

“Does Frome Medical Practice’s new appointments system work for you?”

A survey by Cllr Adam Boyden (Mendip District Councillor, Frome College ward) and Drew Gardner, Frome Liberal Democrats, February 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

Frome Medical Practice is the main General Practitioner (GP) doctors’ surgery in Frome, Somerset, and is understood to have over 30,000 registered patients who live in Frome and surrounding villages. It was rated ‘Outstanding’ by the Care Quality Commission in 2015.

In February 2018, the groundbreaking ‘Compassionate Frome’ and Health Connections Mendip projects, which aim to combat loneliness and reduce hospital admissions by offering a free health and wellbeing support to patients of Mendip GP practices, where Health Connectors connect people to free and low-cost local services, such as exercise classes and support groups, was publicised through articles in The Guardian and Resurgence/Ecologist (see <https://www.fromemedicalpractice.co.uk/services-clinics/health-connections-mendip/>, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/21/town-cure-illness-community-frome-somerset-isolation> and <https://www.resurgence.org/magazine/article5050-compassion-is-the-best-medicine.html>). This excellent work is led by the Practice, by Dr Helen Kingston, and Frome Town Council with local volunteer groups including Active In Touch.

In November 2017, the Practice changed their GP appointment system to the ‘Patient Connect’ system involving an initial ‘phone call to a Care Navigator and a callback from a GP or other health professional, and removed the walk-in clinic and the ability for patients to book GP appointments directly, as explained on their website <https://www.fromemedicalpractice.co.uk/news/2017/10/03/gp-appointments-all-change-on-15th-november/>.

In December we heard some concerns from residents, and as access to primary health care is so important, we decided to carry out an initial independent survey to find out if there are any problems, by asking people “Are you and your family getting the access to a GP and primary healthcare that you need? Is the new system working for you?”. The survey is found here <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GFLXM96>. The main questions are:

1. How satisfied are you and your family with Frome Medical Practice's new appointments system and the closure of the walk-in clinic (since November 2017)?
2. What aspects of the new system are satisfactory and why (if any)?
3. What aspects of the new system are unsatisfactory and why (if any)?
4. Do you have any other comments to make?

Although the survey was prompted by concerns, we framed the questions in order to obtain a sense of the whole range of experiences and views in the community, including positive and neutral or mixed experiences as well as any concerns. As responses were self selected, it is always possible that a greater proportion of people who have had problems with the appointments system were motivated to respond than people who have not had problems. We are also aware that the survey was undertaken during the winter flu season, when the demand for GP appointments was higher than usual, and the availability of GPs was reduced due to sickness. Nevertheless we hope the survey has generated useful feedback.

The survey was initially circulated by email to residents on cllr Boyden's monthly newsletter circulation list in late December 2017. After initial feedback it was publicised further through letters to the Frome Times and Frome Standard newspapers on 17th January 2018. The survey was also then picked up and highlighted on social media. The letter stated and survey website stated "If our survey identifies substantial problems, we will raise the issues with Frome Medical Practice and try to help the practice identify and secure improvements to their service to patients." The survey was then subject to an article in the Frome Times on 1st February (<http://www.frometimes.co.uk/2018/01/30/appointments-system-comes-under-fire/>).

The first 200 survey responses were discussed with Frome Medical Practice's Practice Manager in a meeting on Friday 2nd February. The survey was then discussed by Adam Boyden and Dr Miller of Frome Medical Practice in a BBC Somerset radio programme, Simon Parkin, on Monday 5th February 2018 (available until the end of February at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05v9lcd> from 1 hr 11 mins to 1 hr 29 min). The survey was also the subject of an ITV West Country news item, with interviews by Ben McGrail of two patients, cllr Boyden, and Dr Taylor at the Practice, on the evening and night time news on Wednesday 21st February.

This survey is not linked to a petition which was launched by others on 6th February at <https://www.thepetitionsite.com/152/073/352/demand-an-urgent-review-of-the-frome-medical-practice-appointment-process/> - and which at the time of writing had over 500 supporters. The issues raised in the petition include issues described in responses to question 3 in this survey.

This survey is also not linked to the annual GP Patient Survey, an independent survey run by Ipsos MORI on behalf of NHS England, which is sent out to over a million people across the UK. The results of surveys completed in paper form and online show how people feel about their GP practice through responses to a long list of questions, which can be compared across time and between practices. The results of the 2017 survey of Frome Medical Practice (see <https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/report?practicecode=L85008>) were based on 125 completed surveys out of 267 surveys sent out to patients. The 2018 survey is now open to people who have been sent a form.

At the time of writing, 12th February 2018, there have been 251 online responses to this survey. Responses were received from 2nd January, the vast majority being from 17th January onwards. One additional response was received by post (referred to as L01). This is the report of those 252 responses. The survey remains open at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GFLXM96>.

Answers to questions 1, 2 and 3 are presented in order in sections 2 and 3 below, with a summary of responses followed by lists of responses grouped under headings identifying the issues raised. Positive and negative comments in answers to question 4 have been grouped under answers to questions 2 and 3. A number of people also left their contact details and agreed to be contacted about the survey results and other matters. No names or personal details of any kind which could identify individuals (including Practice staff) are included, for data protection purposes. Section 4 discusses the findings as a whole and makes some recommendations. A draft of this report has been shared with Frome Medical Practice and the Practice's Patient Participation Group, to invite feedback, and we await their response.

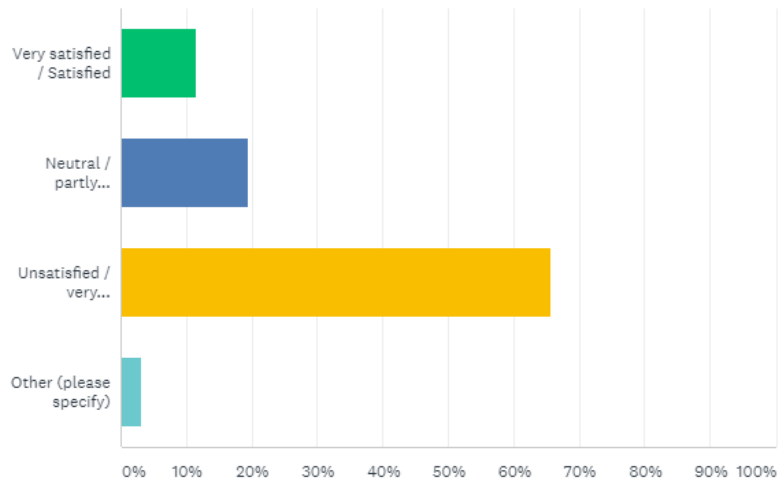
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2. SURVEY RESPONSES

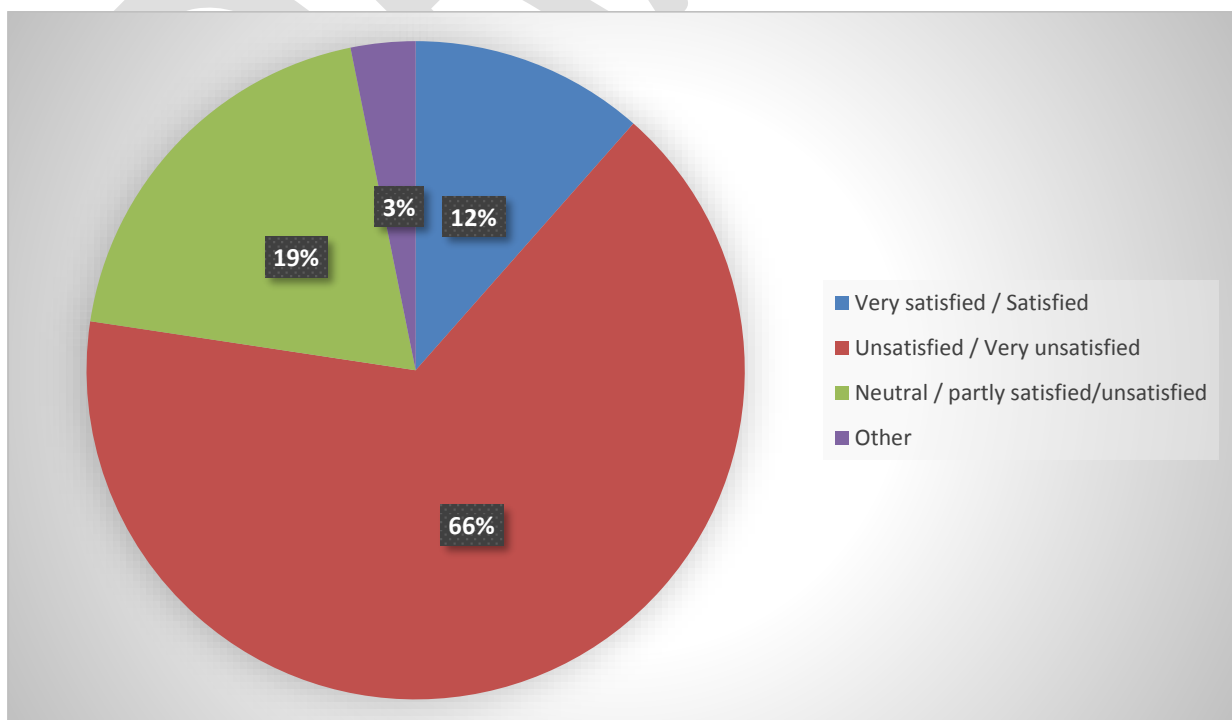
Question 1

How satisfied are you and your family with Frome Medical Practice's new appointments system and the closure of the walk-in clinic (since November 2017)?

Answered: 251 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Very satisfied / Satisfied	11.55%	29
▼ Neutral / partly satisfied and partly unsatisfied	19.52%	49
▼ Unsatisfied / very unsatisfied	65.74%	165
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 3.19%	8
TOTAL		251



Q2

What aspects of the new system are satisfactory, and why? (if any)

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

All respondents answered this question. The positive comments to Q2 are tabulated below from:

- people who were satisfied or very satisfied in Q1,
- people who were neutral or partly satisfied/partly unsatisfied in Q1.
- people who had something positive to say in response to this question, despite answering 'unsatisfied' in Q1 (these answers are indicated by *).

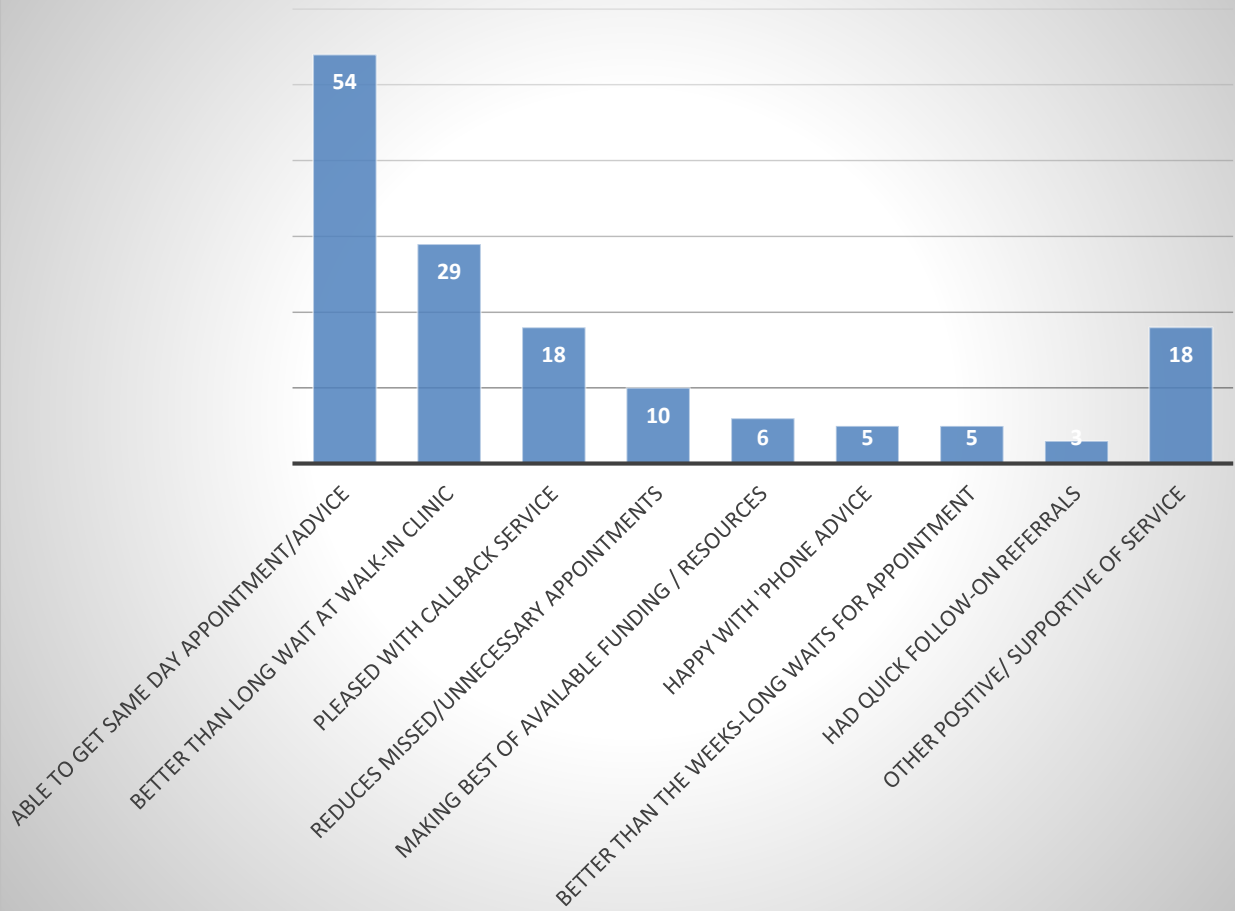
Positive comments included:

- **54** people referred to being able to get a same day appointment or advice
- **29** stated it is better than waiting a long time in the walk in clinic
- **16** people stated they were pleased with the callback service
- **10** thought it would reduce unnecessary or missed appointments
- **5** are happy to speak to a GP instead of making an appointment
- **5** referred to long waits for an appointment in the past
- **3** stated they have been able to get quick follow-on referrals
- **18** other generally positive/supportive comments.
- **6** referred to the Practice making best use of available NHS funding and resources.

64 people simply answered 'none' or otherwise negatively.

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'Why satisfactory?' comments



SURVEY RESPONSES

54 people referred to being able to get a same day appointment or advice, including:

<u>Respondent no.</u>	<u>Response</u>
8	You can speak to a GP much quicker now and things can get resolved over the phone which saves having to wait for an appointment
10	I think it is most satisfactory to be able to speak to a health professional on the same day you require it and for them to be able to help on the phone or call you in as appropriate. This is a tel call at an allocated time so you don't have to wait in all morning for the call back as you misinformed people in your letter.
11	Access to speak to a GP on a day that is suitable to me and a follow up face to face apt on the same day if I need it
12	I have used the service twice and on both occasions had spoken to a GP by 9:30 and picked my prescription up after lunch at my chosen chemist
16	Phoned and after a short wait was called back by my GP. My problem was resolved on the phone and was much better than waiting in the walk in service
23	Good to see a GP same day at dedicated time
30	It's great being able to speak to a doctor the same day and see one if necessary
39	I was able to see a gp each time I have called without sitting in a waiting room for up to 2 hours
42	I like that you can get an appointment that day.
43	Call early, receive a call back, seen within 2 hours, ... prescription and home by 12. Brilliant
46	That you can speak to someone the same day if it's more urgent
49	I have found the new system good, it has allowed me a same day appointment without waiting in the practice for hours...
59	it's brilliant and I've been very happy with getting to speak to a doctor each time I've called...
67	I phoned up and was seen the same day both times I have used it.
79	I work from home so am available to take call backs easily and privately, others might not be in this situation and find it a problem.
84	... spoke to doctor within 2 hours, didn't have to sit amongst 'bugs' for hours on end. ... I think it makes sense, particularly if you are infectious or have to drag a very unwell child in to the surgery in discomfort /distress.
102	I've been relatively lucky to speak to a doctor the same day without needing to wait for an appointment and managed to get a same day appointment when needed
103	It's great that you can see someone the same day if needed
104	Same day appointments whilst waiting in the comfort of your own home with a sick child (or 2)
107	I've read a few moans but have used this service twice. The first time I was in queue position 24 but the phone was still answered quickly. I was called back within 5 mins of my appointment and then came and saw a nurse practitioner who advised antibiotics which I collected on the same visit. The second time I didn't need to come in and was easy to get through.
110	I got an appointment for my daughter on the day I called.
127	Got to speak to a doctor the same day without having to leave my home
132*	Once you eventually get through you do get a call back from a doctor and your problem could be sorted within that day.

136*	I managed to book an evening appointment in advance.
137	Before the change I struggled to see a GP as it took weeks to get an appointment. Now I am assessed over the phone & have seen/spoken directly to a GP several times. I also don't have to sit and wait for ages to be seen, I am advised what time to expect a phone call & have not been disappointed yet with the high level of service I have received from all of the staff.
141	Can get an appointment same day if you call early enough
144*	It is brilliant that you now have the possible opportunity to get a same day appointment if you need to see a doctor quickly. I have had trouble in the recent past trying to get an appointment that was less than 2 weeks ahead.
149	If its urgent you dont have to sit and wait you now get a same day appointment
152	It is good that normally it is possible to get an appointment on the day of phoning.
153	Getting an appointment the same day is great
165	After my initial phone call, the triage nurse called me straight back and my prescription was with the pharmacist that same day.
218	... When i rang for an Appointment last week i was told by a member of Staff that my GP was on Leave. I was told my GP would be back on Monday. I rang early Monday Morning. A Member of Staff asked my symptoms to tell my GP. I was told a time my GP would ring me on Monday!! My GP rang me exactly the time i was told!!! Everything was arranged there and then. Many Thanks to my GP and the member of staff i spoke too.
235	Good if you really need to see a GP because of illness that day and it avoids waiting at the surgery.

29 stated it is better than waiting a long time in the walk in clinic, including:

16	... My problem was resolved on the phone and was much better than waiting in the walk in service
21	Don't have to sit and wait for hours in the walk in clinic
22	Being able to see the doctor of your choice, quickly and not sitting for hours and then seeing an unknown doctor
33	Saves sitting in the walk in for hours. Plus you can speak to a gp if there is the need.
35*	Good to have the option to wait for Dr call from comfort of your own home.
43	... no sitting around in the walk in picking up germs, prescription and home by 12. Brilliant
44*	It's great for those who do need to see a gp urgently and don't want to have to sit and wait at the drop in.
51	Not having to wait in the medical centre for an unspecified time. It's much better to know when a medical professional will telephone.
53	It works much better than before. Means with two kids under 3, I don't have to sit in the walk in. It's good that calls back are offered.
84	... didn't have to sit amongst 'bugs' for hours on end - with a suppressed immune system this is very important.
86	It saves me having to walk to the clinic and wait around for hours, so I have more of my day free.
113	I was able to get a sick note over the phone, saving everyone's time and not having to be exposed to other people's germs!
129	Same day appointments and great help when you call - no more 2 hour sit and wait with a poorly child
130	Not having to go and wait for hours just to get a prescription
156*	Good if you can get an appointment same day. Better than sitting in a waiting room for hours.

168	Removes the uncertainty of sit and wait and not knowing when you will be seen.
171*	Good if you are ill and off work. Much better than going to a walk in clinic
185	Not needing to come into sit and wait - I much prefer waiting at home
202*	Not having to sit and wait in the drop in clinic is helpful (instead, sitting and waiting on the phone wherever you want to be) but that's about it.
207*	Better than old walk in service - telephone call to triage seems to work.
218	We prefer it rather than sit and wait hours and hours in a Waiting Room. With People Coughing Babies Crying so on!! ...

16 people stated they were pleased with the callback service, including:

7	Very quick callback from the right person
36	... The speed of call back was also good
77*	The callbacks are good and so far have happened when they say they will happen
78	Reasonably easy to get an appointment on the day if you are prepared to wait in a long telephone que.
84	Got through on phone within 5 minutes, ...
92	Have only called once but had a quick response and on time.
173	To be able to get advice before your appointment so you know you're seeing the right person is good.
178	Good service, easier for staff I imagine. They were prompt in calling me back when I was pregnant.
201*	The doctor does call you back. Generally when they say you will.
206*	Once an arrangement is made for a call back it seems to work well
221	Let's you talk in comfort of Home or work when arranged.
216*	I think the ability to speak to a doctor in order for them to make a decision about whether or not they need to see me is great. It's a great service in that respect as it saves time for both the practice and patients.
236*	If I am off sick from work, having a telephone consultation when I do not to be seen by the health professional is much easier and it is ok to be waiting for a phone call. I also like that you know what time to expect the call.

10 thought it would reduce unnecessary or missed appointments, including:

51	Well done to FMP for taking such a bold step to improve our local service at a time when there is a national shortage of GPs. I hope this has reduced the number of missed appointments.
105*	Hope it will prevent people who do not need to see a doctor from clogging up the system.
107	Very happy, and think it must reduce the number of people who book appointments and don't turn up. ...
148*	Stops people taking unnecessary appointments
160	Stopping people who don't really need to be seen making way for people who do
175*	Maybe it helps to cut down on people walking in with a common cold. Helping to filter those people out but for other genuine problems, it's awful.
224*	Weaning out people who want to make unnecessary appointments (eg when they have a cold) is a good idea.

5 referred to long waits for an appointment in the past, including:

79	Being able to see or speak to someone the same day as opposed to waiting 2 or 3 weeks in past
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186*	Don't have to wait 3 weeks for an appointment.
190*	Presumably appointments can come round quicker.

5 are happy to speak to a GP instead of making an appointment, including:

16	Phoned and after a short wait was called back by my GP. My problem was resolved on the phone.
113	I was able to get a sick note over the phone, saving everyone's time ...
120	Speaking to a doctor on phone instead of making an appointment is a good idea

3 stated they have been able to get quick follow-on referrals:

59	it's brilliant ... I've also been referred on a two week wait to see a specialist twice in the last month. Amazing! very grateful
65	... If I need a referral that's also made much easier.
114	I suffered from X, was spoken to by a nurse, seen by gp, and referred to ruh speedily. I'm not sure how it would work in other situations

18 other generally positive / supportive comments about the service, including:

8	... I think this is better than the previous waiting time to be seen.
49	Speed of appointments. Not having to wait. If off work sick this would be a perfect system. I can definitely see the benefits.
53	Easy to have contact with a health professional.
59	Just a huge thanks to the medical practise! oh and just to say that the one of the doctors had gone out of his way to call back and check on me twice since i saw him.
81*	That all the staff are working hard for system to work that is clear...
107	Very happy, ...Well done Frome Medical practice
137	All of the staff I have spoken to or emailed (for repeat prescriptions) have shown me nothing lower than professional courtesy. I have lived in many towns and cities over the years & have never before had such a fantastic level of service that the Frome Medical Practice provides. If I need help it is provided in the best possible way.
145*	I feel I am still listened to & taken seriously; e.g. when appointments taken, saw duty doctor.
173	Staff are always friendly and helpful
174	Easier to call up and see gp of your choice. I think its great.
196*	The care navigators that I spoke to were both very good.
222*	When I explained to the care navigators that the process had not worked for me and what had happened they went out of their way to help sort the problem out and arrange for a GP to call me.
232	if it helps reduce the burden on the health centre it has to be good. as with any change/new system there will always be room to improve through modification but as explained by the doctors at the pre launch meeting, something had to be done and a lot of hard work, investigation and consultation was undertaken.
245	Has anyone considered the feelings of the employees at Frome Medical Practice & the effect this negativity has on them? Perhaps before you complain about the system you should work for the NHS & see what strain its really under. I would ask if its acceptable for members of public to swear, shout, threaten & generally be rude to staff which I have witness frequently as an employee? I work with a wonderful group of people trying to do the best they can with the resources provided, it upsets me greatly that they are not treated with the respect they deserve.

6 refer to funding and resourcing issues, including:

8	I think Frome Medical Practice are doing their best under very difficult circumstances and obviously not everyone will be happy with the changes but they might be necessary in order for the practice to survive. Perhaps MDC should be lobbying our local MP about funding for GP practices instead.
10	I feel the real issue lies with government funding of the NHS and the cuts forced on the Practice and not the Practice itself.
51	Well done to FMP for taking such a bold step to improve our local service at a time when there is a national shortage of GPs. ...
142	... More GP's please = More money for the NHS!

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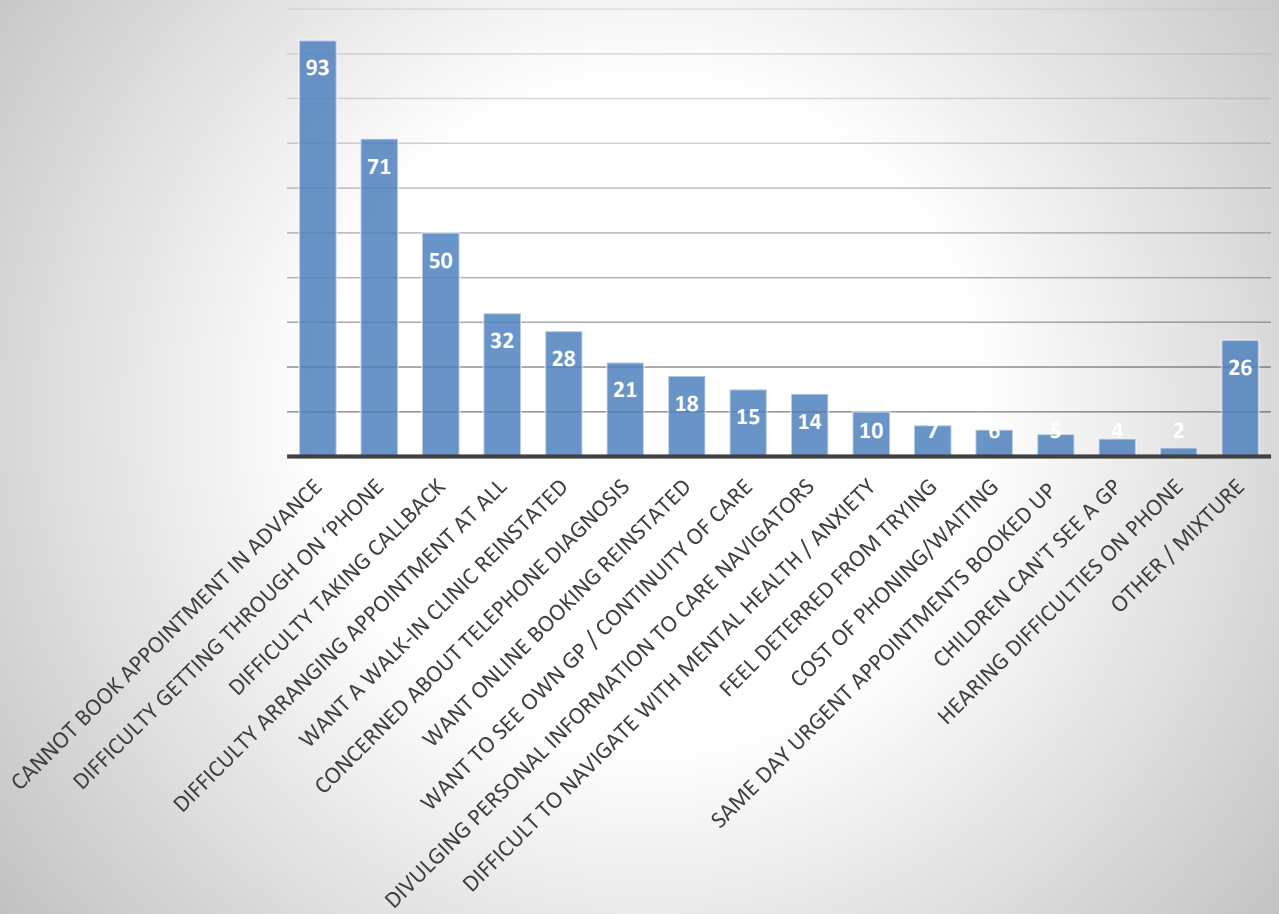
What aspects of the new system are not satisfactory, and why? (if any)

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESPONSES

All respondents answered this question.

- 93 people report difficulties with, or complain about, having to be seen the same day, and not being able to book appointment in advance
- 71 people report difficulties getting through on the 'phone
- 50 people report problems taking a callback
(4 report not getting the promised callback)
- 32 report difficulty arranging an appointment at all
- 28 want a walk-in clinic reinstated
- 21 concerned about telephone call diagnoses
- 18 want the online booking system for appointments in advance reinstated
- 15 want to see their own GP for continuity of care
- 14 concerned about divulging personal information to Care Navigators
- 10 report difficulties with mental health, including anxiety
- 7 feel deterred from trying to make an appointment
- 7 have made complaints or changed surgery
- 6 people are concerned about the cost of phoning and waiting
- 5 concerned unable to see GP same day if appointments are booked up
- 4 report problems for children not being able to see GP
- 2 report difficulties having to use the 'phone with hearing difficulties
- 26 report a combination of issues or other issues

Why unsatisfied?



SURVEY RESPONSES

93 people report difficulties with, or complain about, not being able to book an appointment in advance and having to be seen the same day, including:

6	work shift work so if want to book appointment around shifts I am unable to. ...sooner just book online weeks in advance for non urgent appointments.
17	Cannot book online routine appointments to see your own doctor plus being passed from one person to another explaining your problems. Really going back to the dark ages there was nothing wrong with the walk in system...
20	You can't book an appointment in advance. The last few times I have called in before 11 I have been told the system is full and there is no access to medical assistance on that same day!!! Why can't you still have the facility to book appointments in advance to fit around work commitments and childcare.
21	If I needed a routine appointment it would be impossible to arrange childcare/ access to the car without notice. There need to be some appointments available to book in advance for people who can't just drop everything on the day.
23	... Unable to make routine appointments. Not suitable for people who work and need to arrange time off for routine appointments.
24	Unable to take phone calls in work, and unable to make future appointments for regular check ups.
25	I think this works well for urgent care issues, but you should still be able to make routine appointments in advance or online.
28	...Then I would not be able to come in that day because every day is busy. I need to book appointments between seeing my own patients - so for example if I have a visit in Cheddar, then Glastonbury then Street I can't just nip back to Frome to see a doctor for 5 minutes.
29	Often I do not require to be seen the same day. The "lottery" like system doesn't even guarantee that I can be seen on the day and given that I work 1.5 hours away I will have taken a Days leave on the off chance. ... As is being available for a telephone consultation and putting all plans on hold on the off chance that I will be asked to come in and see someone.
30	Can't prebook appointments when taking work/school attendance into account. It would be beneficial if some appointments could be kept for advance booking. For example, my daughter goes to school in Trowbridge so it would be better if I could advance book if necessary so that I didn't have to drive to Trowbridge and back twice in the same day.
31	Inability to book an appointment at a future date. Only option to phone on the day. Fine for emergency condition. ... I am worried about my mental health so I would like a planned appointment. I can manage to work while I wait for an appointment.
36	Not being able to get appointments booked in advance so transport can be arranged especially for us that have to rely on others to drive us....
37	...Awful system especially for people (mothers) who work. You can't plan your days.
39	...I would like to be able to make non urgent appointments as it isn't always practical to call in the morning at 8am to make an appointment as sometime the appointment isn't urgent so I may need to take kids to school or have other commitments at that time in the morning. I think that the new system is good for the same day appointments but routine appointment should be able to be made in advance.
40	I could not book an advance appointment. I do not want an on the day appointment, or waste an emergency appointment, I want to book one in advance. Please make available advance appointment slots.
44	If like me you and an ongoing condition but it means you need to regularly see the go routinely it's totally impractical. I work and can't sit on the phone indefinitely to then have to give my boss an hour or so of notice and leave to go to the dr, there should be the chance to book ahead for routine appointments.

45	... Unable to book routine appointments. ... I need to talk to a real life person, in person about my medication. It isn't working but it won't warrant a same day appointment (rightly so). As this is affecting me so much I've considered going private as the new appointment system is so stressful. Please allow some routine appointments to be made in advance.
46	... I worry that for a general appointment, the current system makes me feel like I'm in urgent need when actually it's something that can wait maybe a week or two.
47	No other way to book an appointment. Having to repeat the problem 3 times before getting the help you need (to the receptionist, the nurse/dr on the phone and again when you finally at the doctors) longer waiting times to be seen than the drop in clinic. There should be other ways to make appointments, the way works for emergency treatment but routine appointments should be able to be booked in advance.
55	Not suitable for working people. No way of making an appointment for any other day. Go back to old system.
56	It's too rigid you cannot get an appointment even when told to after tests you still have to ring the next day. The phone lines are blocked solid as you have put everything into 8.00 am just to get to talk to a doctor You have to be at home as the doctor MAY want to see you. I can see the reason for this system but it needs some work done on it.
58	No way to plan your day around appointment times, can't book future appointments...
61	Hard to attend an appointment without forward planning. Easier to use walk in on a day off and book an appointment for when I know I can make it/ book time off.
69	Unhelpful for non-urgent matters, follow up appointments. ... Wokingham Berks has just moved from this system to advance appointments and sit and wait- I wonder why? ...
71	Cannot make appointments in advance which for people with long term or mental health issues is a problem. I have made an official complaint to the practice.
73	Unable to make appointments for future dates. If you work full time, you are unable to wait on the phone in the morning in the queues and then to have to wait for the doctor to call back. It's not practical for working people. ...
76	Can't plan around work not good when you work away and won't be seeing same doctor, seems very impersonal ...
77	Trying to book a routine appointment such as asthma check or 12 weekly injections is taking 15 mins holding on the phone as the queues are so big! Would it not make sense to have a option on the phone line for appointments that don't need to be same day?
81	Not being able to book appointments for a convenient time especially as I work shift work at a hospital unsociable hours so need appointments on days off. ...
82	Can't get an appointment in advance or if phone later in day, long queues on phone puts people off waiting on phone. This system is not any good to those that maybe unable to make long calls due to phone credit, those that need future appointments but can't make them in advance.
103	I live in Frome, but do not work there. It's not feasible for me to come out of work for a mid afternoon drs appointment. I think it's fixed a huge number of issues but has created a couple more. I know it can't always work for everyone.
111	... Why cant we just make routine appointments and have call navigators for same day urgent appointments ?? To just leave a message you have to wait in the queue !!
112	I think you should be able to make an appointment still. If you have a long term or chronic illness or something crops up with your tablets being changed by a consultant you should be able to make an appointment in advance to speak to your gp. I get that it's busy but people oftentimes need the reassurance of touching Base with their gp. When there were other people to talk to about long term illnesses like your Parkinsons nurse this would have been OK, but a lot of patients don't have these people to talk to anymore and check things are OK, that meds are appropriate, that the new symptom they have is related to their condition and not something new.
116	Would prefer to be able to make an appointment on-line with a specific GP even if the only appointments were a week or so away - in addition to the current arrangement.

121	... 2. Working people who can't queue on the phone for hours to wait to speak to someone, and be able to be free the same day for a routine appointment. If they aren't free the same day, they need to call the day they are available and queue in the system all over again as appointments cannot be pre-booked. ...
123	...I think it would work better for working people if you could make telephone appointments for another day. Also, given that it is not possible for doctors always to phone at the precise time given, it would help if doctors tried again at the end of the day.
138	... It's no good if you work if a doctor rings at 3pm and decides you need an appointment and says 3.30 it's very unlikely your going to be able to leave work at short notice. ...
140	Not convenient for the working man. I could pick and choose online when I wanted to see a doctor when I'm working away or not.
142	Would be good to have a separate phone line for routine appointments. Instead of filtering everyone through the emergency same day appointment line. More GP's please = More money for the NHS!
143	Why does everything have to be done on the same day - i.e. no facility to make non-urgent appointments ahead of time? Why no consideration for those with serious, even terminal, conditions who may need urgently to speak with their own doctor? ... Why no phone line to deal with one routine questions not needing the help of a health practitioner? ...
144	The fact that you cannot book a doctors appointment further than one day in advance is not acceptable. I cannot always get to a phone from 8am onwards (surely this is one of the most hectic time of the day for lots of families, trying to get ready for work, school etc) and I can certainly not hold on the line for any length of time. I am in a job where I am not allowed to have my phone on me during the day, so cannot wait for a call back. Why can I not book an appointment in advance for my afternoon off so that I know I will be able to attend, not take pot luck to see what is available on the same day? Surely I am not the only person who works full time and sometimes needs to see a doctor, not necessarily for a condition which keeps me off work? The new system assumes everyone is able wait on hold on the phone and available to attend an appointment at any time of the day?
145	As I work it is impractical to have such degree or randomness in that you cannot prebook & if you ring on a day off the appointments can be easily full... The concept is good, but it's not quite there. It would be better if you could still book appointments, say for a third to half the time & then half the time to two thirds allocate for the appointments made on the day.
147	When at work unable to wait for a call back if just need a routine appointment rather than emergency. Would be easier to still have online booking for routine appointments for those of us that have to work for a living.
148	... you do see a doc and they ask you to come back you are unable to make appt until that day no good with children with school hours.
158	...I work in an open plan office and cannot have a private conversation regarding my health if I do not know when to expect the call. I also spend large periods of the working week away from home. Often my mobile signal is poor when travelling or in remote areas so receiving a call and not being able to ring back to continue the conversation at a convenient time for me is difficult. The system needs to allow for call backs to be booked at an agreed time to be able to plan to take the call in privacy and with a good signal.
162	Unable to make early appointment for routine blood test now (one a year need one and used to go in at 0720 before travelling to work) now earliest appointment is 0824 which is difficult.
164	I am unable to make a routine appointment as I am at work when you have to call and even if I could i can't receive calls at work, as a result of this i will run out of my medication in a couple of weeks as I am now overdue a medication check for repeat prescriptions.
166	The new system doesn't work for those who are employed - noone has time to sit on the phone for 10-15 mins waiting to have the initial conversation and I can't take a same day appointment as I work. I need to be able to book in advance. Or we need to option to be

	able to do this online. This service is brilliant if the need is acute/ urgent but it doesn't work if you just want a routine appointment.
167	If you need an urgent app, then the new system is good. I need routine app as I've a chronic condition. ...Please, please, please change the system! We need one option for urgent care and another for routine app or people who don't mind waiting a few of days for an app. Please, please please!!!
171	Impossible to book a routine appointment. I have an ongoing condition and really need to see a doctor but I teach in afternoons so I can't take time off, I need to know I can fit the appointment around my work. ... My old doctors in Langport ran the same day telephone appointments for urgent cases and also a number book ahead for routine appointments. This would be a much fairer system.
181	Not being able to arrange an appointment in advance for a set day. Having to wait on the phone for half an hour before speaking to anyone. The callback when you are at work, and the offering of a same day appointment when you are at work. Need to be able to do a bit of both pre booking and call back/same day.
183	The fact that you cannot make an appointment for a later date. As someone who needs routine appointments and check ups you call on the day you want to come in but I don't need an appointment that urgently. I need to be able to arrange around work and childcare. I just think that the new system needs to be a bit more open to being able to make an appointment. ... It's just a bit silly having such a large building when there's hardly anyone there and you can't actually make an appointment at a convenient time for you if it isn't urgent.
184	I work in Bristol so have to take the whole day off on the off chance I might see a doctor. ... if I did get an appointment it could be up to 3 hours before I could get back home.
189	... I can't come for an appointment on the same day as I live in Frome but work in Swindon, so need to be able to plan ahead. There needs to be more flexibility with appointment system. ...
196	Phoning back after being emailed to say my blood test results were back that I couldn't make an appointment to see the doctor next week but had to phone on the Monday.
199	Not being able to book routine appointments!! I work full time seeing my own patients and it is unacceptable to have to cancel their appointments because I have to wait for a phone call. With the old system this could all be sorted prior to the day! I have stopped my medication as I can't get routine appointment to get a review prior to a repeat prescription!
202	Useless for people who work! I need to book appointments in advance so that I can take the time off work to go to them. I can't just sit on my phone for an hour (while at work) to get onto the patient list, and then take another phone call (whilst still at work) for consultation, and then being asked to come in later that SAME DAY (whilst, funnily enough, still at work!) is just not possible! I also frequently waste time on the phone to not get an appointment at all. ... Drop in clinic and waiting was far more convenient for some people and being able to book an appointment in advance is absolutely essential for people who work! Please allow at least some appointments to be booked in advance! Sick people can't always get to the phone at 8am in the morning and should not have to suffer just because they can't book an appointment for a time when they can actually attend it! What about mental health appointments? People don't necessarily need to be seen that same day but should be able to schedule in the week for a time that suits them....
205	I'm not able to phone and wait for someone to answer the phone and then wait for a call back I work full time and cannot just announce I'm going to be ill and need to go to doctors today!working full time no phoned allowed at desk so can't book appointments.
207	If you want to pre book an appointment is bad - especially if wanting to discuss mental health concerns and arrange support or need more time to discuss. Also for booking around work - wife works afternoons and by the time she gets a call back she can't make same day appointment and told to ring again tomorrow and gets into a circle. ...
211	It works for same day appointments as it avoids waiting at the surgery, but only if you are too ill to be at work. Should be able to book routine appointments ahead so they can be

	on days off or suitable times, waiting until the actual day is very inconvenient. It is not possible to book phone slots online. I have tried and could only book nurse routine appointments. Not what I needed. ...
212	This system does not allow you to call and arrange an appointment for a check up in the future.
213	Not always able to go the same day to the practice. ...
216	I find it slightly annoying that I can't make an appointment in advance, especially as I work in bath and therefore have to make a lot of arrangements in advance just in case I can get an appointment. It's frustrating that I essentially have to wait until I have a day completely free of meetings at work (rare!) in order to a) wait on hold for approx half an hour to get through to the initial contact b) be free for the call back from the doctor and then c) be able to leave work relatively last minute to attend an appointment if appropriate. I recently had a non-urgent issue and it would have been helpful to have been able to book an appointment well in advance so I could make plans with work and other responsibilities in order to attend. As a fairly new resident of Frome I have moved surgeries in order to be registered closer to where I live, but I'm slightly regretting the decision as I was very easily able to make advance appointments with my previous doctors surgery.
220	Unable to book an appointment, it is very difficult to see a dr or await a call back whilst working especially if you don't work locally. It was a lot easier to make an appointment online to fit in with work or drop in and sit and wait. ...
222	If you need a routine appt that does not need to be same day but need to be able to plan it for a non working day or time of day this is not possible and you need to spend up to an hour to try and get a same day appt. Also the time you have to wait on the phone and then you have to wait again for someone to call you back. My experience was that I was not called back. When I explained to the care navigators that the process had not worked for me and what had happened they went out of their way to help sort the problem out and arrange for a GP to call me. I commend them for their helpful and can do approach. I think the principle of being able to call and speak to a go who will make a same day appt is generally a good one. However it should also be possible to make routine non urgent appointments in advance for days and times of your choice.
225	Not being able to book a routine appointment during hours i do not work. ... Having to wait for a doctor to call back if working is hard as i have customer appointments so cannot cancel them. Also if working in a call centre for instance not being allowed personal calls at work. Most people cannot just get time off work on the day for non urgent appointments. The system is not fit for non urgent appointments especially for people who work. I think it is only fit for anyone unemployed. You still need a way to book non urgent appointments in advance.
227	I normally make an appointment for my annual review of medication 2-3 weeks in advance and can easily plan my day. Now I have to check when my GP is available, ring a care coordinator on that morning, wait for a call back to ascertain the appointment time, which will probably be much later in the day if appointments have not been filled with urgent cases. This means a simple, non urgent check up takes a whole day of my time. The previous system worked well. Appointments were available with own GP for ongoing regular treatment and the walk-in clinic dealt with unexpected ailments. A GP was available if a nurse needed more advice. The waiting time was often not more than 30 mins, better than a whole day on the new system.
235	Not suitable if you need a routine appointment and want to plan ahead for a day off or for an early morning appointment before work. Online appointments were ideal for this as I work during the GP telephone hours and not allowed my phone on my person for Safeguarding reasons. The system works for individuals needing to see a GP rather than a 'sit and wait' appointment but doesn't help if symptoms are not acute. ...
236	I do not wish to speak to a care navigator and GP while I am at work. I wish to arrange an appointment when I am not at work, e.g. on my day off. Confidentiality issues arise whilst waiting for a GP to call me back. I feel I am now being prevented from seeing my GP ...

242	I tried calling for days to make an appointment with the particular doctor who is specialising in my care. It was impossible. ... I've developed a relationship with a particular doctor who understands my care and is interested in the use of my medication and my future well being. Since there's no guarantee I can continue to see my doctor on a regular basis to assess my care, there's no ongoing relationship - unsatisfactory for patient and doctor. Surely a doctor wants to be able to monitor a patient with whom they have invested time and prescribed medication??? Being unable to arrange a non urgent appointment with the doctor of my choice is completely unsettling.
244	You cannot make routine appointments which is ridiculous. If you need to see a doctor the same day but work along way from home this is near impossible, and then if you cannot take the appt for the same day you then have to ring the next morning and start the process all over again even though the day before they said you needed to see a doctor. Waste of time a doctor ringing you back to have the same conversation as the day before.
246	Unable to book advance dates to suit... Online booking needs looking into. Unable to book more than 3 appointments which is useless for blood etc. Makes life difficult...
248	No facility to make routine appointments, even when these are requested by a GP during a consultation. "Come and see me again in 2 weeks." Ok, but how? Difficulty in getting through by telephone. Difficulty in being able to receive calls when e.g. at work. Recorded message saying that all appointments are taken for that day - with no facility to make an appointment on another day. Why can this system be purely instead of the sit and wait system, so leaving the facility to make non-urgent, or GP requested appointments, as it was.
250	Can't make appointments for the future! Work away for my job and need to be able to see a doctor if needed. The old system of a walk in clinic for emergency appt was brilliant and also being able to make routine apt.
251	I work full time in Trowbridge and the facility to arrange an appointment to see a GP on a non working day is essential for me.

71 people report difficulties getting through on the 'phone, including:

4	It can take a considerable time to get through on the phone (15 minutes in the case of my father-in-law recently). ...
5	Time delay on the phone, and getting to see your own Doctor, who is then fully booked when you finally get through.
9	Unable half the time to get through to the receptionist line. Then are told about 20th in a queue which can take up to 2 hours to get through. If your needing to see a doctor the same day you then have to wait for a triage nurse to call if she feels you need to see a doctor you then have to wait again for doctor to call. If he/she wants to see you then if there is appointment you may get seen before the end of the day. If not start the whole process again the next day.
20	... The last few times I have called in before 11 I have been told the system is full and there is no access to medical assistance on that same day!!!
23	Too long on hold. Have to explain self 3 times. ...
26	When you want to book you have to wait 30+ in the queue and then still can't seem to get a call back or appointment.
29	... The 8am scramble for telephone appointments isn't feasible with a toddler and new born. As is being available for a telephone consultation and putting all plans on hold on the off chance that I will be asked to come in and see someone.
35	Waiting times too long can't always get an appointment on my free day of calling.
41	Difficulty in getting through, I was number 21 in the queue at 08.45. No obvious triage for patients who need to be see more quickly is red flag for cardiac symptoms. Potential cost to low/ no income families for phone call with wait of 30 mins plus.
42	... Most of the time I call for on 8am but the system still says it's closed and doesn't normally stop playing that message and get you in the queue until about 8:03, it's a bit annoying and for someone who has the leave the house at 8:15 a bit time consuming.
43	The phone queue is long, More staff needed on the phones.
46	If you call a bit later in the morning there is a good chance of not getting to speak to anyone until the next day. ...
49	... My neighbour doesn't have a phone, this has caused real problems with trying to get to see a GP and has forced her into A&E for conditions that could have been treated within a GP practice as she cannot access your service
69	... Exceedingly time consuming to get through by phone - you need to clear a day to try to speak to doctor as have no idea when you first call how long the process might take. ... Also new system is proving very difficult for a family member with mental health issues.
74	Much too long to wait for a reply when calling for help. It would be fab if these were reduced.
75	I work morning and so by time call get appointment it all gone or wait long time on phone talk anyone.
82	Can't get an appointment in advance or if phone later in day, long queues on phone puts people off waiting on phone.
83	I have found it impossible to even speak to anyone on the phone without being on hold for an unexceptable amount of time. The practice needs more people. Taking calls and a separate line for people who have be told to make follow up appointments.
90	If people ring up in the morning they are already in a queue. Some people are not even guaranteed to get an appointment.... Cannot even see your OWN doctor when you need to.
93	I work and cannot be on the phone at 8am making phone calls. ...
105	It takes too long to get through on the phone and by the time you do get through there are no appointments. ...
109	Wait to long to speak to a receptionist, I was in position 19 and waited 30 minutes and still didn't speak to anyone. Which took up my lunch break. I work in environment when you

	can not have you mobile phone as it is locked away, unless on lunch. ... New system doesn't work for people who have full time employment or work shifts, we need to able to book an appointment at our convenience.
111	The waiting time to talk to a care navigater is very long up to 45 mins. I do not wish to talk over the phone about a problem also the area of Frome we live in our mobile signal is bad so we can only make calls up stairs but my husband is disabled and cant get up the stairs.
113	Phone lines state they open at 8, they didn't! When I finally got through it was engaged. When I rang for the 8th time I was put in a queue for 24minutes. This would be a good system with more call handlers during the busiest times.
114	I cannot ever get through the engaged tone. I leave it til 10 am and then all appointments are gone then cant get through to anyone else.
118	If you work, or are otherwise unavailable in the morning, you have absolutely no chance of even speaking to a doctor or getting an appointment.
126	It's hard to get through first thing in the morning and then when you do all appointments are gone...
128	I called at 1520 on a Friday to arrange a blood test. The recorded message said that all the Patient Connect slots were taken although that was not what I wanted. With the drop in, despite needing a copy of War and Peace, at least if you arrived within the open hours you were sure of a consultation. No it appears that a time limit is already operating. The system needs at the very least a dedicated 'phone line with a dedicated operator(s) who can call back promptly.
135	How many phone lines does Frome Medical Practice have to take the massively increased call volume?
136	phone lines state they open at 8, they didn't! When I finally got through it was engaged. When I rang for the 8th time I was put in a queue for 24minutes.
138	Most mornings when I have rang appointments already gone so have to wait until the next day but again same again! ...
141	Waiting in a long queue even after calling at 8am If you can't call until slightly later in the day then you have to wait till following day for appointment Doesn't really work for people who are at work from 8am as they will be unable to get an appointment due to working.
142	This is a very difficult system for working people. It is not always easy to make a call that involves waiting for a long period of time It is costly for people using mobiles and there is the loss of the face to face opportunity to share. ...
143	... Why now no indication of how long the queue is so ringing again later is a viable option? ...
144	... I cannot always get to a phone from 8am onwards (surely this is one of the most hectic time of the day for lots of families, trying to get ready for work, school etc) and I can certainly not hold on the line for any length of time. ...
151	No drop in service. Long queue to get through on the phone Line often busy and disconnects the call. How are full time people supposed to have enough time to keep calling all day? The process of booking an appointment has gone from 5 minutes, to a MINIMUM of 30 minutes. (if you can even get through).
155	Waiting along time on the phone...More navigators needed to answer calls.
156	Not practical for people who work. Being put in a queue of 20 plus people.
166	The new system doesn't work for those who are employed - noone has time to sit on the phone for 10-15 mins waiting to have the initial conversation ...
171	... I have talked to the practice and just get told you have to ring at 8am and maybe you will be lucky with your appointment time. I'm usually taking children to school at 8 so really not good for me. When I called around 9, the appointments for that day had already gone.
180	I work at a college, phones off once in school. I cannot hang on the phone when have a lesson ...
181	... Having to wait on the phone for half an hour before speaking to anyone. ...

186	Having to call each day, waiting on phone was nearly 3 hrs just for an appointment, just to be told there wasn't any and to call again tomorrow! ...
188	The fact the phones don't get answered! Some appointments can't wait!! The new system does not work! U cannot just shut the lines when the appointments are gone!!!
206	Inability to get through to an operator and caller is automatically disconnected without ceremony and cannot hand on-my wife had to make 21 calls!;...
208	Response time to phone call. Only one number for all calls to arrange any type of appointment, either on the day or longer term. ... Reception desk staff say there are 15 lines on 301301, if so why does it take 30minutes or more to get a response?
209	All of it you ring up and the phone either permanently engaged or your 24 in the queue. Now if you have a poorly child and a autistic one who wants you all the time. You are not going to be able to stay on the phone and wait....
210	it is difficult to get through. i was cut off 3 times. i had to wait for 20 minutes each time. this is not a very good system. I'm not very happy.
211	Too difficult to Get through on the phone. It takes approx 20 mins queuing in the system but can take double that before you even get into the queuing system. Continual engaged tone. Impossible to hold for over half an hour on a working day.
214	Having to wait up to 20 minutes for the phone to be answered ...
217	Calling continually and an automated answer telling you the service is busy please call later, tried 4 times. Had to go down to practice. ...
220	This is a very time consuming process waiting to get through on the telephones early then waiting a call back, then possibly seeing a dr that day. ...
221	Takes ages to get through on the phone which isn't easy when you are at work and on hold or queuing for ages. ...
223	Unworkable if you work full-time in a school and cannot hold on the telephone for up to 20 mins waiting for the call to be answered and then you are unable to take a call back.
229	Also when you are in the telephone queue it doesn't tell you where you are in the queue so you can't decide if it's worth waiting or trying again later.
233	Long wait in queue for initial call to be answered. (Up to 30mins). Then wait for call back difficult and anxious if with sick child.
238	having to make 100's of attempts to get through on telephone as line is constantly busy, once through there is no way of knowing where you are in the queue and often it takes half an hour to get to speak to someone, ... when i ring after half ten all appointments have already been booked
242	I tried calling for days to make an appointment with the particular doctor who is specialising in my care. It was impossible. Either continually engaged or told that I was at queue position 28... It wasn't possible to hold onto the phone for half an hour or more to secure an appointment. By the time I did get through on other occasions, the message was relayed that there were no further appointments that day. Frustrated, angry and upset. Either there are not enough phone lines or 'care navigators' to cover all the incoming calls. How anyone with a child to get ready for school or a job to which they need to arrive on time can try and make an appointment is ridiculous. A teacher I know said she couldn't make an appointment on the day, since no appointment time could be guaranteed and she couldn't hold on indefinitely until her call was answered and she would be teaching and unable to arrange cover if she was lucky enough to secure a time slot. Being able to arrange an appointment for a future date is essential to most people. ... I cannot spend three mornings in a row trying to get a call answered in the mere hope of arranging an appointment. It's time wasting and upsetting calling and recalling. ...the new system shows no regard for the patient whatsoever. No one wants to be in a position where they need or have to contact a doctor.
243	Can't get through to make an appointment and can't plan ahead for routine matters. Phone lines jammed.

246	Unable to book advance dates to suit/telephone line engaged for long periods then long delays in answering telephone/no idea of where one is in the queue. Used to be told the numbered position but this has now been removed. Online booking needs looking into.
248	... Difficulty in getting through by telephone. ... Recorded message saying that all appointments are taken for that day - with no facility to make an appointment on another day. ...

6 people were concerned about the cost of phoning and waiting:

41	Difficulty in getting through, I was number 21 in the queue at 08.45. No obvious triage for patients who need to be seen more quickly is red flag for cardiac symptoms. Potential cost to low/ no income families for phone call with wait of 30 mins plus.
142	This is a very difficult system for working people. ...It is costly for people using mobiles ...
143	... How do those without phone plans etc, especially the poor, afford the cost of hanging on indefinitely. Why now no indication of how long the queue is so ringing again later is a viable option? ...
180	my daughter was 27th in queue few weeks back and on phone nearly 3 hrs... who's going to pay her mobile phone bill?
214	Having to wait up to 20 minutes for the phone to be answered which is costing money. Cannot spend that amount of time if you're working. ...
238	i have wasted over £20 calling doctors in last 2 weeks as i am on hold for so long

50 people report problems taking a callback, including:

6	... call back meant had to take call at work which was unnecessarily embarrassing. Call back if at work is awful. ...
15	... I can't take phone calls at work. ...
18	Call back (those that work may only be able to leave a work number). Doctors claim unable to get through 3 times and then you get wiped off their call back. In my situation the doctor claimed was unable to get through, however, if you listen to automated messages carefully, just as we do with your system you would know to wait to speak to a Receptionist who can then put you through. Auto message to say no appointments left (we can't choose what part of the day an illness becomes serious enough to want the advice of a doctor). I don't think much thought has been put in to the times when people will call a little later in the day. To have to call and then listen to a message that states no appointments left is less than helpful. You need to consider those that work a little more than the system currently allows. Some workplaces do not allow mobile phones so to have to await a call back is often difficult and may not have anywhere confidential to then speak to you further about their medical issue. They are calling on that day because no doubt they have already put up with an illness for quite some time before calling - not all people call the doctor unnecessarily.
24	Unable to take phone calls in work, and unable to make future appointments for regular check ups.
25	I was personally ...able to get same day appointment when needed, but after a 35 minute wait for my call and I had to miss work to take the call back. This was ok as my son was acutely unwell - however wouldn't be helpful for routine appointments and I've actually put off seeing a dr about routine issues due to the new system.
28	... I work in the NHS in the community so I would have to cancel appointments to accept a call from a GP. ... Sometimes a phone consultation would be useful or fine but if I'm not in my car, or in a patients home I'm in an open plan office - not ideal.
31	I am a teacher, so unable to take time off to wait in a phone queue on the off chance and I need to plan my absences from the classroom...

37	If I am not at home but working then I may miss the doctor ringing or not be able to go to the time allocated. ... There must be a better system.
49 My only difficulty was trying to take a phone call at work where my mobile doesn't have signal and I'm in a shared office. It was awkward discussing my medical condition in front of colleagues. ... Needing a telephone. Difficulty with callbacks (this would prevent me calling if the condition was embarrassing or potentially more serious)
68	... As I work full time I am unable to call in and wait for a call back during the same day. I work on a helpline! I would like the opportunity to make a non urgent appointment for another day not same day.
76	...if I want call back this time of year I'd have to go outside for privacy as open plan building not good, thinking seriously of changing practices.
80	You have to wait on hold for ages in the morning then be able to take a call which you can't always do if your at work, then you need to hope you can be free for any appointment they offer you. Stupid, stupid system!!
90	I work at ruh hospital so have to book a whole day off to wait for a phone call after lunch to maybe have an appt later on afternoon.
92	I work in an open plan office and don't want to have a discussion about medical matters where other can hear me. I managed to borrow someone's office temporarily last time but that wouldn't always be possible. Other option corridors, loos or outside, none of them satisfactory.
93	I work ... I also am unable to use phones at work in a busy pre-school and cannot wait for a call back.
97	Managed to get an appointment the same day but i had to call during work hours, if my boss was in the office it would not have been possible without taking a sick day of which i have none left so could lose my job!
99	It is much easier to just turn up after work or school etc rather than wait for a call which I can't make when at work.
105	... It is not always convenient to wait for a call back, not everyone can be available to take calls when at work etc. ...
109	... I work in environment when you can not have you mobile phone as it is locked away, unless on lunch. If I did manage to speak to someone, I could not wait for a call back to see if I require an appointment. New system doesn't work for people who have full time employment or work shifts, we need to able to book an appointment at our convenience. Frome medical practice needs to run both system, allow people who require to seek medical attention that day, but also allow patients book appointment for a week to two weeks a head or even longer if they need to see a GP OR nurse in a number weeks/months time.
110	Waiting for a callback when I was at work. Very difficult when you're trying to teach.
123	The difficulty of having to phone in the morning for a telephone appointment later in the day is very difficult if you are working full time. Sometimes it is possible to get through but then you can not actually be available for the consultation time given. On the one occasion I tried to use it the doctor phoned later than the time given and I was unavailable. When I heard the message I tried to phone back but waited 30 minutes in the phone queue. I asked for the doctor to phone me when she could but no one contacted me....
142	This is a very difficult system for working people. ...it's then not always convenient to take the returning GP call. ...
144	... I am in a job where I am not allowed to have my phone on me during the day, so cannot wait for a call back. ... Surely I am not the only person who works full time and sometimes needs to see a doctor, not necessarily for a condition which keeps me off work? The new system assumes everyone is able wait on hold on the phone and available to attend an appointment at any time of the day?
166	The new system doesn't work for those who are employed - ... I can't take a same day appointment as I work. ...

173	It is great for emergencies on the day, but if you work and cannot be available for a call back this makes the system very difficult to use. Also for routine appointments for contraceptive injections for instance it doesn't work very well. I'm a teacher and so can't always be available for call back as with many other professional people.
176	Doesn't allow for people working and unable to make/receive phone calls during the day. I work at local school. Students constantly being pulled out of lessons to go to appts due to same day/limited appts and timings.
177	The system is very good for people who are ill and need to be seen in the day who have all the time in the world, like the elderly or at home mothers with children, but not good at all for anyone who cannot give up a day to make and wait for a phone appointment. Making a call and having to be available for a call back can present challenges if the person is working. Not all doctors appointments are needed for conditions that keep a person off work. When that call then comes in much later than arranged and the persons re-arranged lunch break has expired it is really frustrating. ...
179	It doesn't work for children in school, or for people who cannot take phone calls at work. Not everyone can take calls at work. Doesn't work for children: I have to take a morning off work now, if my daughter needs an appointment and I cannot give her school notice she will be taken out of school.
180	I work at a college, phones off once in school. I cannot hang on the phone when have a lesson nor receive a call back.
189	Not at all satisfied that one has to wait for a call back. If I really need to speak to someone I want to be able to do it in private and not in front of my work colleagues - I work in an open plan office. ...
190	The telephone-heavy element. I work 50 miles from Frome, so have to leave pre-7am and return post-7pm. I work in a large open plan office where making personal calls is far from private and therefore not practical. I have an half-hour lunch break, and there is no mobile signal. As a consequence, ringing to book an appointment, then having to find a convenient opportunity to speak to an advisor, is completely impractical for me. I would be much happier making a booking via email or on the web.
193	Having to wait for a call back if you need to see a doctor. The doctor only calling once. The doctor not sticking to times or forgetting to call once agreed. If you need an urgent appointment & are in employment you call in the morning & have to hope you are available when the doctors call you back. I wasn't as I work on reception. I didn't get a second call and so the process starts again. I didn't get a call back the second time so had to call a third time & then a day later I got a call which I was able to pick up. I thought I had an infection & so this was very frustrating.
198	Phone calls missed as I was at work. I follow up and have to explain to an unqualified staff member who will decide who you will talk to. The old system was flawed but worked better. It seems that the doctors are trying to avoid seeing you.
203	Having to discuss my medical condition at work in front of the public. I work on my own in a public place and would be unable to speak privately with a GP.
205	I'm not able to phone and wait for someone to answer the phone and then wait for a call back I work full time and cannot just announce I'm going to be ill and need to go to doctors today! If I'm lucky enough to get an appointment today!! ...Having to call and hope with fingers crossed you get a call back.working full time no phoned allowed at desk so can't book appointments.
211	... It is impossible to take a call back whilst at work. If I made my employer aware that I was waiting for a Dr phone call then this breaches patient confidentiality. You should not have to disclose to your employer that you need to see a Dr for what ever reason.
212	As opposed to waiting in a surgery for several hours I now wait for most of the day for a call back. Not one call back has been within the allotted time, all have been later. ...
214	...If you're in a job where you can't take phone calls, i.e. teacher, driving job, call centre, what do you do? etc etc. This system takes away any privacy you are entitled to when speaking to a doctor, especially if you have to take a call whilst at work.

223	Unworkable if you work full-time in a school and ... are unable to take a call back.
249	The phone was answered then was told Dr would phone back at a certain time after over a hour & half past time that Dr was going to ring back, I rang & was rudely told that they had rung back but the line was engaged, which was a absolutely a lie, even if the line was engaged the dr could had rung again, but the line was not used until I had called one & half hour after the given time. Service is rubbish.
	4 report not getting the promised callback
62	In REALITY you don't get phoned back at allotted time or in my personal case AT ALL - I am still waiting for a call back from Dr X re: my son (Xyrs) who was experiencing problems with asthma inhalers at the beginning of December 2017. I was given a time slot and the call never came (and still hasn't! - it is now late January) I find this totally unacceptable. I would far rather have sat at a walk in clinic with him for however long it took with a guaranteed chance of speaking to someone in the medical profession. I feel somewhat 'abandoned' and 'helpless'. We struggled on until his asthma clinic appointment (which I managed to arrange myself) but that was not available until some 4 weeks later. ... Please please either make the call back system actually work or implement some kind of sit and wait service again. Maybe on a ticket system like where you queue? There must be a better way because this clearly is not working.
168	No call back received had to chase with follow up calls. No time given for call back. Not able to book appointments in advance.
169	I called for my daughter to see a doctor, I was told I would get a call at nine. By half past two no one had rung. Called the surgery to be told no notes had been put on my daughters file what was wrong but a request for a doctor to ring me was on it. Doctor eventually called at 5:45 and said they would see my daughter the next day. The new system doesn't work. I'd rather go into the surgery and wait two hours and know I'll be seen, rather than wait at home chasing the surgery as to why I've not had a phone call as promised. I was hard to make appointments before and it's practically impossible now. I suffer from a long term illness and as I can never actually see a doctor (I keep trying!) I actually have to pay to get my medication online from an online doctor!
233	a. One neighbours young child had chest infection, they rang 111 and waited several hours for a reply, none came. They rang again later only to be told "it's too late ring tomorrow". b. another elderly neighbour rang desperate to see a doctor, but no one phoned back. They rang back only to be told "the doctor phoned but no one there so he left an answer on phone". Problem is they don't have an answer phone and they waited by the land line phone for hours. c. another near neighbour had exactly the same problem and same response "the doctor phoned and there was no one there". Basically no one rings back and they are making excuses, even worse is when the Medical Centre say the doctor has left a message - when the patient doesn't even have an answer phone.
L01	I am extremely disappointed at the way the health centre is being run under this new system. After a recent XXX I developed a very high temperature due to an infection. On Wednesday 31st January I dialed 111 and was rushed to XX hospital and given a high dose of antibiotics, the quick response and care I received was excellent. The hospital doctor said "If the temperature doesn't reduce you will need to have intravenous antibiotics". [Next day] instead of temperature reducing it increased and I had uncontrollable shaking so I range the Frome Health Centre ... and I explained "I needed a doctor's referral for intravenous antibiotics as stated by XX hospital". The Health Centre said a doctor would phone me before 6pm. I also range 111 and all they said was, I would have to wait for a doctor to refer me to hospital. [Following day] - not heard anything from the doctor. My friend drove me to the Health Centre and was told that the doctor rang and left a message on my land line but there's one problem with that because I sat by the phone desperately waiting for the call AND I don't have an Answer Phone so it's impossible for the doctor to leave a message. (Received by letter, dated 2/2/18).

21 are concerned about telephone call diagnoses, including:

27	When i spoke to the nurse who rang me back she just brushed of what I had to say. Later spoke to doctor who actually listened. Got seen and had to have antibiotics. If I had listen to the nurse I could of been a lot worse. How can someone on a end of the phone be able to tell me if something is wrong with out seeing me in person?
37	I got a phone call and they tried to prescribe antibiotics for my 2 year old without seeing her. As she is unable to verbalise her symptoms I am uncomfortable with them prescribing without seeing her and examining her.
52	There's no triage and potentially major/life threatening illnesses could be left too long. I come into contact with a lot of people who's surgeries have been running this for a much longer period - no-one is happy with it. The Practice needs to have a good long hard look at for who's benefit this new system was brought in. Not all people have a medical knowledge and could be missing vital red flags. Diagnosing over the phone has always been a dodgy way of assessing anyone and vital information can be missed by the sheer nature of being unable to physically see, touch etc.
69	... Telephone consultation is not useful to discuss a skin condition....
86	Not being able to make a general appointment with a gp. Sometimes I feel like I want to see someone in person if I'm unsure about my baby's health, rather than someone trying to diagnose her over the phone.
105 The person deciding if you need to see a doctor makes the decision without seeing the patient and doesn't appear medically qualified, people in genuine need being turned away.
106	Someone at the end of the phone assesses if your needs are urgent or not. As a result, delays seeing a doctor cause further problems.
142	... there is the loss of the face to face opportunity to share. I am concerned that people with mental health issues (talking from personal experience) will find this system a challenge with the lack of a physical appointment to discuss your mental well being and having to share this over the phone.
148	You cannot get to see a doctor when genuinely ill. Somehow a doc prescribed antibiotics without even seeing Me no proper health check. Doctors Appts should be open to everyone. Not happy with the questions the receptionist asks.
205	... I can't and don't believe I should have to describe symptoms over the phone I may miss something vital.
211	...On another occasion a Dr spoke to me and refused to see me as I was able to string a whole sentence together. 3 further attempts to see the doctor and eventually I was prescribed antibiotics for a severe chest infection and have been in bed for a while week. The doctors cannot diagnose over the phone. ...
212	... I was eventually prescribed antibiotics without even seeing anyone, which was disconcerting in this day and age.
213	Diagnosing symptoms over the phone is NOT accurate. Diagnosing symptoms over the phone is useless, as sometimes I forget which symptoms I have had, or may occur soon after I get off the phone. People react differently to different symptoms or have a higher pain threshold may not describe their symptoms correctly. Health Care professionals seem to just read information off of the NHS website, making the call a waste of time and money.
226	A phone call from a doctor who was impatient is not helpful when you are trying to explain the flexibility of an arm. I needed to be seen. I later got a diagnosis privately and am being treated for a frozen shoulder.

15 want to see their own GP for continuity of care, including:

36	... It also doesn't help seeing different Dr's each time as they don't know the history or you personally and the notes don't always tell the whole story.
39	You are offered an appointment with a GP but there's is no continuity of care, you can't choose who you see. Sometimes I would rather see the same doctor the next day without having to go through the call at 8am, wait on the phone for 20 mins to speak to someone to find out the doctor you want to see is in....
42	My son needed some tests. I called to find the results...Got a call from one of the secretaries to say that Dr X wanted to talk to me But the secretary didn't tell me that Dr X wasn't in until 2 days later, so when I called the next day I had no choice but to arrange a telephone appointment with another doctor who could see the results but didn't know what or how Dr X wanted to treat it, so was then told they had messaged Dr X to ask. I then said would she call me, ... But she wasn't really sure and just kept saying 'she should do this. So for piece of mind I will go through the system again tomorrow to get an approval with Dr X. But I've been really anxious and worried because the system is still in place for situations like this. Why can't either doctors phone us themselves to discuss results and treatment or put notes on the system so that other doctors can pass the info on. It seems like a massive waste of a lot of people's time for this sort of situation. The normal way of booking is great but I feel there should be other procedures for test results etc.
85	Difficult to see registered doctor. Appointments daily only. Cannot book to see own Dr when on duty. Appoints with nurse only online. The appointments on offer are not clear.
89	I'd like to be able to make routine appointments with my own gp, I take medication for depression and a congenital heart condition and where those 2 things are concerned I'd prefer consistency of care.
96	I would ideally like to see or speak to my own GP. I've always been the same.
132	Have tried to call every 5mins for an hour, to find the line engaged. I have then joined a queue for 20mins and then when I did speak to the navigator and asked to speak to a specific doctor. I was told the doctor wasn't in that day and to phone again in 3 days time. Following on from question 3 above, the message that is on the phone while waiting in the queue, COULD be " sorry for the delay, if you want to speak to a specific doctor, please visit the practice website to see what days they are due in that week." This would save a lot of anguish, line blocking and time wasting.
152	Return phone calls are not always made at the time stated. It is not always possible to see the doctor you have seen before about a certain matter - a few months ago this continuity was supposed to be important! I do think it should be possible to make an appointment with a specific doctor if it is about an ongoing problem.
220	...Unable to make an appointment to see a dr that you have seen previously.
236	I work full time nights and I have a medical condition that is unpredictable several times each year. I need to be seen by same GP as he knows how my medical condition behaves. It is atypical so unique to me and to have to explain it to a new person each time takes time and then for them to decide the best way forward takes time. ...
242	I tried calling for days to make an appointment with the particular doctor who is specialising in my care. It was impossible. ... I've developed a relationship with a particular doctor who understands my care and is interested in the use of my medication and my future well being. Since there's no guarantee I can continue to see my doctor on a regular basis to assess my care, there's no ongoing relationship - unsatisfactory for patient and doctor. Surely a doctor wants to be able to monitor a patient with whom they have invested time and prescribed medication??? Being unable to arrange a non urgent appointment with the doctor of my choice is completely unsettling.

5 concerned unable to see GP same day if appointments are booked up:

14	Any urgent matter that cropped up late in the day would not be seen and the system places too much trust on a patient to self diagnose. ...
133	...It will drive me to Frome hospital or Bath RUH A&E if I need to see a doctor the same day..
225	... Also what happens if you fall ill after all the daily appointments have gone?
228	The lack of the walk in clinic. Being unable to make future routine appointments online. As a man, I am now unlikely to use the doctor and more likely to use RUH Casualty services because it will still take the best part of a day but at least I know I will eventually see a doctor.
234	... I am a registered asthmatic and on average have 2 chest infections a year. Over the past 50 years I have ALWAYS been able to see a doctor within 3 hours. I am dreading the next chest infection because under this new system I won't be able to obtain the necessary steroids and antibiotics quickly. And yet the Asthma Clinic tell me that I must not delay seeing a doctor.

7 feel deterred from trying to make an appointment:

13	... The system is dangerous. It will deter those who lack confidence and those whom a call back is not suitable. It will deter early diagnosis and increase later expensive interventions.
145	... I felt that I was being talked out of seeing a doctor. ... a male I work with when had a health problem was put off going to doctors because of new system. Men seem to be a little reluctant to go to the doctors & its a shame if this is worsened.
153	At 8.05 am the phone queue was 26. This only took 30 mins but it gives no idea of how long you might be waiting. 26 in the queue would put many people off. Could be difficult if you were at work on a production line. There is an assumption that if you need to see the doctor you must already be off work.
189	... The new system is putting me off and I fear I and many other people would have to be really ill before contacting the surgery which is not ideal or good for one's health.
223	System was introduced to cut down on those people who make applies and then do not turn up. I am not one of those people. You need to target those people and implement charges for missed appointments the same as dentists do. This new appt system terrifies my elderly parents who do not wish to phone up they believe they are making a fuss. They were much happier with me making their appts online when you had a choice of which Dr at a time and day convenient to them.
228	I currently have a medical condition that the NHS website says I should get checked by my GP. I probably won't because the new system is discouraging me from doing it. I would have made an online appointment or gone to the walk in clinic in the past.
235	... The system works for individuals needing to see a GP rather than a 'sit and wait' appointment but doesn't help if symptoms are not acute. If this system had been in place a few years ago I wouldn't have bothered getting an 'on and off' pain in my ears sorted.

32 report difficulty arranging an appointment at all, including:

1	It doesn't work if I need an appointment, it is too longwinded, you can't always get a same day appointment and as I can't use the phone at work entirely useless.
20	... The last few times I have called in before 11 I have been told the system is full and there is no access to medical assistance on that same day!!!
32	[I was] advised by doctor on 111 to see my doctor when I can. This was new years eve. Still haven't got through to frome medical practice, Last time there were 26 waiting on the phone. Madness.

54	Waiting so long in the queue and not being able to make an appointment. Allow us to make appointments, not everyone can ring in during the day which is blooming annoying.
62	In REALITY you don't get phoned back at allotted time or in my personal case AT ALL - I am still waiting for a call back from Dr X re: my son (Xyrs) who was experiencing problems with asthma inhalers at the beginning of December 2017. I was given a time slot and the call never came (and still hasn't! - it is now late January) I find this totally unacceptable. I would far rather have sat at a walk in clinic with him for however long it took with a guaranteed chance of speaking to someone in the medical profession. I feel somewhat 'abandoned' and 'helpless'. We struggled on until his X clinic appointment (which I managed to arrange myself) but that was not available until some 4 weeks later. ... Please please either make the call back system actually work or implement some kind of sit and wait service again. Maybe on a ticket system like where you queue? There must be a better way because this clearly is not working.
63	It's not satisfactory at all. Sitting on the phone waiting and waitingfor up to hours ! Then to be told no appointments available. Call back tomorrow!!
66	If you have a job, a life, a telephone phobia, social anxiety, small children etc, it's almost impossible to access. Sit on the phone for ages trying to get through only to be told no appointments, call back tomorrow or not be called back by the doctor or miss the call because some life is happening. I just gave up - but i guess that's the point, eh?
70	Difficult and time consuming.
90	Cannot even see your OWN doctor when you need to.
92	I have some ongoing issues which it would be beneficial to talk to a doctor about and it doesn't seem possible to arrange. I saw a nurse about an issue recently and she emailed the doctor who prescribed some new medication (...) which didn't suit at all and I had serious stomach pains and depression. It's a bit as if the doctors are being kept at arm's length.
94	I find it very difficult to actually make an appointment which is very frustrating. It would be good to have the option of making a phone appointment or an actual appointment not have to have the phone consultation and then be told if you can have an actual appointment or not. It would be nicer to have the choice.
96	I rang during the week to be told to ring back the following week to try to get a telephone call from my GP. Done that to be told my GP had taken Tuesday off try tomorrow. Totally unacceptable to be honest.
108	Can't even get a appointment for a weeks time..Its no good if you work 8-00 6-00 at night and use your phone.
117	Spending ages waiting to get an answer to the call then another wait to speak to Nurse/Doctor being told to ring back next day to make appointment and going through it all again. ...
146	I need three normal routines app and can't get them. One is very important. ...
150	if you work full time and working during the day its impossible to get an appointment as im not able to be sat on the phone at 8am waiting to possibly be given an appointment or have someone ring me.
156	Can't get an appointment for my 8 month old. It's not urgent but she needs to be seen.
157	Waiting over an hour on the phone, on Monday to be told there were no more appointments and call next day. Tuesday I called and waited over 45 minutes to get someone tell me they would phone back. They did call back and gave me an appointment for the same day. I went up for the appointment and tried to check in at terminals and was told there no appointments for me. I went to the desk who confirmed that there was no appointment. I had a wasted trip. On the Wednesday I tried calling again at 07:50 but received an automated message that all appointments had been filled. I called Thursday and finally got an appointment.
158	We rang today at 13.30 and asked for a phone back referral to be advised that we were too late in the day and ring tomorrow morning. It appears you cannot be ill after about

	11.00 on a Monday. If you fall ill there is no way of getting past the Care Navigator we were just told there was no call back available regardless of the fact that my wife was suffering severe diarrhoea and had been told by the ring back Doctor on Friday to ring today if she still had symptoms. ...
171	Impossible to book a routine appointment. ... I'm usually taking children to school at 8 so really not good for me. When I called around 9, the appointments for that day had already gone.
186	Having to call each day, waiting on phone was nearly 3 hrs just for an appointment, just to be told there wasn't any and to call again tomorrow! ...
187	Took 3 days of trying to get through to be told there is no appointments. ...
188	Having to call each day, waiting on phone was nearly 3 hrs ..., just to be told there wasn't any and to call again tomorrow! ...
200	I've a long term health condition. Work in another area. Can't get an appointment at a convenient time since the new system. Bring the old system back?
208	... When dialled the service gives automated reply 'there are no appointments available today, try again tomorrow!' ... If one visits the surgery, desk staff cannot provide an appointment, one has to go away and phone in! Asked for surgery managers name and direct line, refused both by desk staff! Asked if i could get an appointment to see my registered doctor, told he doesnt have any appointments available at any time!? ...
217	Calling continually and an automated answer telling you the service is busy please call later, tried 4 times. Had to go down to practice. Finally talk to someone on the phone and was not listened to and passed to prescriptions when I wanted an appointment. ...
220	Unable to book an appointment, it is very difficult to see a dr or await a call back whilst working especially if you don't work locally. It was a lot easier to make an appointment online to fit in with work or drop in and sit and wait. This is a very time consuming process waiting to get through on the telephones early than waiting a call back, then possibly seeing a dr that day. Unable to make an appointment to see a dr that you have seen previously.
224	I was refused an appointment with the XX specialist nurse and was told I HAD to see a nurse practitioner first and she would decide if I needed to see <i>her</i> . <i>She</i> eventually told me that was not the case.
231	Impossible to get an appointment, fail to call back... It used to be a great surgery in my opinion, it is now failing to provide even a minimal service.
238	... often the doctor refuses to see me face to face, i am only allowed to talk to the doctor for 2 minutes, 3 doctors have told me to ring back to talk to another doctor as they cant help me, ...
247	Unable to see a doctor when in considerable pain with a back/hip injury. Was sent for X-ray first which took a week for appointment then several days for result. Then sent for physio which took another 2 weeks till I got appointment. Very disgusted as unable to even have a face to face consultation in the beginning. As explained in '2'. Being unable to arrange a non urgent appointment with the doctor of my choice is completely unsettling. I cannot spend three mornings in a row trying to get a call answered in the mere hope of arranging an appointment. It's time wasting and upsetting calling and recalling. Very disgusted the way I was not treated at my age of 73 when I now need medical help. We are consistently told by media to see doctor if we have medical concerns but unable to see a doctor.

18 want the online booking system for appointments reinstated, including:

6	work shift work...sooner just book online weeks in advance for non urgent appointments.
25	I think this works well for urgent care issues, but you should still be able to make routine appointments in advance or online.
60	It would be helpful to be able to make non urgent future doctors appointments online as you could in the past.
64	The fact you have to tell a 'care navigator' what your problem is, personally I have very bad anxiety, ..., where as before I could go online and make an appointment to see my doctor, who knew all my issues.
118	Reintroducing online booking for routine or non-urgent appointments would help relieve some of the pressure the system must be under.
126	Can no longer book a regular check up appointment online. I just feel if it's not an emergency you should be able to book an appointment for later in the week or even month.
140	Not convenient for the working man. I could pick and choose online when I wanted to see a doctor when I'm working away or not. Ridiculous new system. ... go back to the online system. Much more sensible and convenient. Can see push doctor app more appealing now than being "number 20 in the queue". Pathetic.
147	... Would be easier to still have online booking for routine appointments for those of us that have to work for a living.
155	... Not being able to book an appointment online or for a different day or week than the day you've rang.
166	... I can't take a same day appointment as I work. I need to be able to book in advance. Or we need to option to be able to do this online....
182	Not being able to book appointment for doctor online having too have a call from doctor not just given a appointment right away. I am heard of hearing and can't hear well on to the phone. Please go back to old system asap
195	Can we go back to the old system please. It was so good being able to book online.
206	... inability to make an appointment through the website despite online activity being the modern medium
211	... It is not possible to book phone slots online. I have tried and could only book nurse routine appointments. Not what I needed. ...
228	I don't find any aspect of the new system satisfactory. I miss being able to make online appointments ...
235	Not suitable if you need a routine appointment and want to plan ahead for a day off or for an early morning appointment before work. Online appointments were ideal for this as I work during the GP telephone hours and not allowed my phone on my person for Safeguarding reasons. ...
246	Unable to book advance dates to suit/telephone line engaged for long periods then long delays in answering telephone/no idea of where one is in the queue. ...removed. Online booking needs looking into. ... Makes life difficult...
250	Can't make appointments for the future! Work away for my job and need to be able to see a doctor if needed. The old system of a walk in clinic for emergency appt was brilliant...

4 report problems for children not being able to see a GP:

1	From the experience of trying to get an appointment for my autistic son, when we need but can't get a specific time, and from my experience as a man who works full time, I suggest that the arrangements may not be compliant with equalities legislation.
146	Everything its awful and so dangerous my child ended up in hospital as couldn't be seen and was very poorly.
156	Can't get an appointment for my 8 month old. It's not urgent but she needs to be seen.

159	All of it. Not having a walk-in clinic, especially for children and the elderly is ludicrous in my opinion. Our baby had a rash that we wanted looking at - we were told to call the number and would get an appointment in a couple of weeks. If it hadn't been for my wife flat-out refusing to leave without being seen we could have had a very poorly child. What if our suspicions had been correct and it was meningitis or something? Absolutely disgusting.
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28 want a walk-in clinic reinstated:

17	... there was nothing wrong with the walk in system...
48	I work full time and if my children are not well and I feel they need to see the dr we would attend the walk in clinic, now I ring wait ages tell someone I need to see a dr, dr then rings me at time convenient for them, not me, only to tell me I need to see a dr. I think they should have this for the week and open the walk in clinic for the weekend.
61	Hard to attend an appointment without forward planning. Easier to use walk in on a day off and book an appointment for when I know I can make it/ book time off.
73	...The walk in centre was extremely useful.
76	...Bring back walk in clinic, not everyone can afford house phone /internet and afford to wait on mobile whilst in a queue especially those on very low income seems to discriminate towards these people saying they can't make an appointment at the practice in person.
88	It's all too much effort. I prefer to go straight in to the walk in clinic.
99	It is much easier to just turn up after work or school etc rather than wait for a call which I can't make when at work. The old system was great. Why change what works?
105	... I think it would be better if there was a walk in triage system where nurses could see potential patients to give advice on whether a doctors appointment is needed rather than over the phone. Has the practice considered video calls to patients like the push doctor system? It would save having waiting rooms full of sick people spreading germs.
108	... Being back walk in one at lease you got to see someone.
112	You can't go to walk in anymore, so if you need to see someone your stuck with wasting a whole day for a phone call and then getting to the surgery anyway or I imagine a lot of people are wasting the time of a and e departments instead.
116	... The walk-in clinic was also useful. Perhaps what we really need is a mixture of all three systems.
117	... Think I would prefer to sit in waiting room for face to face instead of diagnosed over phone.
125	The walk-in system was simple and straightforward. If I was ill, I went to see someone about it, when I needed it. If I was worried, I knew I'd be able to speak to someone in person (Not the phone). It was convenient, even if having to wait an hour to be seen. The new system has worse waiting times. Calling and talking to a stranger is not as nice as meeting a receptionist. The system falls down late in the afternoon because you have to call back the next morning. The act of being triaged is insulting and patronising, if you are ill. You know when you need medical help instantly.
138	... closure of the walk in clinic is stupid when you have poorly children who need to be seen or anyone in that case, some people cannot wait until the afternoon for a phone call and possibly not even an appointment.

163	I was quite happy with the sit and wait system as you could see a Doctor if you requested. It seems to me to be a long winded way to see a Doctor .Please revert back to the old system.
178	I miss the walk in. It is easy to miss calls and I liked the convenience of going outside working hours. I did not mind waiting, it was good to know that you were certain to see someone if you turned up.
184 I work in Bristol ... As a driver ... The walk in clinic was perfect for myself or people in my position. As you could just walk in and yes you could be waiting for a while but you get to see a doctor then go onto work.
187	... with "drop in" you could visit around working hours.
191	Please revert to drop in system. What was so wrong with it? I really thought it was such a great idea. Now I am thinking to change surgery.
202	...Drop in clinic and waiting was far more convenient for some people ...
215	... Should not have got rid of the walk-in centre. Go back to the old system and get more doctors!
217	Can't think of any advantages. If I am suddenly ill next week there is no guarantee my GP will be available, so the walk-in clinic would have been easier.
227	I normally make an appointment for my annual review of medication 2-3 weeks in advance and can easily plan my day. ...This means a simple, non urgent check up takes a whole day of my time. The previous system worked well. Appointments were available with own GP for ongoing regular treatment and the walk-in clinic dealt with unexpected ailments. A GP was available if a nurse needed more advice. The waiting time was often not more than 30 mins, better than a whole day on the new system.
228	I don't find any aspect of the new system satisfactory. I miss... most importantly, the walk in clinic; which I have used a number of times in the past.
230	It was easier as a walk in clinic.
236	I work full time nights and I have a medical condition that is unpredictable several times each year. I need to be seen by same GP as he knows how my medical condition behaves. ...Sleep has to be prioritised when working nights. The walk -in clinic was perfect for me as I could go there when my night shift finished, wait approx an hour and be seen by the correct individual. I only reduced my sleep for that day by 1-2 hours.
244	Bring back the old system...500% better than what is in place before. If you really felt you needed to see a doctor or nurse on the same day and were happy to sit and wait that was great. So much so I used to rave to my friends and colleagues how amazing our surgery was. NOT ANYMORE !!
250	... Work away for my job and need to be able to see a doctor if needed. The old system of a walk in clinic for emergency appt was brilliant

14 concerned about divulging personal information to Care Navigators:

17	... I don't think anyone should be expected to give personal medical information to UN qualified receptionists. A doctor has to undergo many years of training. In order to go into General practice. This is a very poor thought out system for Frome.
32	... I don't want to discuss my medical concerns with a care coordinator and then again with a GP over the phone. I find this interaction unhelpful. ...
50	Having to explain what's wrong to a non medical person. I tried to get an appointment with my gp. I was told my doctor was on leave and to call back 2 days later and I would have to repeat the whole process again.
61	Don't like having to divulge information to a receptionist for triage...
62	... I am not 100% confident in sharing personal information via a call centre. Some matters can be embarrassing. Frome is a small place and I think we all probably know someone who works at the practice. No disrespect to the call centre staff at all, but I'd like

	to know who I was telling my private matters too! It's rather off-putting. Sometimes telling the GP is hard enough!
64	The fact you have to tell a 'care navigator' what your problem is, personally I have very bad anxiety, so after waiting on the phone for goodness knows how long, and then having to explain my problem, especially if it's related to my mental health, adds to my anxiety, where as before I could go online and make an appointment to see my doctor, who knew all my issues.
139	... I do feel uncomfortable divulging personal info over the phone to a 'care navigator'. They say it's confidential but how do we know that? Drs agree to patient confidentiality; what guarantees do we have that care navigators do the same? I am concerned about divulging personal info to care navigators.
158	... I work in an open plan office and cannot have a private conversation regarding my health if I do not know when to expect the call. ... The system needs to allow for call backs to be booked at an agreed time to be able to plan to take the call in privacy and with a good signal. I do not like having to discuss my medical issues with people who have not taken the hypocratic oath. It is not ethical to require me to discuss such matters in detail with a Care Navigator who will then decide if I can speak with a doctor.
167	..., I DREAD having to talk about my medical history with someone on the phone.
195	...People with mental health problems may be too scared or reluctant to tell a receptionist what the reason for their call is..I don't want to have to tell a faceless person on the phone what my medical problems are!
214	... This system takes away any privacy you are entitled to when speaking to a doctor, especially if you have to take a call whilst at work.
217	... Do not like discussing personal case with someone who is not a qualified GP and then they are making a decision if I am ill enough to see or speak to a GP, it will be very difficult to get pass these care navigators who are just re-named receptionists who are requesting private and confidential information.
236	I do not wish to speak to a care navigator and GP while I am at work....Confidentiality issues arise whilst waiting for a GP to call me back....

10 report problems with mental health, including anxiety:

31	... I am worried about my mental health so I would like a planned appointment. I can manage to work while I wait for an appointment.
175	Having to be 'judged' worthy enough to get an actual face to face appointment is derogatory and degrading. I am in serious need of mental health help and to be told over the phone that there's not a lot that can be offered was very upsetting. It takes a lot for me to make the first step to get help and to be met with this advise was a real knock back.
177	... Having to explain the need for an appointment in the phone to someone who isn't a doctor is not easy and for mental health issues can be a dealbreaker. Someone who is struggling anyway is not going to be able to face this easily and will be put off seeing the doctor. Some very serious conditions will be missed as a result of not seeing a doctor and getting treatment. ... I actually found myself suffering anxiety and losing sleep worrying about ... how I wouldn't be able to get a doctors appointment should I feel the need. ...
192	My husband has mental health issues and is anxious to make a call. So this system has been awful in that respect. For people like him and other medicate exceptions should be able to book an appointment and been seen. I am barely able to support him as his wife due to confidentiality- which of course I understand. It seems ludicrous to not be able to book a regular appointment for him though.
195	Today I rang up(Friday) in a lot of pain to be told that all appointments have now gone for the day and I will have to wait until Monday.What if they have all gone on Monday too? I feel very distressed.It took a lot for me to make the call because I suffer from extreme social anxiety and absolutely hate making phone calls.Now I feel that it will in future be

	hopeless trying to see a doctor because this new service is designed to try and prevent you getting an appointment. I feel my health will suffer and that of my daughter aswell. People with mental health problems may be too scared or reluctant to tell a receptionist what the reason for their call is....
202	... People with anxiety struggle to make personal phone calls and may fail to seek help as a result. ...
205	... I've had genuine health problems that I would not have been treated for as this service stands at the moment I would not have been able to describe my symptoms not would I have wanted to to a person on the phone who was not a doctor it's an uncomfortable thing to do also in the past to get my husband to even go to a doctor was a challenge and he absolutely would not phone and discuss on the phone his issues,it's a very poorly thought out system I never phone unless it's got to a point where I really need to but it's so difficult now. BAD SYSTEM. ...
207	If you want to pre book an appointment is bad - especially if wanting to discuss mental health concerns and arrange support or need more time to discuss. ...
229	I tried all day to just get connect and in the queue to talk to someone. I then had to wait for the male doctor to call me. Once on the call I needed to attended an appt because I had found a lump in my breast. However to book an appt with a lady doctor which I would have preferred I would have had to go through the system again and hope a lady doctor called me back. Ridiculous waste of my time. I suffer from health anxieties and this DID NOT HELP WITH MY STRESS AND WORRY LEVELS.
238	... waiting for doctor to ring makes me very anxious especially when they are very late or dont call at all, often the doctor refuses to see me face to face, ...

2 report difficulties having to use the 'phone with hearing difficulties:

182	Not being able to book appointment for doctor online having too have a call from doctor not just given a appointment right away. I am heard of hearing and can't hear well on to the phone. Please go back to old system asap
221	... Not good for the elderly or hard of hearing to have to call rather than sit and wait.

26 report a combination of issues or other issues, including:

2	It is hard to keep the phone free for the dr to ring you back. It must be very hard when you are at work as not everyone has a job with a phone on their desk. You can't plan to see a dr of your choice & you spend just as long at home waiting to go to the surgery as you would at the walking clinic. You can't plan ahead to go to see a dr. It is sometimes hard on the phone to explain why you wish to see a dr. It must be very hard for parents with children especially if a child isn't well when you meet them from school. It must be hard to arrange transport at a certain time if you don't have much time to get to your appointment i.e. taxi, bus, if you don't drive as when you knew what time your appointment was you could arrange transport in advance.
3	The system is not described accurately on the medical centre website (the video does not mention the 8am 'rush' to call GP's) I believe the triage system actively discourages people from visiting the medical centre. What is more I believe there is scope for genuine medical scenarios to be overlooked. The fact that this system was implemented without consultation with the community.
4	...It discriminates against working people, as they can't plan ahead. The arrangements for fasting blood tests are unsatisfactory, because the early morning appointments have been abolished and you can't get a definite time to be seen. I saw nothing wrong with the previous system. ... The online booking system was modern and needed much less manpower....

14	... Some elderly are inclined to down play problems that may be apparent on examination. Medical Centre trying to make the best of a bad job brought about by recent governments ignoring issues of funding and staff shortages, but not convinced this is the answer.
58	... telephone hold system cuts you off all the time. Phone handlers rude and dismissive.
87	A lack of flexibility for busy people. I was told ... that it works because there are fewer missed appointments and more people are seen. That misses the point its not a numbers game its about all patients having access to services which in this system busy people don't have the same access as those who are more flexible.
95	The entire thing, phone queue times are greatly increased, then the wait for a call then an appointment if you are lucky meaning an entire day is taken up rather than at worst a few hours at the drop in. Also if you want to make an appointment and don't mind waiting a few weeks this is now much harder to do
96	I just can't think of anything positive to say about the new system. It's rubbish. And will end up in total disaster.
111	Nothing is good about the new appointment system.
124	It's almost impossible to get as far as the care investigated and the only time I saw the doctor I had to wait all day for a call. What happens if you are working eg a teacher. You also can't see your own doctor.
134	Having to ring up and wait in the system for a GP to ring you back. Where as the GP could be seeing a patient in that time . this system would be ok for the walk-in clinic .I like to make my own appointment on line when it is convenient to me .
143	It works brilliantly sometimes and appallingly at others. I've used it four times - once wonderful, once okay, once not so good and once devastating! How do you quantify results like that? With more consideration and a better assessment of patients' needs it could work well but I would really like to know the doctors and nurses view of the system. Is it making things any easier for them or more difficult?
144	We have a wonderful new modern facility, but still can't get to see a doctor.
154	None whatsoever. I am fed up with ringing up and having to hang on the phone while being told "Your call is important to us." (or something like it) and/or "You are number 24 in the queue.". The feeling that I get that the doctors are recoiling in horror at the prospect of actually having to talk face to face with these horrible objects called patients.
159	The whole idea is pointless - we already have this system via the non-emergency telephone number.
172	I phoned twice about the same problem with one of my eyes. The first 'health nurse' [if that's what they are called] said she'd get a doctor to phone me that afternoon. However, I had to be out, so we agreed I would phone the next day. The second person I spoke to did not say she'd get a doctor to phone, but advised me to see a pharmacist, who was unable to help because you need lights and proper equipment to examine an eye. In other words, I'm not sure the new screening system is working well enough.
179	I do appreciate that they have had to do this due to funding issues.
191	It takes a whole day, if not more, to get to talk/see a doctor when it could have take less than one hour. It's a lot of waiting, not knowing, and uncertainty. With people who have rigid set jobs this is awfully difficult. And the doctor really seemed very disinterested!
194	Sadly I have also found waiting times when given an appointment can be quite long.
197	The fact you can not get an appointment unless you are lucky enough to be first in line. AND that you have to wait by your phone like you have no life for the doctor to call and let it ring for about a second and a half. And if you are lucky enough to have super speedy answering skill. Then you may be seen. But not very likely that you will after all the ordeal. Please go back to the old and very efficient system that was previously in place.
207	Would rather have seen the money spent on the building spent on more GPs / nurses. Often seems lots of empty rooms.... I would be surprised if more than 50% of the rooms are used at one time and lots of money wasted on heating and lighting empty spaces.

208	The practice says it has a greater number of doctors than when at Park Road, looking at the list of doctors on the Practice web site it appears that none work more than 3 days a week? As surgery is working '9-5 monday to friday' why cant the doctors work 40 hour weeks like most people do, the response time and attention would be better for patients?!
214	... Cannot make an appointment at the health centre...
230	... Firstly you have to ring up and wait in a long queue, explain your symptoms then you are called back, then hopefully you get to see someone. There is not only the uncertainty of wether you will see a gp or not but a long drawn out situation. It's bad enough if you are home but if you are at work like I am i don't think by company would appreciate me spending God knows how long trying to make an appointment. Another thought I had was it must be very difficult for the elderly to deal with. I have an elderly mother who is 83years old and she was very confused when she wanted to make an appointment for a blood pressure check up. In fact my wife and I were so upset we have changed medical centre. ...this is not the answer. There has to be an easier way. I believe there are going to be serious consequence to people's health.

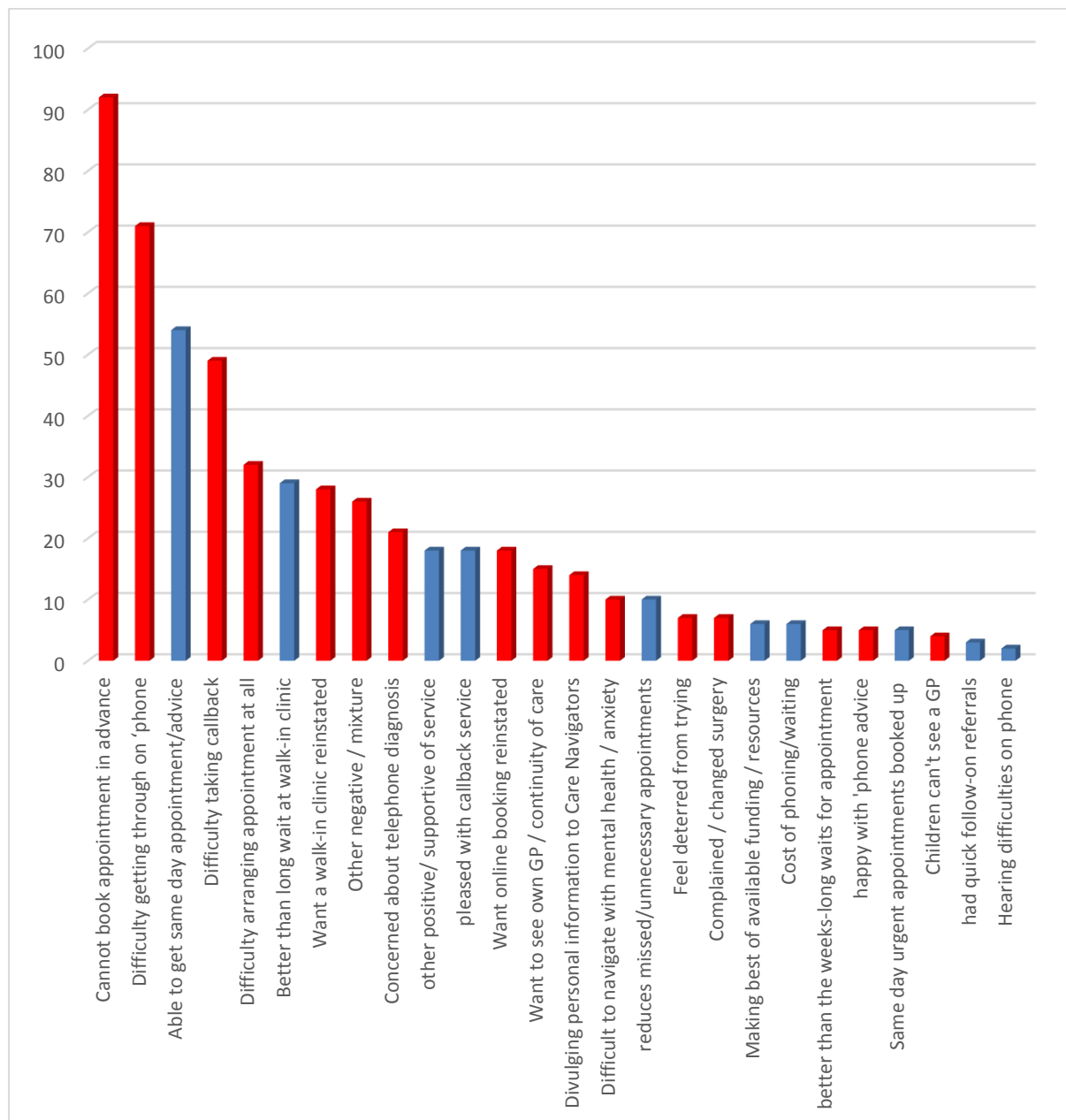
7 have made complaints or changed surgery, including:

32	... I have decided to change practice.
122	I was very badly let down on 3 counts in one day, so I complained by email. Got a Doctor ring me with apology, also a letter of apology...
151	It's terrible - we are looking at other practices.
191	... Now I am thinking to change surgery.
199	If this is not changed back, I will be looking to leave this practice.
230	... In fact my wife and I were so upset we have changed medical centre.

DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS ARISING

A clear majority of people responding to the survey (66%) stated they are 'unsatisfied / very unsatisfied' with the new appointments system. A minority find the system either 'satisfactory / very satisfactory' (12%) or 'neutral / partly satisfied and partly unsatisfied' (20%).

The survey produced a mixture of comments and issues, as seen below (red = negative comments / reasons why unsatisfactory, blue = positive comments / reasons why satisfactory).



The issues arising can be summarised as:

Satisfied customers:

- 54 people referred to being able to get a same day appointment or advice
- 29 stated it is better than waiting a long time in the walk in clinic
- 16 people stated they were pleased with the callback service
- 10 thought it would reduce unnecessary or missed appointments
- 5 are happy to speak to a GP instead of making an appointment
- 5 referred to long waits for an appointment in the past
- 3 stated they have been able to get quick follow-on referrals
- 18 other generally positive/supportive comments
- 6 referred to the Practice making best use of available NHS funding and resources.

These are positive messages for Frome Medical Practice. The Practice's stated reasons for introducing the new system in November 2017 include:

- Making it easier to book urgent appointments and reducing waiting times;
- Reducing missed GP appointments;
- Reducing unnecessary GP appointments;
- Making best use of limited resources.

Urgent same day appointments, and reducing waiting times

The main reason why respondents find the new system satisfactory is that those patients have found it easier to make a same day appointment with a GP than before, including for urgent appointments. Related to this is people who prefer this to previous times when there has been a wait of days or weeks for a booked appointment, and alternatively waiting in the walk-in clinic for up to a few hours. Some also say they prefer waiting at home for a callback rather than waiting with other people in the walk in clinic, where there was some inevitable risk of being exposed to other patients' conditions. Questions for the Practice are:

Q1: How effective has the new system been in making same day urgent appointments available, in numbers per month?

Unnecessary appointments:

'Unnecessary' appointments are where a patient asks for a GP appointment but may be better served by an appointment with another health professional, telephone advice, a visit to the pharmacy, or self-care. It is understood that the number of 'unnecessary' GP appointments has been reduced significantly under the new system. It is understood that a high proportion of patients waiting at the walk in clinic did not need to be seen by a GP. Patients seeking an appointment are now unable to book time with a GP until they have explained their needs to a Care Navigator, who decides if they will have a GP appointment. Questions for the Practice are:

Q2: To what extent and how has the new system reduced unnecessary appointments – in numbers per month, and as a proportion of appointments booked? How has this made more appointments available for patients?

Missed appointments:

One aim of the new system was to reduce the number of missed appointments, to 'free up' appointments in the system for patients to attend. The number of missed (or 'Did No Attend' or 'DNA') appointments before November 2017 has been variously quoted by the Practice as at most 600 – 800 a month. The number of DNAs in January 2018 (published online by the Practice in 'performance data') was 436 out of 13,561 booked appointments (3.2%) in January 2018. The reasons behind a decrease is unclear but may relate to patients being more likely to either forget about or no longer need an appointment if it was made several days or weeks ago. Questions for the Practice are:

Q3: To what extent and how has the new system reduced missed appointments – in numbers per month, and as a proportion of appointments booked? How has this made more appointments available for other patients?

Funding, resources, and the winter flu season:

Several people referred to the issues of NHS funding and the national and local shortage of GPs.

Primary health care, including General Practitioner services, is managed and funded through the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Somerset CCG's Annual Report 2016-17 (<http://www.somersetccg.nhs.uk/publications/annual-report/>) gives some indication of the funding and staffing issues surrounding GP services:

- The national plan known as the 'Five Year Forward View', sets out the priorities for the NHS, and to be successful this will need to reduce demand for health care by preventing ill health and promoting healthy lifestyles, improve the quality and effectiveness of local health services with more care being delivered in the community or the patient's own home, and address a predicted funding deficit which could amount to over £600 million by 2020 if we do nothing different. In East Mendip the introduction of 'Health Connectors' (including at Frome Medical Practice) is providing people living with chronic ill health with a powerful way to network and support each other, also resulting in fewer admissions to hospital.
- Somerset CCG has an annual budget of £750 million, in 2016/17 it had a budget deficit of approximately £3 million, largely caused by the increased number of patients being seen and treated at Somerset's two district hospitals. Somerset CCG faces a financial challenge of £15 million in the coming financial year 2017/18.
- *"Across the whole of the UK, primary care is experiencing severe workforce pressures. In Somerset this is certainly true and is characterised for example by significant reductions in the total number of GP and practice nurses over the last five years as more people have left the profession or left the county than have joined. ... At present there are around 400 individual GPs in Somerset who account for approximately 330 whole time equivalent staff. This represents a loss of at least 30 GPs in the last 12 months alone and the CCG anticipates there will be a net reduction of GPs in Somerset for at least each of the next five years. ... Workforce pressures within individual practices can vary considerably."*

Pressures of funding, and a shortage of GPs both locally and nationally will inevitably limit the numbers of GP appointments available to patients, and provides the environment in which Frome Medical Practice and other surgeries work.

A report, Health and Social Care: Delivering a Secure Funding Future, was commissioned by the Liberal Democrats and will form the blueprint of the Lib Dems' ongoing healthcare policy (see <https://www.libdems.org.uk/health-social-care-report>). The panel, which includes former chief executives of NHS England, the Royal College of Nursing, and the Patients Association, concluded that the NHS in England needs a real terms funding increase of £4bn in 2018-19 and further real terms increases of £2.5bn in each of the following two years. In the short-term, the NHS funding gap could be bridged by an income tax increase. The Lib Dems have been calling for a 1% rise in income tax to help fund the NHS. Longer-term, health and care funding should be brought together in a single ring-fenced tax to replace National Insurance, the report argues.

The Kings Fund reports that the Department of Health's budget for 2017/18 is £124.7bn a year (see <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/nhs-in-a-nutshell/nhs-budget>), and will grow by 1.2% in real terms between 2009/10 and 2020/21. But "This is far below the long-term average increases in health spending of approximately 4 per cent a year (above inflation) since the NHS was established and the rate of increase needed based on projections by the Office of Budget Responsibility (4.3 per cent a year).

Funding pressures are also noted by Dr Sarah Woolaston, Conservative MP and Chair of UK Parliament Health Committee, at <http://www.drSarah.org.uk/sarah's-blog/> in January 2018: *"There is nothing new about winter pressures in the NHS. What has changed is that those pressures have become relentless, extending year round into traditionally quieter months but deepening in intensity over the winter. ... Since 2010, total health spending has risen by an average of just over 1% per year. This is far lower than the long term average increase of around 4% and comes at a time of extraordinary rise in demand and the costs of drugs and technologies...."*

This leads to questions for Frome Medical Practice, Somerset CCG, our local councils and MP:

Q4: To what extent has the winter flu season affected GP appointments system, increasing demand for GP appointments, and reducing the availability of GPs (as a number have been off sick), and over what period of time? Could any more have been done to plan for this?

Q5: To what extent is the number of available GP appointments each day or month being limited by the available funding from NHS England via Somerset CCG, and by the shortage of GPs? How many more GP appointments would be available if there was no national or local 'shortage' of GPs, and if funding was keeping pace with demand?

Q6: Is the Practice aware of how the MP for Somerton & Frome (David Warburton) and Somerset County Council (which hosts the Health and Wellbeing Board) have lobbied Government to address both the GP shortage and NHS funding which is not keeping pace with demand? What further action should they and others take?

Unsatisfied customers

- 92 people report difficulties with, or complain about, having to be seen the same day, and not being able to book appointment in advance
- 71 people report difficulties getting through on the 'phone
- 49 people report problems taking a callback (4 report not getting the promised callback)
- 32 report difficulty arranging an appointment at all
- 28 want a walk-in clinic reinstated
- 21 concerned about telephone call diagnoses
- 18 want the online booking system for appointments in advance reinstated
- 15 want to see their own GP for continuity of care
- 14 concerned about divulging personal information to Care Navigators
- 10 report difficulties with mental health, including anxiety
- 7 feel deterred from trying to make an appointment
- 7 have made complaints or changed surgery
- 6 people are concerned about the cost of phoning and waiting
- 5 concerned unable to see GP same day if appointments are booked up
- 4 report problems for children not being able to see GP
- 2 report difficulties having to use the 'phone with hearing difficulties
- 26 report a combination of issues or other issues

The above issues detailed in the responses above lead to a number of questions for Frome Medical Practice:

Difficulties getting through on the telephone, and cost of phoning

It is understood that the Practice is procuring more telephone lines, so that calls in to the Care Navigators can be answered more quickly. It is hoped that this will reduce the deterrence effect of a long waiting time, leading to patients getting through first time after a shorter wait, rather than making several calls.

Q7: When will the additional 'phone lines be available? How will this reduce telephone waiting times (and costs to patients), from the average and maximum waiting times currently experienced?

Q8: Will additional telephone lines also mean that the available same day appointments are booked up more quickly in the mornings?

Q9: Is it possible to inform callers of the likely waiting time when in a phone queue (in place of the 'place in the queue' which was recently removed)?

Difficulties with same day appointments and callbacks

Q10: Many people who work and need to arrange an appointment, and are not ill enough to be off sick, or the appointment is 'routine', are clearly concerned about (1) informing their employers they need to take time out of work to take a callback from the doctors (being concerned about confidentiality on private health issues), (2) not being available on the 'phone (and not being contactable by phone at all in some jobs) to be contacted by 'phone during the same day as their initial call, (3) finding a quiet private space in which to take a

callback from a Nurse Practitioner or GP. How can the needs of these busy working people who have difficulties with taking callback be addressed?

Q11: How can employees gain better understanding and flexibility from employers to allow them to take time out from work to receive an arranged callback?

It is also understood that when a patient receives a callback and it is agreed they need to see a GP, they are generally asked to attend an appointment the same day, generally the afternoon, even if they do not need the appointment urgently and would prefer to be seen at a later date as they have difficulty coming in the same day.

Q12: If people have difficulty taking time off work, or work distant from Frome and have difficulty getting to the Practice at short notice, it is understood that these patients are generally asked to phone in on a day when they are available, and need to go through the system again. Is this correct?

Q13: Is it necessary to see all patients the same day as they call in with a problem, even if the issue is not urgent and they have difficulty coming in the same day?

Q14: How can the needs of busy working people who have difficulties arranging time off work or other commitments to attend a same day appointment in the afternoon be addressed?

Q15: Can appointments be arranged for the next day or later the same week if that is more convenient for the patient?

Q16: Evening and weekend GP appointments may be more convenient for working people. Are evening appointments the same day available? When will weekend appointments be rolled out, as promoted by the NHS by 2020?

Q17: A few patients have stated that the arranged callback phone call has not been made. Can FMP reassure patients that every effort is always made to call patients back on the agreed number at the agreed time, and any complaints will be addressed.

Difficulties arranging appointments, concerns that same day urgent appointments are booked up, and feeling deterred from calling

The main issue here seems to be that appointments get booked up at some point every day, so people calling in after a certain time are left disappointed and unable to book an appointment that day, and have to call back another day and try again. If this happens after a long 'phone wait, it will add to people's frustration, particularly for urgent issues.

Q18: Could the system be modified so that people who call up after same day appointments are booked up, are able to make an appointment for another day, rather than requiring people to call back another day?

Q19: Can the Practice assure people that patients with urgent medical needs can always be seen by a GP or other suitable medical professional on the day if they need to be, even if same day appointments are 'booked up' on the phone system? How can patients be reassured that this is the case, and informed of how to request this?

A walk-in clinic and online booking

Q20: Can a form of walk-in clinic be reinstated, as some patients are requesting, as this ensures people are seen the same day?

Q21: Can direct online booking of appointments be reinstated, as some patients are requesting?

Telephone diagnosis

Some patients are concerned that the introduction of telephone consultations with a Care Navigator and GPs brings with it the risk that some conditions will be missed or wrongly diagnosed, due to the absence of visual cues and a lack of physical examination, and the reliance on patients describing their own symptoms accurately.

Q22: Can the Practice explain the risks as well as benefits of this aspect of the system, and explain how these risks to patients are minimised?

Q23: Has the Practice considered the use of secure online video consultations (such as is offered by Push Doctor app, suggested by one person responding to the survey) which could reintroduce visual cues in place of telephone consultations where the patient has a suitable mobile phone or tablet?

Continuity of care from own registered GP

The availability of named GPs each day is now shown clearly on the front page of the Practice's website <https://www.fromemedicalpractice.co.uk/> so patients who know this and have access to the internet will be able to call in to see their registered GP on a particular day. However, some patients are unhappy that they need to see their registered GP for particular medical reasons (or for general continuity) and have difficulty doing so, as appointments cannot be made in advance, and many GPs are part time and not available on the day they try and make an appointment.

Q24: Can it be possible for patients with a specific need to make an appointment with a specific GP in advance? If not, what are the implications?

Divulging personal information to Care Navigators, issues with mental health

Some patients are concerned about divulging personal information to Care Navigators rather than GPs. Some patients have difficulties with mental health, including anxiety, and report feeling more stressed by the new appointment system as they may need to talk on the phone and describe their symptoms more than once.

Q25: Can the Practice reassure patients that all information discussed with Care Navigators is treated in the strictest confidence, as it would be if they were talking to their GP?

Q26: If a patient has a mental health issue which prevents them feeling able to discuss their symptoms properly with a Care Navigator, and deters them from trying to make an appointment in this way, is it possible to allow them to talk to a GP without doing so? How else can people with mental health issues, including anxiety, arrange an appointment in a less stressful way?

Hearing difficulties

A small number of people have stated they have hearing difficulties and find the telephone based appointment system difficult to use.

Q27: How can patients with hearing difficulties, who have problems using the telephone, make an appointment?

Children's needs

Some people have reported particular problems with difficulties having their children be seen urgently by a GP.

Q28: How can the parents in the cases included in this report be reassured and have their needs met in future?

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that:

1. Frome Medical Practice reviews the responses from patients responding to this survey.
2. Frome Medical Practice considers and responds to the 28 questions above.
3. Frome Medical Practice undertakes and publicises short term actions and improvements to the system to respond to the issues raised in the survey.
4. Frome Medical Practice makes a commitment to undertaking a full review of the appointments system and options to address issues raised in this survey, as soon as practicable. This should involve a survey of patients, engagement with patients and the wider community, including through the Patient Participation Group. This should seek and take account of the experiences of as many patients as possible, and include publication of a report on its website.
5. Somerset CCG, Somerset County Council and the MP for Somerton & Frome (David Warburton) should lobby the Government to address both the GP shortage and NHS funding not keeping pace with demand.
6. Frome Town Council, Mendip District Council, Somerset County Council and Somerset Healthwatch should note this report, support efforts by Frome Medical Practice to address the issues arising, and support a campaign to address the GP shortage and to increase NHS funding in line with demand.

Adam Boyden and Drew Gardner, 22 February 2018