



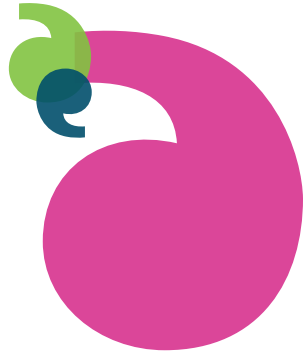
## Accessing GP Services:

Stort Valley & Villages Locality **2014**

**CUT-DOWN**

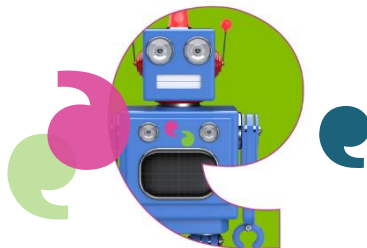
## Who we Are

Healthwatch Hertfordshire is the independent consumer champion that gathers and represents the public's views on health and social care services within the county.



We can do this using the following powers and functions:

- Through local engagement we gather the views and experiences of local people to build an understanding of why and how people use NHS services. This, along with wider intelligence, is used as evidence to influence providers and decision makers to propose change and improvement.
- Through the Local Healthwatch Network and Healthwatch England, we share information to identify gaps and trends in order to influence national and local policy regarding health and social care.



- We alert national bodies; such as Healthwatch England, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and/or council scrutiny committees where appropriate, to concerns about specific providers, health or social care matters.

- We signpost and provide information about people's choices and where to get help if things go wrong.

- We represent local people's voices via our seat on the statutory Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board.

### **How can Healthwatch Hertfordshire hold local health and social care services to account?**

- We can request information from local organisations, commissioners and providers. They then have a duty to respond to request within 20 working days.

- Service providers and Commissioners have a duty to respond to formal recommendations made by Healthwatch Hertfordshire, within 20 working days.

- Trained members of Healthwatch (staff or volunteers) are authorised to perform 'Enter and View' visits. These are powers to go to a service unannounced or announced and have a look at the work and/or standards in that practice

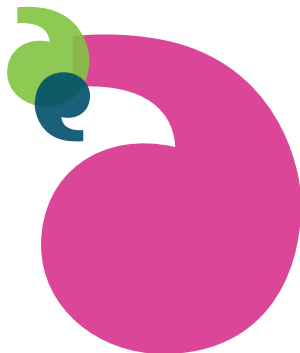
Healthwatch Hertfordshire undertook this piece of research as a direct response to public feedback. We hope this study along with our recommendations helps to stimulate debate and dialogue between Patients, GP Practices, East and North Herts CCG, and the contract holders, NHS England.

### Aims of the Study

- To identify people's concerns and practical ways GP practices can address these.
- To identify trends of how and why people use GP services the way they do.
- To understand the impact GP access has on other services.
- To understand the challenges faced specifically by each practice and factor this into our research.
- To identify and share good practice.
- To use local evidence to raise the profile of systemic issues county wide and nationally.

## Overview of the Research

- Our research concentrated on the Stort Valley and Villages CCG Locality and the 5 practices based there.
- Our research focuses on ‘access’ and not clinical practice.
- The main research phase ran over a 4 week period- 12th May- 9th June- and was in the form of surveys and focus groups.
- We spoke to **838** people in total - **763** people completed our survey and **75** people took part in our focus groups.
- Our survey received a higher response rate than the GP Patient Survey for most Practices and concentrated on *why* people use GP surgeries the way they do, and not just *how* they use them.



## What we Found

- Appointment booking systems are considered to be confusing and inflexible from the patient's perspective.
- More people were positive about their Practice if they had an understanding of the booking system.
- Most people wanted an appointment at an agreed time in the near future. Some said they often have to bypass the system by asking for urgent same day appointments or using 'sit and wait' inappropriately, because they cannot get a convenient advance appointment.
- The most popular method for booking an appointment is over the phone; but many people told us they go to the surgery in person because of difficulties getting through on the phone. Healthwatch Hertfordshire is concerned that those who are unable to get to the surgery in person because of difficulties may be disadvantaged.
- If people cannot get an appointment within the time frame they ask, they are more likely not to see or speak to anyone than seek services outside their Practice.

- We found low usage of online booking with many reporting that systems are not user-friendly. This was true of all age groups.
- The majority of people we surveyed said they like to see a particular doctor. Most stated reasons such as the GP's manner rather than continuity. He or she 'listens to me' was the most cited reason other than continuity for preferring to see a particular GP.
- The research highlighted the importance of the reception team for the patient experience, with feedback in general being positive. The way receptionists communicate messages and look for solutions has a significant impact for patients and their view of the Practice.
- For each Practice, our findings supported the findings of the IPSOS MORI GP Patient Survey (July 2014) conducted twice yearly on behalf of NHS England.



## Recommendations

Using the data we have collected from our research, we have suggested some recommendations for the Practices to consider and discuss with us.

### Appointment Booking

1	Complete an annual audit of appointment demand, particularly ahead of extending opening hours.
2	Review the methods used to book an appointment to identify issues, particularly online booking.
3	Review the Practice's approach to telephone consultations and promote more thoroughly.
4	Agree and communicate protocols for booking different types of appointments (same day, within the week, within the month). This should be communicated to patients and staff members.
5	Prioritise certain groups for appointments with a particular doctor. For example, people with long term conditions or Carers.

### Phone Systems

6	Audit the distribution of telephone contact throughout the day, with a view to easing the pressure at peak times. This may result in either:
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	<p>a) Encouraging patients to contact at different times during the day.</p> <p>b) Redistributing resources.</p>
7	Alter telephone message to give patients an indication of how long they can expect to wait on the phone.

### **Receptionists & Reception Area**

8	Review the 'script' used by receptionists for booking appointments, including language used to communicate messages and ensuring solutions are offered.
9	Review mandatory training programme for reception staff to ensure it equips them with skills including excellent customer service.
10	Ensure there are clear and prominent signs in the reception area and waiting rooms to let patients know they can speak to receptionists, in private, on request.

### **Communication**

11	Ensure there is a simple, practical explanation of the appointment system for patients; particularly patients who are not regular users of the surgery and new patients.
12	Ensure any changes to the appointment system are fully communicated to patients, preferably in advance.

13	Ensure patients know how they can make comments and give feedback about the Practice.
14	Ensure the complaints procedure is clear and accessible to patients.

### Physical Access

15	Ensure patients mobility needs are considered where possible. e.g. in the reception area, avoid speaking to patients in wheelchairs from behind the high part of a desk.
16	Ensure patients are asked about mobility needs when making an appointment.
17	Ensure arrangements for accessing translation and interpretation (including BSL) are made clear to patients.

## What Happens Next?

We will be working with all parties, including NHS England, the CCG, the Practices, and service users, to ensure that the recommendations in this report are carried forward, and to continue to offer support and assistance where ever we can.

We hope that this report acts as a springboard, enabling these groups to work more closely together, ensuring that the public get the very best care possible.

## “What can I do?”

This report is a tool for the community. You can tell people about this report. We want people to know what’s been said, and about the changes that could be made to make things better.

Secondly, you can get involved in our ‘Community Champions’ initiative. Healthwatch Hertfordshire would like to help set up and support a group made up of everyday members of the community. This group, whose members would be registered at all 5 practices, would be able to help us implement the recommendations in this report, as well as continue to help shape health services in the area.

If you’re interested in becoming a ‘Consumer Champion’ we want to hear from you. You can get in touch with us online or call us, or detach this page, fill it in, and send it back to us. All the details are on the back of this page.

**Name:**

**GP Surgery:**

**Contact Details:**

**Phone:**

**Any comments:**

## Thank you for taking the time to read this report!

This is the cut down version. You may want to read the full report, which gives a lot more detail about the background of the research and the results, as well letting you know what your surgery said.

There are a number of ways to access the full report.

Online:

[www.healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk)

Locally:

If you don't have internet access you can ask for it at your local library (If you live in the Stortford and Sawbridgeworth areas).

Alternatively you can write to us or call us, and we will post you out a copy. Our telephone number is:

**01707 275 978**

Our address is:

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