



GP Access West Berks

October 2024

healthwatch
West Berkshire

Objectives



Support GP surgeries to improve their communication with the public



Raise public awareness about other pathways for support and increase understanding of the new ways of working



Increase appropriate access to services and reduce complaints

Participants

In West Berks, **132** participants took part in the project:

- **93** through an online survey
 - **39** through various focus groups
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Participants were diverse and came from different backgrounds. Responses received from varied ethnic, age, gender and disability demographics represent a wide cross-section of the communities surveyed.

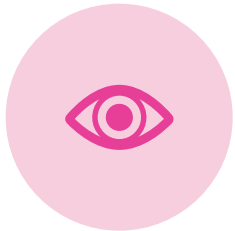
Demographics data is available on request.

Key Findings



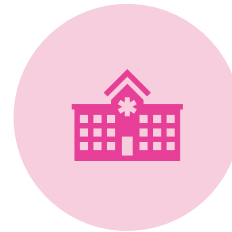
Appointment Access

Many people reported long phone wait times, difficulties booking appointments, significant delays in getting appointments, and not being able to see their preferred GP.



Digital Service Challenge

While tools like the NHS App are designed to simplify access to GP services, many patients, particularly older adults and those without strong digital skills, found it difficult to use.



Care Navigation Confusion

Many people were unaware that care navigators have replaced traditional receptionists. This system, while intended to streamline access, left patients feeling frustrated and unclear about the process.



Communication gaps

Lack of clear communication from surgeries about changes in how GP services operate was a common theme. Many patients felt left in the dark about new systems and how to effectively navigate them.

Some Quotes

Appointment Access

"It's very difficult to get appointment when we are really in need"

Care Navigation Confusion

"I am not always comfortable explaining my problems to the receptionists as sometimes it can be a very personal problem"

Digital Service Challenge

"No-one should be excluded; it shouldn't all be online as it's not inclusive to all"

"More confusing to the older generation"

Communication gaps

"It would be good to be told of these changes by the staff when they happen"

Recommendations



Appointment Access

Surgeries should provide clear, accessible information on how appointments are shared out and alternative options. There should be simple, clear routes to accessing appointments.



Care Navigation Confusion

Use an infographic/s to show the workings of each section of the surgery, e.g. triaging, to provide patients with a visual representation of workings in an accessible format.



Digital Service Challenge

Make opportunities to assess whether a patient can access digital services effectively. Show a flag on each patient's record indicating whether digital services are appropriate.



Communication gaps

Surgeries would benefit from sharing timelier information on changes or updates to services, both in surgery, website and online. Ensure Easy Read, and accessible language is available.

Thank you