

# Our GPs

What local people say



A report from Healthwatch Tower Hamlets

September 2017

## About this report

This report examines important aspects of the services provided by GP surgeries in Tower Hamlets.

We have coded and analysed a total of 3369 issues, from 753 service users collected between April 2016 and March 2017. A further 577 issues, from 146 service users, collected between April and June 2017, were analysed separately.

For anonymity purposes, names of individual GP surgeries have been changed to unique codes. Each surgery receiving this report will privately receive their own code.

This report has been conceived as a baseline study, to be followed up by quarterly reports tracking improvements in the provision of GP surgery services.



Healthwatch Tower Hamlets is an independent organisation led by local volunteers. It is part of a national network of Healthwatch organisations that involve people of all ages and all sections of the community.

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets gathers local people's views on the health and social care services that they use. We make sure those views are taken into account when decisions are made on how services will be delivered, and how they can be improved.

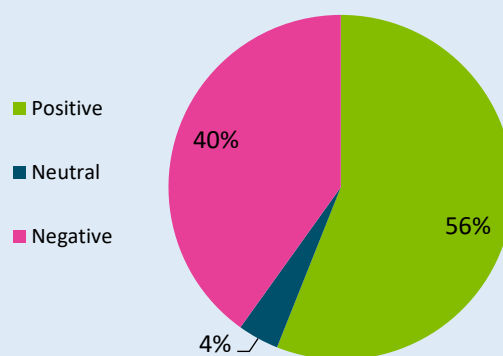
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## What we have learned, in a nutshell

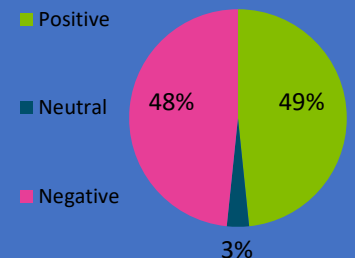
- ❖ Patients are happy with the quality of service provision, the attitude of staff members and with the level of support they receive from their GP surgery, but unhappy with the long waiting lists and telephones. Sentiment about booking appointments is also leaning towards negative. This suggests that GP services in Tower Hamlets are seen by residents as high quality, but difficult to access.
- ❖ In terms of staff attitude, service users are more satisfied with the attitude of medical professionals (doctors and nurses) than with that of reception staff.
- ❖ There is a slight correlation between the number of patients a surgery has and the percentage of negative comments it received from service users (however, there is no correlation between the number of patients *per GP* a surgery has and the percentage of negative comments it received).
- ❖ Perception of staff attitude has an important impact on perception of the surgery. Generally, service users who take a positive view of the attitude of reception staff are more understanding in relation to waiting times, administrative errors or a frustrating booking process. On the other hand, reception staff members receiving negative feedback are perceived as “gatekeepers” making decisions to refuse them bookings arbitrarily, or otherwise as directly responsible for long waiting times or difficulty in accessing services.
- ❖ Many service users are strongly dissatisfied with the very busy telephone lines; some of them report their calls being rejected.
- ❖ Online booking is generally more popular with service users; however, some practices have reportedly discontinued it, and some patients report technical problems with it.
- ❖ Dissatisfaction with booking and waiting lists is not universal: some surgeries, such as the Net7-3 and Net5-1s successfully avoid it, while for others, such as the Net3-3 or Net2-4, it severely affects patient experience.
- ❖ Emergency appointments are usually booked within 2-3 days, although some surgeries are able to provide same-day appointments. While some patients feel that on-the-day appointments should be offered, waiting times of up to 48 hours are seen as acceptable by most.
- ❖ For non-emergencies, many users report waiting 2-3 weeks to be seen. This is regarded as unacceptably long. Some report waiting over a month. 4-7 days is generally seen as an acceptable waiting time.
- ❖ Online and telephone consultations are relatively popular with patients. Where they are not available, at least some patients would like to see them introduced. Telephone consultations are efficiently used by some surgeries to maximise the options for care.
- ❖ Repeat prescriptions by telephone or online are convenient for patients, but not all surgeries offer them.
- ❖ The attitude of medical professionals is universally viewed positively; no surgery with 5 comments or more on the topic has had less than 50% positive comments. Doctors who receive positive feedback from patients are friendly, patient, warm and accommodating. They also offer patients detailed explanations and reassurance and empower them to make informed choices about their healthcare. Service users perceive them as highly competent and knowledgeable.
- ❖ On the other hand, doctors who receive negative feedback are considered to be dismissive of patients and trivialise their concerns. They are described as rushed, rude and don't offer patients explanations or choices. In a small minority of cases, patients report not feeling confident in their doctor's competence.
- ❖ Practice nurses in Tower Hamlets are particularly praised in regard to *staff attitude*.
- ❖ While many service users have found it difficult to book GP appointments, appointments with nurses are relatively easy to obtain.



## What we have learned: reception

- ❖ Service users are mostly happy with the attitude of reception staff and the level of support they receive. However, there is some discontent with some practices regarding communication by telephone.
- ❖ The Net8-4 and Net4-1 are the surgeries with the best reception in the borough, according to patient opinion.
- ❖ Perception of staff attitude has an important impact on perception of the surgery as a whole. Generally, service users who take a positive view of the attitude of reception staff are more understanding in relation to long waiting times, administrative errors or a frustrating booking process.
- ❖ Receptionists who receive positive feedback from patients are perceived as efficient, knowledgeable, dedicated, compassionate polite and customer-service-minded. They go out of their way to support patients.
- ❖ In contrast, those who receive negative feedback are seen as rude, lacking empathy, inefficient and useless at addressing service user's needs. They fail to offer appropriate advice/information and make patients feel uncomfortable for asking, or for not understanding. In some cases, patients see them as "gatekeepers" making decisions to refuse them service arbitrarily, or otherwise as directly responsible for long waiting times or difficulty in accessing services.
- ❖ In terms of staff attitude and support, the Net6-1, Net7-4 and Net4-1 practice receive unanimously positive feedback; while the Net1-1 and the Net3-3 are harshly criticised by service users.
- ❖ Many service users are strongly dissatisfied with the very busy telephone lines; some of them report their calls being rejected. Patients at the Net3-3, Net5-4 and Net6-4 are particularly unhappy, while the Net7-3 and the Net4-3 are the only ones where more service users gave positive feedback on this aspect than negative feedback.
- ❖ Online booking is generally more popular with service users; however, some practices have reportedly discontinued it, and some patients report technical problems with it.
- ❖ Some practices make only appointments as far ahead as 4 weeks available through online booking; and reserve sooner appointments exclusively for telephone booking. This practice is criticised by patients.
- ❖ In some cases, reception staff were not able to provide patients with basic information they needed (such as about doctors' availability). Information about what kind of professional to see for what problem is sometimes lacking or insufficiently clear; this is issue affects primarily maternity/antenatal service users. In a small number of cases, because of errors made by receptionists, patients have been booked with the wrong professional.
- ❖ A number of patients report receptionists enquiring about purposes for booking appointments in ways that they perceive as breaching confidentiality, or giving unauthorised medical advice; they may perceive this as unjustified attempts at gatekeeping/ preventing them from seeing doctors.
- ❖ There have been cases of cancellations, delays or closure not being communicated to patients, as well as appointments cancelled or missed because of admin errors. Patients did not always receive explanations regarding the reason for their appointments being cancelled.
- ❖ Ease of registration varies between surgery; some surgeries only process registrations at times not suitable for working people.

## What service users are saying:



- The online booking system makes things really easy for me (Net5-1)
- You can always get an appointment in an emergency and the online system is great for booking appointments and arranging repeat prescriptions. (Net1-1)
- Your receptionist provided excellent customer service polite professional and courteous too. Explain my query clear and concise and went out of their way to resolve the issue (Net3-4)
- You always have to give the reason why you are calling. When you tell staff it's confidential they say they can't give you an appointment. (Net2-2)

## Our Suggestions

- ❖ Train staff in communicating efficiently and empathetically with service users and customer service skills.
- ❖ Particularly ensure reception staff are communicating sensitively when asking patients for confidential or personal information about the state of their health. Ensure patients receive explanations about why they are being asked certain questions (e.g. "I need to know what the issue is so that I can book you with the right type of professional). Give patients who need it the option to disclose potentially sensitive information more privately.
- ❖ Ensure that all signposting and booking at reception (e.g. booking a patient with a GP, a nurse or a telephone appointment) is in accordance with NHS guidelines.
- ❖ Improve the telephone system, particularly in terms of waiting times, Conduct research with the surgeries receiving more positive feedback (Net7-3 and Net4-3) in order to identify examples of good practice that can be used on a wider scale.
- ❖ Where an online booking system is in place, ensure that it is functional and, ideally, that some sort of tech support is in place for service users.
- ❖ Where an online booking system has been withdrawn, consider re-introducing it.
- ❖ Consider allowing patients to book emergency appointments online as well as by phone.
- ❖ Communicate all planned and unplanned cancellations to patients as soon as possible, explain the reason for it.
- ❖ Ensure all information on the surgery's website and physically displayed in the building is accurate and up-to-date.
- ❖ Display useful information (posters, leaflets) in the reception area (i.e. what documents you need to register, what kind of professionals you need to see for antenatal appointments and when, how to book routine or emergency appointments).
- ❖ Wherever possible, allow people to register at the surgery without outside of normal office (either by extending/ staggering the schedule or introducing online registration forms).
- ❖ Consider having small toys or children's books in the waiting area, as well as entertainment for adults, such as magazines or newspapers.

## What service users are saying:

- Whenever I do call through over the phone or do attend in person I have been greeted by some very friendly receptionists who always seem to tend to my needs with utmost respect and professionalism. I have found that booking an appointment maybe difficult to get as and when you need with a specific doctor, but they do have regular availability and always willing to accommodate to ensure that you are seen to as soon as possible. (Net8-2)
- The doctors are fine but the reception staff are terrible. They act like bouncers at a nightclub, refusing whomever they please. People go here because they are sick and there is no understanding of this here. (Net8-2)
- I had to attempt to make an appointment two times because the first time I phoned to make an appointment they said I was all set and had an appointment, but when I showed up for that appointment they had no record of it. Because I was not logged into the computer at all, they had to reschedule my appointment 2 weeks later. Besides this mix up the receptionist was accommodating when making this appointment. (Net2-1)
- I tried to get in touch multiple times by phone, but ended up in a queue for a ridiculous amount of time and often end up facing someone answering and hanging up straight away, with no communication. (Net7-1)
- Recently, after I had been treated at Barts for a heart-attack, the Consultant tried to get through to the Net7-2 on the telephone: "Good luck!" I wished them, and sure enough after 10 mins of ringing, they gave up. (Net7-2)

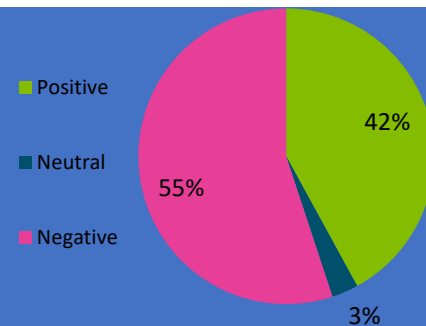
## What we have learned: diagnosis and testing

- ❖ Patient experience varies from one surgery to another with patients in Net4-1 and Net7-3 having a particularly good experience.
- ❖ Patients are satisfied with the attitude of staff (doctors/nurses/ phlebotomists etc.) carrying out tests.
- ❖ Undergoing diagnosis and testing procedures, especially if suspected of serious illness, can be a stressful time for patients. A warm, reassuring manner from members of staff contributes positively to patient experience.
- ❖ Administrative issues are the main reason for discontent on the part of service users.
- ❖ With some exceptions, most patients do not find the booking process overly complicated or waiting times exceedingly long. However, there have been cases of delays in referrals caused by administrative errors.
- ❖ In some surgeries, doctors are able to create a relationship of trust with their patients, and to make them feel that their concerns are being taken seriously; whereas in others they fail to do so.
- ❖ A small number of patients report loss of test results.
- ❖ There were a few cases of doctors and other medical professionals refusing to share test results with patients.
- ❖ In some practices, referrals are made quickly and efficiently, while in others they are refused or delayed.

## Our suggestions

- ❖ Research examples of good practice in surgeries such as Net4-1 and Net7-3.
- ❖ Give patients detailed, easy to understand, explanations about their diagnosis and next steps, especially in justifying a decision to give or not to give a referral to a specialist.
- ❖ Always give patients access to their test results and medical records, barring cases where there is reason to believe it would severely impact their/ somebody else's mental or physical health and well-being.
- ❖ Improve admin systems to prevent delays in diagnosis/testing, loss of test results and communication breakdowns.

## What service users are saying:

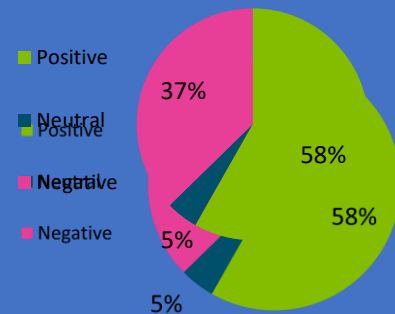


- I have recently had to undertake a series of examinations myself which arose as a result of concerns about possible kidney stones. Once again, my GP and colleagues at the practice were extremely supportive and helpful in ensuring that I saw the appropriate consultants at my local hospital, and undertook the appropriate tests and examinations, all within a period of one month! (Net4-1)
- I was given an appointment time within the hour. Fantastic. At the surgery, I was seen promptly. Doctor was very thorough and pleasant. They made me feel calm as they explained my diagnosis. I had an ECG at the surgery, which must take a lot of pressure away from the local hospital. I left the surgery very confident and happy. (Net4-3)
- On several occasions, I have been there for my treatment where they denied me blood tests and medication this has then lead to my illness becoming worse and finding out about it later. (Net3-1)
- I had an appointment with a doctor, they were very rude, dismissive, didn't want to hear what my symptoms were, they declined to show me my blood test results and denied me a referral to a specialist. (Net7-1)

## What we have learned: clinical treatment

- ❖ Service users perceive clinical treatment offered by Tower Hamlets GP surgeries as *being of very good quality, but difficult to access*. They are satisfied with the attitude of medical staff, the level of user involvement and support they are receiving; but they are also frustrated with the booking process and long waiting times for appointments.
- ❖ Dissatisfaction with booking and waiting lists is not universal: some surgeries, such as the Net7-3 and Net5-1 successfully avoid it, while for others, such as the Net3-3 or Net2-4, it severely affects patient experience.
- ❖ Emergency appointments are usually booked within 2-3 days, although some surgeries are able to provide same-day appointments. While some patients feel that on-the-day appointments should be offered, waiting times of up to 48 hours are seen as acceptable by most.
- ❖ Not all GP surgeries offer emergency appointments; lack thereof is an important point of concern among patients.
- ❖ For non-emergency appointments, many service users report waiting 2-3 weeks to be seen; which is regarded as unacceptably long. Some patients report waiting over a month for an appointment. 4-7 days is generally seen as an acceptable waiting time.
- ❖ Some patients believe that more vulnerable users (small children, the elderly, people with chronic diseases) should have priority in receiving appointments.
- ❖ Surgeries that offer appointments outside of normal working hours and at weekends are highly appreciated by patients; while those with a GP not offering appointments outside of normal working hours are often concerned about their access to GP services. There are only 5 surgeries in the borough offering no appointments whatsoever outside of usual working hours.
- ❖ Many people find their GP surgery's booking process frustrating and not user friendly. However, service users who receive overall good care and perceive the practice as generally well run are more likely to find the booking process and waiting times acceptable. Furthermore, when a surgery is promptly offering emergency appointments, patients are more understanding of long waiting times for routine appointments.
- ❖ Online and telephone consultations are relatively popular with patients. Where they are not available, at least some patients would like to see them introduced. Telephone consultations are efficiently used by some surgeries to maximise the options for care.
- ❖ Repeat prescriptions by telephone or online are convenient for patients, but not all surgeries offer them.

## What service users are saying:



- Waited 6 days for a routine appointment with my own GP, which isn't bad by some GP practice standards. Always treated with respect and felt looked after by my GP. Referrals and documentation seems to be done in a timely fashion. (Net1-2)
- Earlier this year I needed to call out the Saturday night emergency GP and he was at my door within ½ an hour - service indeed. Using the online appointments system, I can see any doctor really quickly or wait a few days for a specific doctor. The online repeat prescription works very well and sends it straight to the pharmacist thus saving time and effort collecting the prescription and taking to the pharmacist. (Net4-2)
- The surgery provides very good health service, particularly when people needs an urgent appointment. There could be a bit delay for a normal appointment. However, when you need an urgent same day appointment the reception team never says no. They always try their best to help, no matter how busy the surgery is. (Net6-2)



## What we have learned: clinical treatment (continued)

- ❖ Some surgeries strictly enforce a “Ten minutes only/ appointment” or “One issue only/ appointment” rule; patients tend to disagree with this.
- ❖ The attitude of medical professionals is universally viewed positively; no surgery with 5 comments or more on the topic has had less than 50% positive comments.
- ❖ Doctors who receive positive feedback from patients are friendly, patient, warm and accommodating. They also offer patients detailed explanations and reassurance and empower them to make informed choices about their healthcare. Service users perceive them as highly competent and knowledgeable.
- ❖ On the other hand, doctors who receive negative feedback are perceived as dismissive of patients and trivialise their concerns. They are rushed, rude and don't offer patients explanations or choices.
- ❖ In a small minority of cases, patients report not feeling confident in their doctor's competence.
- ❖ In some practices, it is possible for patients to choose between seeing a specific doctor after some waiting and seeing any other doctor sooner; in others, this is not an option.
- ❖ Some surgeries have been praised for going above and beyond in communicating with other health professionals, such as hospital specialists and pharmacists to ensure an efficient and speedy referral or prescription process.
- ❖ In other cases, doctors have been criticised for failing to provide patients with the paperwork or referrals they needed.
- ❖ Walk-in centres are an important asset to the community; they are, however, often used by patients who cannot get appointments with their own GPs.
- ❖ Some surgeries are praised for not keeping patients waiting for their appointments; while in others appointments are reportedly running late.
- ❖ Small delays in being seen (5 to 15 minutes) are not seen as a problem by most patients, especially those who are overall satisfied with the practice. Delays of 20 minutes or more are seen as unacceptable. Not being informed about unexpected delays is also a subject of annoyance among patients.
- ❖ Some service users would like surgeries to be more flexible in cases where patients are slightly late for appointments

## What service users are saying:

- We go by first names now and it makes a HUGE difference! Where else are you recognised as an individual and welcomed personally? This week is another great example. I had asthma clinic and a review for my meds booked midweek. Yet they called me a few days later to rebook on a Saturday (yes, they are also working on Saturdays!!), both! "you can't do midweek because you are working far" they said. Do I need to comment further? (Net7-3)
- I have a number of conditions that require ongoing treatment and the Net7-1 staff are very helpful and I think have saved my life on two occasions. My doctor is excellent and on the occasions when I need to see a doctor quickly I have been impressed with the other doctors. They are first and foremost excellent clinicians that have provided me with excellent treatment - a hospital consultant once told me I was very fortunate to have such a good GP practice (Net7-1)
- The practice has effectively chased other healthcare providers when needed and overall I am impressed and grateful for the care and attention I receive. (Net7-2)
- GPs don't appear to be particularly well informed and on more than one occasion have prescribed treatments to my partner without being fully aware of breadth of possible side-effects. (Net7-4)

## Our Suggestions

- ❖ Research and examine the booking system in surgeries where there is a high level of satisfaction in order to identify and share good practices.
- ❖ Share best practice from doctor-based telephone triage & consultation systems and introduce where possible.
- ❖ Consider the possibility of introducing phone and online consultations to support patients in developing an awareness of the urgent care system and where to access reliable health advice and support.
- ❖ Where a phone or online consultation does not need to be followed up by an appointment in person (e.g. a patient with flu-like symptoms for less than a week), refer/send links to trustworthy on-line sources about self-care and symptom management such as NHS Choices or the self-care forum. A database of such useful link could be created by GPs and kept on hand.
- ❖ Introduce telephone or online options for repeat prescriptions; increase the use of online technology for appointments, prescriptions, referrals and the sharing of medical records.
- ❖ Put systems in place to better enable working people to access GP services. This could entail staggering opening times in order to offer at least some early morning/ evening/ weekend appointments, or using/ expanding the hub system of referring patients to other network practices that do offer appointments outside of normal working hours.
- ❖ Maintain and expand the hub system to reduce waiting times for appointments.
- ❖ Put systems in place to enable the most at-risk patients (children, the elderly, the seriously unwell) to access GP services faster.
- ❖ While maintaining a “ten minutes per appointment/ one issue per appointment” rule, allow some degree of flexibility for severe or urgent cases, as needed.

## What service users are saying:

- My GP is very good, but I have to always go into the surgery for repeat prescription. Sometimes I am tired and very busy, but as I have no choice (my GP do not take prescription over the telephone), I have to personally go into my Surgery to make my repeat prescription Suggested Improvements: It would be nice if repeat prescriptions can be allowed over the telephones at GPs.
- Was offered appointment for sick toddler in more than a week. Was then told to go somewhere else. Person on the phone wasn't even interested in the symptoms or state of the kid. No other option was offered, e.g. Phone consultation. Very disappointing experience. Not helpful not caring practice. (Net5-4)
- Recently I came to see a doctor with chest pain; I was given a ECG test however my ECG appointment was booked one week later. This is something I would like to be changed at the surgery as one week is far too long for a patient to wait with chest pain. I would like that to be changed. People should be able to give ECG or other important tests within the same day. (Net4-3)
- I have been suffering from a blocked ear for over a week been using an ear drop prescribed by my pharmacy which hasn't cured my issue hence the reason for my visit. It's been a complete waste of time after checking my ear they informed me that it's blocked and suggested I carry on applying the drops and if it doesn't clear then I should book an appointment with the nurse I explained to him that I'm going away in two days' time for two weeks and asked if there is any way I could see the nurse, their response was enjoy your trip, you might think they were wishing me a good trip but what they were actually saying is, what do you want me to do about it. (Net2-2)

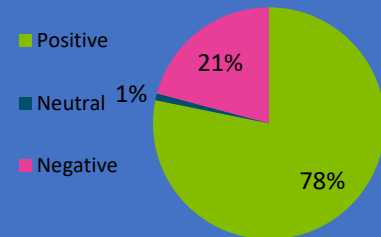
## What we have learned: Clinical nursing

- ❖ Service users are satisfied with clinical nursing in their GP surgeries, more so than with any other aspect of the care pathway.
- ❖ Practice nurses in Tower Hamlets are particularly praised in regard to *staff attitude*.
- ❖ Nurses receiving positive feedback are warm, friendly and reassuring, as well as professional and efficient. They are knowledgeable and offer good explanations, empowering patients to make choices about their healthcare.
- ❖ In some surgeries, nurses have been able to build a cordial, warm relations with patients; which plays an important role in building trust between service users and medical professionals.
- ❖ Only a minority of nurses receive negative feedback from service users. They were described as rushed, judgmental and reportedly they didn't offer explanations or choices regarding treatment
- ❖ Nurse practitioners are an important asset to GP surgeries. In many cases, a consultation with a nurse rather than a doctor is sufficient for the patient's needs.
- ❖ While many service users have found it difficult to book GP appointments, appointments with nurses are relatively easy to obtain

## Our suggestions

- ❖ Raise awareness of situations where it is sufficient to be seen by a nurse rather than a GP, and encourage relevant patients to get appointments with nurses.
- ❖ In a few practices, nurses have learned/ use regular patients' first names. This has been appreciated by patients and the practice could be extended to more surgeries and practice staff.

## What service users are saying:



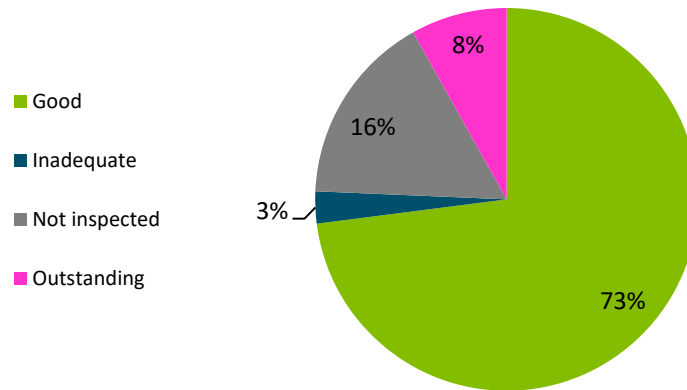
- The day I had minor surgery the doctor and the nurse that day were very kind, with the nurse offering to hold my hand. I feel that everyone I came into contact with was very pleasant and related well to me as a person. (Net2-2)
- I was especially impressed with the practice nurse's approach to my diabetic care. Because of their coaching i have adapted my lifestyle and i feel great. The nurse was also kind enough to see me for both problems today even though i had an appointment tomorrow this was to help me as i work and i am very grateful for that. (Net7-4)
- The surgery has changed so much for the better, it is open longer hours, there is a nurse in the surgery all the time and there is a health care professional there to do blood test ect all this wasnt available before. (Net3-1)
- One particular HCA is very good, so professional and always makes me feel at ease. They always make me feel that they care. I am 84 years old and have been to various surgeries, this is the best surgery i have ever been to. It is nice when I come in and they all know me by my first name. It is nice to feel appreciated and respected , especially when you are feeling unwell. (Net4-2)
- Nurse was arrogant. Gave our baby medication without telling us they were doing it. Took prescription to chemist and they said the prescription was wrong and not suitable for a baby. (Net8-1).

## Background

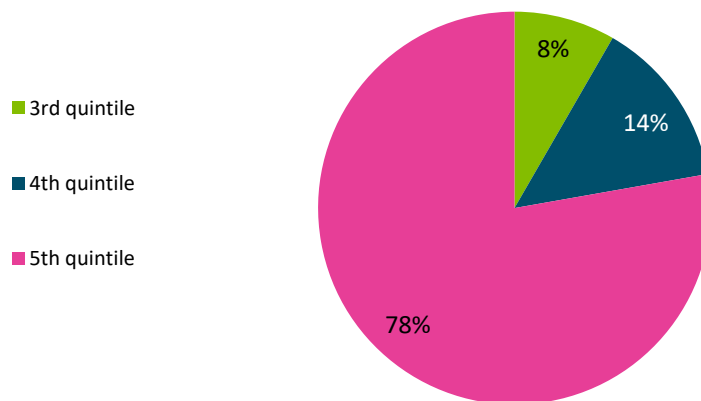
There are 36 GP surgeries in Tower Hamlets, divided between 8 commissioning networks. (Note: numbers on map do NOT correspond to numbers in anonymised codes.)



27 surgeries in the borough have been rated as “good” by the CQC, 3 as “outstanding” and 1 as “inadequate”.



Most GP surgeries in Tower Hamlets serve areas characterised by severe deprivation and inequalities. 28 surgeries are in areas with an Index of Mass Deprivation (IMD) in the 5<sup>th</sup> quintile (indicating the poorest areas in the country).



The average number of registered patients a Tower Hamlets GP surgery has is 8980.

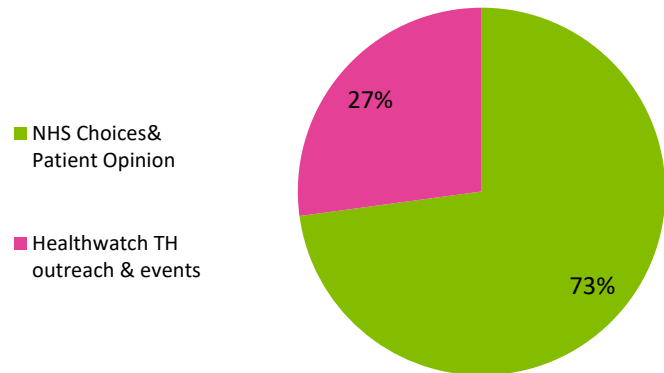
The average number of GPs in a practice is 5.

The average number of patients per GP is 2071; however, the ratio can vary a lot; between 709 patients/ GP (Net5-3) to 6688 patients/GP (Net7-5).

## Methodology

### Data collection

Between April 1, 2016 and March 31 2017, we have collected and analysed comments from a total of 753 GP service users in Tower Hamlets who gave feedback on their experience with the Royal London Hospital, identifying a total of 3369 issues.



We have collected comments in a variety of ways:

- ❖ Our volunteers engaged directly, face-to-face, with patients, asking for their feedback on the services they had received
- ❖ We coded patients' comments published on NHS Choices and Patient Opinion

**Disclaimer:** The data analysed is based on a partly self-selected opportunity sample, rather than a random or representative sample; therefore, it is not, nor does it claim to be statistically significant. The views represented in this report do not necessarily represent the views of Tower Hamlets NHS patients as a whole. Due to sourcing comments from NHS Choices/Patient Opinion, this report might represent a more negative view of NHS GP services than could be found by a study with a representative sample.

## The Coding

Service user comments have been coded using a nationally recognised coding matrix, which applies issue, care pathway location, and (positive, neutral or negative) sentiment. The same coding matrix and the same methods for aggregating data from multiple sources are used by nine other Healthwatches across England.<sup>1</sup>

### The Care Pathway

Care Pathway locations cover:

- ❖ Transport (ability to get to-and-from services)
- ❖ Reception (reception services including back-office)
  
- ❖ Diagnosis/Testing (diagnosis of condition, including testing and scans)
- ❖ Clinical Treatment (treatment received by trained clinicians)
- ❖ Clinical Nursing (care received by trained nurses)
- ❖ Discharge (discharge from a service)
- ❖ Follow On (supplementary services following discharge, including care packages)
- ❖ Community (community based services, such as social care, district nursing and community mental health).

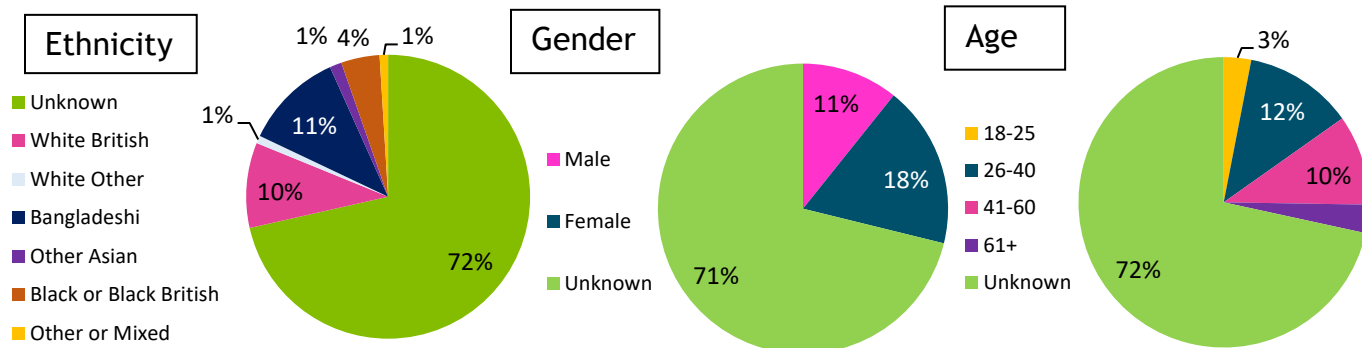
Quality assurance of coding is ensured through the Healthwatch Tower Hamlets Patient Experience Panel.

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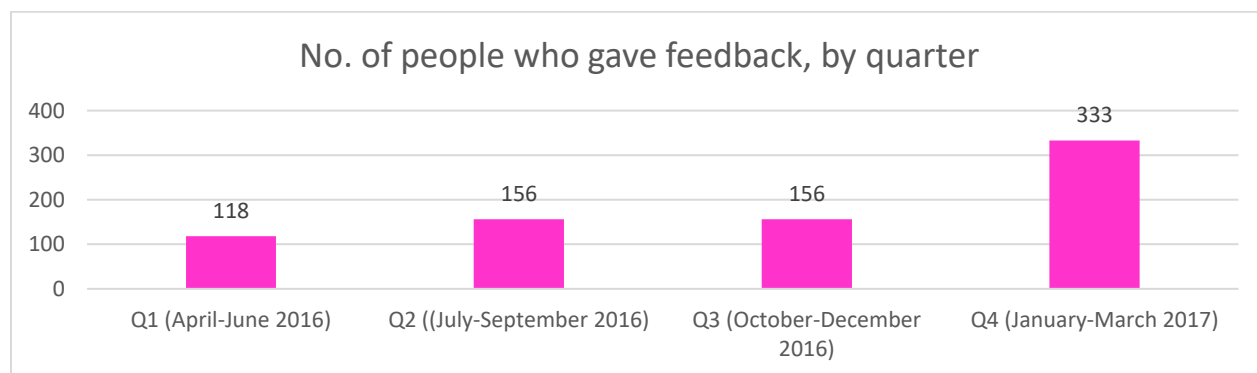
<sup>1</sup> Croydon, Waltham Forest, Doncaster, Kirklees, Cumbria, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Somerset

## Respondents' demographic profile

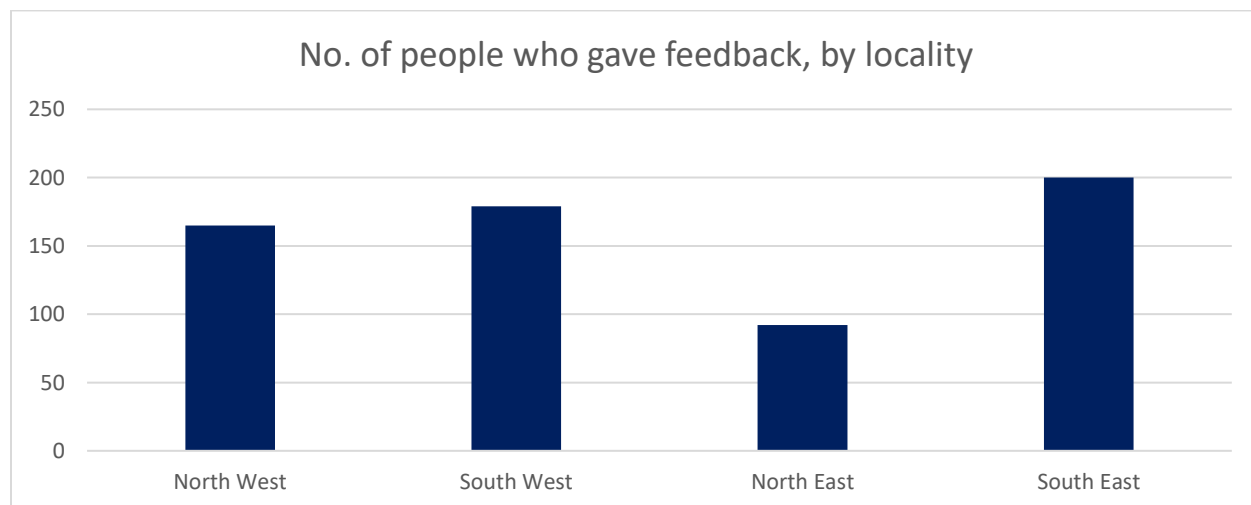
As many comments receive come from anonymous reviews, demographic data is unavailable for a majority of service users. However, those for whom we have been able to record demographic data appear to be broadly representative of the borough's population. More female users have responded than male users.



More service users gave feedback in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter (January-March 2017) than any other.



Most feedback came from residents of the South-East Locality (Networks 7 and 8)



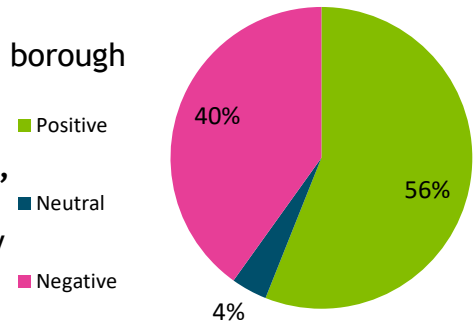


## Our insights

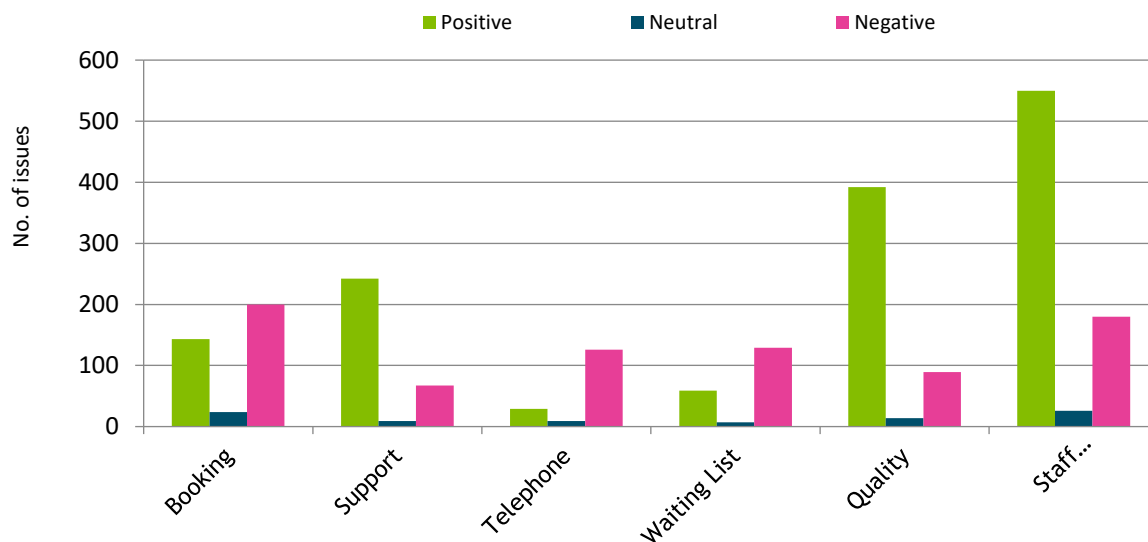
### TOP OVERALL TRENDS

According to the comments, sentiment about GP's in the borough is **56% positive**.

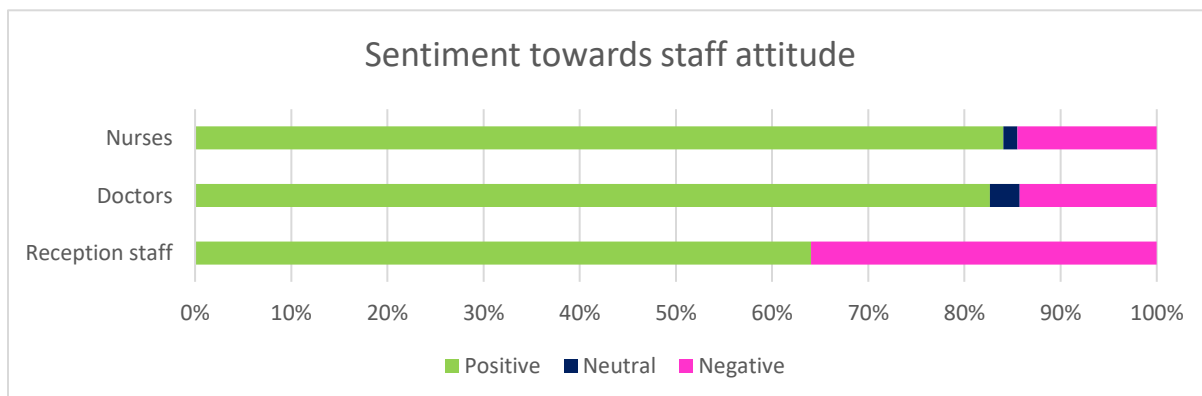
Patients are happy with the **quality of service provision**, the **attitude of staff members** and with the **level of support** they receive from their GP surgery, but unhappy with the **long waiting lists** and **telephones**. Sentiment about **booking appointments** it also leaning towards negative.



This suggests that GP services in Tower Hamlets are seen by residents as **high quality**, but **difficult to access**.

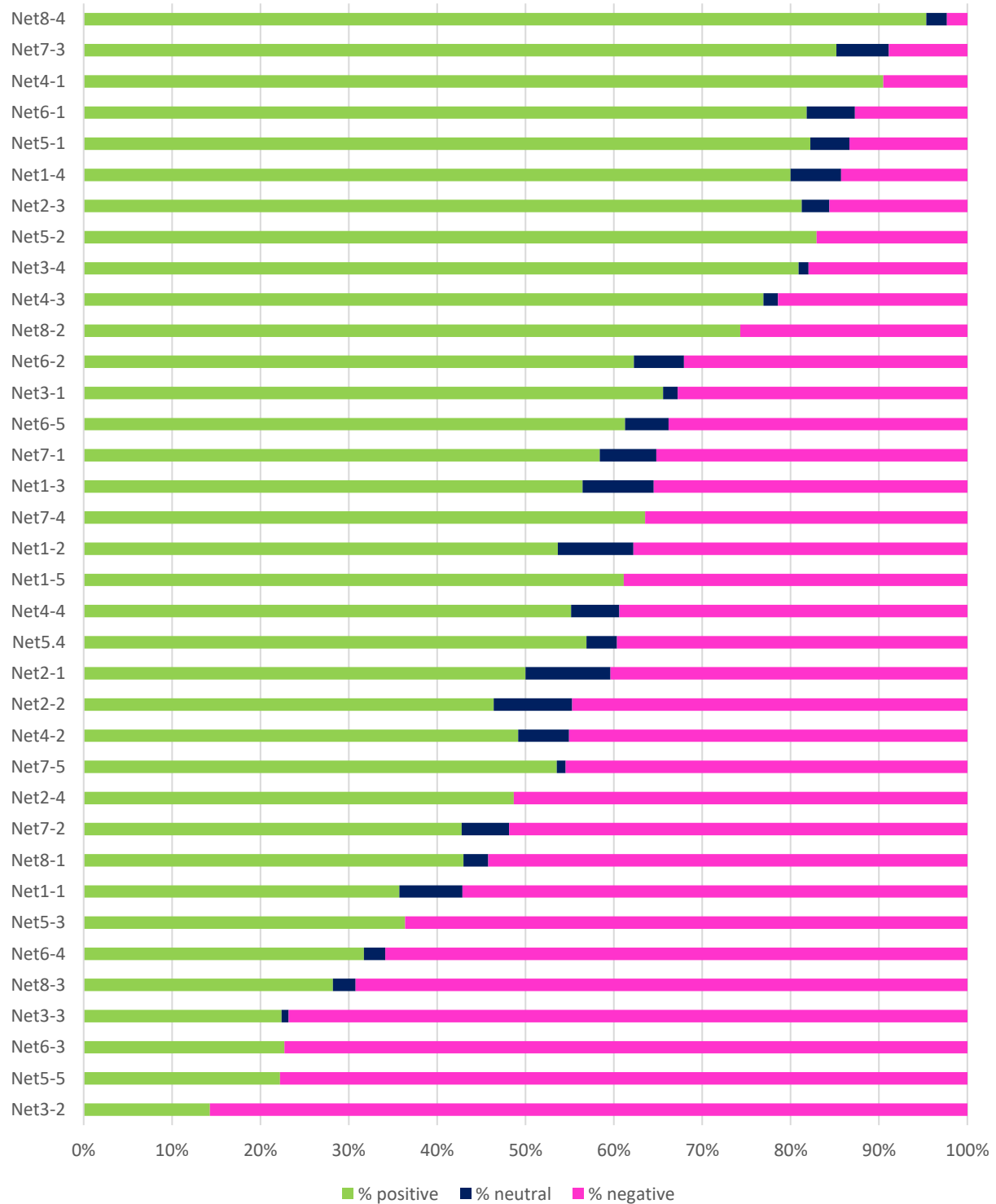


In terms of **staff attitude**, service users are more satisfied with the attitude of medical staff (doctors and nurses) than with that of reception staff.



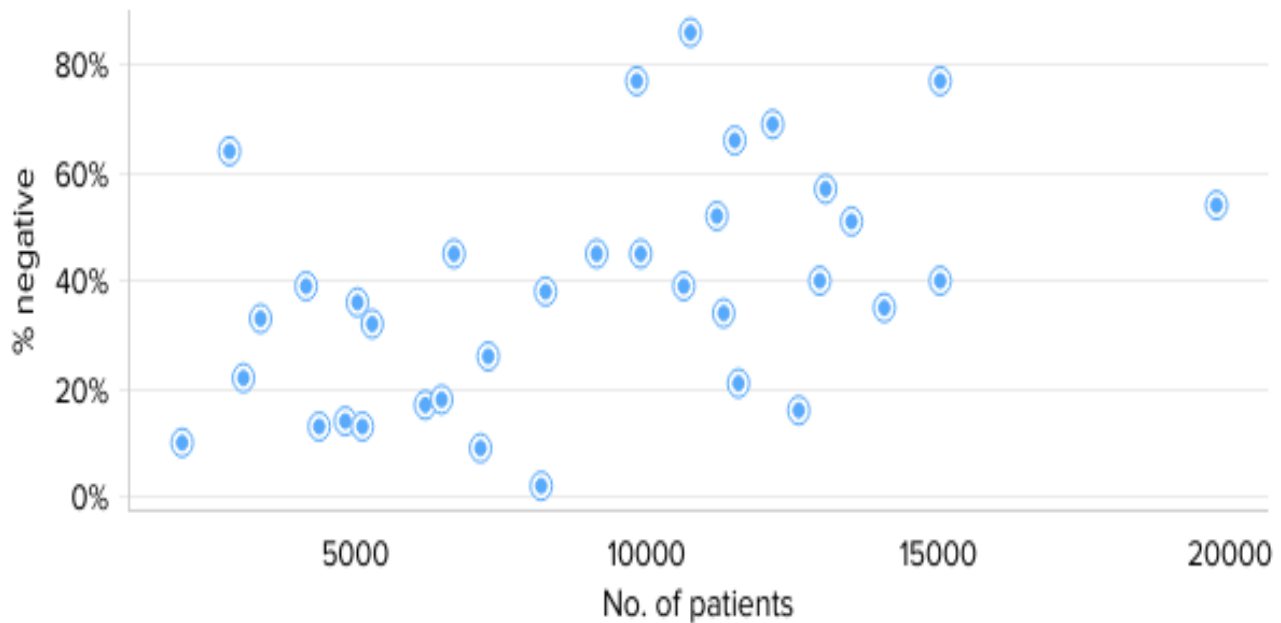


## Ranking of surgeries by patient opinion

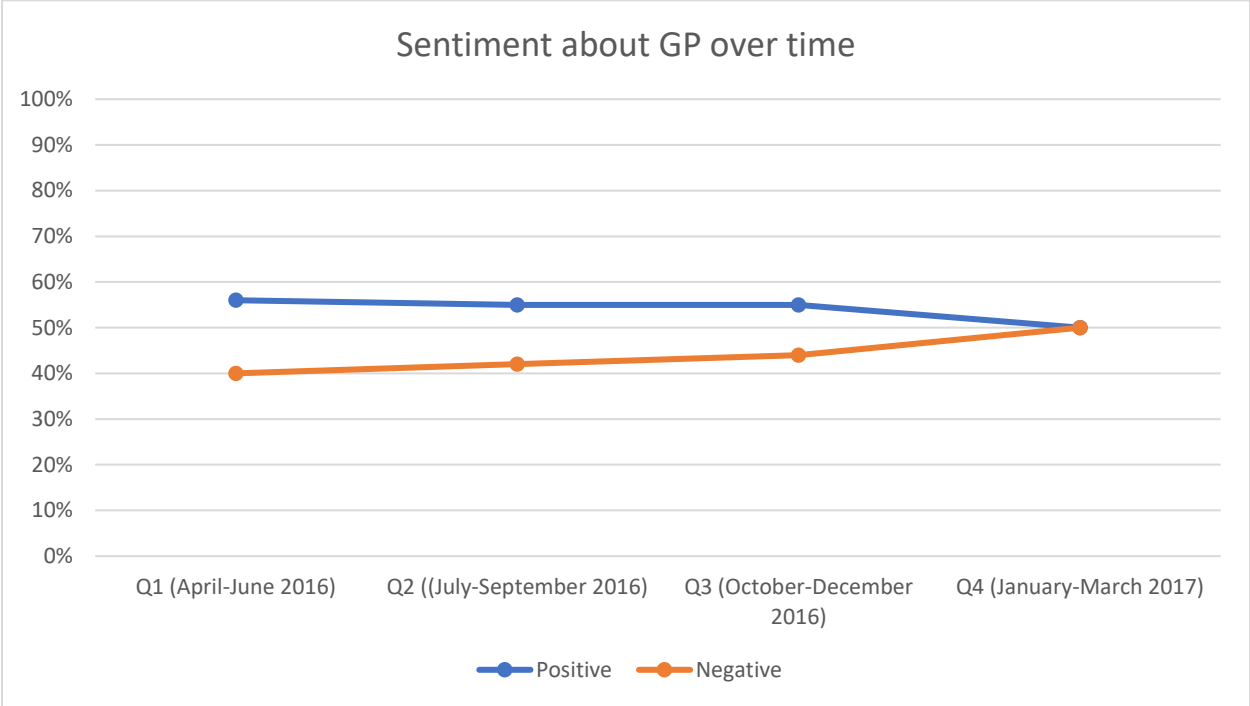


Patients' assessment of GP surgeries does not necessarily coincide with CQC's assessment. The three outstanding practices, Net4-3, Net6-5 and Net6-4 rank only #10, #15 and #32 in terms of patient opinion. (Sentiment about Net6-4, in particular, is 66% negative). On the other hand, sentiment about the Net7-5, marked "inadequate" by the CQC, is 54% positive, close to the average GP surgery in Tower Hamlets.

Surgeries with a large number of patients are slightly more likely to receive a higher percentage of negative comments from service users; which could indicate an over-crowding/ over-stretching of services problem (although it is note-worthy that the association does not become stronger if related to the number of patients *per GP*).



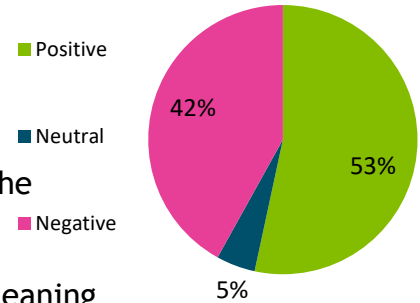
Sentiment on GP surgeries did not significantly vary over time, between the 4 quarters of the year.



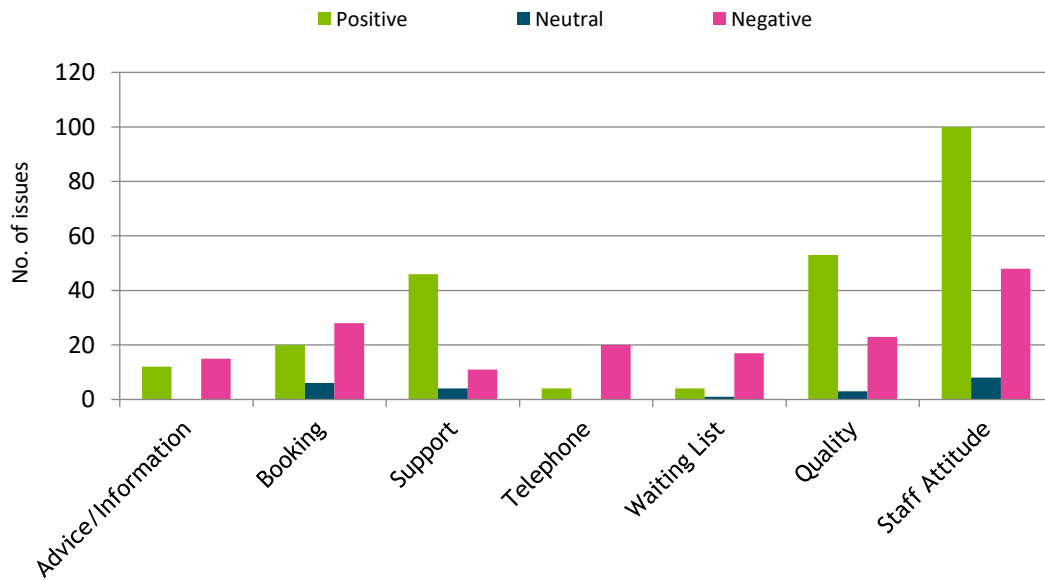
## The 5<sup>th</sup> Quarter- April 1 to June 30,2017

146 service users gave feedback between April and June 2017.

Sentiment about GP surgeries during this time is 53% positive, similar to the recorded sentiment for the previous 4 quarters.



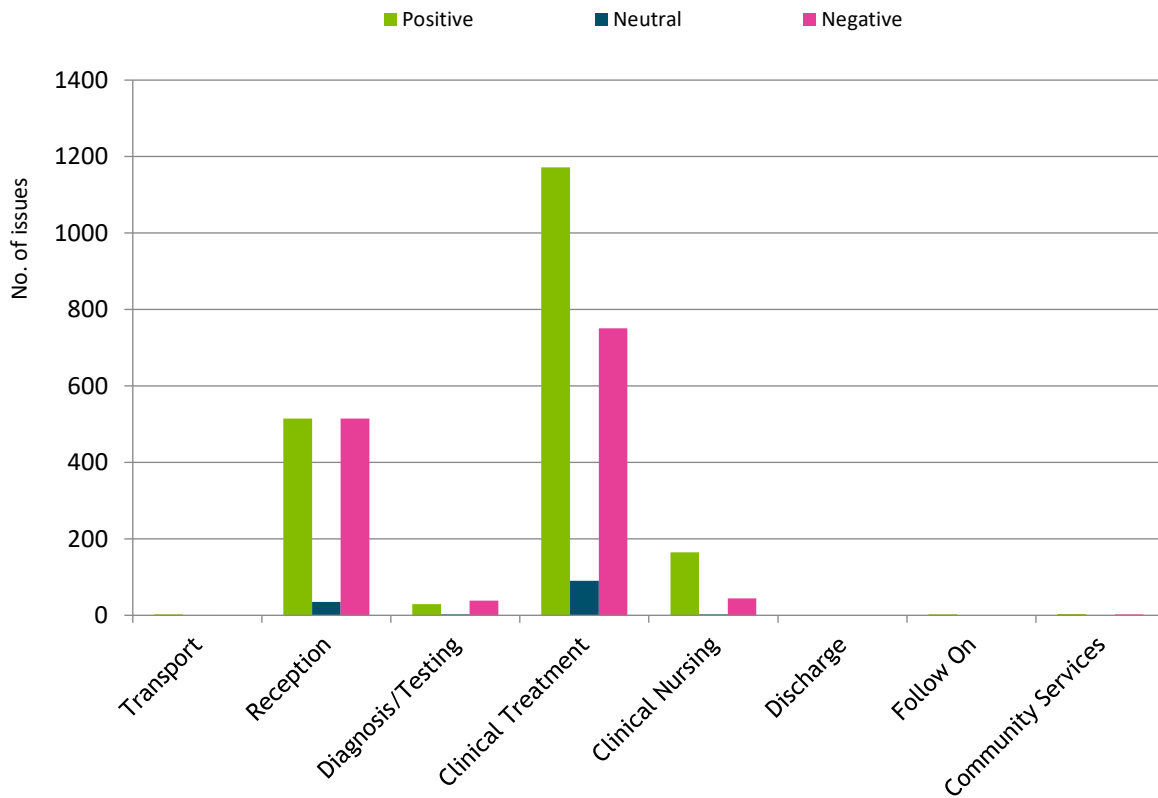
The core insights remain the same: patients are happy with the quality of care they receive and the attitude of staff members, but unhappy with **the long waiting lists and telephones**. Sentiment about **booking appointments** is also leaning towards negative, while sentiment about advice/information is mixed.



## THE CARE PATHWAY- A SERVICE USER'S JOURNEY

**Clinical treatment** is, by far, the most discussed aspect; and attitude towards it is broadly positive (58% positive). The most positively regarded aspect is **clinical nursing** (78% positive), partly because nurses are seen as more available and easier to book than doctors.

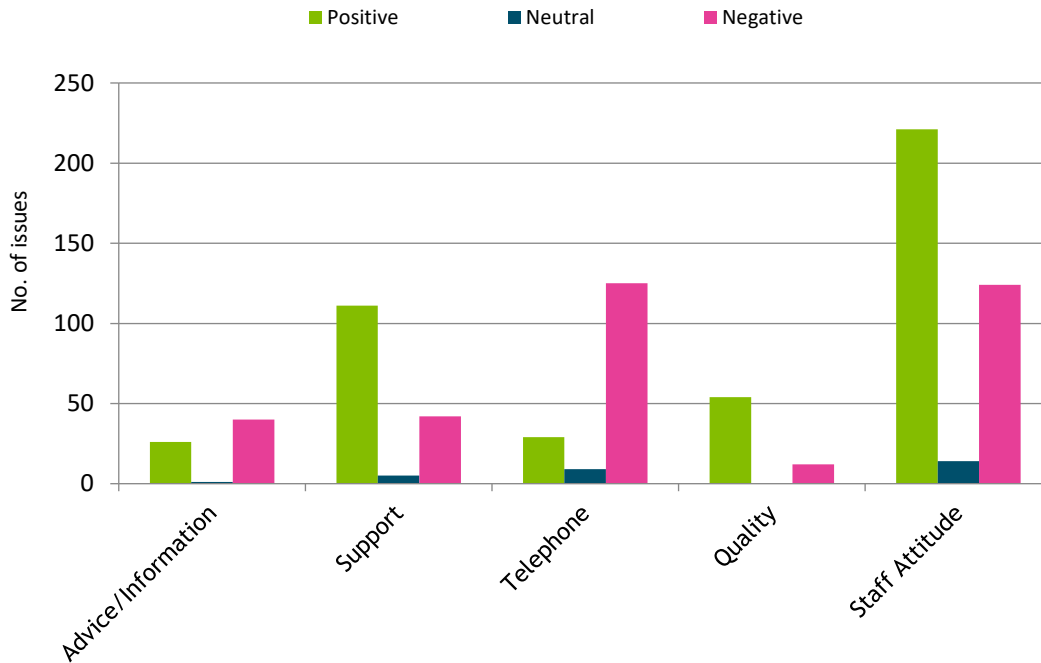
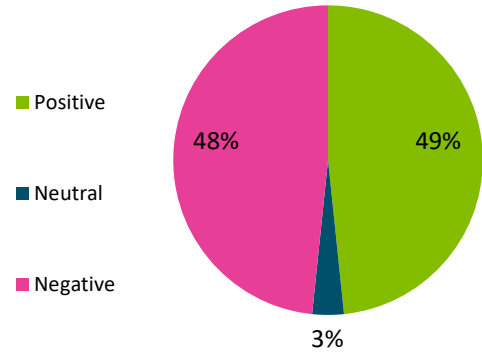
On the other hand, attitude towards **reception** and **disgnosis/testing** is leaning towards negative. Administrative errors and a poorly ran telephone system play an important part in this relatively less satisfactory assessment.



## RECEPTION

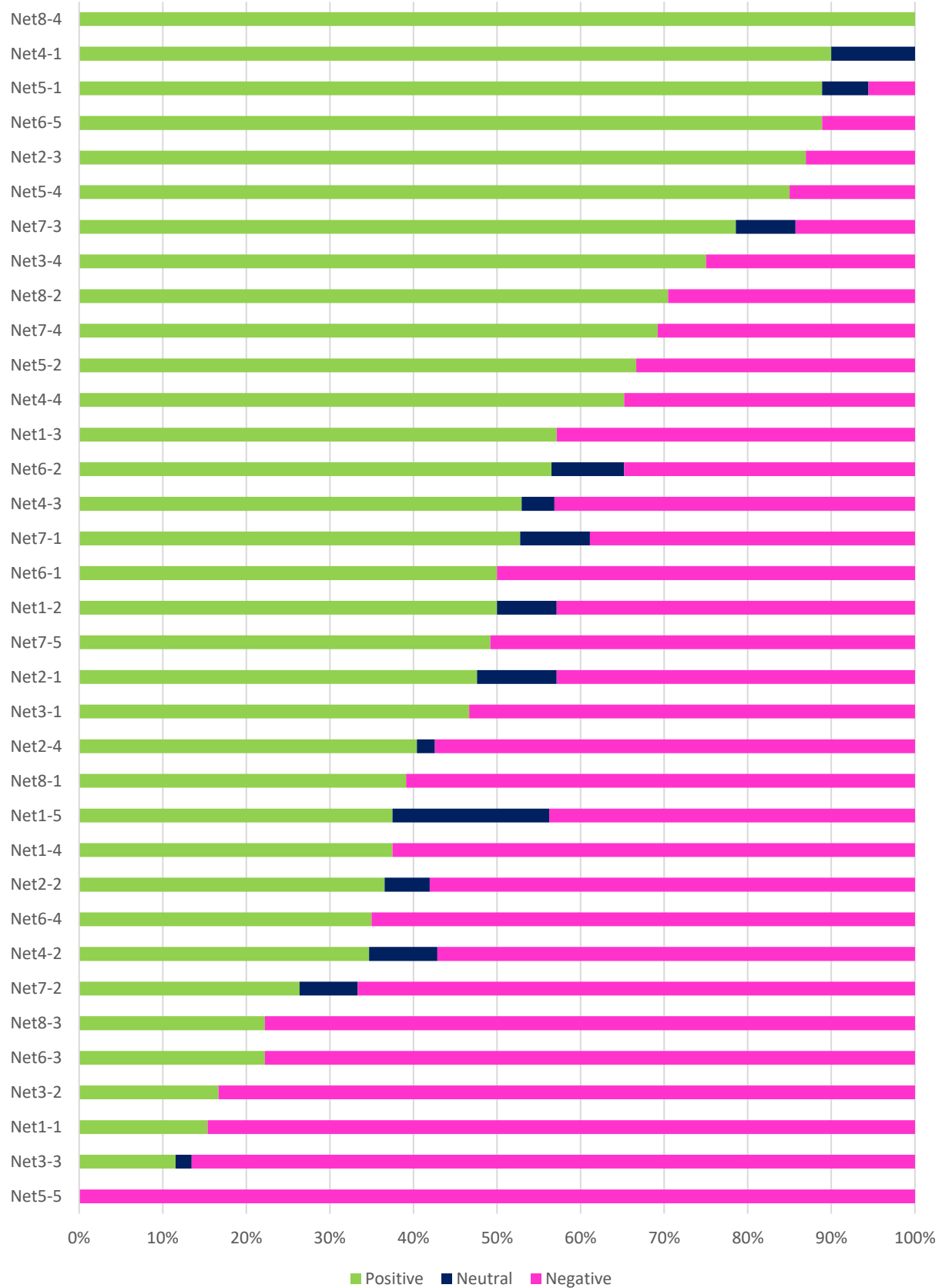
Overall sentiment about reception is mixed (49% positive).

Service users are mostly happy with the attitude of reception staff and the level of support they receive, but unhappy with communication by telephone. Sentiment about advice/information is also leaning towards negative.



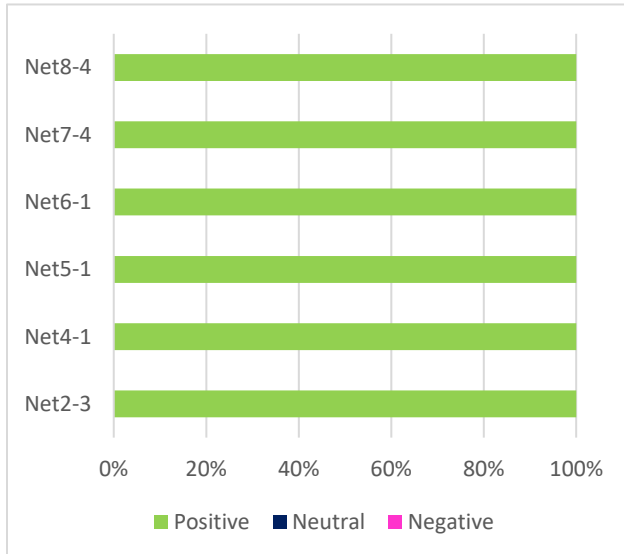


## Ranking of reception services by patient opinion

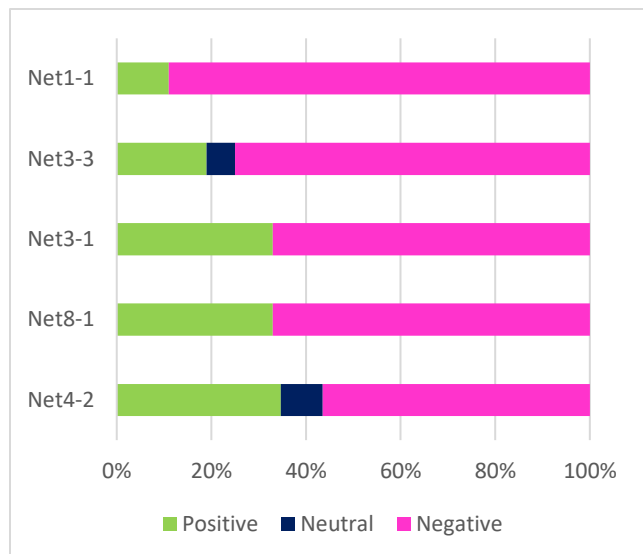


On reception staff attitude, Net4-1, Net5-1, Net7-4, Net6-1, Net2-3 and Net8-4 received 100% positive feedback. In contrast, the surgeries receiving the most negative feedback on reception staff attitude were the Net1-1 (89% negative), Net3-3 (75% negative), Net3-1(67% negative) and Net8-1 (67% negative).

Surgeries with positive perception of reception staff attitude

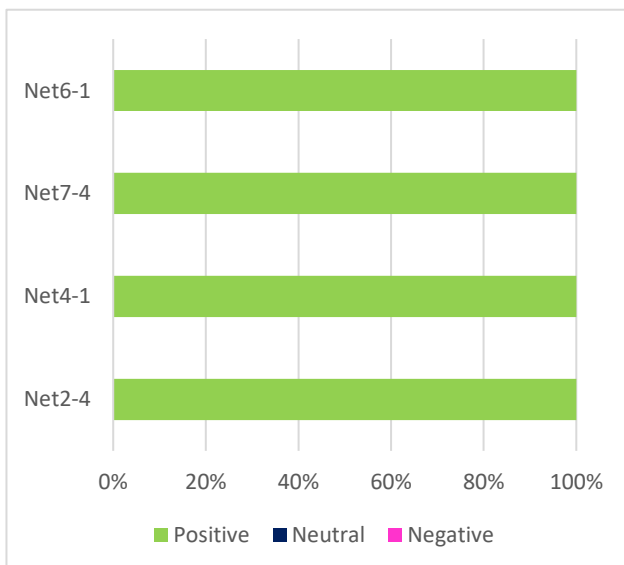


Surgeries with less positive perception of reception staff attitude

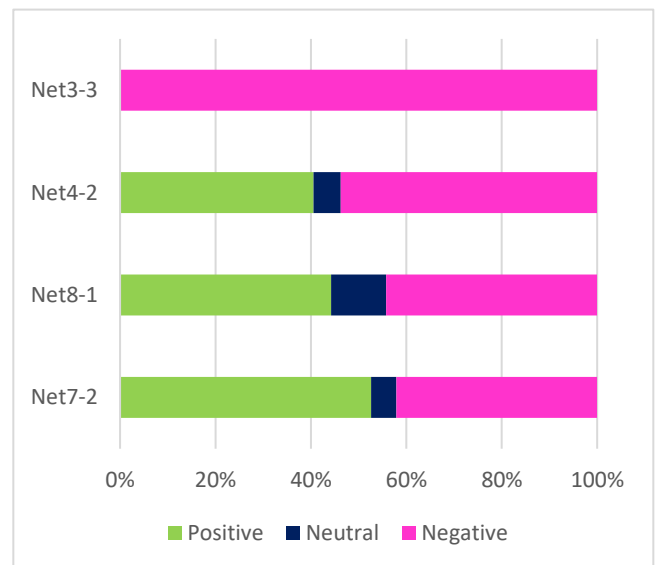


the Net6-1, Net7-4, Net4-1 and Net2-4 receive 100% positive comments. The Net3-3 receives 100% negative comments. The only other surgery where negative comments outweigh the positive ones on support is the Net4-2

Surgeries with positive perception of reception support

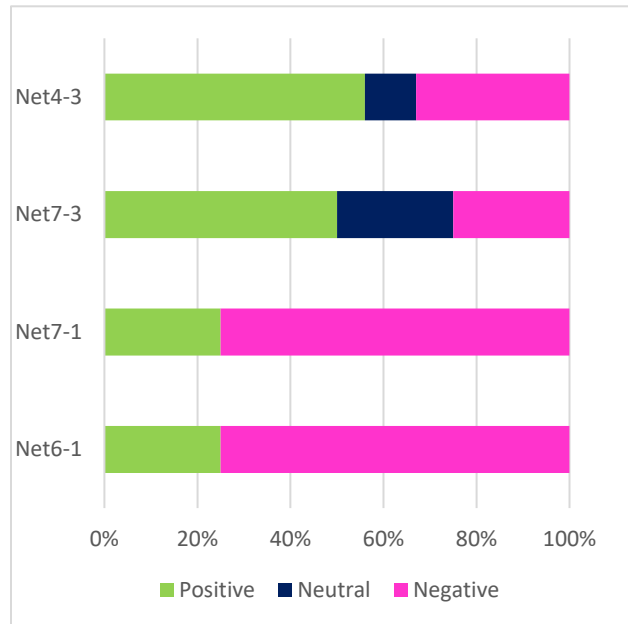


Surgeries with less positive perception of reception support

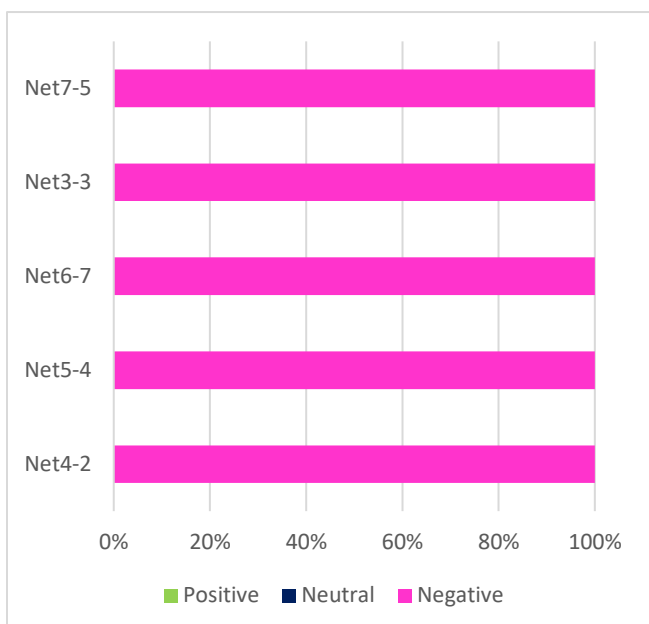


Feedback on **communication by telephone** with the surgery's reception is 100% negative for Net7-5, Net3-3, Net6-4, Net5-4 and Net4-2. The only two surgeries where there are more positive comments than negative on the telephone service are Net4-3

Surgeries with positive perception of reception telephone communication



Surgeries with less positive perception of reception telephone communication



Many service users are strongly dissatisfied with the very busy telephone lines; some of them report their calls being rejected.

- I tried to get in touch multiple time by phone, but ending up in a queue for a ridiculous amount of time and often end up facing someone answering and hanging up straight away, with no communication. I'm very disappointed by the customer service. (Net7-1)
- Been trying to get through on the phone - either no one answers or it's an impatient sounding person. (Net7-2)
- Just had my phone call rejected 3times picked up and then immediately hanged up. (Net7-2)

Poor telephone service can impact on the surgery's communication with consultants and specialists:

- Recently, after I had been treated at Bart's for a heart-attack, the Consultant tried to get through to the Net7-2 on the telephone: "Good luck!" I wished them, and sure enough after 10 mins of ringing, they gave up. (Net7-2)

Online booking is generally more popular with service users; however, some practices have reportedly discontinued it, and some patients report technical problems with it.

- Online facility is reliable and secure for booking appointment in advance and requesting prescriptions. And you are sent appointment reminder to your mobile, not a new service, they have been doing it for many years. (Net2-3)
- I booked my appointment online. The online booking is much easier to use. If I call, I have to stay on the telephone for more than half an hour. So now I only book online.(Net6-4)
- Only annoyance is that the online service no longer seems to work, it was very handy to book appointments etc. Shame, why has this stopped? (Net6-5)  
(Net1-5)
- I tried using the online system once, however it would not let me go further after 2/3rd of the way into the booking process...said I had to speak to someone as there was issue (error message) ... with online if you have a bad experience once, you tend not to try again. (Net2-2)

Technical support when the online system breaks down is highly appreciated by patients:

- I spoke to the Patient Support Administrator at Net8-1 in relation to my online login details. I received excellent service from them. They took time to take me through the process and managed to get me registered online to use Patient Access. They were extremely helpful, friendly and professional. Customer service at its best! It was very helpful as I am a busy person and can't visit the surgery often. The online service is useful to me.

Some practices make only appointments as far ahead as 4 weeks available through online booking; and reserve sooner appointments exclusively for telephone booking. This practice is criticised by patients.

- The online booking system only lets you book in 4 weeks' time.(Net7-2)
- The system is supposed to help take the pressure off the reception, but I'm not allowed to look for earlier appointments/ cancellations. So I still have to call reception and take up their time. I'm also not allowed to book another appointment, which I was told by the unhelpful GP to book, until after my nurse's appointment. All of this is ridiculous, forcing patients to use an online booking system that nobody likes by restricting how many appointments are available through reception and then treating patients like children by not allowing them to make appointments through the online booking system. (Net1-3)

Practices' websites are an important source of information for patients; information published online helps them "navigate the system" and avoid care delays:

- I have found the admin side easy to negotiate, as the clinic website is excellent and I follow the receptionists' advice to call early if I need a routine GP appointment within 2 days. (Net2-3)

Some practices have outdated or inaccurate information on their websites or physically displayed in the building:

- Interestingly, the online booking system offers only Tuesday bookings, under their name and on a day when the doctor is never in the practice. There's no online booking available other than for Tuesdays. This is false, misleading and non-transparent information by practice management. (Net4-1)
- I am writing this while I sit in the street outside the surgery waiting for them to reopen at 2pm. I am here to pick up a prescription and have wasted time and money to get here having checked the opening times which are publicised as 8am - 730pm. I have tried to phone but their recorded message just states they are closed - not why or for how long. I only know they reopen at 2pm because the receptionist used hand gestures through the window. I am busy at work and could really have done without this. All it would have taken is an honest display of opening times to avoid this problem. (Net6-2)

Inefficient booking systems impact on perceived staff attitude as well as on communication between patients and reception staff.

- I don't envy the receptionists their jobs - dealing with annoyed patients all day can't be fun - but the result is that they really are challenging to deal with. They tend to be very frazzled and can be hard to communicate with, especially over the phone. (Net3-3)

Receptionists who receive positive feedback from patients are perceived as efficient, knowledgeable, dedicated, compassionate polite and customer-service-minded. They go out of their way to support patients.

- This is a small and personal practice run by one doctor and a dedicated staff of supporters. Nothing is too much trouble for the team and they are very good at telephoning reminders of appointments and texting information. (Net4-1)
- Your receptionist provided excellent customer service polite professional and courteous too. Explain my query clear and concise and went out their way to resolve the issue experienced (Net3-4)
- Excellent receptionists with great communication skills and they really understand your problems and help as much as they can (Net6-2)
- They were keen to answer all my questions, yet their service went beyond my expectations. They were extremely professional yet so caring and passionate for their work. (Net2-3)
- Always helpful and attentive, could not ask for better. Rate Doctors very highly, staff always polite and most important remember one's name. In particular would praise front line reception very highly. (Net8-2)
- The staff at the reception are always very helpful and with great telephone manners. (Net8-2)
- I had a very worrying ongoing skin complaint which was getting worse all the time. After seeing two GPs and a Dermatologist while visiting family in Ireland I finally came back to my own local surgery, Net3-4 for more help. The receptionists really understood how worried I was and helped me speak to the doctor and get in for an appointment urgently that day.[...] the receptionists were so lovely when I was probably very abrupt and concerned on the phone and secured me call backs and appointments every time I needed them.

Generally, service users who take a positive view of the attitude of reception staff are more understanding in relation to long waiting times, administrative errors or a frustrating booking process:

- Of course, if you ring at a time when it's bound to be busy you may not get through, but generally phone access is fine and receptionists are helpful and friendly. (Net7-2)
- The reception staff are very helpful and friendly yet professional and approachable. There is usually a Bengali speaking member of staff on duty. When mistakes occur, and on a few occasions, they have occurred, both admin staff/management and doctors work together to resolve it. We all make mistakes, it's what we do to resolve it that matters. (Net2-3)
- I have been with this surgery for many years and I consider myself very lucky to be one of their patients. [...] Of course, there will be days where we have to wait longer for a reply but at least we know that we will get a reply eventually. (Net7-1)
- I have been a patient at this surgery for 2 years now and have always received the best treatment from it's doctors, nurses and administrative staff. It's occasionally difficult to get through on the phone and to get an appointment at a suitable time - but this is a problem across the board in NHS surgeries and not one that is unique to this surgery. The staff are professional, personable, helpful and polite at all times despite having to deal with some very difficult patients at times. I'd highly recommend this surgery. (Net5-4)
- A hard job someone is willing to do. This surgery is in a small enclave and has a client group with a diverse range of needs. Under the circumstances I cannot possibly fault the service they provide. They are terribly helpful, kind, tolerant, friendly and I'm happy they are here (Net6-1)

On the other hand, those who receive negative feedback are seen as rude, lacking empathy, inefficient and useless at addressing service user's needs. They fail to offer appropriate advice/information and make patients feel uncomfortable for asking, or for not understanding. In some cases, patients see them as "gatekeepers" making decisions to refuse them service arbitrarily, or otherwise as directly responsible for long waiting times or difficulty in accessing services.

- I would not recommend this clinic to anyone. Receptionists behave as if they cared about you but then, if you need anything more than booking an appointment, they won't help. I had been waiting for more than an hour for an appointment I booked in advance and when I asked whether there was any problem with it they just said "oh sorry we didn't know you had an appointment and that you were here". I've been waiting for so long even though I was sick and had a temperature and that was all that they had been able to do, not even offered to book a new appointment or to be visited straight away. I will never go there again. (Net4-4)
- Got same day appointment for my ill toddler... And then had to wait nearly an hour in an almost empty waiting room with both children. This is a normal thing, apparently. Receptionists are bored and rude, as if people are a bother. (Net7-2)
- I received a letter detailing my missed appointment from GP practice management which seemed quite aggressive and unreasonable, I called direct to speak to practice management that I was in hospital regarding my baby on one appointment and the other I completely forgot. Rudely they answered the phone then continued with the same attitude though out call that I should of called from hospital and if I had a dentist appointment I would of called to cancel. I [...] really felt the practice management have no customer service training and was only willing to recite policy procedure. (Net5-2)
- The receptionists, with one exception, are highly obstructive. Usually there is one attending to patients queuing at the desk, and 3 or 4 sitting around behind, not answering the phone. (Net7-2)
- Never saw a smile from the receptionist- most patients turned away confused or dissatisfied. [...] Eventually reached the front - was bluntly asked for postcode- looked disappointed when I was in the area. Bluntly asked if I had filled in a form which as far as I could see was only available from the receptionist and so the answer must be no. Given the form and told to fill it in and go back to the end of the queue. Horribly depressing place- so far can find no other practice that serves my address- surely this must be wrong? (Net3-3)

Poor staff attitude strongly impacts negatively on the patient's general impression of the surgery:

- I am utterly disappointed with this clinic and have left several complaints and am now disappointed that the NHS has not taken further action to resolve this, there needs to be severe improvements made or shut it down!!staff are incompetent, rude and make several mistakes and have the audacity to be rude to patients (Net3-3)
- I have found front of house staff rude, unhelpful and with poor communication. So many bad examples of unacceptable behaviour including numerous occasions of failing to ever call back despite promising to do so. What is also surprising is that despite repeated comments the Practice hasn't bothered to respond to any of the comments. The impression they leave by not dealing with this is that they don't care about their patients overall clinical health and wellbeing. And the lack of online access the poor opening hours and lack of drop in appointments reinforces this impression no matter how good the clinicians are. (Net4-2)
- I am amazed at how disrespectful this practice is! 30 min on hold to get an appointment, only to get the receptionist to literally cut me off in the middle of my sentence by putting me back on hold and hang up on me! When they don't do that, they provide extremely inconsistent information, and this goes as far as giving out partial medical results on the phone, only to stop and say "We can't give out medical information on the phone" (Net7-1)
- It's sad to see the great work that the doctors do in this practice been tarnished by [ rude receptionists] that are obviously not fit to deal with the public. (Net2-4)

Information about what kind of professional to see for what problem is sometimes lacking or insufficiently clear; this is issue affects primarily maternity/ antenatal service users. In a small number of cases, because of errors made by receptionists, patients have been booked with the wrong professional.

- Visited the practice after making an appointment weeks ago to see a doctor regarding my heart and lung check, it is my first pregnancy and really rely on the professionals to get things right. So, when calling and telling the receptionist I need an appointment for heart and lung checks and I'm pregnant and they say you need to see a midwife I take their word for it, only then to go to my appointment and be seen by the midwife who abruptly says no I can't see you go to reception. I now figure out the receptionist didn't know what they were doing and booked me in to see the wrong person. The receptionist is now saying I have to wait another 4 weeks before I see a GP. And then has to cheek to get defensive when I question why so long. (Net4-3)
- Getting an appointment with a doctor took me almost 2 months because people over there are stupid enough to book you to the wrong person 2 - 3 times in a row. (Net1-3)
- The reception staff should be trained better on the times of the practice and what doctor's nurses are available and doing what service. My husband was left without meds all weekend because of a mess up by reception it's wrong and unfair I will be taking my complaint further (Net4-4)

In some cases, reception staff were not able to provide patients with basic information they needed (such as about doctors' availability):

- Impossible to get an appointment. I tried to make an appointment with the doctor a few weeks back; I was told I have to wait for weeks but I wasn't given a time (not even weeks ahead). I was insisting waiting for my doctor's availability. I was promised to get a call-back to arrange an appointment with the doctor as I had bad experience with locum in the past and I didn't want a repeat. I never received a call-back, neither got an appointment. (Net4-1)
- When you call reception often they rush you on the phone, no customer service or willing to listen to patient concern, especially information about appointment given over the telephone are inaccurate. (Net6-2)
- Today I rang to make an appointment. After trying to get through early morning, midday and afternoon with no luck. I finally got through after calling again in the afternoon, after about 10 minutes waiting to be told that the number for Net7-5 practise has changed and I was given another number by a member of staff that just rang and rang. I'm sure I was given a wrong number,

A number of patients report receptionists enquiring about purposes for booking appointments in ways that they perceive as breaching confidentiality, or giving unauthorised medical advice; they may perceive this as unjustified, unauthorised attempts at gatekeeping/ preventing them from seeing doctors:

- Staff in reception never know what they are doing and also give the wrong information to patients. Confidentiality of illness has to always be broken over the phone by telling the receptionist what is the purpose for booking an appointment prior to talking to your own doctor regarding the problem, which is not correct, within the GMC and NMC code of conduct, confidentiality is one of the core principles to maintaining a professional attitude. (Net2-4)
- You always have to give the reason why you are calling. When you tell staff its confidential they say they can't give you an appointment. (Net2-2)
- Men don't go to Drs unless they need too and they're not going to tell a female receptionist their problems. You're going to put the phone down. Putting people in quasi clinical roles in with no training is not going to work (Net4-3)

In a small number of cases, patients with a poor command of English report rude treatment from reception staff:

- I believe someone who work in customer service in a GP must understand they have to work with every type of customers, with different backgrounds, some of them do not have English as first

language, some are very vulnerable for their health problems, so they deserve respect, and being talk with a good manners and consideration. (Net7-2)

- The reception staff are extremely rude and obnoxious. I think they are the worst part of the surgery. They don't know how to treat patients properly, if anything they make us question our self-respect and dignity. I feel utmost sorry for the people who are not fluent in English because they are treated with such disrespect and I am a first-hand witness of this and it pained me to see this. (Net1-1)
- The appointment is for my mother but she does not speak English very well. My mother came here three times trying to make an appointment and each time she was turned back, it is a real struggle for her as my father (her husband) needs 24hr care and it is hard for her to leave her house to be turned back each time. I do not live with her but when I came over her house today she told me how she was trying to get the appointment and the problem she was having so I called and I was told to make the appointment online, however the receptionist did not get back to me with the website (Net6-4)

There are some reported cases of appointments missed or cancelled because of admin errors:

- No text messages were sent to me to confirm my appoint. I have to call up to check if my appointment was scheduled, and came to my surprised that my appointment was not schedule! Re-scheduled my appointment again and was advised that I will get a confirmation via text messages in a couple of minutes. This did not happen and I call up again nearer to my appointment date to check and was told that no appointment has been made. Now, that I finally scheduled for another time, the practice actually called me up a day before asking me what appointment did I schedule for, which I do not understand why are they asking me what appointment was made as it would have been recorded on the system. And then I was told that they have to cancel my appointment because there is no stock for the intended vaccination. I was told to call up again in the next couple of days to check if stocks are available! (Net8-1)
- I had to attempt to make an appointment two times because the first time I phoned to make an appointment and they said I was all set and had an appointment, but when I showed up for that appointment they had no record of it. Because I was not logged into the computer at all, they had to reschedule my appointment 2 weeks later. Besides this mix up the receptionist was accommodating when making this appointment. (Net2-1)

Cancellations of appointments or repeat prescriptions also happen with no reason given to patients:

- The first time I booked an appointment, the surgery called a couple of hours in advance to cancel my appointment. The second time I booked an appointment, the surgery called a mere half an hour before my appointment. Both times i have had to take time off work, I was given little explanation and I have still not been able to access any medical care. (Net3-2)
- I turned up at the surgery for my prescription and after the receptionist messing around with paperwork and looking in their handbag i finally got their attention. When I finally got their attention, they told me that my repeat prescription had been rejected with no explanation - I was obviously not happy as I have run out of my pills and need them. Another receptionist intervened and mentioned all doctors have left for the day and there's nothing they can do for me until Saturday morning. At that I mentioned 2 - 3 minutes back there was a doctor here who could have helped but because of the messing about making me wait as the other receptionist was more concerned about their handbag I now have to come back in the morning (Net8-2)



There have also been cases of cancellations, delays or closure not being communicated to patients:

- The surgery website, phone message and notice outside the surgery all state that the practice is open on Saturday mornings. No update is posted in any of these places that it will be shut today Saturday 30/4/2016. I came to the surgery to pick up a repeat prescription which I had submitted on Tuesday 26/4/2016 and have been unable to collect it. (Net1-3)
- Would it be possible to inform the patient in case of significant delays please? In a few recent occasions, my appointment was delayed by more than 30 mins and would have been useful to know it in advance. (Net4-4)
- My apportionment has been cancelled and I wasn't even told about it. The receptionist said that the voicemail was left for me on my mobile phone - funny enough I don't have a voicemail on my mobile phone (Net6-5)
- Cancelled several of my appointments and have failed to let me know, I had taken time off of work to attend! (Net3-3)

Some patients have reportedly been discouraged or prevented from complaining about the surgery by reception staff:

- I chose to make a formal complaint regarding their attitude towards me and they hung up on me. I think it's disgusting how I was treated. (Net5-2)
- The big problem with this practice is the receptionists in the front desk, I don't know what kind of education one needs to do that job, or what kind of social awareness, but I witness them even mocking patients that wanted to complain about the bad service that they were providing. (Net2-4)
- I did write a complaint on the website, but I noticed my complaint was partially edited to the practice's favour (Net7-2)

For some surgeries, communication with pharmacists/ transfer of prescriptions to pharmacies is smooth and straightforward.

- I register at this surgery a few weeks back and was seen very quickly registered etc etc. I then got my prescription and there was an issue with it. I went in to the surgery and not only did the receptionist get me in to see the nurse immediately but they got the new prescription signed and ready but they got the chemist down the road to get it ready for me as well! All in 40 mins.
- You can always get an appointment in an emergency and the online system is great for booking appointments and arranging repeat prescriptions. (Net1-1)

In other cases, it is found lacking; admin mistakes may also cause delays.

- I was trying to get in touch with them about my 75 year old fathers repeat prescription, that the receptionist told me was at the Pharmacy[...] the pharmacist advised that there was no prescription and called the surgery for them to say that they had it there, I then walked back to the surgery and the receptionist behind the desk informs me they were the one that spoke to the pharmacist and was the one I saw earlier and that they informed the pharmacist that they had sent them the script 2 weeks earlier and that they had just got off the phone again to the pharmacist who informed them that my father had already picked up the script 2 days earlier, which he had not. So I went back to the Pharmacy yet again, at this point thinking if it's my father's mistake [...]. The pharmacist informed me that they clearly told the receptionist that that had not received the most recent script and that they one that was picked up by my father's carer was over a month ago. On not going back to the Surgery for the third time and advising what the Pharmacist said, the receptionist continued to say the pharmacist did tell them it's been picked up and that there is nothing further they can do [...] I asked the receptionist to call the Pharmacy in front of me and after finally calling and insisting pharmacist is saying the same, I asked they give the pharmacist the date of the script, which they ignored and when they did, it became clear that they never did

send them the script and gave me one then saying that's the one but forgot to send there, but it had today's date on it. I have video of incident (Net2-2)

- The practice has trouble keeping track of notes, letters and paperwork in general. [...] The receptionists, with one exception, are highly obstructive. [...] One in particular is very incompetent, and has on some occasions even issued me with another patient's prescriptions. (Net7-2)
- The online repeat prescription works very well and sends it straight to the pharmacist thus saving time and effort collecting the prescription and taking to the pharmacist. (Net4-2)

The registration process is found to be highly frustrating by some patients. In some surgeries, registrations can only be processed during specific times, that are inconvenient for many working people.

- I went to Net2-2 centre this morning (Saturday) to register with a GP. When I arrived I've been told that registrations are only between Mondays and Fridays. I was totally surprised (in a negative way) and explained to the receptionist that I can't come during those days because I work. The receptionist's answer "Find another GP centre". I was absolutely appalled and disgusted by the way I was greeted and the agent's attitude. On top of that before going to Net2-2 centre, I called several GP centres of my area which all told me to go to Net2-2 because of my postcode. Besides what's the point of opening on Saturdays if one can't register? (Net2-2)
- I've tried 3 times to register in person here. The queues at the desk are long and you can hear the reception staff discussing patients' personal details. The staff are rude and unhelpful. They require 1 photo ID plus two proofs of address from a list that they do not reveal online and when I went in for a second time the receptionist was so rude to me (Net3-3)

In some cases, surgeries have been able to see patients straight after registration; this has been highly appreciated by service users.

- The lovely reception staff took me under their wing and got me registered and through to see a GP straight away. I then needed to see a nurse which the GP managed to get me in to see straight away as well. (Net6-1)
- I came to Net8-2 because I had a health emergency after a chronic condition going bad. I just recently moved to UK and was not registered at any medical Centre and I was afraid that they would turn me down because the registration process takes about 2 weeks before they can see you, like anywhere else. But as soon they realized it was an emergency, the doctor saw me right away, gave me medications, prescriptions and a referral to a specialist. I didn't have to wait 2 weeks, they've put me in their system right then and there. They literally saved my life. (Net8-2)

Waiting room environment varies from surgery to surgery. Some are family friendly and offer patients entertainment such as magazines and toys for children; which service users comment positively upon:

- When we got there, there was not a queue to see a receptionist so we went straight to one and they kindly directed us to the correct waiting room. The waiting room was large with air conditioning, toys to amuse toddlers and a large amount of leaflets and magazines to entertain a variety of people. (Net4-3)

In some cases, the waiting room and reception area are successfully used to display and provide information:

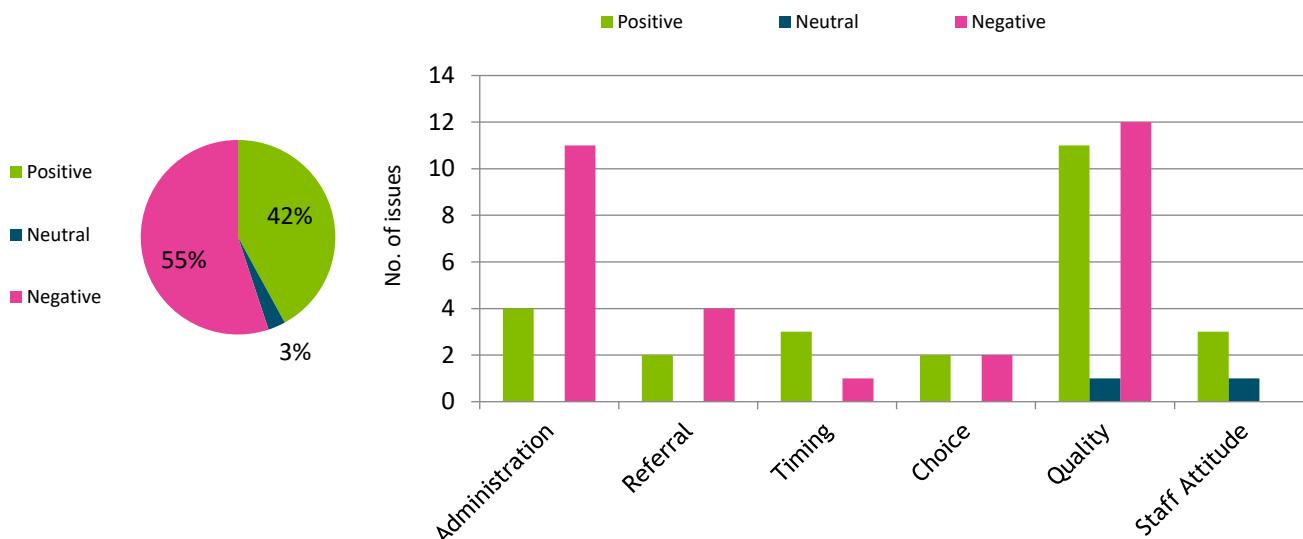
- It's worth picking up leaflets next to Reception such as 'important phone numbers' for local services (e.g. St Barts hospital departments, walk-in centres etc) as these numbers can be like gold-dust and are not always on the internet as you'd expect.

In other cases, waiting rooms are perceived as disorganised and not used to their full potential. Some service users comment on how the waiting room environment could be better used for offering information to patients, using walls and displays:

- Information is scattered everywhere, they should use the monitor to display the information, offer advice, etc.
- The waiting room inside the surgery should be more appealing and updated. It should have a name board and clock there for people who are waiting there, especially mums with babies. There should be a suggestion box too for patients to give their suggestions for improvement. There should be a toy section or play area for children. It is not child friendly at all. The TV doesn't work nor does the self-service machine where you can register yourself for an appointment rather than waiting in the queue. (Net2-2)
- Reception area is very depressing; the environment could be improved...there is clutter and information everywhere... It's very 20th century!! They should be using that monitor at the front to display all the information advertised...people will take more notice if the information was displayed on the monitor. (Net2-2)

## DIAGNOSIS AND TESTING

Overall sentiment about diagnosis and testing is **55% negative**. Opinion about the quality of service provision is mixed; and service users are broadly satisfied with staff attitude and timing. Administrative issues make up the largest source of discontent among patients.



Undergoing diagnosis and testing procedures, especially if suspected of serious illness, can be a stressful time for patients. A warm, reassuring manner by members of staff contributes positively to patient experience:

- Spoke to a member of staff this morning about my results, they were very polite and wished me a good day. It's the little things. I have been a patient at this practice for five years and care from both the Dr and the Reception team has always been consistent. (Net4-1)
- The blood person is very nice and calm with patients very friendly as well and only one thing maybe they need to just improve their English otherwise very nice person. (Net3-1)
- I had a blood test on Tuesday 29th september for the first time in my life. I was so scared and couldnot sleep at night. But during the blood test I was in a hand of the best nurse ever in my life. (Net3-3)
- My husband has his blood test every week and the nurse who does it really makes our day no matter how down you feel when you come out you have a full heart and a smile (Net4-2)

In some surgeries, doctors are able to create a relationship of trust with their patients, and to make them feel that their concerns are being taken seriously.

- I have been a patient of Net7-4 for almost 7 years an although my visits are not frequent I have always received an excellent level of service when needed. The staff are pleasant and always making sure no stone is left unturned during diagnosis. (Net7-4)
- I was rushed to the walk-in a couple of months back with a bleeding nose, the GP was successfully able to diagnose it as an bacterial infection and was able to recommend the ENT clinic to me. The ENT clinic is run by a doctor who is very understanding of your condition and offers the best advice. The doctor was able to diagnose me successfully and recommend a treatment plan. When it was clear, I needed to be operated on - the doctor involved me in the decision process and clearly discussed the pro's and con's. (Net8-1)
- I was seen for a bad sinus attack and breathlessness- I'm asthmatic. The doctor examined me thoroughly and was so incredibly helpful- I felt very relieved I'd come (Net6-5)
- Symptoms taken seriously and follow up felt appropriate and proportionate. The doctor also gave me the time we needed rather than rushing the appointment, very impressed. (Net6-5)

## Whereas in others they fail to do so

- I felt that they didn't take my reasons for the appointment seriously. I requested to be checked for Diabetes, since my dad is diabetic (Type 2, so familiarity) and I thought I could have some of the symptoms listed on the NHS website. On the same website is advised to contact your GP if you think you have those symptoms and that is what I have done. The GP eventually booked me in for blood tests and added that i could eat before my blood tests. It is common knowledge that you shouldn't eat before blood test as this could affect the results. I felt that they didn't have a proper knowledge of the job. The first appointment that I met the same GP was because my partner had a fungus on his back. The doctor didn't really know what to do and she Googled the images of dermal fungus! Since when Google is a 100% reliable source of medical info???
- I made the mistake of going to see one of the male doctors at Net2-2 Health for a female-specific problem. The amount of misinformation was staggering. I was told that a positive test result for a condition that causes difficulty conceiving and higher chances of diabetes and high cholesterol was "nothing to worry about". This happened twice till I was able to see a female doctor, where I was promptly given correct information and a referral. (Net2-2)

## In some GP practices, procedures can be booked efficiently:

- The practice operates super efficiently because they log your telephone request straight away and depending on the issue you will get a call back almost instantly from the doctor or nurse who will advise you what to do next. I've called them 8:30AM and got a call back from the doctor by 9AM and then an appointment for 11AM. Then I went back for a blood test for 2PM. Easy and efficient! I will need to call for my results and I'll have a follow up call with the doctor who will again advise me of next steps. (Net7-3)
- I see my GP on a weekly bases, they are always very nice, friendly, and professional . The surgery has changed so much for the better, it is open longer hours, there is a nurse in the surgery all the time and there is a health care professional there to do blood test ect all this wasnt available before.(Net3-1)
- I rang last Monday afternoon, 25th July, to try to get an appointment and was given one for the next morning at 9 a.m.! I received an excellent consultation from the doctor. After which a kind receptionist arranged a blood test which was carried out immediately by an efficient phlebotomist. Within minutes I had collected my prescription from the staff at the adjacent pharmacy. (Net3-3)

## Whereas in other practices, admin issues may cause delays to patients being appropriately refer or receiving the testing they need:

- Results of tests are not followed up and I had some deranged blood results that should have been addressed urgently that weren't thus impacting on my physical health immensely (Net1-1)
- Everyone from the reception staff to my GP has been condescending and dismissive and no-one ever seems to be available to deal with my requests in a timely manner, there are a ridiculous number of waiting times and layers of bureaucracy for processes that at other practices took no time at all. (At one point, it seemed that no-one in the entire practice knew how to process a particular type of lab test, making me wait 40 minutes after my appointment while they figured it out. (Net2-4)
- The practice seems disorganised, the receptionists are slow and make constant mistakes with important time sensitive thing like referral letters. At one point my GP even referred me for the same X-ray twice after having not read my notes properly. (Net7-4)

Only a minority of patients have found the booking process difficult and waiting lists exceedingly long:

- Tried to book an appointment today for a follow up post an ultrasound that I've had testing for cancer. Unable to secure an appointment for 3 weeks - and even then, this is not with my regular doctor. (Net8-1)
- Regularly unable to get appointments. For example, called both surgeries yesterday afternoon (Thu) after a surgical operation and was told by specialist doc to visit GP on Mon for post operative wound check and was told by receptionist only availability is Wednesday. If I need anything earlier I need to visit walk in clinic. Well, thanks (Net4-4)

Communication between GPs and patient regarding test results has, on a few occasions, been deficient or lacking:

- Received a phone message from the gp at the end of practice hours so no answer when rang back immediately informing me I had been booked a hospital appointment following some test results and to call back reception the following day to receive information on the results, as the tests are pregnancy related waiting a night for information has churned up a lot of anxiety and stress from being completely left in the dark. I rang back first thing and after being on hold eventually spoke to someone who through no fault of their own couldn't make sense of the notes they then said they would call get someone to call me back, I could see we weren't getting anywhere and asked if they could at least tell me the figures on the results so I could go away and consult another doctor, but no joy. After 7 hours, no call back my husband rang and they said someone would call to help in an hour, feeling massively fobbed off we politely persevered. Someone rang back two hours later said they can't tell me and to make an appointment. Trouble is now I have to walk into a treatment appointment at the hospital with no information and no test results. Disappointed with the level of care and lack of empathy, with no effort to mutually work towards a solution. (Net2-2)

A small number of patients report loss of test results:

- They've lost my blood work on numerous occasions! (Net3-3)
- I am still 1 month later waiting for results of blood test and ECG. (Net6-5)

In some practices, referrals are made quickly and efficiently

- I have recently had to undertake a series of examinations myself which arose as a result of concerns about possible kidney stones. Once again, my GP and colleagues at the practice were extremely supportive and helpful in ensuring that I saw the appropriate consultants at my local hospital, and undertook the appropriate tests and examinations, all within a period of one month! (Net4-1)
- This health centre and its GPs have supported me with chronic and acute medical problems excellently for the past 20 years. My previous GP helped me get a prompt hospital appointment when I had a suspicious looking mole on my left arm a few years ago. This prompt GP followed by a prompt hospital appointment saved my life; the mole turned out to be a malignant melanoma. (Net7-2)

Whereas in other practices, referrals are refused or delayed

- On several occasions, I have been there for my treatment where they denied me blood tests and medication this has then lead to my illness becoming worse and finding out about it later. I do not recommend this practice at all. (Net3-1)
- Results of tests are not followed up and I had some deranged blood results that should have been addressed urgently that weren't thus impacting on my physical health immensely. (Net1-1)
- I have had a recurring condition for 3 years and I have asked repeatedly to be sent to a specialist and the GP hasn't been willing to give me a referral until this month (Net2-2)

There were a few cases of doctors and other medical professionals refusing to share test results with patients:

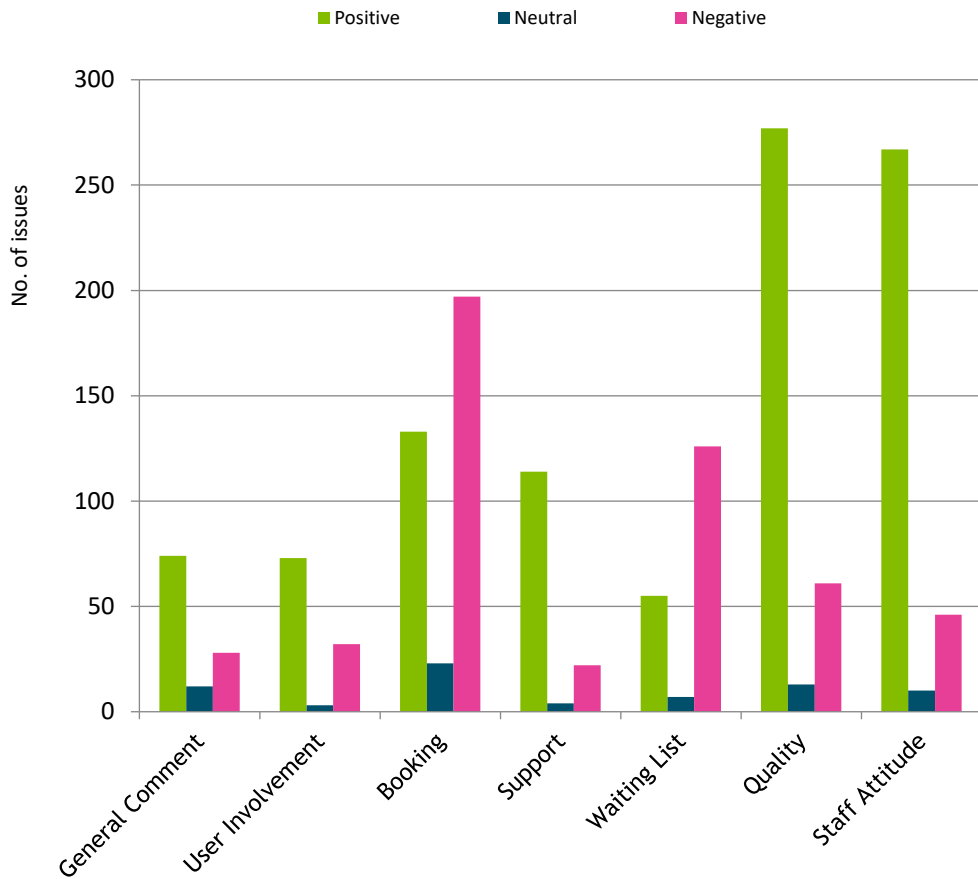
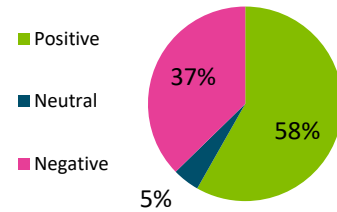
- I had an appointment with a doctor, they were very rude, dismissive, didn't want to hear what my symptoms were, they declined me to show me my blood test results and denied me a referral to a specialist. (Net7-1)
- Went for a typical urinary test, the nurse just did the test, never asked me about my symptoms and never informed about the results. They just prescribed an antibiotic and told me to leave. This is completely unprofessional, the whole examination lasted 5 minutes. I was left stressed without knowing what was the issue. (Net8-1)

One patient reported feeling that their privacy has been violated:

- I had to have blood taken recently. I found the care assistant reading through my medical records on the computer and so involved in 'snooping' s/he didn't realize I had entered the room. I was then quizzed on various entries in my records which had no relevance to the task in hand/ reason for appointment - to take blood. I pointed out that what was being asked was inappropriate, they had no reason to be reading through my medical records and bore no relation to what had been requested (does this fall under Data Protection, Computer Misuse or both?). On leaving I was told that the care assistant would contact me to discuss any abnormalities in the results and further care - I said 'No, I would see the doctor who requested the tests for any clinical discussions'. Why should a care assistant be reading through a medical record when only supposed to be taking blood? What clinical education, knowledge, right does a care assistant have to discuss clinical matters? The tests were being made to try and reach a diagnosis - do care assistance make clinical diagnosis now? (Net8-1)

## CLINICAL TREATMENT

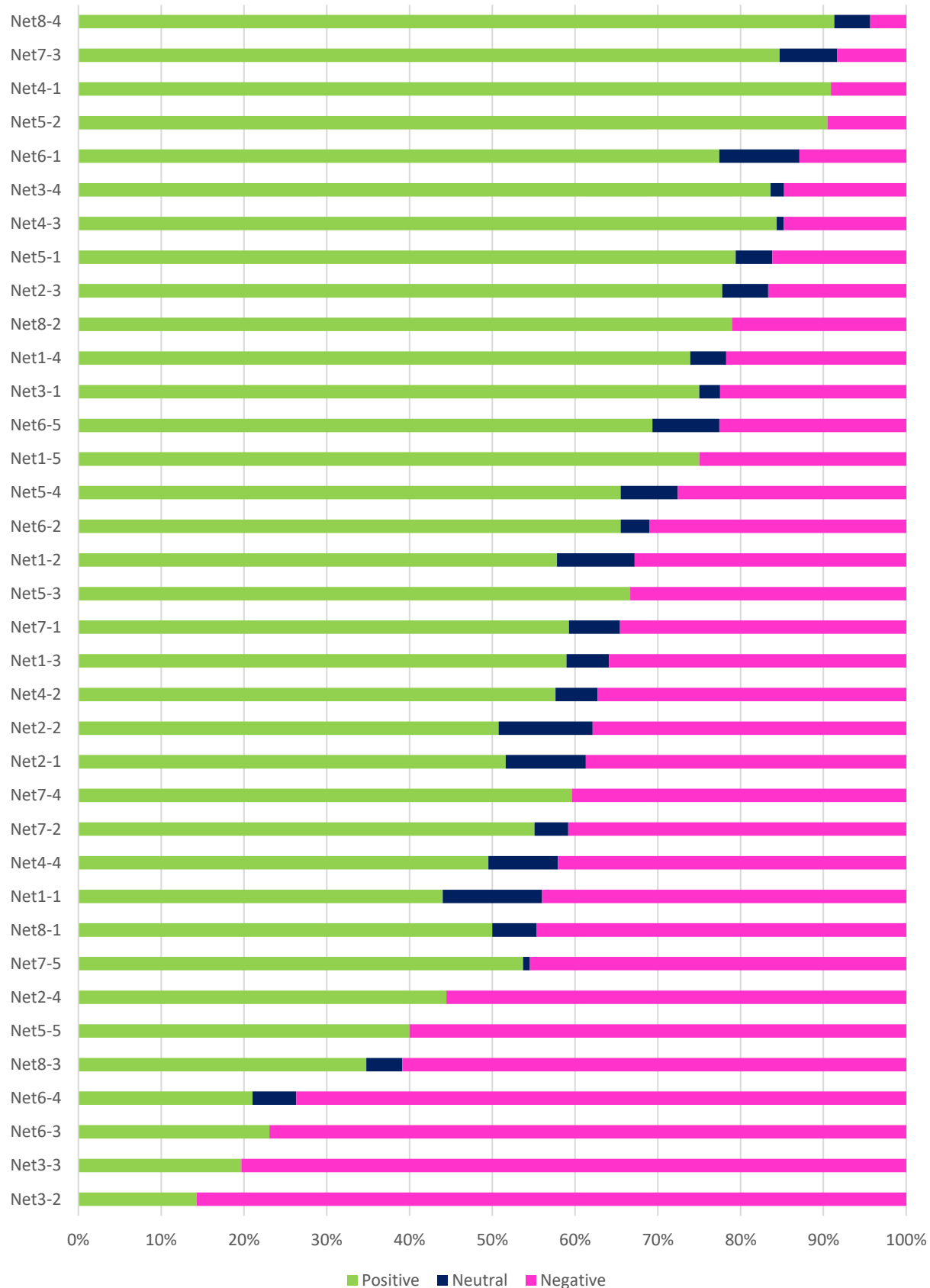
Overall, sentiment about clinical treatment is **58% positive**. Service users perceive clinical treatment offered by Tower Hamlets GP surgeries as *being of very good quality, but difficult to access*. They are satisfied with the attitude of medical staff, the level of user involvement and support they are receiving; but they are also frustrated with the booking process and long waiting times for appointments.



Net8-4, Net4-1 and Net5-2 receive overwhelmingly positive feedback, while for Net6-3, Net6-4, Net3-3 and Net3-2 feedback is strongly negative.

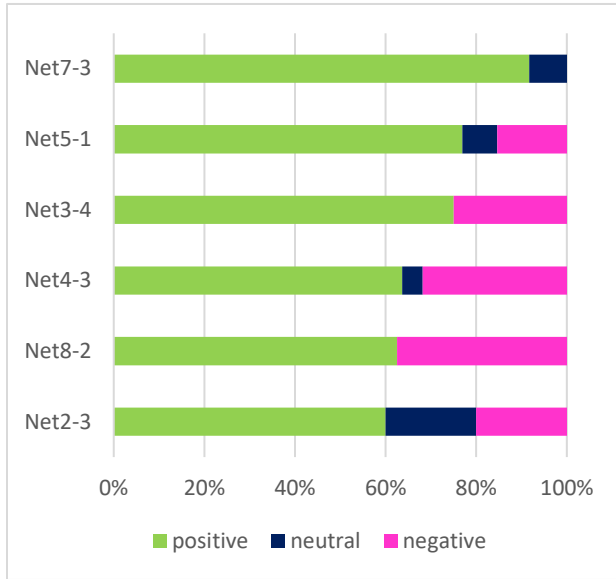


## Ranking of clinical treatment by patient opinion

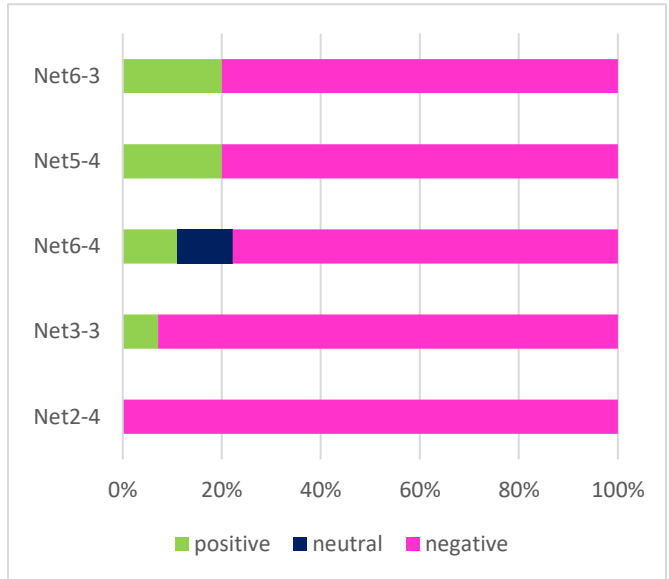


Dissatisfaction with booking and waiting lists is not universal: some surgeries, such as the Net7-3 and Net5-1s successfully avoid it, while for others, such as the Net3-3 or Net2-4, it severely affects patient experience.

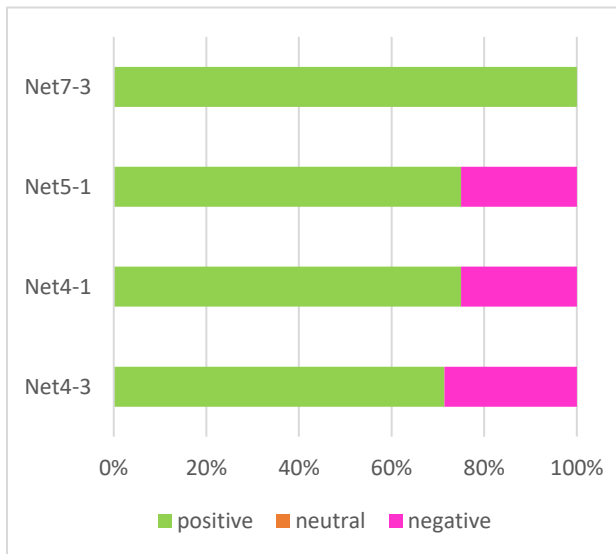
**Surgeries with positive perception of clinical treatment booking**



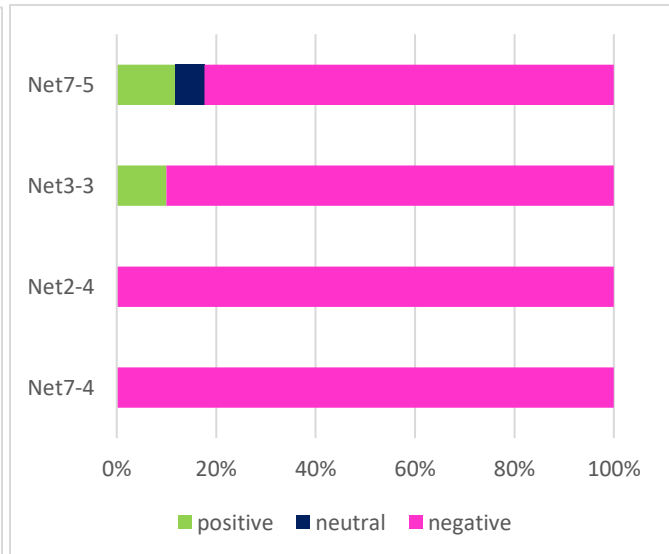
**Surgeries with less positive perception of clinical treatment booking**



**Surgeries with positive perception of clinical treatment waiting times**



**Surgeries with less positive perception of clinical treatment waiting times**



The attitude of medical professionals is universally viewed positively; no surgery with 5 comments or more on the topic has had less than 50% positive comments. Net5-4, the Net8-4, Net5-2, Net4-1 and Net7-3 have each had 100% positive feedback on the attitude of GP's.

For non-emergency appointments, 4-7 days is generally seen as an acceptable waiting time. Seeing a specific GP takes longer, 2-3 weeks.

- Waited 6 days for a routine appointment with my own GP, which isn't bad by some GP practice standards. Always treated with respect and felt looked after by my GP. Referrals and documentation seems to be done in a timely fashion. (Net1-2)
- I come to here to make appointments as well as phone to make appointments, last time it took seven days to get an appointment...it's a busy place. I am happy with my appointment experience. (Net2-2)
- Can take 3-4 weeks to make an appointment with your GP, this time can be reduced if you are willing to see a different doctor. Prefer to see own GP as they know background etc. (Net7-2)
- Made the appointment for my son who is a toddler. I couldn't get an appointment on the same day and I had to wait on the phone line for quite some time. However, I was given an appointment a few days later and we were called after 20 minutes which is quite early. The normal waiting time is far longer.

However, in many GP surgeries, you often have to wait 2-3 weeks before you are seen at all for a non-emergency. This length of time is seen as unacceptable by most patients.

- It takes 2-3 weeks to get an appointment, sometimes even 3-4 weeks!! Patients are suffering, we should not be waiting so long...appointments should be given within 1 week, I think they should bring back the 48-hour appointments!! (Net7-5)
- I have been with mission practice for over 10 years now, and happy with the staff, nurse doctors. But recently it is getting too long for the wait to get an appointment. It is easy to book appointment via online system which is good, but I can only get an appointment after 3 weeks wait recently. (Net1-3)
- I have frequently had to wait 2-3 weeks for an appointment (which is unacceptable in itself) but having an appointment cancelled at least 3 times at the last minute takes the biscuit. (Net2-4)
- I have now been given an appointment for three weeks' time which is unacceptable when juxtaposed with the fact that they are happy to take on new patients who will also not be able to see a GP. (Net3-3)
- I originally registered to this surgery because I had chest pain, and following my first visit, I had to wait for 2 weeks to meet a GP. First appointment (after two weeks) - my appointment got lost, showed up for no reason and had to take time off. (Net7-1)
- The way the management run this surgery is you can't pre-book an appointment for the same week as you will have to wait for up to 3 weeks. You have to ring at 8am on the same day and hope to get one. (Net8-2)

Some patients even report waiting lists a month or longer, up to 8 weeks.

- Normal appointments are 6 to 8 weeks. Surgery got worse over time. (Net3-3)
- Appointment waiting time minimum 6 weeks. On the day appointments for emergencies only. What about people who need to see their G.P? (Net7-2)
- I have been with this GP for 6 years and used to like how the waiting times were very reasonable but in the last 2 years, it has been at least 3 weeks to see a GP - I have even had instances of a 4 - 5 weeks wait! They need to stop enrolling new patients and to focus on the existing patients. (Net7-1)

Emergency appointments are usually booked within 2-3 days, although some surgeries are able to provide same-day appointments. Generally, patients believe they should receive on the day appointments for emergencies; or 48 hours at most.

- If the problem is more serious she gets an appointment on the day or within 2-3 days. Normally she calls in the morning or come into the GP practice. Sometimes it is difficult to get an appointment even if the problem is serious and needs to see a doctor on the day. Needs to explain a lot and this may not be enough. However she does realise they may be busy. (Net2-2)
- Have had no difficulties booking an appointment. Always within 48 hours - usually within a day. (Net3-1)

Lack of emergency appointments is an important point of concern among patients.

- Impossible to get the 48h appointment. (Net3-3)
- I had blood in my eyes and wanted to see a GP very soon (or at worst the next day). I called Net6-3, but the receptionist told me to go and see an optician. I emphasised it's not vision related but clearly its health related. But the receptionist insisted that because it has to do with my eyes, i must see an optician instead. Having later being convinced my myself that blood in my eyes required seeing a GP instead of an optician, the receptionist later told me I cannot book any GP appointment until after the third day. They wouldn't book an appointment for me over the phone, but instead told me to come to the health centre the next morning to book an appointment in person for the following day (which is the third day from today)- but there is no guarantee i will get a slot. (Net6-3)
- Was offered appointment for sick toddler in more than a week. Was then told to go somewhere else. Person on the phone wasn't even interested in the symptoms or state of the kid. No other option was offered, e.g. Phone consultation. Very disappointing experience. Not helpful not caring practice. (Net5-4)

The booking process is inconvenient to some service users.

- Trying to make an appointment by phone takes far too long (e.g. You will hear 'you are caller no. 8 in queue', then wait 15 minutes only to hear 'you are caller no. 6". It takes 15+ minutes to make an appointment with two phone callers? No, don't think so. (Net3-3)
- The phone system is totally broken. It is usually impossible to set up an appointment by phone. It will literally tell you that there are no appointments with any doctors ever. So I just avoid that and go straight to the operator, where I sometimes get stuck in a limbo where I am supposedly in line to have my call answered, but I can be waiting for half an hour even if there's supposedly only one person in front of me. I've often run out of time to wait before I got anyone to answer. (Net8-3)
- The reception staff are fine, it's the appointments that are a problem. (Net6-4)
- The appointment system is very bad. It takes between three to four weeks to get an appointment to see the doctors. Also, patients do not have a personal they are assigned to. You see a different doctor every time for each appointment.
- Appointments only start at 9am and the telephone lines only open at 8.45am - obviously not designed for anyone in full time employment. (Net2-4)

Often, appointments during evenings and weekend are not made available

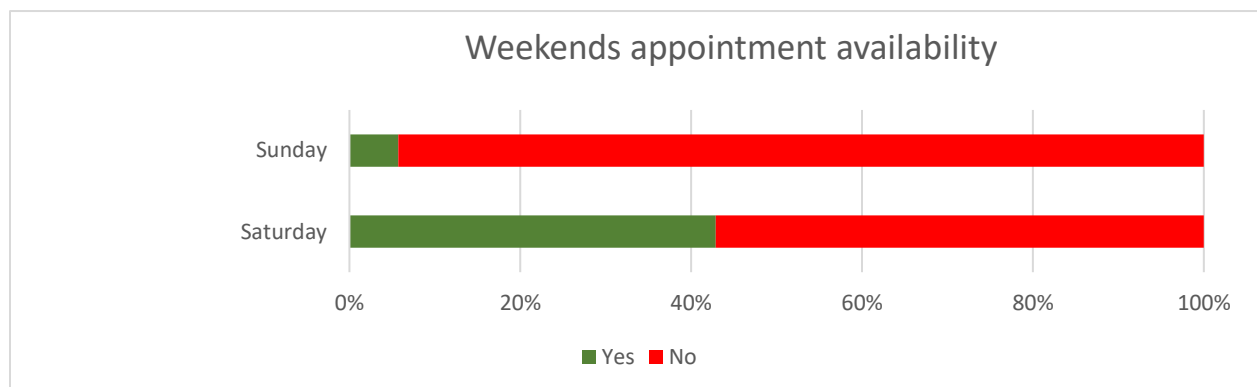
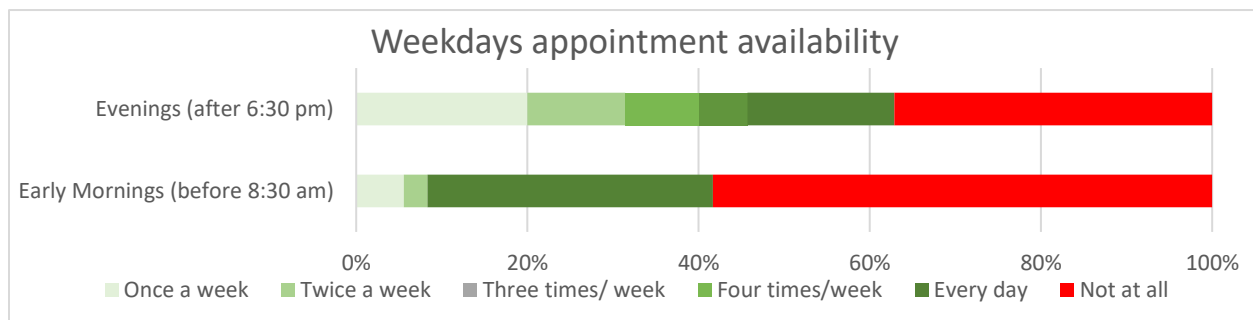
- Longer opening hours, weekend opening and evening appointments. The assumption is that nobody works. More education for patients as to where to seek care.
- Weekend and after work appointments are out of the question. (Net7-4)
- The online booking system works a treat and can usually get an appointment within a week (although usually only during work hours) (Net1-3)
- Poor access to appointments at times that are suitable for working people. (Net3-3)

Surgeries that offer appointments outside of normal working hours are highly appreciated by patients:

- This GP is open on Saturdays, which is very good. (Net4-4)
- Appointments are easy to book and they run early morning appointments (7.15am) so I never have to take time off work for an appointment. (Net8-4)
- Usually they can offer me dates suited to my needs. Telephone consultations, early appointments to very late in the day and most of all weekend appointments, not something offered in all practices. (Net7-5)

According to data published on NHS Choices for each surgery's consultation hours:

- 15 out of 36 surgeries offer early morning appointments (earlier than 8:30 AM) at least once a week
- 22 out of 36 surgeries offer late evening appointments (after 6:30 PM) at least once a week
- 15 out of 36 surgeries offer Saturday appointments.
- Only 2 out of 36 surgeries offer Sunday appointments, Net8-1 and Net6-5. Both also offer a walk-in centre service for people registered with different surgeries.
- Only 5 surgeries out of 36 offer no appointments whatsoever outside of normal working hours



Service users who receive overall good care and perceive the practice as generally well ran are more likely to find the booking process and waiting times acceptable.

- As someone who is new to the area and the NHS I've been very happy with all my interactions with the Net7-1. The staff are considerate and attentive and I've always been well informed about my options. I've had to visit twice and both times have been able to make an appointment at a convenient time using the online system. (Net7-1)
- Appointments are easy to book and they run early morning appointments (7.15am) so I never have to take time off work for an appointment. (Net8-4)
- I've never had to wait long for an appointment - maybe I've just been lucky, but if think the centre runs really smoothly. (Net6-1)
- Arranging appointments and follow-ups is straightforward, have always been able to see someone when I need / want to. (Net2-2)
- The online booking system (and messaging) makes things really easy for me to book appointments at a suitable time rather than phoning up. (Net5-1)

Furthermore, when a surgery is promptly offering emergency appointments, patients are more understanding of long waiting times for routine appointments.

- The surgery provides very good health service, particularly when people needs an urgent appointment. There could be a bit delay for a normal appointment. However, when you need an urgent same day appointment the reception team never says no. They always try their best to help, no matter how busy the surgery is. (Net6-2)
- This surgery always helps me when I have a problem and they do it as fast as they can too. The only problem I have here is that appointments take a while to book if it's not an emergency but apart from that, great service. (Net7-5)
- The care has always been great here be it from the Reception staff, the Nurses or the GP. Appointment slot availability recently has reduced a little but it is the season for more demand on the service so I can understand (Net7-5)

Some patients feel they should be prioritised for emergency appointments because of their needs (living with chronic conditions, small children etc.)

- My one year old was very sick with scary skin blisters. I came early in the morning to try to obtain an appointment (as for this practice procedure) only to be told they don't have appointment! But it was a baby and extremely sick and I followed their procedure to get an early appointment. This is totally unacceptable - to deny an appointment to an extremely sick baby. (Net3-4)
- Recently i came to see a doctor with chest pain i was given a ECG test however my ECG appointment was booked one week later. This is something i would like to be changed at the surgery as one week is far too long for a patient to wait with chest pain. I would like that to be changed. People should be able to give ECG or other important tests within the same day. (Net4-3)

Online and telephone consultations are relatively popular with patients.

- Bang on! I can have online or telephone consultation. I have asthma clinic. Flu jump every year ... All good advice, support and adequate medication when needed. (Net7-3)
- Telephone consultation has been reliably provided when appropriate and the IT supervisor was very helpful in making Patient Access work for me. (Net7-2)
- They are always available by telephone in an emergency and have prevented A&E admissions on numerous occasions with their professional and knowledgeable care. (Net8-1)
- If I have any concerns, I am able to speak to a doctor promptly via their telephone consultation system. (Net6-1)
- I have found the opportunity to talk to a doctor on the phone very helpful. (Net8-3)
- What has been helpful to me is that when an emergency appointment is not available, the doctors call you back to discuss matters. That is incredibly convenient for me. (Net3-4)
- I often use the telephone doctor's consultancy rather than going in in person and have always received good advice. (Net4-2)

Telephone consultations are also efficiently used by some surgeries for triage purposes

- The centre also offers a call back service which I have used twice - where if you need to see a doctor urgently but there are no appointments, then you leave your name and number and they call you back. It works really well - they either tell you what medication to go out and buy, or will try and find you an emergency appointment if you need it. (Net6-1)
- To save time the doctor speaks to you over the phone and if it's something simple they can send over a prescription to the pharmacy and this saves you from having to use up an appointment. Sometimes though it can be a problem you have to wait for the doctor to call you and this means having to stay at home.
- I cannot recommend this place highly enough. They have a great telephone system where you call in the morning, and have a GP call you back to decide whether you need to come in or not. There has never been a time when I have not been able to get an apt on a day when I needed it, and they are great at offering advice. (Net7-3)
- The staff were really helpful in giving me the information required; when no urgent appointments were available I was able to chat to a GP on the phone who could give advice and arrange for an appointment after knowing the details. Always feel very welcome and reassured on the few occasions I have had need to visit. (Net3-4)
- I have used the telephone consultation (Triage) I thought it was good, they called me back and prescribed me medicines, if it's something serious, they ask you to come and see the doctor and make that appointment for you (Net4-4)

Where they are not available, at least some patients would like to see them introduced.

- Maybe it there was a phone back system. You could talk to a Dr or someone about your symptoms and what you think you should do and they could just put your mind at ease. Don't necessarily have to come into the GP surgery - reassurance that you're on the right track - or a navigator. (Net1-2)
- I think they should offer 'Skype' type consultations (Net2-2)

Information about booking is not always accurate or easy to understand

- Highly dissatisfied with the response of the telephone operators when it comes to booking GP appointments, we don't get consistent information regarding timings/appointment slots. We called a few times for weekend appointments and were told to call back on Thursday at 8am first thing. But when we called at 8am on Thursday, the operator said that everything is already booked. Upon insisting that we got this information from the previous operator the day before, they agreed to look further and came up with 2 open slots! This incident has happened at least 3 times.
- I am not happy with my GP as waited usually 30 minutes to get the line, unable to get appointment with my regular doctor, got wrong information from staff and take 2 weeks to get an appointment

In some practices, it is possible for patients to choose between seeing a specific doctor after some waiting and seeing any other doctor sooner:

- Using the online appointments system, I can see any doctor really quickly or wait a few days for a specific doctor (Net4-2)

In other surgeries, this is not an option:

- Appointments are with different doctors each time so they do not know the history of the patient. I was referred to the wrong hospital.
- I was very angry for not getting appointment with my preferred doctor and finally other doctor didn't give enough time.
- I seem to be allocated a new doctor at the rate of one every two years. My last doctor, who was very good, I only saw twice. Ditto the one before that. Come to think of it, ditto the one before that! I find this unsettling and makes me wonder about looking for a practice with a little more stability. (Net1-2)

Walk-in centres are an important asset to the community; they are, however, often used by patients who cannot get appointments with their own GPs.

- The walk-in center is very handy, and useful if you need an emergency appointment. Its open long hours and staff are excellent. (Net8-1)
- Net8-1 operates a great walk-in service which is very convenient for residents nearby on days when it is difficult to obtain an appointment. (Net8-1)
- Today's a drop-in session, very easy, just turn up. (Net7-3)
- On using the walk-in centre found that they were fast and effective. (Net6-5)

Repeat prescriptions by telephone or online are convenient for patients, but not all surgeries offer them.

- Sometimes GP will send prescription straight to pharmacy without requiring appointment, saves a lot of time, makes things much easier. (Net7-3)
- The online system is great for booking appointments and arranging repeat prescriptions. (Net1-1)
- The online repeat prescription works very well and sends it straight to the pharmacist thus saving time and effort collecting the prescription and taking to the pharmacist. (Net4-2)
- My GP is very good, but I have to always go into the surgery for repeat prescription. Sometimes I am tired and very busy, but as I have no choice (my GP do not take prescription over the telephone), I have to personally go into my Surgery to make my repeat prescription Suggested Improvements: It would be nice if repeat prescriptions can be allowed over the telephones at GPs.

Doctors who receive positive feedback from patients are friendly, patient, warm and accommodating.

- We go by first names now and it makes a HUGE difference! Where else are you recognised as an individual and welcomed personally? This week is another great example. I had asthma clinic and review for my meds booked midweek. Yet they called me a few days later to rebook on a Saturday (yes, they are also working on Saturdays!!), both! "you can't midweek because you are working far" they said. Do I need to comment further? (Net7-3)
- My named GP has been absolutely fantastic during this time and, as always, has treated me with the upmost care and consideration throughout. He is very patient and understanding and takes the time to explain things to me. When my named GP has been unavailable I have seen other GP's or nurses within the surgery and they have been very helpful and caring also. (Net7-1)
- They gave me all the support and all the treatments I've been in need plus all the information. One particular doctor is very professional and polite. My personal GP is very pleasant and polite plus they are very professional and help all the time I was in need, discussing with me on everything about my health and what to do regarding all situations. (Net3-1)
- The Doctors always take the time to listen to me and it doesn't feel as though they are trying to rush me out the door. They've been helpful and thorough. (Net1-3)
- I went to visit my GP today and came out feeling thoroughly at ease, and confident that my health is being cared for. I have experienced rushed appointments and what felt like being brushed off at previous practices, however today I was made to feel important, with a genuine concern for care and assistance from the professional. It brings back substance to the idea of the 'family doctor', which is such an important part of life, and in the community. (Net4-3)



They also offer patients detailed explanations and reassurance; and empower them to make informed choices about their healthcare. Service users perceive them as highly competent and knowledgeable.

- I've seen several different doctors and all have been excellent, responding to my questions, worries and requests clearly and thoughtfully. (Net7-2)
- The doctors are patient, kind and knowledgeable and always make me feel understood and properly listened to and respected. They are dedicated professionals who never patronise or make me feel that what I am talking about is trivial. (Net5-1)
- I have been seeing the same doctor for 10 years and they take time to talk to me about my problems and discuss my options for the way forward. (Net2-4)
- My own GP was very perceptive and intelligent. (Net2-2)
- What is most important is that the doctors actually listen to you. They examine you and do not send you home with paracetamols only. (Net3-4)
- had lots of issues with my children, and this GP really supported and helped me with my problems. The doctors here are really understanding and take a lot of care of their patients. One particular doctor helped me so much I can't thank them enough. They are fast with the service, getting appointments, medicines and other services. (Net3-1)
- I then went into see the GP who made me feel relaxed and explained everything to me in detail, the doctor was very kind and considerate and made me feel at ease. (Net7-5)

On the other hand, doctors who receive negative feedback are dismissive of patients and trivialise their concerns.

- I am very disappointed about the behaviour of the GP that I met this morning. It is the second time that I have an appointment with this GP and it is the second time that I am disappointed. I felt that they didn't take my reasons for the appointment seriously. (Net8-2)
- Another GP service who refuse to investigate the cause of a person's symptoms. Only interested in symptom management and then they fob you off with vague explanations. (Net5-3)
- I have been suffering from a blocked ear for over a week been using an ear drop prescribed by my pharmacy which hasn't cured my issue hence the reason for my visit. It's been a complete waste of time after checking my ear they informed me that it's blocked and suggested I carry on applying the drops and if it doesn't clear then I should book an appointment with the nurse I explained to him that I'm going away in two days' time for two weeks and asked if there is any way I could see the nurse, their response was enjoy your trip, you might think they were wishing me a good trip but what they were actually saying is, what do you want me to do about it. (Net2-2)
- I've been seeing doctors for a while now because of depression, panic attacks and anxiety. The first doctor that I spoke with was really understanding and helpful in all process but unfortunately this doctor left the Net4-2. The doctor advised me to come back, see doctor within 2weeks because I should have been put on the higher dose of antidepressants once my body get used to it. Next doctor kept me on the same dose-asked me to come back after another two weeks. Today I had appointment with another doctor and they also wasn't aware of my state at all - even though they have my medical record- their approach was really unprofessional-asked me I want to be put on the higher dose- that's should be doctors decision based on the analysis of my state. The doctor was really impatient and even made inappropriate comment saying 'Do you understand what I'm saying' in a really bad manner. The doctor was rude and intimidating, and is the last person I wish to speak about my anxiety and I wish I never have to see this doctor again!!! After my doctor left I feel like I get improper medical care because the doctors I see don't even bother to look at my medical records and it is extra hard to keep explaining my mental state to each of them and getting their attitude in return (Net4-2)

They are rushed, rude and don't take the time to offer explanations.

- Some GP's are extremely rude and do not give the patient the time to even get a word in. I have experienced two different doctors cutting me off and hanging up over a telephone appointment, without giving me the opportunity to even say a word. Absolutely disgusting service. (Net6-3)
- Doctors can often speak down to patients. Can be very undermining, made to feel as though do not understand my own condition/symptoms. We need to respect doctors but they also need to respect us. (Net7-2)
- GP didn't give enough time for my son when he was suffering from fever. He just saw my son for 5 minutes and issued prescription. I felt frustrated as he didn't care about us too much and was not our regular doctor.
- My GP is always in a hurry during consultation. He doesn't even allow the statutory 15 minutes. It's like 5 minutes for his consultation, then he makes prescriptions. We are not comfortable with that.
- The reception staff are ok but some of the doctors really make me angry. Whether I go for myself or with my mother they just really seem to lack patient care. I made an appointment few weeks ago I got the appointment in 2 weeks' time. (Net7-1)
- I have always had the greatest respect for medical and support staff. However, after my most recent dealing with a medical staff member at this surgery, I was left to feel humiliated and patronised. This particular doctor had stated to me 'so what do you want me to do about it' and 'why are you here then', in what was an unkind and rude manner. I was acutely unwell and needed the assistance of trained medical staff, and all I got was rudeness and poor treatment that I was left in tears and distressed for days. (Net2-3)

In a few cases, patients report not feeling confident in their doctor's competence.

- I requested to be checked for Diabetes, since my dad is diabetic (Type 2, so familiarity) and I thought I could have some of the symptoms listed on the NHS website. On the same website is advised to contact your GP if you think you have those symptoms and that is what I have done. The GP eventually booked me in for blood tests and added that I could eat before my blood tests. It is common knowledge that you shouldn't eat before blood test as this could affect the results. I felt that they didn't have a proper knowledge of the job. The first appointment that I met the same GP was because my partner had a fungus on his back. The doctor didn't really know what to do and she Googled the images of dermal fungus! Since when Google is a 100% reliable source of medical info??? (Net8-2)
- GPs don't appear to be particularly well informed and more than one occasion have prescribed treatments to my partner without being fully aware of breadth of possible side-effects. (Net7-4)
- The doctors have no common sense. Patients have ended up dying because they do not give the correct medicine.

Some surgeries have been praised for going above and beyond in communicating with other health professionals, such as hospital specialists and pharmacists to ensure an efficient and speedy referral or prescription process.

- The practice has effectively chased other healthcare providers when needed and overall, I am impressed and grateful for the care and attention I receive. (Net7-2)
- I had a very worrying ongoing skin complaint which was getting worse all the time. After seeing two GPs and a Dermatologist while in Ireland I finally came back to my own local surgery, Net3-4 for more help. [..]. The doctor has been amazing, they took me seriously and understood how frustrated I was after getting nowhere over six months. They helped to secure an urgent appointment at the Royal London with a Dermatology Registrar who was able to see me within two weeks. I was sent back for a follow up biopsy within another two weeks (Net3-4)
- I had a problem recently and made an urgent appointment, the GP listened to my fears and referred me to the hospital, asking for me to be seen within 2 weeks. It was because of their quick action that I was operated on and now have a clean bill of health, but it could have ended

In other cases, doctors have been criticised for failing to provide patients with the referral or paperwork they needed.

- [Doctors here] were very rude with me. As a patient didn't expect from a doctor. I asked them to give me a sick note that I can give it to my work place but they told for first week no doctor will give you a sick note, which is totally wrong (Net7-1)
- The GP who was checking me was not professional at all. They were reluctant to give a referral or even check with senior doctor if it was possible to do so, after I clearly described the problem along with all the relevant records. The pain on my wrist comes and goes, but it was confirmed by the doctor abroad that I need a surgery to remove the cyst. They kept insisting that we need to wait until pain comes back (I have never heard anything as ridiculous as that). (Net8-3)
- I went to Net2-4 because since 6 months ago I urinate 10 or 12 times per day, so I cannot sleep at nights, I have pain when I ejaculate and abdominal pain. They made a urine test, in the test everything was ok. After that they refused to send me to a specialist (Net2-4)
- While being sick with very strong headache and hardly being able to breathe the staff refused to give me a referral to a specialist though I have told them this is a recurring condition and I consider this to be unacceptable from people that have the mission to save lives. (Net2-2)

Some surgeries strictly enforce a “Ten minutes only/ appointment” or “One issue only/ appointment” rule; patients tend to disagree with this.

- I've been registered with this surgery for 8 years and the doctors and nurses are almost always great, until last week when I saw a GP who, when I told them I had a couple of things to discuss snapped at me about them only having ten minutes. (Net1-3)
- Generally, GP doctors do not have enough time to listen to patients. Plus, when you finally get to see the doctor, they only want to hear about one issue/problem. When patients have other or multiple health issues, doctors tend to not want to talk about your other health issues
- Majority of doctors are very good, they take the time to listen, give clear explanations and advice on medicine and course of treatment. A couple of new/trainees have pointed out 10 minutes per patient rule or 2-3 problems per appointment - haven't seen them since. To be pressured with time, it can be distressful for some patients, especially the infirm. (Net2-3)
- They give 10 minute appointments but he needs 15 or 30 mins. (Net7-5)

Some surgeries are praised for not keeping patients waiting for their appointments:

- They are so very kind, welcoming, caring and competent that I always feel completely at ease. If I come early, they always try to squeeze me in as soon as they can so I don't have to wait at all. (Net8-2)
- Waiting times in the lobby are shorter than most places.(Net5-2)

In some surgeries, appointments are running late. Waiting times of 30 minutes or more are seen as unacceptable by patients.

- When you're at practice they are over running, today appointment is so far 40 mins late (Net7-2)
- Average waiting time to see the doctor is around 1 month if not longer. One of the doctors has one remedy for all the issues - "don't worry". Not mentioning time spent in the waiting room - at least 40 minutes behind your scheduled appointment. (Net7-4)
- Today I had to wait an hour for my appointment, and then a further 20 minutes for my prescription to be issued. (Net5-4)
- Waited two hours for an appointment after calling up to try to get an appointment for weeks (Net1-2)
- Every time we have to go there (I try to avoid it as much as possible) the waiting time is ridiculous. Minimum 25-30 min with an appointment. I have a new-born baby and it is very frustrating and stressful to wait in there sometimes 40 min 1 hr! They can't cope with the demand. (Net6-5)
- I checked in for my GP appointment at 10am but get to see him at 11:25 which is too long.
- I haven't received any great experience from my GP practice as wait here long time to see my GP. I came here for 9am appointment but see him at 11am.

Small delays are not seen as a problem by most patients, especially those who are overall satisfied with the practice:

- To make my appointment was very easy, I spoke to the doctor on the phone, I didn't have to wait nor was the call placed on hold and I got my appointment immediately. I have a 11 O clock appointment it is 11:06 but I have no problems waiting for a few minutes. (Net4-3)
- Not overcrowded, 15 min average time waiting to get to the appointment. Helpful staff. Caring and welcoming professionals (Net8-4)
- I tend to see the same GP and the doctor is exceptional. Though I often have to wait a little longer than the scheduled appointment time, I know that when I do go into the consultation room, the doctor will listen and not just hurry me out with a prescription. (Net2-2)
- I can understand patients getting annoyed at long waiting times in the surgery but I always remind myself of times I've been in with the dr well over my 10 minutes appt slot (Net7-2)

Patients are not always informed of delays:

- Waiting times seems to be an issue, they should inform patients of waiting times- there should be a system to inform patients if appointments are running late.
- Would it be possible to inform the patient in case of significant delays please? In a few recent occasions, my appointment was delayed by more than 30 mins and would have been useful to know it in advance. (Net4-4)

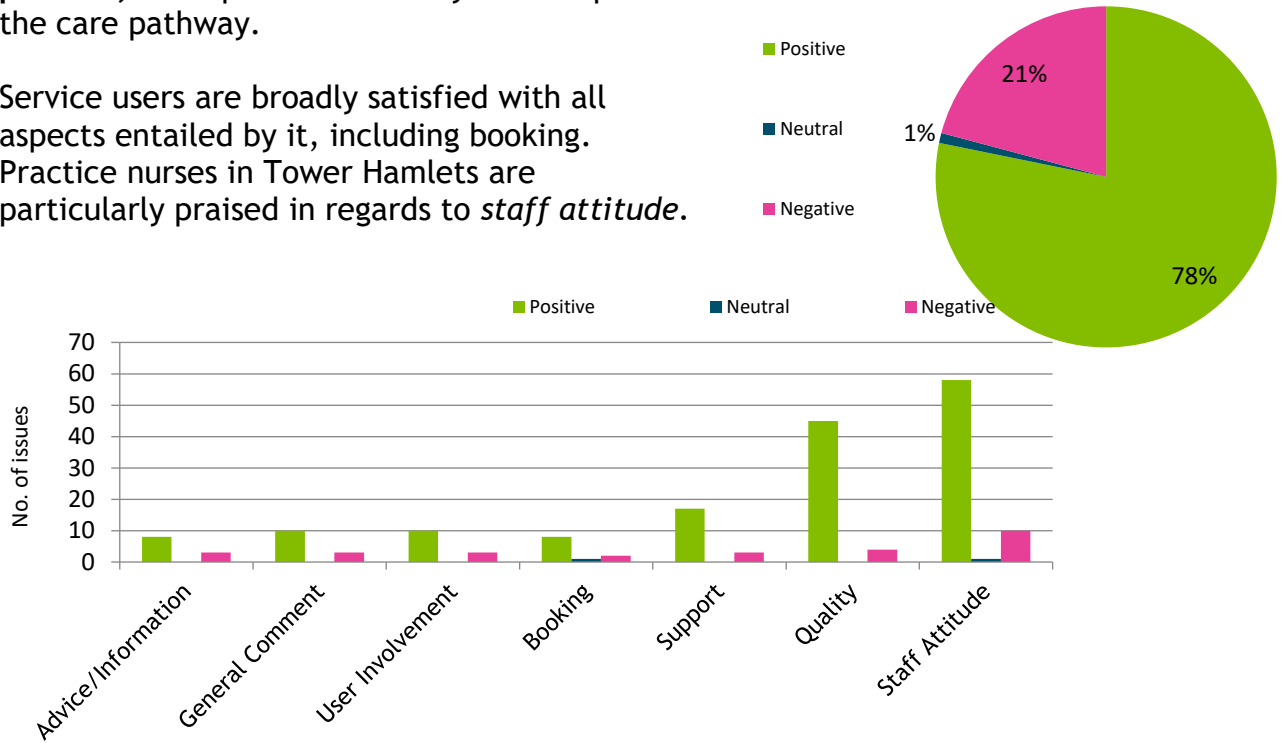
Some service users would like surgeries to be more flexible in cases where patients are slightly late for appointments:

- I work long hours and find it very difficult to get out on time to make an appointment. More often than not I have to call and say I'll be 5 mins late after great efforts to get out and make the appointment. When I arrive, I'm told I have missed my appointment and I'm left waiting for 2 hours to be seen. I find this odd given if I am on time I still have to wait at least 30 mins to be seen... It seems they just kick you out off the list if you're the tiniest bit late why can't common sense be used and put me one or two people down the list? (Net6-5)
- My mother 84-year-old had a appointment 9.00 in the Surgery today she was 10 minutes late due to forgetting her door key at home. I was home at the time so luckily, I was able to let her back in before I went to work. The receptionist asked in a rude manner why was she late and what's the reason for coming to see the doctor then was told to take a seat and didn't get seen until 11.30. This is a disgrace for a elderly person to be treated in this way. (Net1-1)

## CLINICAL NURSING

Overall. Sentiment about clinical nursing is **78% positive**; more positive than any other aspect of the care pathway.

Service users are broadly satisfied with all aspects entailed by it, including booking. Practice nurses in Tower Hamlets are particularly praised in regards to *staff attitude*.



The only surgery where negative comments about clinical nursing (11 out of 19) outnumber the positive comments is Net8-1.

Nurses receiving positive feedback are warm, friendly and reassuring, as well as professional and efficient:

- My nurse was amazing. So helpful and reassuring. The nurse provided me with a lot of information and made me feel relaxed. I would ask for them again. (Net6-5)
- The medical staff were friendly and the nurse treating me had a good sense of humour. (Net1-1)
- I had a blood test on Tuesday 29th September for the first time in my life. I was so scared and could not sleep at night. But during the blood test I was in a hand of the best nurse ever in my life. If all the doctors, nurses and reception staff were all like this, Net3-3 could be a heaven. (Net3-3)
- The day I had minor surgery the doctor and the nurse that day were very kind, with the nurse offering to hold my hand. I feel that everyone I came into contact with was very pleasant and related well to me as a person. (Net2-2)
- We were seen by Nurse Practitioner. I was extremely happy with the care and attention provided. They were very professional and had attention to detail. They were also very caring and kind person. (Net8-1)
- Great health visitors, baby clinic, practice nurses and all of the GPs I have seen have shown excellent knowledge and treated me with kindness and compassion, always going out of their way to help. (Net1-3)

They are knowledgeable and offer good explanations, empowering patients to make choices about their healthcare.

- Nurse explained procedure (smear test) very clearly and was very knowledgeable. (Net6-5)
- I was especially impressed with the practice nurse's approach to my diabetic care. Because of their coaching i have adapted my lifestyle and i feel great. The nurse was also kind enough to see me for both problems today even though i had an appointment tomorrow this was to help me as i work and i am very grateful for that. (Net7-4)
- The nurses and GPs I have seen since have been professional, considerate and have listened to what I have to say instead of talking down to me, so that I can make informed choices. (Net4-3)
- They are well-resourced and efficient; the nurses are lovely and they have good initiatives in place to help patients self-serve. (Net2-3)
- The nurses and other staff are very good and are pleasant and helpful. I am always well informed by the staff about what the situation is and what my options for treatment are etc. (Net7-1)

In some surgeries, nurses have been able to build a cordial, warm relations with patients; which plays an important role in building trust between service users and medical professionals .

- And to top it all up: the welcome! We go by first names now and it makes a HUGE difference! Where else are you recognised as an individual and welcomed personally? [...]. A bit like catching up on a long-standing relationship. All friendly yet professional and effective. And I was done within 30 minutes. (Net7-3)
- I used to see a nurse in this surgery smiling all the times saying 'hello', 'good morning' and asking all the patients they know 'how are you' when they get in. I found this nurse not only a good phlebotomist, but felt very sympathetic to the patients. This is the behaviour we expect from any health professional. An asset to this surgery. Our whole family comprising a big number of patients love this nurse and we want staff like them n the reception as well, at least who can give a smile to the patient even at the time of big stress. I this surgery. (Net3-3)
- One particular HCA is very good, so professional and always makes me feel at ease. They always make me feel that they care. I am 84 years old and have been to various surgeries, this is the best surgery i have ever been to. It is nice when I come in and they all know me by my first name. It is nice to feel appreciated and respected , especially when you are feeling unwell. (Net4-2)

Only a minority of nurses receive negative feedback from service users. They are rushed, judgemental and don't offer explanations or choices regarding treatment:

- Went for a typical urinary test, the nurse just did the test, never asked me about my symptoms and never informed about the results. They just prescribed an antibiotic and told me to leave. This is completely unprofessional, the whole examination lasted 5 minutes. I was left stressed without knowing what was the issue. (Net8-1)
- .Nurse was arrogant. Gave our baby medication without telling us they were doing it. Took prescription to chemist and they said the prescription was wrong and not suitable for a baby. (Net8-1).
- The way I was treated was utterly appalling. The nurse was incredibly rude in manner, and did not do much about my urine infections. Instead, they decided to focus on the fact that I was a smoker and told me - in a very aggressive manner - all the horrible young deaths I am likely to face because of this. They even made a horrible comment about my problems with anxiety and depression saying that smoking hadn't helped me much since I was suffering from this illness. The whole thing was out of order and I am therefore extremely offended. (Net8-1)
- The nurse is not good they are wasting time by just talking about meaningless things and very long wait to be called by them. Practice manager is nice but sometimes can be very rude with the patients in front of other patients which is embarrassing for patients. (Net3-1)

Nurse practitioners are an important asset to GP surgeries. In many cases, a consultation with a nurse rather than a doctor is sufficient for the patient's needs.

- I was seen by an advanced nurse practitioner who immediately diagnosed the problem. I was unable to receive further treatment there due to the nature of my problem but was advised to go to A & E for that which I did and the problem was sorted. (Net6-5)

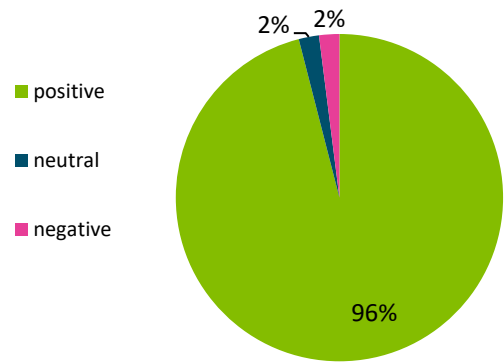
Some patients have found that booking appointments with nurses is easy, in contrast with booking GP appointments which many have found frustrating.

- The surgery has changed so much for the better, it is open longer hours, there is a nurse in the surgery all the time and there is a health care professional there to do blood test ect all this wasn't available before. (Net3-1)
- Booking appointments to see our nurse, doctor or any doctor is now done on GP Direct service; where you phone up on the same day you want to see a nurse or doctor, give your telephone number and the doctor or nurse calls you back and consultation is done over the telephone first, then prescription is made. If need be for you to be seen by the doctor or nurse, they then give you a time on that same day when to come in and which doctor or nurse to come and see. This is really good.
- The practice operates super efficiently because they log your telephone request straight away and depending on the issue you will get a call back almost instantly from the doctor or nurse who will advise you what to do next. (Net7-3)

## CASE STUDY: DOCKLANDS PRACTICE

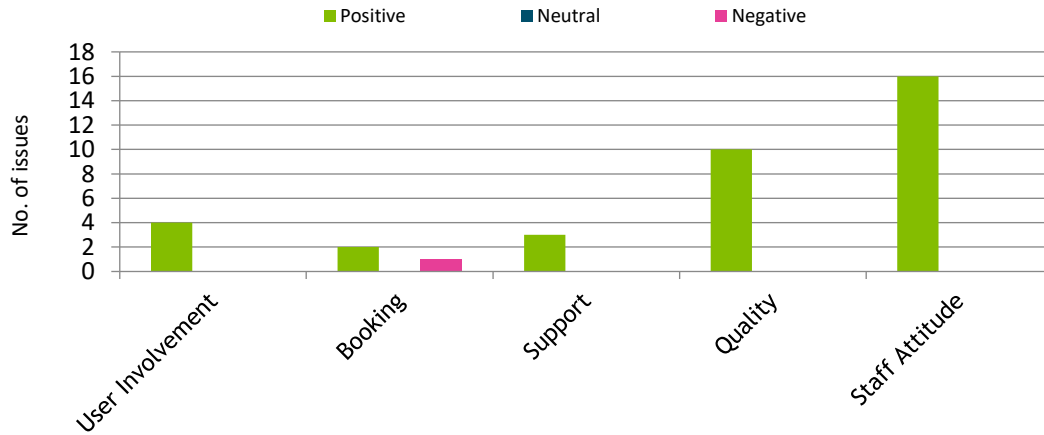
The Docklands practice has 8185 registered patients. It is staffed by three GPs (One full-time, two part-time), two nurses (one of whom is an Advanced Nurse Practitioner), two healthcare assistants and one phlebotomist. The admin team comprises of five team receptionists and one medical secretary.

Last inspected in 2015 by the CQC, it received a “good” rating in all categories.



The feedback that the surgery received from patients is 96% positive, making it the most highly appreciated surgery in the borough. This case study illustrates how *pleasant and professional attitude from all staff members, combined with a reasonably efficient booking system, can have a major positive impact on patient opinion.*

Service users are particularly happy with the attitude of all staff members and with the overall quality of the service they are receiving.





Doctors, nurses and reception staff are overwhelmingly described by patients as friendly and accommodating.

- I have always found the doctors, nurses and receptionists to be very friendly and have never felt rushed during an appointment.
- All staff are kind and patient focused. They go the extra mile, all staff from the front desk to locum doctors.
- Helpful staff. Caring and welcoming professionals. Gentle nurses with the patient and proceedings
- Wonderful team working at the Docklands Practice, they are always helpful and patient. One member of staff are wonderful and I would definitely recommend the facilities to anyone living in the area.
- The staff are friendly and kind and the doctors and nurses have looked after my health wonderfully - thank you!
- Following a recent bout of ill health, I have encountered GPs, locums, nurses and reception staff on numerous occasions. Everyone has been kind, courteous and efficient and I am so pleased we decided to register here and can only recommend it to others.

Medical professionals empower service users to make informed choices about their healthcare

- The nurses and doctors take time to listen and answer all questions in detail as well as consulting you on your preferred treatments.

According to the surgery's website, appointments can be booked in person at the reception, online or over the telephone. The surgery encourages patients to ask reception staff for advice regarding what kind of medical professional they should see: *"It may be that you do not need to see a doctor but instead need to see one of the other health care workers. If so, please ask the receptionist who will help you."* As the surgery has a relatively high number of patients per GP, the two nurses and two healthcare assistants offer a large number of services, including vaccinations, routine screenings such as cervical smears, STD testing etc.

The practice is open from 7 am on Mondays and Tuesdays and from 8 am Wednesday through Friday; closing at 6:30 pm on all days. People working normal office hours who cannot take time off work for GP appointments have, therefore, the option of being seen early in the morning.

The booking process is perceived as efficient:

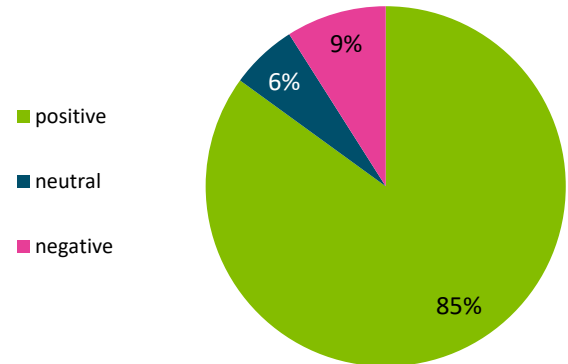
- Appointments are easy to book and they run early morning appointments (7.15am) so I never have to take time off work for an appointment.
- I was able to get an appointment quickly and without fuss. I required bloodwork and was able to get in swiftly.
- Not overcrowded. 15 min average time waiting to get to the appointment. Online booking system a bit disappointing

According to the surgery's website, repeat prescriptions can be ordered in person, online or via the Echo iPhone app.

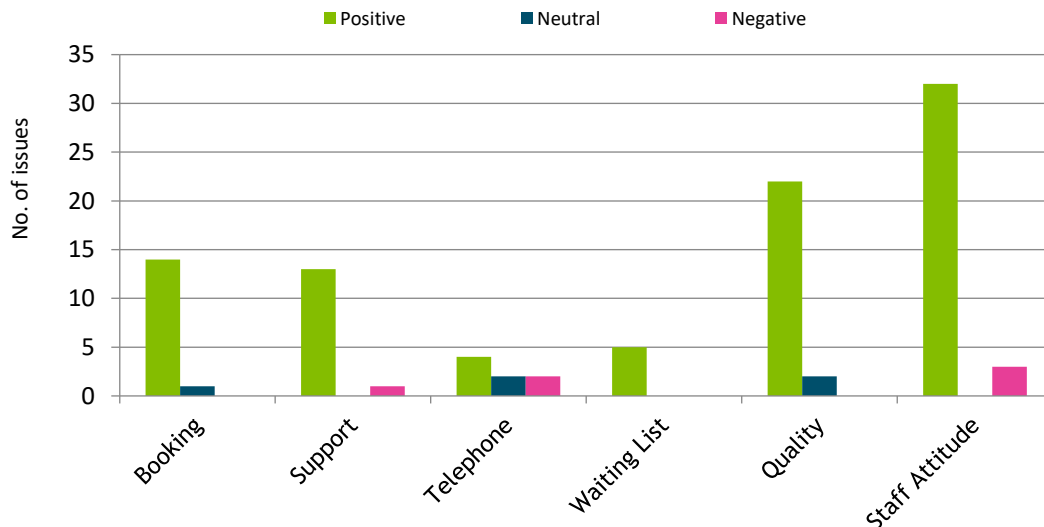
## CASE STUDY: ABERFELDY PRACTICE

The Aberfeldy surgery has 7143 registered patients. It is staffed by seven part-time GPs, two practice nurses and one healthcare assistant. The admin team comprises of five receptionists, one senior receptionist and one secretary.

Last inspected in 2016 by the CQC, it received a “good” rating in all categories.



The feedback that the surgery received from patients is 85% positive, making it the second most highly appreciated surgery in the borough, after the Docklands Practice. This case study illustrates *a potential good practice model in regard to a booking system*.



Service users are happy with the attitude of all staff members, the level of support and the overall quality of the service they are receiving. More remarkably, there is no negative feedback on the booking process and waiting list, topics that GP patients in Tower Hamlets tend to be strongly dissatisfied with.

Telephone consultations are offered and used as a triage system. They can also be requested online. Patients are overwhelmingly pleased with this system.

- The practice operates super efficiently because they log your telephone request straight away and depending on the issue you will get a call back almost instantly from the doctor or nurse who will advise you what to do next.
- Bang on! I can have online or telephone consultation. I have asthma clinic. Flu jamp every year ... All good advice, support and adequate medication when needed.
- They have a great telephone system where you call in the morning, and have a GP call you back to decide whether you need to come in or not. There has never been a time when I have not been able to get an apt on a day when I needed it, and they are great at offering advice. My baby has been treated here since her birth and the nurses and health visitors are excellent. People say a lot of bad things about the NHS but this place is outstanding.
- Rang at 8.30 and got put through to out of hours service (must have rang just before 8.30) there was a 20 min wait time to get through. Called back and got through to reception far quicker and made appointment for today. Typically very easy to make appointment, GP will always call back and advice whether or not you require appointment.
- Normally quite easy to get an appointment, don't often need one but there isn't a long wait time. These always made over the phone, GP calls back and provides advice over the phone, appointment not always needed.
- Called the surgery at about 9:30 and got through straight away on the phone. They asked me for the details of why I was calling and whether I would like to say. Manner was very good. Dr called back within 10 minutes and I was given an appointment to come in at 9:45. She likes the call back service, its a good idea to talk to the Dr first. She called a couple of weeks ago when she thought it was an emergency and the Dr didn't think it needed medication or to see them. Just told to take paracetamol and if that didn't work then to call again. Needed to make an appointment in the end. Not happy as the pain is still there and they haven't solved the problem. Service is fine though.
- Normally quite easy to get an appointment, don't often need one but there isn't a long wait time. These always made over the phone, GP calls back and provides advice over the phone, appointment not always needed.
- Firstly, you are not left waiting too long for an appointment - the doctor calls you back reasonably promptly to either deal with whatever worry you have or to give you an appointment date as near to the date you want as possible.

Consequently, emergency appointments can be obtained promptly

- Been coming here a long time. No complaints. Phoned up with a touch of flu that was getting worse and my wife is diabetic. Phoned this morning and they said come in about 11.
- I've called them 8:30AM and got a call back from the doctor by 9AM and then an appointment for 11AM. Then I went back for a blood test for 2PM. Easy and efficient! I will need to call for my results and I'll have a follow up call with the doctor who will again advise me of next steps.

Through the EMIS system, it is also possible for patients to request repeat prescriptions online. Service users find this feature useful:

- Finds the pharmacist very helpful and the fact that everything gets sent through on the computer now. Saves confusion or people tampering with prescriptions. Pharmacist checks medication, asks questions.

The practice's website contains advice on what kind of professional (doctor, nurse, specialised clinic) to see for various problems.

Reception staff are described as friendly and efficient

- The receptionists are friendly and caring, they're available for questions and work efficiently.
- Also importantly, the receptionists are mostly efficient, understanding and compassionate

Medical professionals are accommodating and offer detailed explanations. Patients hold them in high regard.

- The doctors I've met so far are also nice and caring - they understand that you need answers and they try to accommodate your problems and requests as best as possible. They also understand that sometimes you need enough face time with them.
- So a bunch of good doctors and nurses: all knowledgeable, hospitable and respectful.
- The doctors are amazingly in tune with your individual treatment needs. You are treated with respect and dignity.

Staff members have learned and are using regular patients' first names. This helps create a friendly, trustful environment where patients feel safe and relaxed.

- And to top it all up: the welcome! We go by first names now and it makes a HUGE difference! Where else are you recognised as an individual and welcomed personally? This week is another great example. I had asthma clinic and review for my meds booked midweek. Yet they called me a few days later to rebook on a Saturday (yes, they are also working on Saturdays!!), both! "you can't midweek because you are working far" they said. Do I need to comment further?

Overall, even when not entirely satisfied, patients see the surgery as generally well-ran and report a mostly positive experience:

- The only aspect I think needs improvement is that sometimes it takes a while to get through - to speak to someone -.. On the phone. I will be adding more to this review, but for now, I could not ask for a better GP Surgery. Keep up the good work.