

Joint Patient Participation Groups (PPGS) Survey October 2024

In October 2024, the PPGs for Newton Place Surgery and Faversham Medical Practice teamed up to jointly conduct a street survey, asking patients about their experiences with their GP practice.

The results show that patients generally appreciate the surgeries' friendly, kind and professional staff. Many respondents expressed an understanding of the extra demands on their practices due to new housing developments in the area.

Despite the positive feedback, the survey highlighted several areas for improvement. The overriding core issue was the difficulty in getting GP appointments, often resulting in longer waits or a scramble to secure an appointment on the day

An important take-away from the survey was the immense value patients place on the Urgent Treatment Centre, recognising its support for both the town and the GP practices.

We here identify the key issues arising, look at the report overall by question and supply key data as an appendix.

Key Issues

1. A general lack of available GP appointments.
2. Difficult GP appointment systems. Patients from both practices suggested revisiting the appointment systems to make the process easier, and less time-consuming. The 8am and 1pm starting pistol is seen as unfair and is a significant obstacle to appointments for some.
3. A lack of available named GP appointments.
4. A lack of focus on more regular systemised interaction through Health Checks or other monitors.
5. The E-Consult experience
6. Inconsistent or absent communications around “what’s next” for patients after an appointment or referral.

Other issues

- Attitude and interpersonal communications during a consultation – examples include feeling rushed and clinicians addressing the screen not the patient.
- Privacy and suitability of environment around reception areas
- A lack of availability of patient focussed appointment e.g. late/weekend appointment

Our survey was carried out in the town centre on a busy dry sunny autumn Saturday. There were several un-related events also taking place that day, attracting a large number of people of all age groups into the town centre. A total of 221 people completed our survey, filling in our questionnaire by hand. The survey was anonymous (ie without names) and asked a total of 18 questions, some of which invited comments – of which we received hundreds.

Summary of Results for each Question :

Q1. Which GP practice/s are you registered at?

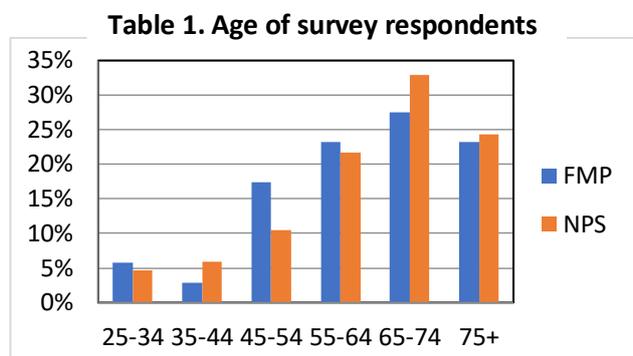
69% of respondents were patients at Newton Place Surgery and 31% at Faversham Medical Practice.

Q2. How many other members of your household are also registered with your GP practice:

This question was poorly phrased – probably confusing participants between single and joint person households and data has therefore been excluded. Data has remained in the appendices as it shows the general breadth of household numbers.

Q3. What age group do you belong to?

The age profile of respondents from both practices was predominantly older people, presumably a function of either the Market audience on the day or those willing to give time to the survey, but nevertheless reflecting the age group who were interested and wanted to have their say:



Q4. What gender do you identify as?

70% of respondents (for both practices) were female, again potentially a reflection as above

Q5 Approximately how many times have you contacted your GP practice or has the practice contacted you in the last year?

98% of respondents had had contact to and from their Practice within the last year, with 9% having had more than 10 contacts.

Q6. In the last year how many visits have you made to the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC)?

55% of respondents had had contact with the Urgent Treatment Centre, the vast majority of whom had had 1 – 3 contacts.

Table 2. No. of contacts with GP Practice over a year

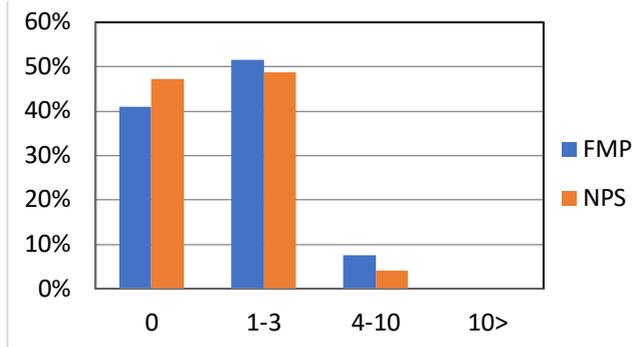
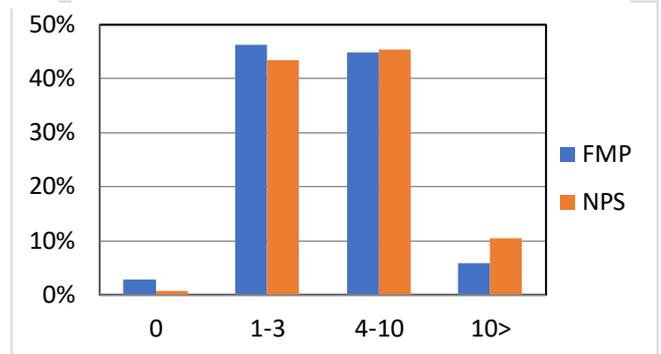


Table 3 No. of visits to UTC in a year



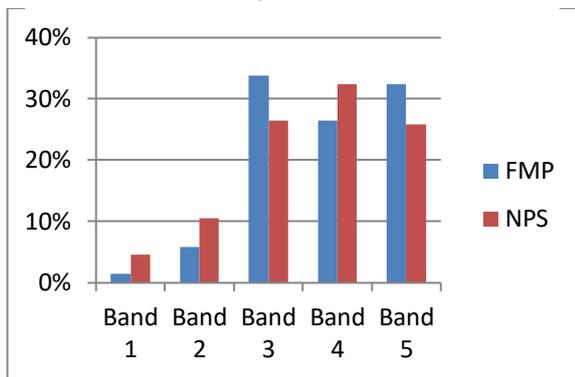
Q7 Thinking just about your GP practice, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is least favourable and 5 is best), please rate your experience as a patient. &

Q8 Thinking about your score and your interactions with the GP practice (and those of your household) which specific areas have you found good and which areas not so good? &

Q11. Thinking just about your GP practice, how could the service from the practice be specifically improved for you as an individual?

Nearly 60% of participants rated their own experience as a Faversham patient within the top two (of 5) bands and only 13% the bottom two bands.

Table 4. Rated experience at Practice



**1: Least favourable
5: Best**

Key to this favourable assessment across the board in both practices was an appreciation of the three sets of people that patients mostly interact with: doctors, nurses and other clinical staff and reception staff.

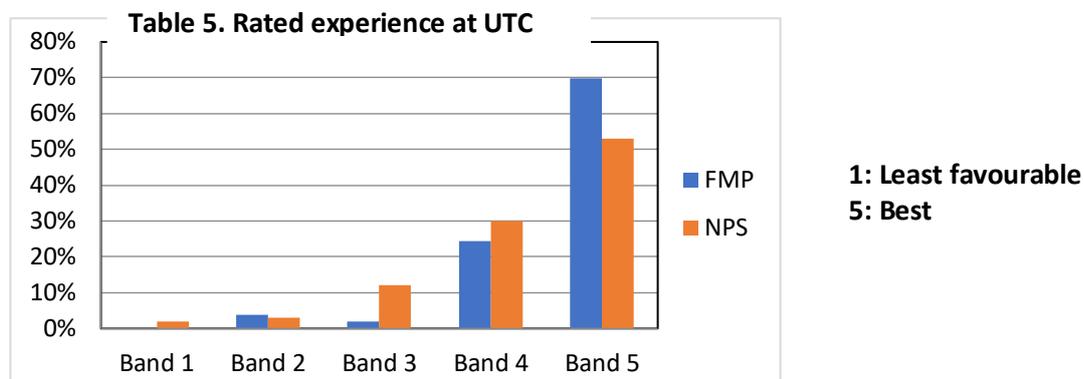
When asked what could be improved for them specifically in their own practice, patients overwhelmingly wanted more available GP appointments – an issue already understood and at the top of both Practices’ agendas.

The importance of “Continuity” around an individual’s longer-term relationship with the Practice is also seen as a key issue. This has multi manifestations – different GPs, medical notes, communications and referrals to name but four.

Q9 Thinking just about the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is least favourable and 5 is best), please rate your experience at the UTC: &

Q10. Thinking about your score and your interactions with the UTC (and those of your household) which specific areas have you found good and which areas not so good?

An important takeaway from the survey was the immense value Faversham patients place on the Urgent Treatment Centre, recognising its support for both the town and the GP practices. 87% of UTC users rated their experience of the UTC within the top two bands (band 4 and 5) and again staff were particularly appreciated.

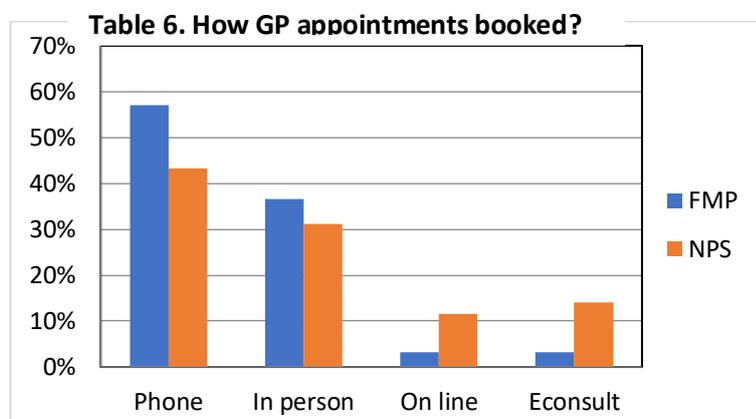


Negatives were experienced with occasional long waits for treatment and with the online self-triage/check-in screen.

Q12. How do you usually book your appointments at the GP practice? What is good and bad about the current appointments system?

The majority of patients (46%) book GP appointments by phone but a surprisingly high number do so in-person, often supposedly because of the phone service difficulties. Just over 20% use E-Consult (or Online) to interact with their GP.

This area is one of significant variance between the two Practices with Newton Place at present promoting and integrating E-Consult.



Patients at neither practice are content with the current booking systems and this is also flagged in key issues.

Q13. What is good and bad about the current repeat prescriptions system?

Perhaps the best takeaway regarding Repeat Prescriptions is that over 80% of participants are having a good rather than a poor experience. There are definitely issues – the speed of the systems overall and the increasing waits at the pharmacies but for many the system works well.

The survey does not investigate the whole raft of different apps or delivery systems available to patients but overall the results suggest that there is no serious ongoing issue with the service.

Q 14. Do you feel the medical and nursing staff at the GP practice have a good understanding of your general health?

Under 50% of Faversham town patients reported they consider their health is well monitored and cared for, which is telling. Nearly 40% of patients fall into a rather grey area of lacking a sense of co-ordinated care but satisfied when they themselves present with an issue. 10% of the patient group struggle to have issues resolved (with another 4% avoiding the GP Practice altogether). This theme of lack of regular Health Checks and consequent detrimental effect is picked up by individual comments elsewhere within the Survey and flagged as a key issue.

Q 15. If you have had an ongoing issue or needed a referral, how have you found the follow-up communications from the GP practice?

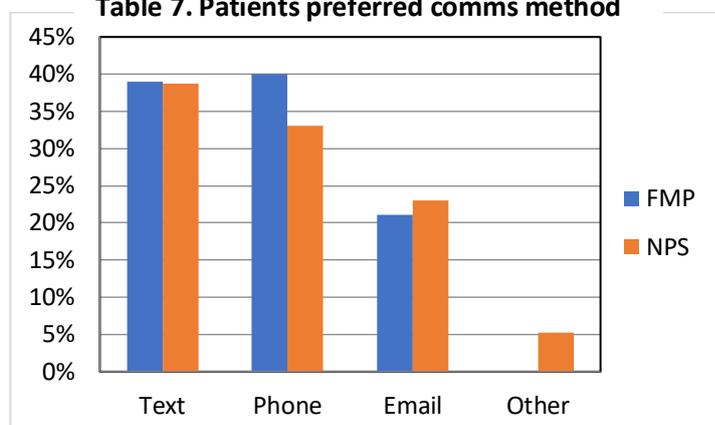
A strong issue with patients, reflected across both Practices, is that of ongoing communication from the Practice following an initial consultation, be that a need for referral or simply follow through treatment - 26% summarised it as “bad”.

There is an issue of clarity around what patients can and should expect at the end of each consultation. The whole “what next” area is ragged and filled with uncertainty and is flagged as a key issue.

Q16. Both GP practices use phone, text, email, post and the website for communications. What is your preferred form of communication and how are current GP practice communications working for you?

Whilst there were differences in the preferred methods of communications most are able to work with what they are given – txt and phone were the highest preference.

Table 7. Patients preferred comms method



Q17. Which one specific issue would you like your GP practice to improve?

Given the chance to state a single specific issue which their Practice should improve patients again – across both Practices - voted overwhelmingly for increased GP appointment availability but two other issues were strong contenders – the appointment systems themselves and the struggle to obtain an appointment with their own or a named GP. All are therefore flagged as key issues.

Q18. E-Consult is a national service. If you have used E Consult within the last year what is your experience?

71% of people responded to this question, and the results showed use of E-Consult to be a Marmite experience scenario as well as a big difference between our two Practices. Over six

times as many Newton Place patients have used E-Consult than Faversham Medical Practice patients. Of that overall number just over half have had a good experience and just under half a bad experience with E-Consult. The inconsistency around E-Consult indicates this should be a key issue for both Practices.

Table 8. Total number of patients and E Consult experience

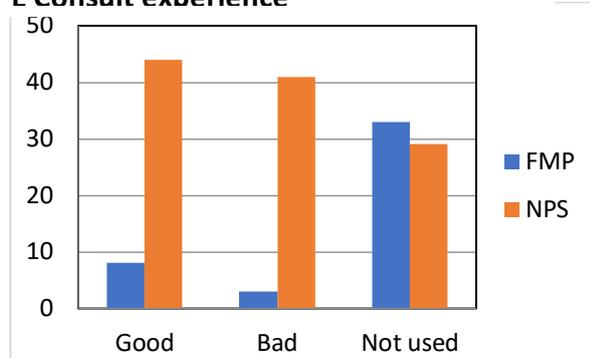
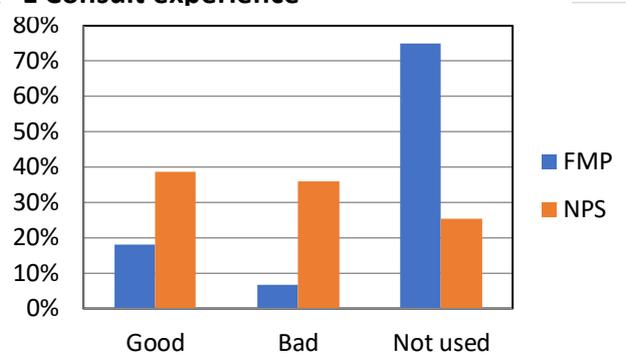


Table 9. Percentage of patients and E Consult experience



Final Comments

This report, with its accompanying appendices, describes the results of Faversham’s Joint Patient Participation Groups’ survey of residents, carried out in October 2024. We hope that this information will be of great benefit to the two practices in the months and years ahead as they work to improve health services across the town. We will make sure that the patient’s voice is heard and, where possible, acted upon.

As mentioned earlier, we received literally hundreds of comments which raised many issues, some in small numbers but presenting particular and significant problems for patients, including, for example, appointment waits, reception service, continuity of GP, phone systems, variable quality of GP, surgery waits at appointments and GPs listening. We could not capture all of these in this report, but they are available in the survey forms themselves and in Appendix 1. They are very interesting, and we would encourage everyone to take the time to read them.

As Patient Participation Groups for the two practices, our role includes ensuring the voices of our patients and their perspective are heard, key issues acknowledged and wherever possible resolved. In that context therefore we hope this survey will be of joint interest and benefit to our local GP practices and each of the staff groups who work within them, to improve health services provided within the town.

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February 2025

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Attachments :

Appendix 1 : Analysis of questionnaire responses (questions 8-18)

Appendix II : The street questionnaire used