



GP Access Desktop Study

July 2025

healthwatch
Nottingham & Nottinghamshire

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“Called to book an appointment, 50 min on hold waiting, was told there were none available that day, I expressed I wasn't after a same day appointment, I was happy to have one when the next one was available. Was told I needed to call back at 8 the next day when the appointments get released and I needed to call 111 anyway for my issue. Called 111 they took me into A&E, 6 hours later told it's not life critical and to call my GP and book an appointment. Oh that's exactly what I tried to do. Called GP next day- 40 min wait told no appointments and call back next day. Call again same no appointments. Broken system”

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A 25 to 49 year old man from Broxtowe

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What we heard

- Patients share ongoing concerns about accessing GP service with us
- In 2022, we carried out two projects on this topic: a desk-based study and a Hot Topic survey
- In 2023, NHS England published the Delivery Plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care to tackle the '8am rush'
- Recent changes made to GP contracts for 2025/26



What we did

- In order to track and monitor local progress and identify ongoing challenges, we conducted this desktop-based research
- Data was collected through telephone calls and website reviews
- Two phases of data collection: Phase 1 in July 2024 and Phase 2 in May 2025
- 57 GP practices contacted by telephone and 58 website reviews, which accounts for almost 45% of the 127 GPs in Nottingham & Nottinghamshire

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I. Access to GP Services

1. Telephone Access

What's working well	What could be improved	Our recommendations
Shortest wait was less than a minute, 41.4% answered within 5 minutes	Longest wait was 1 hour & 17 minutes, 20.7% had wait times over 30 minutes	Reducing waiting times remains the aim
86.2% state queue position: transparent and patient-friendly	37.9% offer call-back options, meaning over 60% do not	Expand use of call-back option
68.4% take appointment booking calls throughout opening hours	Most still encourage calls at 8am as capacity for appointments is reached quickly	Enable appointment booking throughout opening hour

 **35 (attempts) between 8am and 9am to finally get an answer to be told no appointments"** 
A 65 to 79 year old man from Nottingham City

2. Online Access (via website and NHS App)

What's working well	What could be improved	Our recommendations
81.4% offer booking via practice website	Only around half respond to online requests on the same day	Respond to online requests promptly (same-day)
65.5% support NHS App booking	31% do not support or clearly communicate NHS App booking	Fully deploy NHS App booking, improve visibility and enable two-way messaging e-consults

“Enable patients in over 90% of practices to see their records and practice messages, book appointments and order repeat prescriptions using the NHS App by March 2024.”

Delivery plan for recovering access to primary care, NHS England 2023

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“...I called 4pm - told to call back 8:30 am - I cannot, I work, I cannot take call backs either...It's been 6 months now of trying-wish I could afford private”

A woman, 50-60 years old from Broxtowe

You often cannot get through on the phone to make an appointment. If it's not an all out emergency the waiting time to see a GP is 4/5 weeks.”

A 65 to 79 year old resident of Nottinghamshire

“Never can get a face to face appointment spend 40 mins at 8am trying to get an appointment.”

A 65 to 79 year old resident of Ashfield

“I am a 70+ female with a few issues I would like to talk to my GP about face to face. Unfortunately it is impossible to prebook an appointment with the surgery. It all has to be done through AccuRx. I have tried speaking to the receptionists but they have advised they are not allowed to make appointments with GP's”

A resident of Newark & Sherwood

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3. Appointment Accessibility

What's working well	What could be improved	Our recommendations
67.8% offer all three booking modes (telephone, online, in-person)	32.2% do not meet NHS guidance on offering all booking modes	All practices should offer all three booking modes (telephone, online, in-person)
80.7% offer patients the choice of appointment type	Face-to-face consultations often dependent on triage outcome, and not patient's choice	Honour patient appointments preferences (especially face-to-face)
87.7% allow advance booking	Advance booking windows vary widely (from 48 hours to 3 months)	No formal recommendation, however, the wide variation in advance booking highlights inconsistencies across practices



II. Effectiveness of Website Information

1. Explanation of the booking and triage process



What's working well	What could be improved
93.2% explain general booking process	59.3% explain the triage system
81.4% include website booking information	22% mention expected response time
72.9% clarify urgent vs. routine appointment process	47.5% mention walk-in booking availability
78% include information on the variety of healthcare professionals available at the GP practice	61% mention NHS App booking
67.2% explicitly confirm availability of face-to-face appointments	6.6% state they do not offer face-to-face appointments & 23.0% make no mention of this

2. Other Accessibility Information



What's working well	What could be improved
89.3% provide home visit information	50.8% include chaperone details; 47.5% mention interpreter services

3. Website Usability & Accessibility



What's working well	What could be improved
95.2% include the three essential service pages (appointments, prescriptions & medications, and contact details); 88.1% have translation tools available	Usability of translation tools varies, both in terms of language options available and positioning on the webpage

Effectiveness of Website Information

Our recommendations

Improve website clarity and accessibility: Ensuring it includes effective explanation of triage, response time to online requests, chaperones and interpreters availability. Offering variety of translation options which are positioned prominently. Uniformity in website layouts enables a better patient experience.

Developing a clear and comprehensive patient charter can help ensure that all key information is communicated effectively.

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Most of our recommendations are underpinned by the 2025/26 GP Contract from NHS England.

For more information

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