

## Swanage Medical Practice PPG

### Results of Follow-Up Patient Survey 2023

#### Introduction

The GP Patient Survey is a national survey, which is carried out by Ipsos every year. A random sample of patients registered with each GP Practice is invited to participate in the Survey each year - in 2022, the Survey was sent to over two million people across the UK and the results can be found at: <https://www.gp-patient.co.uk>. The 2023 Survey was undertaken in January and the results will be available later this year.

In 2022, 264 patients registered with the Swanage Medical Practice were invited to participate in the Survey and 123 survey questionnaires were sent back, giving a completion rate of 47%.

When the Practice reviewed the results of the 2022 GP Patient Survey, the Partners agreed that a Follow-Up Survey was needed to explore further why patients had responded the way they had to a number of the questions. The PPG agreed to undertake this Follow-Up Survey on behalf of the Practice.

#### Method

After agreeing with the Practice Manager which questions should be included in the Follow-Up Survey, the Chair of the PPG put together a survey questionnaire, a copy of which is included at **Appendix 1**.

The Survey was undertaken by four members of the PPG on six mornings between 17 and 24 April, between 9:00am and 12:30pm. PPG members, who were stationed in the Reception area at the Surgery, invited patients who had attended the Surgery for an appointment that morning to complete the Survey Questionnaire before leaving the Surgery.

There were times when the Reception area was too crowded to ask everyone to participate - and not all patients agreed to participate, either because they had to get back to work or to school, for example, or because their car parking was running out or they had a bus to catch. It is likely, therefore, that fewer younger patients were surveyed than had actually attended the Surgery on the mornings when the Survey was being undertaken. In addition, PPG members ran out of questionnaires one morning and there was a delay of more than an hour before further copies of the questionnaire were made available. As a result, fewer questionnaires were completed on this occasion than might otherwise have been the case.

A few patients took the questionnaire away and said they would return it to the Surgery at a later date [as yet, I am not aware of any that have been returned].

## Results

A total of 219 questionnaires were completed. The results for each question are set out below, together with the results for comparable questions included in the 2022 GP Patient Survey. Not every questionnaire was completed in full, so the denominators used to calculate percentages have been adjusted accordingly. Summaries of the main issues raised in patients' comments are also set out below - the comments are set out in full at **Appendix 2**.

### Section 1: Making today's appointment

#### Q.1: How did you make your appointment?

Method	Number	Percentage
I telephoned the Practice to make an appointment	121	56%
Someone at the Practice phoned me to book the appointment	39	18%
I booked my appointment in person	29	13%
I booked my appointment online	0	0%
One of the doctors booked my appointment	8	4%
One of the nurses booked my appointment	13	6%
My appointment was sent to me in the post	3	1%
My appointment was sent to me by text	1	1%
My appointment was booked for me by NHS111	1	1%
My appointment was booked for me by a friend, as I find it too difficult to book appointments myself	1	1%

#### Q2: Generally, how easy do you find it to get through to the Practice on the phone?

	Follow-Up Survey 2023		2022 GP Patient Survey	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Very easy	65	30%	17	12%
Fairly easy	100	47%	87	63%
Not very easy	29	14%	24	17%
Not at all easy	12	6%	9	7%
Did not try	8	4%		

Two patients commented that it was easier to make an appointment on the phone now than it used to be - and several told us verbally that they were very pleased to find that they were now being told what number they are in the queue. Others were very complimentary about the receptionists.

However, there were 27 more negative comments about the process of making an appointment - the main issues raised by patients included:

- Difficulties getting through to the Practice - and no-one answering at all on some occasions
- Long waits to speak to a receptionist once they had got through (waits of up to an hour were reported, resulting in some patients giving up and visiting the Surgery in person instead)
- Having to listen to too many messages when the phone is first answered - this is a particular issue for those who ring the Practice frequently
- Some frustration following the introduction of the new telephone system, particularly for those who had to dial in a second time on a different number.

**Q3: Were you satisfied with the appointment you were offered?**

	Follow-Up Survey 2023			2022 GP Patient Survey	
	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Yes	205	95%		83	65%
No	19	5%		35	28%
			Declined appt	10	8%

Significantly more patients were satisfied with the appointment they had been offered than had been the case in 2022.

Of those who were not satisfied with the appointment they had been offered, ten patients gave their reasons why. The main issues they raised included:

- The lack of availability of appointments, particularly to see a GP
- The length of time they had to wait for an appointment to see a GP - several people reported that the earliest appointment they were offered was four weeks hence or longer, which they thought was too long to wait.

Others commented that it was generally easier to get an appointment with a nurse than with a doctor - although one patient commented that she had to wait six weeks for a follow-up appointment with the Diabetes Nurse, which she felt was too long.

**Q4: Overall, how would you describe your experience of making your appointment?**

	Follow-Up Survey 2023		2022 GP Patient Survey	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>Very good</b>	151	71%	33	26%
<b>Fairly good</b>	45	21%	36	29%
<b>Neither good nor poor</b>	13	6%	27	22%
<b>Fairly poor</b>	4	2%	14	11%
<b>Poor</b>	2	1%	14	11%

Positive comments were received from 27 patients.

However, more negative comments were received from 14 patients. The main issues raised included:

- Difficulties getting through to the Practice on the phone, including long waits for the phone to be answered
- Long waiting times to see the GP.

One patient was particularly unhappy about the recent changes to the telephone system, as he is no longer able to ring the Treatment Room directly, making it much more difficult for him to cancel appointments (he usually attends the Treatment Room twice each week to have an ulcer dressed, but sometimes needs to cancel an appointment - for example, when he gets a follow-up appointment at the hospital). He now has to ring the main Surgery number and often finds that he doesn't get an answer. He has now resorted to coming into the Practice in person because getting through on the phone is so difficult. He did not know the telephone system was changing, as he is not on Facebook or able to access the Practice website.

Another patient explained that, when he attends the Surgery for his Vitamin B12 injections, he is not always able to book the appointment for his next injection 12 weeks hence. This can be very frustrating as, when he phones back a few weeks later, he can't always get an appointment on the day he needs.

## Section 2: Today's appointment

### Q5: Who was your appointment with?

Type of Clinician	Number	Percentage
GP	76	36%
GP Registrar	6	3%
Associate Physician	3	1%
Advanced Nurse Practitioner	26	12%
Paramedic	5	2%
Practice Nurse	74	35%
Healthcare Assistant	19	9%
Physiotherapist	3	1%

These results should be interpreted with caution, as patients were only sure which type of clinician they had seen when they had been seen by either a GP or a Physiotherapist. Many were not able to distinguish between the other types of clinician.

### Q6: Thinking about the reason for your appointment, were your needs met?

	Follow-Up Survey 2023		2022 GP Patient Survey	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes, definitely	187	91%	74	57%
Yes, to some extent	16	8%	19	39%
No, not at all	2	1%	16	16%

There were a number of complimentary comments.

However, some patients were not entirely happy with the outcome of their consultations.

One patient explained that she is disabled and uses a Rollator, so needs disabled parking. However, there are not enough disabled parking spaces, so she frequently has to park in a taxi space and risk being penalised.

### Section 3: Overall experience of the Practice

#### Q7: Overall, how would you describe your experience of the Practice?

	Follow-Up Survey 2023		2022 GP Patient Survey	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Very good	163	77%	56	40%
Fairly good	39	19%	53	38%
Neither good, nor poor	5	2%	13	9%
Fairly poor	3	1%	10	7%
Very poor	1	1%	8	6%

Positive comments were received from 26 patients.

However, more negative comments were received from nine patients. The main issues raised included:

- Difficulties getting an appointment to see a doctor in a timely manner
- Difficulties getting through to the Practice on the phone.

One patient requested that the text reminders should be made much clearer.

Another patient requested that the opening times listed on the Practice website should be changed - it states that the Surgery is open from 8:30am to 6:00pm, but when she had called by, she had found that it was closed for lunch for an hour.

Another patient requested that, when the Surgery is closed, there should always be a message on the answerphone to this effect. She reported that she had tried to phone the Surgery on Good Friday (she hadn't realised the Surgery would be closed on Good Friday), but, as there was no response, she had walked to the Surgery - only to find a notice on the door saying the Surgery was closed for the holiday.

Some patients reported poor experiences when speaking to receptionists - including being told there were no appointments available and being turned away. One patient reported being turned away by a receptionist and told to come back later in the day, when her symptoms suggested that she should probably have been seen straight away. One of the PPG members also observed a visitor to Swanage with a potentially serious - and life-threatening - cardiac condition being turned away because there are no more appointments available that morning.

Another patient expressed dissatisfaction about the delay in dealing with a previous complaint.

One patient asked for the music in the Waiting Room to be changed.

Another patient said she wished there was a lift, as her appointments are downstairs and, as she uses a Rollator, she cannot use the stairs - she has to walk round the outside of the building and then wait for the lower ground floor door to be unlocked for her.

#### **Section 4: Demographic characteristics**

##### **Q.8 Gender**

Of those who completed the question, 49.5% indicated that they were Female and 50.5% indicated that they were Male.

##### **Q9: Age**

The age breakdown of those who responded was as follows:

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
0-9 years	2	1%
10-19 years	3	1%
20-29 years	7	3%
30-39 years	14	7%
40-49 years	14	7%
50-59 years	17	8%
60-69 years	56	27%
70-79 years	56	27%
80-89 years	29	14%
90+ years	5	2%

#### **Discussion**

Overall, the results of the Follow-Up Survey were much better than those of the GP Patient Survey undertaken in 2022. However, the results may not be directly comparable as, in the Follow-Up Survey, only patients who had attended the Surgery for a face-to-face appointment were included. In addition, every effort was made by PPG members to include as many as possible of the patients attending the Surgery each morning in the Survey, whereas it may be that patients who had concerns were more likely to participate in the GP Patient Survey.

The main Issues raised by those patients who provided comments were:

- Difficulties phoning the Practice to make an appointment; and
- Getting an appointment with a doctor.

A new telephone system had been installed at the Practice only a few weeks before the Follow-Up Survey was undertaken and quite a lot of the issues raised about making an appointment by phone related to issues experienced as a result of teething problems following the installation of the new telephone system. Hopefully, many of these issues will resolve over time - although it does seem that there are times when additional staff need to be deployed to answer calls coming into the Practice.

Addressing the shortage of GP appointments is likely to be a more challenging issue to address. The PPG has already been working with the Practice to raise awareness of alternatives to a GP appointment and this needs to continue. Some patients can be redirected to an alternative service or clinician by the receptionists or when they are triaged. However, it is essential that those patients who do need to see a doctor are enabled to do so in a timely manner.

Two issues were drawn to the attention of the Practice Manager immediately and action has already been taken to address them - these include:

- Amending the Practice website to make it clear when the Surgery is open - as well as the times when patients can phone the Practice [this issue has now been addressed]
- Ensuring that appropriate messages are included when patients phone the Practice at times when the Practice is closed, including on Bank holidays [the Practice Manager was already aware that there had been a problem over the Easter holiday, following the installation of the new telephone system, and had already taken steps to ensure that this never happens again].

A number of other issues were raised which it should be straightforward to address, including:

- Reviewing the messages that patients hear when they telephone into the Practice - this is a particular issue for those patients who need to phone the Practice on a regular basis
- Reviewing the wording of appointment reminders sent to patients by text to ensure that they state that the text has come from the Practice and that they make it clear what alternative actions patients can take - including attending for their appointment if they are able to do so
- Enabling patients to phone the Treatment Room direct if they need to do so - assuming this is possible following the installation of the new telephone system
- Enabling patients to book repeat appointments when they need to do so - including, for example, enabling patients requiring regular Vitamin B12 injections every 12 weeks to book these in advance
- Ensuring that receptionists receive ongoing training in care navigation to reduce the likelihood of patients with potentially serious medical problems being turned away from the Surgery



- Reviewing disabled access to the Surgery
- Ensuring that patient complaints are dealt with in a timely manner
- Providing photographs of clinical staff at Reception and on the Practice Website, so patients know who they are about to see / have seen
- Reviewing the music played in the waiting room while patients are waiting to be seen.

## Recommendations

PPG members enjoyed undertaking the Patient Survey and felt that this was a worthwhile initiative for them to be involved with. In view of the fact that a new telephone system had been installed only a few weeks before the Survey was undertaken, the PPG recommends that consideration is given to repeating the Survey in six months' time to find out whether patients' experiences of phoning the Practice has improved.

It is also recommended that the following actions are taken:

- Continue to take measures to ensure patients are aware of alternatives to a GP appointment - this is an issue the PPG would like to continue supporting the Practice on
- Review the messages that patients hear when they telephone into the Practice
- Review the wording of appointment reminders sent to patients by text to ensure that they state that the text has come from the Practice and that they make it clear what alternative actions patients can take - including attending for their appointment if they are able to do so
- Enable patients to phone the Treatment Room direct if they need to do so - assuming this is possible following the installation of the new telephone system
- Enable patients to book repeat appointments when they need to do so - including, for example, enabling patients requiring regular Vitamin B12 injections every 12 weeks to book these in advance
- Ensure that receptionists receive ongoing training in care navigation to reduce the likelihood of patients with potentially serious medical problems being turned away from the Surgery
- Review disabled access to the Surgery
- Ensure patient complaints are dealt with in a timely manner
- Provide photographs of clinical staff at Reception and on the Practice Website, so patients know who they are about to see / have seen
- Review the music played in the waiting room while patients are waiting to be seen.

In addition, the PPG recommends that efforts to recruit additional GPs and other clinicians continue.

Follow-Up Survey Questionnaire

**Swanage Medical Practice**  
**Follow-Up GP Patient Survey 2023**

After reviewing the results of the 2022 GP Patient Survey, we have decided to undertake a follow-up survey to find out more detailed information to help the Practice improve the services we offer.

Members of the Patient Participation Group have kindly agreed to help us with this survey. Please answer the questions below. We will keep your answers completely confidential.

**Making today's appointment**

**1. How did you make your appointment?**

- I telephoned the practice to make an appointment
- Someone at the Practice phoned me to book the appointment
- I booked my appointment in person
- I booked my appointment online
- I booked my appointment another way - if yes, please say how

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**2. Generally, how easy do you find it to get through to the Practice on the phone?**

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Not very easy
- Not at all easy
- I haven't tried

If it wasn't easy, please tell us why

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**3. Were you satisfied with the appointment you were offered?**

- Yes
- No - if no, please explain why not

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**4. Overall, how would you describe your experience of making your appointment?**

- Very good
- Fairly good
- Neither good nor poor
- Fairly poor
- Poor

Please tell us more about your experience

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**Today's appointment**

5. Who was your appointment with?

- GP
- GP Registrar
- Associate Physician
- Advanced Nurse Practitioner
- Paramedic
- Practice Nurse
- Healthcare Assistant

6. Thinking about the reason for your appointment, were your needs met?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, to some extent
- No, not at all

Please tell how your needs weren't met

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**Overall experience of the Practice**

7. Overall, how would you describe your experience of the Practice?

- Very good
- Fairly good
- Neither good nor poor
- Fairly poor
- Very poor

Please tell us more about your experience of the Practice

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**Some questions about you**

8. What is your gender?

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9. What is your age?

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**Thank you for your time.**

**Responses received in full****Q2: Generally, how easy do you find it to get through to the Practice on the phone?**

- Much better now.
- Easier now.
  
- Today was good, but previously I waited over an hour for someone to answer the phone.
- I have to start phoning way before the Surgery opens.
- It took nearly 25 minutes to book the appointment.
- I had to wait a long time listening to all the messages first.
- I got frustrated with the automation and the long wait.
- There was a long queue of people waiting on the phone ahead of me.
- I had a bit of a wait - I was told that there were six patients in front of me.
- Sometimes it's not very easy to get through to the Surgery.
- Someone answered the phone fairly quickly today.
- You have to be patient!
- It is sometimes very busy.
- It took a long time to get through. Mum and Dad are hard of hearing, which makes it more difficult for them.
- Too long to wait - with bad music!
- Not always easy to get through - it depends on one's luck.
- I get fed up listening to the preamble when the phone is first answered - it takes so long, and we've heard it so many times!
- Sometimes, call times are limited to certain periods and sometimes, no-one answers (possibly due to pressure).
- Difficult to get an appointment with a doctor as there are no appointments.
- It takes a while for someone to answer and to get through to the people.
- At 8:30 am, I was number 14 in the queue, so I decided to walk down to the Surgery.
- It's always busy when I've tried to get through, it seems that 5:00pm is the best time.
- Too much message at the beginning.
- Sometimes slow.
- Long wait.
- Always busy!
- Presumably lots of phone calls into the Surgery, preventing people getting through.
- Did not know they had changed the number, so I got a bit frustrated.
- Hard to get through, no-one answered.

**Q3: Were you satisfied with the appointment you were offered?**

- Fantastic! A1!
- It was OK.
- Treatment Room appointments are easy to get, appointment with a doctor or not.
- It took a very long time (one month) to get the appointment.
- It was three weeks ahead.
- I had to wait four weeks.
- Over two week wait.
- It took a week to sort it out.
- Waiting time a bit long.
- Would have liked my Diabetic Nurse follow up sooner than six weeks' time.
- Took three attempts.
- No vacancies.
- I had to wait for a month.

**Q4: Overall, how would you describe your experience of making your appointment?**

- Seem very thorough.
- The Receptionist was very clear with her questions, quickly answered my questions, and gave me an appointment.
- Always get an appointment and staff and doctors are really helpful.
- Very friendly.
- Everyone was very polite and helpful.
- Pleased to be seen this morning. Better than Sit and Wait Surgery.
- Excellent.
- Very helpful and informative.
- Helpful and offered alternative dates.
- Excellent, thank you.
- I have faith in the Practice and I believe they do their best.
- Fast and cheerful.
- Fast response to my fears. Polite, efficient staff. Brilliant Practice. Thank you.
- Impressive, friendly service - very efficient.
- Very friendly.
- Excellent, in every way.
- All very quick and easy - very speedy response.
- Excellent service - a good response from the receptionist.
- Staff normally try to find convenient and early appointments.

- Fabulous staff, super supportive.
  - Very impressed with being able to be seen so soon. Thanks a lot.
  - When I walked in, the Receptionist was very good.
  - All friendly and informative.
  - Very satisfactory.
  - Always can get an appointment quickly.
  - Missed appointment and phoned - staff are very understanding.
  - I never have a problem making an appointment when needed.
  - Even in the height of Covid, they always saw me face-to-face to calm me.
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- Not as quick as it used to be.
  - It could be better if I could get my appointment earlier than one month.
  - I find seeing the nurse easier than seeing the doctor.
  - B12 injections can't always be booked 12 weeks in advance. Can be frustrating. When you phone to book a few weeks later, you can't always get the day you need.
  - Today was good, but previously had to wait over an hour for someone to answer the phone.
  - Just on the phone a long time.
  - It's a long wait to see my doctor - five weeks.
  - I got through on the phone at 8:30am and was 10<sup>th</sup> in the queue and I did not have to wait long. I found getting an appointment the most stressful part!
  - I saw a GP Registrar - otherwise I would have had to have waited weeks for an appointment.
  - I have found it easy to make a blood test appointment, but not so easy to see a doctor.
  - Had to wait a while - number five in the queue.
  - I have had occasions when it is difficult to get an appointment that's not a month away. Also have had good appointment times as well.
  - I was not informed that the telephone system was changing - I only have a phone (not on Facebook and not able to use website). The new telephone system is worse than the previous one. I can no longer ring the treatment room directly. Difficult to cancel appointments. The messages are too long, and I have to wait too long. Often I don't get an answer. I am very frustrated and thinking of changing practice to Corfe Castle - but I like my doctor. Having to come in in person to make my appointments because the phone is too difficult.
  - The website states the Surgery is open from 8:30am to 6:00pm. However, I called by and it was closed for lunch for an hour. This should be indicated on the website, etc.

**Q6: Thinking about the reason for your appointment, were your needs met?**

- Called in for an NHS health check. All questions answered.
  - Listened to and treated well.
  - Mum has not been well, but difficult to know what's exactly wrong. Lovely lady gave blood test, kind and understanding.
  - Needs met, except not possible to get rid of the pain due to being allergic to many painkillers.
  - Very good face-to-face.
  - We discussed the relevant facts relating to my condition.
  - Blood test - very efficient and quick, very competent.
  - Practice Nurse is excellent.
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- Despite scoring very low on mood questionnaire, the doctor raised the possibility of antidepressants! Not appropriate at all.

**Q7: Overall, how would you describe your experience of the Practice?**

- Excellent as always.
- Always get to see or speak to someone. Staff always friendly.
- Always efficient, friendly and helpful.
- Dealt with physical and mental needs.
- Didn't have to wait too long. The Doctor was very thorough and pleasant - and reassured me.
- Excellent.
- Good so far.
- Good experience - and overall made progress with personal health (asthma).
- You cannot please everyone. I'm well satisfied with the Practice, you always see me when urgent. Well done to the staff that make it happen.
- Kind staff.
- I phoned this morning and had the appointment today. Absolutely great. Thank you.
- Quick appointment time and very quick waiting time once I arrived.
- Kind and polite staff. I felt very well looked after and cared for.
- Always very good, excellent service. Thank you.
- Very quick and efficient.
- The doctor was very quick to take my point and her analysis of my situation. Very insightful and knowledgeable. Much appreciated.
- Today very good.
- The service at this Practice is always exemplary, either at regular INR reading visits, or regarding my breathing.

- The GP was helpful, considerate and treated me with kindness and acted with superspeed in my referral.
  - Lovely friendly nurse.
  - I was in pain and telephoned the Surgery this morning - as soon as it was open. I was given an appointment with a nurse practitioner and prescribed the necessary antibiotics.
  - Excellent.
  - Very good and very accommodating.
  - High quality.
  - Very good treatment. Very friendly and professional.
  - Very satisfactory, staff polite.
  - It was good today, but I do feel that, with the expansion of new housing in Swanage, I am concerned that the Surgery will be overwhelmed.
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- The experience directly with the staff is brilliant - when you can get to see them. I've had issues getting an important appointment in a timely manner.
  - Make the reminder text more clear.
  - Some parts are good. I wish there was a lift, as my appointments are downstairs. I use a Rollator, so cannot do stairs, hence I have to walk round the outside, then wait for the door to be unlocked.
  - Change the awful music!
  - Some receptionists good, some not. Doctors and nurses v good.
  - Very good today. However, had a prior experience (on the morning of 19/4/23) when I was turned away by the Receptionist and told to come back at 2:00pm (was experiencing difficulty breathing after house fire the previous evening).
  - Trying to get to see the doctor is the hardest thing.
  - Long wait for GP.
  - Bad - but good when here. Very difficult to contact people. When Surgery is closed, please add to phone message. I tried to call, but no response, so walked to the Surgery - only to find that there was a notice on the door, saying it was closed for the holiday. (The patient hadn't realised the Surgery would be closed on Good Friday).
  - Very poor until I changed doctors. Made a complaint in 2021 about my previous doctor and still haven't received a response. Paramedic amazing, as is my current doctor.