



Swanage Medical Practice Patient Participation Group

Patient Survey 2024

Summary

In April 2024, members of the Patient Participation Group (PPG) at Swanage Medical Practice undertook a Patient Survey on behalf of the Practice.

The Survey was administered in person by PPG members in the Surgery during the third week of April 2024 - 257 patients who had attended the Surgery for a face-to-face appointment took part. We are very grateful to those who took the time to complete our Survey.

People's experience of making an appointment had improved since we carried out our last Survey in April 2023, following the introduction of the new digital telephone system:

- 81% had found it either very easy or fairly easy to get through to the Practice on the phone, compared to 77% in 2023
- 96% described their experience of making their appointment as either very good or fairly good, compared to 92% in 2023.

People's overall experience of the Practice was similar in the two Surveys: 94% described their overall experience as either very good or fairly good, compared to 96% in 2023.

More than a quarter of those who participated in the Survey also took up our invitation to provide written comments about their experiences of the Practice. The main issue they raised was the difficulty getting an appointment to see a doctor in a timely manner.

In this year's Survey, we also included questions about:

- The information and advice patients had sought before booking their appointment - 17% had tried to treat themselves, 9% had sought advice from a friend or family member, 11% had spoken to a Pharmacist and 12% had used an online NHS service

- Their use of online services - 35% had used the NHS App and 30% were ordering repeat prescriptions online
- The Practice Website - 30 people made really helpful suggestions for improving the Practice Website
- Whether patients thought they would use a Self Help Health Kiosk if one was installed in the Surgery - more than half said they would.

The results of the Survey are set out in full in this Report, together with all the comments provided by those who took part.

We have made a number of recommendations to address the issues raised by those who participated in the Survey, which the PPG will be supporting the Practice to take forward - these include:

- Keeping patients informed of changes in the way services are delivered at the Practice and ensuring patients are aware of alternatives to a GP appointment -
- Giving consideration to the introduction of a fairer and more equitable way to allocate appointments which better meets patients' clinical needs - similar to systems already being introduced in other GP Practices
- Reviewing the length of appointments - GP appointments have already been increased to 15 minutes
- Undertaking another review of the Practice Website to take on board the suggestions made by those who took part in the Survey.

The full list of the PPG's recommendations is also set out in the Report.

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Introduction

In April 2024, Swanage Medical Practice Patient Participation Group (PPG) carried out a Patient Survey at the Surgery on behalf of the Practice.

The PPG had previously carried out a Patient Survey at the Surgery in April 2023 to explore in more detail why patients had responded the way they had to the GP Patient Survey, the national survey carried out by Ipsos every year. We focused in particular on:

- Patients' experiences of making their appointment;
- Their experience of the appointment; and
- Their overall experience of the Practice.

The results of this Survey were published on the Practice's website in June 2023. One of the recommendations included in the report was to repeat the Survey, as a new telephone system had been installed only a few weeks before this Survey had been undertaken - the PPG wanted to find out whether patients' experiences of phoning the Practice for an appointment had improved.

In addition to the questions included in the 2023 Patient Survey, we decided to also include questions about the following issues in this year's Patient Survey:

- What information and advice patients had sought before booking their appointment
- Their use of online services
- The Practice Website
- Whether patients thought they would use a Health Self Help if one was installed in the Surgery.

Method

After agreeing with the Practice Manager which questions should be included in the 2024 Patient Survey, the Chair of the PPG put together a Survey Questionnaire, a copy of which is included at **Appendix 1**.

In the Survey Questionnaire, we included all the questions included in the 2023 Patient Survey to enable us to see what progress had been made over the last year. In addition, we agreed to include questions about:

- *What information and advice patients had sought before booking their appointment*
In Summer 2023, the PPG worked with the Practice to bring together information on services patients can access themselves without the need for a GP appointment and we were interested to see the impact of this initiative.
- *Their use of online services*
The PPG had previously worked with the Practice to promote the use of online services - and there has also been a national campaign to promote awareness of the NHS App. We were therefore interested to see what proportion of patients registered with the Swanage Medical Practice are now using these services.
- *The Practice Website*
In Spring 2022, the PPG worked with the Practice to develop a new Practice Website. In the 2023 National GP Patient Survey, 68% of those who returned a completed questionnaire indicated that they found it easy to use the Practice website to look for information or to access services - but 32% said it was not easy. We were therefore interested to find out how patients who had used the Practice Website thought it could be improved.
- *Whether patients thought they would use a Health Kiosk if one was installed*
The Practice has been exploring the possibility of installing a Self Help Health Kiosk at the Practice. A Health Kiosk enables patients to take simple measurements, such as their height, weight and blood pressure. It can also be set up to enable patients to answer health questionnaires and to do medication reviews. However, a Health Kiosk would represent quite a sizable investment for the Practice, so the GP Partners were keen to understand how many patients might use a Health Kiosk if one was installed, before going ahead and purchasing one - assuming the necessary funds can be identified.

We used the same methodology for undertaking the Survey as we had used in April 2023 - patients who had attended the Surgery for an appointment were invited by PPG members in person to complete a questionnaire before leaving the Surgery.

The Survey was administered by seven PPG members over five days, from 15 to 19 April, between 9:00am and 12:30pm and between 2:00pm and 4:45pm each day. PPG members, who were stationed in the Reception area at the Surgery, invited

patients who had attended the Surgery for an appointment that day to complete a Survey Questionnaire before leaving the Surgery. This is the same methodology as we used for the 2023 Patient Survey.

Those participating in the Survey were shown information about the Self Help Health Kiosk the Practice was considering installing in the Surgery - a copy is included at **Appendix 2**. PPG members also talked to patients about the Health Kiosk - as well as the existing Blood Pressure Measuring Area.

Not all patients agreed to participate, either because they had to get back to work or to school or had another appointment to get to, or because their car parking was running out or they had a bus to catch. Some felt too unwell to participate - and others just did not wish to participate. It is likely, therefore, that fewer younger patients were surveyed than had actually attended the Surgery on the days when the Survey was being undertaken.

We also noticed that, as the week went by, more and more patients were attending for their second appointment that week, so did not complete another questionnaire. As a result, the number of questionnaires completed each day declined as the week went by.

Results

PPG members enjoyed undertaking the Patient Survey and, as was the case in 2023, felt this was a worthwhile initiative for them to be involved with.

A total of 257 questionnaires were completed.

[Figures to be added on the total number of appointments attended that week, including the number of people who attended for two or more appointments]

The results for each question are set out below, together with the results for comparable questions included in the Patient Survey undertaken by the PPG at the Surgery in April 2023.

Not every questionnaire was completed in full, so the denominators used to calculate percentages have been adjusted accordingly.

Summaries of the main issues raised by patients in the comments they included in their completed questionnaires are also set out below - their comments are set out in full at **Appendix 3**.

Observations made by PPG members administering the Survey have also been included.

The results for comparable questions included in the 2023 GP Patient Survey are also included - although it should be noted that the methodology used for this Survey was different to the one used for the Practice Surveys.

The GP Patient Survey is a national survey, carried out by Ipsos every year. A random sample of patients registered with each GP Practice is invited by post to participate - questionnaires are sent to over two million people across the UK each year. In 2023, 258 patients registered with Swanage Medical Practice were invited to participate in the Survey and 113 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a completion rate of 44%. The results can be found at: <https://www.gp-patient.co.uk>.

In addition, every effort was made by PPG members to include as many as possible of the patients attending the Surgery each day in the Practice Surveys, whereas it may be that patients who had concerns were more likely to participate in the National GP Patient Survey.

Section 1: Making today's appointment

Q.1: How did you make your appointment?

Method	Practice Patient Survey 2024		Practice Patient Survey 2023	
	Number	%	Number	%
I telephoned the Practice to make an appointment	128	50%	121	56%
Someone at the Practice phoned me to book my appointment	43	17%	39	18%
I booked my appointment in person	57	22%	29	13%
I booked my appointment online	1	<1%	0	0%
My appointment was made by one of the doctors	13*	5%	8	4%
One of the nurses booked my appointment	9	4%	13	6%
My appointment was sent to me in the post	6	2%	3	1%
My appointment was sent to me by text/email	1	<1%	1	1%
My appointment was booked for me by NHS111	0	0%	1	1%
My appointment was booked for me by a friend, as I find it too difficult to book appointments myself	0	0%	1	1%

* Includes one patient whose appointment was made by the Paramedic

Q2: Generally, how easy do you find it to get through to the Practice on the phone?

	Practice Patient Survey 2024		Practice Patient Survey 2023		2023 GP Patient Survey	
	Number	Percentage	Number	%	Number	%
Very easy	69	27%	65	30%	19	14%
Fairly easy	139	54%	100	47%	84	62%
Not very easy	24	9%	29	14%	26	19%
Not at all easy	9	4%	12	6%	7	5%
Have not tried	15	6%	8	4%	-	-

A number of patients commented on how helpful the Receptionist had been. However, there were 25 more negative comments about the process of making an appointment - the main issues raised by patients included:

- Some difficulties getting through to the Practice on the phone - a number of patients said they prefer to come into the Surgery in person to book an appointment because they find it so difficult to get through on the phone
- Long waits to speak to a Receptionist once they had got through to the Practice on the phone
- Having to listen to too many messages when the phone is first answered.

Q3: Were you satisfied with the appointment you were offered?

	Practice Patient Survey 2024		Practice Patient Survey 2023			2023 GP Patient Survey	
	Number	%	Number	%		Number	%
Yes	249	98%	205	95%	Yes, and accepted appt	107	83%
No	6	2%	19	5%	No, but still took appt	21	17%
					Declined appt	1	1%

The main issue raised by those who were not satisfied with the appointment they had been offered was the length of time they had to wait to see a GP. Several people reported that the earliest appointment they had been offered was in three weeks or longer, which they thought was too long to wait - and, while undertaking the Survey, PPG members heard some patients being told that the earliest appointment available to see their GP was in six weeks.

Several patients reported that there had been no appointments available at all to see their GP when they had first tried to book an appointment and that they had been advised to ring back a few days later.

PPG members also observed that patients who came in person to book an appointment were either offered an appointment the same day because their problem was deemed to be sufficiently urgent to necessitate a same day appointment, or were offered a routine appointment some weeks hence. We were concerned that some of these patients did in fact need to be seen sooner than this, but there did not seem to be an option for patients to be offered an appointment within a week, for example. Some patients were clearly more easily persuaded that their problem did not necessitate a same day appointment than others - and PPG members were also concerned that some patients with potentially serious problems were having to wait too long.

Q4: Overall, how would you describe your experience of making your appointment?

	Practice Patient Survey 2024		Practice Patient Survey 2023		2023 GP Patient Survey	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Very good	181	72%	151	71%	41	30%
Fairly good	61	24%	45	21%	60	43%
Neither good nor poor	7	3%	13	6%	15	10%
Fairly poor	3	1%	4	2%	14	10%
Poor	1	<1%	2	1%	9	7%

Positive comments were received from 27 patients.

However, more negative comments were received from 11 patients. The main issue raised was the long waiting times to see their GP.

Three patients commented that their original appointment had been cancelled due to staff sickness, meaning they had to wait even longer to be seen.

Q5: Before you tried to get this appointment, did you do any of the following?

	Practice Patient Survey 2024		2023 National GP Patient Survey	
	Number	%	Number	%
Used an online NHS service	32	12%	23	17%
Used a non-NHS online service	6	2%	13	9%
Spoke to Pharmacist	22	11%	17	13%
Tried to treat myself	44	17%	42	31%
Called an NHS helpline - eg NHS 111	9	4%	17	13%
Contacted or used another NHS service	4	2%	5	4%
Asked for advice from a friend or family member	24	9%	23	17%
Tried to get information or advice from a non-NHS service	10	4%	10	8%
Other	7	3%		
Did not try to get information or advice beforehand	159	62%	50	37%

It should be noted that many of those participating in the 2024 Practice Patient Survey, who indicated that they had not tried to do anything before getting their appointment, said this was because they had not initiated their appointment - they had either been invited to attend for the appointment by the Practice or had been advised to make the appointment by a health professional working either at the Practice or at another NHS service.

Of those who participated in 2024 Practice Patient Survey, patients aged under 60 were nearly twice as likely to indicate that they had used an online NHS service than those aged 60+ (66% compared to 34%) - although one person aged over 80 said they had used an online NHS service before trying to get their appointment.

The number of different actions taken by people participating in the 2024 Practice Patient Survey before they had tried to get their appointment is set out below - 116 patients had taken at least one action before they tried to get their appointment and 33 had taken more than one action.

Practice Patient Survey 2024	
Number of actions taken before trying to get an appointment	Number of patients
Six actions	1
Five actions	1
Four actions	3
Three actions	13
Two actions	15
One actions	83
Total Number of patients who took at least one action	116

One patient had taken six different actions before trying to get their appointment:

- Using an online NHS service;
- Using a non-NHS online service;
- Speaking to a Pharmacist;
- Contacting another NHS service;
- Asking for advice from a friend or family member; and
- Trying to treat themselves.

Another patient had taken five different actions:

- Using an online NHS service;
- Using a non-NHS online service;
- Trying to get information advice from a non-NHS service
- Asking for advice from a friend or family member; and
- Trying to treat themselves.

Section 2: Today's appointment

Q6: Who was your appointment with?

Type of Clinician	Practice Patient Survey 2024		Practice Patient Survey 2023	
	Number	%	Number	%
GP	96	38%	76	36%
Locum GP	10	4%		
GP Registrar	5	2%	6	3%
Physician Associate	5	2%	3	1%
Advanced Nurse Practitioner	19	7%	26	12%
Paramedic	11	4%	5	2%
First Contact Physiotherapist	3	1%	3	1%
Practice Nurse	53	21%	74	35%
Healthcare Assistant	37	15%	19	9%
Another healthcare professional	7	3%		
Don't know	10	4%		

These results should be interpreted with caution, as many patients were not sure which type of clinician they had seen - or who they had seen. Ten patients indicated on their questionnaires that they did not know who they had seen, but many others asked PPG members for help with answering this question. For example, many of those who had attended the Surgery for a blood test were not sure whether they had seen a Healthcare Assistant or a Practice Nurse.

Some of the patients who indicated that they had been seen by another healthcare professional (ie one not listed) had in fact been seen by a Midwife.

Q7: Thinking about the reason for your appointment, were your needs met?

	Practice Patient Survey 2024		Practice Patient Survey 2023		2023 National GP Patient Survey	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes, definitely	221	88%	187	91%	83	62%
Yes, to some extent	30	12%	16	8%	37	28%
No, not at all	1	<1%	2	1%	13	10%

Although the majority of patients felt their needs had been met, some patients were not entirely happy with the outcome of their consultations. One patient had been booked in for a procedure, but then been told this was not something that could be undertaken at the Surgery. Another patient had been seen by a nurse who felt that a doctor's opinion was also needed, but, as no doctor was available at the time, the patient had to return to the Surgery later that day to be seen by a Doctor. Another patient commented that they had not been given an explanation for their problem - and another did not feel they had been given much information.

Section 3: Online services

Q8: Which of the following GP/NHS online services have you used?

	Practice Patient Survey 2024			2023 National GP Patient Survey	
	Number	%		Number	%
NHS App	89	35%		Not asked	
Practice website	62	24%		Not asked	
Ordering a repeat prescription	77	30%		31	21%
eConsult	44	17%		Not asked	
Accessing test results	39	15%		Not asked	
Accessing medical records	33	13%		21	14%
Filling in an online form	19	8%		9	6%
None of above	111	43%		91	64%

Number of GP/NHS online services - 2024 Practice Patient Survey

2024 Practice Patient Survey		
Number of GP/NHS online services used	Number of patients	% of patients
Seven online services	9	3.5%
Six online services	4	1.6%
Five online services	5	1.9%
Four online services	15	5.8%
Three online services	24	9.3%
Two online services	28	10.9%
One online service	61	23.7%
None	111	43.2%

Q9: The PPG helped redesign the Practice Website in 2022. If you have used the website, please tell us how you think it could be improved

Thirty people responded to this question, 17 of whom were happy with the website.

Suggestions for improving the website included:

- Providing clearer contact details on the website - including providing an email address for patients to use to contact the Practice
- Making eConsult easier to find on the website - and making it available out of hours
- Making it easier to find the link to SystemOnline
- Enabling the booking of appointments online.

Three people thought the design of the website could be improved by simplifying the design and making it less cluttered - and by making it easier to navigate and more user focused.

Two people thought the language used on the website could be easier to understand and that the text should be written in plain English.

One person had found it difficult to register online and another was experiencing difficulty with setting up access to their test results.

One person said they would like to also be able to access the results of tests undertaken at hospitals online - and another thought there should be more coordination between the websites of the various providers of NHS services.

Section 4: Health Kiosk

Q10: Have you ever used the Blood Pressure Measuring Area in the Waiting Room?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	78	31%
No	173	69%

Many people we surveyed were unaware that there is a Blood Pressure Measuring Area in the Waiting Room - and others commented that the signage could be improved.

Nine people provided comments, the majority of whom told us they owned their own Blood Pressure Machine and monitored their Blood Pressure at home - indeed, many told us they had been advised to do this by their GP, as it provides a truer picture of their Blood Pressure. Some patients told us they have their Blood Pressure measured at a Pharmacy.

Some felt embarrassed to measure their Blood Pressure in the Waiting Room, in front of other patients, and recommended that a more private area within the Surgery should be identified.

Others told us they were reluctant to use the Blood Pressure Measuring Device in the Waiting Room because they were concerned about the hygiene of the Blood Pressure Cuff.

Q11: Would you use a Health Kiosk if one was installed?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	138	54%
No	55	22%
Not sure	61	24%

A number of patients told us that they had used Health Kiosks in other GP Surgeries and were really positive about their experiences.

Section 5: Overall experience of the Practice

Q12: Overall, how would you describe your experience of the Practice?

	Practice Patient Survey 2024		Practice Patient Survey 2023		2023 National GP Patient Survey	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Very good	171	68%	163	77%	62	44%
Fairly good	64	26%	39	19%	57	40%
Neither good, nor poor	12	5%	5	2%	15	11%
Fairly poor	2	1%	3	1%	6	4%
Very poor	1	<1%	1	1%	1	1%

Positive comments were received from 36 patients, mixed comments (ie both positive and negative) were received from 7 patients and negative comments were received from 21 patients.

The main issue raised was the difficulty getting a face-to-face appointment to see a doctor in a timely manner, particularly with the patient’s own GP - and the lack of availability of GP appointments.

Some patients reported poor experiences when speaking to Receptionists - including being told there were no appointments available and being turned away.

A few patients reported poor experiences with Doctors at the Practice - for example, one patient reported that a diagnosis had been missed and another patient reported that the Doctor they had initially been allocated to had not been sufficiently understanding.

One patient reported being seen by a Nurse who needed the opinion of a Doctor, but, as no Doctor was available at the time, they had had to return to the Surgery later in the day.

One patient commented that they had a lot of faith in their own Doctor, but had received conflicting advice when seen by other Doctors at the Practice. Another commented that they would prefer to see their own Doctor so they can build up a relationship with them.

One patient commented that the system is obviously set up to meet the needs of a quota of patients, rather than to meet the needs of individual patients - so, once all the appointment slots are booked (ie on a first-come-first-served basis), appointments are no longer available for patients presenting later in the day whose needs might be greater than those who have already been allocated an appointment. They felt that the current system for allocating on-the-day appointments therefore prioritises those who know how to work the system and shout the loudest, rather than those in greatest need.

Another patient commented that they thought the 10 minutes allowed for an appointment was much too short and it was no wonder the Doctors were not able to keep to time and stick to appointment times.

One patient commented that the one-hour limit on the disabled parking at the front of the Surgery is often not enough time if there are long waits to be seen or appointments are slow.

Another patient commented that it is difficult to synchronise bus times with appointment times - this is a particular issue for those travelling from Studland.

One patient commented that they wished the service was more patient focused and comprehensible to the service user - and another reported problems with referrals through the System.

One patient commented that it would be good to have regular feedback sessions.

Section 4: Demographic characteristics

Q13: Gender

Of those who completed the question, 61% indicated that they were Female and 39% indicated that they were Male.

Q14: Age

The age breakdown of those who responded was as follows:

Age	Number	Percentage
0-9 years	1	<1%
10-19 years	6	2%
20-29 years	4	2%
30-39 years	17	7%
40-49 years	17	7%
50-59 years	30	12%
60-69 years	54	22%
70-79 years	66	27%
80-89 years	48	19%
90+ years	6	2%

Discussion

Experience of making an appointment

It was good to see that people's experience of making an appointment had further improved, with the majority of people now describing their experience as good (96% in the 2024 Practice Patient Survey).

A new digital telephone system was installed at the Practice in April 2023, which enables the number of calls coming in at any one time to be monitored, as well as the length of time people are waiting to have their call answered. When the number of calls coming in increases and waiting times for calls to be answered increase, additional staff can be deployed to answer calls, thereby reducing waiting times - although there will still be times when there are insufficient staff available to answer all the calls coming into the Practice in a timely manner.

Experience of being seen by a clinician at the Practice

The majority of those who participated in the 2024 Practice Patient Survey felt their needs had been met by the Clinician they had seen during their appointment.

However, many patients were again not sure which type of Clinician they had seen - or who they had seen. This could be addressed, at least some extent, by providing photographs of clinical staff at Reception and on the Practice Website, so patients know who they are about to see / have seen.

Overall experience of the Practice

Although the majority of those who participated in the 2024 Practice Patient Survey described their overall experience of the Practice as good (94%), satisfaction was slightly lower than it had been in the 2023 Patient Survey (96%).

The main Issues raised by those patients who provided comments in the 2024 Practice Patient Survey were:

- Difficulties getting an on-the-day appointment with a Clinician
- Long waits to see a GP, particularly the patient's named GP, for problems deemed to be non-urgent - and the lack of availability of GP appointments
- The benefits of always being seen by your own GP, particularly for long-term conditions, so the GP and the patient can get to know each other.
- The problems with the current system in place for allocating urgent on-the-day appointments, which allocates appointments on a first-come-first-served basis and therefore prioritises those who know how to work the system and who shout the loudest, rather than those in greatest need
- The length of appointment slots.

Addressing the shortage of GP appointments continues to be a challenging issue to address - for all GP Practices.

In 2023, the PPG worked with the Practice to raise awareness of alternatives to a GP appointment, including Services patients can refer themselves to, and it is clear from the 2024 Patient Practice Survey that many patients are seeking information and advice from other sources before trying to get an appointment - and many are trying to treat themselves.

Some patients can be redirected to an alternative Service or to another member of the Multi-Disciplinary Team of Clinicians now working at the Practice - either by the Receptionists or by the Clinicians undertaking triage.

However, it is essential that those patients who do need to be seen by a Doctor are enabled to do so in a timely manner.

For urgent on-the-day appointments, the Practice currently operates a first-come-first-served system for booking urgent on-the-day appointments. This means that, once all the appointment slots have been allocated, no more patients can be booked in to be seen during that session - even if they have an urgent problem. While we were undertaking the Survey, we heard a number of patients presenting at Reception during the morning being told to ring the Surgery back at 2:00pm to try and get an appointment during the afternoon session.

For appointments deemed to be non-urgent, it was clear that, for some patients wanting to see their own, named GP, waiting times to be seen can be several weeks - indeed, while we were undertaking the Survey, we heard patients being offered appointments five or six weeks hence. This may be quite appropriate - for a routine follow-up appointment, for example. However, it was also clear that some patients needed to be seen much more quickly than this. Their problem may not have been sufficiently urgent for them to need to be seen as an emergency on that day, but was of sufficient concern to warrant an earlier appointment than several weeks hence. It was also clear that there needs to be a balance between encouraging patients to always see their named GP for problems considered to be non-urgent and enabling them to see another GP if they present with a more urgent problem.

NHS England has recently published helpful guidance for GP Practices on how to improve care navigation and triage processes in general practice¹. One of their recommendations is that, when determining the urgency of appointment required, a hierarchy of appointments should be available to those undertaking triage to address different levels of urgency (eg same day, this week, within 2 weeks).

Some GP Practices are now implementing Total Triage Models supported by Clinical Decision Support Systems.

For example, GPs at the Lime Tree Surgery in Leytonstone are using KliniK Healthcare Solutions to support them to undertake fast, accurate triage for all

¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/how-to-improve-care-navigation-in-general-practice/>

appointments, which ensures that urgent appointments are offered to those most in need - rather than to those who know how to work the system and shout the loudest. A presentation about their new model was included in a recent Patients Association webinar¹. Information about their new system, including a leaflet produced for patients, can also be found on their website².

Wareham Surgery has also recently introduced a Total Triage Model, using eConsult, which means that all requests for an appointment are now being reviewed by a Clinician to determine the clinical need of the patient³. One of the reasons they introduced this new System was to address the inequality that existed with their previous System in who got an appointment - often this was on a first-come first-served basis, which did not take into account patient need. Since introducing their new System, waiting times for appointments have improved dramatically. Call volumes have also reduced, meaning that phone lines have been freed up for those without internet access. Patient feedback has also generally been very positive⁴.

It is clear, though, from experience in other Practices within Dorset, that the introduction of such systems does need to be carefully managed - and supported by a clear communication strategy.

Other issues raised by patients who participated in our Survey, some of which it should be fairly straightforward to address, include:

- The one-hour time limit on the disabled parking at the front of the Surgery, which is often not enough time if clinicians are running behind and there are long waiting times to be seen.
- The difficulty synchronising bus times with appointment times - this is a particular issue for those travelling from Studland
- Ensuring patients are called in for their appointments, as well as their name appearing on the screens in the Waiting Room
- The need for regular opportunities for patients to provide feedback.

Online Services

More than a third of those who completed the 2024 Practice Patient Survey said they had used the NHS App. Although this question was not asked in the last National GP Patient Survey, we do know that, by February 2024, the NHS App had more than 34 million registered users (60% of the total population of England).

¹ <https://www.patients-association.org.uk/understanding-changes-in-primary-care-digital-access-webinar>.

² <https://limetreesurgery.gpsurgery.net/services/new-appointment-system/>

³ <https://warehamsurgery.nhs.uk/may-2024/>

⁴ <https://warehamsurgery.nhs.uk/update-may-2024/>

More of the patients we surveyed in April 2024 had ordered a repeat prescription online than had been the case in the last National GP Patient Survey (undertaken in January 2023) - 30% compared to 21%. This is likely to increase further as a result of NHS Dorset's *Only order what you need* Campaign, one element of which means that Community Pharmacists are no longer able to order repeat prescriptions for patients - the onus is now on the patient to request repeat prescriptions for their medication only when they need it.

There is clearly scope to increase the use of other Online services, including accessing test results and medical records online and using eConsult - although it was good to see that some patients had used all seven of the online services listed in the Survey Questionnaire.

A few years ago, the PPG worked with the Practice to promote awareness of online services and the benefits of using these services and consideration should be given to undertaking another similar campaign.

Practice Website

After reviewing the results of the 2021 GP Patient Survey, the Practice decided to create a new Practice Website as part of its drive to improve communication. PPG members were given the opportunity to comment on the new Website before it was launched in May 2022. However, it is clear from the results of the 2023 GP Patient Survey that more could still be done to make it easier for people to use the Practice Website.

In addition, since the launch of the new Practice Website, NHS Digital has issued guidance on how to create Practice Websites that are accessible and easy for patients to use¹.

Of those completing the 2024 Practice Patient Survey, 24% said they had used the Practice Website - and 30 people made suggestions for how they thought it could be further improved.

A number of people thought the design of the website could be simplified and made easier to navigate - including, for example, providing clearer contact details for the Practice and making it easier to find eConsult and SystemOnline.

After looking at the websites of other GP Practices, such as Wareham Surgery² and Corfe Castle Surgery³, it is clear that one of the ways the Website could be made easier to navigate would be to place all the tabs most frequently used at the top of the homepage - this would mean that patients would no longer have to scroll down to find what they are looking for.

¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/creating-a-highly-usable-and-accessible-gp-website-for-patients/>

² <https://warehamsurgery.nhs.uk>

³ <https://corfecastlesurgery.co.uk>

Others thought the website could be more user focused and written in more accessible language - the PPG would be keen to work with the Practice again to review all the content to ensure that it is as user-friendly as possible.

One patient suggested that it would be good idea if an email address were provided on the website for patients to use to contact the Practice. Some Practices do provide an email address for patients to contact the Reception Team and this can work well if patients only use this for contacting the Practice with administrative requests. However, problems can result if patients use this mode of contacting the Practice for medical problems - particularly if they have an urgent problem. Some Practices, such as the Highgate Group Practice, have put clear protocols in place to enable patients to contact the Practice online appropriately¹.

Self Help Health Kiosk

It was interesting to see that more than half of those who participated in the Survey said they would use a Self Help Health Kiosk if one was installed in the Surgery. A number of patients told us they had used a Health Kiosk in another GP Surgery and were really positive about their experiences of using a Health Kiosk.

Some patients commented that they would be more likely to use a Self Help Health Kiosk if there was someone there to show them how it worked the first time they used it. This is perhaps something PPG members could help with.

Many people said they were monitoring their Blood Pressure at home with their own Blood Pressure Monitoring Equipment - this was the main reason why people were not using the Blood Pressure Measuring Area currently set up in the Waiting Room.

Others told us that they were embarrassed to measure their Blood Pressure in the Waiting Room in front of other patients and recommended that a more private area within the Surgery should be identified. If the decision is taken to install a Health Kiosk, then care would also need to be taken when deciding where it is placed to ensure patient privacy.

Many people did not even know there was a Blood Pressure Measuring Device set up in the Waiting Room and recommended that the existing Blood Pressure Measuring Area should be better signposted and labelled more clearly. The same would apply to a Health Kiosk if it is decided to go ahead and install one in the Surgery.

¹ <https://www.highgategrouppractice.com>

Recommendations

The PPG recommends that the following actions are taken:

- Continue to take measures to keep patients informed of changes in the way services are delivered at the Practice, including the increasing range of clinicians of different clinical backgrounds who are now part of the Multi-Disciplinary Team providing services at the Practice - the PPG would like to continue supporting the Practice on this issue
- Continue to take measures to ensure patients are aware of alternatives to a GP appointment, including services they can refer themselves to - the PPG would like to continue supporting the Practice on this issue
- Ensure Receptionists receive ongoing training in care navigation
- Consider introducing a fairer and more equitable way to allocate appointments which better meets patients' clinical needs, involving the triage by Clinicians of all clinical requests, supported by a Clinical Decision Support System (ie a Total Triage Model) - as has already being introduced in other GP Practices
- Consider putting in place a hierarchy of appointments of different levels of urgency (eg same day, this week, within 2 weeks) to meet the differing needs of patients as determined by Clinicians undertaking triage
- Consider reviewing the length of appointments - and offering double appointments to those with complex needs
- Consider putting in place a mechanism for ensuring that patients who have parked in one of the disabled parking bays in front of the Surgery are seen within the one-hour time limit permitted to park there
- Consider providing photographs of clinical staff at Reception and on the Practice Website, so patients know who they are about to see / have seen
- Promote the uptake of the NHS App and the use of online NHS/GP services - the PPG would also like to support the Practice with this issue
- Undertake another review of the Practice Website to address the comments made by patients responding to the Survey, including making it easier to navigate and ensuring it is user focused - the PPG would also like to support the Practice on this issue
- Review the current location of the existing Blood Pressure Measuring Area to ensure patient privacy and improve its signposting and labelling
- Give further consideration to the installation of a Self Help Health Kiosk in the Surgery, in view of the high level of interest in using one if it were installed - and, if it is decided to go ahead and install a Health Kiosk in the Surgery, give careful consideration to its location, signposting and labelling.

Swanage Medical Practice
Patient Survey 2024

We have decided to undertake another survey to help the Practice improve the services we offer.
The Patient Participation Group (PPG) has kindly agreed to help us with this survey.
Please answer the questions below. We will keep your answers completely confidential.

Making today's appointment

1. How did you make your appointment?

- I telephoned the Practice to make an appointment
Someone at the Practice phoned me to book the appointment
I booked my appointment in person
I booked my appointment online
I booked my appointment another way - if yes, please say how

.....

2. Generally, how easy do you find it to get through to the Practice on the phone?

- Very easy
Fairly easy
Not very easy
Not at all easy
I haven't tried

If you don't find it easy, please tell us why

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.....
.....

3. Were you satisfied with the appointment you were offered?

- Yes
No - if no, please explain why not

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.....

4. Overall, how would you describe your experience of making your appointment?

- Very good
Fairly good
Neither good nor poor
Fairly poor
Poor

Please tell us more about your experience

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.....

5. Before you tried to get this appointment, did you do any of the following?

Please tick all that apply

- Used an online NHS service, such as the NHS website
Used a non-NHS online service
Tried to treat myself
Spoke to a Pharmacist
Called an NHS helpline, such as NHS 111
Contacted or used another NHS service
Asked for advice from a friend or family member
Tried to get information or advice from a non-NHS service
Other
Did not try to get information or advice beforehand

If, other please say what it was you did

.....
.....

Today's appointment

6. Who was your appointment with?

- GP
- Locum GP
- GP Registrar
- Physician Associate
- Advanced Nurse Practitioner
- Paramedic
- First Contact Physiotherapist
- Practice Nurse
- Healthcare Assistant
- Another healthcare professional
- Don't know

7. Thinking about the reason for your appointment, were your needs met?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, to some extent
- No, not at all

Please tell us how your needs weren't met

.....

.....

Online Services

8. Which of the following GP/NHS online services have you used?

Please tick all that apply

- NHS App
- Practice Website
- Ordering repeat prescriptions online
- Doing an online consultation (eConsult)
- Accessing my test results online
- Accessing my medical records online
- Filling in an online form
- None of these

9. The PPG helped redesign the Practice Website in 2022. If you have used the website, please tell us how you think it could be improved.

.....

.....

.....

Health Kiosk

10. Have you ever used the Blood Pressure Measuring Area in the Waiting Room?

- Yes
- No

11. Would you use a Health Kiosk if one was installed?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Overall experience of the Practice

12. Overall, how would you describe your experience of the Practice?

- Very good
- Fairly good
- Neither good nor poor
- Fairly poor
- Very poor

Please tell us more about your experience

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Some questions about you

13. What is your gender?

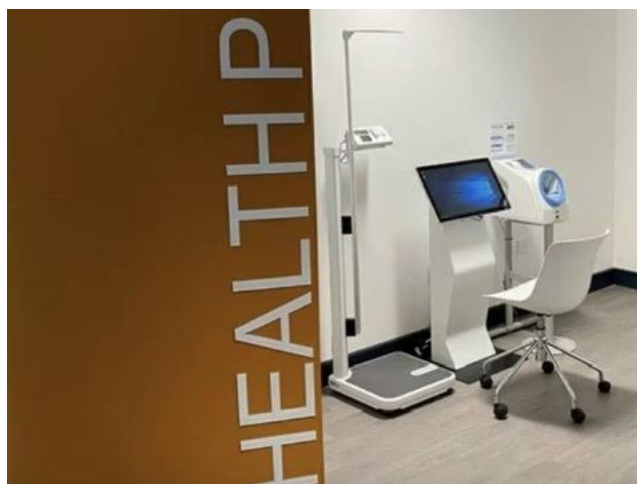
.....

14. How old are you?

.....

Thank you for your time.

Self Help Health Kiosk



A Health Kiosk enables patients to take simple measurements, such as their height, weight and blood pressure - as they can do already in the Blood Pressure Measuring Area in the Waiting Room.

But, if this new Self Help Health Kiosk was installed, these measurements would be added automatically to the patient's health record, ready for the results to be reviewed by a Clinician. At the moment, patients have to record the measurements themselves on a piece of paper and take this to the Receptionist, who then adds them to their records.

The patient simply uses the touchscreen to log in with their name and date of birth, like they do when they book in for an appointment, and then follows the instructions on the screen.

This new set-up would therefore be much quicker and easier for patients to use. It would also save Clinicians time by having the information they need to hand before the patient's appointment starts, which means they can then spend more time talking with the patient.

Alerts for abnormal readings can also be set to trigger notifications immediately within the Practice, as well as on-screen messages telling the patient what to do next.

Patients could also use this new Health Kiosk to answer health questionnaires - about their asthma or diabetes, for example - or to do Pill Checks and other medication reviews. This means they'd be able to do these routine checks at a time convenient to them - and, if all the measurements are normal, they may not need to attend the Surgery for an appointment.



Comments received in full

Q2: Generally, how easy do you find it to get through to the Practice on the phone?

Positive comments

- Receptionist very helpful.

Negative comments

- Can be a long wait if lines are busy.
- Can be a long wait to speak to someone - very friendly and helpful when connected.
- Generally fine, but sometimes a wait, which can be difficult as often at work. But thoroughly understandable with demands on Practice.
- Have to listen to request to visit chemist. Long waiting time.
- I get through eventually.
- I usually book appointments at the Surgery Reception.
- Length of time to answer.
- Length of time waiting - sometimes get lost!
- Long time waiting.
- Long wait for an answer.
- Long wait on the phone.
- Long wait on the phone, then long wait for appointment.
- Nearly always busy and unable to answer the phone.
- Phone line often very busy.
- Phone took a long time to connect.
- Quite a long wait.
- Sometimes quite easy, other times in a long queue.
- Time waiting for someone to answer. Also, the repetitive message.
- There is always a wait giving alternative ways to get in touch with someone else.
- Very long time to pick up the phone. Quicker to walk into the Surgery.
- Waited a long time for a response.
- Waiting on the phone, as phone always busy.
- Waits on occasion, but not significant.
- Wait to be seen disappointing. My previous appointment was very difficult to get - in fact, I was told no appointments were available for me at all and I had to go to the hospital for treatment.
- You may have to go through many loops.

Q3: Were you satisfied with the appointment you were offered?

Positive comments

- Although the earliest appointment available was supposed to be in two months, I was lucky because the kind receptionist managed to squeeze me in sooner.
- I was amazed! [at how quickly was able to be seen].

Negative comments

- I would've liked an earlier appointment.
- Needed to sit and wait.
- No doctor available for second opinion.
- Rather long time away.
- Sometimes appointments are very far in advance.
- The doctor wanted to see me in two weeks, but I had to wait 3½ weeks.
- Took at least three weeks.

Q4: Overall, how would you describe your experience of making your appointment?

Positive comments

- Always find it straightforward - for thirty years - to make an appointment.
- Always give me plenty of time, genuinely caring.
- Great people, great service.
- Helpful phone operator, listened well and reassuring.
- I got seen straight away.
- I was concerned and the doctor saw me the same day. Very efficient and reassuring. Thank you.
- If you don't mind seeing any GP, you can get an appointment easier than waiting for your own GP.
- It was very helpful and informative.
- Listened, and helpful.
- Needed two appointments in the last two days for my daughter and I've been able to get these appointments.
- Nice to have a receptionist.
- No wait at all.
- Positive.
- Quick and efficient.
- Quick, prompt and efficient service, very pleased.
- Reasonably easy to get an appointment.
- Receptionist was very thorough in getting all the information required.

- Same day appointment. Very happy with consultation.
- Slight wait on the phone, but very friendly staff.
- Sometimes a queue, but staff very courteous and friendly.
- Staff are friendly and very helpful.
- Staff try to find a suitable day and time for us, pleasant patient manner.
- The doctor is really helpful and accommodating, and flexible to see us.
- Very happy with my appointment.
- Very helpful.
- Very polite and helpful.
- Very smooth to arrange, very pleasant staff.

Negative Comments

- Appointment cancelled by Surgery due to illness.
- Appointment rather a long time away.
- Appointment had to be cancelled and rearranged due to staff illness.
- Just too many calls coming into Reception.
- Long delay - perhaps due to Easter annual leave.
- Long time to wait for an appointment.
- Long waits a problem. Cancer in the family, so very concerned.
- Phoned to make an appointment, but appointment offered not appropriate as carer for son. So came in person and then had to sit and wait.
- Poor experience. Sometimes come to see Receptionist and advised to go home and phone.
- Someone rang me as first appointment cancelled.
- There was a wait of a few months, but my condition was not urgent.

Q8: Thinking about the reason for your appointment, were your needs met?

Negative comments

- Booked in to have a blood test and to have an implant removed, but no details given to the nurse about the implant removal - and then told that I had to sort it out myself.
- I saw a nurse who needed the opinion of a doctor, but no doctor was available.
- Not getting much information.
- BP medication adversely affecting my left hand, but doctor not sure why.
- Very long wait.

Q9: The PPG helped redesigned the practice website in 2022. If you have used the website, please tell us how you think it could be improved.

Positive comments

- Easy to use.
- Easy to use to do my prescription requests.
- Happy with it.
- I found it adequate when I needed it.
- I have only used it once with no issues.
- It is okay.
- It met my needs.
- It was fine.
- It's fine as it is.
- It's good for me.
- It's okay.
- No complaints.
- Not had any problems when using it.
- Not really thought about it, it works for me.
- Nothing to improve so far.
- Quite okay as it is.
- Very easy to use.

Negative comments

- eConsult could be easier to find.
- It would be helpful if there was also an email address on the website for patients to use to contact the Practice.
- It is quite messy. I think it needs to be easier to navigate and use - and easier to understand the language.
- It needs to be more user focused and less cluttered.
- Link to SystmOnline not easy enough to find, particularly for repeat prescriptions.
- Needs to be more coordination between the websites of different services.
- Not as easy to use as it was before.
- Not easy to find eConsult - good for quick advice and not taking up an appointment.
- Okay, but difficult to register. Had to come into the Practice.
- Not being able to get eConsult out of hours. Also unable to set up access to test results.
- Plain English, simple content design, clearer contact details.
- Unable to receive blood test results from hospital.
- Would like to be able to book appointments online.

Q10: Have you ever used the existing Blood Pressure Measuring Area?

Reasons given for not using existing Blood Pressure Measuring Area

- Concerned about the hygiene of the blood pressure cuff
- Have a blood pressure machine
- I go to the pharmacy to have BP measured
- I have a BP machine
- I have my own BP machine at home
- I measure my own BP
- I check my blood pressure at home
- I check my blood pressure at home
- I measure BP at home measure blood pressure at home

Q12: Overall, how would you describe your experience of the Practice?

Positive comments

- Always a positive and helpful experience.
- Always friendly and easy to deal with.
- Always given the time of day and even seen face-to-face during COVID any time when really ill.
- Always helpful, always feel satisfied.
- Always very good, fast and helpful.
- Appointment was for my daughter - the doctor was very kind and helpful.
- Arrived on time, called immediately and all was satisfactory.
- The Doctor was very helpful and understanding and gave me some advice on tablets. He was willing to see me again.
- Excellent service always.
- Friendly and local. Appointments easy to make.
- Friendly, kind and efficient.
- Generally very good, always able to access appointments when I need them.
- Generally fine, no complaints!
- Got better recently.
- GPs are always very friendly and helpful.
- Had a blood test, was very efficient and pleasant experience.
- I attend the Ulcer Clinic twice a week and find the treatment excellent.
- I have regular tests for high blood pressure and diabetes and regular appointments are made for me. I feel that I am being looked after.
- Although I appreciate that the Practice is very busy, I have been given an appointment on three occasions when I had pressing needs.
- Mostly very good. Usually get me in for appointments.

- I've been seen on time. Friendly staff.
- Lovely people, very kind.
- Lovely staff, but need more of them to get quicker appointments.
- My appointments have been faster in recent years.
- My GP is excellent and supportive.
- Very good as didn't have to wait a very long time. Calm. Everyone is very helpful and understanding.
- Very good - once you get seen!
- Prompt appointment, friendly, and professional staff.
- Staff always pleasant and helpful. If information not to hand, then advised how to get information. Seen fairly promptly.
- The doctor was very good and offered a lot of help.
- This was my first visit and it has been a positive one.
- This was my first appointment. Very quick response to my call. Quick appointment and very happy with my care today. Practice is clean and welcoming.
- Very happy - no waiting time.
- Very happy with all staff and facilities.
- Very reassuring and thorough. Thank you.
- Wonderful.

Both positive and negative comments

- Always a pleasure to experience. However, I'm a carer for my wife and a one-hour limit on disabled parking at the front of the Surgery is often not enough if your appointments are slow.
- Excellent, once here - apart from having to organise my own implant removal. All staff excellent.
- Have generally found Swanage Medical Practice really good and it is reasonably easy to get an on-the-day appointment when needed - although the system as a whole is obviously set up to meet a quota of patients, rather than to meet the needs of individual patients.
- Have only used the Surgery once. Arrived on time, waited a further 20 minutes to see the doctor.
- I have a lot of faith in the GP that we see regularly. Unfortunately, I have received conflicting advice from others - and feel less reassured by others.
- You all do your best, but the NHS system is broken. I very much appreciate your service.

Negative comments

- Although I have rated my experience as fairly good, availability of appointments is very disappointing and disheartening when you feel you need to be seen.
- Appointment on screen is only visual and should also be vocal.
- Blood test appointments take a long time. GP appointments take a long time.
- Can't get appointments with GP.
- Depends on the doctor. Previously had a very poor experience with the Practice as a diagnosis was missed.
- Difficult to get appointments.
- Had to change doctors - now have a much more understanding doctor. Had some quite upsetting appointments with the previous doctor.
- I was given an emergency appointment with a nurse, who needed the opinion by a doctor, but, as no doctor was available at this time, I had to return later in the day.
- I think the 10 minutes patient limit is ridiculous - how can any doctor possibly stick to appointment times?
- I would like to see my own doctor more often when ill.
- I'd like to see my own doctor more often.
- I'd prefer to see my own doctor, when necessary, as I don't really know them or have formed a contact as I did with my previous family doctors.
- It can be really difficult to get a routine appointment. Staff are generally friendly and helpful - although recent experience with a bank receptionist was bad. It would be good to have regular feedback sessions.
- Rated my experience as fairly good only because it's difficult to get face-to-face appointments.
- Recently, I had an ear infection and was told it didn't warrant a same day appointment by the Receptionist.
- Sometimes difficult to get an appointment.
- Sometimes difficult to get an appointment.
- Use bus and times don't always suit. Needed support for blood pressure. Carer for son.
- Variable experience - has declined since COVID. Issues with referrals through the system.
- Wish service was more comprehensible to the customer - ie more patient focused.
- Would prefer more face-to-face appointments.