

When you need to see a Doctor

GP Practice Patient Engagement

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January 2014



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## **Introduction**

Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group (GCCG) is working effectively with GP practices to strengthen patient engagement and develop a more systematic approach to gaining patient views. This enables the GCCG to collate the themes identified by patients which informs the commissioning priorities. Asking the views of a cross section of patients also helps the CCG to gain a deeper insight into patient experience.

With the support of the GCCG Board Practice Manager, 33 practices have agreed to participate. Each practice is requested to engage 10 patients and ask prepared questions which had been identified as potential issues for patients in Gateshead. The questions are also circulated as a survey to patients who have given email contact details. This process is repeated 4 times a year.

This report contains the findings from 27 practices who took part completing and returning a prepared spreadsheet. The practices engaged a total of 270 patients.

The responses from the patients provide a 'snap shot' of patient views from GP practices in Gateshead.

The aim of the current survey is to identify patient behaviour when a patient requires to be seen urgently.

## **Methodology**

Gateshead GP practices agreed to ask 10 patients 4 prepared questions which had been identified as key issues for Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group.

The practice is able to use their preferred methods to ask patients the questions, methods agreed include one to one patient interview, request for patient to complete of paper copy of questionnaire and hand it in at the surgery, or take in part in a group discussion.

All patients who had registered email details with the practice received a link to 'Survey Monkey' which included the questions for completion by the patient.

The information was circulated to practices by the Practice Manager on the CCG board who circulated an email to all practices on behalf of the GCCG.

## **Survey Questions**

The questions for patients in this survey included:

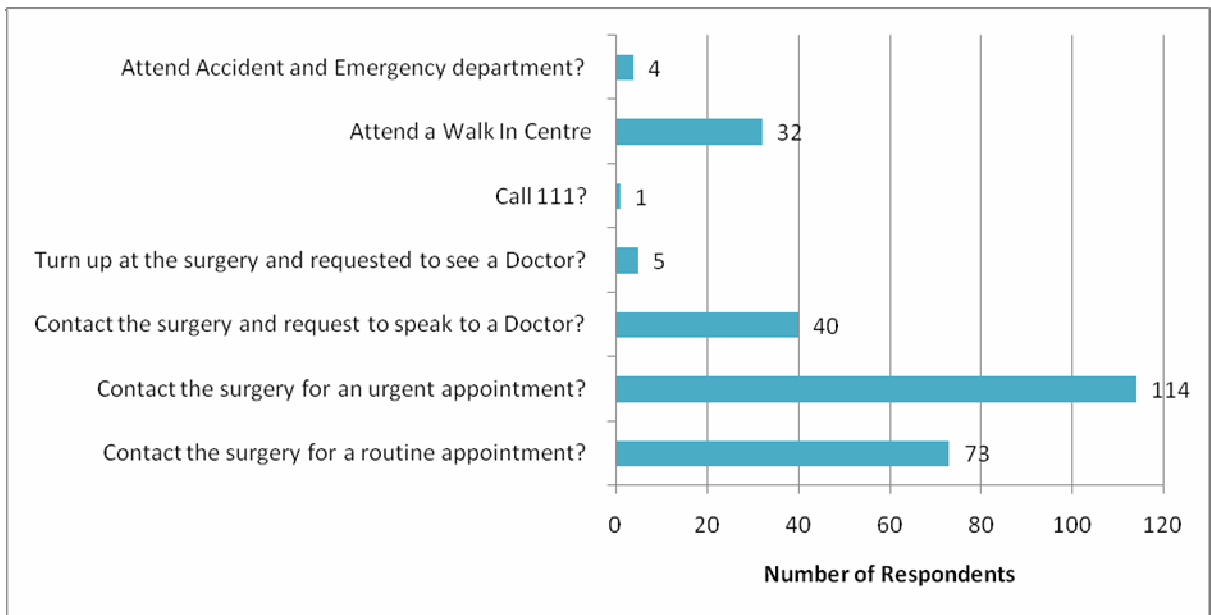
- 1. If you felt unwell during surgery opening times and needed to see a Doctor urgently what would you be more likely to do?**
- 2. Have you had difficulty getting an appointment at your surgery when you felt you needed to see a Doctor on that day?**
- 3. If you could not get an urgent appointment to see a Doctor at your practice would you consider attending another practice if an appointment was made for you?**
- 4. Would you consider using other methods to consult with your Doctor?**

**Patients were given the opportunity to submit their contact details to participate and give their views on future health issues that were of interest to them.**

**Results and responses from all participating practices**

Responses were received from 27 practices. A total of 270 patients gave responses to the questions.

**Question 1 – If you felt unwell during surgery opening times and needed to see a Doctor urgently what would you be more likely to do?**



**Patient Comments:**

*Receptionist can usually give advice and fit you in for appointment.*

*I know that at my clinic will do all that is possible to get me to see the doctor on the same day.*

*The surgery has an excellent service and I can always see a doctor urgently.*

*If I felt the need to see a doctor I feel that contacting the surgery for an urgent appointment is the easiest way to do it.*

*I think I would be seen quicker asking for urgent appointment than waiting for ages at the walk in centre.*

*If can't get appointment would go to the walk in centre.*

*It would depend upon how ill I was on how urgent I felt it was.*

*The patient idea of urgent varies greatly. GP practice's needs to recognise this and try to cope.*

*I would only attend a walk in centre if I was unable to see a doctor at the practice, also depends on the urgency*

*Often attend the walk in centre as I seem to fall ill out of hours*

*It all depends on how unwell you feel.*

*I have called 111 before and was sent an ambulance when all I needed was a doctor, I was mortified!!*

*If it was really serious I would to A&E otherwise always the Doctors surgery.*

*If couldn't speak to Doctor, would then go to A&E.*

*If I truly needed to see a Doctor urgently then I would attend A&E. However, I have contacted the surgery and asked for a same day appointment in the past and been provided with an appointment.*

*Can never get an appointment on the day though so would probably end up at a walk in centre*

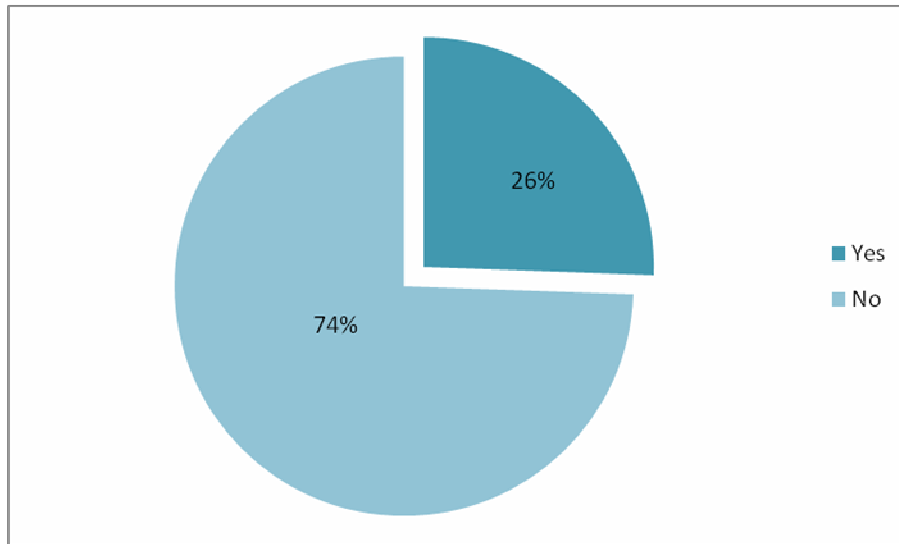
*I have always found asking to speak to the on-call doctor is the answer if there are no appointments.*

*If I did feel any worse I would go to a Walk In Centre.*

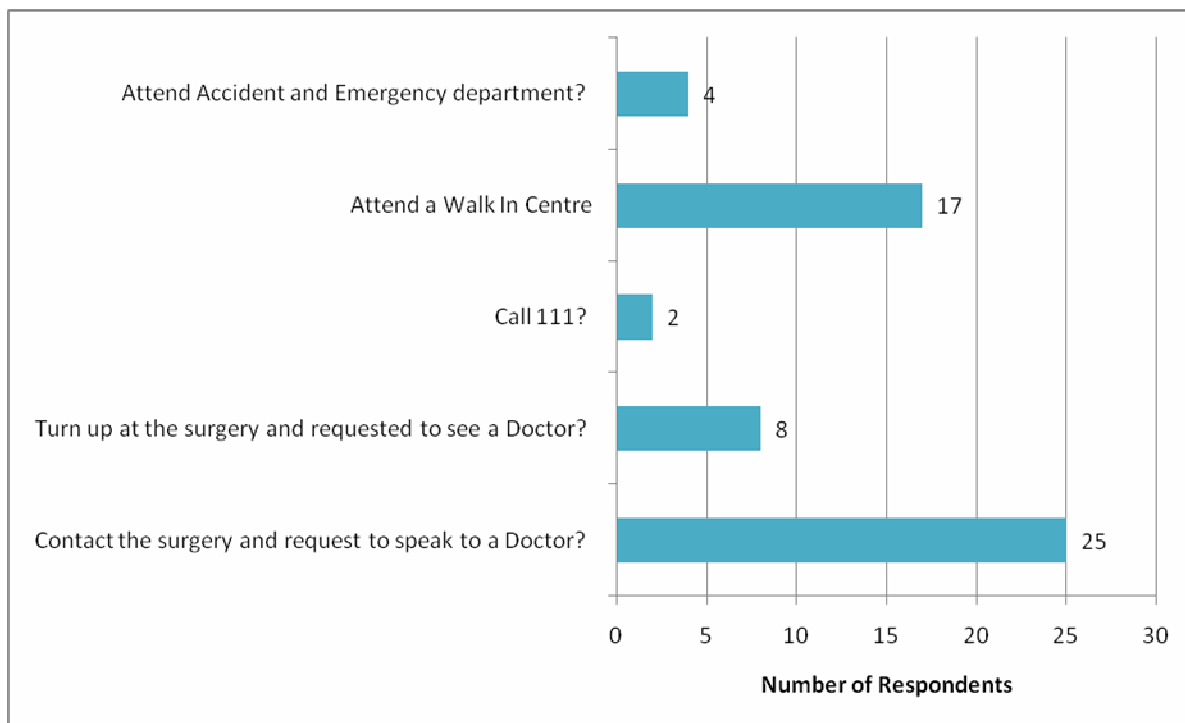
*It would depend how unwell I felt & how likely I felt a doctor (or other medical professional) would be able to help.*

*I understand around 10 deaf patients register at one Gateshead Practice. I would like to see the service provide Text Mobile. Many of them find easy access to it rather than type talk (some of them are not used any longer). We stress need to have TEXT MOBILE for medical emergency appointment to see GP. The easy way to contact as many hearing used telephone, but we deaf patient find hard to access. Please consider about the TEXT MOBILE for us.*

**Question-Have you had difficulty getting an appointment at your surgery when you felt you needed to see a Doctor on that day?**



**If yes what did you do?**



**Patient comments;**

Generally if it is urgent, which it would be if you wanted to see a doctor that day, the receptionist usually gives you an appointment if I couldn't then I would go to the walk in centre. If it got worse go to walk in centre.

Turned up at the surgery before 8:30 and requested an appointment for that day necessitating 2 trips despite feeling unwell.

Also frequently have difficult seeing a nurse.

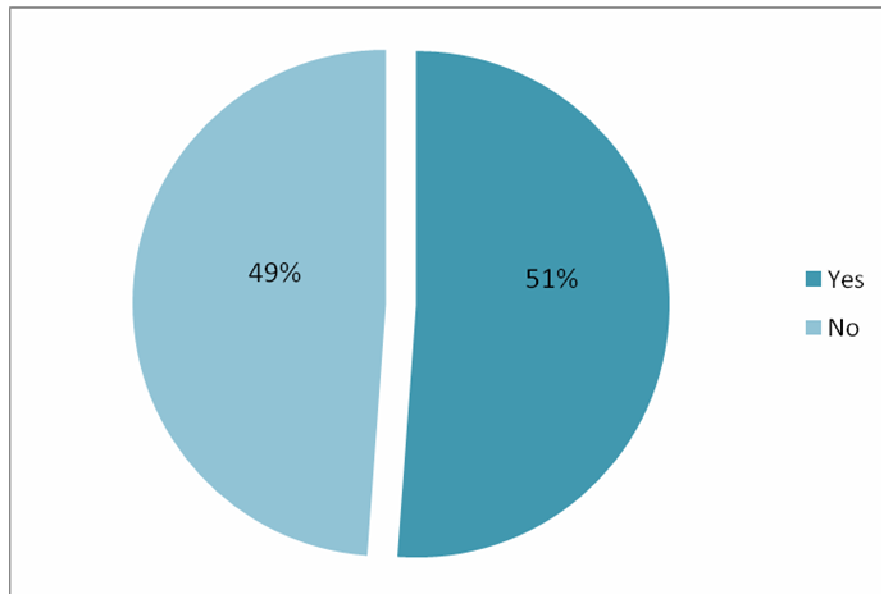
Depends on the situation.

Asked advice from the receptionist.

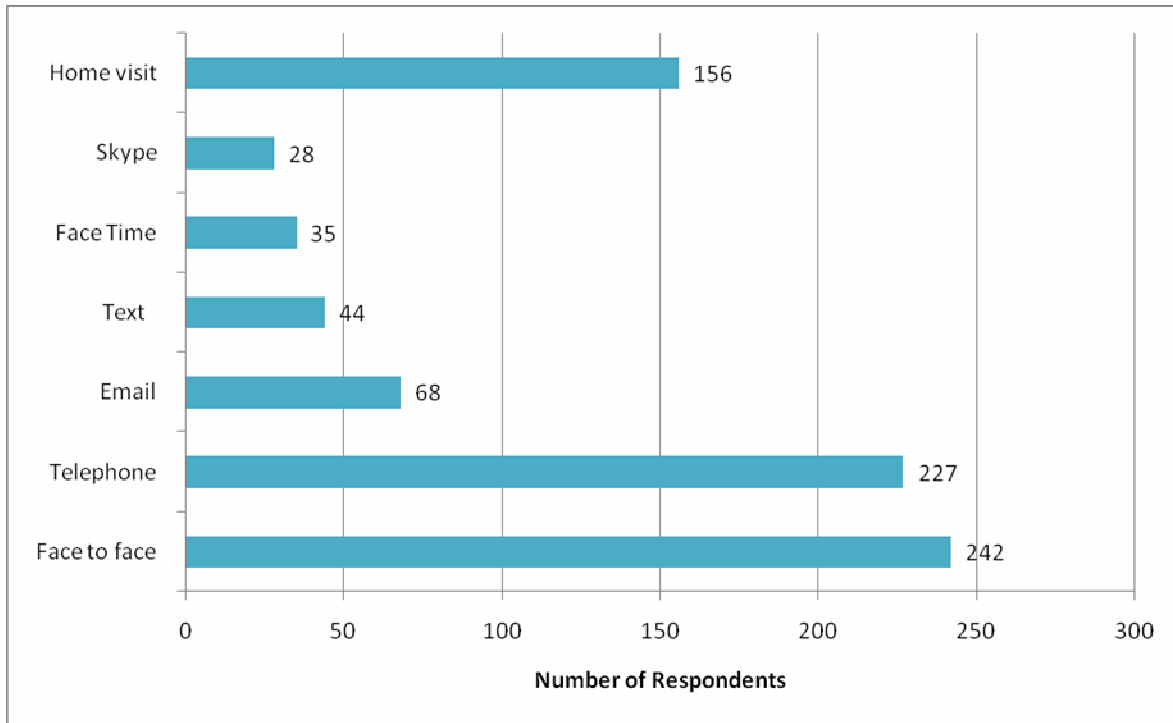
Accepted first appointment available.

Rang back later.

**Question - If you could not get an urgent appointment to see a Doctor at your practice would you consider attending another practice if an appointment was made for you?**



**Question - Would you consider using the following ways to consult with your Doctor?**



### Patient comments;

*Email and text are not confidential enough.*

*I would be happy with email or telephone for routine matters; especially where I have consulted a GP before on the same matter and it is just a case of checking up what to do next.*

*I wouldn't be keen to use text (it would take as much effort to compose a pithy text) so this wouldn't be a good alternative to email.*

*Skype might be a possibility, but until the local broadband connection becomes more reliable the video option is liable to time lag, so phone call would be better than Skype. I would reserve home visits for when I really cannot attend the surgery but consider it essential to be examined in person.*

*I would find SMS messaging a little impersonal. Skype and Facetime would perhaps feel a little odd, although I would not rule them out entirely.*

*Email may work in scenarios where the patient has a simple query or question they would like to ask the Doctor, rather than taking an appointment slot. Although again this can be an*



*impersonal method of communication and may not enable full discussion.*

### **Would you like to give your views on health issues you are interested in?**

98 patients gave contact details. 47 gave email addresses 51 patients gave telephone numbers

### **Conclusion**

Whilst it is clear from the results of this survey that there is much to celebrate in the huge value patients place on their family doctor services, some of the basics including the ease in making appointments and being able to see a GP (including the GP of their choice) when they feel unwell still needs attention.

- The first point of contact for patients who need to see a Doctor urgently is their own GP.
- 111 service – a very small number of patients who completed the survey stated they have used this service.
- If patients were not able to book an appointment with their own GP many would consider accessing urgent care services such as Walk In Centres or Accident and Emergency.
- Over 50% of respondents would consider attending another GP practice if they couldn't get an urgent appointment at their regular practice.
- Face to face, telephone contact and home visits remain the preferred methods for patient consultation with their GP however some patients would consider email, text or face time for routine matters if confidentiality was assured.
- Deaf patient have requested, 'Text Mobile' for medical emergencies to see a GP.
- GP practice engagement with patients is a very effective method to maintain involvement with patients who are interested in giving views on health related issues.

This report will assist Gateshead CCG in driving continuous improvement, reduce health inequalities and support Primary Care in addressing local health priorities.