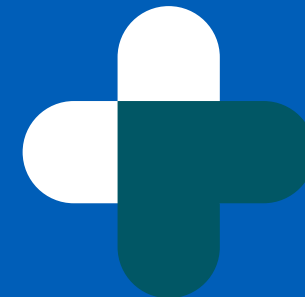


London Digital First Programme: South West London Patient Perspectives Case Study

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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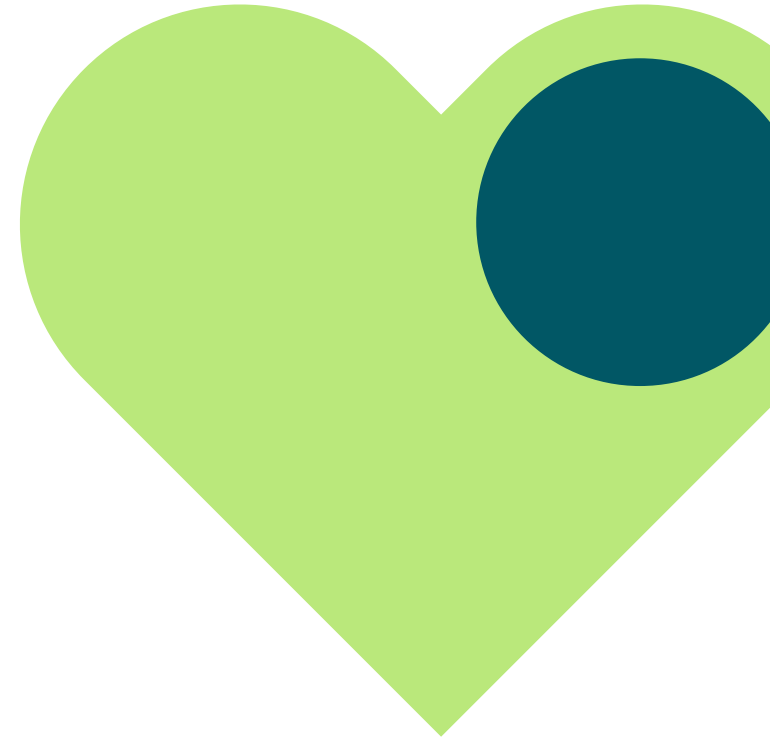


Introduction

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 South West London (SWL) 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)

Most survey respondents (58%) had used Online Forms for themselves or on behalf of someone else, which is significantly lower than other ICSs - further work is required to understand why this is the case. Access was primarily via the GP website (35%) or an app (32%) for the purpose of booking appointments (61%), ordering prescriptions (45%) or for medical advice (20%). The focus group findings echoed this with benefits raised around the ability to access reliable information and educational content, such as appointment information and healthy living tips. The other key benefits highlighted were time saved, with forms being quick and easy to use, and enabling a prompt response without waiting in queues (this was also found in a previous survey, see Appendix 1: Existing patient feedback on Online Forms for more details). Additionally, patients found Online Forms support more productive discussions with GPs/healthcare professionals by providing them with accurate information ahead of the appointment.

A majority of survey respondents (73%) agreed they knew what times Online Forms were available for submission, although the focus group did highlight some challenges around inconsistency in availability of the service and with different appointments offered online compared to over the phone. Other concerns were around ensuring people are not digitally excluded and which staff members have access to the forms for triaging. Digital exclusion and service time inconsistency were both highlighted in a previous survey too (see Appendix 1: Existing patient feedback on Online Forms) suggesting these are areas for improvement in SWL.

58%
use Online Forms

81%
find Online Forms easy to use

81%
were happy with the outcome following use

92%
use monthly or less



NHS App

Most survey respondents (75%) 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 138,826 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).

The focus group discussion highlighted key benefits around the simple and accessible design which enables access to records and prescription management - the two most common uses identified in the survey. The third most common use in the survey was to book appointments, however it was raised in the focus group that not everyone could do this directly. Other challenges included not being able to access full medical history or test results from hospital or specialist appointments and a lack of awareness that the NHS App can also be accessed via a desktop, in addition to via a mobile app, making it more accessible than they realised.

75%
use the NHS App

86%
found it easy to sign up

86%
find it easy to locate the information they need

90%
use it monthly or less



GP surgery website

A third of survey respondents (31%) had not used GP websites for themselves or on behalf of someone else, however 83% of those who had used GP websites found them easy to use. This is higher than other data sources which showed only 67% of people found their GP surgery website 'easy' to use (see Appendix 3: Existing patient feedback on GP surgery websites)

69%
use their GP
surgery website

83%
find it easy to use

94%
only use it
monthly or less



Communications

Appointment reminders (74%), invitations to book appointments (62%), and surveys (33%) were the most common reasons for receiving contact from a GP surgery via text message.

When asked about preferred communication methods, SMS / text message (72%), email (12%) and telephone (8%) were the top three responses.

72%
prefer SMS / text
messages




12%
prefer email

8%
prefer telephone

South West London (SWL) ICS:

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

1. Existing data

-  Accurx (Online Consultation product) Patient Feedback Data (January 2023-June 2023)
-  South 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.



x4

Four participants



x3

Three of the six South West 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.

5,000

text messages
sent by SMS

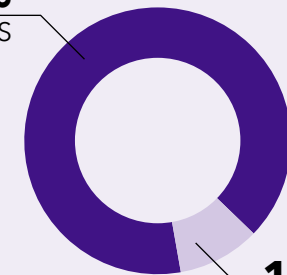
by five GP surgeries (Central Surgery, Langley Surgery, Sunray Surgery, Acorn Group Practice, and Putney mead Group Practice) and one PCN (Sutton PCN).

195

responses
received

90%

via SMS
link



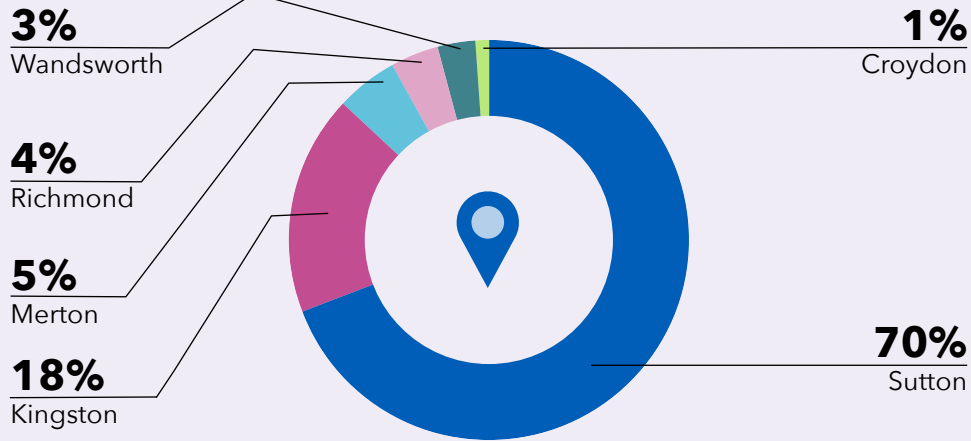
10%

via other
routes

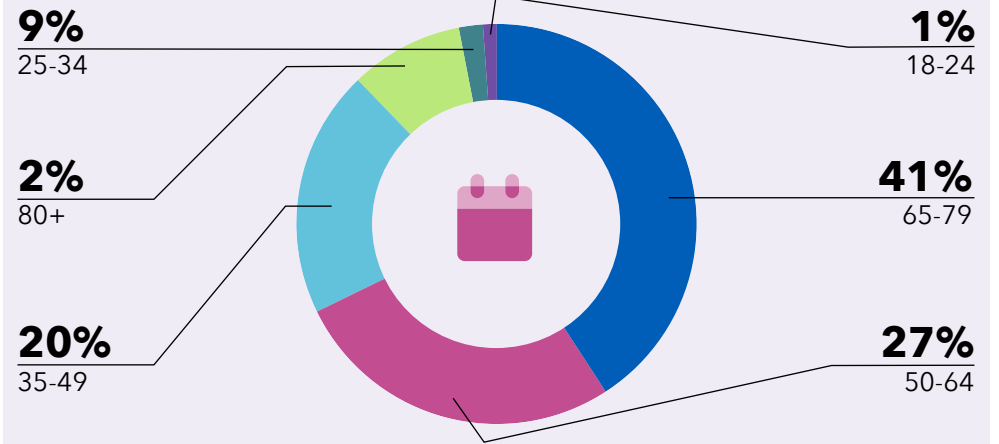
Key demographics of survey respondents are detailed overleaf.

South West London ICS: Survey respondent demographics

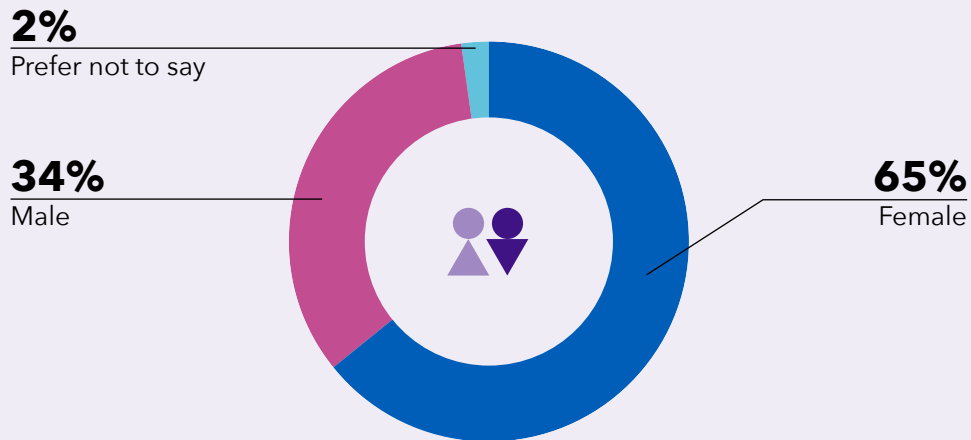
Borough (n=195)



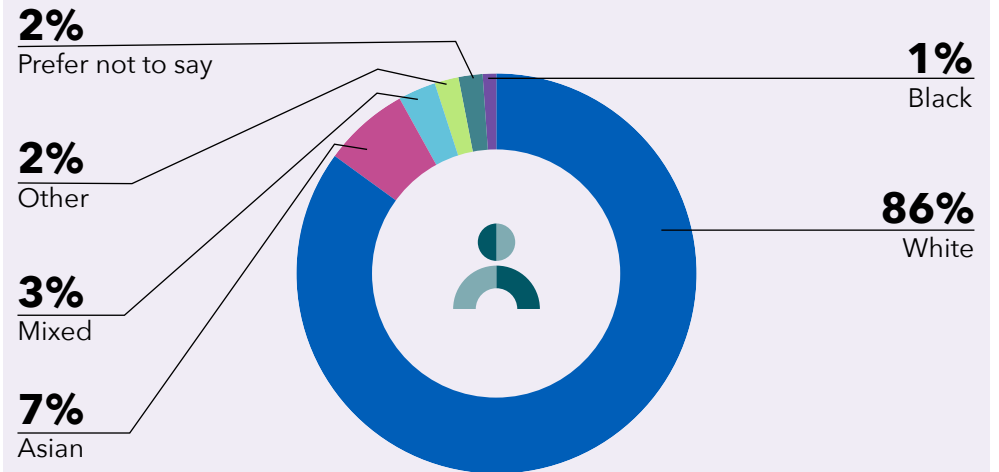
Age group (n=195)



Gender (n=193)



Ethnicity (n=195)



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

Many respondents had not used Online Forms:

of the 191 respondents, 42% had not used Online Forms

Most respondents do not use Online Forms frequently:

of 113 respondents, most use them monthly (41%) or rarely (51%).

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

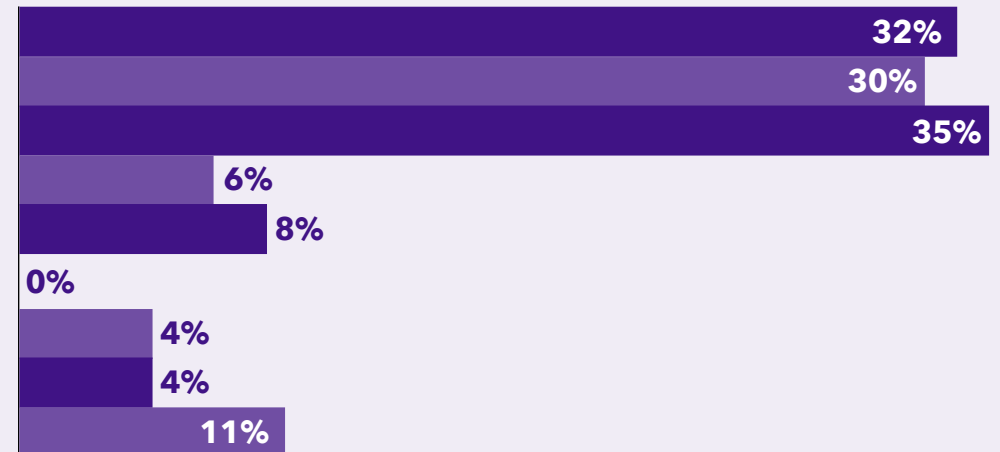
of the 134 respondents, 40% heard about them via GP surgery/staff, 31% via SMS/text message, 30% via their GP surgery website, and 16% via the NHS App.

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

of the 131 respondents, 35% and 32% accessed Online Forms via GP surgery websites or apps, respectively. Only 6% said they required help from GP reception staff or family/friends.

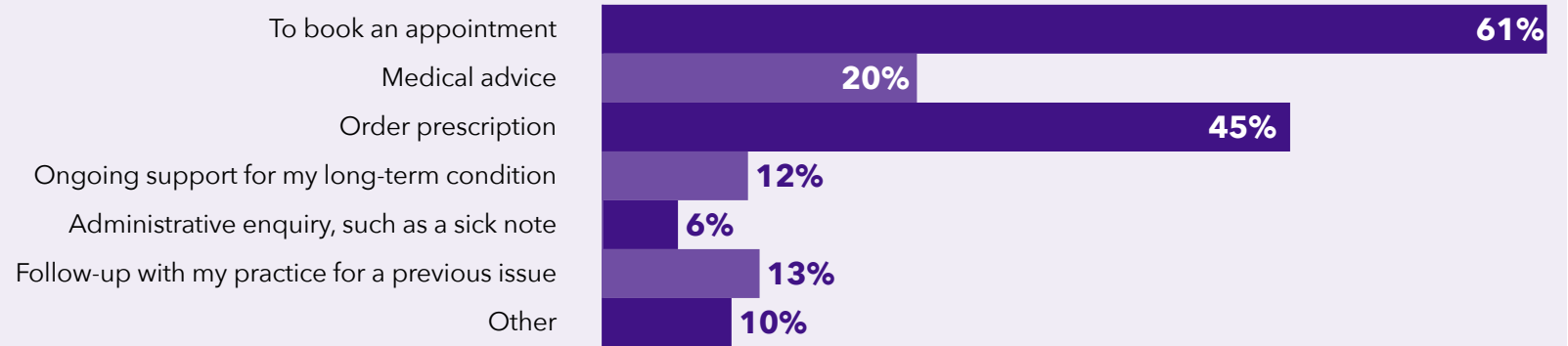
Reasons for not accessing the service* (n=79)

- 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)

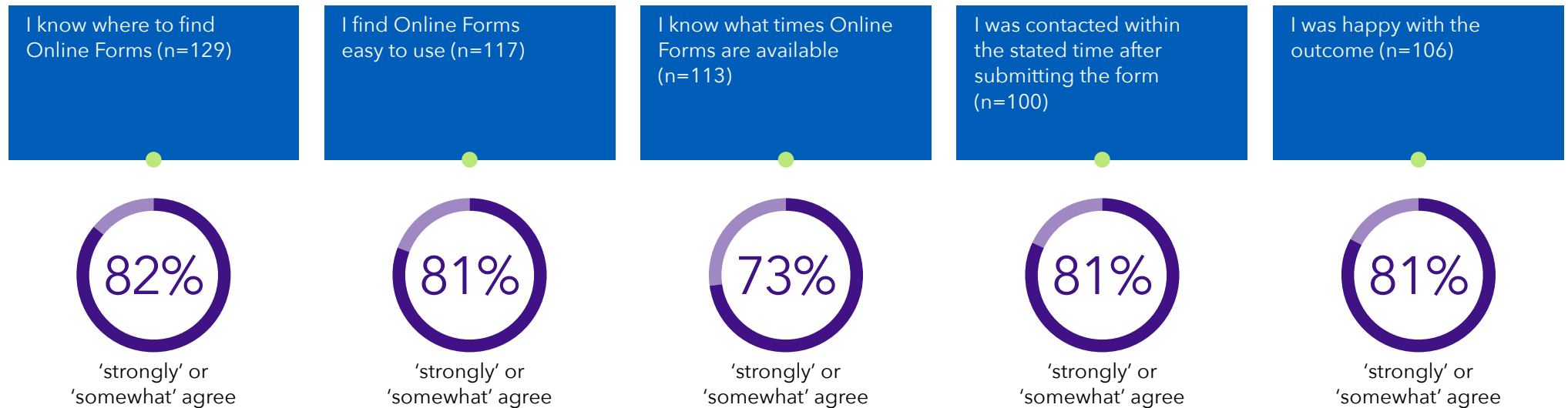


* Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total is more than 100%

What have you used Online Forms for?* (n=130)



The following statements were asked:



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

South 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 travel
- ✓ Don't need to wait in phone queues
- ✓ Able to access the service in own time
- ✓ Prompt response from GP practice

More accurate

- ✓ Ability to provide more accurate information to GP ahead of the appointment, leading to a productive discussion
- ✓ Ability to capture information from the GP appointment, encouraging transparency

Enables self-care and empowerment

- ✓ Able to access reliable information and educational content e.g. healthy living tips
- ✓ Able to access appointment information

Ease of use

- ✓ Easy and quick to use
- ✓ Clear layout

"I have used the Online Form now at least 5 times and selected to discuss with my GP over the phone. It is really efficient as my GP has a written summary of what I want to discuss with him/her and we tend to have a very productive discussion over the phone."

Negative experiences

- There can be inconsistency in the availability of the service
- Some patients do not have access to online services
- Different appointments offered on the phone and online, causing confusion and delay
- Patients are unclear who has access to their personal information once a request has been submitted
- Difficulty accessing and inputting information on the small screen of a mobile phone
- Some patients would not trust a diagnosis made via an online platform

"I'm a bit older and our generation is not used to digital devices at home. I'm concerned about the elder generation, specifically the ones who are not digital, what will happen to them? Are they going to be forgotten by the GPs?"

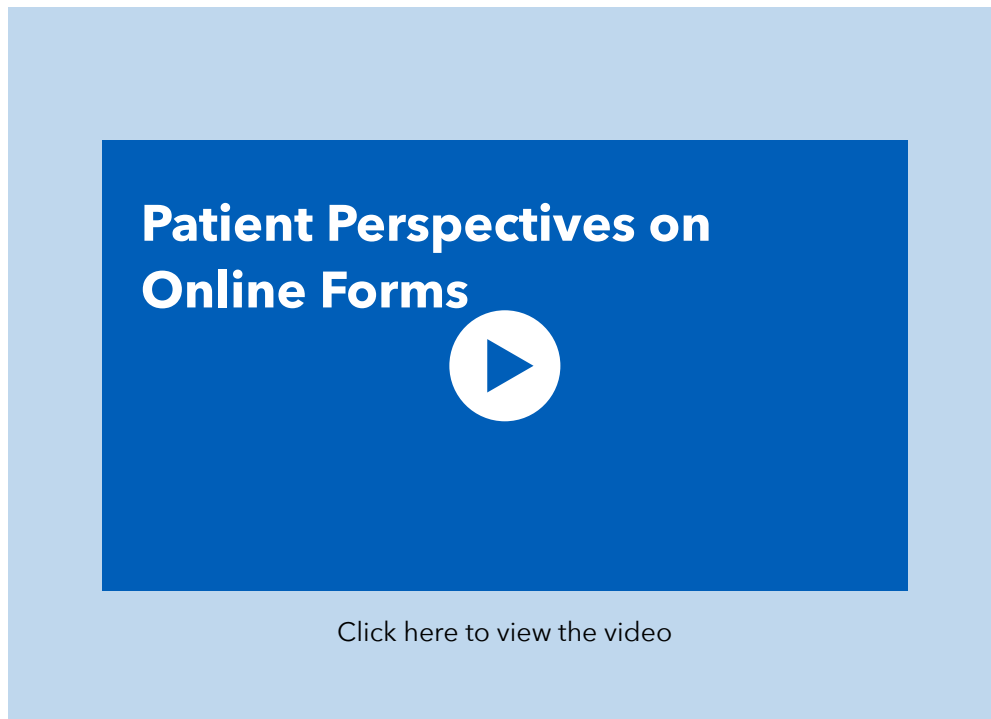
Suggestions for improvements

- Introduce an 'opt out system' for patients who do not have access to a mobile phone or computer
- Extend the hours online forms are made available for completion to improve accessibility and convenience
- Offer the functionality to request routine appointments directly through the Online Form, proving patients with a more convenient process

"It would be better if it was available 24 hours a day for non-urgent matters - it also often closes early as they deal with all inquiries on the day - non-urgent issues could be sent through and dealt with by the practice the following working day."

South 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.



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

Most respondents had used the NHS App:

of the 185 respondents, 75% had used it for themselves or on behalf of someone else.

Most respondents do not use the NHS App frequently:

of 126 respondents, most use it monthly (42%) or rarely (48%).

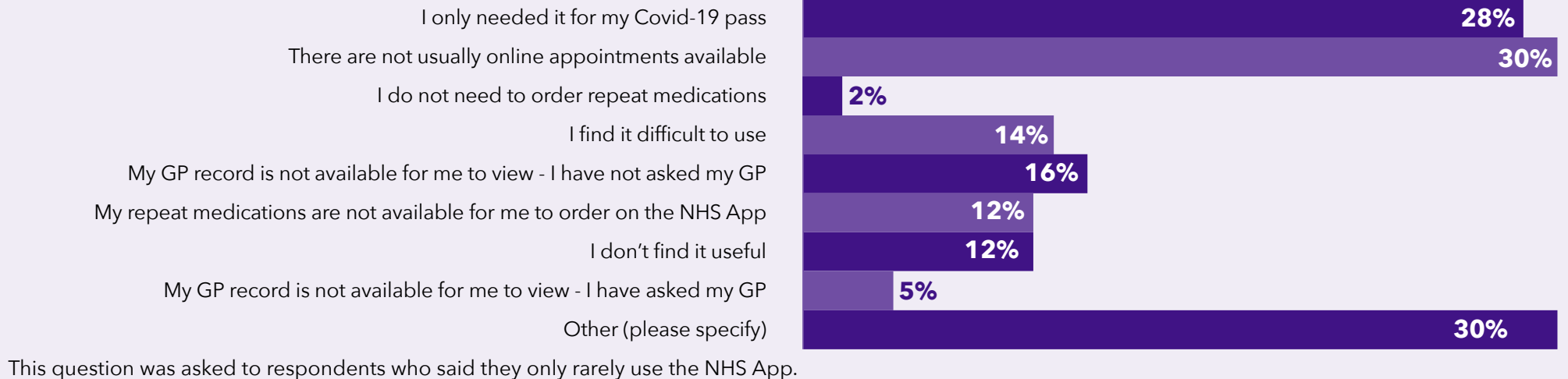
Most respondents heard about the NHS App via Covid-19 communications*:

of the 148 respondents, 30% had heard about it via communications related to Covid-19, 28% via GP surgery/ staff and 23% via the NHS website.

The most common use of the NHS App is to order repeat prescriptions*.

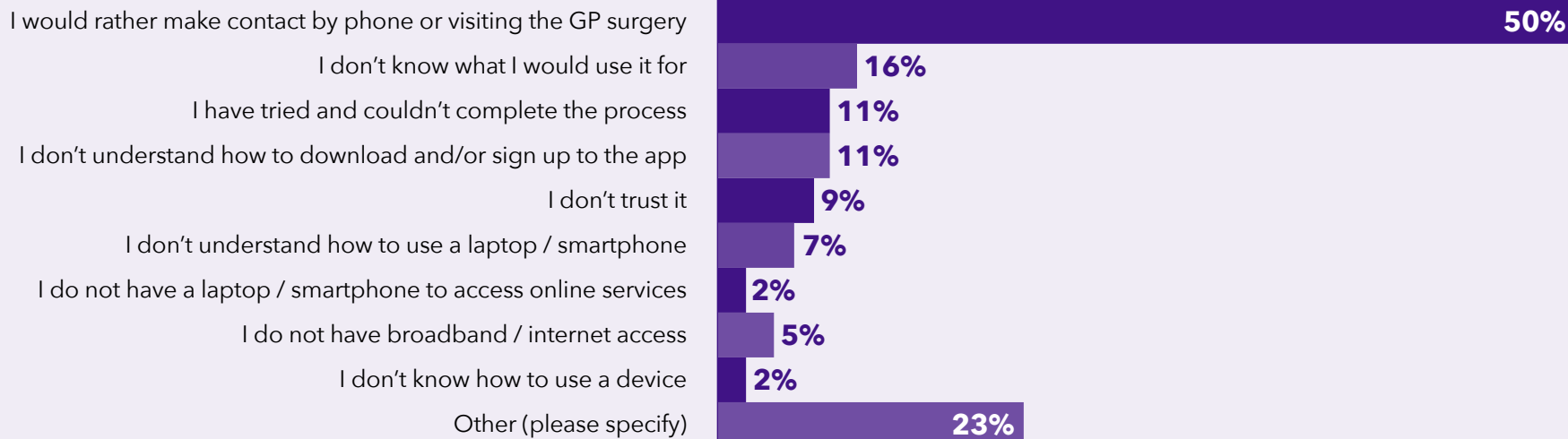
48% of the 143 respondents reported using the NHS App for this purpose. Other common uses were to view medical records (43%) and to book a GP appointment (38%).

Please let us know why you are not using the NHS App* (n=57)



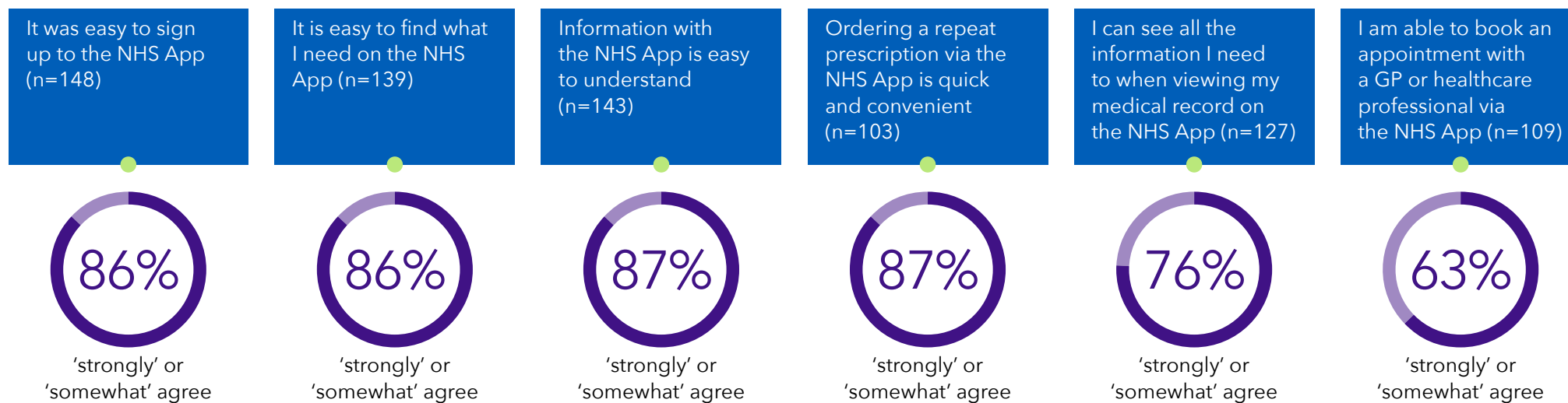
* Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total is more than 100%

Please indicate why you haven't used the NHS App* (n=44)



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%

South 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

- ✓ Simple
- ✓ Accessible layout
- ✓ One source for all medical information

Access to records





- ✓ Easy to access medical records and test results
- ✓ Can query data
- ✓ Can share with clinicians across various healthcare settings

Prescription management

- ✓ Order repeat prescriptions without need to contact GP






“The test results being available online is just brilliant...you know a variety of reasons. But like, you know taking anxiety away because you can actually see the results quickly and so you’re not you’re not having to wait for and a week for a phone call to let you know.”

Negative experiences

-  Some patients are unable to book GP appointments directly through the NHS App
-  Limited information available, and not full medical history
-  Some patients are unable to access test results from hospital or specialist appointments
-  Only able to access via a mobile phone, which excludes some people from accessing these services

“It needs to be integrated with acute and other types of care, not just primary care.”

Suggestions for improvements

-  Avoid introducing functionality solely on mobile phones, as accessing information on the small screen is bad for posture and vision
-  Update medical records, so patients have access to their full medical history
-  Ensure regular updates are made to the NHS App to ensure the information is kept up-to-date
-  Introduce an ‘opt out system’ for patients who do not have access to a mobile phone or computer
-  Introduce the functionality to book appointments directly with the GP, providing patients with a more convenient process

“Its use should not be compulsory, it should include opting out especially when one knows that someone is unable to use it.”

South West London ICS:

Online survey results relating to GP surgery websites

Many respondents have not used their GP surgery website:

of the 186 respondents, 69% had accessed their GP website for themselves or on behalf of someone else.

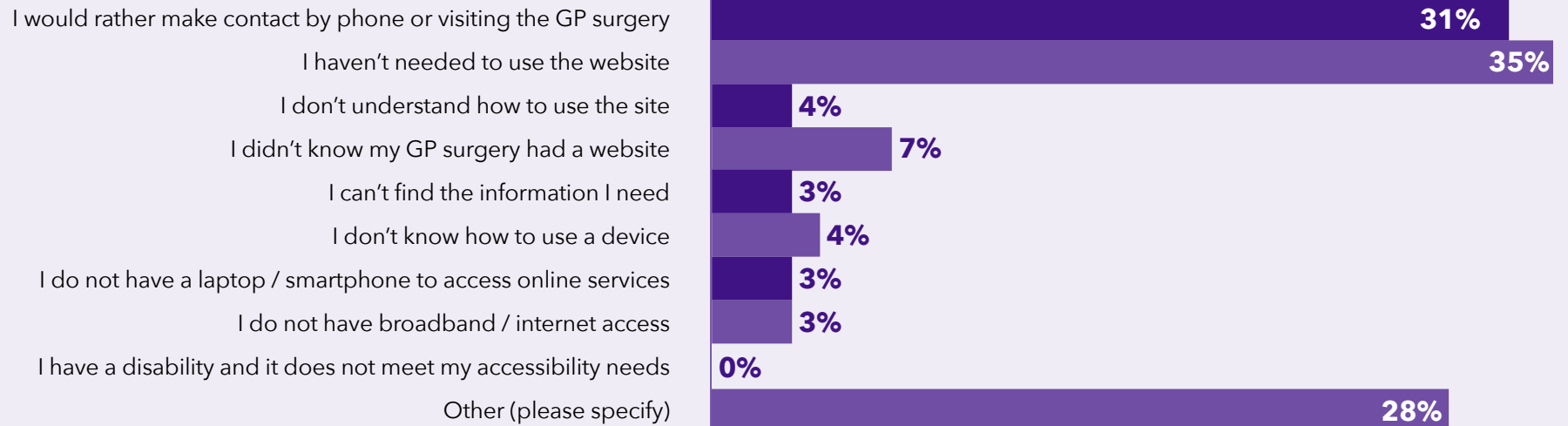
Most respondents do not access their GP surgery website frequently:

of the 138 respondents, most only access their GP surgery website monthly (29%) or rarely (65%).

Finding information is relatively easy

most of the 138 respondents found it very (39%) or somewhat (43%) easy to find what they need on their GP surgery website.

Please indicate why you haven't used your GP surgery website* (n=72)







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


South 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 specify the type of appointment required
-  Information on GP surgery websites was not up to date
-  Difficult to navigate and use, especially for those individuals who may have less experience using online platforms
-  There are too many methods to access the same information

 "I feel that we have the patient website, but then we're also diverting through another NHS App website and we shouldn't, we should be trying to consolidate."

Patient suggestions for improvements

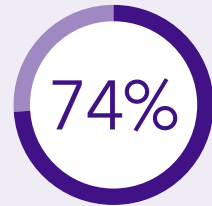
-  Simplify and make improvements to the menu structure and signposting to make information easier to find
-  Training offered to GP surgery staff to support them to interact with patients from different cultural backgrounds
-  Optimise GP surgery websites for mobile devices
-  Ensure the website is kept up to date, to accurately reflect services available, members of staff, opening hours and contact information for example
-  Adopt a common template across the London region to ensure consistency in user experience

 "I think the website could be clearer, stating clearly appointments, admin, prescriptions etc."

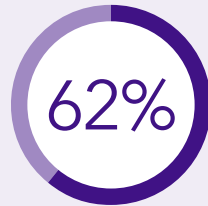
South West London ICS: Online survey results relating to communications

Most text messages from GP surgeries are around appointments*

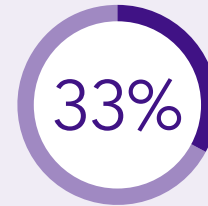

187
respondents



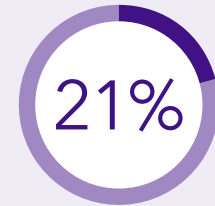
said they receive appointment reminders via text



said that they receive invitations to make appointments



said that they receive invitations to complete surveys

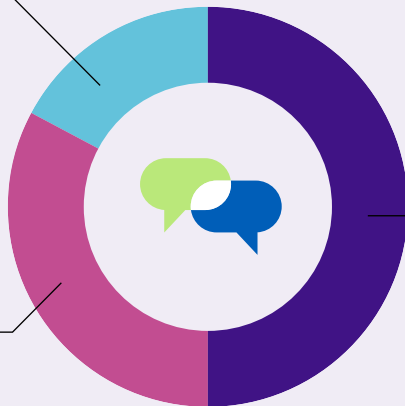


said that they receive information about test results

Please let us know why you do not receive text messages from your GP surgery (n=6)

17%

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



50%

I didn't know my GP surgery could send me text messages (n=3)

33%

Other (n=2)

Participants were asked 'How would you prefer to receive communications from your GP surgery?' (n=155)

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 Online Forms

An analysis was carried out on patient feedback data received from the Accurx (Online Consultation product) system between January 2023 – June 2023 (n=6446). Due to the large volume of data, 200 responses from patients who had given a feedback score of 1 (very easy) and 200 responses from patients who had given a feedback score of 5 (very difficult) were analysed. This was done to try and understand what was working well with the current system, as well as barriers patients were facing in accessing or using it. The following themes were identified:

Theme	Detail
Patient experience of using Online Forms	<p>69% felt the system was 'very easy' or 'quite easy' to use. 20% of respondents reported it to be 'quite difficult' or 'very difficult' to use and 11% reported it to be 'neither easy nor difficult' to use.</p> <p>Of those who reported the online consultation system to be 'very easy' or 'quite easy' to use, the reasons given included clear user instructions, a usable layout and questions that were simple, efficient and relevant.</p>
Usefulness of service	<p>Reported benefits to the use of the online consultation system included the fact the system was quick to use and saved time. Patients reported not only saving time themselves, by not having to wait in the GP practice phone queue, but also saving time for GP practice staff and the need for unnecessary appointments.</p>
Challenges with usefulness of service	<p>The Accurx patient feedback data also described some challenges around the usefulness of the online consultation system. The challenges included issues around the fact the form was too long, the options were not tailored to their needs and there were restricted hours of use of the Accurx system.</p>
Challenges with ease of use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 20% of respondents reported the online consultation system to be 'quite difficult' or 'very difficult' to use.• Challenges described could be grouped in to three main themes:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Issues with the online form system: the process was too time consuming , the system instructions were not clear , there was no option to schedule an appointment and issues were experienced with logging on to the system.2. The application of the online form system: concerns around digital exclusion for certain cohorts of patients, the fact the form would be difficult to fill in when unwell and the need for support to complete the forms.3. Communication with GP practice: preferring to phone the GP practice to make an appointment, a lack of personal contact and slow or no response to queries.

Appendix 2: Existing patient feedback sources on the NHS App

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

Theme																	
Annual use of accessing medical records online	<p>Across SWL 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 2020 to 2023 (7% in 2020, 8% in 2021, 20% in 2022, 21% 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 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>138,826 views</td> <td>March 2023 (174,187 views)</td> <td>July 2022 (113,593 views)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Summary coded record view</td> <td>135,971 views</td> <td>March 2023 (171,159 views)</td> <td>July 2022 (110,461 views)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Detail coded record view</td> <td>99,133 views</td> <td>March 2023 (130,341 views)</td> <td>September 2022 (74,353 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 accessed to the detailed coded record.</p>	View	Average number of views per month	Highest number of views	Lowest number of views	Record views	138,826 views	March 2023 (174,187 views)	July 2022 (113,593 views)	Summary coded record view	135,971 views	March 2023 (171,159 views)	July 2022 (110,461 views)	Detail coded record view	99,133 views	March 2023 (130,341 views)	September 2022 (74,353 views)
View	Average number of views per month	Highest number of views	Lowest number of views														
Record views	138,826 views	March 2023 (174,187 views)	July 2022 (113,593 views)														
Summary coded record view	135,971 views	March 2023 (171,159 views)	July 2022 (110,461 views)														
Detail coded record view	99,133 views	March 2023 (130,341 views)	September 2022 (74,353 views)														

Appendix 3: Existing patient feedback on GP surgery websites

An analysis was carried out on data from the South West London ICS GP Patient Survey 2020-2023. The following themes were identified:

The data showed an increase in the percentage of patients using online services, such as ordering a repeat prescription online and accessing medical records online, from 2020 to 2023.



Of the online services, booking appointments online appeared as the most used service (32% of patients in 2023) and filing in an Online Form the least used service (10% of patients in 2023).



The data showed a year-on-year decrease from 2020 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' 77% of patients in 2020 agreed it was easy, however this reduced to 76% in 2021, 67% in 2022 and 67% in 2023.

