



# GP Access Report

November 2022

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## Executive Summary



During August and September 2022 in partnership with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB), we designed and launched a survey to gather people's experiences of accessing their GP practice.

This piece of work is a priority for Healthwatch Sunderland for 2022-2023 and was chosen by members of the public.

This report covers those 1261 respondents who replied during this period and the information gained via conversations held with the 14 GP practice managers from across the city. There were a higher number of respondents from the Washington PCN (Primary Care Network). However, themes identified from patient feedback remain consistent across the city.

The main findings of the survey are as follows:

- **Booking appointments** - Citywide half of the survey respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the length of time they wait for their call to be answered and most patients gained an appointment within a week. Overall highest levels of satisfaction for booking appointments were in the Coalfields and Washington and lowest levels in the North.

Most patients citywide booked their appointments via the telephone (84%), with the highest numbers in the Coalfields, East, and Washington PCNs. Of those who book their appointments on-line most patients are from the North and the lowest number in the Coalfields PCN.

Common issues reported when booking appointments were; long telephone queues, patients being asked to call at 8am, the lack of booking for future appointments, lack of on-line booking facility and lack of face-to-face appointments with doctors.

- **Staffing** - Most patients were positive about doctors, nurses and receptionists within the practices and used complimentary comments when describing them. Patients commented that they provide high levels of patient care and professionalism and acknowledged the pressures practices were currently facing.
- **Prescriptions** - Citywide an overwhelming majority (84%) of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the prescription service at their GP practice.
- **Extended Access Service** - Around half of the survey respondents citywide had heard of the service and one third had used it, with highest levels of usage in the North PCN. Levels of satisfaction from patients who had used the service were high, with 72% of respondents rating it either excellent or good. Highest levels of satisfaction were in the Coalfields PCN. Bookings to the Extended Access Service were, in the main, booked via the GP practices except the Coalfields PCN where most patients (48%) booked via 111.
- **Practice managers discussions** - The main challenges highlighted by Practice Managers during our discussions were lack of resources (staffing, funds and physical space), increase in demand, lack of patient knowledge around self-care and lack of understanding by patients of what services are available within primary care.

## Introduction



The COVID-19 pandemic has put a huge strain on the NHS and impacted how the public access health services. Like many organisations, general practice needed to adapt and offer clinical consultations in different ways to ensure patients still receive the healthcare they needed. As well as the traditional ways of working such as face-to-face appointments, primary care needed to adapt and introduce or build on new ways of working such as offering on-line, video and telephone consultations.

As a Healthwatch we have been listening to people's experiences of accessing GP services, some patients have told us that services are working well for them and have allowed them to save time and get the help they need. But for others it's been more difficult, time consuming and frustrating to access the support when they need it.

In response it was decided in 2022 that GP access would be a priority item of work and would involve researching into what are the main access issues for patients and to listen to the staff who have been working in GP practices through the pandemic.

The purpose of this report is to share the findings with those who commission and provide general practice services to help them understand, directly from local people, what is going well, but also, what else could be done to improve patient access to their GP practice.

When trying to improve and build better systems for patients and staff it is essential to listen to peoples' voices and collaborate with those who use services and also those that provide them.



**We champion what matters to you  
and work with others to find ideas  
that work.**

**We are independent and  
committed to making the biggest  
difference to you.**



## Methodology

### Patient survey



In partnership with the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, we designed a survey to collect feedback from patients accessing their GP practice (see appendix 1).

Questions were designed to help understand how patients access their GP, what is working well and any issues they may encounter to identify any potential barriers.

Members of the public were invited to complete surveys during the months of August and September 2022. Surveys were available to complete online using Survey Monkey or as a paper-based version which were supplied alongside self-addressed envelopes. In addition, people could also call Healthwatch Sunderland where staff were available to assist in completing the survey over the phone.

Surveys were promoted via the Healthwatch Sunderland e-newsletter, social media channels, website, via networks and contacts within the NHS, social care, and the local voluntary and community sector.

Many of the GP practices kindly promoted the survey through their own communications systems such as their text messaging service, website and social media platforms etc. Some GP practices also took up the offer to distribute the paper-based version to their patients in practice, which patients then either returned to the practice reception or posted via the SAE to the Healthwatch Sunderland office.

### GP Practice Manager conversations

From the 38 GP practices based in the city we also held conversations with Practice Managers from 14 practices, to gain additional feedback to that received from patients, (see appendix 2 for those who were selected and agreed to take part).

These conversations were held to discover what the top three challengers were faced by the practice, with the aim to see if there was any correlation with what the patients were also experiencing and if the issues were common across the city or locality based only.



## Findings

Thank you to the patients of Sunderland who completed our survey we received a total of **1261** surveys from patients who gave feedback on their experiences of accessing their GP practice. (A full breakdown by GP practice can be found in appendix 3.)



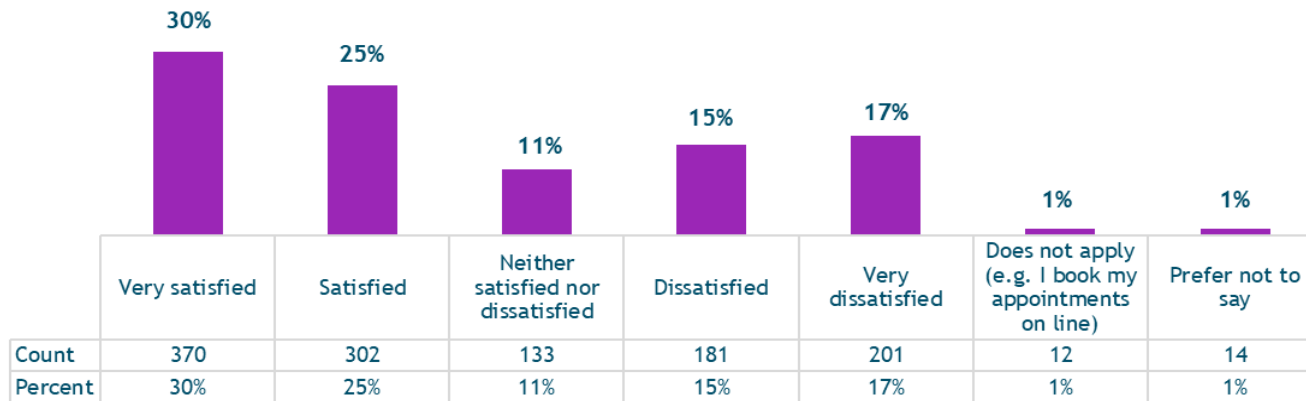
- Coalfields 152
- North 129
- East 101
- Washington 671
- West 1 94
- West 2 114

### Section 1 - Booking appointments

The first section on the survey asked patients about their experiences of booking appointments at their GP practice. The results can be found below. (Please note, not all survey respondents answered all questions).

### Q1. How satisfied are you with the length of time you wait for the phone to be answered at your surgery?

#### Citywide



When asked how satisfied they were with the length of time it took for their call to be answered, most patient's city wide were either very satisfied (30%) or satisfied (25%).

Similar satisfaction levels could also be seen in the Coalfields, East, West 2 and Washington PCN. In comparison most patients in both the North and West 1 PCN were mostly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the length of time it took for the phone to be answered.

Patients were asked to explain the rating they had given and for those who were very satisfied or satisfied most explained that their call to the practices is answered promptly and they appreciate being informed where they are in the queue.

“Always get a prompt answer or call back option.”

“Appreciate knowing what number in the queue when waiting.”



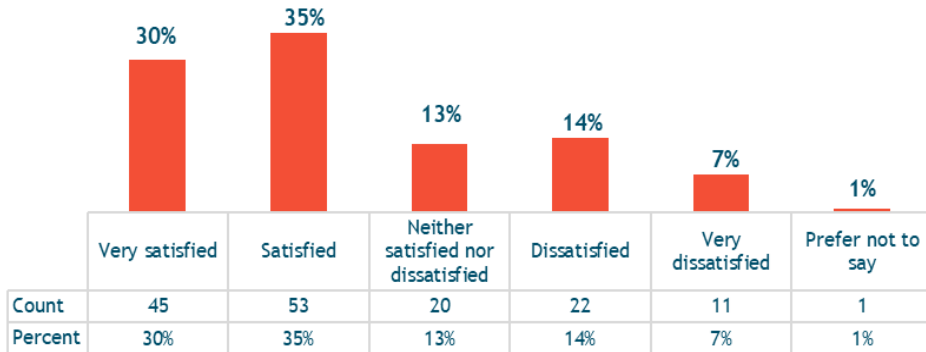
Comments received from those patients who were dissatisfied, were in the main, related to the length of time being on hold in a queue to speak to a staff member, being in a queue for a long period of time and then being told there are no appointments available or being cut off when in a queue.

“I think ringing at 8 in the morning and being told you’re 35th in line is very off putting. How can this be possible.”

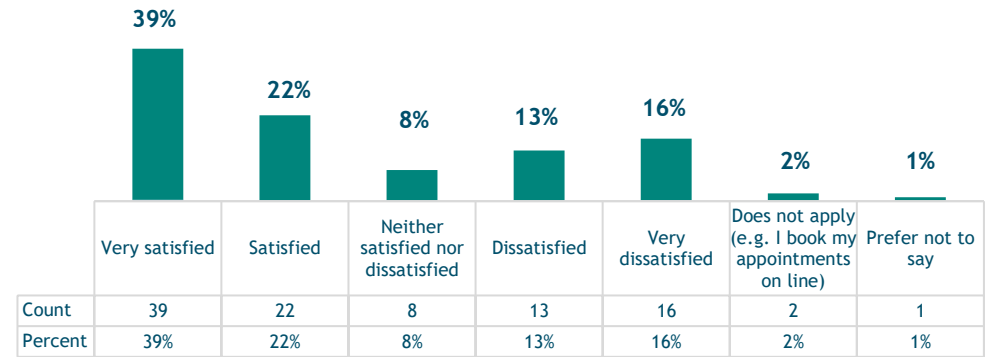


How satisfied are you with the length of time you wait for the phone to be answered at your surgery?

Coalfields



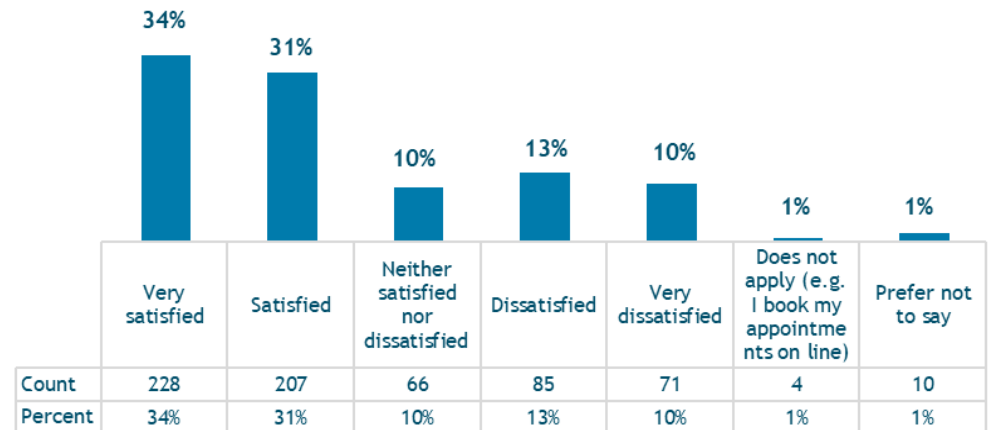
East



North



Washington

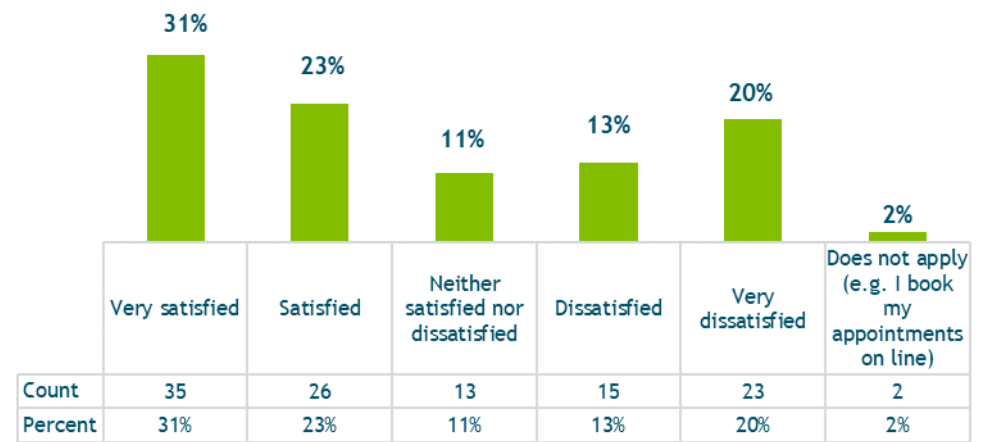
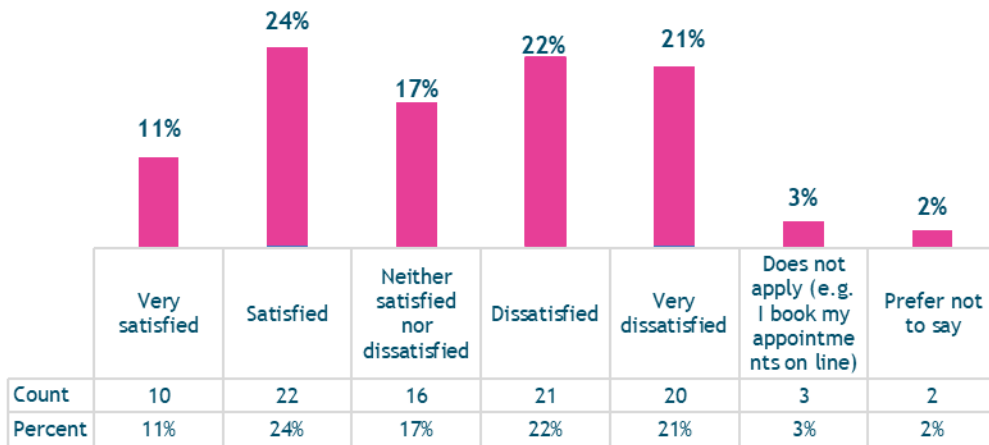




How satisfied are you with the length of time you wait for the phone to be answered at your surgery?

West 1

West 2

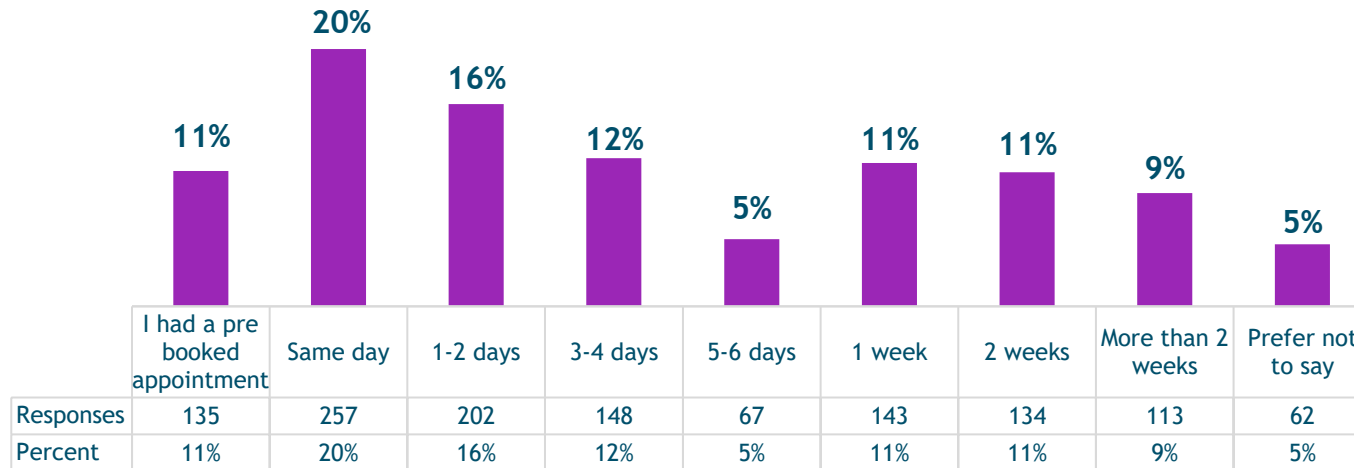


“Difficulty in getting through at the recommended time of 8.30am when recommended to book appointment by practice but I can now also book online via the NHS App.”

## Q2. How long did you wait for your most recent appointment?

### Citywide

How long did you wait for your most recent appointment?



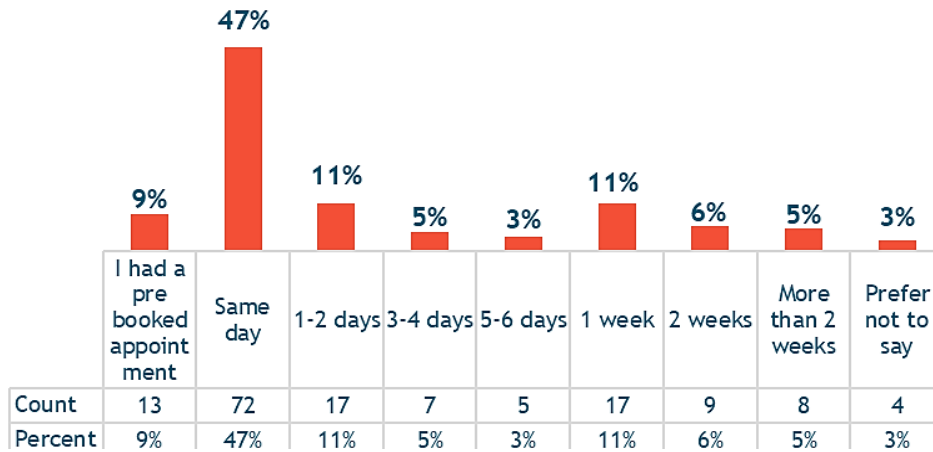
Most survey respondents (20%) from across the city informed us that their most recent appointment was booked on the same day as they received their appointment.

Results from the Coalfields (47%) and East (39%) PCN also showed that most patients waited the same length of time for their appointment and were able to have their appointment on the same day as making their booking. In comparison most patients from PCN in the North (37%), West 1 (35%) and West 2 (41%) informed they had waited 2 weeks or more for their most recent appointment.

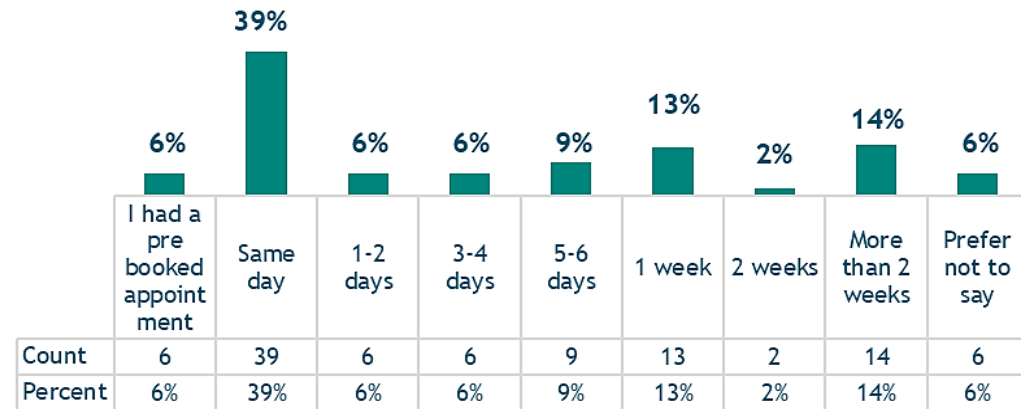
Most patients from the Washington PCN informed us that their most recent appointment had either been made within 1-2 days (21%) or 3-4 day (15%).

How long did you wait for your most recent appointment?

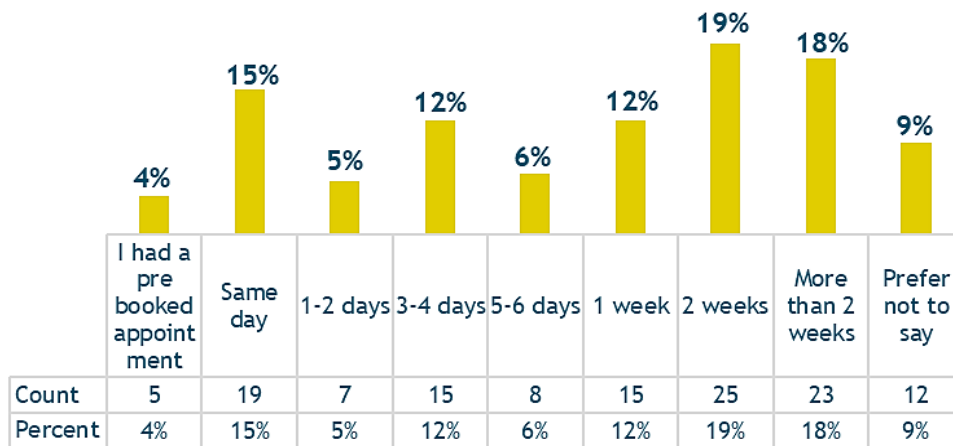
Coalfield



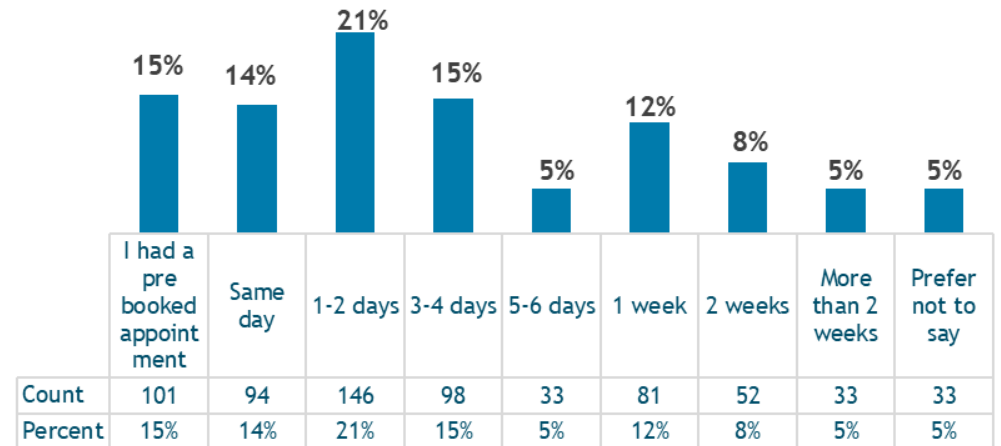
East



North

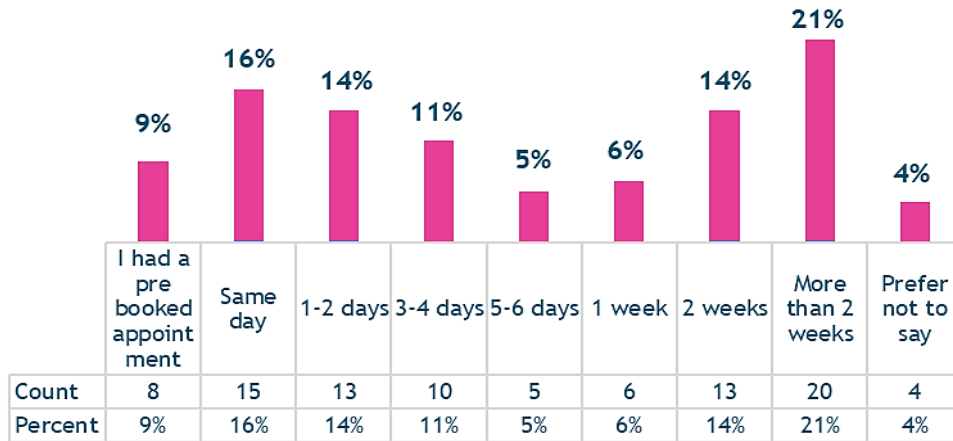


Washington

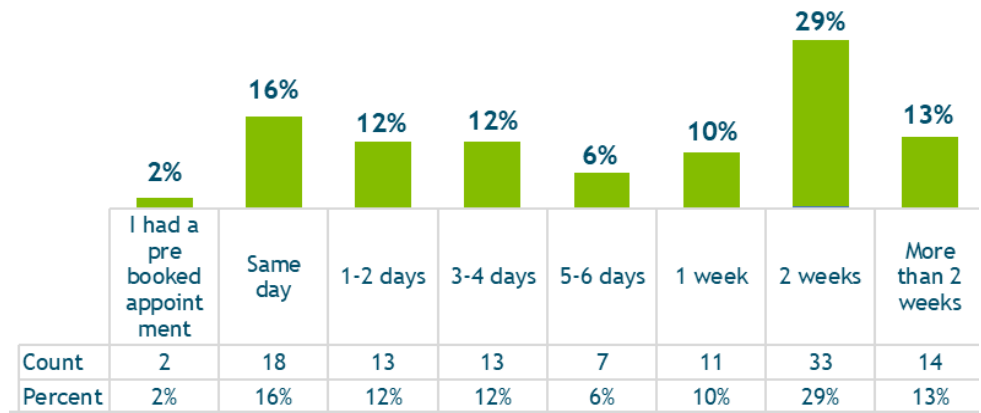


How long did you wait for your most recent appointment?

West 1



West 2

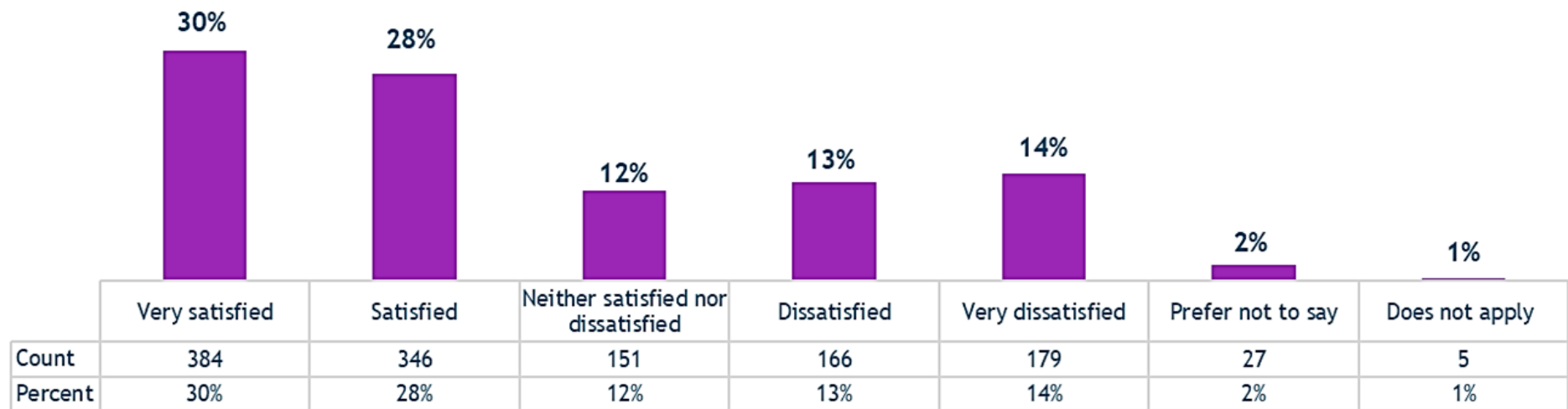


“I know there is a general shortage of GPs in this area and as I have said their medical skills are excellent, but the system isn’t working as well as it used to.”



**Q3 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the amount of time you waited for your appointment?**

Citywide

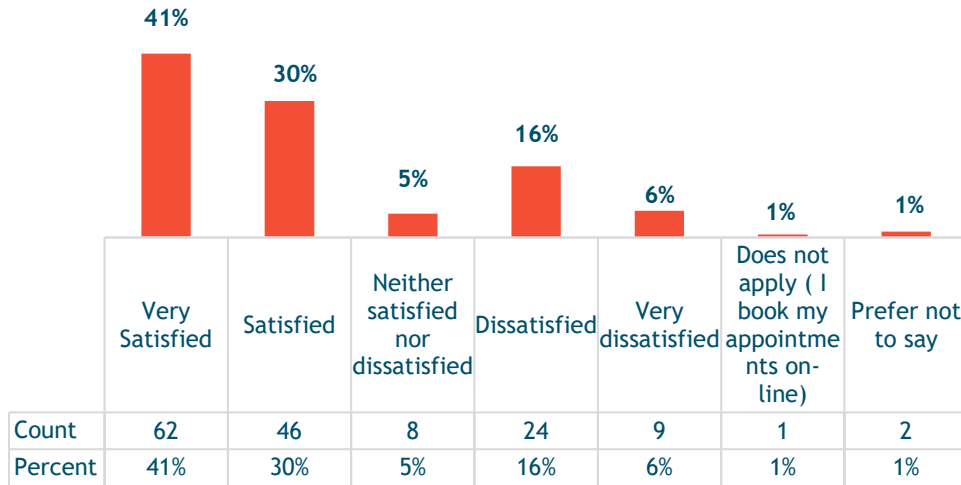


Most patients from across the city were either very satisfied (30%) or satisfied (28%) with the length of time they waited for their most recent appointment.

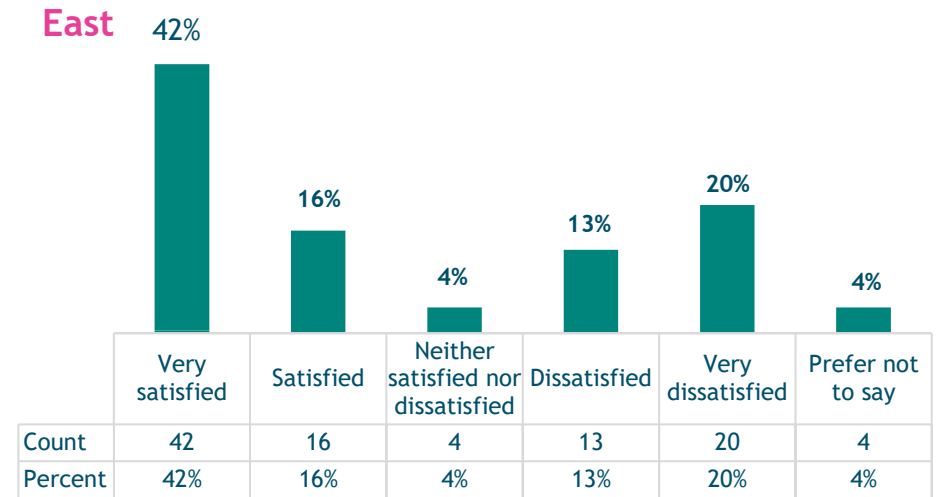
Findings across the PCNs also showed similar satisfaction levels in the Coalfields (71%), East (58%), Washington (64%) and West 2 (52%) PCNs, where most patients were either satisfied or very satisfied. Patients from the North were mostly either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (57%), whereas in West 1 patients satisfaction levels were split with almost one quarter satisfied (23%) and a quarter very dissatisfied (24%).

**How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the amount of time you waited for your appointment?**

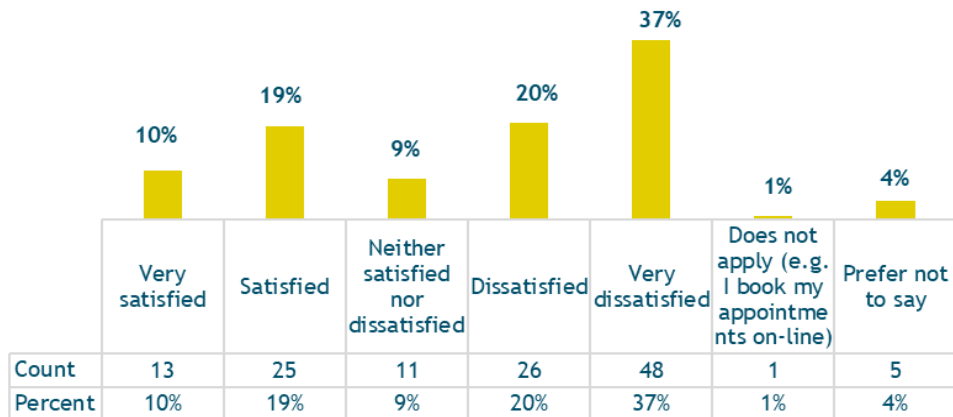
**Coalfields**



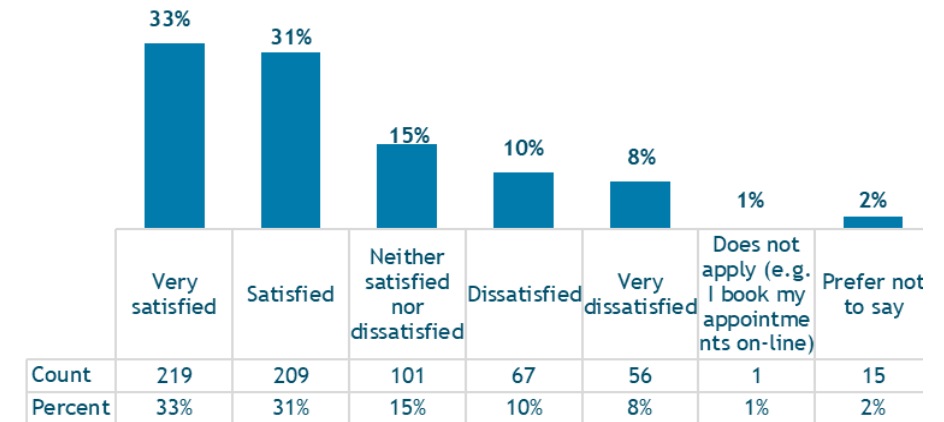
**East**



**North**



**Washington**



How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the amount of time you waited for your appointment?

West 1



West 2



## Q4. Please tell us how you would normally book your appointment

	Coalfields		East		North		Washington		West 1		West 2		Citywide	
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Online	4%	7	5%	5	18%	23	5%	34	16%	15	16%	17	8%	101
In person	3%	5	1%	1	6%	8	4%	26	5%	5	3%	4	4%	49
Via phone	89%	132	89%	89	68%	88	88%	590	77%	72	78%	89	84%	1061
Other	4%	8	5%	5	8%	10	3%	18	2%	2	3%	4	4%	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1258</b>

Survey respondents were asked to select how they would normally book their appointments at their GP practice. As seen above, most patients across the city book their appointments via the telephone, with highest numbers in the Coalfields (89%), East (89%) and Washington (88%). Of those who book their appointments on-line most patients are from the North (18%), West 1 (16%) and West 2 (16%) PCN and the lowest number in the Coalfields PCN (4%).



## Q5. Please tell us about any issues you encounter when trying to book your appointment

When asked to provide information on issues faced when trying to book appointments, we received feedback from some patients but not all, some patients stated they had no issues.

**Citywide** some of the common issues reported by patients when trying to make appointments included:



**Long telephone queues** - in a large amount of the feedback received patients comment about the length of time it takes to get through to surgeries on the phone, with many stating that they try calling multiples times and often find once their call is answered there are very few if any appointments available and must repeat the process again.

**Calling at 8am** - many patients expressed their dislike of having to repeatedly call early in the morning to gain an appointment, with many of these explaining that this has proved either inconvenient or at times impossible for them to do.

**Booking future appointments** - some patients commented that when they require appointments on a future date, their surgeries aren't able to offer them an appointment and this causes them frustration.



“Ring as soon as surgery opens but end up being 30th in the queue.”

“Much easier to travel to surgery to book appointments than sit for long periods on the telephone. Frustrating that advance bookings are not often available.”



Other issues for patients from all PCN's, excluding West 1, related to the on-line booking system:



### On-line booking system unavailable or a small number of available appointments

Many patients mentioned that they have been used to booking their appointments via the on-line booking system but due to changes, this option is no longer available. Whilst others mentioned that the on-line system is available to them but there is very limited appointments available to book. In both cases patients explained due to the limits in the online booking system they are then forced to contact the practice via the phone and this option is often unsuitable.



“I used to be able to book appointments online but now the only option is via telephone. I am autistic and struggle with the telephone so find this option very stressful which can result in me having a meltdown/shutdown.”

“I'd prefer to book on-line but there's never any to select and despite me working and asking for early/late appointments or on my day off, I am always initially offered a number of inconvenient appointments before I get a suitable time.”



Many patients from the Washington PCN, also stated they had issues with booking GP appointments:



### Lack of available face-to-face GP appointments

Many Washington GP patients informed they found it very difficult to gain an appointment to see a GP face-to-face or see the GP of their choice, despite this being their preferred option.

“It is virtually impossible to get a doctor's appointment in my experience.”

“GPs are still doing telephone triage rather than face-to-face appointments.”

## Section 2 -Staffing

### Q6 Please tell us a little about the doctors at your practice

Citywide survey respondents mostly showed their appreciation for the doctors at their GP, with common themes identified including:



- **Positive attitudes** - a high volume of patients complimented their doctor's manner and attitude with frequently-used words such as friendly, polite, helpful and courteous to describe them.
- **High levels of care and professionalism** - many patients informed that their GPs were knowledgeable within their role and showed genuine care for their patients and commonly described them as professional, understanding, empathetic, caring and reassuring etc.

“First class service, doctors and staff very friendly and put me at ease.”

“There appears to be a good range of expertise in specialist areas, spread among the various GPs in the practice.”

“Professional and knowledgeable providing excellent care in a compassionate and empathetic way. Offers reassurance and support”

The negative comments received about doctors were in the minority and could be categorised into:



- **Access** - patients commonly informed that they felt there was a lack of available appointments to see a GP, with many adding this was due to either GPs working on a part-time basis or because many had recently retired.
- **Continuity of care** - many patients talked about the lack of continuity of care with their GP, which they believed was because their GP is working part-time, or locums are employed.
- **Lack of time** - patients stated that despite the GPs acting in a caring manner they often feel rushed by the GP during the appointment.

“It appears there are a very fast turnover of doctors - not many that seem to be permanent.”

“Very professional, kind and helpful. Do tend to rush appointments though, speaking over me and talking very quickly.”

## Q7. Please tell us a little about the nursing staff at your practice

Citywide there were an overwhelmingly high number of positive comments about the nurses working in GP practices across the city. The main themes highlighted were:



- **Positive staff attitudes** - a high number of patients complimented the nurses' attitudes and commonly described them as friendly, caring, helpful, empathetic and kind.
- **Highly skilled** - many patients informed that they felt that their nurses were true professionals, attentive and competent within their roles.
- **Very accessible** - many comments received talked about the availability of the nurses and being able to access appointments with ease.

“Again, fabulous, and very personable. Lovely smile and always happy. Don't feel like on a wheel they take time to chat and ask you how you are feeling. Best thing is look at your face when talking rather than having conversation whilst typing into a screen, even when running behind and I'm sure will feel pressure to catch up.”

“The nurse practitioners are competent and understanding. They ask advice from the doctors if necessary.”

“Amazing. Not just professional but the care is very personalised. Can't praise them highly enough.”

Overall, a small percentage of negative comments were received, these could be themed into:



- **Access** - Some patients commented that sometimes it can be difficult to get an appointment with the nurse, with some citing that this was because they worked on a part-time basis.
- **Lack of time** - Some patients informed that their appointments with their nurses can often run late or are rushed.

“Very rushed and have very little time for you.”

“Really nice, hard to get an appointment, through no fault of their own.”

## Q8. Please tell us a little about the reception staff at your practice

Citywide there was a higher number of positive comments about reception staff than negative comments. In the main positive comments related to:



- **Positive attitudes** - many patients used complimentary wording to describe the reception staff and these included, friendly, lovely, polite and hardworking.
- **Helpfulness** - there was many comments received about how many receptionists are responsive and efficient and do their best to help patients out when and where they can.

“Always calm focused and efficient no matter how busy they are, and very friendly too. True professionals.”

“While I waited for my last appointment, I observed the reception team handle a couple of patients with issues and both times I was impressed by how they went out of their way to be helpful and to make sure both patients enquiries were sorted out for them. My own experience has always been good as well.”

“Reception take the brunt of everything and deal with a lot of patients in a respectful manner and with fantastic customer skills.”

Negative comments in the main could be categorised into two main themes:



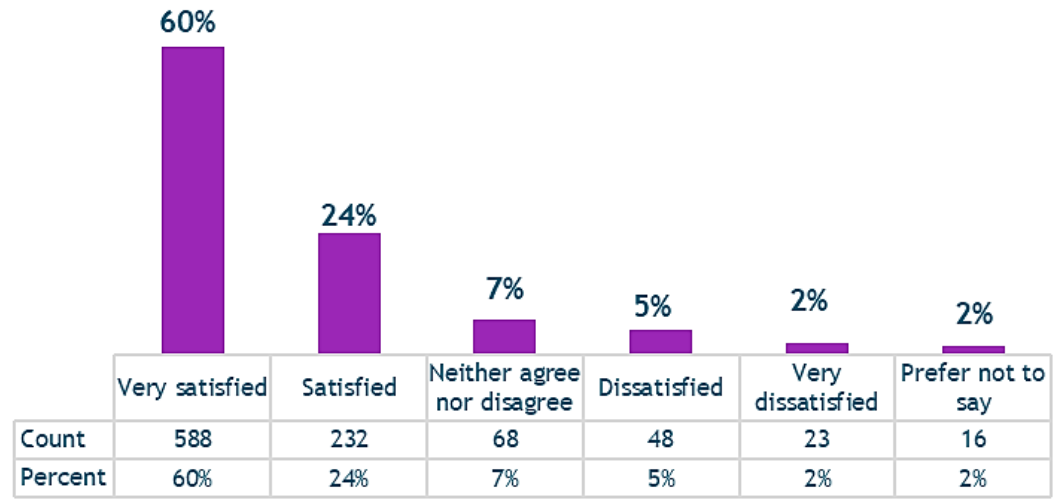
- **Negative attitudes** - some comments received talked about the attitudes of the receptionist in a negative way, words used to describe them included unhelpful, unfriendly, rude.
- **Triage questions** - some patients who commented negatively spoke about the questions reception staff ask when triaging them. Patients commented that they often felt this was unnecessary, too many questions were asked or they were the wrong people to do this.

“The reception staff are generally ok, but it must sometimes be difficult to triage patients if you are not medically qualified. Consequently, it can be difficult to explain why you would like to take a particular course of action.”

Section 3 - Prescriptions

**Q9 If you get a repeat prescription, how satisfied are you with the service?**

Citywide



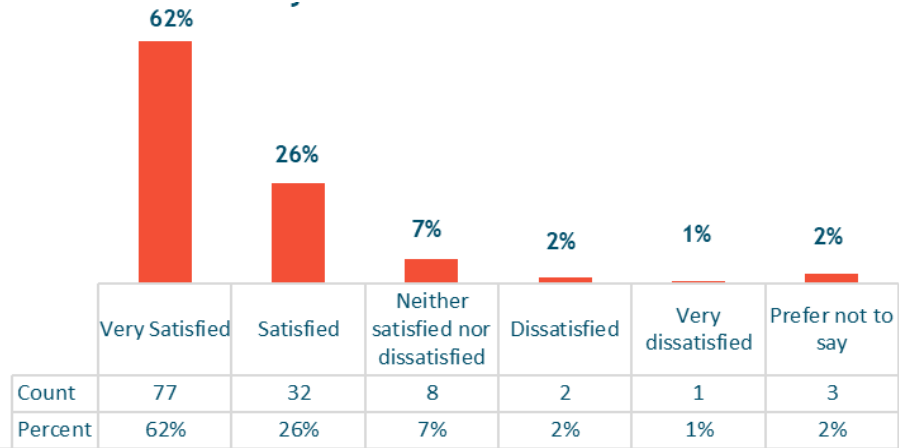
84% of respondent across the city are very satisfied (60%) or satisfied (24%) with the prescription service. This trend is reflected across all of the PCNs, with some respondents adding that they find ordering their prescription on-line efficient and effective. Although most patients are happy with the prescription service at their practice, some encounter issues and delays when it comes to collecting their prescriptions from the pharmacy.

“The doctor sends the prescription over quickly but the pharmacy takes ages to sort the script and sometimes they say they can't find it.”

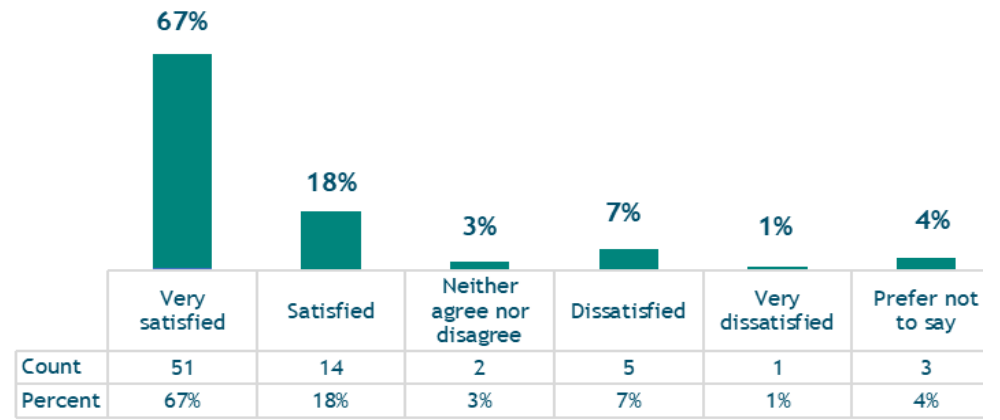
“The GPs have your repeat done either same day or next day. However, it's the pharmacy who hold up doing your prescription and take a week.”

If you get a repeat prescription, how satisfied are you with the service?

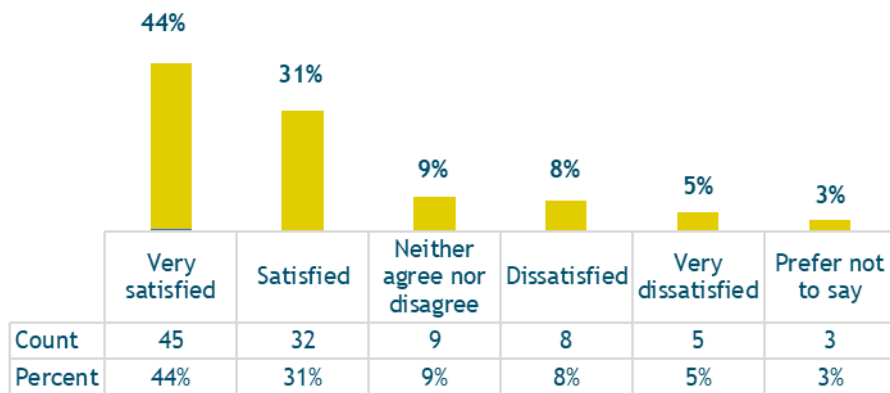
Coalfields



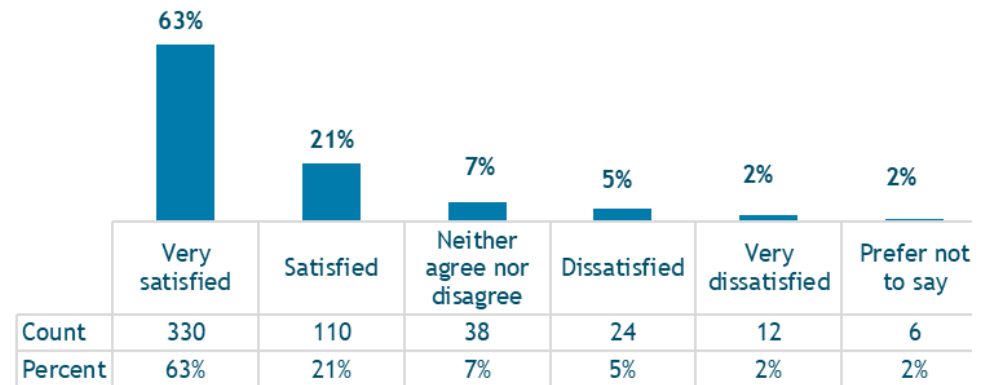
East



North

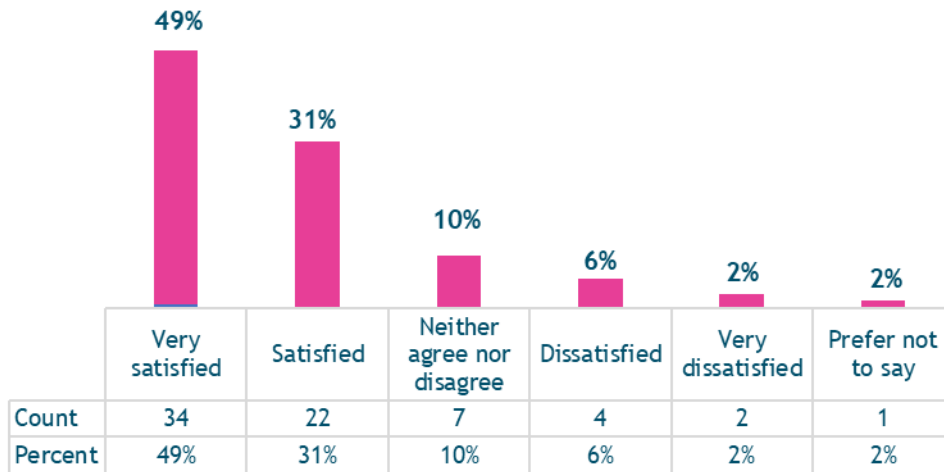


Washington

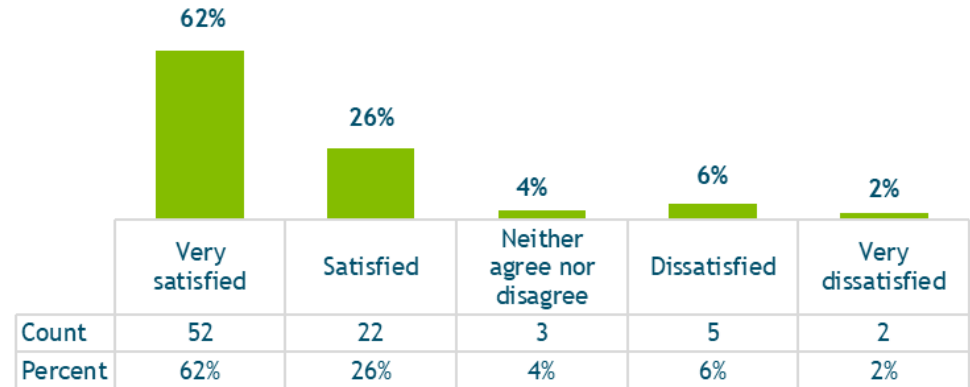


If you get a repeat prescription, how satisfied are you with the service?

West 1



West 2



“I have my medication delivered to me every Monday. I never have a problem; it’s always sorted for me. 5 stars.”



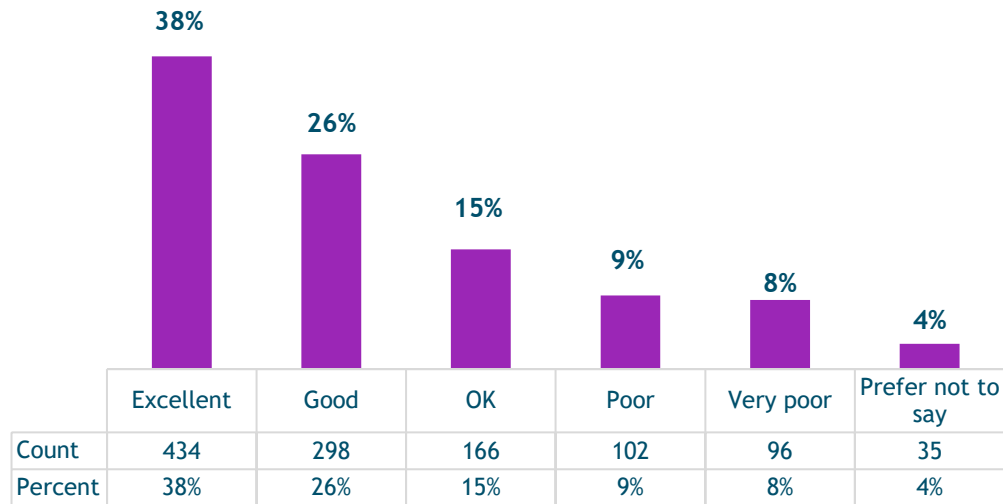


## Section 4 - Overall satisfaction levels

Patients were asked to provide an overall rating for their practice and were given the opportunity to leave additional comments.

### Q10. Overall, how would you rate the service at your GP practice?

#### Citywide



Most respondents across the city rated the service at their GP practice as either very good (38%) or good (26%).

These satisfaction levels were also similar in all PCN areas except the North where most ratings were from OK to very poor (65%).

Highest levels of satisfaction were seen in both the Coalfields (39%) and the Washington (44%) PCNs.



Overall patients expressed high levels of praise for the general running of practices, including the professionalism shown by all staff and complimented the delivery of treatment and care they receive. Many also commented about the length of time they had been patients at their practice and in this time had never had any issues.

“Never had a problem with this outstanding practice. The whole team are so well trained, they are amazing.”

“Find all doctors and staff very efficient and helpful.”

“Overall, the day to day running and regular care repeat blood tests, vaccinations, and annual checks are very good.”

“In 21 plus years we have never had one single issue.”

Those negative comments received mostly related to access. Many patients reiterated that the care and treatment that they receive from the clinicians is good and acknowledged that due to increase in demand practices are doing what they can. However, patients explained that they often struggle to gain access to their practice due to systems and processes in place and they find appointments are difficult to obtain. For some patients, such as carers and those who work being on the phone in a queue for long periods of time is unfeasible.



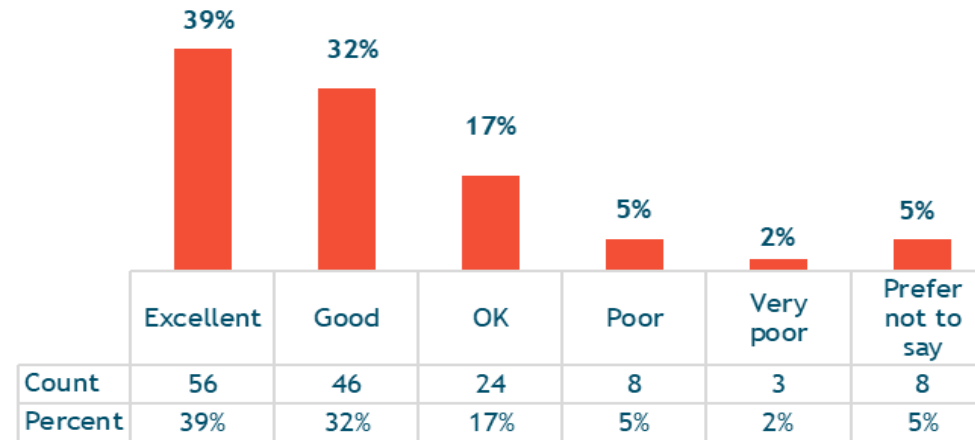
“You can very rarely secure an appointment especially if their hours are reduced by working part time. The queueing system via telephone & booking system on-line needs a massive overhaul as it simply doesn't work to achieve helping the maximum amount of patients it can.”

“When you need an appointment, you can't get one, you can go for days trying to get through to book an available appointment.”

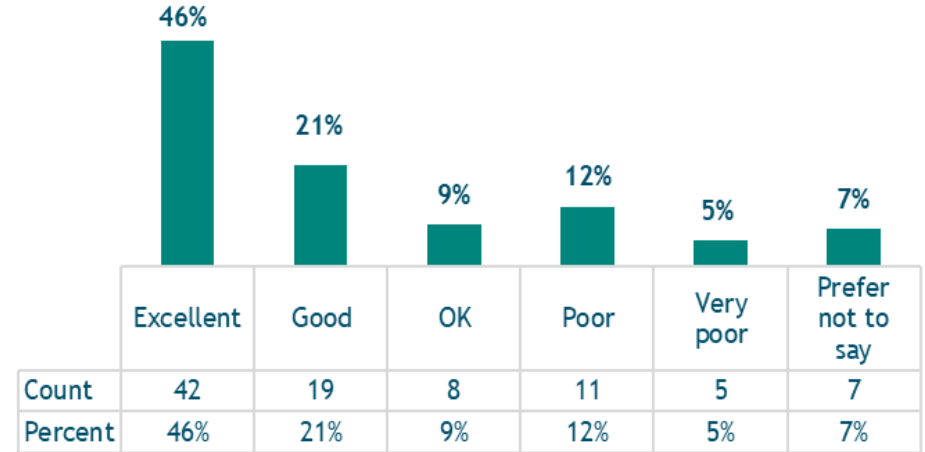
“I find accessing difficult and not easy, you almost need to learn how they want to engage with us rather than the service being tailored to how we want to use it”

Overall, how would you rate the service at your GP practice?

Coalfields



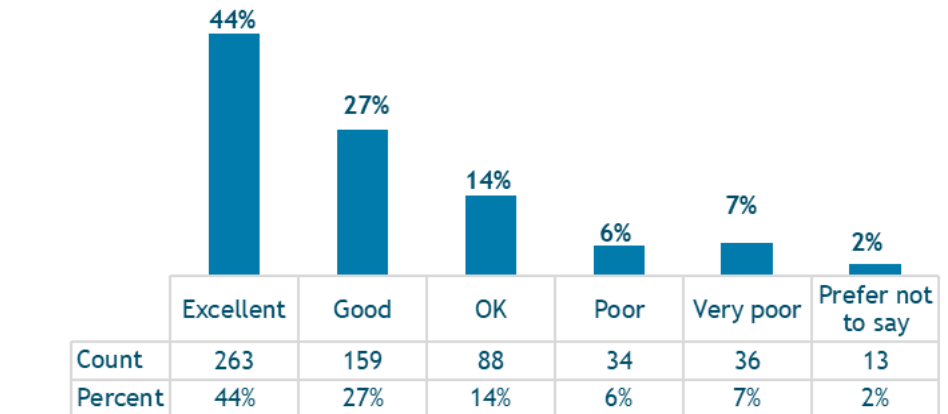
East



North

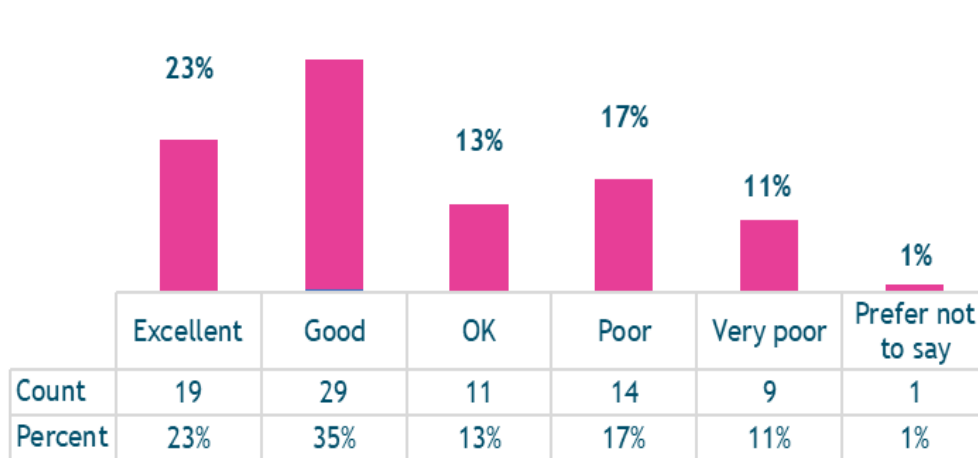


Washington

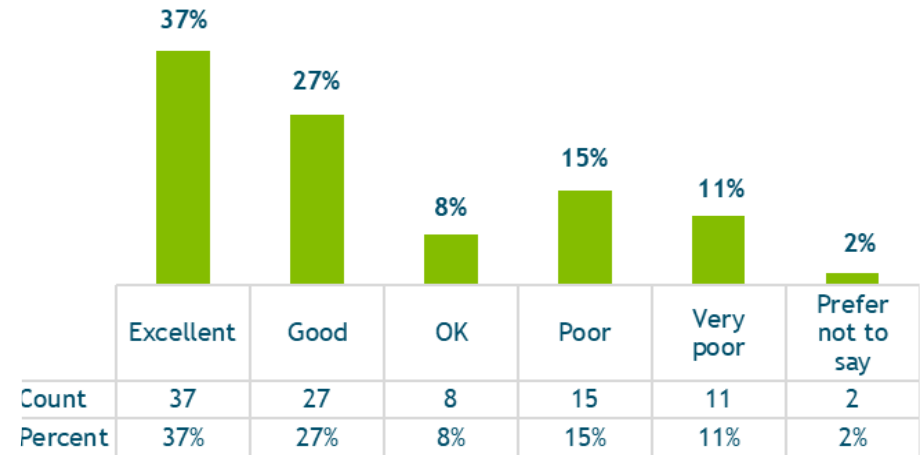


Overall, how would you rate the service at your GP practice?

West 1



West 2



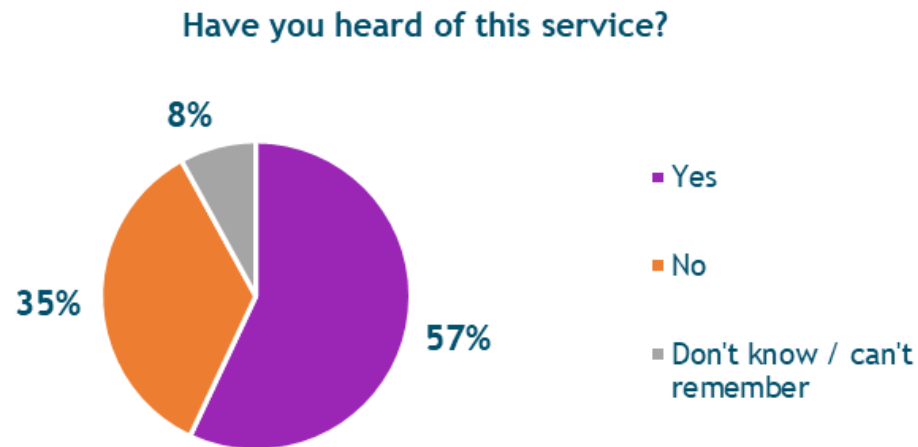
“The Doctors, Nursing Staff and Reception Staff are all very good. I have been with this practice for 22 years and no complaints from me.”



## Section 5 - Sunderland Extended Access Service

### Q11. Have you heard of this service?

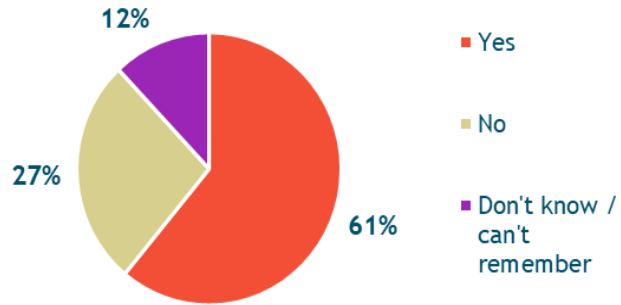
#### Citywide



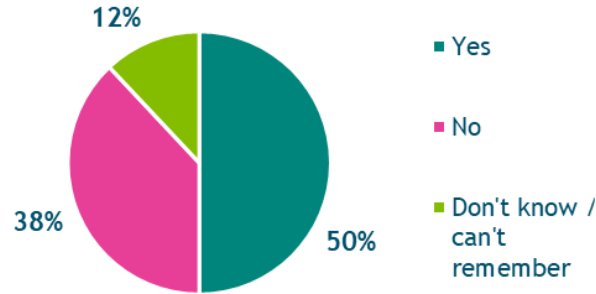
We received 1,120 responses to this section of the survey and when asked 57% of survey respondents citywide had heard of the Extended Access Service. In all of the PCN areas at least 50% of respondents had heard of the service. Highest levels were in the North, where 76% of people had heard of the service and lowest levels were seen in Washington, where 42% of people informed, they hadn't heard of the service.

Have you heard of this service?

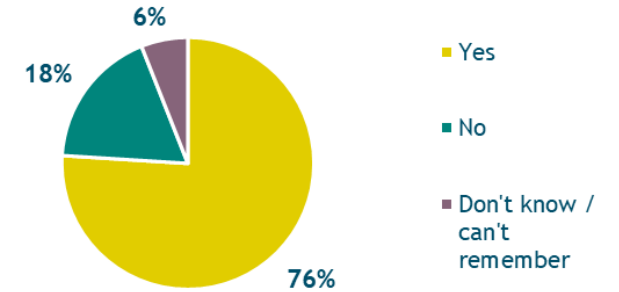
**Coalfields**-(145 survey responses)



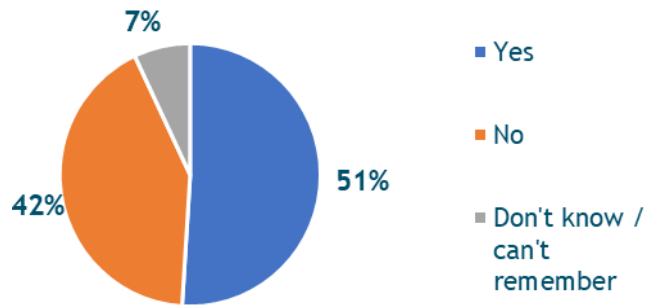
**East**-(91 survey responses)



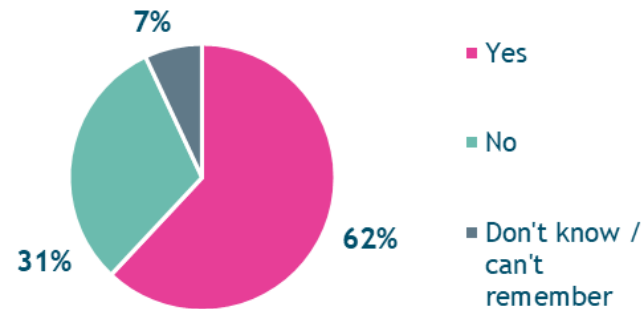
**North**-(115 survey responses)



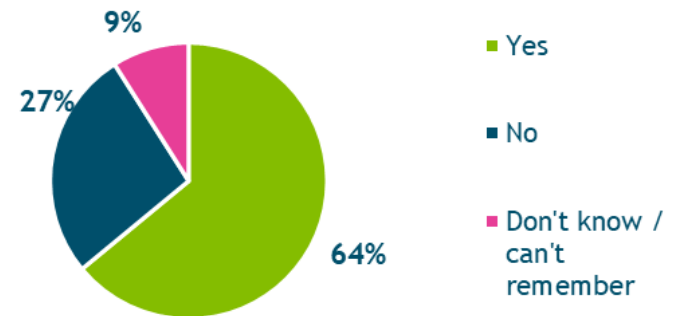
**Washington**-(544 survey responses)



**West 1**-(82 survey responses)



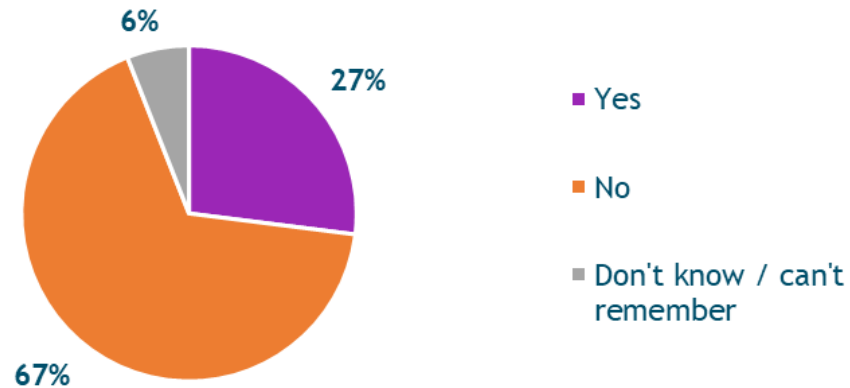
**West 2**-(98 survey responses)



## Q12. Have you ever used this service?

### Citywide

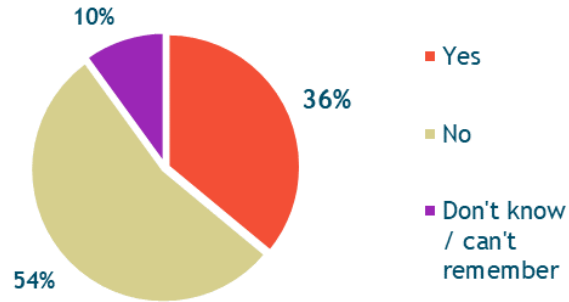
Have you ever used this service?



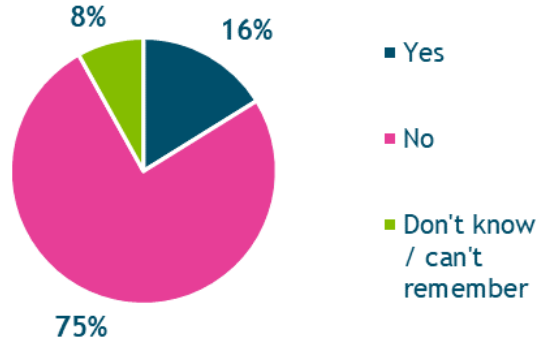
We received 1120 survey responses to this question, when asked 27% of survey respondents citywide had used the Extended Access Service. Across the PCNs the highest usage of the service could be seen in the North (47%) and the lowest in the East (16%).

Have you ever used this service?

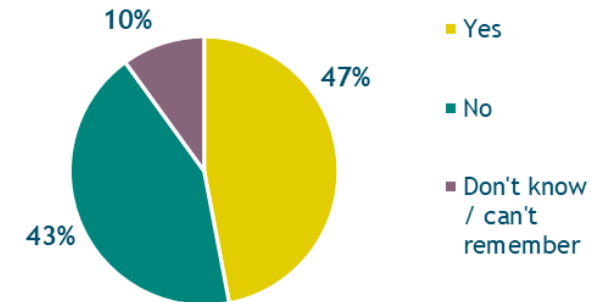
**Coalfields**-(145 survey responses)



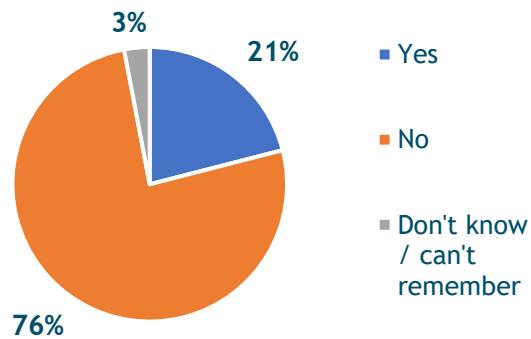
**East**-(91 survey responses)



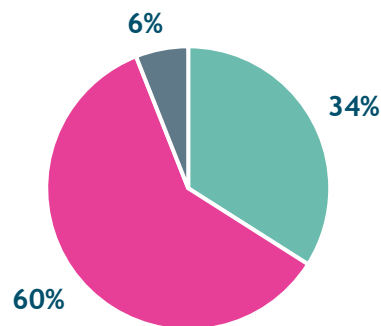
**North**-(115 survey responses)



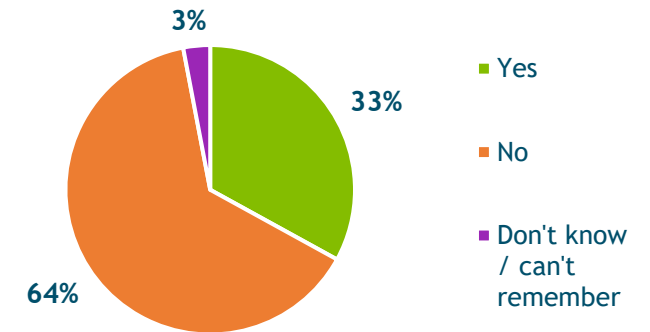
**Washington**-(588 survey responses)



**West 1**-(82 survey responses)



**West 2**-(98 survey responses)





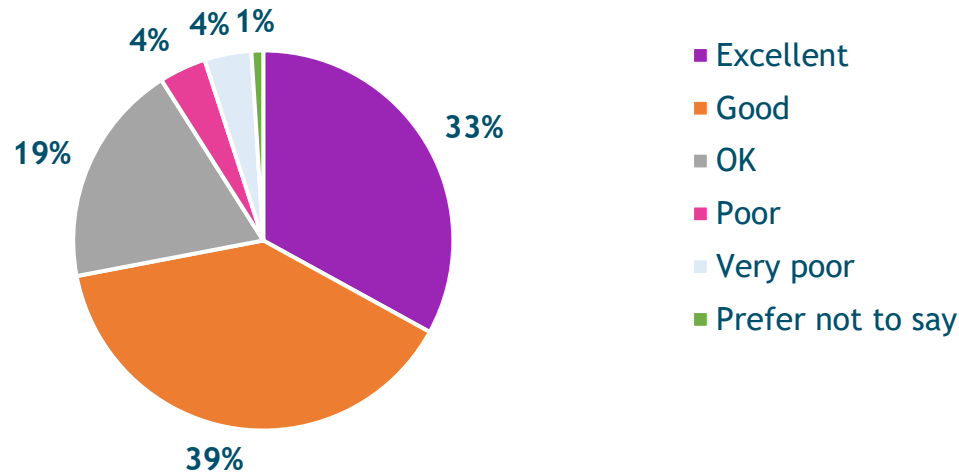
## Q13. How did you book your appointment?

	Coalfields		East		North		Washington		West 1		West 2		Citywide	
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Through my GP surgery	44%	23	56%	9	65%	34	61%	75	57%	16	69%	22	59%	179
Through NHS 111	48%	25	38%	6	33%	17	33%	40	36%	10	28%	9	35%	107
Don't know / can't remember	8%	4	6%	1	2%	1	6%	8	7%	2	3%	1	6%	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>304</b>

Most citywide survey respondents (59%) booked their Extended Access appointment via their GP practice. This was reflected across the PCNs, except the Coalfields PCN where most patients (48%) booked via 111.

## Q14. How would you rate the Extended Access Service?

### Citywide



302 responses were received for this question, of these 72% of respondents citywide who had used the Extended Access Service rated it as either good (39%) or excellent (33%). This trend is reflected across all the PCNs with the highest levels of satisfaction in the Coalfields at 54%.

Most comments left by survey respondents citywide about the Extended Access Service were positive, with people liking the fact that the service is available to them if they are unable to get an appointment at their own surgery. High numbers of respondents stated that they felt listened to and that the treatment they received was good.

Some responds highlighted that the service needs to be better promoted, as they were unaware of its existence.

Most negative comments received were around the lack of continuity of care and some people stated that they were unable to access the treatment they required and were therefore referred back to their own GP practice. Several people from the Washington PCN stated that they had too far to travel to access the service.



“An excellent service. GP had access to my records and was professional and helpful. Appointment time and venue was appropriate.”

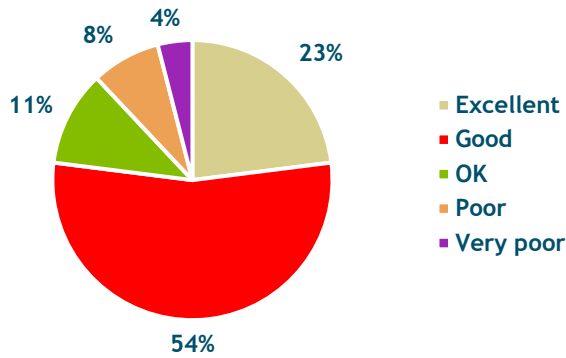
A great service that has really helped me out on the odd occasion I have needed to use it, however many people still unaware that it exists.”

“I did not know about this and I think it’s bad because it should be more accessible and people should know if they are ill out of hours that they can still be seen.”

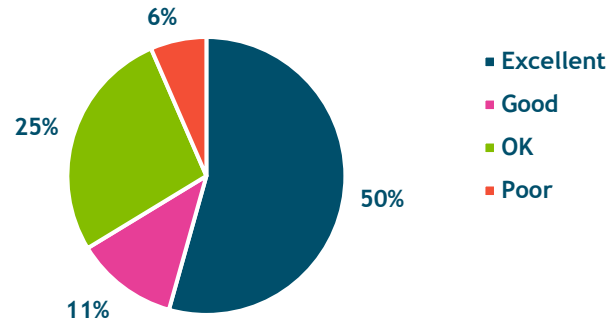


How would you rate the Extended Access Service?

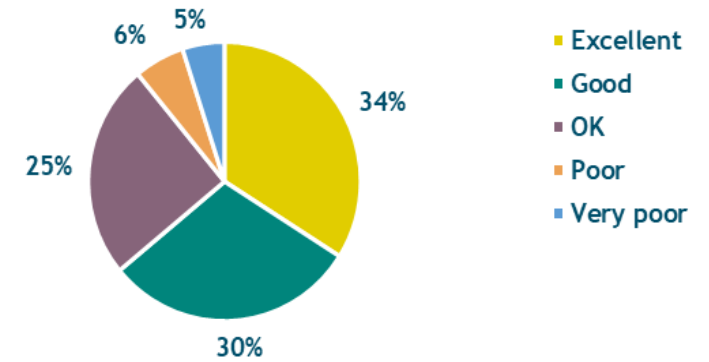
Coalfields-(52 survey responses)



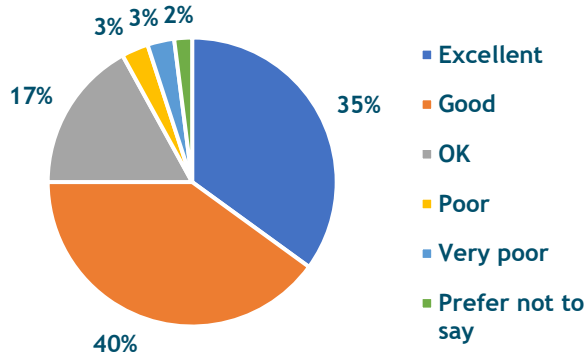
East-(16 survey responses)



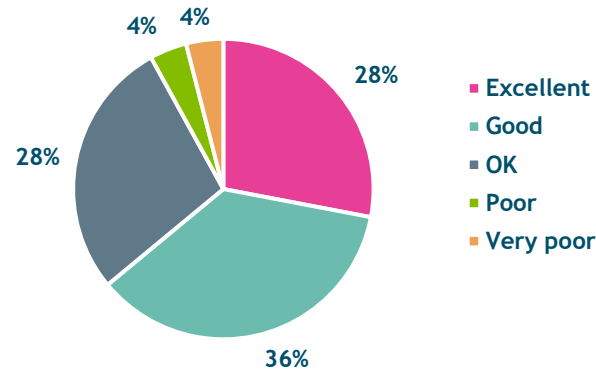
North-(52 survey responses)



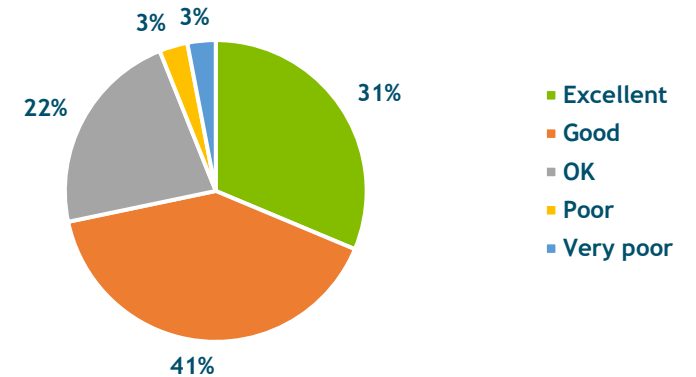
Washington-(123 survey responses)



West 1-(28 survey responses)



West 2-(32 survey responses)



## Discussions with Practice Managers



Conversations were held with at least two Practice Managers in each PCNs, with the aim of finding out what the main challenges they are facing within the practice and to see if there was any correlation with what the patients were also experiencing. (A list of those practices visited can be found in appendix 2)

Across the city we identified several common themes that practices were facing. Themes identified were relevant across the city and no specific themes per PCN were found. Themes identified included:

- **Lack of resources**  
 Many managers explained that they are currently facing issues with resources which was having a negative impact on the delivery of services, one area that was cited by most managers was staff shortages. Managers explained that due to issues with staff recruitment across all departments, staff retention, sickness levels and staff retirement, levels of staffing are proving difficult. Lack of available funds due to cost-of-living rises was also identified as an issue, as was lack of physical space within surgeries to deliver services, to meet the increase in demand.
- **Increase in demand**  
 Most managers explained that they have over the past few years seen an increase in demand for their services, coupled with unrealistic expectations from patients, which in turn has seen more patients displaying negative attitudes and behaviours towards practice staff.
- **Lack of patient knowledge around self-care**  
 Most managers citywide explained they are seeing an increase in patients presenting themselves for care and treatment for minor ailments. It appears that due to lack of knowledge around self-care some patients are presenting inappropriately at GP practices when they should be using other services within primary care such as local pharmacies or items from their first aid kits.
- **Lack of understanding by patients of what services are available within primary care**  
 Many managers acknowledged that Some patients don't seem to be aware of the full services available across primary care. This is from the roles of individual staff within GP practices, such as the Nurse Practitioner to Social Prescribers and services in general that would help them to make the best choices on where they need to go for what.

## Conclusion

The aim of this evaluation was to find out what is working well in general practice and what needs to be improved. Armed with this intelligence, the NHS can use it to ensure that GP practices are organised well, ensuring people have a good experience of care.

The findings, based on feedback received, has shown those areas that are working well and with the highest levels of satisfaction and what people felt least satisfied with and need improving. A summary of these can be found below:

### • What is working well

- **Staff attitudes and professionalism** - an overwhelming number of patients gave positive feedback about doctors, nurses and receptionists working within practices, complimenting them on their professionalism and how well cared for they feel they are.
- **Prescription service** - most comments and feedback received for prescription services was positive, with 84% of patients either very satisfied or satisfied with the service.
- **Extended Access** - high levels of satisfaction were received by those patients who had used the service and with 72% of people rating it as excellent or good.

### • What needs improving

- **Options available to access practices** - high levels of dissatisfaction were associated with the way in which patients must access their GP practice. For some patients options available to them are very limited and/or inflexible.
- **Awareness of the wider primary care offer** - practice managers stated that some patients are not fully aware of those services available throughout primary care including the range of healthcare professionals and their roles and services available within general practice, which they state often results in inappropriate use of appointments.
- **Appointment availability** - several patients were dissatisfied with the limited number of appointments available to book and the lack of face-to-face appointments especially with a GP.
- **Continuity of care** - some patients were dissatisfied with the inability to see the same health professional over a period, which they believe negatively affects the level of care they receive.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - GP Access Survey

Healthwatch Sunderland provides an independent voice for local people who use health and social care services within the NHS or funded by local government. Our role is to ensure that people's views are listened to and fed back to those who commission and provide these services so they can be improved.

This year the people of Sunderland told us that they would like us to look at **GP Access** as one of our main areas of work. In response to this we have designed this survey to help us discover how people access their GP practices, what is working well and what needs improving.

Healthwatch Sunderland takes your privacy seriously. The information you provide on this form will be kept confidential and stored electronically. Your anonymised comments may be shared with commissioning teams, healthcare providers, and Healthwatch England, to help them improve services. We treat all information confidentially and will only share this anonymous information in the exercise of our public function as a local Healthwatch. For further information about our Privacy Policy visit: [www.healthwatchesunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchesunderland.com)

- Tell us the name of your GP practice (e.g., Millfield Medical Practice): .....
- How satisfied are you with the length of time you wait for the phone to be answered at your surgery?

Very satisfied  Satisfied  Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   
Dissatisfied  Very dissatisfied   
I book my appointments online  Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer above:

- How long did you wait for your most recent appointment?

Same day  1-2 days  3-4 days   
5-6 days  1 week  2 weeks   
More than 2 weeks  It was pre-booked  Prefer not to say

If more than 2 weeks, please tell us how long:

How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the amount of time you waited for your appointment?

Very satisfied  Satisfied  Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   
Dissatisfied  Very dissatisfied   
Does not apply (e.g. I book my appointments on-line)  Prefer not to say

Please tell us how you would normally book your appointment

On-line  Telephone  In person at GP practice   
Other (please specify):

.....

Please tell us about any issues you encounter when trying to book your appointments

We would now like to know your thoughts about the doctors, the nurses and the reception staff at the practice. This could be any feedback you wish to share, whether this is positive or negative based on your recent experiences.

Please tell us a little about the doctors at your practice:

Please tell us a little about the nursing staff at your practice:

Please tell us a little about the reception staff at your practice:

- If you get a repeat prescription, how satisfied are you with the service?

Very satisfied  Satisfied  Neither satisfied nor   
Dissatisfied  Very dissatisfied  Not applicable   
Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer above

- Overall, how would you rate the service at your GP practice?

Excellent  Good  OK   
Poor  Very poor  Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer above

Please provide any additional comments you would like to make

### Sunderland Extended Access Service

We would now like to ask you some question about the Extended Access Service (out of hours appointments). This service is available to the patients of Sunderland who may need to see a GP or other healthcare professional on an evening, weekend or bank holiday.

- Have you heard of this service?

Yes  No  Don't know/can't remember

- Have you ever used this service?

Yes  No  Don't know/can't remember

- How did you book your appointment?

Through my GP surgery  Through NHS 111  Don't know/can't remember

- How would you rate the Extended Access Service

Excellent  Good  OK   
Poor  Very poor  Prefer not to say

Please leave any additional comments about the Extended Access Service here:



### A bit about yourself

By telling us more information about yourself, you can help us better understand how people's experiences may differ depending on their personal characteristics. However, if you do not wish to answer these questions you do not have to.

- **What is your sex?**

Male  Female  Prefer not to say

Other (please specify) .....

- **How old are you?** .....

- **Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more?**

Yes  No  Prefer not to say

### What is your ethnicity?

White (includes British, Northern Irish, Gypsy, Irish Traveller, Roma or any other white background)

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (includes White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian or any other Mixed or Multiple background)

Asian or Asian British (Includes Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese or any other Asian background)

Black, Black British Caribbean, African or other Black background

Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)  
.....

**Thank you for your feedback your time is much appreciated!**

The closing date for the survey is **30th September 2022.**

If you require further information, please contact us on: **Phone:** (0191) 5147145

**Email:** [healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net](mailto:healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net) or **visit:** [www.healthwatchesunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchesunderland.com)

To keep up to date with all things health and social care sign up to our newsletter by visiting our website news page, or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

## Appendix 2 - Practice Manager conversations

We spoke to 14 practice managers in total, see below the breakdown.

Coalfields	
■	Hetton Medical Group
	Keiper Medical Practice
East	
■	Park Lane Practice
	Deerness Park
	Southlands Medical Group
North	
■	Bridgeview Medical Group
	Castletown Medical Centre
	Fulwell Medical Centre
Washington	
■	Dr Stephenson and Partner
	Rickleton Medical Centre
West 1	
■	Millfield Medical Group
	Forge Medical Practice
West 2	
■	Village Surgery
	Springwell Medical Group

## Appendix 3 - GP practice survey responses

Coalfields - 152 responses		
	Grangewood Surgery	9
	Herrington Medical Centre	21
	Hetton Group Practice	23
	Houghton Medical Group	57
	Kepier Medical Practice	26
	Westbourne Medical Group	16
East - 101 responses		
	Ashburn	7
	Deerness Park (Hendon & Bunnyhill sites)	26
	Dr. Bhate and Partners	5
	New City Medical	8
	Park Lane Medical Practice	12
	Southlands	36
	Villette	7
North - 129 responses		
	Bridge View Medical Group	73
	Castletown Medical Centre	6
	Dr Gellia and Dr Balaraman	3
	Fulwell Medical Centre	17
	Redhouse Medical Centre	13
	St Bede Medical Centre	17
Washington - 671 responses		
	Concord Medical Practice	4
	Dr Stephenson & Partners	47
	Galleries Medical Centre	30
	I J Healthcare (Harraton & Springwell House)	264
	New Washington Medical Group	14
	Rickleton Medical Centre	277
	Monument Surgeries, Sunderland GP Alliance (Barmston & Galleries)	22
	Other (Includes patients where surgery named as Concord or Victoria Road health centre)	13
West 1 - 94 responses		
	Chester Surgery	2
	Forge Medical Practice	44
	Hylton Medical Group	4
	Millfield Medical Group	18
	Pallion Family Practice	19
	Pallion Health Centre	1
	Wearside Medical Group	6
West 2 - 141 responses		
	Broadway Medical Practice	33
	Happy House Surgery	11
	New Silksworth Medical Practice	18
	South Hylton Surgery	18
	Springwell Medical Group	30
	Village Surgery	4

## Appendix 4 - Demographics

- **Sex** - 1082 people completed this section of the survey. Sex of respondents is as follows:

	Count	Percentage
Female	751	69%
Male	308	29%
Prefer not to say	23	2%

- **Age** - 950 people completed this section of the survey. Ages of respondents is as follows:

	Count	Percentage
18-24	21	2%
25-34	76	8%
35-44	129	14%
45-54	164	17%
55-64	230	24%
65-74	233	25%
75 or older	96	10%
Prefer not to say	1	0

- **Physical or mental health conditions or long-term illness** - 1074 people complete this section of the survey. The findings are as follows:

	Count	Percentage
Yes	606	56%
No	394	37%
Prefer not to say	74	7%

- **Ethnicity** - 1080 people complete this section of the survey. 95% of respondents identified as White British, 5% identified as other ethnicities. Please see below for detail:

	Count
White: British / English / Northern Irish / Scottish / Welsh	1032
Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani	12
Black / Black British: African, Caribbean	6
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Black African, Black Caribbean & White	2
Middle eastern origin	1
Prefer not to say	27

## Appendix 5 - Distribution list

### North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

Scott Watson, Director of Place (Sunderland)

David Thompson, Northeast and North Cumbria Healthwatch ICB Participant Lead

Lisa Anderson, Senior Involvement and Engagement Lead

Suzanne Watson, Senior Primary Care Commissioning Manager

Ann Fox, Director of Nursing (Sunderland, South Tyneside and Durham)

Wendy Thompson, Head of Primary Care

### Sunderland Local Authority

Councillor Graeme Miller, Leader of the Council

Graham King, Director of Adult Services

Cllr Kelly Chequer, Portfolio Holder for Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Board Chair

Anne Wilson, Commissioning Specialist

Ann Dingwall, Lead Commissioning Adults

Jane Hibberd, Head of Strategy and Policy, Health and Wellbeing Board

Jessica May, Sunderland Partnership Manager

Cllr Michael Butler, Chairman, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Gerry Taylor, Director of Public Health

Wendy Mitchell, Public Health Lead

### South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust

Ken Bremner, Chief Executive

Liz Davies, Director of Communications

Anna Davidson, Involvement and Engagement Officer and TITO Lead

Lauren Robinson, Communications & Involvement Manager

### All Together Better

Philip Foster, Managing Director, All Together Better Sunderland

Penny Davison, Senior Commissioning Manager, All Together Better Sunderland

### Sunderland GP Alliance

Chief Exec Jon Twelves of the General Practice Alliance

Ashleigh Gordon Pucci, Supervisor MDT Co-ordinator, Sunderland GP Alliance

### Other contacts

Delana Lawson, Development Officer, Healthwatch England

Research Helpdesk, Healthwatch England

Communications Team, Together for Children

Kay Wheeler, Sunderland Echo

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