

Methods of GP Access

Summary Report October 2020

From patients experiences indicating difficulties accessing GP surgeries/ practices for various needs such as: appointments and medication made by telephone and via the internet.

Part A- 84 patients/ respondents completed an online survey.

Part B—Volunteers and staff made 464 phone calls to a sample of GP surgeries/ practices (44) over a six week period.

Part A Key Findings

- One respondent said that they had attempted 120 times to telephone their GP surgery/ practice.
- While 28 commented they were not able to get through.
- 55 respondents telephoned between 1 to 6 times before being able to contact their GP surgery/ practice.
- 43 respondents do not use online appointments and 27 respondents that did use online services, said that they had not found it easy, whilst 16 said that it did not work.
- 17 respondents who were not able to contact their GP surgery/ practice did nothing, 12 had sought advice through the internet, 10 had self-treated and 10 had spoken to a pharmacist.

Part B Key findings

- 402 of 464 calls were answered/connected on the first attempt (87%), 62 calls were not answered or connected on the 1st attempt/call (13%).
- Once through messages varied in length with lots of information to take in. With confusing times on opening hours (differing from their website), kept patients waiting to speak to staff and on one occasion it took 43 minutes to speak the staff member.
- Within many messages patients are directed to book online appointments via eConsult. Some patients do not access the internet.
- 93% of surgeries refer patients to other care venues if an appointment cannot be had to meet patient's needs.

Signposting

- On a number of occasion Healthwatch staff contacted surgeries/ practices on behalf of patients to enable surgery/ practice to call patients for such needs as: appointments, medication, repeat prescriptions and urgent professional calls.

Recommendations

- Clinical and professional staff have access to a dedicated non patient telephone number to 'each' GP surgery/ practice when needed for such things as medication updates, safeguarding issues etc
- Patient awareness of online GP services could be increased.
- Access to adequate and well staffed telephone systems is very important.
- Patient telephone messages could be reduced in content and length with an option to skip.
- Digitally excluded patients (no internet) should still be able to access GP services via telephone.

To access the full report

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