

Access to General Practice (GP) services in Barnsley

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Executive Summary

The General Practice (GP) services (e.g., appointment booking, repeat prescriptions, referrals to hospital etc) and the way that they are accessed has changed dramatically over the last decade. GP's have experienced a significant and growing strain with declining GP numbers, rising demand and challenges with the recruitment and retention of staff all having a knock-on effect for patients.

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, in early 2020, amplified these problems despite the NHS's drive to increase capacity, meet existing targets and reduce waiting times.

Whilst for some people the experiences of care from their GP service have continued to be positive, the general sentiment of those contributing to this study is that it has proven challenging accessing GP services and that there's a need for improvement. Patients raised the following concerns:

Booking an appointment - Delays in answering the telephone and the period of time from booking an appointment to receiving treatment were the main concerns raised by patients. Whilst 86% of patients were able to book an appointment, patients indicated that they were unable to do so as they:

- Associated this service with a visit to the practice to see their GP in person.
- Perceived that it is not possible to provide a robust diagnosis and treatment plan, by telephone, as it is difficult to observe body language and other non-verbal signs. This resulted in unnecessary stress and anxiety for some patients. See Remote Consultations.
- No longer had freedom of choice (method of contact, type of appointment and which healthcare professional treated them). The ability to book appointments online or via an Application (App) being removed by some practices and at one practice only being able to book appointments once per week. It is felt that this creates a bottleneck at 8am, when telephone lines and / or surgeries open, and that this is the only way to make an appointment regardless of whether it is urgent or routine. Likewise, the triage process created unnecessary anxiety and stress for some patients. See Preliminary Assessments.

Remote consultations: Video and telephone (remote) consultations suited some people and definitely had a place for those who are confident with using technology or are just waiting advice or medication for a reoccurring problem. This did not work so well for the older generation (e.g., with long-term health conditions, disabilities), patients with mental health problems and people without access to the internet. Patients weren't sure when their GP, or other healthcare professional, would call back as a specific time was not allocated for their appointment. This was particularly problematic for those who have school runs and are working.

Preliminary assessments (triage) - Patients found the triage process confusing as it resulted in the need for multiple interactions to get the care that they needed. It was perceived that this method meant that patients were no longer offered the freedom of choice.

Access to regular treatment and medication: Patients reported that they struggled to get appointments for regular health check-ups, treatments and medication reviews. As a result, they were unable to get the medication and treatment that they needed to manage their condition.

Communication: Poor communication about changes to GP services, in response to Covid-19, and how they are delivered has made it harder for people to access care.

HW Barnsley is currently working in partnership with Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG), Barnsley Healthcare Federation (BHF) and Barnsley Primary Care Forum (PCM) to take the findings from this survey forwards.

About us

Healthwatch (HW) Barnsley is the independent health and social care champion. When the people of the borough of Barnsley raise concerns about healthcare services (including GP, hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes and other support services), HW use this feedback to raise awareness of people's experiences with the appropriate Healthcare organisations.

HW then work in partnership with the relevant Healthcare organisation to influence and initiate improvements to health and care services for the benefit of the local community.

Introduction

Getting access to a family doctor's (GP) appointment has always been a cornerstone of the NHS and for many has traditionally been the first point of contact when feeling unwell. The GP services (e.g., appointment booking, repeat prescriptions, referrals to hospital etc) and the way that they are accessed has changed dramatically over the last decade. GP's have experienced a significant and growing strain with declining GP numbers, rising demand and challenges with the recruitment and retention of staff all having a knock-on effect for patients.

In 2019 / 2020 HW Barnsley, through its engagement activities and advice / support service, heard about:

- A lack of GP appointments and long waiting times for appointments.
- Difficulties reaching a receptionist by telephone at some GP practices.

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, in early 2020, amplified these problems despite the NHS's drive to increase capacity, meet existing targets and reduce waiting times.

The pandemic necessitated the need for the NHS to implement new ways of working (e.g., conduct preliminary assessments (triage) of patients, virtual consultations) to ensure adherence to social distancing guidelines and enhanced infection and prevention measures. The NHS was also required to support the Covid-19 vaccination programme (from December 2021). This led to increased pressure on the whole of the NHS which in turn had a significant impact on the service that the NHS was able to provide.

Between April 2019 - December 2020, HW England conducted a study about accessing GP services during the Covid-19 pandemic. Patients raised concerns about:

- **Communication:** Confusion about how to get in touch with their GP, whether they could make an appointment and how, and what to expect if they attended the surgery in person.
- **Booking an appointment:** Waiting for a long time when phoning GP practices. Problems booking appointments because of triage systems and not being sure when their GP or other healthcare professional will call back, leaving people feeling anxious.
- **Appointments not meeting needs:** Remote GP appointments haven't met everyone's needs. While telephone appointments are convenient for some, others are worried that their health issues will not be accurately diagnosed. These problems were exacerbated for disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, people without access to the internet and for anyone whose first language is not English.
- **Access to regular treatment and medication:** Patients struggled to get appointments for regular health check-ups, treatments and medication reviews. As a result, they were unable to get the medication and treatment that they need to manage their condition.

Between July - October 2021, 72% of HW Barnsley's calls related to problems accessing GP Services:

- Telephones not being answered in a timely manner.
- A lack of GP appointments resulting in some patients visiting the Accident and Emergency Care (A&E) department at the hospital, because it was quicker and easier than trying to get a GP appointment.

Posts on social media were brought to HW Barnsley's attention, one in particular had 140 comments about various aspects of the GP service including the lack of GP appointments. This highlighted that the new ways of working had caused confusion and disarray with people who had tried to book an appointment with their local GP practice. They found themselves having to navigate different booking systems and triage pathways, as well as in some cases having to quickly learn how to hold a digital conversation instead of the traditional face-to-face appointment they were used to.

HW Barnsley was also aware, via attendance at Primary Care Committee Meetings, that GPs had expressed concerns about the high rate of "Did not Attend" (DNA) appointments in Barnsley.

In response to the various concerns raised, HW Barnsley's Strategic Advisory Board (SAB) agreed that accessing GP services in Barnsley required further investigation and approved this study.

From 15 November - 8 December 2021, HW Barnsley hosted 2 third year medical students from Sheffield University. Their time was focused on the design, development, execution and promotion of the patient questionnaire / survey.

The purpose of this document is to share the findings from the "Access to GP Services" study, together with the way forward, with the residents of the borough of Barnsley.

Method

The following approach was adopted:

1. An online survey was produced and promoted with all partners and service providers in the area. This included attendance at the Vaccine Centre and a Wellbeing forum to discuss patient experience, and complete the online survey, face-to-face.
2. The survey was open to anyone registered with a Barnsley GP as opposed to targeting specific groups. Parents and carers were able to complete the survey on behalf of children and people in their care.
3. A Quick Response (QR) code was used as part of the promotion. This was advertised online and in local outlets to make it easier to access the survey and to also encourage engagement with younger residents.
4. A small incentive was offered, with residents being entered into a draw, to win one of five £10 Amazon vouchers on completion of the survey.
5. The survey was open for 15 days (22 November - 6 December 2021 inclusive).

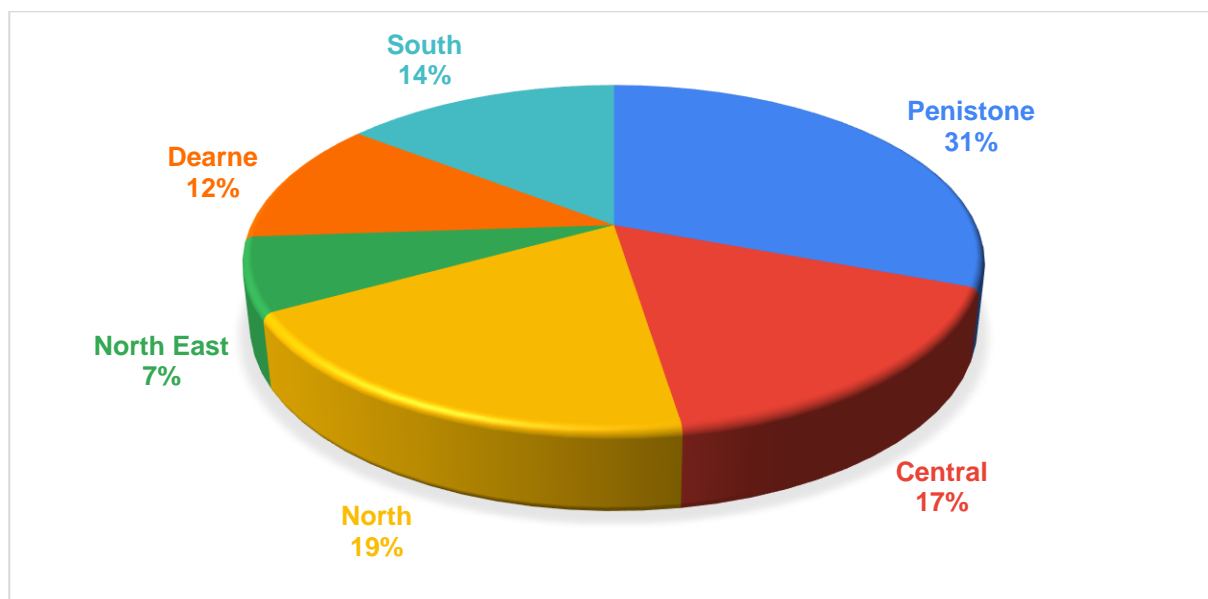
The primary aim of the questionnaire was to explore patients' opinions and feelings when accessing GP services. This approach enabled patients to comment on their experience "in their own words."

Findings

Barnsley has one Primary Care Network (PCN) comprising 32 member GP practices, of which 4 are managed directly by the Barnsley Healthcare Federation (BHF). See Appendix 1 for further details.

The member practices support circa 246k patients via six neighbourhood networks. The respondents (referred to as “patients” from here on) came from a good geographical spread of the Barnsley area (see Appendix 2 for further details). 345 patients (0.14%), from the following neighbourhood networks, responded to the survey:

1. Penistone
2. Central
3. North
4. North East
5. Dearne
6. South



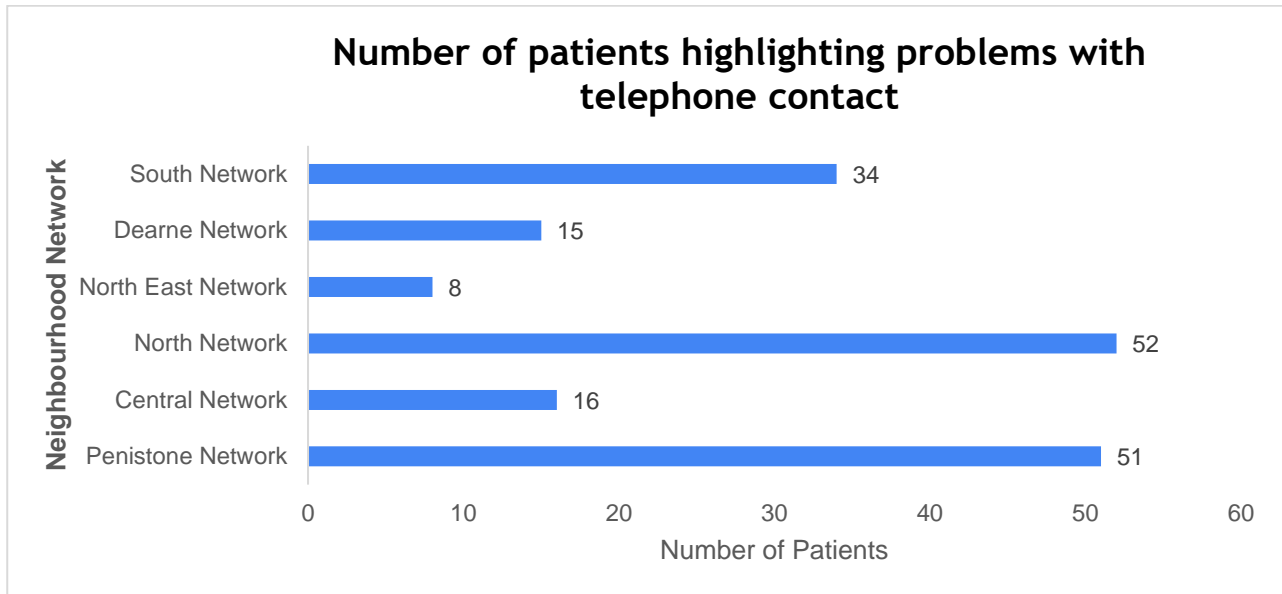
Patients were asked to comment on their experience, in the past 6 months, of booking an appointment, whether they had missed an appointment and the type of appointment offered. In addition, they were asked to rate the level of satisfaction with their practice on a scale of 1 - 10 (1= worst 10 = best) together with providing observations on opportunities for improvement. A copy of the survey questionnaire is available on request.

Details of the findings, for each neighbourhood network, including examples of patient comments can be found in the Appendices (see Appendix 3 - 8 for further details).

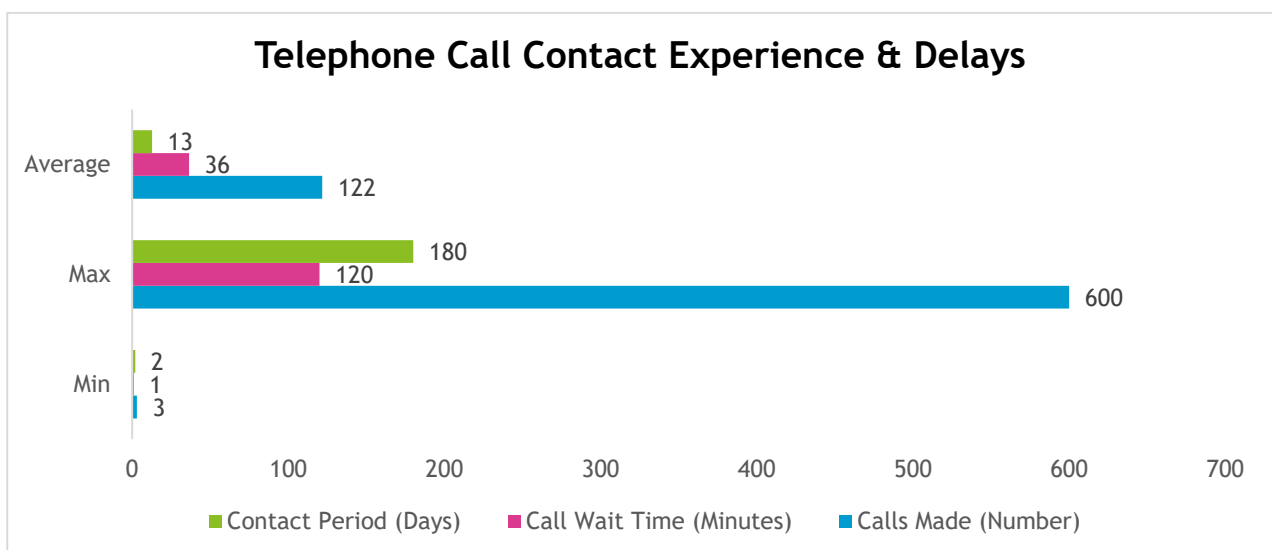
Initial Contact

Of the 345 patients, 302 (88%) booked their appointment by telephone, 22 (6%) visited the practice, 19 (5%) via an online appointment booking system and 2 (1%) in writing.

Of the 302 patients making contact by telephone, 176 (58%) highlighted that it was difficult making contact with the GP Practice (e.g., no answer, line engaged, held in a queue, call terminated and had to dial again).

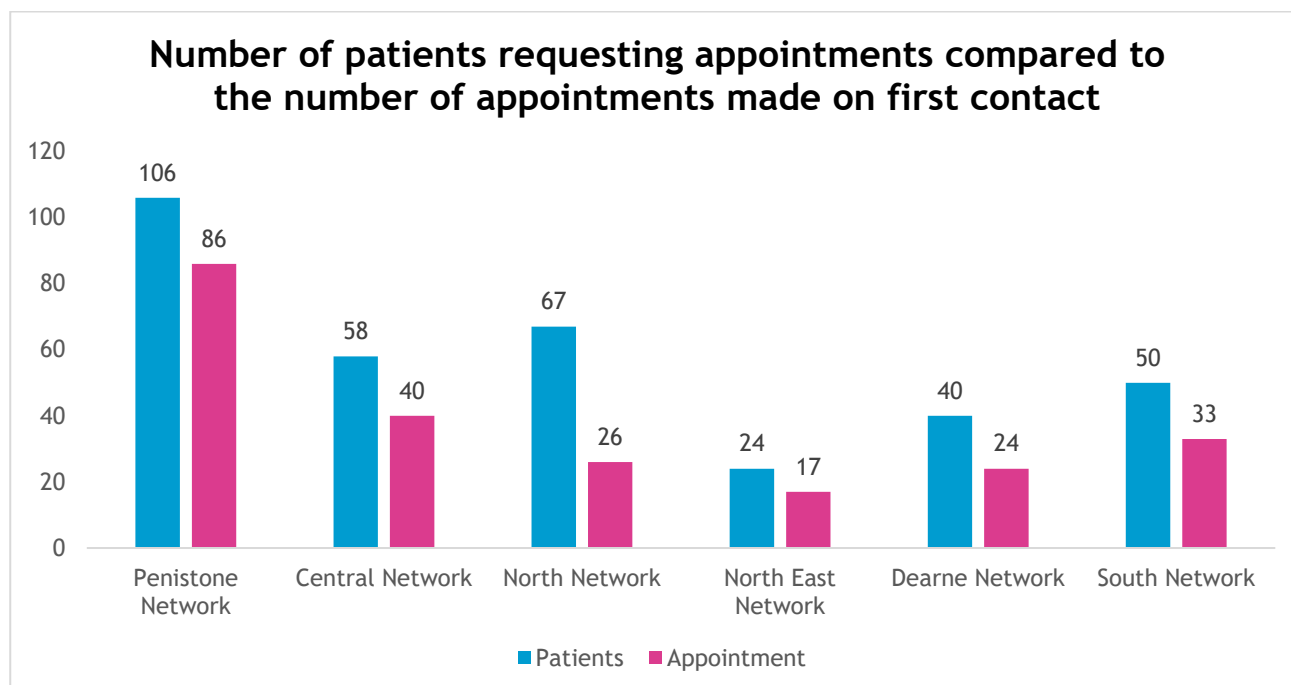


- It took 66 patients, 122 calls (on average) to speak to someone at the practice. The number of attempts made ranged from 3 - 600.
- 51 patients spent 36 minutes (on average) on the telephone waiting for their call to be answered. The call waiting time was between 1 - 180 minutes.
- 38 patients contacted the practice over a period of 13 days (on average). The contact period ranged from 2 - 180 days.



Appointment Booking

Of the 345 patients, 226 (66%) were able to get an appointment on initial contact with the practice.



Of the 345 patients, 119 (34%) were unable to book an appointment on initial contact as:

- 66 (55%) patients were informed that all appointments available for that day had been allocated and they needed to call back at 8am the next morning to try again.
- 44 (37%) patients were unable to get through to the practice despite redialling on numerous occasions.
- 1 (1%) patient received a recorded message advising to go for treatment elsewhere.
- 8 (7%) patients did not specify a reason.

Over a period of 2 to 180 days, 75 (63%) of the 119 patients, were able to book an appointment resulting in the number of patients receiving treatment increasing to 301 (87%) of which 6 (2%) were treated elsewhere (e.g., i-Heart, hospital).

Of the 295 (86%) patients that received treatment from their practice:

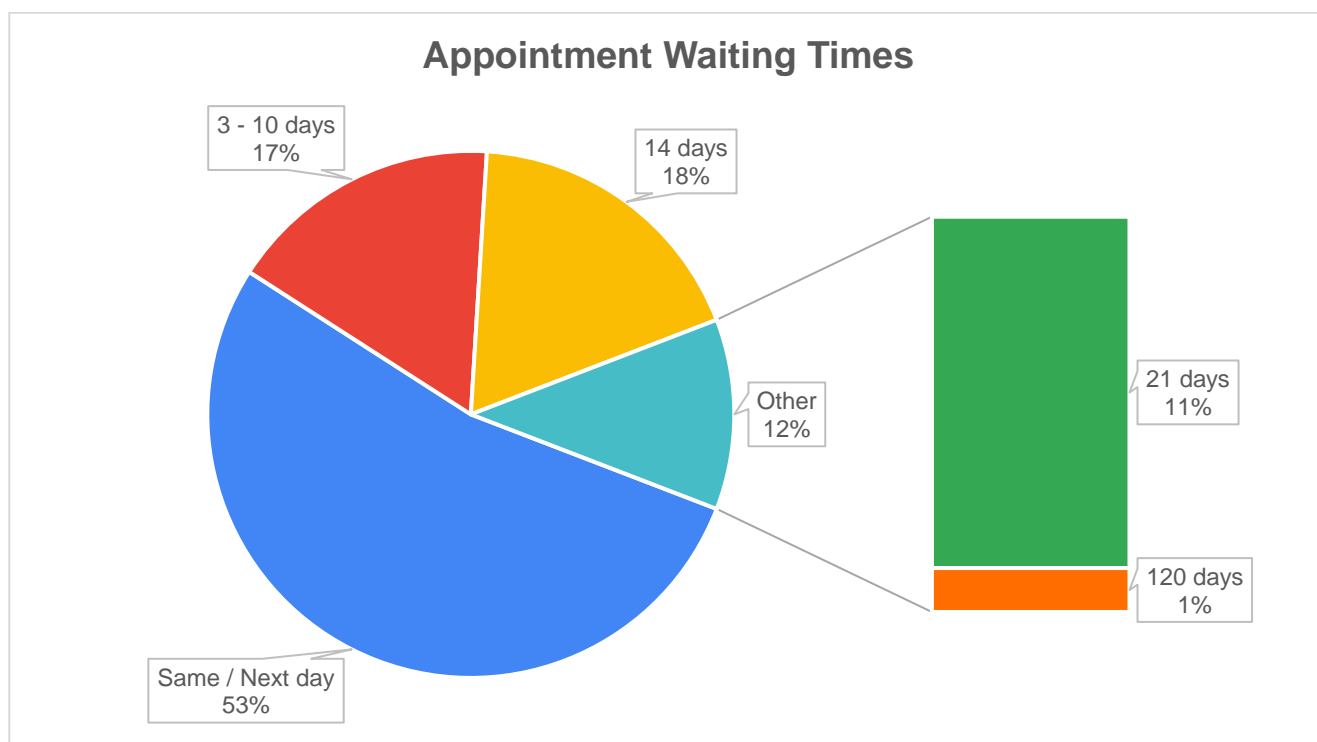
- 209 (71%) appointments were telephone consultations and 86 (29%) were face-to-face.
- Of the 209 patients that had telephone consultations, 36 (17%) were subsequently offered a face-to-face appointment.
- 215 (73%) appointments were conducted by a GP, 78 (26%) with a Nurse or other Healthcare professional and 2 (1%) patients were supported by a receptionist.

Appointment Waiting Time

Of the 345 patients, 173 (50%) commented that it takes too long from booking an appointment to receiving treatment. A further 61 (18%) said that they had a short wait time and the remaining 111 (32%) patients provided no comment.

Patients attended their appointment 7 days (on average) after booking it. Based on the experience of 77 (22%) patients:

- 41 (53%) had their appointment on the same day or the day after they contacted the practice.
- 13 (17%) had waited 3 - 10 days for their appointment.
- 14 (18%) had waited 14 days for their appointment.
- 8 (11%) had waited 21 days for their appointment.
- 1 (1%) had waited 120 days for their appointment.



Appointment Cancellation / Did Not Attend (DNA)

Of the 345 patients, 17 (5%) advised that they had not attended an appointment (in the past 6 months) and that they did not cancel it for the following reasons:

1. 6 (35%) totally forgot about the appointment. These were primarily appointments made in advance for routine treatment (medication reviews, follow ups).

“It was an error on my part I wrote the wrong date on my calendar.”

2. 5 (29%) were a mixture of patients with mental health problems (not able to face the appointment) and telephone appointments being missed as the practice used a private number.

“My phone setting blocked unknown callers, but I have now de-activated it so it doesn't happen again.”

“Complex health issues meant that I got the time wrong. Doctor sent me a text saying the appointment was 20 mins later than it was and despite them informing me of that, in my ill and confused state, I still got the time wrong.”

3. 3 (18%) tried to contact the practice to cancel the appointment and weren't able to get through so they gave up.

“I had an appointment for my flu jab but managed to get it at my local Asda. I tried ringing the practice as I didn't have time to go in but no joy at anyone answering.”

“I couldn't get through to reception to cancel my appointment.”

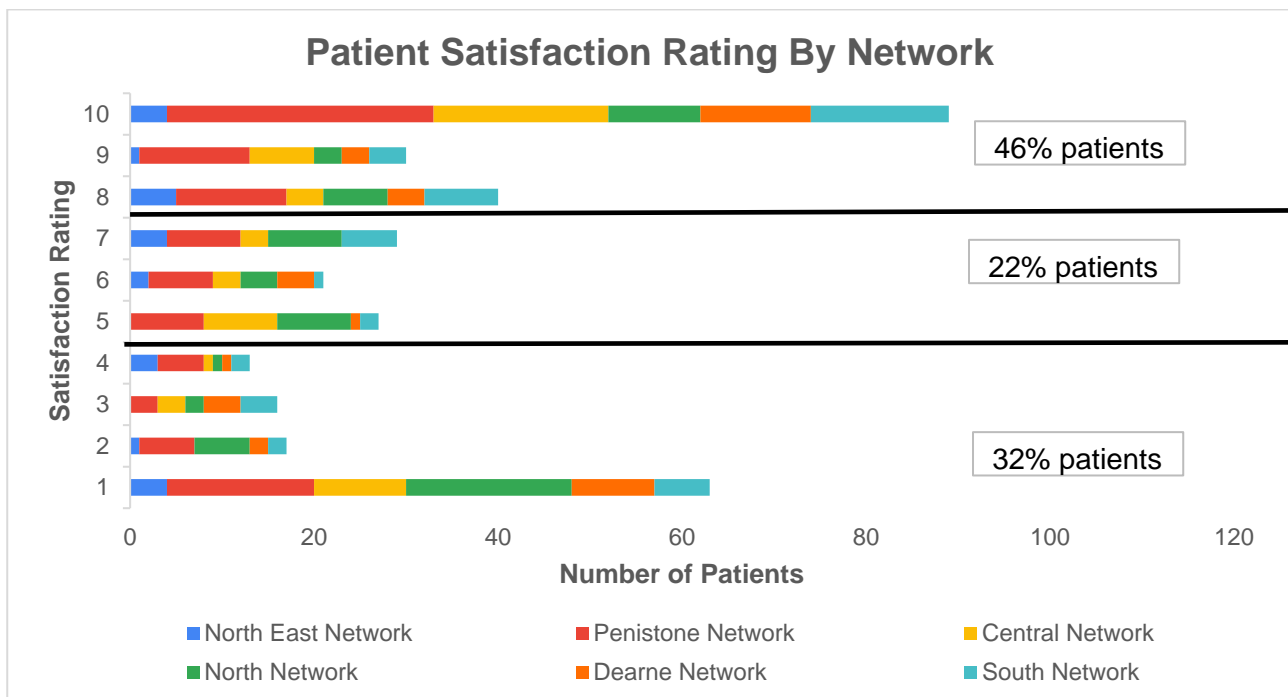
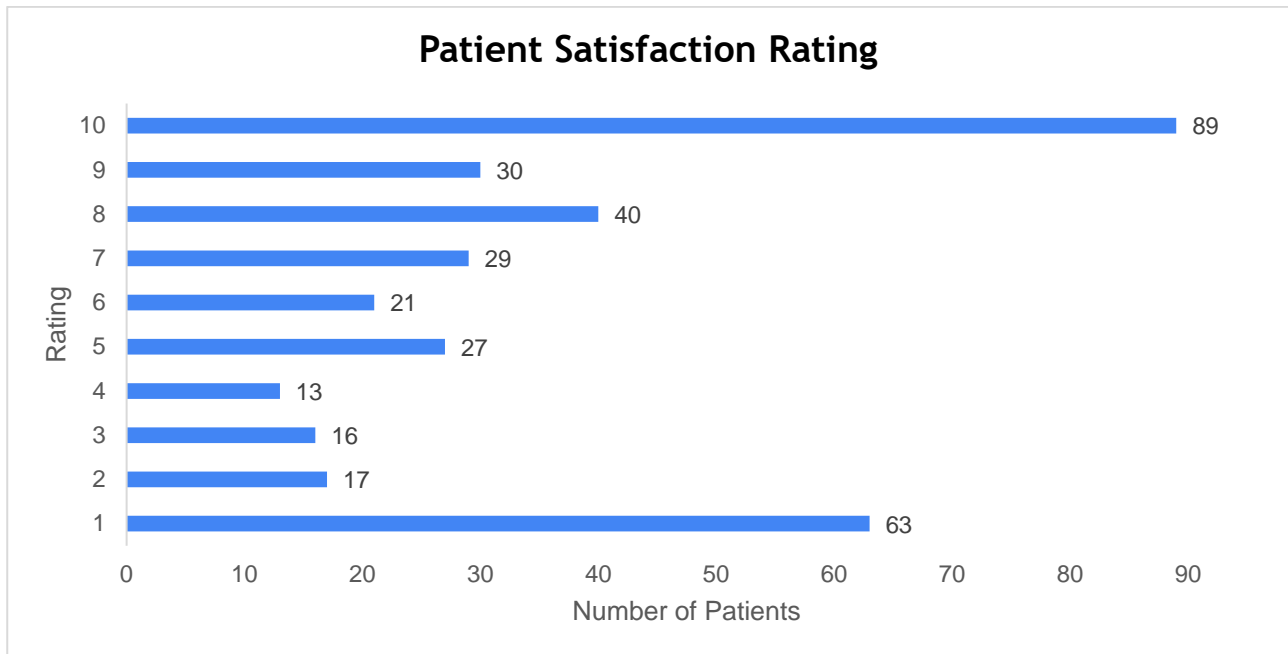
4. 3 (18%) said that this was due to either a patient or practice error. One patient was sat in reception waiting for his appointment when he received a text telling him he had not attended.

“Because the doctors say I had booked an appointment I know 100% I didn't have an appointment booked I would have crawled on my hands and knees to get to see a doctor.”

“It was an error on my part writing wrong date in calendar. I called the practice to explain and they were understanding.”

Patient Satisfaction

Patients rated their level of satisfaction, on a scale of 1 - 10 (1 = worst, 10 = best), based on their overall experience (including initial contact, appointment booking, wait time and the outcome of their treatment).



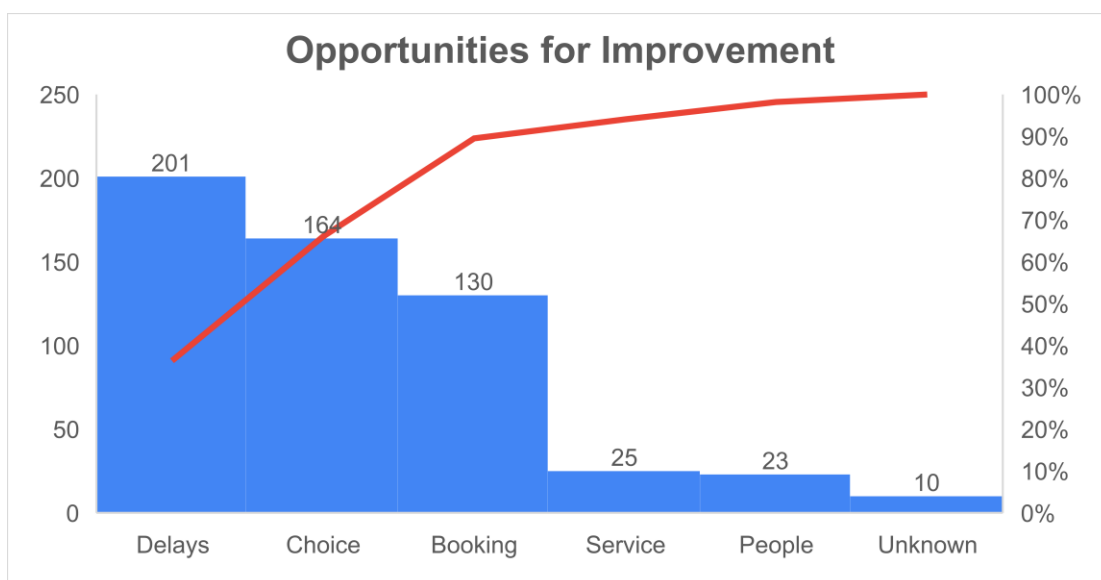
GP Practice / Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Patients
Penistone Network	16	6	3	5	8	7	8	12	12	29	106
Central Network	10	0	3	1	8	3	3	4	7	19	58
North Network	18	6	2	1	8	4	8	7	3	10	67
North East Network	4	1	0	3	0	2	4	5	1	4	24
Dearne Network	9	2	4	1	1	4	0	4	3	12	40
South Network	6	2	4	2	2	1	6	8	4	15	50
Total By Rating	63	17	16	13	27	21	29	40	30	89	345
% By Rating	18%	5%	5%	4%	8%	6%	8%	12%	9%	26%	

Patients were asked about the outcome of their appointment and how they had been treated by their GP practice:

1. 139 (40%) patients were satisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they had been listened to, treated with respect and were satisfied with the treatment or referral.
2. 96 (28%) patients were dissatisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they were unable to express themselves or given enough time for their appointment and hence did not get the outcome they felt they needed.
3. 69 (20%) had mixed feelings about the outcome of their appointment and / or overall experience highlighting that whilst they were happy with the outcome of their treatment, they perceived that they had not been listened to and / or treated with respect. Likewise, there were some who were unhappy with the outcome of their treatment who commented that they had been listened to and treated with respect.
4. 41 (12%) patients did not comment on their experience.

The survey provided patients with the opportunity to comment on any aspect of the GP appointment booking process and / or service “in their own words”. Where patients explicitly expressed dissatisfaction with any aspect of their experience, they were asked to provide an explanation of why they felt this way and what could have been done differently. See Opportunities for Improvement for further details.

Of the 345 patients, 318 (92%) indicated that there was an opportunity to improve the appointment booking process and / or GP service (although 10 patients did not comment on which aspect). 27 (8%) patients stated that they would not make any changes (of which 4 patients suggested improvements).



Circa 550 comments were provided, by 322 patients, on one or more element of the appointment booking process and / or GP service.

Examples of the reason(s) that patients commented on the need to improve the appointment booking process and / or GP service:

Reason / Neighbourhood Network	Penistone	Central	North	North East	Dearne	South	Total	%	% Total	
Delay - Call Wait Time	51	16	52	8	15	0	142	44.0%	80.8%	
Delay - Appointment availability	22	3	0	0	0	34	59	18.3%		
Choice - Face-to-Face not offered / allowed	13	1	13	2	5	4	38	11.8%		
Service - Clinician (diagnosis)	7	6	4	0	0	5	22	6.8%		
People - Receptionist (attitude)	6	2	3	0	1	2	14	4.3%	19.2%	
Booking - Went / Referred Elsewhere	5	0	3	0	1	3	12	3.7%		
Booking - Advance booking not allowed	3	1	4	0	0	1	9	2.8%		
People - Clinician (attitude)	5	1	3	0	0	0	9	2.8%		
Choice - Prefer to see my GP	0	6	1	0	1	0	8	2.5%		
Booking - Unhappy with triage process	0	1	2	0	0	0	3	0.9%		
Choice - Suitable time not offered	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	0.9%		
Service - Test results not communicated	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0.6%		
Choice - Home visit not offered / allowed	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.3%		
Service - Prescription not issued	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.3%		
	117	38	85	10	24	49	323			
Of the patients that stated "no change", 4 provided constructive feedback on the appointment booking process.										
Some patients provided multiple reasons. Likewise, some did not comment.										
	Gender			Age Range						
Reason by Demographics	Male	Female	Unknown	0 - 17	18 - 30	31 - 45	45 - 69	60 +	Total	
Delay - Call Wait Time	25	110	7	2	16	49	41	34	142	
Delay - Appointment availability	9	49	1	2	12	14	18	13	59	
Choice - Face-to-Face not offered / allowed	7	30	1	0	4	14	12	8	38	
Service - Clinician (diagnosis)	6	15	1	1	2	7	7	5	22	
Service - Receptionist (attitude)	5	8	1	1	1	6	4	2	14	
Choice - Went / Referred Elsewhere	2	10	0	0	1	2	5	4	12	
Choice - Advance booking not allowed	2	7	0	0	1	4	2	2	9	
Service - Clinician (attitude)	1	8	0	0	3	3	3	0	9	
Choice - Prefer to see my GP	1	7	0	0	1	1	3	3	8	
Choice - Suitable time not offered	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	3	
Choice - Unhappy with triage process	0	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	
Service - Test results not communicated	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	
Choice - Home visit not offered / allowed	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Service - Prescription not issued	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
	59	253	11	6	43	103	98	73	323	

Existing NHS Key Performance Indicators

Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) provided data to facilitate a comparison between HW Barnsley's survey findings and information gathered via existing performance management and patient experience indicators (Sources: 2021 GP Practice Survey and NHS Digital Appointment Data).

BCCG's appointment data shows that the number of appointments over the past 3 years has remained relatively unchanged. 117k (monthly average) appointments were booked of which 4.9k (monthly average) weren't attended, equating to a non-attendance rate of 4.2%, in the period April 2021 - February 2022.

A summary of the findings can be found in Appendix 9 with further details in the Access to GP Services - Comparison of Healthwatch's survey results to existing NHS performance indicators report. A copy of this report is available on request.

Opportunities for Improvement

Appointment Booking

Patients would like:

1. The ability to contact the practice by different methods. For example, telephone, online booking system and in writing (e-mail and letter).
2. To be able to book appointments in advance, over 7 days, and for appointments to be released at different times throughout the day.
3. Their GP to be able to book a follow-up appointment immediately after the consultation / treatment rather than patients having to go back to a receptionist to do so.
4. Alternative approaches to be implemented for routine (non-urgent) appointments, prescriptions, test results and medication reviews. For example, dedicated telephone lines for each service, e-mail the practice, request prescription and medication reviews online.
5. Telephone appointments to be made for a specific time as opposed to providing a window in which their GP will make contact.

Patient Choice

Patients would like the freedom to choose the:

1. Method of contact with the practice (see above).
2. Type of appointment. For example, face-to-face (by video, a home visit or at the practice), telephone or correspond in writing.
3. Appointment time that best suits their circumstances. For example, avoid school drop off, after work etc.
4. Healthcare professional that treats them.

Delays

Patients would like to see an improvement both in the time that it takes to make contact with the practice and the period from booking their appointment to their visit. See Initial Contact and Appointment Waiting Time Sections for further details.

Communication and Continuous Improvement

In addition to the above, there's an opportunity to:

1. Raise awareness of how the existing Appointment Booking processes operate providing greater clarity for patients about the service that their GP provides. For example:
 - Appointment bookings open at 8am Monday to Friday by telephone only. Appointments are booked on a first come first serve basis.
 - Every patient will be assessed via telephone triage to ascertain if a face-to-face appointment is necessary. This will be completed by a Nurse or a Receptionist.
 - For non-urgent appointments please ring after 1pm.
 - The services provided by a healthcare professional other than a doctor.
2. Raise awareness of existing Applications (Apps) that are available for patients, to search for advice about their symptoms and the most appropriate course of action including directing them to the relevant service, to meet their needs. Alternatively, assess the feasibility of providing an App (for use across the borough of Barnsley) that meets this need whilst also allowing patients to book an appointment with their GP via a “common” platform.
3. Promote the use of right care, right place (Self-Help, Pharmacies etc).
4. Assess the feasibility of streamlining the Appointment Booking process with the aim of providing patients with the same experience irrespective of the practice, or neighbourhood network, that they belong to (i.e., implement a “consistent” process across the borough of Barnsley).

Way Forward

Healthwatch (HW) Barnsley would like to see the relevant healthcare organisation(s) undertake a formal review of the way that people access General Practice (GP) to ensure that the service works for everyone. Likewise, ensure that people understand the changes that have been and / or are to be made to the existing GP service and how these affect the way that people receive the care and support that they need.

The findings from this study have been shared with Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG), Barnsley Healthcare Federation (BHF) and Barnsley Primary Care Forum (PCM). It has been agreed that a meeting will be scheduled, with all interested parties, to discuss the findings in further detail. The aim of this meeting is to facilitate the development of an action plan to address the opportunities for improvement section set out within this report (as appropriate).

HW Barnsley will monitor the outcome of this study and publish progress updates (as required).

Risks and Issues

1. The survey was completed at a time when the NHS was under increased pressure (e.g., at the start of winter and during the midst of the emergence of the Covid Omicron variant). This has the potential to impact the way in which patients responded.
2. The ideal sample size, based on the borough of Barnsley's population of 246,886 (2011 Census), a +/- 95% confidence level and +/-5% margin of error, is 384 responses (using Qualtrics Sample Size Calculator). Whilst there is a shortfall of 39 (10%) responses, the observations provided by the participating patients reflect the sentiment of their experience. Patients have consistently highlighted the same and / or similar problems irrespective of their neighbourhood network.
3. The survey has limitations as the sample size is small and the questionnaire did not gather the data in the same format (e.g., multiple choice questions) to facilitate a direct comparison to the 2021 GP Practice Survey. Therefore, the findings from this report should be used, in conjunction with other data and local knowledge, to review trends and patterns to facilitate discussion and decision making on future initiatives. See Way Forward and Appendix 10 for further details.
4. Where percentages, and other numerical results, have been calculated, variation may be seen due to rounding (e.g., the sum of percentages does not equal 100%). Likewise, there's an inherent risk that there may be spelling and / or grammatical errors in the quotations provided by patients.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Adaline Opare-Anim and Emily Wilcock (Sheffield University, Medical School) for putting the survey together and a big thank you to the residents of Barnsley who took part in the survey.

HW would also like to express our sincere appreciation to Carol Hanson (Healthwatch volunteer) for her time and expertise in analysing the data from the survey and producing this report.

Appendix 1 - Barnsley Primary Care Network

Over a number of years, GP practices in Barnsley have come together, firstly to create Barnsley Healthcare Federation (BHF) and then to form Barnsley Primary Care Network (PCN).

Barnsley PCN is made up of 32 independently managed GP practices. Barnsley Healthcare Federation (BHF) directly operates and manages 4 of these practices (Brierley, Goldthorpe, Highgate and Lundwood).

The PCN enables individual member practices to compete more effectively when tendering for services, whilst also providing clinical governance, designed to ensure that levels of patient care are consistent across all member practices.

Members of the PCN share a common purpose and goal, enabling publicly-funded services to develop new services, improve efficiency, whilst also providing greater levels of accountability.

The member practices are:

GP Practices	GP Practices
Ashville Medical Practice	Kingswell Surgery
BHF - Brierley Medical Central	Lakeside Surgery
BHF - Goldthorpe Medical Centre	Lundwood Medical Centre
BHF - Highgate Surgery (Grimethorpe & Shafton)	Monk Bretton Health Centre
BHF - Lundwood Practice	Penistone Group Practice
Burleigh Medical Centre (formerly Park Grove)	Royston Group Practice
Darton Health Centre	Royston - High Street Practice
Dearne Valley Group Practice	St Georges Medical Practice
Dodworth Medical Practice (Apollo Court)	The Dove Valley Practice
Dr Mellor & Partners (Garland House)	The Grove Medical Centre
Grimethorpe Surgery	The Kakoty Practice
Hill Brow Surgery	The Rose Tree Practice (White Rose)
Hollygreen Practice	Victoria Medical Centre
Hoyland First Practice (Walderslade)	Wombwell GMS Practice (Chapelfield)
Hoyland Medical Practice	Wombwell Medical Centre
Huddersfield Road Surgery	Woodland Drive Medical Centre

The 32 practices belong to one of six neighbourhood networks - Penistone, Central, North, North East, Dearne and South.

Appendix 2 - Survey Respondents

Demographics

Of the 345 patients that responded to the survey:

- 265 (76%) identified as female, 69 (21%) as male and 11 (3%) did not wish to disclose.
- 324 (94%) were White British, 17 (5%) preferred not to disclose their ethnicity and the remaining 4 (1%) were Black, Indian and Mixed Race.
- 17 (3%) were children, 38 (11%) were age 18 - 30, 103 (30%) were 31 - 45 years old, 106 (31%) were between 46 - 59 years old and the remaining 89 (26%) were 60 years old and above.

Locations

The table below shows the geographic location which the respondent described as their location. This does not mean that this is the location of the resident's GP practice but shows a good geographical spread of respondents:

Ardsley	3	Dearne	1	Kexborough	1	Shafton	3
Athersley	11	Dodworth	11	Kingstone	3	Silkstone	3
Barnsley Central	35	Elsecar	4	Lundwood	4	Smithies	5
Barugh Green	5	Gawber	5	Mapplewell	14	Staincross	9
Billingley	2	Great Houghton	2	Middlecliffe	1	Stairfoot	2
Birdwell	7	Grimethorpe	2	Monk Bretton	15	Tankersley	2
Bolton on Dearne	6	Hemingfield	2	New Lodge	2	Thurlstone	1
Brampton	2	High Green	1	Oakwell	2	Thurnscoe	17
Brierley	2	Higham	2	Old Town	9	Ward Green	3
Carlton	3	Honeywell	5	Penistone	10	West Bretton	1
Cudworth	10	Hoyland	9	Pilley	1	Wilthorpe	9
Cundy Cross	3	Hoylandswaine	2	Pogmoor	5	Wombwell	22
Darfield	13	Jump	1	Redbrook	8	Worsbrough	13
Darton	14	Kendray	5	Royston	11	Wortley	1

Appendix 3 - Penistone Network

This network consists of six practices. 106 patients from this network responded to the survey.

Initial Contact

Of the 106 patients, 100 (94%) booked their appointment by telephone, 4 (4%) via an online appointment booking system and 2 (2%) visited the practice (after unsuccessful attempts to make contact by telephone).

Of the 100 patients making contact by telephone, 51 (51%) highlighted that it was difficult making contact with the GP Practice (e.g., no answer, line engaged, call terminated and had to dial again).

Contact	Patients	Average	Min	Max
Calls Made (number)	23	114	21	277
Call Wait Time (minutes)	19	39	15	80
Contact Period (days)	7	5	2	21

Patient feedback indicates that it takes 114 attempts (on average), over 5 days (average), to make contact with the GP practice to then be held in a queue for 39 minutes (on average) before speaking to a receptionist / administrator.

Appointment Booking

Of the 106 patients, 86 (81%) were able to book an appointment on initial contact with the practice. 20 (19%) were unable to book an appointment on initial contact as:

- 13 (65%) patients were unable to get through to the practice despite redialling on numerous occasions.
- 6 (30%) patients were informed that all appointments available for that day had been allocated and they needed to call back at 8am the next morning to try again.
- 1 (5%) patient received a recorded message advising to go for treatment elsewhere.

Over a period of 3 - 5 days, 9 (45%) of the 20 patients, were able to book an appointment resulting in the number of patients receiving treatment increasing to 95 (90%) of which 2 (2%) were treated by i-Heart.

Of the 93 patients that received treatment from their practice:

- 71 (76%) appointments were telephone consultations and 22 (24%) were face-to-face.
- Of the 71 patients that had telephone consultations, 14 (20%) were subsequently offered a face-to-face appointment.
- 74 (80%) appointments were conducted by a GP and the remaining 19 (20%) with a Nurse or other Healthcare professional.

Appointment Waiting Time

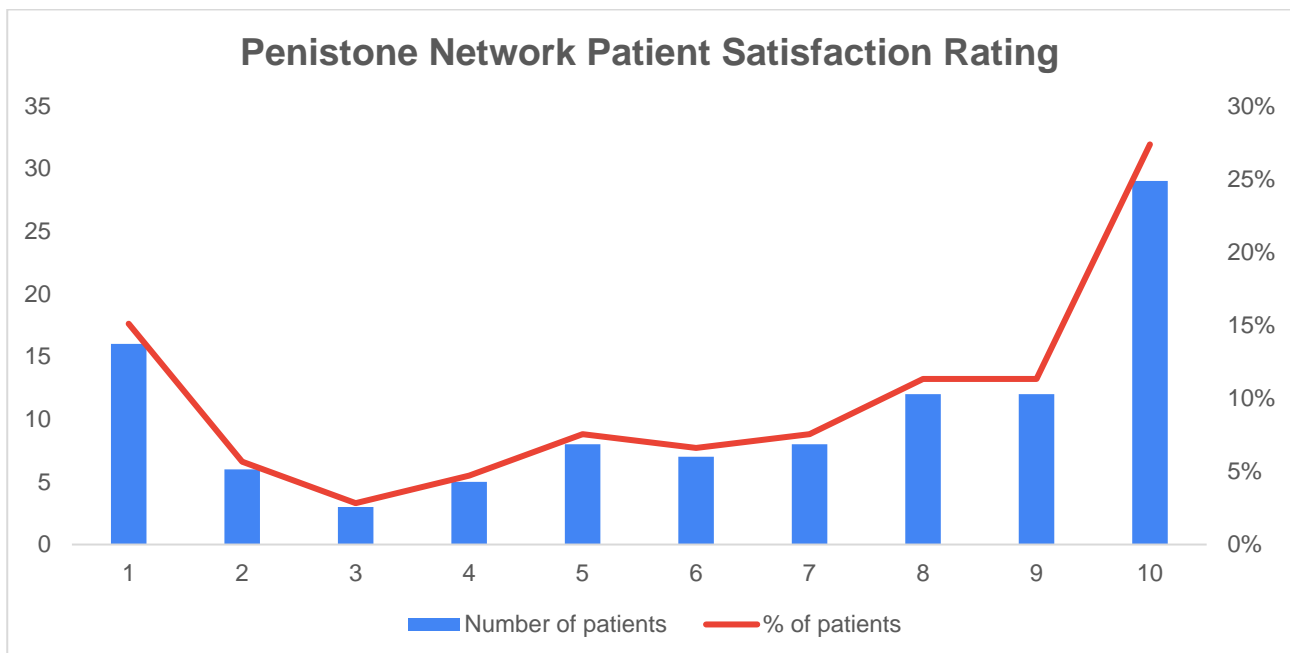
Of the 106 patients, 94 (89%) commented that it takes too long from booking an appointment to receiving treatment. The remaining 12 (11%) did not express any concerns.

Based on the experience of 23 (22%) patients:

- 19 (83%) had waited 16 days (on average) for their appointment.
- 3 (13%) had their appointment on the same day that they contacted the practice.
- 1 (4%) had waited 120 days for their appointment.

Patient Satisfaction

Patients rated their practice on a scale of 1 - 10 (1= worst, 10 = best) based on the satisfaction of their overall experience.



Patients were asked about the outcome of their appointment and how they had been treated by their GP practice:

- 39 (37%) patients were dissatisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they were unable to express themselves or were not given enough time for their appointment and hence did not get the outcome they felt they needed.
- 8 (21%) of these patients indicated that they were unhappy with the way that the practice staff (primarily Receptionists) had conducted themselves and perceived them to be rude and unhelpful.
- 36 (34%) had mixed feelings about the outcome of their appointment and / or overall experience highlighting that whilst they were happy with the outcome of their treatment, they perceived that they had not been listened to and / or treated with respect. Likewise, there were some who were unhappy with the outcome of their treatment who commented that they had been listened to and treated with respect.
- 31 (29%) patients were satisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they had been listened to, treated with respect and were satisfied with the treatment or referral.

Patients in this network highlighted the following opportunities for improvement:

- That it should be possible to book appointments in advance.
- That there should be an alternative approach for routine appointments, prescriptions and test results (e.g., dedicated telephone lines, e-mail the practice).
- That it should be the patient that chooses the method of contact with the practice (telephone, online, visit or email), type of appointment (telephone or face-to-face), time of the appointment and the healthcare professional that they would like to see.
- Delays (see Initial Contact and Appointment Waiting Time sections for further details).

An extract of the comments provided by patients regarding their experience:

Apollo Court

“Seen by very professional Advanced Nurse Practitioner. Very knowledgeable, friendly and helpful and listened to everything that was said. Bloods taken easily-BP checked and medication reviewed and altered. Very satisfactory.”

“Almost impossible to get an answer to the telephone in less than half an hour. Told to phone for same day appointments after 8 am. Phone not answered until late morning, then told no appointments available! This week phoned 3 times in the morning, waited 7 minutes, 10 minutes and 6 minutes. Phone not answered at all until 12:15.”

Huddersfield Road

“Starting at 08:00, it took 175 redials before being told at 08:50 that all appointments had gone. It took 5 days of redialling to be given a phone appointment for several days later.”

“The doctors are really good and listen to what you need but getting the appointment is really difficult.”

“Took a long time to get through for the appointment, but then spoke to the doctor on the phone, had a face-to-face appointment within half hour and a follow-up call too. May have taken a long time to get through but fantastic service when I had”.

“It was a very personal matter related to menopause, which I would have liked an in-person appointment for. Could not get the treatment I wanted (which is available elsewhere!) and felt dismissed, as if it was not a real problem.”

“I spoke to the doctor over the phone originally and explained my symptoms. The doctor was very quick to diagnose me and then offered me the chance to come in for an in-person appointment which I was very happy about as I preferred to have a face-to-face appointment so I could explain exactly what my symptoms were. The doctor was very good and put my mind at rest.”

“Tried to book an appointment by phone for my flu jab, the answerphone message not to ring to book Covid jabs or boosters but no mention of not ringing to book a flu jab, unable to get through, either engaged or no answer. I had received a text from NHS to book the flu jab.”

“Appointment over the phone, waited over 50 minutes to get through. Follow-up appointment (which doctor requested) was tried to be made at the surgery in person, but was refused and put down as a follow-up task. This task was never completed by reception. I had to ring 3 times to arrange this appointment myself and was waiting up to 40 minutes on each call.”

Huddersfield Road

“I phoned 21 times in one day, all but one time the phone was engaged. The one time the phone was answered it was a recorded message telling me they would contact me about Covid and to put the phone down NOW so people who are really ill can get through! As I needed to make an appointment with the nurse at the surgery's request, I held on for 10 minutes but no one answered the phone. I then visited the surgery to book the appointment face-to-face.”

“You can only book an appointment for on the day and sometimes you are redirected to other services like 111 for advice.”

Kingswell Surgery

“Use NHS online system to book. Can ring, but fewer appointments available. Waiting usually a couple of days or so, but sometimes a week or more.”

“I had upper back pain, the doctor felt it could be a blood clot and referred me to another surgery, as the doctor was not doing face-to-face. The other surgery refused to see me and referred me to casualty where I waited 14 hours to see a doctor to find out the original doctor had misdiagnosed a blood clot on the lungs for what was actually a muscle sprain. This caused me much stress and upset which could have been avoided.”

Penistone Group Practice

“Made appointments via the phone when needed. I've had a same day appointment or a conversation with the on-duty doctor. The service with Penistone Group Practice has always been responsive, compassionate, thorough and proactive”

“Much easier on the app. Wait too long on phone and rude reception staff.”

“As a professional I know not to try to ring any of the GP practices in Barnsley until after 3 pm and near the end of the week - when I have needed an emergency appointment for my child this strategy has paid off getting a telephone appointment for the next week. Twice I have tried to ring for my 88 years old Mum and been unable to even get beyond the engaged tone - e.g., not even in the queue - my Mum who is hard of hearing finds the pre-recorded messages very hard to contend with but had tried before I took over - the system finally beat the pair of us after five full days trying. She did actually manage to speak to the receptionist twice only to be told she had to try again the next day as all slots were taken. This has led to my Mum to decide to simply not to book a diabetes review which she had been written to and asked to book!!!! Says receptionist was unhelpful”.

Victoria Medical Centre

“Telephoned on auto ring back, took 150+ calls to get an appointment for a doctor to call me back for phone appointment. Needed to call back with some information requested, ended up having to drive to the surgery the next day.”

“I felt it was quite difficult to get my point across and the GP could not read my facial expressions and she had no idea I was actually crying during the appointment.”

“Took approximately 30 attempts before my call went in to a queue. Recorded message suggested that I use ring back. When ring back option was chosen, another recorded message stated “this service is not available”. I wanted a face-to-face appointment but this request was refused and I had no choice but to accept a telephone consultation. After the telephone consultation I was asked to go to the practice reception at a given time. When I attended, I was then asked to return home and await a further telephone call to arrange an appointment.”

Victoria Medical Centre

“It took half an hour of constant phoning to speak to a receptionist and send her an email showing the problem. I then had a phone call from the receptionist to say I needed to make a telephone appointment but she couldn’t do it then, I had to phone back at a specified time. It then took another half hour of constantly phoning to get through again and make a telephone appointment for two days later. Following the telephone appointment, I then had a face-to-face appointment the following day.”

“Used the phone, had to try over 100 times to get through, then to be told there was no appointments and to try call back later if any more released. Tried again later, again took over 100 calls to be told was no appointments and to try i-Heart and there was nothing else they could do.”

“I had the phone call appointment in the morning of 6 August and saw the Doctor in the afternoon. He said that he would refer me to a clinic which has an 8-weeks waiting time. The clinic contacted me to say that I have an appointment for a phone call on 18 Jan 2022. I have not been diagnosed nor had any treatment and it will be 6 months by the time I have that phone call.”

“I felt able to manage waiting 9 days but I think that’s a long time if my condition was more acute.”

Woodland Drive Medical Centre

“I know my body better than anyone I rarely request to see a GP and when I do I want to sit face-to-face where he/she can also see the colour of my eyes (sclera), state of my skin (flushed, clammy etc) these cannot be assessed over the phone or with a photo.”

“Called to get a GP appointment for my 4 years old daughter who had an ear infection. I was told there were no appointments available but she could get an appointment in 3 weeks, following the date I called. Obviously, I can’t leave my child with an ear infection for 3 weeks. Called several days, struggled to get through and when I did no same day appointments were available. Told to contact i-Heart. Tried 2 days in a row and took over 200 calls to get through to be told they also had no appointments and to go to A&E. I attended A&E but it was very busy and most of the parents I spoke to there had been told to go due to no available GP appointments”.

“I find it very difficult to get an appointment. I appreciate the surgery is very busy but sometimes I make over 70 calls to get through in between working. Sometimes I have just given up and left a problem to get worse. I’ve emailed a private consultant’s recommendation to the surgery but not heard back. I often have to go in person to get an appointment which is difficult as I work long hours and have caring responsibilities. Once I do go in, I can normally make an appointment but it sometimes is a phone one several weeks later and then on the phone they tell me I need to come in. It feels a bit like a battle really”.

“Appointment made over the phone. I was waiting over 2 weeks for the appointment to see a nurse for a prescription renewal who then had to get the prescription signed off by the GP.”

Appendix 4 - Central Network

This network consists of five practices. 58 patients from this network responded to the survey.

Initial Contact

Of the 58 patients, 52 (90%) booked their appointment by telephone, 5 (9%) via an online appointment booking system and 1 (1%) visited the practice (after unsuccessful attempts to make contact by telephone).

Of the 52 patients making contact by telephone, 16 (31%) highlighted that it was difficult making contact with the GP Practice (e.g., no answer, line engaged).

Contact	Patients	Average	Min	Max
Calls Made (number)	6	157	10	600
Call Wait Time (minutes)	3	32	25	40
Contact Period (days)	3	19	2	42

Patient feedback indicates that it takes 157 attempts (on average), over 19 days (average), to make contact with the GP practice to then be held in a queue for 32 minutes (on average) before speaking to a receptionist / administrator.

Appointment Booking

Of the 58 patients, 40 (69%) were able to book an appointment on initial contact with the practice. 18 (31%) were unable to book an appointment on initial contact as:

- 8 (44%) patients were informed that all appointments available for that day had been allocated and they needed to call back at 8am the next morning to try again.
- 7 (39%) patients were unable to get through to the practice despite redialling on numerous occasions.
- 3 (17%) patients did not specify the reason.

14 (78%) of the 18 patients, were able to book an appointment resulting in the number of patients receiving treatment increasing to 54 (93%) of which 2 (4%) patients were treated elsewhere (hospital and i-Heart).

Of the 52 patients that received treatment from their practice:

- 33 (63%) appointments were telephone consultations and 19 (37%) were face-to-face.
- Of the 33 patients that had telephone consultations, 4 (12%) were subsequently offered a face-to-face appointment.
- 33 (63%) appointments were conducted by a GP and the remaining 19 (37%) with a Nurse or other Healthcare professional.

Appointment Waiting Time

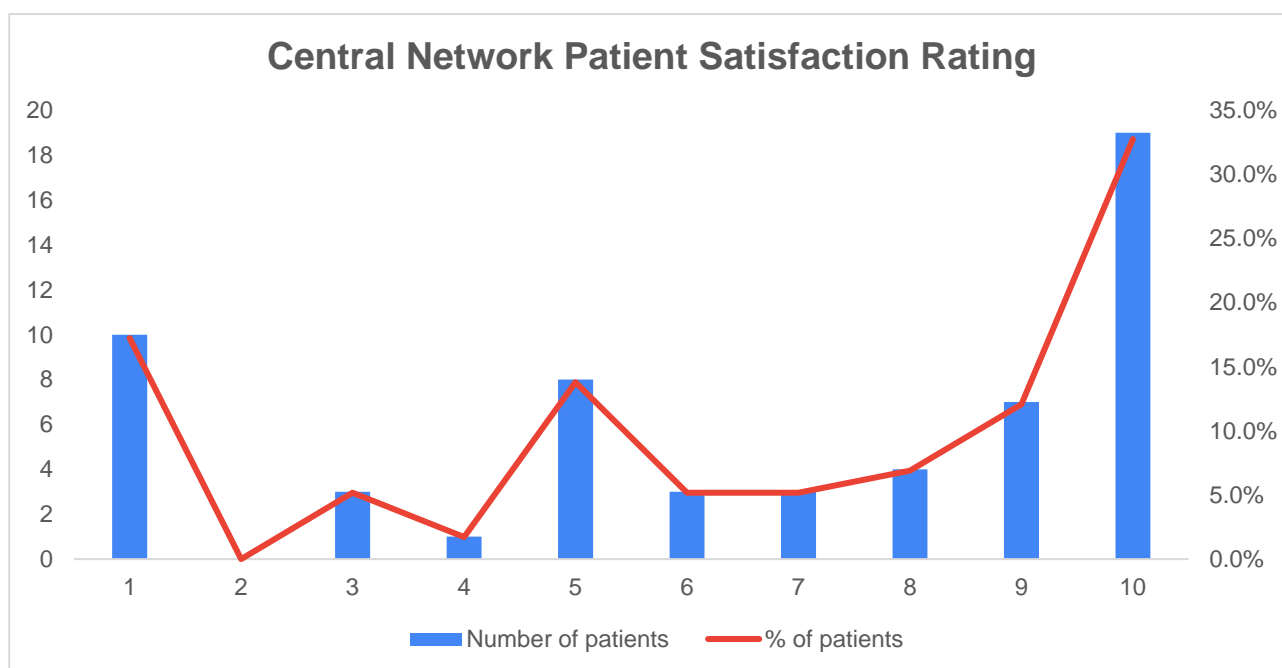
Of the 58 patients, 19 (33%) commented that it takes too long from booking an appointment to receiving treatment. A further 19 (33%) said that they had a short wait time and the remaining 20 (34%) patients provided no comment.

Based on the experience of 34 (59%) patients:

- 20 (59%) waited 2 days (on average) for their appointment.
- 13 (38%) had their appointment on the same day that they contacted the practice.
- 1 (3%) had waited 14 days for their appointment.

Patient Satisfaction

Patients rated their practice on a scale of 1 - 10 (1= worst, 10 = best) based on the satisfaction of their overall experience.



Patients were asked about the outcome of their appointment and how they had been treated by their GP practice:

- 30 (51%) patients were satisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they had been listened to, treated with respect and were satisfied with the treatment or referral.
- 10 (17%) patients were dissatisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they were unable to express themselves or given enough time for their appointment and hence did not get the outcome they felt they needed.
 - Of the 10 patients, 3 commented that they were unhappy with the way that the practice staff had conducted themselves and perceived them to be rude and unhelpful.
- 9 (16%) had mixed feelings about the outcome of their appointment and / or overall experience highlighting that whilst they were happy with the outcome of their treatment, they perceived that they had not been listened to and / or treated with respect. Likewise, there were some who were unhappy with the outcome of their treatment who commented that they had been listened to and treated with respect.
- 9 (16%) patients did not comment on their experience.

Patients in this network highlighted the following opportunities for improvement:

- That it should be possible to book appointments in advance.
- That there should be an alternative approach for routine appointments, test results and prescriptions (e.g., dedicated telephone lines, email the practice).
- That it should be the patient that chooses the method of contact with the practice (telephone, online, visit or email), type of appointment (telephone or face-to-face), time of the appointment and the healthcare professional that they would like to see.
- It should be possible for the GP to book a follow-up appointment immediately after a consultation / treatment rather than patients having to go back to a receptionist to do so.
- Delays (see Initial Contact and Appointment Waiting Time sections for further details).

An extract of the comments provided by patients regarding their experience:

Ashville Medical Practice

“Rang reception, logged a call for GP to ring me back, they did so within an hour, went to visit the surgery the same day for an appointment.”

“Rang the surgery from 8 am every 5 minutes for 45 minutes just to speak to a receptionist. A shortage of 2 GPs because 2 had trouble getting in because of the snow. Told to ring again at 2pm. Took another 45 mins to get through to receptionist. I was told there were no appointments available. I had to insist that I needed to speak to a GP today as my asthma was getting worse and I needed a steroid prescription. GP finally rang me at 3.45pm.”

“They are always running on time or within 5 minutes after. All the staff are friendly and listen to your issues and deal with appropriately. I cannot praise this surgery enough.”

“Start calling at 8am. Engaged so keep redialling. Get to long message re covid. Now in a queue but no idea how many. Get through to reception 8.30. No appointments left either in person or phone, please try again 2pm. Try again 2pm, get through 2:15 no appointments left. Please call i-Heart at 4pm. Call i-Heart 4pm, engaged, redial. Connects but in a queue, tells you how many. Get through 4:30 arrange call back from doctor. I went through this process 3 times over the last 6 weeks. Never seen a doctor in person but had call backs.”

“My issue was not an emergency, but 3 x half hour phone sessions just to book a call back is not acceptable. Not just once but 3 times over 6 weeks. Also missed a call back when I was in shower and again when driving. The doctor left a note on my record and the receptionist read it out. I didn't even get to speak to the doctor. It seems call backs are scheduled for next half day, first come first served. I would prefer to book in a call back a few days in advance with a rough time slot. Technology would help here, a proper queueing system or better an online system to book a slot.”

Burleigh Medical Practice

“My GP doesn't prioritise infants and those who actually need appointments. Tried for 6 weeks to get my 2 years old an appointment, called every morning and by the time they finally answered they had given the appointments out. I thought it was disgusting that they tried to fob me off by saying all children get a viral cough. I have enough medical staff in my family to know that's not true.”

“Appointments are always gone despite me calling at 8:30am daily when appointment lines first open. Resorted to Doctor Link to book an appointment, entered symptoms and was informed that I would hear from my GP for an appointment within 7 days. That was in May and to date (Now December) I've heard nothing. I required a blood test in August 2020 before I could undergo a MRI and surgery. The GP surgery declined an appointment for bloods before reluctantly agreeing 3 weeks later.”

“It would be good to be able to book online post covid, since this system used to be in place”.

“It is very frustrating trying to get through along with everyone else first thing in the morning. An older person with less experience with technology would not manage. Booking in advance for things that aren't a priority should be available, as well as a few emergency appointments every day for things that are more urgent. Often urgent cases cannot get through to book an appointment and therefore don't get seen.”

The Dove Valley Practices

“I don't understand why I need to be triaged before I can make a doctor's appointment.”

“Positive outcome and reassured that if I needed an appointment at a later date if condition changed to phone and request one.”

“It would be easier to be able to book some appointments online for that day instead of having to phone up. Some issues can't be discussed over the phone and need a physical meeting with a doctor. The doctor should be able to make an appointment, after the telephone call, for you rather than having to then go back to reception and try to make an appointment.”

“Couldn't see what was wrong with my problem physically only using pictures and was given wrong treatment.”

“Telephone always engaged, online Patient link only offering odd telephone appointments 2/3 weeks later.”

The Grove Medical Practice

“I rang 111 for advice who told me to get an appointment with my GP. Rang GP the day after 18 times without success so gave up.”

“I had to have a medical examination, and the nurse wasn't sure what she was looking for, so I then had to wait until the doctor was free so he could examine me. I had to come back 2 more times because I was mis-diagnosed. Eventually a hospital appointment was made, with 6 weeks wait.”

“All I've got is telephone calls at 1 and 2 hours. How do you talk about your feet for 1 hour? I am house bound and cannot get my covid booster. The doctor doesn't know who, where or when I will get it and doesn't care neither and much more it's awful.”

The Kakoty Practice

“Try to get past the receptionist (she should be in goal for Barnsley) if she thinks you need help, she will make you an appointment with the nurse (phone appointment) then if the nurse thinks you need a doctor a phone appointment is arranged. If the doctor deems you ill enough to see him, a face-to-face appointment is arranged or he will tell you to go to A&E. It's a farce, Benny Hill couldn't have dreamt it up.”

“My GP surgery have gone back to being able to make appointments on their online system. I was pleasantly surprised that I could book for the next day.”

“Some patients need to see a doctor. I understand that there are time wasters (they know who they are). Had I just walked in to A&E I would have had to sit and wait in line for help or collapse. I needed to be able to tell the A&E staff that I had been sent by my GP and he had informed them that I was coming. The methods they use now (as opposed to how it was) is seriously flawed, someone will die because of the time it takes to get to see a doctor”.

“Relatively easy - appointment made over the phone - waited a little while due to automated phone system but quick and easy after directed to the correct department.”

“The staff was friendly and attentive.”

Appendix 5 - North Network

This network consists of five practices. 67 patients from this network responded to the survey.

Initial Contact

Of the 67 patients, 58 (87%) booked their appointment by telephone, 2 (3%) via an online appointment booking system and 7 (10%) visited the practice (after unsuccessful attempts to make contact by telephone).

Of the 58 patients making contact by telephone, 52 (90%) highlighted that it was difficult making contact with the GP Practice (e.g., no answer, line engaged, call terminated and had to dial again).

Contact	Patients	Average	Min	Max
Calls Made (number)	22	119	3	300
Call Wait Time (minutes)	11	35	1	120
Contact Period (days)	12	21	3	180

Patient feedback indicates that it takes 119 attempts (on average), over 21 days (average), to make contact with the GP practice to then be held in a queue for 32 minutes (on average) before speaking to a receptionist / administrator.

Appointment Booking

Of the 67 patients, 26 (39%) were able to book an appointment on initial contact with the practice.

Of the 67 patients, 41 (61%) were unable to book an appointment on initial contact as:

- 26 (64%) patients were informed that all appointments available for that day had been allocated and they needed to call back at 8am the next morning to try again.
- 10 (24%) patients were unable to get through to the practice despite redialling on numerous occasions.
- 5 (12%) patients did not specify the reason.

30 (73%) of the 41 patients, were able to book an appointment resulting in the number of patients receiving treatment increasing to 56 (84%) of which 2 (4%) patients were treated elsewhere (Pharmacy and i-Heart).

Of the 54 patients that received treatment from their practice:

- 40 (74%) appointments were telephone consultations and 14 (26%) were face-to-face.
- Of the 40 patients that had telephone consultations, 2 (5%) were subsequently offered a face-to-face appointment.
- 40 (74%) appointments were conducted by a GP, 13 (24%) with a Nurse or other Healthcare professional and 1 (2%) patient was supported by a receptionist.

Appointment Waiting Time

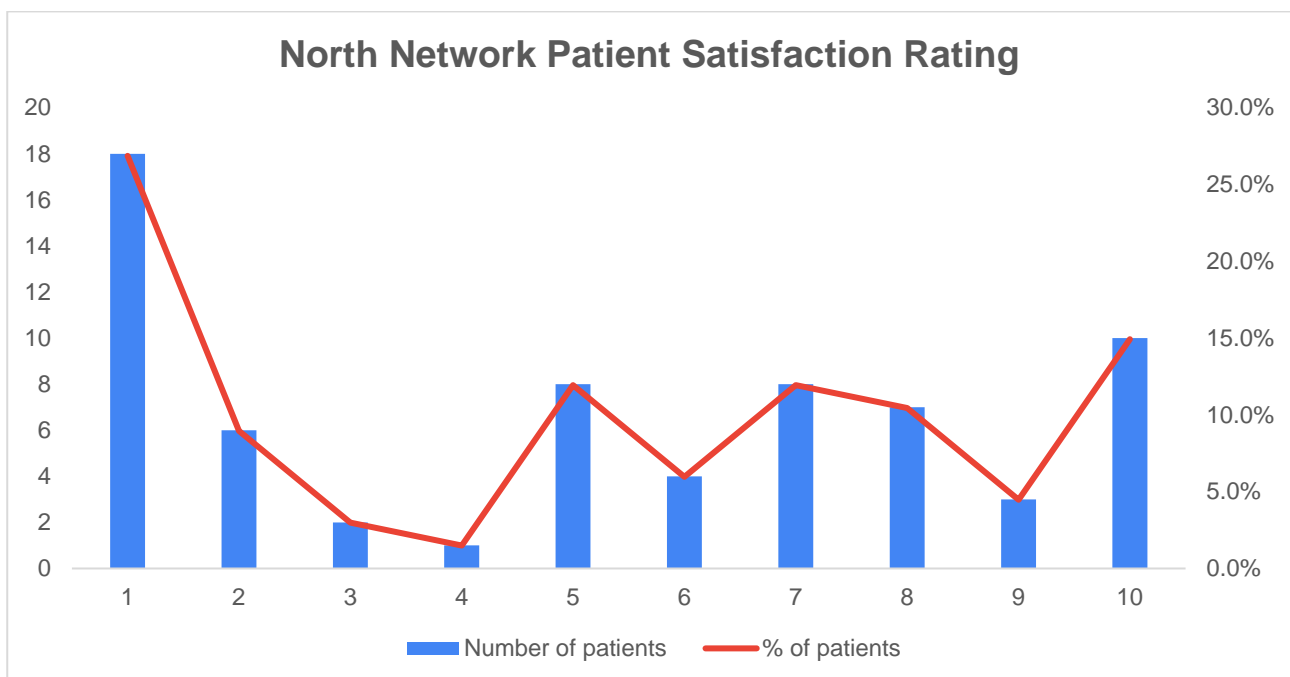
Of the 67 patients, 25 (37%) commented that it takes too long from booking an appointment to receiving treatment. A further 9 (13%) said they had a short wait time and the remaining 33 (50%) patients provided no comment.

Based on the experience of 7 (10%) patients:

- 6 (86%) had their appointment on the same day that they contacted the practice.
- 1 (14%) had waited 7 days for their appointment.

Patient Satisfaction

Patients rated their practice on a scale of 1 - 10 (1= worst, 10 = best) based on the satisfaction of their overall experience.



Patients were asked about the outcome of their appointment and how they had been treated by their GP practice:

- 27 (40%) patients were satisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they had been listened to, treated with respect and were satisfied with the treatment or referral.
- 19 (29%) patients were dissatisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they were unable to express themselves or given enough time for their appointment and hence did not get the outcome they felt they needed.
- 14 (21%) had mixed feelings about the outcome of their appointment and / or overall experience highlighting that whilst they were happy with the outcome of their treatment, they perceived that they had not been listened to and / or treated with respect. Likewise, there were some who were unhappy with the outcome of their treatment who commented that they had been listened to and treated with respect.
- 7 (10%) patients did not comment on their experience.

Patients in this network highlighted the following opportunities for improvement:

- That it should be possible to book appointments in advance.
- That there should be an alternative approach for routine appointments, repeat prescriptions and medication reviews (e.g., dedicated telephone lines, email the practice).
- That it should be the patient that chooses the method of contact with the practice (telephone, online, visit or email), type of appointment (telephone or face-to-face) and the healthcare professional that they would like to see.
- Delays (see Initial Contact and Appointment Waiting Time sections for further details).

An extract of the comments provided by patients regarding their experience:

Darton Health Practice

“Our surgery is small and efficient. The GP does sometimes come across as dismissive but generally is perfunctory and efficient. Overall, I'm happy with his care. The nurses and reception staff are knowledgeable and go out of their way to be helpful.”

High Street Practice

“My husband had just started cancer treatment when COVID struck he has had a mixture of hospital visits for care and complications- sepsis- - he has had visits and telephone consultations it's been a very good service.”

“Took them 147 calls to answer phone then they would only give me a phone appointment no examination and prescribed based on what I told them.”

“I had to use an online app, which asked my symptoms and then told me how long I needed to wait for an appointment then let me book over the phone telephone appointment.”

“Struggled to get through at telephone, lines busy most of the morning. Patients have to ring from 8am in a morning in order to get a telephone or face-to-face appointment with GP. I have never been provided details so I could book online.”

Hill Brow Surgery

“I had to call 167 times from 8am in morning until I got through. I have kept these logs as getting through is ridiculous. You also cannot book a routine appointment meaning you have to call as an emergency even for a medication review.”

“Can only phone between 8-9 am but phone always busy so can't get through and when eventually you do get through no appointments left so have to keep trying next day. 100 + redial phone calls before answered, queueing up to 10th in line. Start work at 8am so unable to stay on phone to do procedure.”

“Was on phone to doctors for 1hr 25 minutes but got told no appointments left. Told to phone NHS 111, 25 minutes to get through to them, gave me a wrong number for referral. Phoned doctors again and because they noticed I had a referral from them they then said they would get a doctor to phone me which they did an hour later.”

“Got a same day appointment as these are the only type they do and by telephone. You have to phone at 8 am or you won't get one. I phoned 86 times to get my last one as everyone is doing the same thing knowing if you don't get through on time you won't get one and have to go through the same trouble the day after. I asked for an estimated call back time they won't give you one. I am working so not always able to just pick the phone up when the doctor phones.”

“Telephone appointment with a GP, arranged over the telephone. The appointment was same day (this was not an urgent problem) as no pre-scheduled appointments could be made. I was not given an appointment time and was asked to make myself available from 10:00 to 18:00. I had telephoned on approximately five other days prior to this day, on four of those I could not get through to the GP surgery despite multiple attempts (20+), and on the other day all call back appointments had been taken. I was invited to call another day or use the i-Heart Barnsley service (I called back another day as the issue was non urgent).”

“No substitute for a doctor being able to view what your problem is and diagnose the necessary treatment. Too much time wasted repeating things on the phone to different people. Not surprising that people get frustrated and go to A&E.”

Hill Brow Surgery

“A long wait time to get through to the surgery by phone, dialling on repeat & 'user busy' each time. By the time you manage to get through, there are often no telephone appointments left for that day, and you cannot book for the following day, and have to go through the whole process again. However, once you get through, and get a phone appointment, the service is exceptional and the doctors are brilliant.”

“Ailments cannot be seen/diagnosed over a zoom call! You can't listen to someone's chest, look in their throat or ears to diagnose so everything gets passed off as viral.”

“Any other time I would have been asked to provide a urine sample to confirm the diagnosis and may have had to go for a blood test given the symptoms (kidney infection) and the medication I'm on (blood pressure tablets). I was happy that the appointment was the same day and I was prescribed antibiotics but at the same time, concerned that I'd more or less diagnosed myself.”

“A medication error was made on my prescription by the GP leaving my epileptic child without medication. Had to phone 111 as no one was available to rectify the mistake.”

Royston Group Practice

“They will only do a telephone appointment where they ring back but partner explained that where he worked, he wouldn't hear the phone ring due to the noise. They suggested having time off work which is not acceptable. It is a new job after having depression so partner did not want to ask for time off.”

“I have contacted the surgery on 3 occasions for an appointment and refused an appointment due to not having face-to-face appointments. I was unable to speak to a doctor and instead had to tell the receptionist my issues and was issued with a prescription and advised to attend A&E. On the 3rd time, I left my details with the receptionist and advised someone would call me back that afternoon, that was last week and I have not had a call back.”

“After explaining in great detail about how the current situation with my son I was made to feel I was overreacting and the doctor said It is something we just have to deal with. Only when I pushed further did the GP say he would refer my son but I have yet to receive the referral letter 5 months later.”

St Georges Medical Centre

“I needed a pill check with the nurse having not had one for 12mths. I called in person at the surgery to make the appointment as the telephone line is always busy. Was advised by the receptionist that the nurse would review my medical history and decide whether I needed a face-to-face appointment or telephone appointment. I needed a face-to-face appointment. On the day of the appointment, I was sat in the waiting room and received a text saying that I'd failed to attend my appointment. I made a complaint to the receptionist who ended up doing my pill check and relaying the answers to the nurse via instant messenger.”

“I have booked for myself and for my elderly father-in-law. No way of seeing anyone in person really. It takes upwards of 300 calls to get through sometimes, lucky if it's in the 100s. Online booking system very limited on what is on there to book. My father-in-law has a skin complaint and still hasn't been able to see anyone in person, he is unable to send photographs as not good with technology and because of the limited choice of appointments I can't be there when the phone calls are made. They are simply having to guess without a visual aid as to what treatment is best.”

“My mum wanted an in-person appointment for emergency steroid medication for when her asthma became uncontrolled - they wouldn't see her unless a PCR test was done - this process simply takes too long for health conditions that need to be treated quickly before the patient deteriorates.”

Appendix 6 - North East Network

This network consists of seven practices. 24 patients from this network responded to the survey. No responses were received from BHF Highgate (Grimethorpe or Shafton) and Lundwood Medical Centre.

Initial Contact

Of the 24 patients, 22 (92%) booked their appointment by telephone, 1 (4%) via an online appointment booking system and 1 (4%) visited the practice.

Of the 22 patients making contact by telephone, 8 (36%) highlighted that it was difficult making contact with the GP Practice.

Patient feedback indicates that it takes 150 attempts (on average), over 21 days (average), to make contact with the GP practice to then be held in a queue for 30 minutes (on average) before speaking to a receptionist / administrator.

Appointment Booking

Of the 24 patients, 17 (71%) were able to book an appointment on initial contact with the practice.

Of the 24 patients, 7 (29%) were unable to book an appointment on initial contact as:

- 4 (57%) patients were informed that all appointments available for that day had been allocated and they needed to call back at 8am the next morning to try again.
- 3 (43%) patients were unable to get through to the practice despite redialling on numerous occasions.

5 (71%) of the 7 patients, were able to book an appointment resulting in the number of patients receiving treatment increasing to 22 (92%).

Of the 22 patients that received treatment from their practice:

- 14 (64%) appointments were telephone consultations and 8 (36%) were face-to-face.
- Of the 14 patients that had telephone consultations, 3 (21%) were subsequently offered a face-to-face appointment.
- 19 (86%) appointments were conducted by a GP and the remaining 3 (14%) with a Nurse.

Appointment Waiting Time

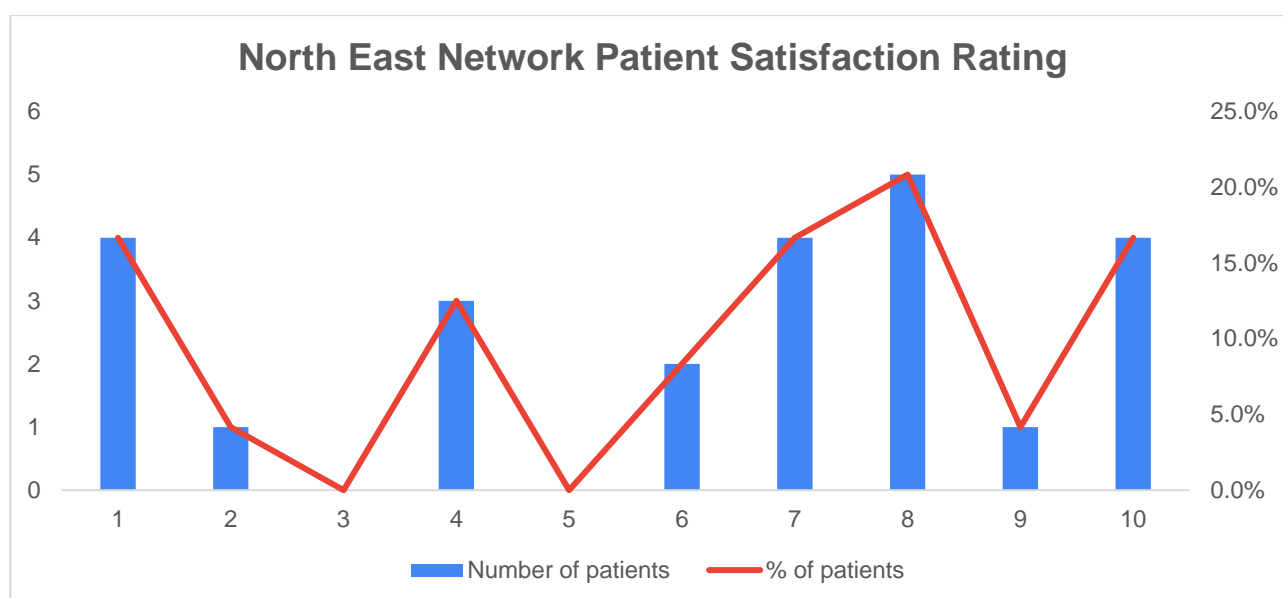
Of the 24 patients, 6 (25%) commented that it takes too long from booking an appointment to receiving treatment. A further 6 (25%) said they had a short wait time and the remaining 12 (50%) patients provided no comment.

Based on the experience of 6 (25%) patients:

- 4 (67%) had their appointment on the same day that they contacted the practice.
- 2 (33%) had waited 14 days for their appointment.

Patient Satisfaction

Patients rated their practice on a scale of 1 - 10 (1= worst 10 = best) based on the satisfaction of their overall experience.



Patients were asked about the outcome of their appointment and how they had been treated by their GP practice:

- 11 (46%) patients were satisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they had been listened to, treated with respect and were satisfied with the treatment or referral.
- 4 (17%) patients were dissatisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they were unable to express themselves or given enough time for their appointment and hence did not get the outcome they felt they needed.
- 2 (8%) had mixed feelings about the outcome of their appointment and / or overall experience highlighting that whilst they were happy with the outcome of their treatment, they perceived that they had not been listened to and / or treated with respect. Likewise, there were some who were unhappy with the outcome of their treatment who commented that they had been listened to and treated with respect.
- 7 (29%) patients did not comment on their experience.

Patients in this network highlighted the following opportunities for improvement:

- That it should be possible to book appointments in advance.
- That it should be the patient that chooses the method of contact with the practice (telephone, online, visit or email), type of appointment (telephone or face-to-face) and the healthcare professional that they would like to see.
- Why there is a need for triage by a receptionist before speaking to a doctor or other healthcare professional.
- Delays (see Initial Contact and Appointment Waiting Time sections for further details).

An extract of the comments provided by patients regarding their experience:

BHF Brierley

“I had to wait 2 weeks for a blood test then another 2 weeks for the results for which I needed medication for the condition detected in the blood test. The wait times are too long and not seeing doctor in person is a problem.”

“Phoned surgery several times only to be told 'no appointments left'. Haven't managed to get an appointment.”

BHF Lundwood

“I had been trying ages to get one, and it was only going to be over the phone as a triage. I had a nurse appointment and spoke to her and she made me a face-to-face appointment for the GP, following which I was referred to Barnsley hospital. I was not able to make a face-to-face appointment myself. Phone appointments cannot be given a specific time and thus they have called when it is not possible to answer and they do not call back.”

“Went to surgery spoke to receptionist had to wait two weeks for a phone appointment. I was informed that if I went on Doctor Link that I would get in early. I got an appointment a few days later to see a doctor in surgery.”

“Required a face-to-face appointment for a breast examination however was given a telephone appointment. Following the telephone appointment, the GP then decided to do a face-to-face appointment which was the following day. The GP did not offer any explanation or reassurance of findings. I had to request to be referred to the breast clinic rather than watch and wait as the GP advised I had a breast lump.”

“No trouble getting the appointment and reception staff lovely and helpful. However, found GP dismissive, felt rushed and that I was wasting his time. Call quality very poor as if doctor had phone on loud speaker. Did not say/ask everything I wanted to.”

“Booking could be more flexible rather than phoning at 8 am only. Pre-bookable appointments for non-urgent advice could be available to book online or via telephone.”

Grimethorpe Surgery

“Took days of ringing and eventually used 111 to get a call back from the GP who in turn made an appointment. People just want to ring and make an appointment not explain to a receptionist/Nurse.”

“Rang for an appointment (average 200 times before any answer) then told a doctor would ring back and do a diagnosis over phone. Wrong way to do things unprofessional.”

“I've stopped going to my doctor. Asked to see the nurse practitioner at our practise as it's much easier to get an appointment with her and my problems were more understood by a woman.”

Monk Bretton Health Centre

“No need to take annual leave from work, my manager was happy for me to take the call during work hours. Doctor was able to diagnose ear infection from symptoms described and answers given. Medication prescribed and available for pick up later the same day.”

White Rose Medical Practice

“I had to phone the receptionist and talk with them initially. I must say some receptionists are more approachable than others. Some seem to dismiss your concerns or appear abrupt on the phone or even when you attend the GP surgery. I was informed after the telephone conversation with reception that a doctor would call me back at a certain time or up to a certain time. When I had a consultation over the phone, the GP informed that she would like to see me in person and arranged an appointment that day. I was not waiting long for an appointment.”

“My initial experience with the GP was positive in terms of the GP calling me back at the time stated, as well as inviting me in for a consultation. The overall initial experience was positive I felt listened to and the GP informed that she would make relevant referrals for a hospital scan and blood tests. This was done quickly. My main concern is the breakdown and lack of communication after attending the Hospital appointment. I am still awaiting the results from my scan at Barnsley Hospital. Despite contacting the GP and requesting my results, no GP has contacted me in regards to these. Also, I put a referral in for Barnsley out of hours Cervical Screening and have still not heard back from this service either.”

“3 hours doctor rang back but I missed the call as I went out of the room. The receptionist was reluctant to put me through to the doctor.”

“What's the use of having doctors if you cannot book an appointment? They were making it so difficult. People end up going to A&E putting them under pressure.”

“Always a great service from my GP surgery, receptionists are always extremely helpful and able to determine if a face-to-face appointment or telephone is required, but equally listens to concerns raised if any and is guided by patient.”

Appendix 7 - Dearne Network

This network consists of five practices. 40 patients from this network responded to the survey. No responses were received from BHF Goldthorpe or Lakeside Practice.

Initial Contact

Of the 40 patients, 29 (73%) booked their appointment by telephone, 9 (23%) visited the practice (3 after unsuccessful attempts to make contact by telephone), 1 (2%) via an online appointment booking system and 1(2%) made contact by letter.

Of the 29 patients making contact by telephone, 15 (52%) highlighted that it was difficult making contact with the GP Practice (e.g., no answer, line engaged, call terminated and had to dial again).

Contact	Patients	Average	Min	Max
Calls Made (number)	5	121	40	300
Call Wait Time (minutes)	6	28	4	55
Contact Period (days)	6	10	3	19

Patient feedback indicates that it takes 121 attempts (on average), over 10 days (average), to make contact with the GP practice to then be held in a queue for 28 minutes (on average) before speaking to a receptionist / administrator.

Appointment Booking

Of the 40 patients, 24 (60%) were able to book an appointment on initial contact with the practice.

Of the 40 patients, 16 (40%) were unable to book an appointment on initial contact as:

- 9 (56%) patients were informed that all appointments available for that day had been allocated and they needed to call back at 8am the next morning to try again.
- 7 (44%) patients were unable to get through to the practice despite redialling on numerous occasions.

7 (44%) of the 16 patients, were able to book an appointment resulting in the number of patients receiving treatment increasing to 31 (78%).

Of the 31 patients that received treatment from their practice:

- 19 (61%) appointments were telephone consultations and 12 (39%) were face-to-face.
- Of the 19 patients that had telephone consultations, 3 (16%) were subsequently offered a face-to-face appointment.
- 21 (68%) appointments were conducted by a GP, 9 (29%) with a Nurse or other Healthcare professional and 1 (3%) patient was supported by a receptionist.

Appointment Waiting Time

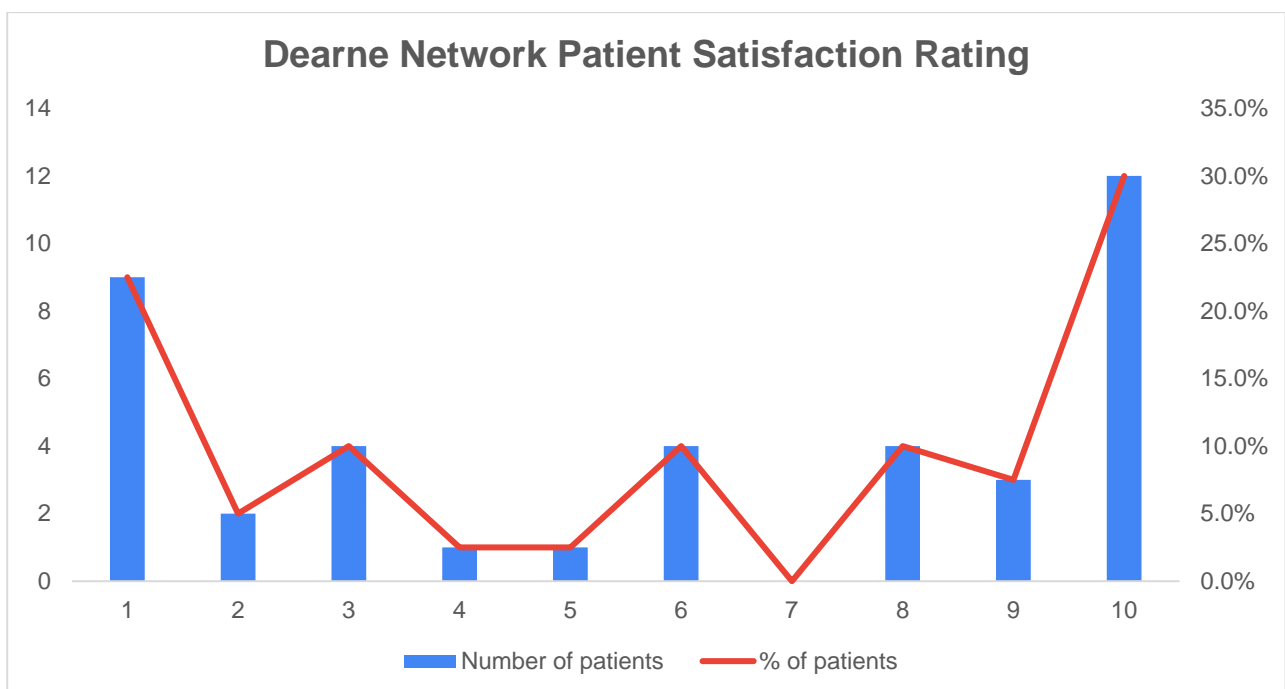
Of the 40 patients, 14 (35%) commented that it takes too long from booking an appointment to receiving treatment. A further 5 (13%) said they had a short wait time and the remaining 21 (52%) patients provided no comment.

Based on the experience of 10 (25%) patients:

- 5 (50%) had waited 14 days for their appointment.
- 2 (20%) had waited 21 days for their appointment.
- 2 (20%) had their appointment on the same day that they contacted the practice.
- 1 (10%) had their appointment the day after contacting the practice.

Patient Satisfaction

Patients rated their practice on a scale of 1 - 10 (1= worst 10 = best) based on the satisfaction of their overall experience.



Patients were asked about the outcome of their appointment and how they had been treated by their GP practice:

- 17 (42%) patients were satisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they had been listened to, treated with respect and were satisfied with the treatment or referral.
- 16 (40%) patients were dissatisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they were unable to express themselves or given enough time for their appointment and hence did not get the outcome they felt they needed.
- 3 (8%) had mixed feelings about the outcome of their appointment and / or overall experience highlighting that whilst they were happy with the outcome of their treatment, they perceived that they had not been listened to and / or treated with respect. Likewise, there were some who were unhappy with the outcome of their treatment who commented that they had been listened to and treated with respect.
- 4 (10%) patients did not comment on their experience.

Patients in this network highlighted the following opportunities for improvement:

- That it should be possible to book appointments in advance.
- That there should be an alternative approach for routine appointments and repeat prescriptions (e.g., dedicated telephone lines, email the practice).
- That it should be the patient that chooses the method of contact with the practice (telephone, online, visit or email), type of appointment (telephone or face-to-face) and the healthcare professional that they would like to see.
- That it should be possible to book appointments daily and not just on Tuesdays.
- Delays (see Initial Contact and Appointment Waiting Time sections for further details).

An extract of the comments provided by patients regarding their experience:

Dearne Valley Group Practice

“Sometimes its quicker to have a telephone appointment and if it’s a minor issue fantastic. If it’s an issue where you need to see a doctor that should be an option too. It’s so hard to get an appointment or even one around working hours.”

“I went to the surgery at 7:45am and waited in the queue for an appointment. I waited almost an hour after my appointment time but once I got to see the Nurse practitioner, she was great and sorted me out with x-rays, a referral and medication.”

“We are advised to ring to get an appointment on the day - start ringing immediately at 8am - the phone will be engaged- dial continuously and if you're lucky you may get through. If you don't get through until after 45 mins all appointment will be gone and you will be told to ring tomorrow. It seems to me that the only way to book in advance is if you have an on-going problem and the doctor will book at your last appointment.”

“This was a straight forward symptom and I felt I knew what I had - the doctor asked detailed information and agreed with my diagnosis - but on this occasion the outbreak had been extensive. I would have felt more reassured if I had been seen in person. However, the treatment worked.

“I would rather wait in a queue on the phone than keep ringing. Also being able to book in advance for convenience. But not such a problem for me as I'm retired. Must be a nightmare for someone who works. Sometimes telephone appointments are fine and I can see they are an efficient way of dealing with the volume of patients. For the same reason seeing a nurse can also be fine.”

“Call as soon as they open, get a "line busy" response and redial. I redialled 108 times before I spoke to someone, it took 55mins. Calling them on the day is very stressful, wasting time and energy.”

“Usually, you have to ring about 200 to 300 times a day to get an appointment and even when you do, they usually say there isn't any appointments left.”

Dr Mellor & Partners

“I wrote a note describing my problem and dropped it off at the surgery so it could be read when less busy. I was rung back within an hour and got an appointment the same day. I always go to the surgery to make appointments and always have no problem. Trying by telephone not good. I am happy to pop to the surgery but worry if I was suddenly seriously ill and if I couldn't go how I would manage however the i-Heart service is brilliant.”

“Phone waiting times are very long, queues outside for appointments if you go to the surgery on a Tuesday, as that is the only day that we can get appointments for some reason.”

“Appalling long wait for the phone to be answered. Poor booking system and administration, only one day a week where slots are released. Hardly any online slots. Should use a triage system and release appointments every day including Saturday.”

“Average telephone wait is 45 minutes and you often get cut off. Then appointment may be two weeks away. It's very hard to get an appointment and have been to A&E instead.”

Dr Mellor & Partners

“More nurses and doctors? More flexibility from them. When I broke my foot in two places and cracked my ankle, the online service suggested I had twisted it, no further action. The telephone service said the same, took over a week and a trip to a walk-in centre that said the same then ended up at A&E to sort it. Now I need a doctor again, it's nigh on impossible but I do not need A&E.”

“Appointments need to be accessible daily with a shorter waiting time, 2 weeks is no good if the problem is now. It is unfair to send people to A&E if it isn't serious.”

“I have tried several times to get an appointment, sadly by telephone it's impossible. I ended up having to go and queue at 12pm on a Tuesday when appointments for 2 weeks later are available! I have had to suffer with my health in between waiting for my appointment. I do feel face-to-face appointments are better and we really do need urgent appointments to see the doctors when your health issues first come to light.”

Hollygreen Practice

“My Aunt wanted to arrange the covid booster jab and flu jab. She still has not had them and she also cannot get her prescriptions on time. A visit to the surgery is required to get an appointment. For goodness sake, she is housebound and in a wheelchair.”

“You can't book an appointment over the phone so you have to queue up at the surgery at 8 00am. It just depends on your complaint. If you actually get to see a doctor, it is generally a phone appointment. When you finally get an appointment it's not that long a wait. How can a doctor give you a diagnosis over the phone? People don't even bother trying to see the doctor as it is too much hassle.”

“Phoned at 08:00 ringing, the line continually went dead. Finally got through at 10.30 and all appointments had gone. People are going down to the surgery and queuing for appointments. These are dealt with first hence none left when they finally answer the phone. I've never had the appointment with my GP, it's an absolute lottery if you can get an appointment. The current system is not fit for purpose. Should not have to continually contact 111 because you cannot see your GP. There's no continuity to prognosis.”

“I could only access my doctor via a telephone appointment after queuing at the surgery early morning. I was diagnosed as needing a hip replacement without being seen or having an X-ray. Still not had a definitive diagnosis. I have trouble explaining my problems and symptoms over the phone and believe face-to-face appointments are vital to mental health.”

“Tried calling at 8am every day for a week, when I finally got through there were no appointments left and the receptionists were rude and unhelpful.”

“Didn't get one offered by the receptionist. I was asked loads of questions she said that she would message the doctor and a prescription would be made out if required. Would have been better to have a talk with the doctor not just the receptionist over the counter.”

Appendix 8 - South Network

This network consists of four practices. 50 patients from this network responded to the survey.

Initial Contact

Of the 50 patients, 41 (82%) booked their appointment by telephone, 6 (12%) via an online appointment booking system, 2 (4%) visited the practice and 1 (2%) made contact by e-mail. 4 of the patients had attempted to make telephone contact before adopting an alternative approach.

Of the 41 patients making contact by telephone, 34 (83 %) highlighted that it was difficult making contact with the GP Practice (e.g., no answer, line engaged).

Contact	Patients	Average	Min	Max
Calls Made (number)	8	117	5	300
Call Wait Time (minutes)	11	45	10	120
Contact Period (days)	9	6	2	21

Patient feedback indicates that it takes 117 attempts (on average), over 6 days (average), to make contact with the GP practice to then be held in a queue for 45 minutes (on average) before speaking to a receptionist / administrator.

Appointment Booking

Of the 50 patients, 33 (66%) were able to book an appointment on initial contact with the practice.

Of the 50 patients, 17 (34%) were unable to book an appointment on initial contact as:

- 13 (76%) patients were informed that all appointments available for that day had been allocated and they needed to call back at 8am the next morning to try again. 5 of these patients made several unsuccessful attempts to make an appointment and went elsewhere for their treatment (e.g., privately, i-Heart, hospital).
- 4 (24%) patients were unable to get through to the practice despite redialling on numerous occasions.

10 (59%) of the 17 patients, were able to book an appointment resulting in the number of patients receiving treatment increasing to 43 (86%).

Of the 43 patients that received treatment from their practice:

- 32 (74%) appointments were telephone consultations and 11 (26%) were face-to-face.
- Of the 32 patients that had telephone consultations, 10 (31%) were subsequently offered a face-to-face appointment.
- 28 (65%) appointments were conducted by a GP and 15 (35%) with a Nurse.

Appointment Waiting Time

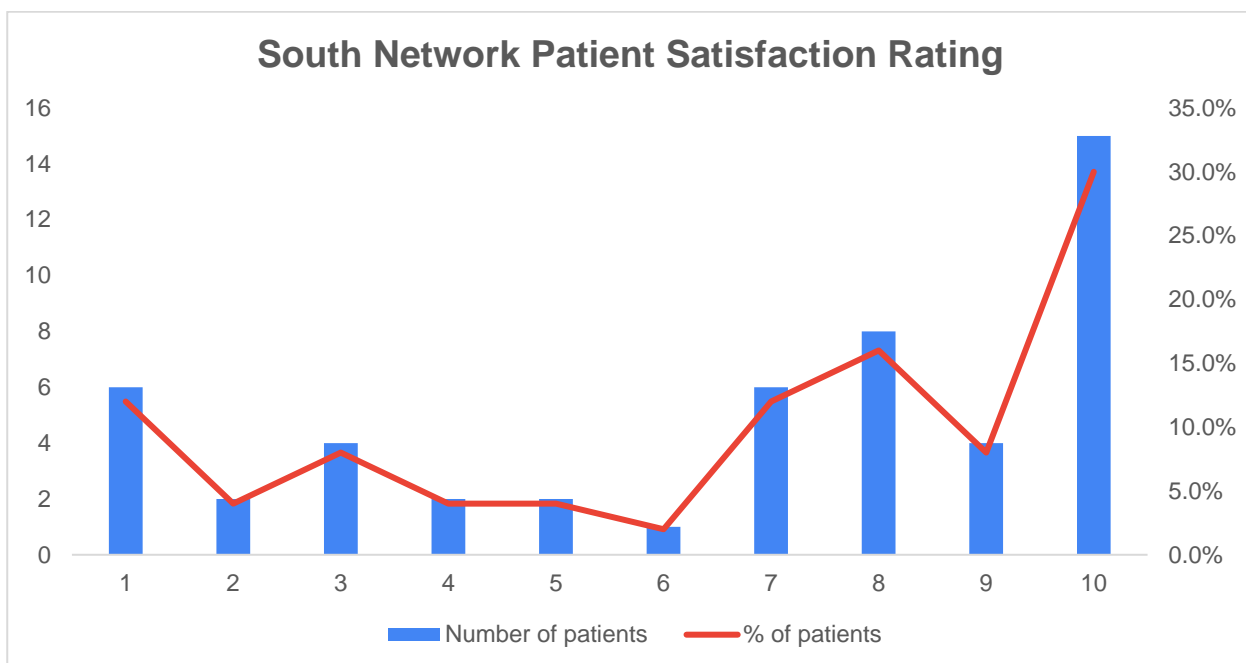
Of the 50 patients, 15 (30%) commented that it takes too long from booking an appointment to receiving treatment. A further 10 (20%) said they had a short wait time and the remaining 25 (50%) patients provided no comment.

Based on the experience of 10 (20%) patients:

- 7 (70%) had their appointment on the same day that they contacted the practice.
- 2 (20%) had waited 14 days for their appointment.
- 1 (10%) had waited 7 days for their appointment.

Patient Satisfaction

Patients rated their practice on a scale of 1 - 10 (1= worst 10 = best) based on the satisfaction of their overall experience.



Patients were asked about the outcome of their appointment and how they had been treated by their GP practice:

- 23 (46%) patients were satisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they had been listened to, treated with respect and were satisfied with the treatment or referral.
- 8 (16%) patients were dissatisfied with the outcome of their appointment. They felt that they were unable to express themselves or given enough time for their appointment and hence did not get the outcome they felt they needed.
- 5 (10%) had mixed feelings about the outcome of their appointment and / or overall experience highlighting that whilst they were happy with the outcome of their treatment, they perceived that they had not been listened to and / or treated with respect. Likewise, there were some who were unhappy with the outcome of their treatment who commented that they had been listened to and treated with respect.
- 14 (28%) patients did not comment on their experience.

Patients in this network highlighted the following opportunities for improvement:

- That it should be possible to book appointments in advance.
- That there should be an alternative approach for routine appointments and repeat prescriptions (e.g., dedicated telephone lines, email the practice).
- That it should be the patient that chooses the method of contact with the practice (telephone, video, online, visit or email), type of appointment (telephone or face-to-face) and the healthcare professional that they would like to see.
- Delays (see Initial Contact and Appointment Waiting Time sections for further details).

An extract of the comments provided by patients regarding their experience:

Chapelfield Medical Centre

“We called yesterday to get an emergency appointment refused. I was in pain all day had a fever couldn't get any help from my doctors. Told to call i-Heart at 4pm over 300 calls later to get through. Sent photos and eventually had a call back at 9pm had to go to Tesco to collect a prescription at 10:15 pm. Couldn't understand why it took around 3 hours to call back.”

“Felt listened to. An ECG was done there and then as part of my appointment. My appointment was set up after normal surgery time as I am vulnerable with blood cancer.”

“My sister has to phone for me, I have Aphasia - I can't understand everything on the phone. It took about half an hour for antibiotics and a phone call by the doctor.”

“I waited quite a while on the phone, but once answered I had a brief call with the receptionist who organised a call back from a doctor. The doctor called me back about 2 hours later and had a phone consultation. A physical examination was necessary, so she told me to attend the surgery within the next half hour - which I did. Although I had to wait on the phone, the rest of the experience was well managed in light of the pandemic. Staff were polite and efficient despite it being a difficult time for them.”

“Trying to get through on the phone and get an actual face-to-face appointment as a result is the hardest part. I had to push for the face-to-face appointment for my daughter (it was needed as she ended up being referred for physio, something they wouldn't have been able to do over the phone).”

“Having to ring almost 300 times at 8:30am just to get put in a queue to speak to someone is a joke. I can't take an hour out of my day as a self-employed person to sit and constantly make a phone call. Had many follow-up calls until they finally agreed to see my son, made me take him out of nursery at a financial loss to me as I had to have time off work to get him a PCR test even though he had no covid symptoms. When I attended the appointment no one even asked about the result of the test so I lost out on £100 wages and wasted £50 paying for a day of nursery that wasn't used for absolutely nothing.”

“Although I had to wait on the phone, the rest of the experience was well managed in light of the pandemic. Staff were polite and efficient despite it being a difficult time for them.”

“The online booking system could be better, there's hardly ever any appointments when I use it. I do like the current system of speaking on the phone first. If it's something that can be sorted verbally it saves time as I don't need to take too much time out of my day to visit in person. Safer too with Covid.”

“Appointment system requires patient to call from 8am for a same day appointment. This call took in excess of 100 calls to get through to the surgery. I suspect had it not been related to my breathing I would have been asked to call back the next day. Some things just can't wait.”

Hoyland Medical Practice

“I feel that it is getting increasingly difficult to see a GP face-to-face. I get frustrated that this contact with the GP has not been opened up unlike other services in the community. I am a community health worker and have been visiting families for a long time now that restrictions are lifted, but that does not seem to be the case with GPs! I feel very angry also that the same practice did not even visit my father-in-law when he was end of life, and that the GP diagnosed him as end of life over the phone! I feel that the personal touch has gone, and understand that there have been restrictions, but if a priest can carry out a home visit at end of life, I can't see why a GP cannot.”

“I can't talk very well on the phone because of my disability.”

“Frustrated as I work full time and ended up taking half a day leave to try to get through to the doctors on the telephone for my dad. If you ring at 8:00 am you cannot get through. The medical assistance was provided by i-Heart not Hoyland Medical Centre. Tried to ring approx 100 times.”

“I phoned for an hour for 2 mornings and was unsuccessful at getting an appointment. I wrote to the practice manager complaining as much about the fact that they had no call waiting system. I got an appointment in 2 weeks from that e-mail. Meanwhile my usual doctor must have been told about my email and arranged to ring me the next day. It was a phone call. Two weeks later I got a phone call from another doctor who they had made an appointment with. She was very supportive and has been since, by texting the blood results that I had recently had done.”

“The telephone appointment did feel quite rushed and the GP wasn't one whom I was familiar with - he was based at another Hoyland Practice. He was 'straight to the point' and didn't seem to have an awful lot of time. I guess it is very difficult to deal with all patients who need an appointment - maybe he had several other appointments after mine. I would much prefer a socially-distanced face-to-face appointment. I find telephone appointments quite distracting. They are less personal and effective with complete reliance on the patient being fully able to describe their symptoms, rather than being viewed by the GP. I think that poor telephone lines and interference can make the whole appointment very difficult. Fortunately, I did manage to obtain the medication that I needed to enable a full recovery but I shall be so glad when we can again see our own GP, in person.”

“There is a place for phone appointments. Video appointments would also be a good option. Some patients prefer face-to-face and this should be discussed. Most of the staff are lovely but some don't listen and when you speak to different doctors / nurses every time you ring you get told different things. I don't think enough investigations are being done and sometimes mental health or other important issues are missed over the phone but could have been picked up face-to-face or even on video. I personally have given up bothering for myself. It would have to be pretty serious for me to even try and by then could be too late. Even if you do need X-rays, scans etc you just go on waiting list so long you will probably be dead before you get seen. I don't blame anyone and think the NHS staff are incredible but other than emergency care, cuts and covid have killed day to day health services.”

“The GP is aware of me and familiar of my home circumstances as a carer. Between us we used the available time very effectively. We co-created an agenda and covered the most important areas.”

“Frustrations at not being able to see a GP and the telephone system where it is constantly ringing out - no queuing system where you know where you are and how long you have to wait.”

Walderslade

“I could not get an appointment for my baby grandson. Even though there was absolutely no-one in the surgery waiting room, I was refused a face-to-face appointment. I was told to send a photo through the GP system, but when the GP rang me back, she could not see it. She then proceeded to ask me what I thought the problem was!! I was extremely worried that a baby would not be seen in person.”

“Easiest way to get an appointment is ringing at 8am otherwise it’s a very long queue on the phone then all appointments have gone and to ring back the next day.!

“Telephone appointment had been booked for 9am-9:10am, but was not contacted until 9:40am by this time I had already had to leave the house. I was offered a face-to-face appointment but due to being not contacted at the booked time I would have not been able to get to the appointment on time. The doctor then said she would have to pass my case on to the on-call doctor. She later rang me back and asked me to send pictures. I did this and I was contacted an hour or so later and prescribed cream and antibiotics as I had initially requested.”

“Usually when calling the doctors surgery, it can take up to 50 minutes for my call to be answered. There is a lengthy option speech to begin with and then you enter a queue and then the phone dial rings until it is picked up. It can prove difficult to hold on for so long.”

“Frustrating having to wait so long to get through to someone, usually to be told there are no appointments available, however when discussed it was a child and the issue, an appointment was available for that day.”

“Service is good when able to speak to or see a doctor. Happy with telephone appointments followed by face-to-face if needed but frustrated by the lack of availability of appointments and not being able to book ahead is rubbish as a full-time worker with a chronic health condition.”

Wombwell Medical Centre

“Rang reception who said a nurse would ring me back. Nurse rang me and after I insisted it was of urgency, I was given an appointment for that afternoon, although I was told that only one doctor was working that day. Although I did manage to see a doctor in person, for an urgent matter, the filtering of patients by receptionists is not acceptable to me. Filtering by a nurse isn’t either.”

“Have to ring at 8am in the morning on the day you want an appointment and hope for the best - have to ring a good number of times. Once you have an appointment its good, but it takes a while to get one.”

“Waiting for over 10 minutes (ringing, not on hold) before receptionist picked up. Happens every time! I feel that you can't properly diagnose ailments over the phone! I feel like I'm getting fobbed off and not being listened to.”

“If you aren't fast or don't have access to Internet you may not get an appointment or be on hold for 30 mins to find out they have all gone. I got a call back from a nurse practitioner, explained my issue and was given a same day appointment with a doctor. The doctor was very good and helpful, referred me for tests and gave advice and prescription etc”.

“I need a follow-up appointment every 2 weeks and the doctor books me in on each appointment. She’s been amazing, all the staff have.”

“It takes way too long to get through on the phone sometimes it has taken over 200 calls to then be on hold for up to 45 minutes.”

Appendix 9 - Comparison of findings to NHS

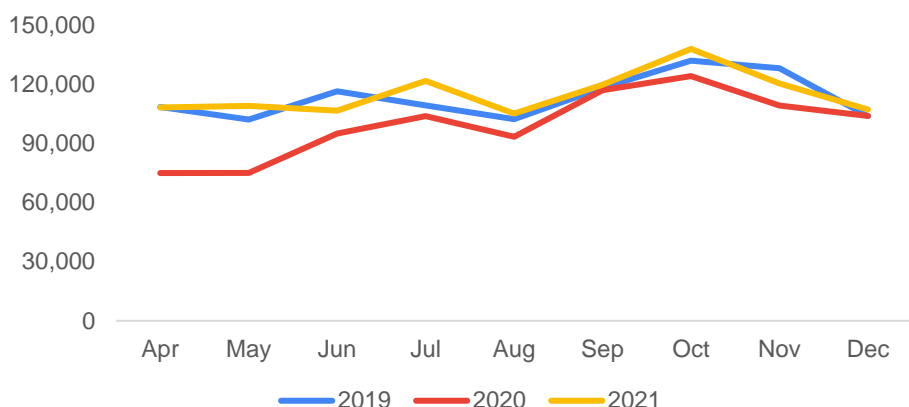
Performance Indicators

A comparison of the Healthwatch (HW) Barnsley's survey findings to existing NHS performance indicators highlights that:

1. The 2021 GP Practice Survey (GPPS) contained 61 multiple choice questions (including questions on demographics and Covid-19) requiring the patient to mark one or more boxes (as stated in the questionnaire). Whereas, the HW survey contained 19 questions (including demographics) of which 80% were open-ended enabling patients to provide their opinions and feelings ("in their own words") on any aspect of the appointment booking process and the quality of the service provided by their GP practice.
2. The Did Not Attend (DNA) rate (5%) is consistent with NHS trends over the past 3 years (2019 - 2021). It has not been possible to compare the reason for non-attendance as this type of information does not appear to be captured in the NHS data. See Page 4 for further details.
3. The type of appointment (e.g., telephone, visit) is broadly consistent with NHS data with the exception of visits to the practice (5% lower) and on-line booking (3% lower). Patients were encouraged not to visit GP practices during the Covid-19 pandemic and some patients commented that they no longer had access to on-line appointment booking tools.
4. The ease of getting through to someone at the GP practice on the phone is 10% higher than the 2021 GPPS (where 47% of patients said that it was not very easy or at all easy to make contact).
5. There is no comparable data for the length of time that it takes to speak to someone at the GP practice.
6. Face-to-face appointments are 19% lower and telephone consultations 24% higher than the 2021 GPPS. The HW study shows that of the patients that had a telephone consultation, 17% then had a follow-up face-to-face appointment.
7. 33% of patients had waited more than 7 days. This is 17% higher than the 2021 GPPS survey findings. Whereas, same and next day appointments remain unchanged. Patients were not asked when they wanted their appointment as part of the HW survey. Whereas, this was asked in the 2021 GPPS.
8. Patients were not explicitly asked if they were offered a choice (type of appointment, location, time or healthcare professional), which was asked in the 2021 GPPS. Some patients did however, comment on this.
9. There's a significant difference between the patient satisfaction and overall experience ratings. The 2021 GPPS indicated that more than 80% of patients were satisfied with the service versus 40% of patients in the HW survey. The HW survey shows that 92% of patients would like to see an improvement in the appointment booking process and / or GP service. There is no comparable NHS data to draw comparisons on the effectiveness, efficiency and / or stability of the appointment booking process.

Further details can be found in the Access to GP Surveys Comparison of Healthwatch's survey results to existing NHS performance indicators report.

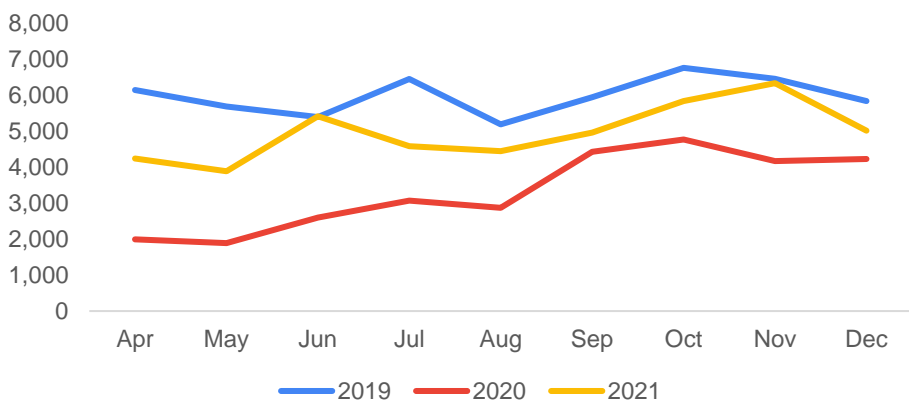
Comparison of Appointments Held Apr - Dec (2019 - 2021)



Appointments Held

- Appointments held in 2020 were 12% lower than 2019.
- Appointments held in 2021 were 15% higher than 2020.
- Appointments held in 2021 were 1.5% higher than 2019.

Comparison of Non-Attendance Apr - Dec (2019 - 2021)



Non-Attendance

- Non-attendance in 2020 was 44% lower than 2019.
- Non-attendance in 2021 was 49% higher than 2020.
- Non-attendance in 2021 was 16% higher than 2019.

* Did Not Attend (DNA)					Appointment Type				
Month	Appointments Booked	Appointments Held	DNA*	DNA %	Face-to-Face	Home Visit	Telephone	Video / On-line	Unknown
Apr-21	112,713	108,473	4,240	3.8%	71,969	400	35,992	14	4,338
May-21	105,968	102,081	3,887	3.7%	68,317	189	33,369	15	4,078
Jun-21	121,831	116,415	5,416	4.4%	81,428	252	35,479	18	4,654
Jul-21	113,859	109,274	4,585	4.0%	75,551	277	33,969	20	4,042
Aug-21	106,688	102,243	4,445	4.2%	71,699	270	30,081	748	3,890
Sep-21	123,113	118,152	4,961	4.0%	87,036	292	30,421	620	4,744
Oct-21	137,782	131,943	5,839	4.2%	102,394	454	28,676	799	5,459
Nov-21	134,421	128,085	6,336	4.7%	96,997	451	29,918	693	6,362
Dec-21	108,855	103,839	5,016	4.6%	76,759	300	26,364	681	4,751
Jan-22	112,531	107,921	4,610	4.1%	79,400	373	27,406	891	4,461
Feb-22	111,598	106,652	4946	4.4%	79,989	320	25,602	1,108	4,579
Mar-22									
Total	1,289,359	1,235,078	54,281		891,539	3,578	337,277	5,607	51,358
Monthly Average	117,214	112,280	4,935	4.2%	81,049	325	30,662	510	4,669
% of appointments by type					72.2%	0.3%	27.3%	0.5%	4.2%

Appendix 10 - Initiatives In Progress / Planned

The NHS is moving to a new service model in which patients get more options, better support, and joined-up care at the right time in the optimal care setting. Over the next five years, every patient will have the right to online 'digital' GP consultations. GP practices will work together to deal with the pressures in primary care and extend the range of convenient local services, creating integrated teams of GPs, community health and social care staff.

In response to these findings, Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) highlighted that the following initiatives are in progress and / or planned in response to the new service model:

Appointment Booking

Opportunity for Improvement	Healthcare Organisations Response via BCCG
Patients would like the ability to contact the practice by different methods. For example, telephone, online booking system and in writing (e-mail and letter).	GP contract arrangements for 2022/23 are still to be confirmed however there is the intention that all appointments which do not require triage are able to be booked online, as well as in person or via the telephone. Further guidance is to be issued to practices on what type of appointments practices are expected to be made available for online booking.
Patients would like to be able to book appointments in advance, over 7 days, and for appointments to be released at different times throughout the day.	From April 2021, all practices were required to offer patients an opportunity to book a minimum of 25% of all appointments online. Patients can also book and cancel their appointments, order their repeat prescriptions, view their medical records as well as look up their symptoms and register their organ donation preferences using the NHS Application (App). Delivery of pre-bookable appointments for new and follow up appointments is included within the Practice Delivery Agreement (PDA) scheme. All practices have informed BCCG that they are providing pre-bookable appointments.
Patients would like their GP to be able to book a follow-up appointment immediately after the consultation / treatment rather than patients having to go back to a receptionist to do so.	Practices are being encouraged to utilise the GP system (AccuRx) more efficiently. An imminent update to the system will enable practices to send patients, (if they are happy to / have access to the internet), a link to book an appointment in a pre-approved time frame e.g., two weeks' time. Consideration needs to be given to who, in the practice, is best placed to undertake this task to ensure that resources are being managed effectively.
Patients would like alternative approaches to be implemented for routine (non-urgent) appointments, prescriptions, test results and medication reviews.	Electronic repeat dispensing is a feature of patient online services and included within the contract. Practices are being encouraged to utilise the GP system more efficiently - patients can send administration or medical requests to the practice. Practices could then call or message the patient back.
Patients would like telephone appointments to be made for a specific time as opposed to providing a window in which their GP will make contact.	Specific times are allocated for face-to-face appointments. These can often be running behind due to unforeseen circumstances which has an associated impact on telephone consultations and hence, why a time window is provided for these appointments.

Patient Choice

Opportunity for Improvement	Healthcare Organisations Response via BCCG
Method of contact with the practice (see above).	See Appointment Booking and details of digital service / online information in the Delays and Communication sections overleaf.
Type of appointment. For example, face-to-face (by video, a home visit or at the practice), telephone or correspond in writing.	<p>The type of appointment offered is assessed by the practice as part of the pre-liminary assessment (triage) to ensure appropriate for the circumstances.</p> <p>A core digital service offer to patients was also included as a priority within the update to the GP contract agreement 2020/21 - 2023/24 with more online services for patients and using digital tools to increase flexibility in how staff work and care for patients.</p>
Appointment time that best suits their circumstances. For example, avoid school drop off, after work etc.	<p>Due to GP opening times there are currently a choice of available appointment times.</p> <p>Extended Service - A review of the existing service is scheduled to take place (4Q 2022) to ensure that appointments are available with GP's and nurses, across the borough of Barnsley, 7 days a week.</p>
Healthcare professional that treats them.	<p>Improving access for patients and subsequent changes to the GP contract was included in the NHS Long Term Plan and Investment and Evolution (a five-year framework for GP contract reform).</p> <p>Planned recruitment includes a varied workforce (e.g., general practice, pharmacists, paramedics, advanced nurse practitioners, health and wellbeing coaches, social prescribing link workers) to ensure that the NHS has primary care personnel to reflect future needs and priorities. This will enable more appointments to be held, with the most appropriate clinician, which in turn will reduce appointment waiting times,</p> <p>A Community Pharmacy Consultation service is in the process of being developed to receive referrals from General Practice.</p> <p>There are initiatives in place such as new to partnership, fellowship programmes and mentor schemes to support GP recruitment and retention.</p>
Patients unable to get appointments reported that they were advised by their practice, and not by their own volition, to contact 111, i-HEART and / or visit the Accident and Emergency (A&E) department at the hospital.	<p>It is difficult without knowing full details to ascertain the clinical appropriateness of this.</p> <p>The Service Quality and Performance Report provided from Barnsley Healthcare Federation when delivering the Out of Hours service also report on a monthly basis the number of patients directed to A&E or transferred to 999. For example, in January 2022 of 2387 patients, 158 were directed to attend A&E as soon as possible and 20 within 4 hours. 33 were transferred to 999.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that patients may be directed to i-HEART/ 111 when the practice are not able to provide an appointment due to capacity at specific points during the pandemic. However, it is important to note that the key reason behind why the extended access service is in place is to provide additional appointment capacity across the borough and provide patients with an increased choice when they require a same day appointment.</p>

Delays

Opportunity for Improvement	Healthcare Organisations Response via BCCG
<p>Patients would like to see an improvement both in the time that it takes to contact the practice and the period from booking their appointment to their visit.</p>	<p>Further details/ updated national guidance is expected in relation to this area for 2022/23. BCCG continues to work with GP practices to improve resources and telephony systems including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft teams assisting with outbound calls - As part of the NHS response to increased pressures within primary care, through the winter months and responding to the latest variant of COVID-19, NHS Digital are enabling phone calls to be made via Microsoft Teams for GPs. This offering provides additional outbound calling capacity for practices releasing current telephone lines to help with the expected increase in incoming calls. Providing the added benefits of increasing capacity with flexibility as users will be able to make calls from any of the computers that practices already have without affecting the local primary phone system. • Planned recruitment (see Patient Choice section) such as new Care Co-ordinator roles will help free up some of the additional duties currently carried out by reception staff to respond to appointment booking calls. <p>BCCG acknowledged that it's important for patients to get their appointment within an appropriate time to meet their needs and for this to be clearly communicated with the patient at the point of booking. Therefore, a core digital service is included as a priority within the update to the GP contract agreement 2020/21 - 2023/24 with more online services for patients and using digital tools to increase flexibility in how staff work and care for patients. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices offering online consultations that can be used by patients, carers and by practice staff on a patient's behalf, to gather submitted structured information and to support triage, enabling the practice to allocate patients to the right service for their needs. • The ability to hold a video consultation between patients, carers, and clinicians. • Two-way secure written communication between patients, carers and practices. • An up-to-date accessible online presence, such as a website, that, amongst other key information, links to online consultation system and other online services prominently signposting to validated symptom checker and self-care health information (e.g., nhs.uk) via the practice's online presence and other communications • Shared record access, including patients being able to add to their record. • Request and management of prescriptions online. • Online appointment booking.

Communication and Continuous Improvement

Opportunity for Improvement	Healthcare Organisations Response via BCCG
<p>Raise awareness of how the existing Appointment Booking processes operate providing greater clarity for patients about the service that their GP Practice provides.</p>	<p>BCCG will work with GP practices to improve information made available to their patients around booking processes and alternative ways to access services e.g., online ordering of repeat prescriptions etc.</p>
<p>Raise awareness of existing Applications (Apps) that are available for patients, to search for advice about their symptoms and the most appropriate course of action including directing them to the relevant service, to meet their needs. Alternatively, assess the feasibility of providing an App (for use across the Barnsley borough) that meets this need whilst also allowing patients to book an appointment with their GP via a “common” platform.</p>	<p>BCCG will work with GP practices to improve the information made available to their patients. There are currently several tools and websites to help patients:</p> <p>Doctor Link - 1 practice has adopted this application which allows patients to search for advice about their symptoms and the most appropriate course of action, including directing them to the most relevant service (e.g., pharmacy, hospital), to meet their needs.</p> <p>Patient Triage tool (AccuRx) - From Sept 2021, an application was introduced that enables text messages to be sent to a patient by telephone (e.g., appointment reminders) and hold on-line (video) appointments. Patients can also use this tool to message their practice with a medical or admin query and the practice will respond directly.</p> <p>Sound Doctor - This website provides more than 300 self-management videos on a range of different subjects (e.g., diabetes, dementia, back pain, ageing well at home).</p>
<p>Promote the use of right care, right place (Self-Help, Pharmacies etc).</p>	<p>BCCG has previously commissioned Care Navigation Training for GP Practice admin staff, called ‘First Port of Call Training’.</p> <p>Care Navigation Training is to be delivered in 2022 to all administrative staff (due to the levels of staff turnover / the number of changes that have occurred in the NHS over the last few years). The aim of the training is to provide a standardised approach to Care Navigation across all Barnsley GP Practices. BCCG’s Primary Care and Communications Teams will jointly raise public awareness of Care Navigation.</p>
<p>Assess the feasibility of streamlining the Appointment Booking process with the aim of providing patients with the same experience irrespective of the practice, or neighbourhood network, that they belong to (i.e., implement a “consistent” process across the borough of Barnsley).</p>	<p>A national project has recently been undertaken and completed in relation to practice coding of appointments which will assist with data collections and future planning.</p>