

Survey results & actions

Mark Dunscombe - 29th October 2024



Amersham Health Centre



Commentary –slide 1

As a Patient Participation Group, the primary function of the Friends of Amersham Health Centre is to act as conduit between the Health Centre and its patients. To provide patient feedback to the Health Centre and to help the Health Centre communicate effectively with its patients.

That is why we ran the survey and that is what this evening is all about.

Agenda



CONTEXT



SURVEY RESULTS



**HOW IS AHC
RESPONDING TO
YOUR FEEDBACK**



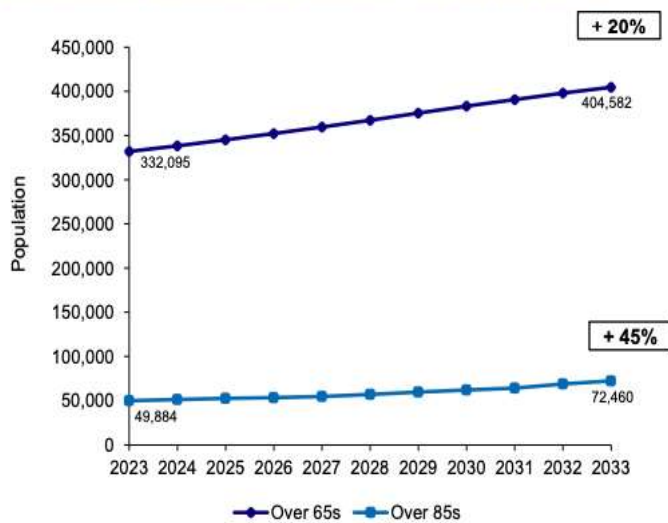
QUESTIONS

Commentary –slide 3

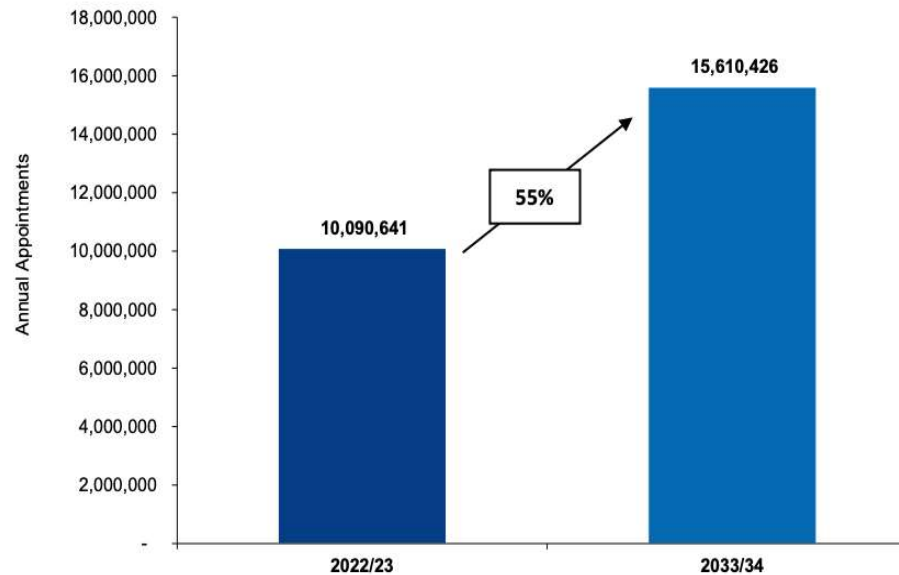
It makes sense to start by setting the scene -providing some background and context to what's happening in the NHS and how it is impacting our Health Centre. Then we can look at the survey results and how the Health Centre is responding to your feedback.

Context – mismatch between demand and capacity

BOB Forecast Population Growth to 2034 for Over 65s and Over 85s



BOB ICB General Practice Appointments (All Types – 2022/23 vs 2033/34)



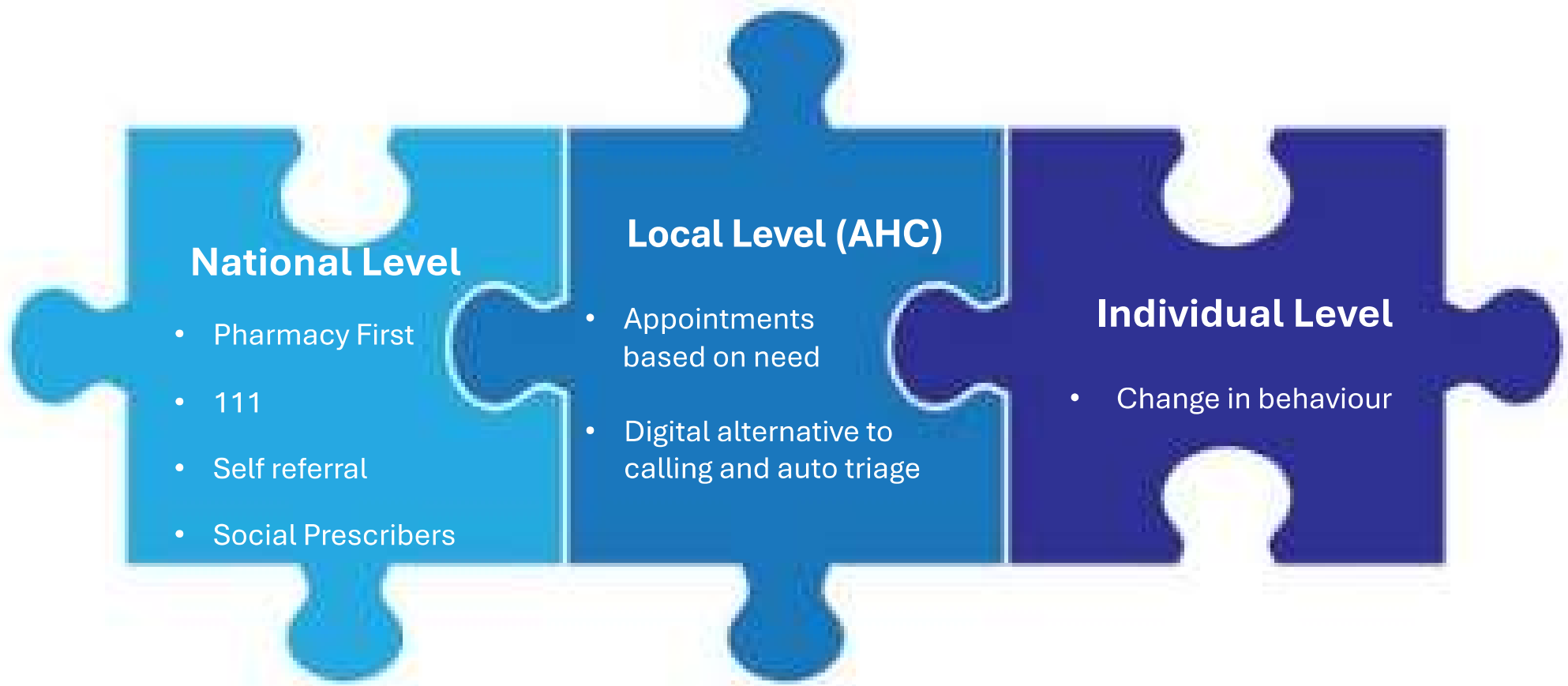
Patients struggling to see a GP

Commentary –slide 5

We hear a lot in the news about the impact the aging population is having on the NHS, in very general terms. These graphs were produced by Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Integrated Care Board. That's the part of the NHS that the Health Centre sits in. The graph on the right predicts that there will be a 55% increase in the demand for GP appointments in the 10-year period to 2033/34.

At a time when budgets are being squeezed, and resources are stretched; it's not a surprise that we see stories of patients unable to get an appointment with a GP.

Context – how the NHS is responding



Commentary –slide 7

The NHS is aware of the situation. Several national initiatives have been launched to try to take the load of GPs. They are aiming to provide alternative routes to medical care that don't involve you having to see your GP at the start.

The Pharmacy First scheme is expected to free up between 10-30 million GP appointments annually -and to put that in perspective there are about 350 million GP appointments annually. I've used it and was really pleased with the outcome. And it's also important to remember that the 111 service was setup to help take the load of both A&E departments and GP surgeries. They do have access to your medical record -so if you are struggling to access the Health Centre -they are there to support you and provide access to a medical practitioner.

At a local level, the Health Centre is in the process of making a major shift in how it responds to requests for appointments. It's transitioning to a position of providing appointments based on need not want. 10 years ago, I would walk in to the Health Centre, ask the receptionist for an appointment and be given one. Those days are over.

Now all requests are triaged to assess need and urgency first, before appointments are offered.

AskFirst's symptom checker automatically triages the patients need and so plays a vital role in the move to triaging all requests for appointments. It also helps reduce the volume of calls by allowing patients to submit requests digitally.

All this will require a shift in our behaviour, as patients, to take advantage of initiatives like Pharmacy First and understand that it is perfectly normal for the Health Central to triage appointment requests. It is the new normal.

Agenda



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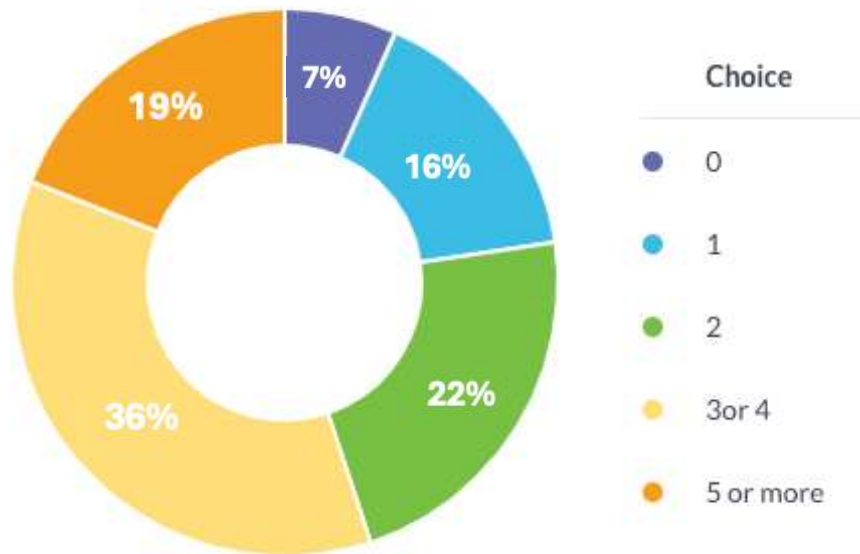


QUESTIONS

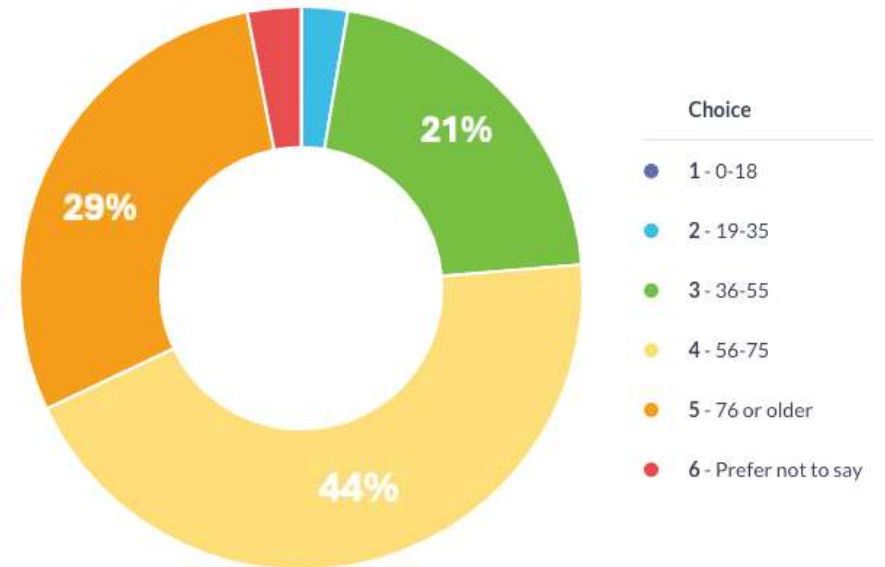
Commentary –slide 9

Onto the survey results.

706 patients participated in the survey



Question -How many appointments with a GP or a nurse have you had over the past 12 months?



Question -What is your age group?

Commentary –slide 11

We had 706 responses -which is very good and thank-you for participating.

This is how the results will be presented and so it's worth highlighting a couple of things:

- The question asked is always next to the multi-coloured doughnut that is showing the results
- And each chart will have a key

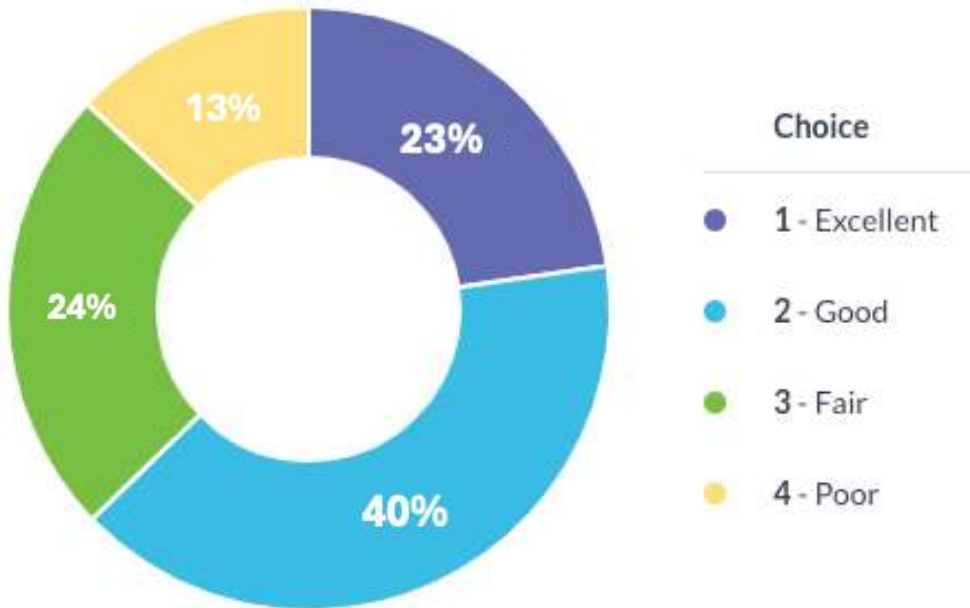
So, in the chart on the left for instance, 22% of respondents had 2 appointments in the past 12 months. Then looking at the chart on the right, 44% of respondents were between the age of 56 -75.

We asked questions about age and number of appointments to see if the responses represented the patient population that the Health Centre serves. It also allowed us to compare the experiences of those patients who had 1 appointment in the year against those who had 5+ appointments in the year. And similarly, from an age perspective.

It's disappointing that very few under 35s participated in the survey but probably not a big surprise. Otherwise, the coverage was good.

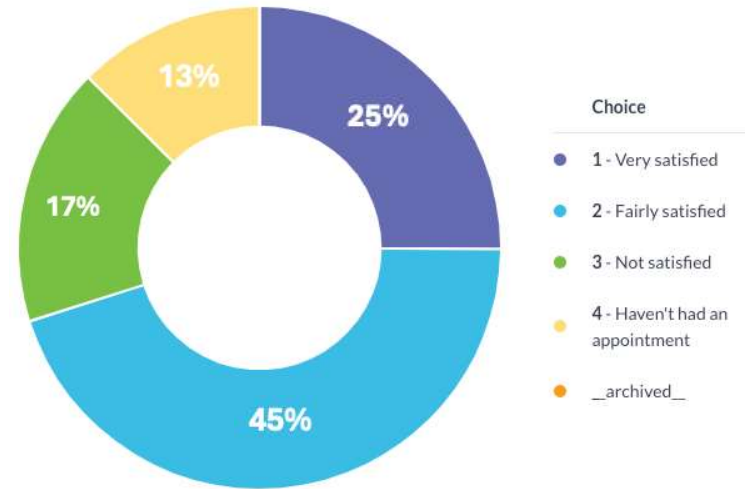
And with a total patient population of 14,500 and 706 responses, we can say that the results are statistically accurate.

Most patients are satisfied with AHC

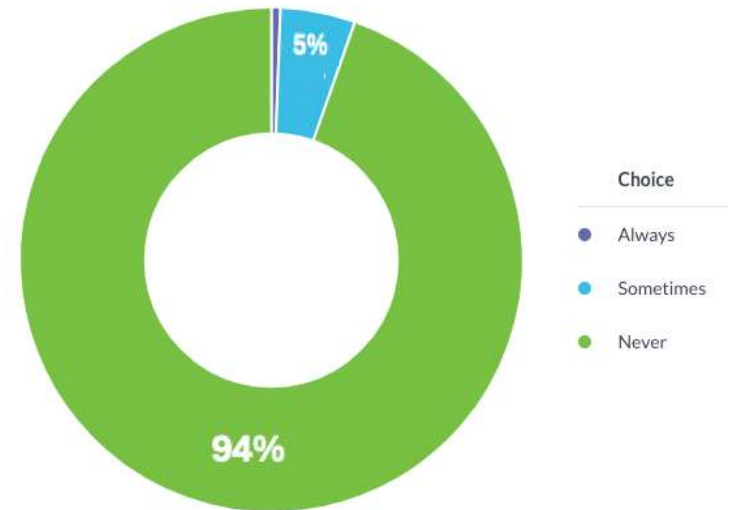


Question -Thinking back to your last appointment, how would you rate your experience?

Question -If you had an appointment with the surgery in the last 12 months, how satisfied were you with the appointment time offered?



Question -Have you experienced any difficulties at the surgery due to language barriers or cultural differences over the past 12 months?



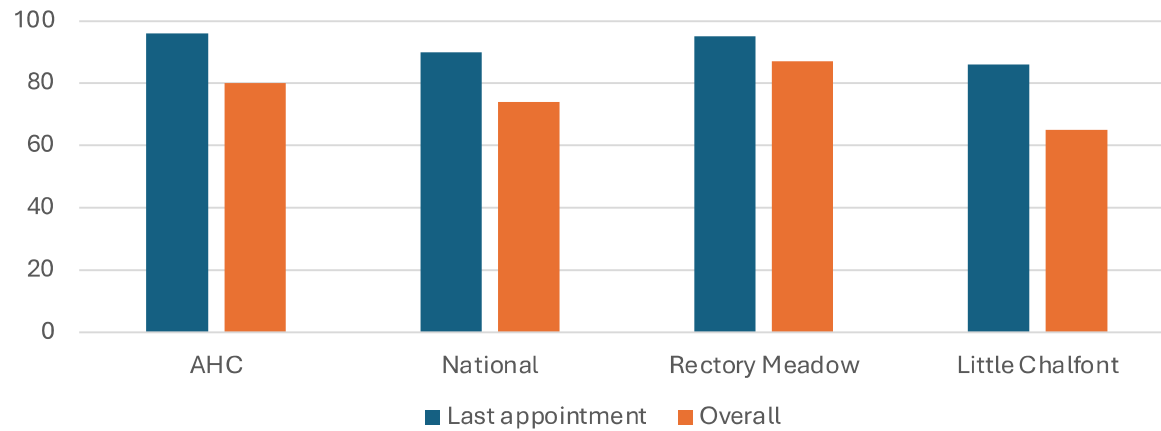
Commentary –slide 13

Looking at your responses regarding your last appointment, the availability of appointments and the cultural environment at the Health Centre –overall, it paints a positive picture.

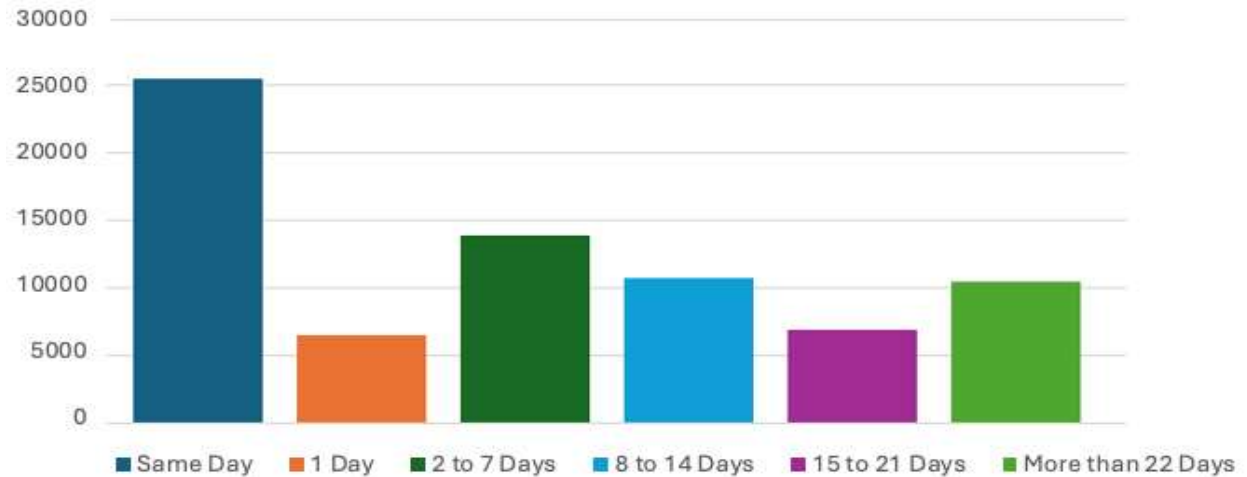
We did want to compare your opinions expressed in the survey, with a couple of other data sources to check what we were seeing.

Other data points inline with survey results

National GP Patient Survey 2024



Days to appointment at AHC



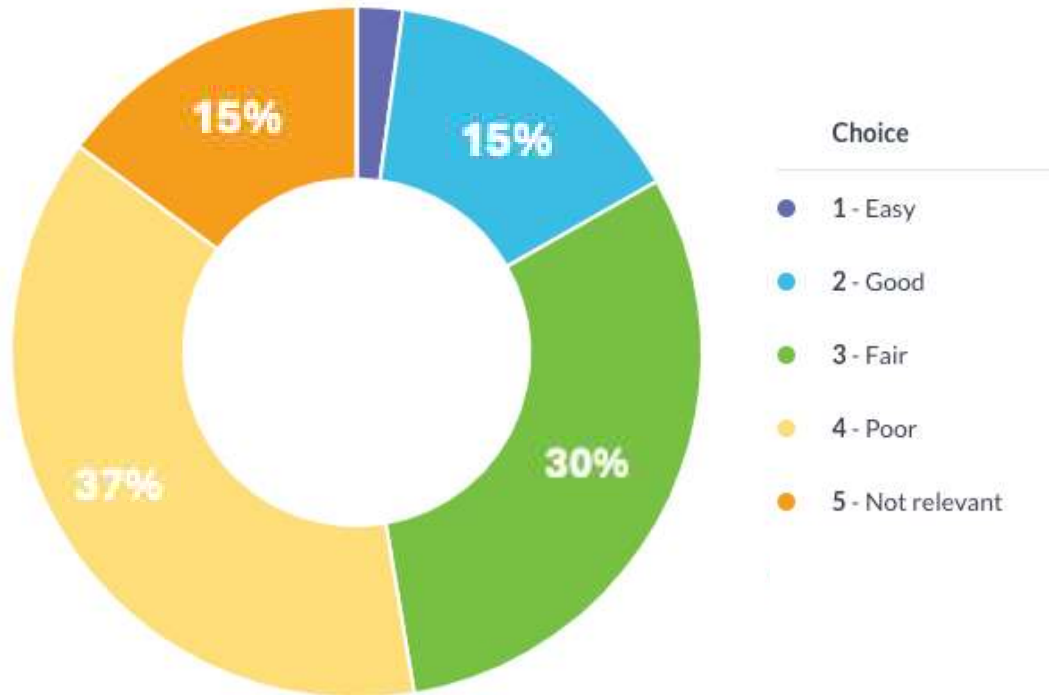
Commentary –slide 15

To that end, we looked at the national GP survey run by the NHS. They try to get 100 responses from patients across every surgery in the country. The graph at the top shows the results for the overall patient experience and results based upon their last appointment. You can see that the Health Centre performs well in comparison to both the national average and other local surgeries.

The second graph focuses on the time gap between requesting an appointment and having an appointment. This data is from June of this year, and it shows over 40% of patients are seen on either the day they requested an appointment, or the following day.

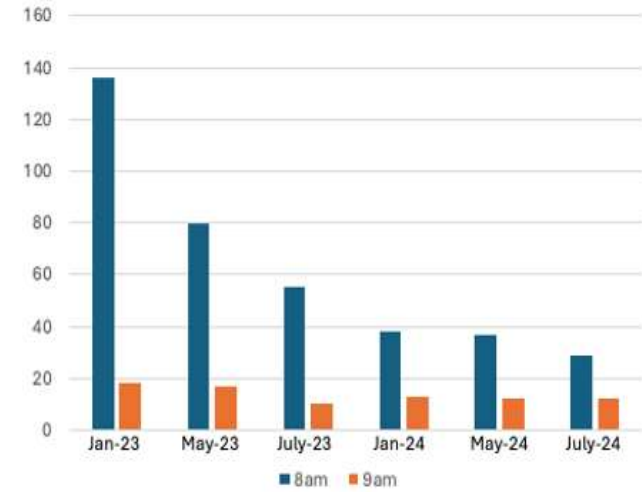
All of this is very positive, and the Health Centre should be congratulated.

Calling the surgery –not great but some improvement

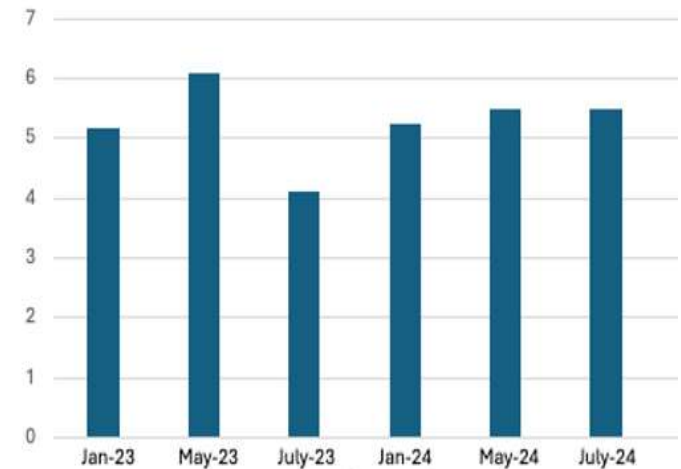


Question -What is your experience of getting through to the surgery over the last 12 months?

Abandoned calls



Average queue time



Commentary –slide 17

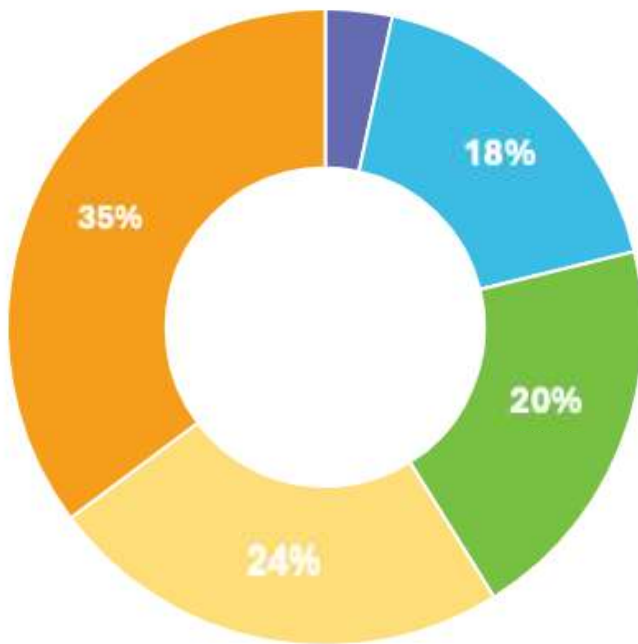
The situation isn't as rosy when you look at your experiences calling the Health Centre. A third of patients rate their experiences as poor.

The chart on the top right shows a reduction in abandoned calls and that is a bright spot worth highlighting. To be clear, an abandoned call is when someone rings the Health Centre, they find themselves sitting in a queue, give up waiting and end the call before it's been answered. As the surgery phone lines do not open until 8:30, the number of abandoned calls in the first time slot is inflated by all those of ringing before 8:30 and then putting the phone down. The direction of travel is positive. If I add the 2 timeslots together in January 2023, there were about 155 abandoned calls and 12 months later, there were 50 -a significant improvement.

But overall, there has been no improvement in the average queue time -it's stayed around 5 minutes. When you look at some of the comments in the feedback -it's this and the endless recorded messages that you must listen to, that is the cause of so much dissatisfaction.

It's not good but the Health Centre has limited funds to invest, budgets are tight and recruiting more staff to answer your calls isn't a priority for the Health Centre. Funds are prioritised on increasing the medical practitioner resources to help address growing demand for appointments.

AskFirst – patients are struggling



Very impressed with how responsive the Health Centre is after putting in a request through AskFirst

The options & questions on AskFirst always seem to change – it doesn't make it easy to use

Some of the questions on the AskFirst app are quite random/confusing – it can be difficult to use

AskFirst worked better than expected, with fast call back

I hate AskFirst. It feels like a barrier, not a help

I had real problems when I tried to book an appointment with AskFirst

I've tried to use AskFirst twice and it has not had the option I needed

It's getting very difficult to get GP appointments and the AskFirst app is quite difficult to use

Choice

- 1 - Easy
- 2 - Mostly good
- 3 - Quite difficult
- 4 - Very difficult
- 5 - Don't use AskFirst

Question -How would define your experience of using AskFirst?

Commentary –slide 19

You gave AskFirst a big thumbs down. The Health Centre introduced it nearly 2 years ago and a third of patients don't use it and of those that do -the majority struggle.

I've included several patient comments to help bring the situation to life.

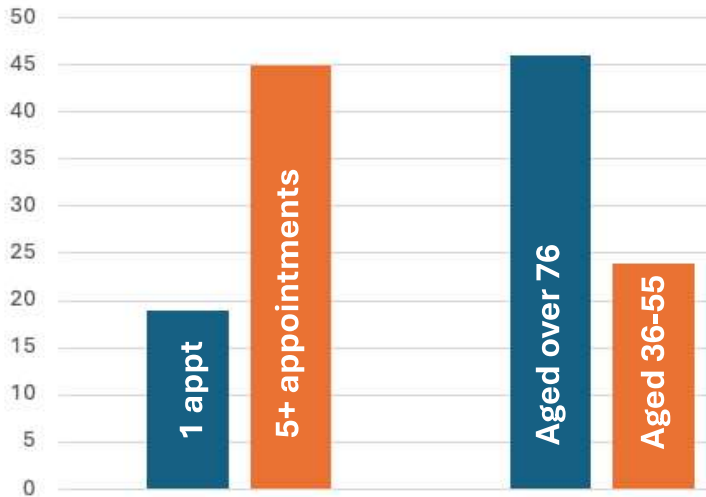
The ones in green are patients with positive experiences -they've seen it working as it should do.

The red comments are from patients who see AskFirst as a barrier the Health Centre has put in place to prevent them seeing a Doctor or Nurse. This is absolutely not the case.

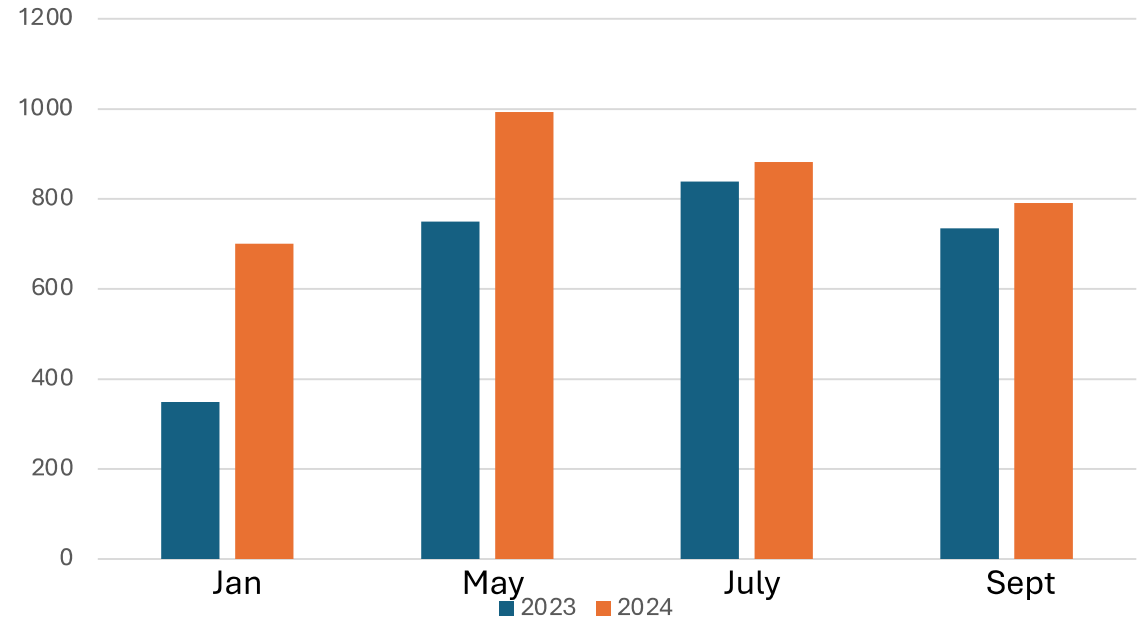
The comments in blue are the most common -they highlight the challenges and frustrations you have with AskFirst.

AskFirst- patient usage

**% AskFirst users saying
easy to use or mostly good**



**Number of patients requesting an appointment
with AskFirst**



**50% of all flu jab
appointments
booked using
AskFirst in
September 2024**

Commentary –slide 21

Looking at some of the other data about AskFirst provides valuable insights. If you look at the graph on the top right, you'll see that the rate of adoption has tailed off since May of this year. There is a big increase in the number of patients requesting appointments through AskFirst from January 2023 to January 2024. That's repeated from May 2023 to May 2024 –that shows a growth in usage over time. It is what you would expect to see. However, looking at July 2023 to July 2024, the growth in usage has significantly slowed down. We see that again between September 2023 to September 2024.

That's disappointing, particularly when only about 25% of appointment requests originate from AskFirst. That's a big contrast to what the Health Centre has just witnessed with flu jab appointments. 50% of all flu jab appointments were booked using AskFirst. Yes, it was a pretty simple process BUT it does suggest that if you can simplify AskFirst, patients will use it.

And there are 2 other learnings worth highlighting. These are the charts on the bottom left of the slide. We filtered how we looked at the survey responses in 2 ways, based on 2 assumptions we had.

The first assumed that the more appointments a patient had in a year, the more familiar they would be with AskFirst and so the happier they would. That assumption proved correct. That's the case with most things and suggests that if patients can over the initial hump, things become easier.

The second assumption was that older patients would be more likely to struggle than younger patients. Comparing the responses from those patients over 76, with those between 35 to 55, showed we were wrong to assume this.

Agenda



CONTEXT



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QUESTIONS

Commentary –slide 23

That's the review of the survey responses. Hopefully, you found it interesting -maybe surprising, maybe not.

My 3 takeaways are:

One -the quality of care at the Health Centre is good.

Two -patients aren't happy, when they ring the Health Centre, about how long they are sat in a queue.

And three -AskFirst isn't the easiest app to use -patients are struggling.

Onto how the Health Centre is responding to your feedback.

How is AHC responding to your feedback

Phone message when you ring AHC

- Strike the right balance between speed and communication



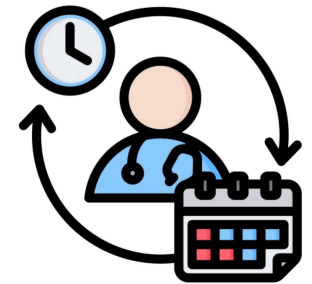
Greater focus on communication

- Monthly newsletter
- Checking we have the correct email address for patients
- Reviewing messages on TV screen in AHC waiting room
- Exploring new communication channels



Appointments requests

- Consistent approach to managing requests from AskFirst, telephone and in-person
- Duty Doctor triage's all requests



Carrying out a review of AskFirst

- Frequency of updates
- Speaking to other surgeries that use AskFirst
- Ease of use verses depth of functionality



Commentary –slide 25

There are a number initiatives that have been identified in response to your feedback and the growing demand for appointments. Some of these initiatives are small, other big, some have already started, and some require support from other areas of the NHS.

The first change is around the recorded message you hear when you call the surgery. If you called the surgery at the end of September, you would have heard 3 announcements before you were given the different options -1 for appointments 2 for prescriptions etc. It took almost a minute to listen to the 3 announcements - it's too long and it was evident in your feedback, that it frustrates you. The Health Centre is looking to strike a better balance between their opportunity to communicate with patients and the patients desire for speed. Now you only hear 1 announcement –hopefully, that will address some of your frustrations.

With so many things happening, the Health Centre appreciates the importance of keeping patients informed. That is -what's happening, why's it happening and how does it affect me.

Getting people's attention is difficult - there are lots of big corporates and big budgets fighting for your attention. So, this isn't easy.

Hopefully, everyone here is receiving the monthly newsletter that is being emailed to patients. The format is new, it's 2 pages, it's punchy –it is a big improvement. Well done to everyone involved. If you haven't received it -please check with the surgery in the first instance that they have your correct email address.

And to help ensure the Health Centre has the right email address for patients –when you go the Health Centre for an appointment, the touch screen you use to “book-in” will ask you in future to validate your email address. A request has gone into the NHS IT team and so it will probably take a couple of months before it takes effect.

The Health Centre totally revamped its website about 12 months. The new one is a big improvement. There is a desire to drive more traffic to it -one way might be to post a headline on a Facebook group like “My Amersham” with a link back to the Health Centres website. The idea is really to try some different approaches to help keep patients in the loop- more aware of what's happening at the Health Centre. Some of the ideas won't work and hopefully some will work. We are happy to receive your suggestions.

Commentary –slide 25 continued

Increasing the usage of AskFirst by patients is critical. It will reduce the volume of inbound calls, it's AI automatically triages a patient need, it reduces the administration burden and integrates directly with the Health Centres patient administration system. The Health Centre is committed to improving its useability. There is a review underway to see how best to make it easier to use. It won't be quick but it's very important.

We, as patients, probably need a bit more guidance about how to use it, so that we can get the most out of it.

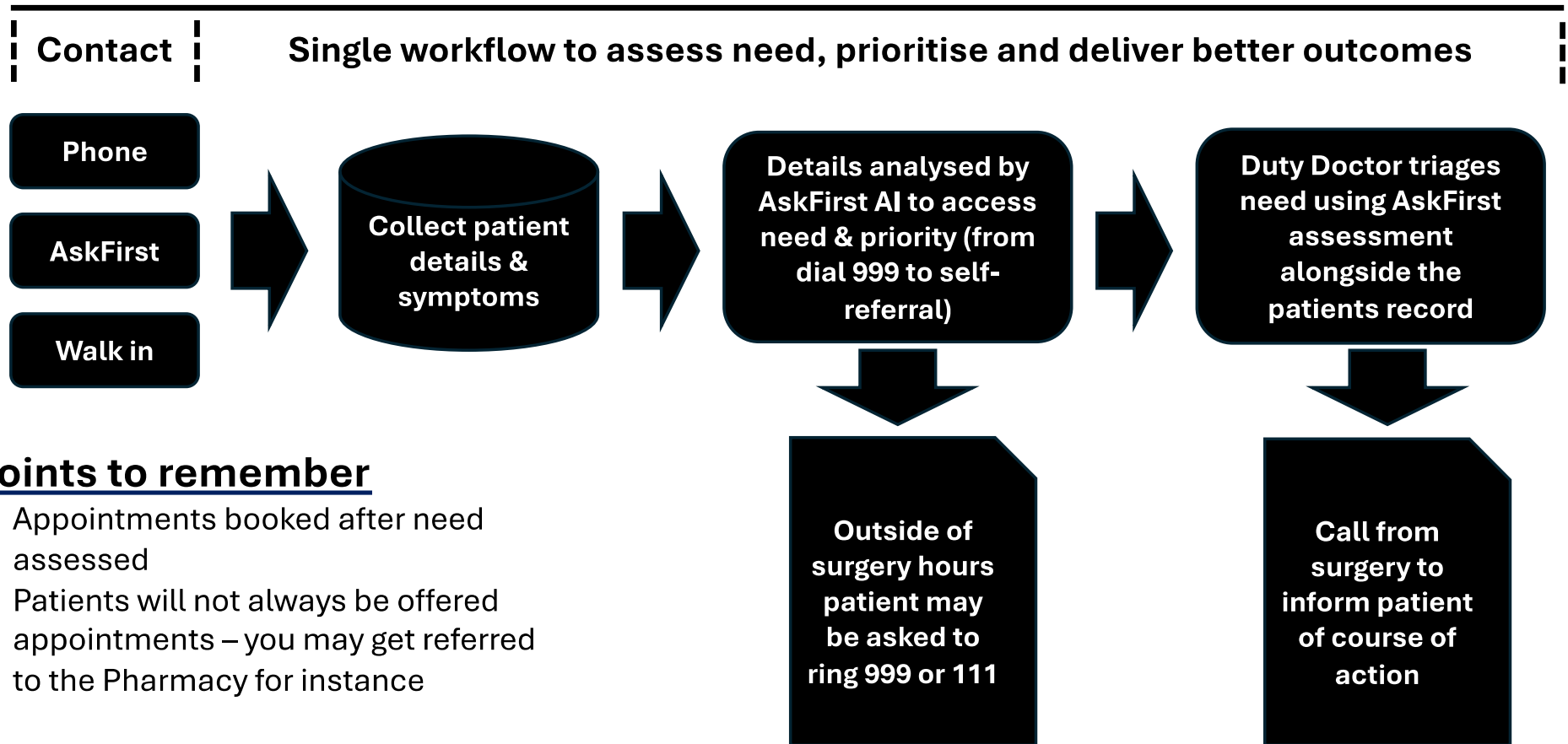
And there's a discussion required about ease-of-use verses more functionality. In the world of IT and app development, this is always a point of discussion.

The final initiative is already underway and focuses on how the Health Centre responds to our requests for an appointment. The move to giving out appointments based on need not want.

To support this shift, 2 things are changing

- Firstly -all requests for appointments are to be treated in the same way; regardless of whether you call the Health Centre, use AskFirst or walk into Health Centre and ask for an appointment. Every patients' symptoms will be triaged using AskFirst's symptom checker, not just those using AskFirst. Patients who call-in or walk-in will be asked more questions about their symptoms to allow staff to essentially complete an AskFirst request on the patient's behalf.
- And secondly, there is an understanding that having a doctor involved in the triage process is important. They can see what the AskFirst symptom checker is saying, and they also have access to your patient record.

New process for managing requests for appointments



Commentary –slide 28 continued

Here is a simplified view of the new process, starting with the initial contact on the left and moving across to the right.

It's worth pointing out this process, this workflow, is being recommended by the NHS as part of their Modern General Practice framework.

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