but have not heard back from the GP** [***also Communication***] (April 2022).
2. *XXXXX Medical Centre*: a caller said they had multiple health conditions, and their GP withdrew their medication (April 2022)
3. *XXXXX Medical Centre*: a caller was prescribed medication for their condition. Later the same week, **they received an email from a forum who informed them that that taking the amount of the medication specified could be dangerous** (May 2022).
4. A caller said their child's doctor kept changing **and each new doctor changes their medication, which does not work** (September 2022).
5. An individual said that **there was a prescription error on their partner's repeat prescription for Angina** (October 2022).

Access to service (3)

1. An individual was enquiring how to register at a GP surgery, due to difficulties after recently coming to the UK (May 2022).
2. A parent said their **child's illness requires regular prescriptions** and they have been registered with their GP for a few years (the surgery is Northampton, but they live seven miles away). **Recently they have told they must register elsewhere as they are out of the area. The parent said they have not moved recently and do not see the issue** (October 2022)
3. A caller made an enquiry about registering with a GP (October 2022).



Patient records

XXXXX Surgery: a caller was contacted by Kettering General Hospital regarding an ultrasound due to a lump on their child's abdomen. The caller said this was incorrect information and informed the hospital. They then called XXXXX, spoke to the receptionist who were convinced that this patient visited the surgery with this issue. **The caller said this was not true and requested a call with the GP, who was rude to them insinuating that they had memory problems, as they could not remember this attendance at the practice.** The individual said the notes on their records should be removed. **The caller said they are not happy about this breach of information going onto the incorrect records [also Communication and Staff attitude]** (August 2022).

Delays

An enquirer said they injured their back, and **their GP took a long time to send them for an MRI.** The individual said they are in chronic pain (July 2022).

Medication/Care/Staff attitude

An individual said they have been **experiencing issues with their GP for a while.** They said their GP has been failing to provide them with the medication prescribed from hospital. They mentioned that there is **no care for them, if they have a fall.** They also mentioned that a nurse at the surgery has been unpleasant to them and left them feeling uncomfortable (July 2022).



Appendix 2 - Participants by local area

Number who responded to the questionnaire from areas of Northamptonshire

Corby	22
Daventry	10
East Northants	43
Kettering	22
Northampton	78
South Northants	28
Wellingborough	24
Preferred not to say	2

Appendix 3: Respondents who are patients at the following surgeries

1. Corby Dr Sumira Surgery	2
2. County Surgery	1
3. Eskdail Medical Centre	3
4. Lakeside, Corby	13
5. Lakeside, Oundle	4
6. The Cottons, Raunds	4
7. Earls Barton Medical Centre	4
8. Rilwood	1
9. Saxon Spires	1
10. Albany House, Wellingborough	8
11. Eleanor Cross, Delapre	2
12. Spring Field, Brackley	1
13. The Headlands, Kettering	4
14. Redwell Medical Centre, Wellingborough	4
15. Parks Medical Practice, Blisworth	1
16. Nene Valley Surgery, Thrapston	4
17. St Luke's, Duston	16
18. Delapre Medical Centre	1
19. Harborough Field, Rushden	3
20. Spinney Brook, Irthlingborough	2
21. Dryland, Kettering	1
22. Wootton Medical Centre	4
23. The Parks, Roade	2
24. Abington Park, Medical Centre	7
25. Irchester, Wellingborough	1
26. The Brook Medical Centre, Towester	2



27. Towester Medical Centre	6
28. Danes Camp	10
29. Crick	1
30. Forest Gate, Corby	2
31. Greens Norton Medical Centre	3
32. Great Oakley Medical Centre	2
33. Kingsthorpe Medical Centre	1
34. The Pines	9
35. Leicester Terrace	2
36. Brackley Medical Centre	2
37. Abbey Medical Centre	4
38. Bugbrooke	2
39. Woodview	1
40. Queensview	1
41. Byfield Medical Centre	3
42. Linden Medical Centre	1
43. Burton Latimer	3
44. Rothwell & Desborough	3
45. Weavers, Kettering	3
46. King Edward Road, Northampton	1
47. Greenview	1
48. Parklands, Rushden	1
49. Park Slope, Blisworth	1
50. Higham Ferrers	2
51. Long Buckby	1
52. Adnitt Road, Rushden Medical Centre	3
53. Ecton Brook	1
54. Leicester Terrace Healthcare Centre	1

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to all those who took the time to share their views and experiences with us.

We met with representatives of the Northamptonshire Health and Care Partnership <https://www.icnorthamptonshire.org.uk/> and the Local Medical Committee in Northamptonshire <http://www.northantslmc.co.uk/> in January and February 2023 to discuss the report and our findings, however, neither has given us a formal response to include in this report as of date of publication 23rd March 2023.



About Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and wellbeing and improve the quality of services to meet people's needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and social care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvement, where required.

Our rights and responsibilities include:

- We have the power to monitor (known as “Enter and View”) health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of health and social care.
- We report our findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision makers and make the case for improved services where we find there is a need for improvement
- We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people, to influence how services are planned, organised, and delivered.
- We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we find out what local people think about health and social care. We research patient, user and carer opinions using lots of different ways of finding out views and experiences. We do this to give local people a voice. We provide information and advice about health and social care services.

Where we feel that the views and voices of Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire and the people who we strive to speak on behalf of are not being heard, we have the option to escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations including Healthwatch England, NHS England and the Care Quality Commission.

Find out more at www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

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North Northamptonshire
West Northamptonshire





About Connected Together

Connected Together Community Interest Company (CIC) is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire.

The remit of the Connected Together CIC includes:

- Contract compliance
- Legal requirements
- Financial and risk management
- Sustainability and growth
- Agreeing strategy and operations
- Agreeing policies and procedures



Connected Together CIC is a social enterprise and a partnership between the University of Northampton and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire. It aims to be first for community engagement across the county of Northamptonshire and beyond.

By using our expertise and experience, we can help you in delivering community engagement programmes including workshops, research, surveys, training and more. Contact us to find out how we can help your community.

We welcome ideas and suggestions for projects that benefit Northamptonshire and its community.

Find out more at www.connectedtogether.co.uk





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