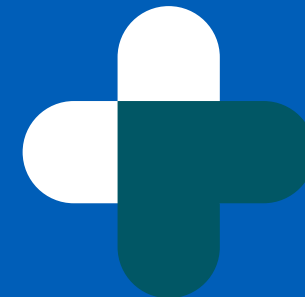


# London Digital First Programme: North East London Patient Perspectives Case Study

[healthinnovationnetwork.com/digital-first-primary-care](http://healthinnovationnetwork.com/digital-first-primary-care)



Case study undertaken by the Health Innovation Network (HIN)  
South London on behalf of NHS England's London Digital First  
Programme



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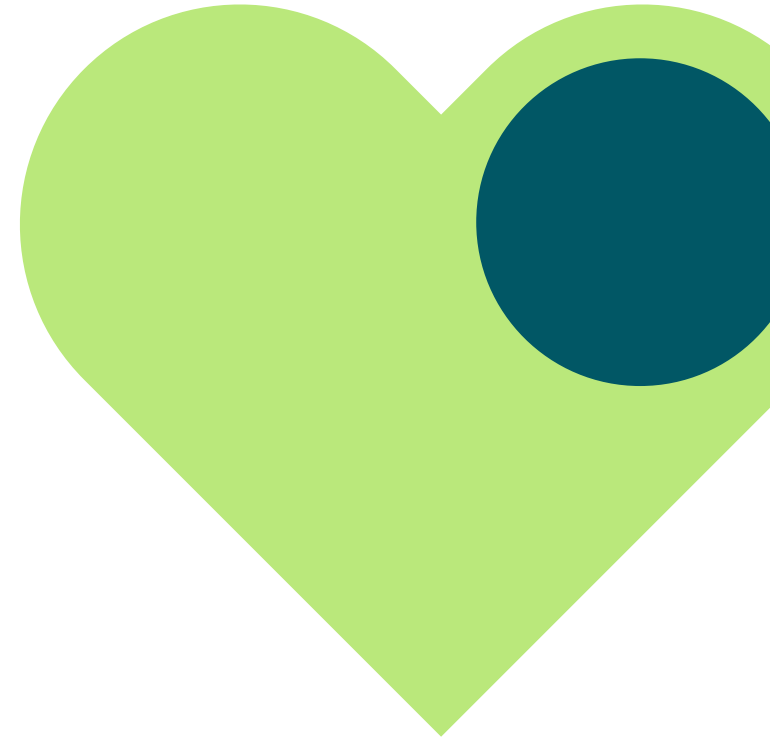


# Introduction

This case study was developed with patient feedback gathered from existing sources of feedback data, an online survey and an online focus group with patients from North East London (NEL) Integrated Care System (ICS).

This report represents the experiences and perspectives of patients regarding three digital tools used to access general practice - Online Forms, the NHS App and GP surgery websites.

Please see the main report for further details, including London-wide findings, conclusions and recommendations.



# Executive Summary



## Online Forms (also known as Online Consultations)

Three quarters of survey respondents (76%) had used Online Forms for themselves or on behalf of someone else, showing relatively high awareness. Access was primarily via the GP surgery website (39%) or a link in a text from the GP surgery (25%), for the purpose of booking appointments (72%), medical advice (35%) or ordering prescriptions (34%). The focus group findings highlighted the convenience of Online Forms, noting that they are quick and easy to use and patients are able to get a prompt response without waiting in queues. Online Forms also provide patients with an opportunity to express their concerns in detail as well as support non-English speakers with the use of translation tools.

Most survey respondents (75%) were either strongly or somewhat happy with the outcome of using Online Forms. The focus group suggested inconsistent response and appointment times may contribute to why some people are unhappy with their outcomes. Other challenges raised were around lengthy, repetitive or irrelevant questions, together with the issues some patients may face in completing the forms due to limited technology skills or lack of access.

See Appendix 1: Existing patient feedback on Online Forms.

76%  
use Online Forms

77%  
find Online Forms  
easy to use

75%  
were happy with  
the outcome  
following use

89%  
use monthly or less



## NHS App

Most survey respondents (80%) had used the NHS App for themselves or on behalf of someone else. This is supported by data from the NHS App Reporting dashboard which reported an average of 130,362 views per month (between July 2022 and June 2023), however usage fluctuated throughout the year (see Appendix 2: Existing patient feedback on the NHS App for more information).

The focus group discussion highlighted key benefits around the simple and intuitive design which enables access to records, booking of appointments and prescription management - the three most common uses identified in the survey. Participants also enjoyed being able to access test results, Covid-19 vaccination details and using the App as a source of reliable information. However, some raised concerns that they were unable to access their full medical history, as well as test results from secondary services. Other challenges included issues around integration with other systems.

80%  
use the NHS App

88%  
found it easy  
to sign up

83%  
find it easy to  
find the information  
they need

87%  
use it monthly  
or less



## GP surgery website

Most survey respondents (72%) had used GP surgery websites for themselves or on behalf of someone else and 78% found them easy to find the information they need. This is higher than other data sources which showed only 58% of people reported their GP surgery website as 'easy' to use (see Appendix 3: Existing patient feedback on GP surgery websites).

**72%**  
use their GP  
surgery website

**78%**  
find it easy to use

**91%**  
only use it  
monthly or less



## Communications

Appointment reminders (78%), invitations to book appointments (54%), and surveys (39%) were the most common reasons for receiving contact from a GP surgery via text message.

SMS / text message (69%), telephone (11%) and email (9%) were the top three preferred communications methods.

**69%**  
prefer SMS / text  
messages




**11%**  
prefer telephone

**9%**  
prefer email

# North East London (NEL) ICS:

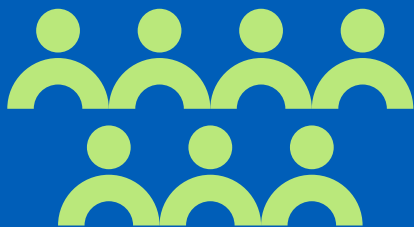
This case study is drawn from the analysis of three main data sources

## 1. Existing data

-  Accurx and eConsult (Online Consultation products) feedback
-  North East London ICS GP Patient Survey 2021-2022
-  NHS App Reporting Dashboard July 2022-June 2023

## 3. Online focus group

A focus group was held to obtain conversational and detailed patient perspectives on key themes identified from the analysis of existing data and online survey.



**x7**

Seven participants



**x6**

of the seven North East London boroughs represented

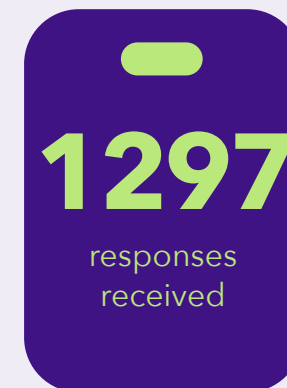
## 2. Online survey

An online survey using Qualtrics platform developed to obtain ICS-level feedback and indicate prominent areas for exploration with the focus groups.



**1400**

survey invites sent by SMS



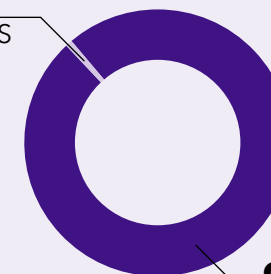
**1297**

responses received

by seven GP surgeries (Dr Chibber's Practice, The Neaman Practice, Kings Park Surgery, First 4 Health Group, Loxford Practice, St Stephens Health Centre and Chingford Medical Practice).

**1%**

via SMS link



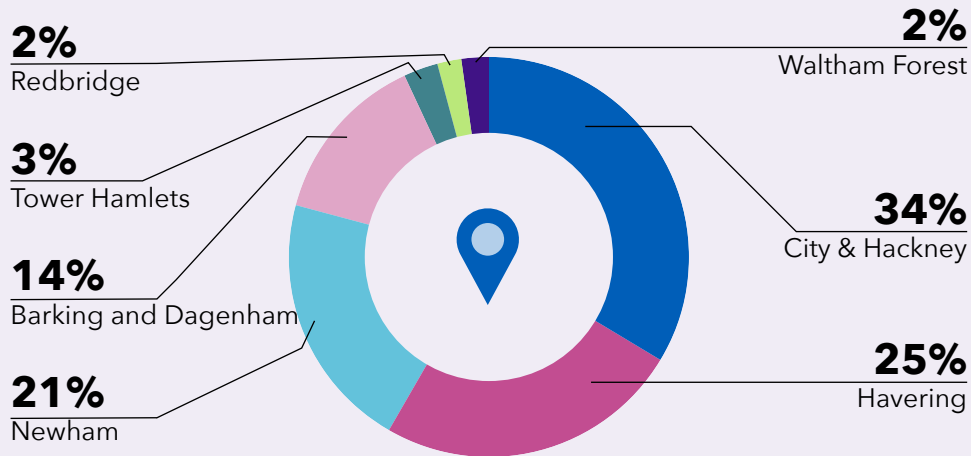
**99%**

via other routes

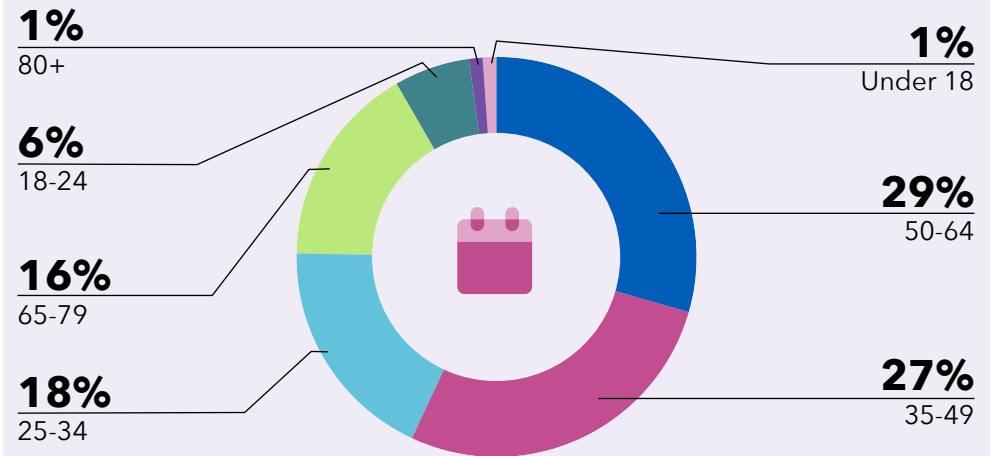
Key demographics of survey respondents are detailed overleaf.

# North East London ICS: Survey respondent demographics

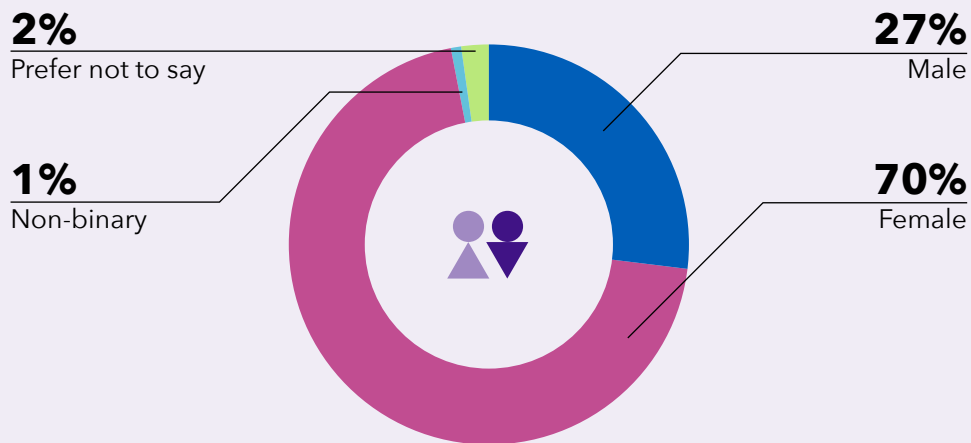
**Borough (n=1294)**



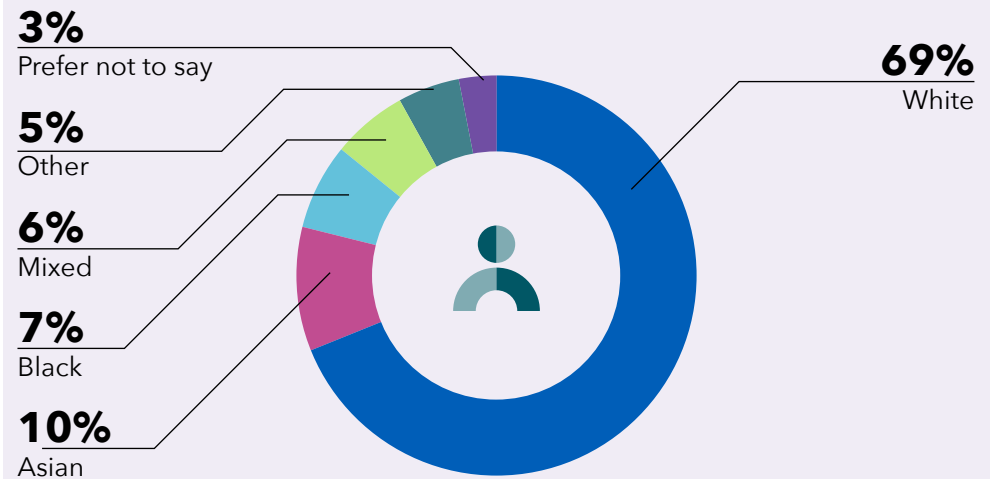
**Age group (n=1270)**



**Gender (n=1258)**



**Ethnicity (n=1267)**



# North East London ICS: Online survey results relating to Online Form use

## Three quarters of respondents had used Online Forms:

of the 1269 respondents, 76% had used an Online Form for themselves or on behalf of someone else.

## Most respondents do not use Online Forms frequently:

of 883 respondents, most use them monthly (26%) or rarely (62%).

## Most respondents heard about Online Forms via their GP surgery\*:

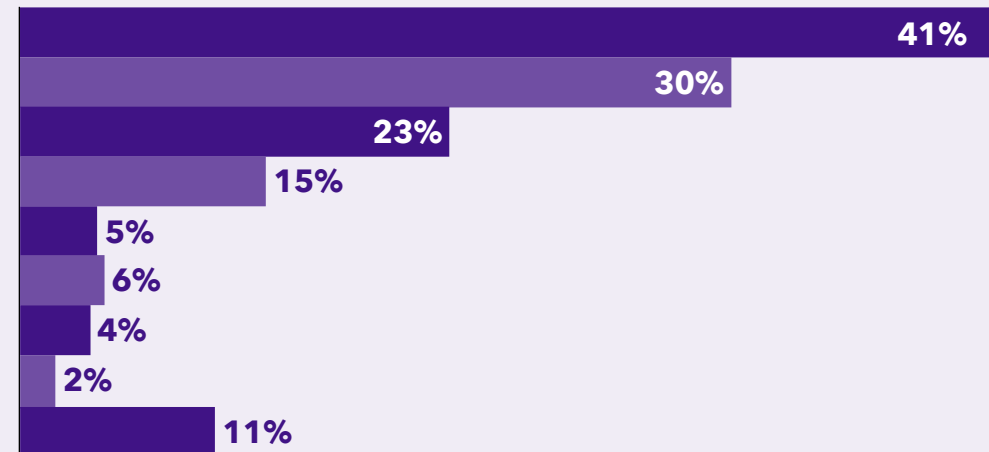
of the 1052 respondents, 48% heard about them via GP surgery/ staff, 34% via SMS/text message, 33% by their GP surgery website, and 18% via the NHS App.

## Online Forms are mainly accessed via the GP surgery website:

of the 1028 respondents, 39% and 25% accessed Online Forms via GP surgery websites or a link sent in a text message from the GP surgery respectively. 8% said they required help from GP reception staff or family/friends.

## Reasons for not accessing the service\* (n=302)

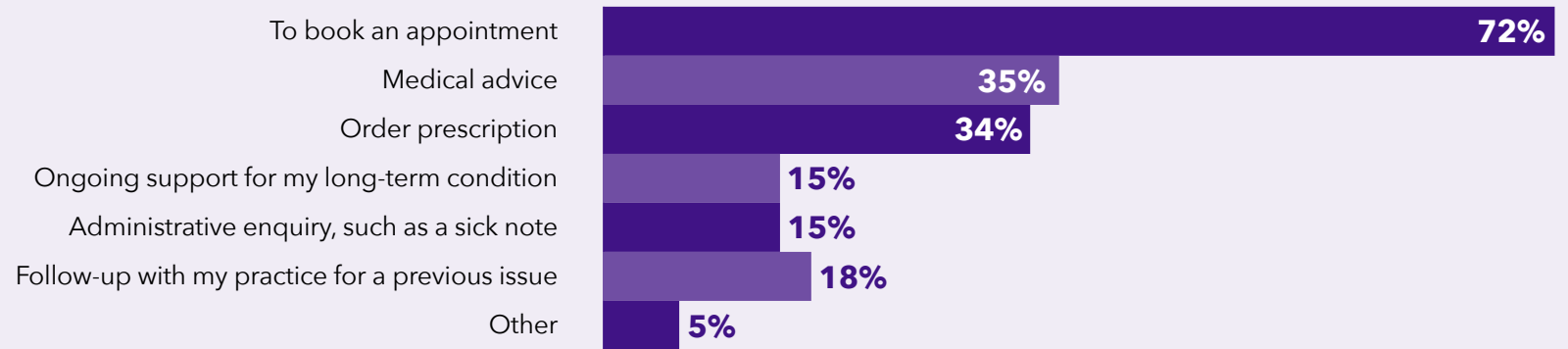
- I would rather make contact by phone or visiting the GP surgery
- I haven't needed to use an Online Form
- I didn't know this service was available
- I don't understand what I have to do/I don't know how to use a device
- I don't trust it
- I do not have a laptop/smartphone to access online services
- I do not have broadband/internet access
- I have a disability and it does not meet my accessibility needs
- Other (please specify)



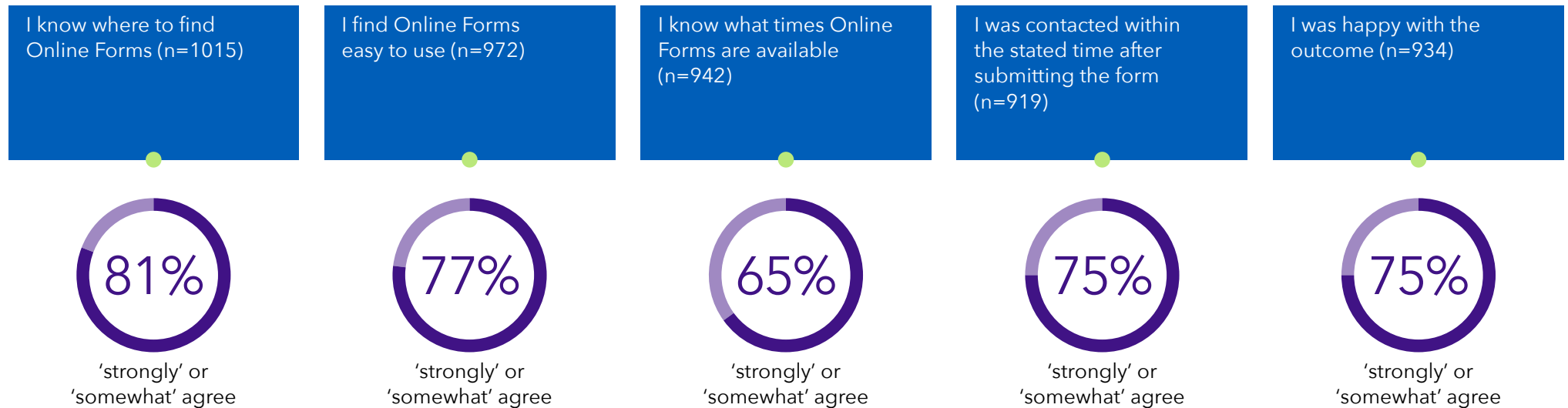
\* Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total is more than 100%



## What have you used Online Forms for?\*( n=1031)



### The following statements were asked:



\* Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total is more than 100%

# North East London ICS: Overall experiences of using Online Forms



This section uses data from all three sources: existing feedback, online survey and focus groups

## Positive experiences

### More accurate

- ✓ Have time and means to express concerns in detail
- ✓ Reduces patients' anxiety as face-to-face conversation not needed
- ✓ Can use translation tools for non-English speakers

### Time saving

- ✓ Don't need to travel to the GP surgery
- ✓ Don't need to wait in phone queues
- ✓ More accessible and flexible

### Convenient








- ✓ Easy to use and access
- ✓ Quick response from the GP

### Visual technology

- ✓ Photos can support diagnosis
- ✓ Video consultations mean avoiding travel and wait times







**“It was really fantastic and really convenient. I don't have to go and wait at the waiting room for 1 or 2 hours... they sent me a text message and the time, and they asked me to be 5 minutes before the time... it was fantastic to be honest with you.”**

## Negative experiences

-  Lengthy, irrelevant, or numerous questions
-  GP/healthcare professional called at a different time than what had been expected, resulting in a missed appointment and delay in receiving care
-  Patients do not receive any confirmation the request has been received
-  The form is difficult to complete for those who have limited English skills
-  There can be slow response times, with some not receiving responses at all
-  Some people, such as those with learning disabilities, may face challenges due to limited technology skills, lack of access to devices or the internet, or unease with online services
-  Would prefer in person or phone interaction with GP surgery, rather than use digital tools

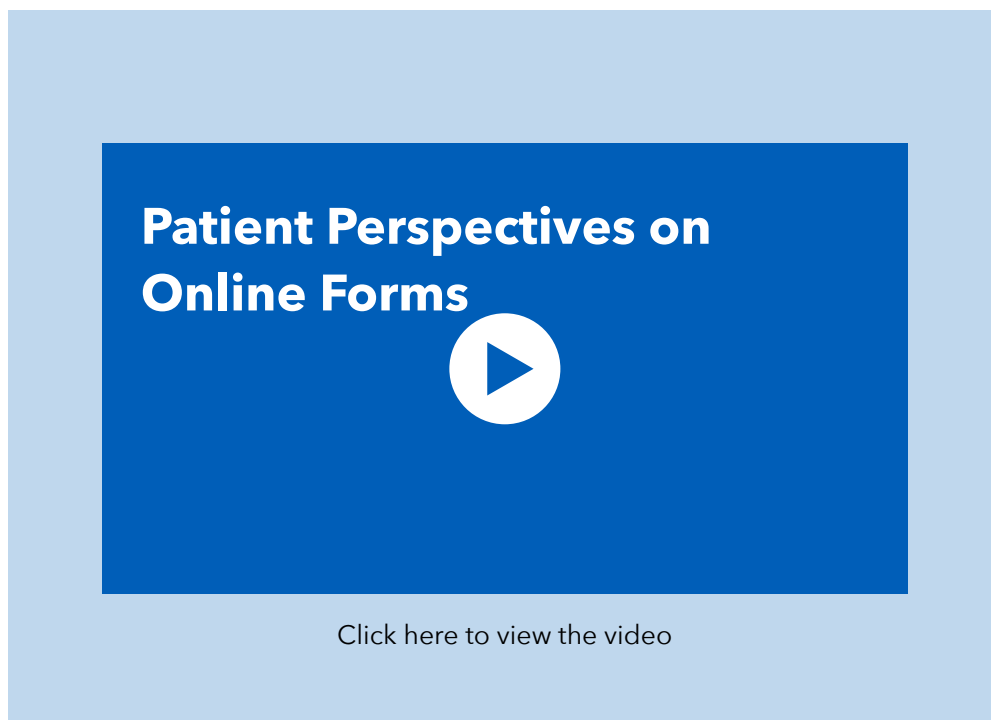
**“People forget about people with learning difficulties and other disabilities though. With everything going digital, these people may be less likely to contact their GP”**

## Patient suggestions for improvements

-  Clear guidelines indicating when to expect a response, as well as signposting for emergencies
  -  Streamline the online form to reduce the number of required questions and avoid duplication
  -  Offer provisional appointment slots, with the option to schedule appointments with specific healthcare professionals directly
  -  Introduce translation tools and ensure use of simplified language to enhance accessibility
  -  Implement a receipt tracking function to keep people informed on the request progress and reduce the necessity to follow up with the GP surgery
  -  Add functionality to allow two-way messaging communication between the patient and GP
- “I haven't looked into this properly so this may already exist but perhaps a way to track referrals (and their progress) whether that be a website/app rather than having to chase the receptionists via a call or pop in.”**

# North East London ICS: Overall experiences of using Online Forms

A series of clips were collected from the focus groups held about patient perspectives of online forms. A video was created to highlight the perspectives from participants in each London region.



# North East London ICS: Online survey results relating to NHS App

## Most respondents had used the NHS App:

out of the 1222 respondents, 80% had used it for themselves or on behalf of someone else

## Most respondents do not use the NHS App frequently:

of 852 respondents, most use it monthly (32%) or rarely (55%)

## Most people heard about online forms via their GP surgery\*:

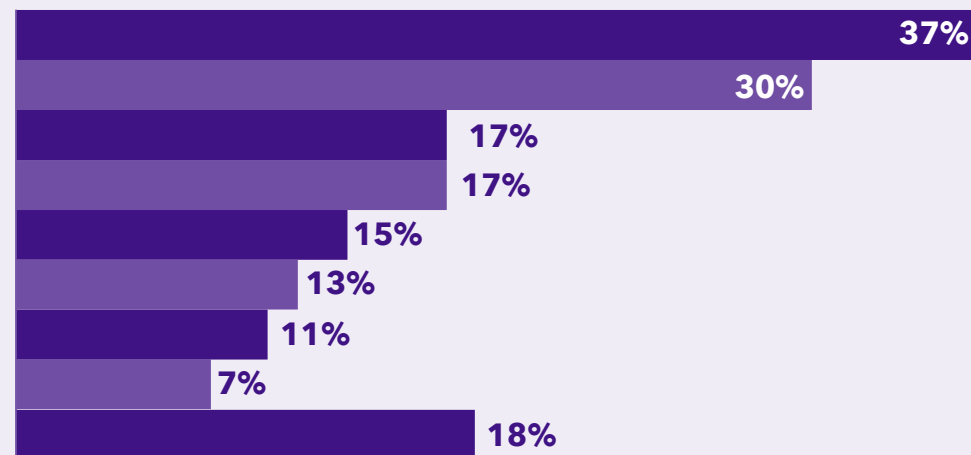
of the 1046 respondents, 29% had heard about it via their GP surgery/staff, 26% via the NHS website, 25% via communications related to Covid-19 and 22% via their GP surgery website.

## The most common use of the NHS App is to book an appointment or order repeat prescriptions\*:

44% of the 1018 respondents reported using the NHS App for each of these purposes. The third most common use was to view their medical record (42%).

## Please let us know why you are not using the NHS App\* (n=446)

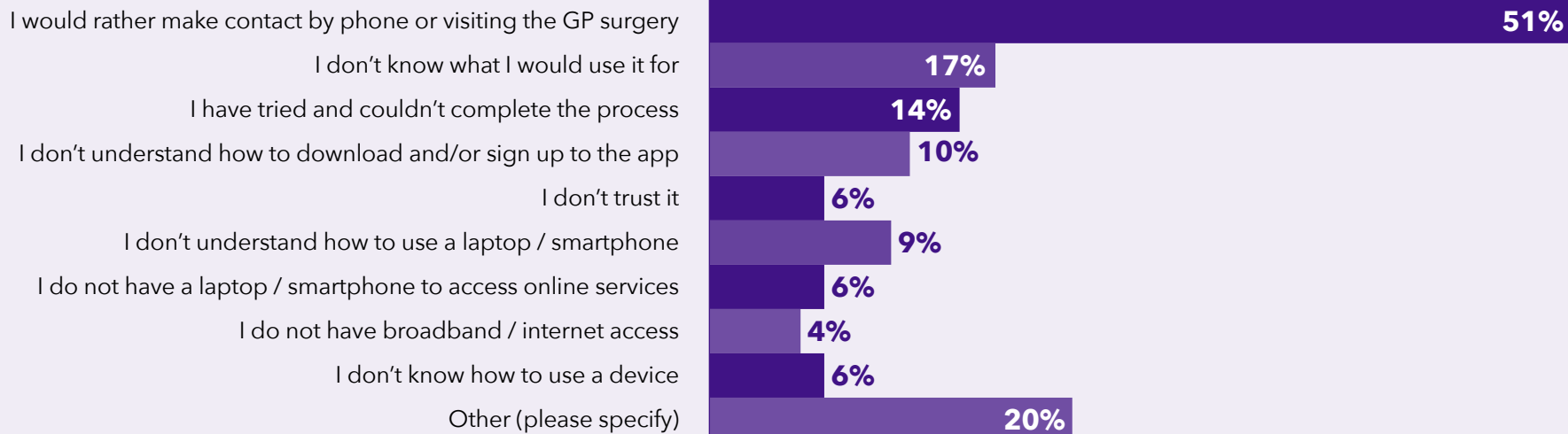
- I only needed it for my Covid-19 pass
- There are not usually online appointments available
- I do not need to order repeat medications
- I find it difficult to use
- My GP record is not available for me to view - I have not asked my GP
- My repeat medications are not available for me to order on the NHS App
- I don't find it useful
- My GP record is not available for me to view - I have asked my GP
- Other (please specify)



This question was asked to respondents who said they only rarely use the NHS App.

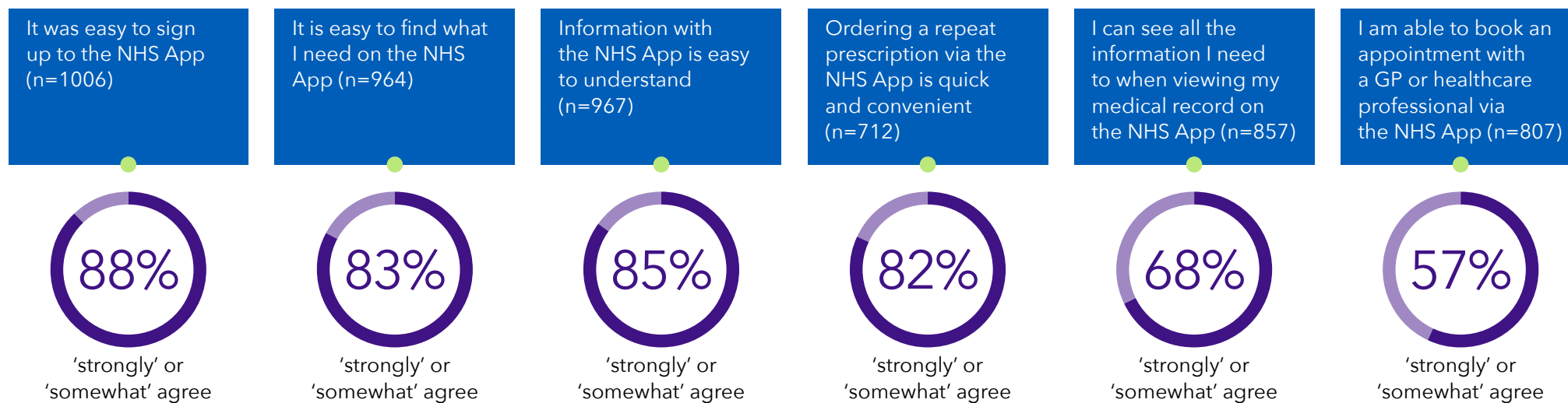
\* Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total is more than 100%

## Please indicate why you haven't used the NHS App\* (n=235)



This question was asked to respondents who said they have never used the NHS App.

### The following statements were asked:



\* Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total is more than 100%

# North East London ICS: Overall experiences of using the NHS App



This section uses data from all three sources: existing feedback, online survey and focus groups

## Positive experiences

### Convenient

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ Able to access 24/7
- ✓ One source of information

### Appointment management

- ✓ Able to book GP appointments (for self and dependents)

### Prescription management







- ✓ Order repeat prescriptions without need to contact the GP practice

### Information source






- ✓ Reliable source of information
- ✓ Access to healthcare records and test results
- ✓ Access to Covid -19 vaccination details

**“Using NHS App, very convenient for me to book appointments for myself and my daughter out of hours.”**

## Negative experiences

-  Some people are unable to book appointments with a named GP directly
-  Limited information available, including access to full medical history
-  Some patients are unable to access test results from hospital or specialist appointments
-  The NHS App does not always integrate with other applications and systems that patients use to manage their healthcare
-  Would prefer in-person or phone interaction with GP surgery, rather than use of digital tools
-  **“It would be great if my GP practice and the app were more integrated, but I appreciate this takes time.”**

## Suggestions for improvements

-  Introduce the functionality to book appointments (where not already in place), providing patients with a more convenient process
-  Update medical records, so patients have access to their full medical history
-  Ensure regular updates are made to allow patients to access test results from hospital or specialist appointments
-  Include a ‘live chat function’ to allow patients to engage with the GP practice in real time to answer any queries they may have when navigating the website
-  **“There are gaps in the record that covered a period when I went to a different GP surgery. It would be great if all records could be in one place.”**

# North East London ICS: Online survey results relating to GP surgery websites

## Three quarters of respondents have accessed their GP surgery website:

of the 1201 respondents, 72% had accessed their GP surgery website for themselves or on behalf of someone else.

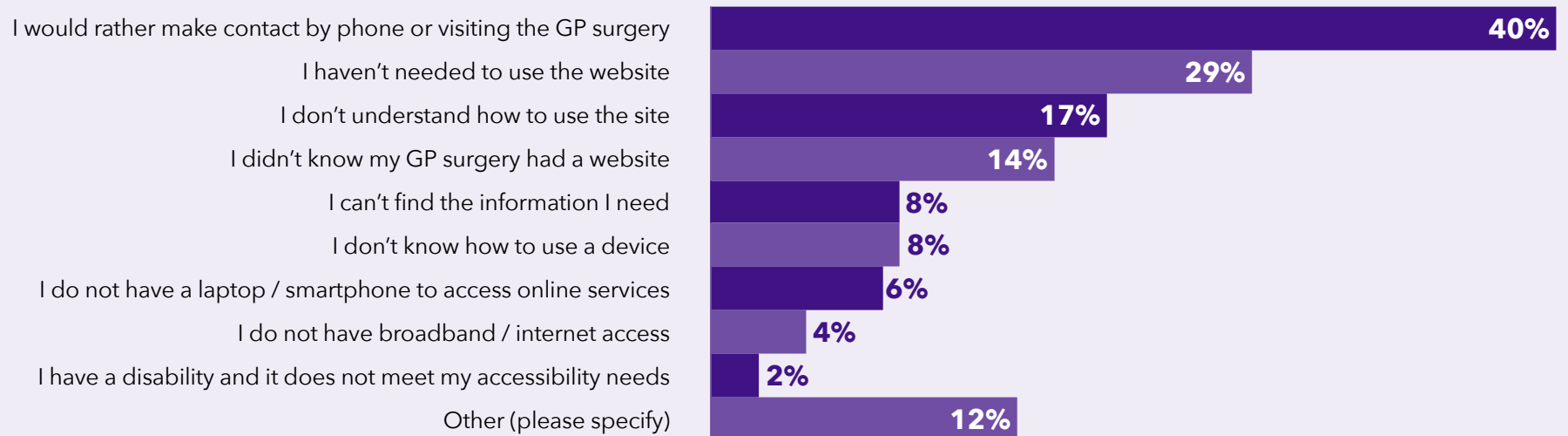
## Most respondents do not access their GP surgery website frequently:

of the 806 respondents, most only access their GP surgery website monthly (23%) or rarely (69%).

## Finding information is relatively easy:

most of the 987 respondents found it very (35%) or somewhat (44%) easy to find what they need on their GP surgery website.

### Please indicate why you haven't used your GP surgery website\* (n=276)



\* Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total is more than 100%

# North East London ICS: Overall experiences of using GP surgery websites



This section uses data from all three sources: existing feedback, online survey and focus groups

## Positive experiences

### Convenient

- ✓ Order repeat prescriptions without need to contact GP practice
- ✓ Smooth experience of ordering a sick note

**"I had a good experience when using online GP website to request a sick note for work my request was answered promptly with instructions of how to get the sick note."**

## Negative experiences

- Unable to book GP appointments
- The language used is not very accessible, especially for those for whom English is a second language
- Difficult to navigate and use, especially for those people who may have less experience using online platforms
- Some people, particularly the elderly, may face challenges due to limited technology skills, lack of access to devices or the internet or unease with unfamiliar online services
- Would prefer in-person or phone interaction with GP surgery, rather than use of digital tools
- Information is not kept up to date
- "Design feels very old and not intuitive to navigate. A suspicion that some content is out of date."**

## Suggestions for improvements

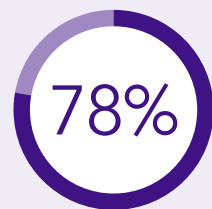
- Simplify and improve the menu structure and signposting to make information easier to find
- Introduce the functionality to request a routine appointment, providing patients with a more convenient process
- Introduce translation tools and ensure use of simplified language to enhance accessibility
- Ensure the website is kept up to date, to accurately reflect services available, members of staff, opening hours and contact information
- Offer training sessions to patients to improve their confidence in using GP surgery websites
- "Making it more clear what things are and how they can be used and using more layman's terms like fill this form for a repeat prescription or for a doctors sick certificate for you employers would help "**



# North East London ICS: Online survey results relating to communications

## Most text messages from GP surgeries are around appointments\*

  
**1232**  
respondents



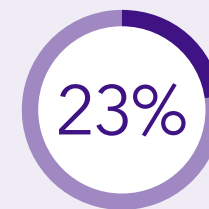
said they receive appointment reminders via text



said that they receive invitations to make appointments



said that they receive invitations to complete surveys



said that they receive information about test results

## Please let us know why you do not receive text messages from your GP surgery (n=41)

**10%**

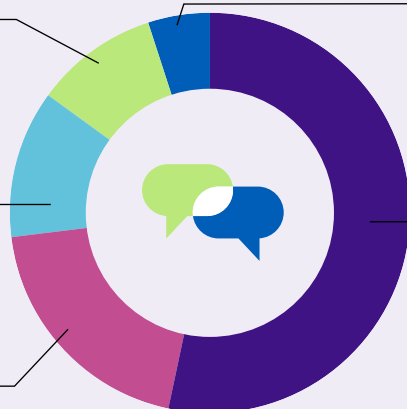
I do not have a personal mobile phone device (n=4)

**12%**

I chose to opt out of receiving text messages (n=5)

**20%**

Other (n=8)



**5%**

I have not provided my GP surgery with my mobile number (n=2)

**54%**

I didn't know my GP surgery could send me text messages (n=22)

Participants were asked 'How would you prefer to receive communications from your GP surgery?' (n=949)

## Answers, in order of most preferred were:

01



SMS / text message

04



WhatsApp

02



Telephone

05



Messaging via NHS App

03



Email

06



Letter / post

\* Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total is more than 100%

## Appendices

# Appendix 1: Existing patient feedback on Online Forms

An analysis was carried out on Accurx and eConsult (Online Consultation products) feedback, and the North East London ICS GP Patient Survey 2021 and 2022 results. The following themes were identified:

\*\* TH, Newham and B&D did not have any patient feedback via eConsult. Redbridge 13 patients, Havering 35 patients, Waltham Forest 43 patients, City and Hackney 30 patients sampled.

Theme	Detail		
<b>eConsult Patient Outcomes</b>	On average across the four boroughs, 55% of patients found their issue to be completely resolved via the use of online consultation services, while 70% of patients did not have to seek further help for their problem after the consultation.		
	Borough	% of patients who said their issue was completely resolved or improved 7 days after using the service	% of patients who did not have to return to the GP or any other health service for the same problem in the week after consulting online.
	Redbridge	50%	54%
	Havering	50%	71%
	Waltham Forest	65%	70%
City & Hackney	55%	83%	
<b>eConsult Patient Satisfaction</b>	Patient satisfaction was generally positive across the four boroughs, with an average satisfaction score of 69% overall and 72% of patients likely to recommend the online consultation services to friends and family.		
	Borough	% patients who indicated they were satisfied with the service	% of patients who would recommend the eConsult service to family and friends
	Redbridge	77%	85%
	Havering	71%	71%
	Waltham Forest	79%	74%
City & Hackney	50%	57%	

### eConsult Source of Referral

The top three most successful strategies to raise awareness of OC/VC services were via GP contact, practice staff and through the practice website. Incorporating this into planning may help to boost the utilisation of OC/VC services and in turn, patient outcomes. An additional consideration is the importance of GP involvement and face-to-face explanations of the service, as this may lead to better utilisation of the service and also more positively influence patient perception of the OC/VC services. For example, in C&H the patient satisfaction was only 50%, and the majority of referrals came from the practice website, as opposed to WF who had the highest rate of GP referrals and patient satisfaction.

Borough	Most common source of referrals	Other referral sources
Redbridge	GP practice staff alerting patients to the service	GP referral, the practice website and internet searches
Havering	Practice website	GP practice staff
Waltham Forest	GP practice staff	Practice website and the GP themselves
City & Hackney	Practice website	GP practice staff and the GP themselves

### Accurx Patient Feedback (all boroughs)

The majority of patient triage requests through Accurx were from patients aged between 20 to 60, although the highest occurrence of triage request came from infants aged between 0-1.

It would be interesting to know the reasons for referrals for those between 0-1 and 20-60 to understand whether more targeted patient information is needed to better manage requests from those patients most likely to utilise the service.

Perception of triage services via Accurx was positive, with 90% of patients describing it as 'very' or 'quite' easy to use.

## Appendix 2: Existing patient feedback on the NHS App

An analysis was carried out on data from the North East London ICS GP Patient Survey 2020-2023 and the NHS App Reporting Dashboard (July 2022-June 2023). The following themes were identified:

Theme																	
<b>Annual use of accessing medical records online</b>	<p>Across NEL ICS there was an increase in the percentage of patients who had accessed their medical records online in the 12 months from 2021 to 2022 (7% in 2021, and 16% in 2022), however this figure remained the same in 2023, with 16% of respondents stating they accessed their medical records online in past 12 months.</p> <p>Note: this is in relation to accessing medical records generally, not specifically via the NHS App.</p>																
<b>Monthly use of patient access to prospective medical records (NHS App)</b>	<p>The data from the NHS App Reporting Dashboard (July 22 - June 23) showed fluctuations throughout the year. Key data is shown below.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>View</th> <th>Average number of views per month</th> <th>Highest number of views</th> <th>Lowest number of views</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Record views</td> <td>130,362 views</td> <td>March 2023 (148,522 views)</td> <td>December 2022 (112,139 views)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Summary coded record view</td> <td>127,547 views</td> <td>March 2023 (145,634) views)</td> <td>December 2022 (109,064 views)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Detail coded record view</td> <td>73,599 views</td> <td>July 2023 (88,284views)</td> <td>December 2022 (58,604 views)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Note: the detailed coded view holds all medical information, whereas the summary coded record view only contains information about a patient's medicines and allergies. Patients need to contact their GP surgery to request access to their detailed coded record.</p>	View	Average number of views per month	Highest number of views	Lowest number of views	Record views	130,362 views	March 2023 (148,522 views)	December 2022 (112,139 views)	Summary coded record view	127,547 views	March 2023 (145,634) views)	December 2022 (109,064 views)	Detail coded record view	73,599 views	July 2023 (88,284views)	December 2022 (58,604 views)
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Detail coded record view	73,599 views	July 2023 (88,284views)	December 2022 (58,604 views)														

## Appendix 3: Existing patient feedback on GP surgery websites

An analysis was carried out on data from the North East London ICS GP Patient Survey 2020-2023<sup>2</sup>. The following themes were identified:

The data showed an increase in the percentage of patients using online services, such as booking appointments online and ordering repeat prescriptions online, from 2021 to 2023.



Of the online services, booking appointments online appeared as the most used service (36% of patients in 2023) and filling in an Online Form the least used service (16% of patients in 2023).



The data showed a year-on-year decrease from 2021 to 2023 in how easy patients found the GP surgery website to use to look for information or access services.

When asked, 'how easy is it to use your GP surgery website to look for information or access services' 67% of patients in 2021 agreed it was easy, however this reduced to 58% on 2022 and 56% in 2023.

