

Primary care access update

January 2024

Context

1. This report provides an update on access to GP services across Hampshire.
2. There are three types of contract used for primary care in England. The most common is the General Medical Services (GMS) contract. This is a nationally negotiated GP contract and the most common type of primary care contract in Hampshire. A GMS contract exists in perpetuity. Unlike other areas of the health service, primary care services are predominantly delivered by small businesses (GP partnerships) and shifting market forces are placing considerable strain on this operating model.
3. GP services in England are independently regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which monitors and inspects providers of health and care services on quality and safety standards. Practices rated as good or outstanding usually receive inspections at least every 5 years; practices rated requires improvement or inadequate will be inspected within twelve and six months respectively of the previous inspection.
4. Workforce remains a significant challenge for primary care locally and nationally. Although GP numbers remain relatively stable, the number of partners has decreased and the increase in demand has put significant pressure on all clinicians. Hampshire and Isle of Wight has undertaken a good deal of work relating to the recruitment and retention of additional primary care roles, as noted within this report.

Appointments and access

5. In response to this, GP services are currently offering more appointments year on the year but demand for these services also continues to rise significantly. The data on the next page shows the number of GP appointments, and appointment type, from January to October 2023 for practices across the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board area.
6. The data shows stabilisation in primary care across the year. In October 2023 we saw the highest number of GP appointments for one single month of the year to date, with over 1 million appointments, supporting an overall population of 1.9 million people. Throughout the year approximately 64% of appointments have been face to face, and around 40% of all appointments being on the same day. The data also shows GP practices utilising a wide range of clinical professionals to support as many patients as possible.
7. While the data provides an overview in terms of what is being offered, it does not necessarily show the true picture of demand or provide narrative as to a practice's



circumstances. The data may show some inaccuracies with how practices record interactions with patients.



Hampshire and Isle of Wight

GP appointment data: January - October 2023

Month	Total appointments	Face to Face	Home Visit	Telephone	Video or online	GP	Other healthcare professional	Same day appointments
January 2023	932,346	598,392 (64.2%)	7,453 (0.8%)	296,046 (31.8%)	7,865 (0.8%)	440,524 (47.3%)	466,912 (50.1%)	423,943 (45.5%)
February 2023	862,765	556,185 (64.5%)	7,174 (0.8%)	272,579 (31.6%)	7,383 (0.9%)	406,962 (47.2%)	433,942 (50.3%)	374,550 (43.4%)
March 2023	990,958	643,166 (64.9%)	8,276 (0.8%)	317,038 (32%)	8,603 (0.9%)	471,612 (48%)	494,467 (49.9%)	421,513 (42.5%)
April 2023	765,355	499,587 (65.3%)	6,707 (0.9%)	237,404 (31%)	4,513 (0.6%)	347,844 (45.5%)	397,209 (51.9%)	330,070 (43.1%)
May 2023	874,976	571,699 (65.3%)	7,889 (0.9%)	269,648 (30.8%)	6,804 (0.8%)	407,011 (46.6%)	448,437 (51.2%)	371,930 (42.6%)
June 2023	923,429	593,497 (64.27%)	8,470 (0.92%)	285,452 (30.91%)	11,666 (1.26%)	428,451 (46.40%)	476,605 (51.61%)	387,658 (41.98%)
July 2023	875,376	554,153 (63.3%)	8,147 (0.93%)	278,012 (31.76%)	13,921 (1.59%)	397,763 (45.44%)	460,467 (52.6%)	372,970 (42.61%)
August 2023	896,554	561,324 (62.6%)	8,886 (0.99%)	289,024 (32.24%)	15,473 (1.73%)	404,665 (45.14%)	473,699 (52.84%)	382,688 (42.68%)
September 2023	982,480	643,619 (65.5%)	9,580 (0.98%)	284,191 (28.93%)	18,240 (1.86%)	431,016 (43.87%)	531,232 (54.07%)	379,231 (38.6%)
October 2023	1,030,555	718,562 (69.73%)	11,168 (1.08%)	303,486 (29.45%)	24,813 (2.41%)	466,066 (45.22%)	600,625 (58.29%)	415,463 (40.21%)

Supporting GP services and improving patient access

8. In May 2023 the government published its recovery plan for primary care, launched by the Prime Minister in a visit to Southampton. The plan sets out four key areas to support recovery:
 - Empower patients to manage their own health including using the NHS App, self-referral pathways and through more services offered from community pharmacy. This will relieve pressure on general practice.
 - Implement modern general practice access to tackle the 8am rush, provide rapid assessment and response, and avoid asking patients to ring back another day to book an appointment.
 - Build capacity to deliver more appointments from more staff than ever before and add flexibility to the types of staff recruited and how they are deployed.
 - Cut bureaucracy and reduce the workload across the interface between primary and secondary care, and the burden of medical evidence requests so practices have more time to meet the clinical needs of their patients.

9. This is steered by two central ambitions, set nationally:
 - To tackle the 8am rush – meaning patients should be able to not only contact their practice easily but be able to book an appointment (not necessarily on the same day as when they ring) when they ask for it.
 - For patients to know on the day they contact their practice how their request will be managed. If their need is clinically urgent it should be assessed on the same day by a telephone or face-to-face appointment. If the patient contacts their practice in the afternoon they may be assessed on the next day, where clinically appropriate. If their need is not urgent, but it requires a telephone or face-to-face appointment, this should be scheduled within two weeks. Where appropriate, patients will be signposted to self-care or other local services.

10. Locally we have been putting this plan into action, building on the already strong work our Primary Care Networks (PCNs) have started.

11. We have expanded our Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) roles by recruiting an additional 219 people across Hampshire and Isle of Wight. Roles include health and wellbeing coaches, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, paramedics and first contact physiotherapists, all working in GP practices to help people get support from the most appropriate professional first time round.

12. To support our clinicians to focus as much time as possible on frontline, senior clinicians across our Integrated Care System have agreed a set of principles to improve patient care and reduce bureaucracy. This includes improving the connections between GPs working in our local practices and consultants working in our acute hospitals. Last year the Integrated Care Board established a steering group focused on improving communication and reducing duplication across primary and secondary care.

13. Staff working in PCNs have been undertaking care navigator training and digital transformation training to ensure their skills are refreshed/updated to help support patients with more rounded care, improving the wider health and wellbeing of our population.
14. A main area of concern expressed by patients is difficulties in getting through to their GP practice by telephone. GP practices, as small enterprises, have faced challenges in providing a telephone system which can handle the increased number of people requiring support. Following this, all practices now offer cloud-based telephony which has improved patient experience when waiting to speak to their clinician. A programme of updating systems for some of our early adopter sites next year will further improve patient experience.
15. 111 non-clinical direct booking has been implemented across Hampshire with General Practice enabling direct booking into their triage arrangements via non clinicians within 111. The implementation of the APEX demand and capacity tool has rolled out, with practices being asked to review frequent attenders and implement a proactive care plan to reduce this type of demand.
16. GP practices have played a key part in supporting our patients to be 'winter strong', delivering COVID-19 and flu vaccination in addition to providing urgent and routine appointments. In Hampshire and Isle of Wight, almost 500,000 COVID vaccinations have been given since the programme began in September 2023. This includes the work by GP practices to vaccinate local care home residents.
17. We are working to ensure the NHS locally is maximising the opportunities that the NHS App and online access provides. By doing so, we are freeing up capacity for those patients who cannot access online services, who are often the most vulnerable in our population.

Next steps

18. A more modern general practice model will improve patient experience and access to GP services as well as expand access to additional services and roles across primary care. Over the coming months we will be working towards this, improving continuity of care and doing more to release GP time to focus on frontline care and managing the most complex. We will keep the committee updated on our progress.