

London Digital First Programme: North West London Patient Perspectives Case Study

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



digital first
Connected Primary Care

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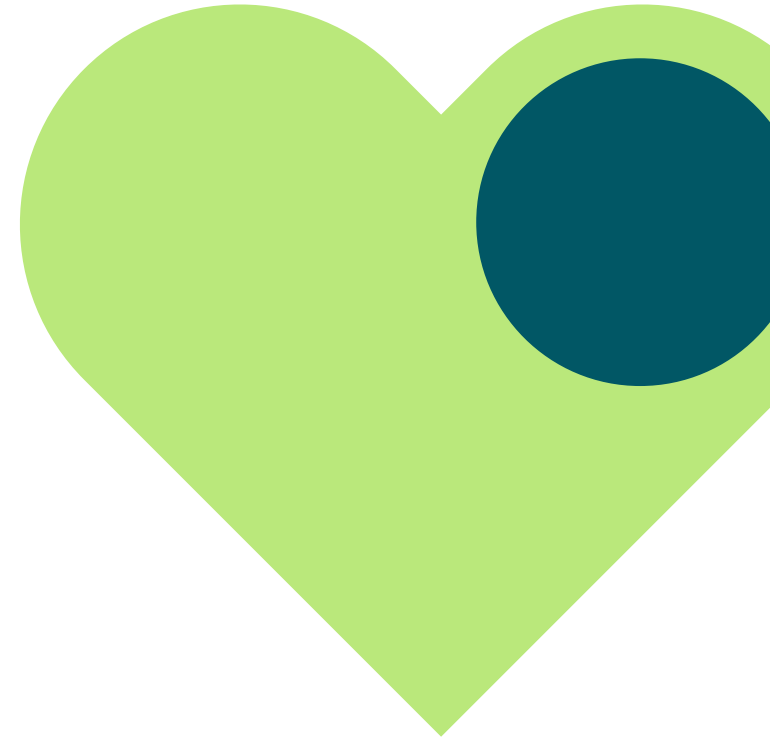


Introduction

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 West London (NWL) 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 (74%) had used Online Forms for themselves or on behalf of someone else, showing relatively high awareness. Access was primarily via the GP surgery website (55%) for the purpose of booking appointments (54%), ordering prescriptions (43%) or seeking medical advice (41%). The focus group findings echoed this with benefits raised around the ability to order prescriptions, follow up on test results and being able to book appointments (including for dependents). The other key benefit highlighted was time saved, with forms being quick and easy to use, and patients able to get a prompt response without waiting in queues.

Most survey respondents (76%) were either strongly or somewhat happy with the outcome of using Online Forms. The focus group suggested that those who were unhappy with the outcomes may have felt this way because of inconsistent availability of the service and response times. Other challenges raised were around Online Forms being difficult to locate and having to answer many, and sometimes what could be perceived as irrelevant and repetitive questions.

No previous data was available to compare changes in attitude or experience over time.

74%
use Online Forms

72%
find Online Forms
easy to use

75%
were happy with
the outcome
following use

86%
use monthly or less



NHS App

Three quarters of survey respondents (74%) 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 168,113 views per month (between July 2022 and June 2023), however usage fluctuated throughout the year (see Appendix 1: Existing patient feedback on the NHS App for more information).

The focus group discussion highlighted key benefits around the simple and intuitive design which enabled 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 and to use it as a source of reliable information. However, some raised concerns about the possibility of being able to access test results without the guidance of a medical professional, which could cause anxiety. Other challenges included not being able to access the full medical history and confusion about this app in relation to other available health apps, with there being lack of clarity around which to use and for what purpose.

74%
use the NHS App

81%
found it easy
to sign up

80%
find it easy to
locate the information
they need

77%
use it monthly
or less



GP surgery website

Most survey respondents (87%) had used GP surgery websites for themselves or on behalf of someone else and 84% found them easy to use. This is higher than other data sources which showed only 65% of respondents described their GP surgery website as 'easy' to use (see Appendix 2: Existing patient feedback on GP practice websites).

87%
use their GP
surgery website

84%
find it easy to use

90%
only use it montly or
less



Communications

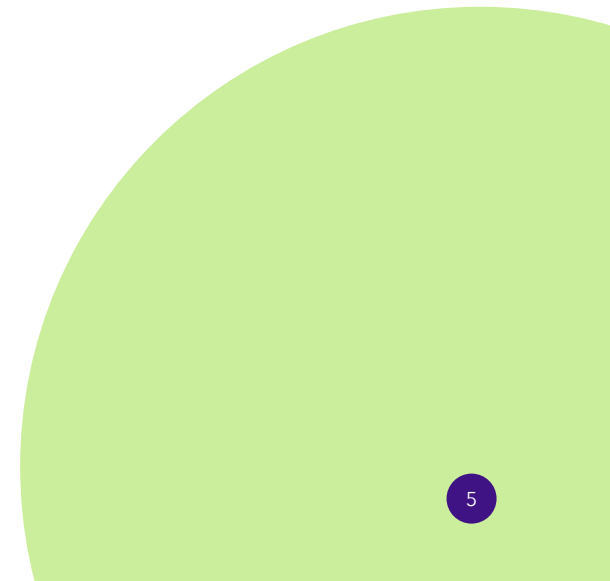
Appointment reminders (80%), invitations to book appointments (61%), and to access test results (29%) were the most common reasons for receiving contact from a GP surgery via text message.

SMS / text message (61%), email (15%) and telephone (10%) were the top three preferred communications methods.

61%
prefer SMS / text
messages

15%
prefer email

10%
prefer telephone



North West London (NWL) ICS :

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

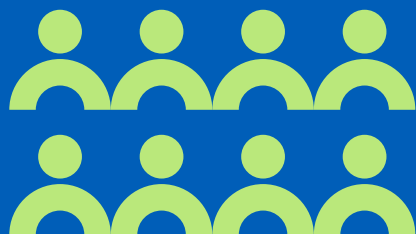
1. Existing data

 North West London ICS GP Patient Survey 2020-2023

 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.



x8

Eight participants

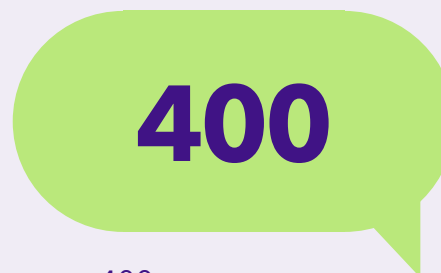


x5

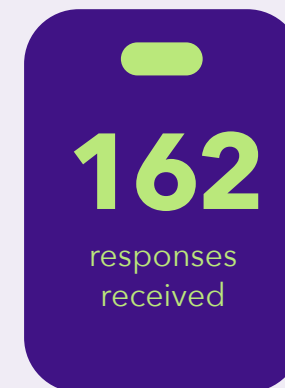
Five of the eight North West London boroughs represented

2. Online survey

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



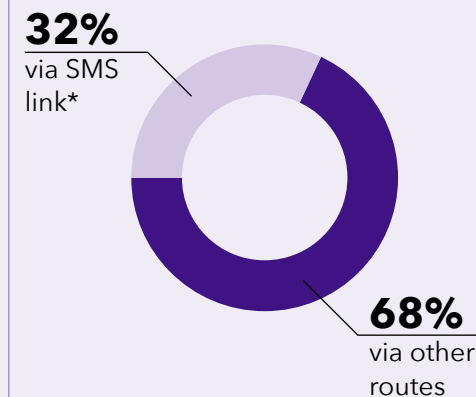
400 text messages sent by SMS*



162

responses received

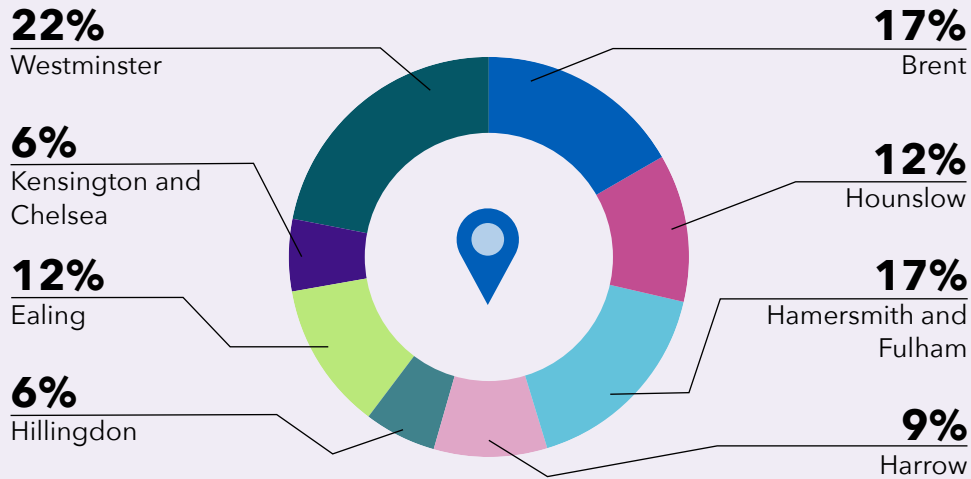
*one GP surgery (Victoria Medical Centre) invited 400 patients via SMS to participate in the survey.



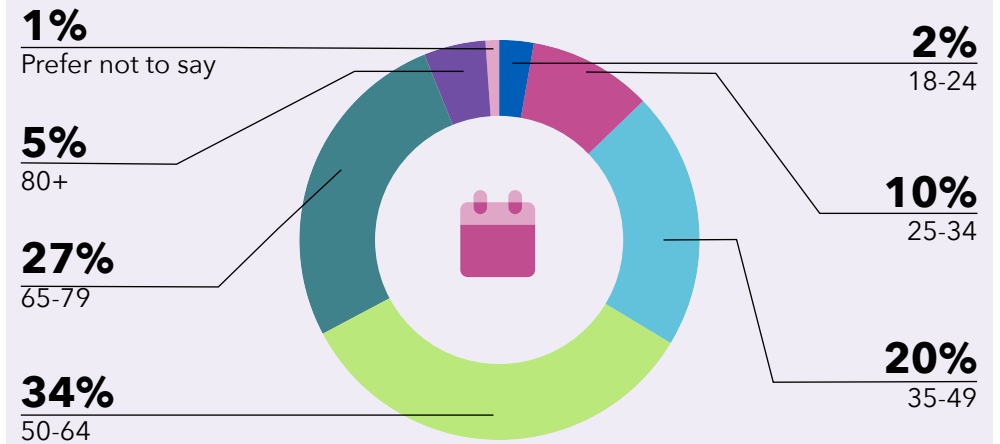
Key demographics of survey respondents are detailed overleaf.

North West London ICS: Survey respondent demographics

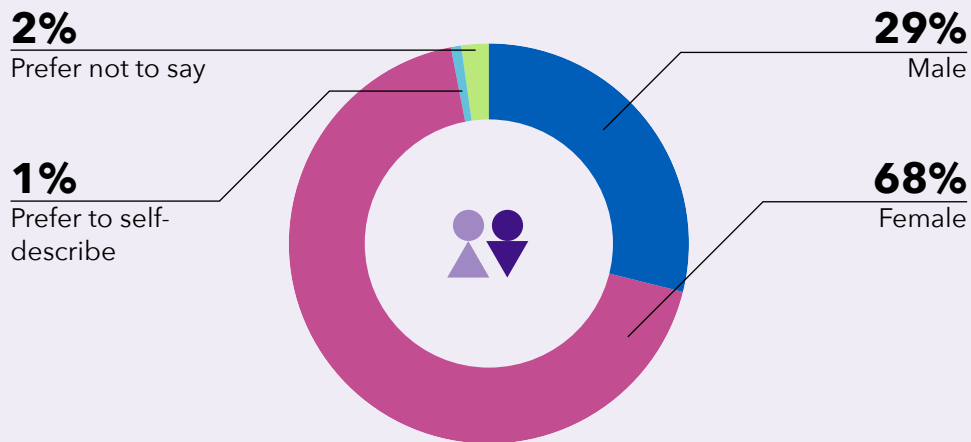
Borough (n=162)



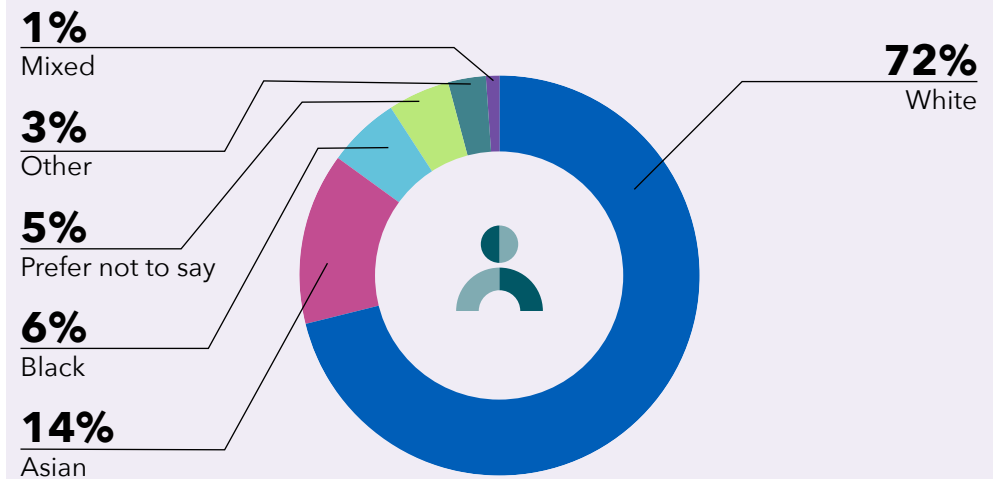
Age group (n=161)



Gender (n=161)



Ethnicity (n=160)



North West London ICS: Online survey results relating to Online Form use

Three quarters of respondents had used Online Forms:

of the 157 respondents, 74% had used an Online Form for themselves or on behalf of someone else.

Most respondents do not use Online Forms frequently:

of 112 respondents, most use them monthly (25%) or rarely (61%).

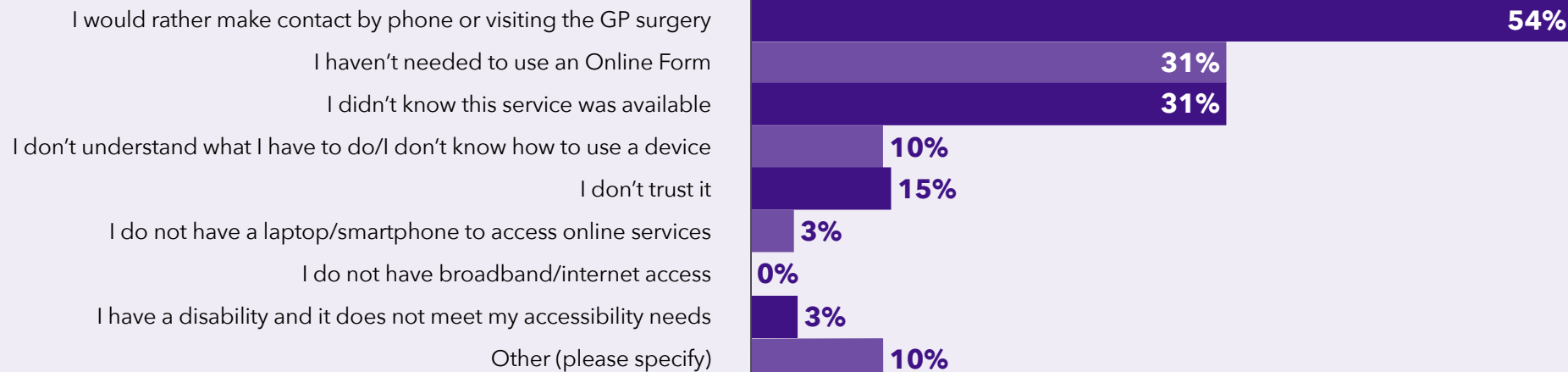
Most people heard about Online Forms via their GP surgery website*:

of the 124 respondents, 48% heard about them via their GP website, 39% by the GP surgery/ staff, 22% via SMS / text message and 16% via the NHS App.

Online Forms are mainly accessed via GP surgery websites or apps:

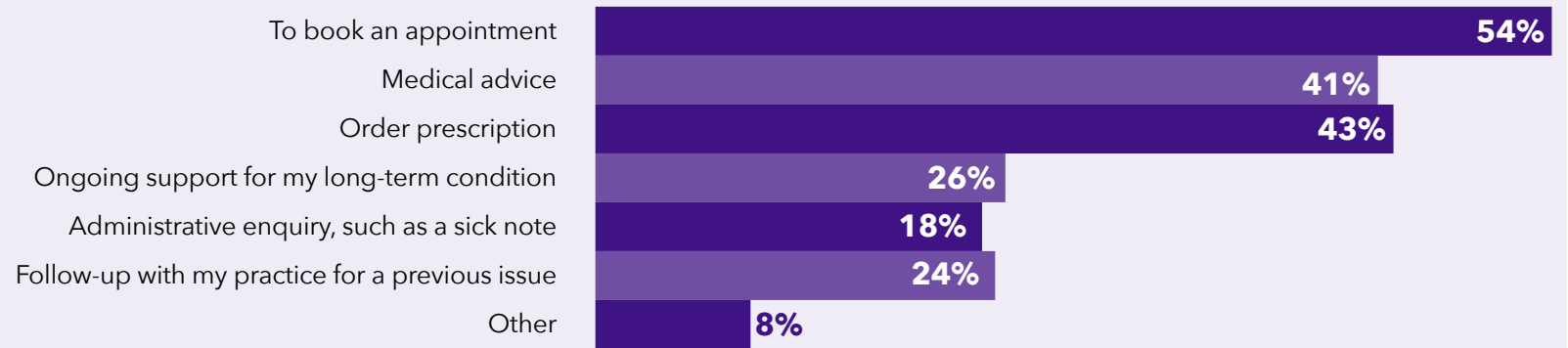
of the 121 respondents, 55% and 22% accessed online forms via GP surgery websites or apps, respectively. Only 6% said they required help from GP reception staff or family / friends.

Reasons for not accessing the service* (n=39)

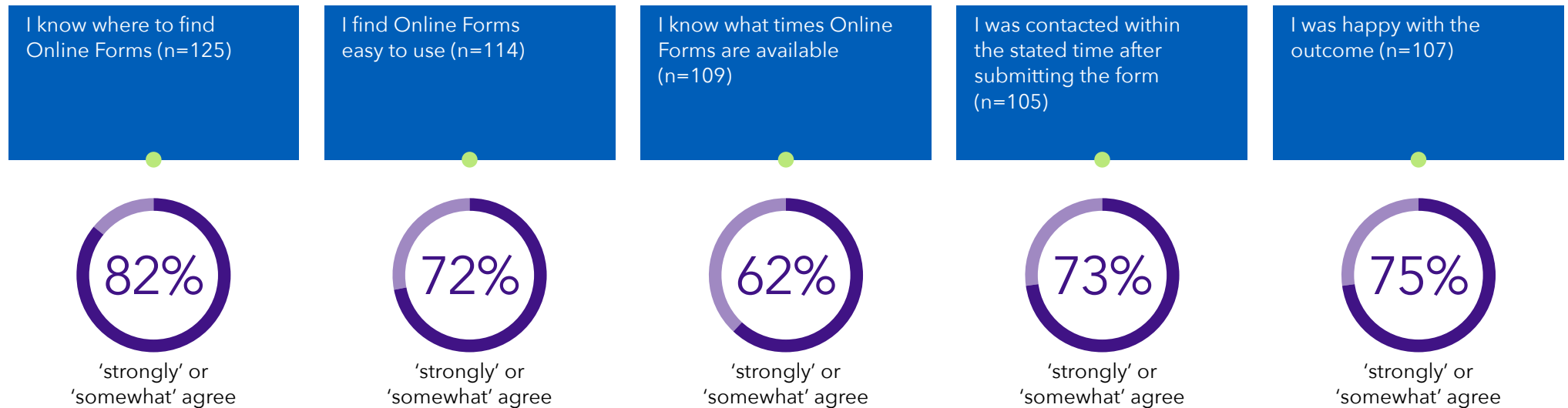


* Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total is more than 100%

What have you used Online Forms for?* (n=124)



The following statements were asked:



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

North West 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

Time saving

- ✓ Don't need to wait in phone queues
- ✓ Quick and easy to use
- ✓ Prompt responses from GP surgery

More accessible

- ✓ Support for people who face challenges in accessing the GP practice in person
- ✓ Patients able to use their laptop to control their smartphones to access online consultations
- ✓ Accelerated treatment and timely medication access for patients with lifelong conditions

Enables self care and empowerment

- ✓ Request appointments for dependents
- ✓ Request test results without an appointment
- ✓ Order repeat prescriptions without need to contact the GP

More accurate

- ✓ Have time and means to express concerns in detail
- ✓ Allows ability to provide more accurate information to the GP

"It's definitely saving me trips to A&E in crisis because of the fact that it's sped up that treatment because I'm not having to say please, please to the receptionist."

Negative experiences

- Lengthy, irrelevant, or numerous questions
- It can be challenging to locate the form
- There can be inconsistent availability of service and response times
- Some patients do not have access to online services, and can be digitally excluded
- Healthcare professionals outside of London had not heard of the platform, so were unable to access the information
- Would prefer an option for in-person or phone interaction with GP surgery, rather than use of digital tools.

"Less need to run through sets of questions/options that don't help make it a smooth experience. It felt hard to 'open' the option to just say what the problem was."

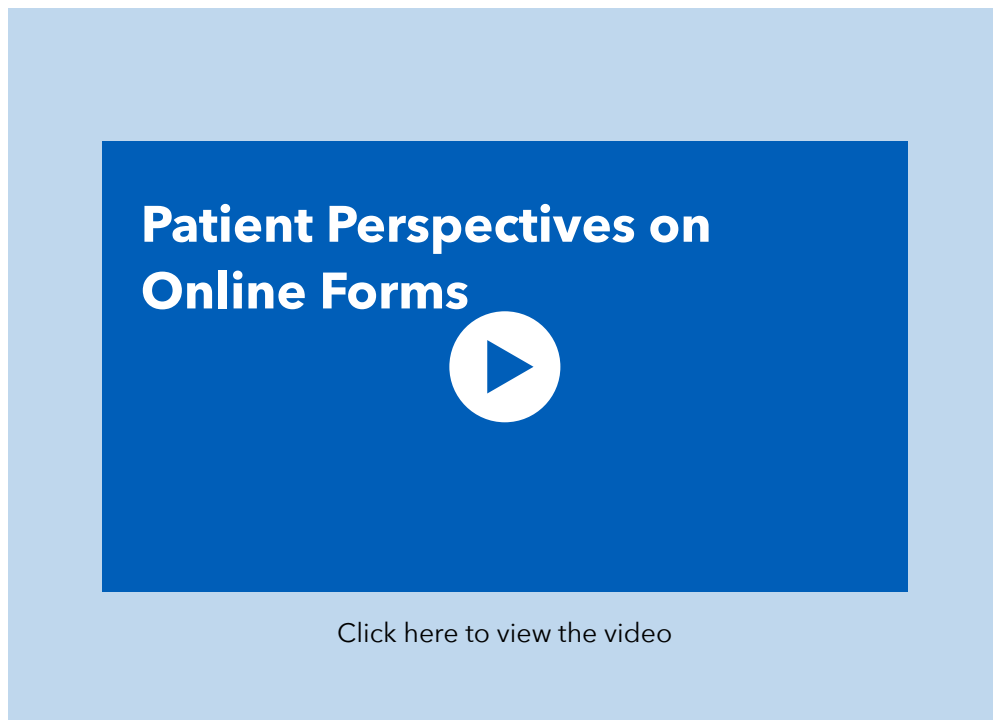
Suggestions for improvements

- Extend the 'opening hours' to improve accessibility and convenience
- Introduce a 'live chat' function to allow patients to access real-time support when needed
- Streamline the online form to reduce the number of required questions
- Test new digital tools with patient focus groups before deployment

"I think that the majority of people who are on using these systems are having to use these systems are older, less computer savvy and so therefore the way they navigate their way through the systems needs to be looked at and made simpler and easier to follow."

North West 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 West London ICS: Online survey results relating to the NHS App

Most respondents had used the NHS App:

of the 149 respondents, 74% had used it for themselves or on behalf of someone else.

Most respondents do not use the NHS App frequently:

of 100 respondents, most use it monthly (29%) or rarely (48%).

Most people heard about the NHS App via Covid-19 communications*

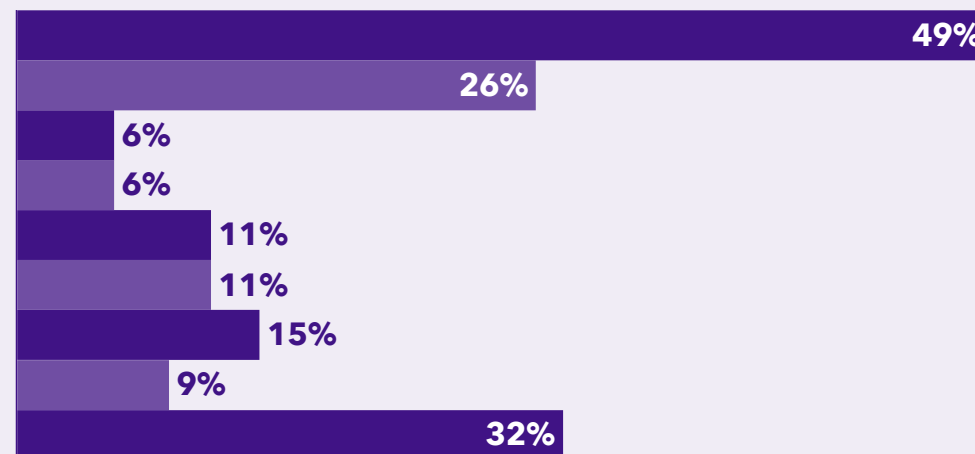
of the 126 respondents, 37% heard about NHS App via communications related to Covid-19, 32% via the NHS website, 20% via text/SMS message from GP surgery and 19% via their GP surgery website.

The most common use of the NHS App is to view medical records*:

over half (57%) of the 122 respondents reported using the NHS App for this purpose. Other common uses included to order repeat prescriptions (45%) and to book a GP appointment (22%).

Please let us know why you are not using the NHS App* (n=47)

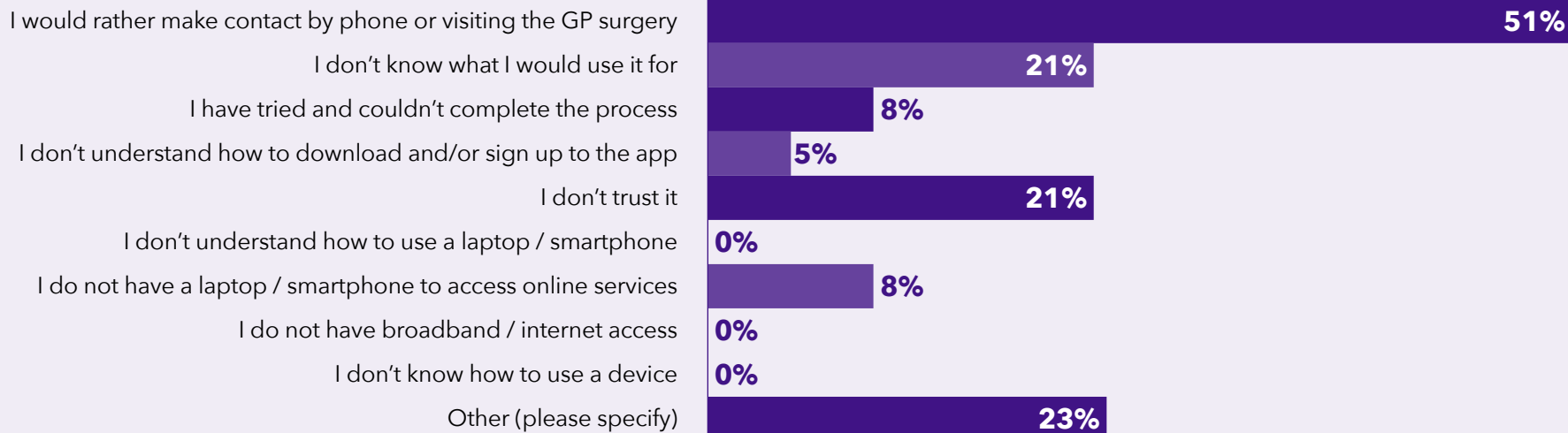
- I only needed it for my Covid-19 pass
- There are not usually online appointments available
- I do not need to order repeat medications
- I find it difficult to use
- My GP record is not available for me to view - I have not asked my GP
- My repeat medications are not available for me to order on the 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.

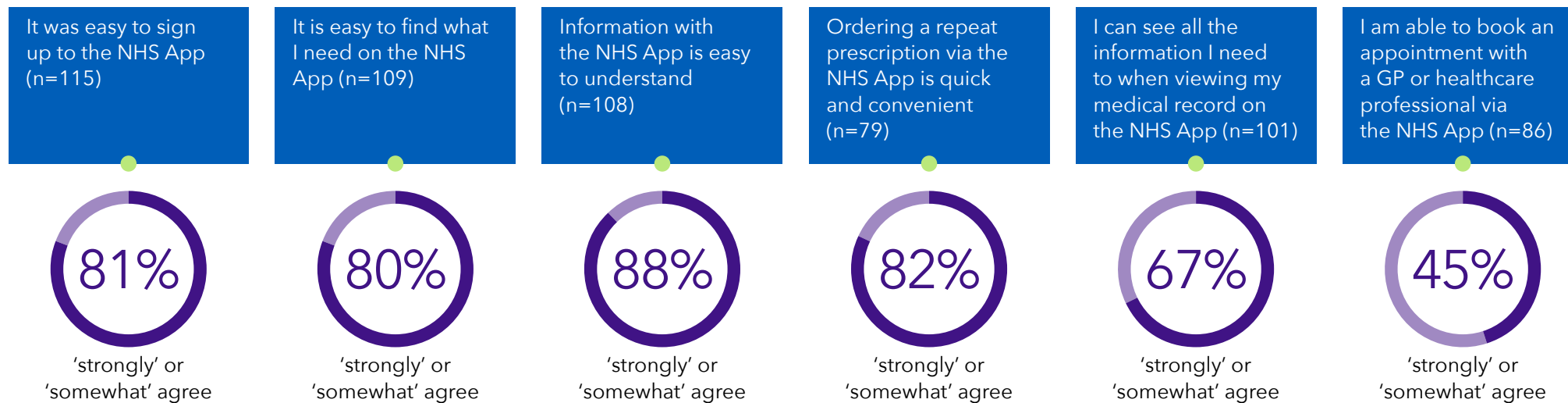
* Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total is more than 100%

Please indicate why you haven't used the NHS App* (n=39)



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 West 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

Ease of use

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ Available to access 24/7 and out of hours services

Access to records

- ✓ Easy to access medical history
- ✓ Can access test results without a GP appointment

Healthcare management

- ✓ Order repeat prescriptions without need to contact the GP
- ✓ Supports appointment management

Information source

- ✓ Reliable source of information for symptoms and advice



“Get info about tests etc without having to wait weeks for even a telephone consultation.”

Negative experiences



Unable to book appointments with GP directly



Limited information available, including access to full medical history



Some patients are unable to access test results from hospital or specialist appointments



Access to test results before they are reviewed or explained by a clinician which could cause worry/anxiety



There are too many methods to access the same information



“Although I have never had any alarming results it could be bad if a patient got bad results without anyone to interpret.”

Suggestions for improvements



Re-introduce the functionality to book appointments, as this was available during the Covid-19 pandemic



Maintain regular updates of patients records across the healthcare system to allow timely access and avoid delays



Include a brief explanation of test results within the record



Streamline the multiple healthcare systems in to one platform, so all information can be found in one place



“Only thing is the uncertainty over overlap between practice website, online consultation and app. Could do with streamlining and clarifying for everyone.”

North West London ICS:

Online survey results relating to GP surgery websites

Most respondents have accessed their GP surgery website:

out of the 157 respondents, 87% had accessed their GP surgery website for themselves or on behalf of someone else.

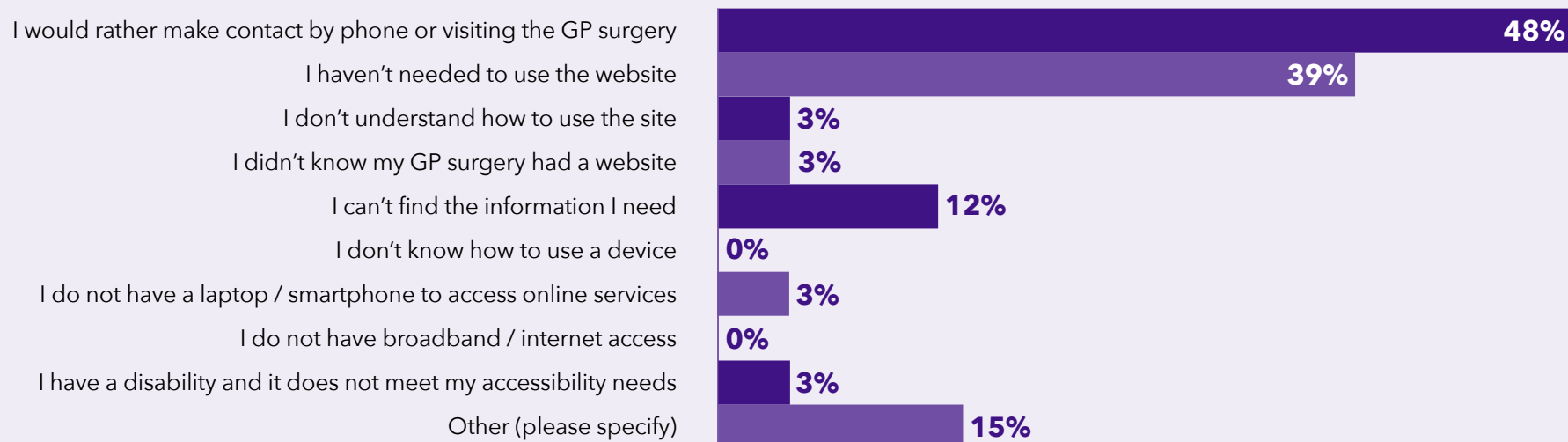
Most respondents do not access their GP surgery website frequently:

of 122 respondents, most only access their GP surgery website monthly (34%) or rarely (57%).

Finding information is relatively easy:

most of the 137 respondents found it very (34%) or somewhat (50%) easy to find what they need on their GP surgery website.

Please indicate why you haven't used your GP surgery website* (n=33)



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

North West London ICS: Overall experiences of using GP surgery websites



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

Negative experiences

- Unable to request a routine appointment with their GP
- The website lacks an email contact option for patients who cannot use voice telephony to reach the GP surgery
- Difficult to navigate and use, especially for those individuals who may have less experience using online platforms
- Would prefer an option for in-person or phone interaction with GP surgery, rather than use of digital tools
- Information on the GP website is not kept up to date

"Practice websites can often have too many pages making it difficult to navigate. No search toolbar to find a specific page."

Suggestions for improvements

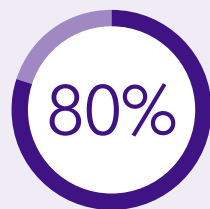
- Simplify and improvements to the menu structure and signposting to make information easier to find
- Ensure that GP surgery websites adhere to 2016 Accessible Information Standard by providing people with disabilities with different access options e.g. phone or e-mail
- Ensure the website is kept up to date: to accurately reflect services available, members of staff, opening hours and contact information
- GP surgeries to proactively inform patients of changes made to the website, to ensure they are kept informed

"I wish all care settings would comply with the 2016 Accessibility Information standards, which are very good, which basically say that any care sitting in health and social care should communicate with the patient according to what is possible for the patient...basically do not assume that people can hear and see."

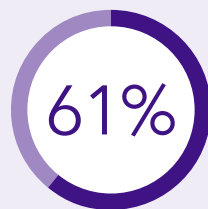
North West London ICS: Online survey results relating to communications

Most text messages from GP surgeries are around appointments*


160
respondents



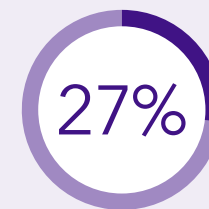
said they receive appointment reminders via text



said that they receive invitations to make appointments



said that they received information about test results



said that they receive invitations to complete surveys

Please let us know why you do not receive text messages from your GP surgery (n=3)

33%

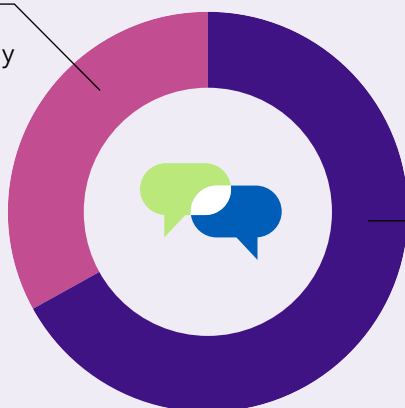
I have not provided my GP surgery with my mobile number (n=1)

0%

I didn't know my GP surgery could send me text messages

0%

I chose to opt out of receiving text messages



67%
Other (n=2)

Participants were asked 'How would you prefer to receive communications from your GP surgery?' (n=131)

Answers, in order of most preferred were:

01



SMS / text message

04



WhatsApp

02



Email

05



Messaging via NHS App

03



Telephone

06



Letter / post

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

Appendices

Appendix 1: Existing patient feedback on the NHS App

An analysis was carried out on data from the NHS App Reporting Dashboard (July 2022-June 2023) and the North West London ICS GP Patient Survey 2021-2023. The following themes were identified:

Theme																	
Annual use of accessing medical records online	<p>Across NWL ICS there was a year-on-year increase in the percentage of patients who had accessed their medical records online in the past 12 months from 2021 to 2023 (12% in 2021, 21% in 2022 and 23% in 2023).</p> <p>Note: this is in relation to accessing medical records generally, not specifically via the NHS App.</p>																
Monthly use of patient access to prospective medical records (NHS App)	<p>The NHS App Reporting dashboard (July 22 - June 23) showed fluctuations throughout the year. Key data is shown below.</p> <table><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>168,113 views</td><td>March 2023 (197,405 views)</td><td>August 2022 (144,166 views)</td></tr><tr><td>Summary coded record view</td><td>163,648 views</td><td>March 2023 (192,546 views)</td><td>August 2022 (140,029 views)</td></tr><tr><td>Detail coded record view</td><td>102,132 views</td><td>June 2023 (137,051 views)</td><td>September 2022 74,715 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 surgeries to request access to the detailed coded record.</p>	View	Average number of views per month	Highest number of views	Lowest number of views	Record views	168,113 views	March 2023 (197,405 views)	August 2022 (144,166 views)	Summary coded record view	163,648 views	March 2023 (192,546 views)	August 2022 (140,029 views)	Detail coded record view	102,132 views	June 2023 (137,051 views)	September 2022 74,715 views)
View	Average number of views per month	Highest number of views	Lowest number of views														
Record views	168,113 views	March 2023 (197,405 views)	August 2022 (144,166 views)														
Summary coded record view	163,648 views	March 2023 (192,546 views)	August 2022 (140,029 views)														
Detail coded record view	102,132 views	June 2023 (137,051 views)	September 2022 74,715 views)														

Appendix 2: Existing patient feedback on GP surgery websites

An analysis was carried out on data from the North West London ICS GP Patient Survey 2021-2023. The following themes were identified:

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



Of the online services, booking appointments online appeared as the most used service (33% of patients in 2023) and filing in an online form the least used service (13% 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' 76% of patients in 2021 agreed it was easy, however this reduced to 68% on 2022 and 65% in 2023.

