

Patient participation & changes to primary care

Healthwatch Warwickshire aims to ensure lived experience of people is considered - in light of recent changes taking place within NHS services, including the introduction of 'Primary Care Networks'.

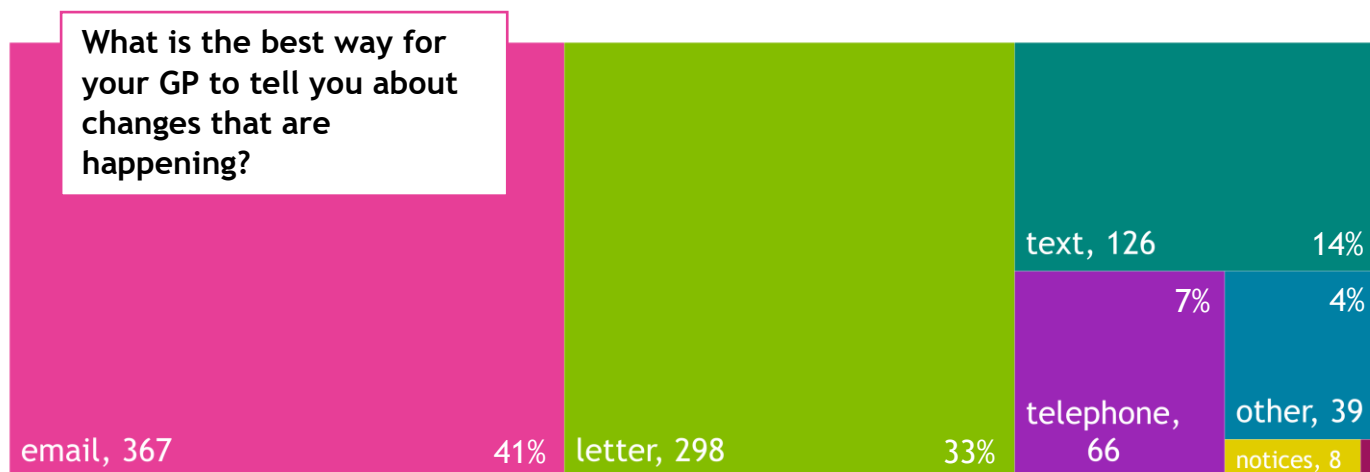
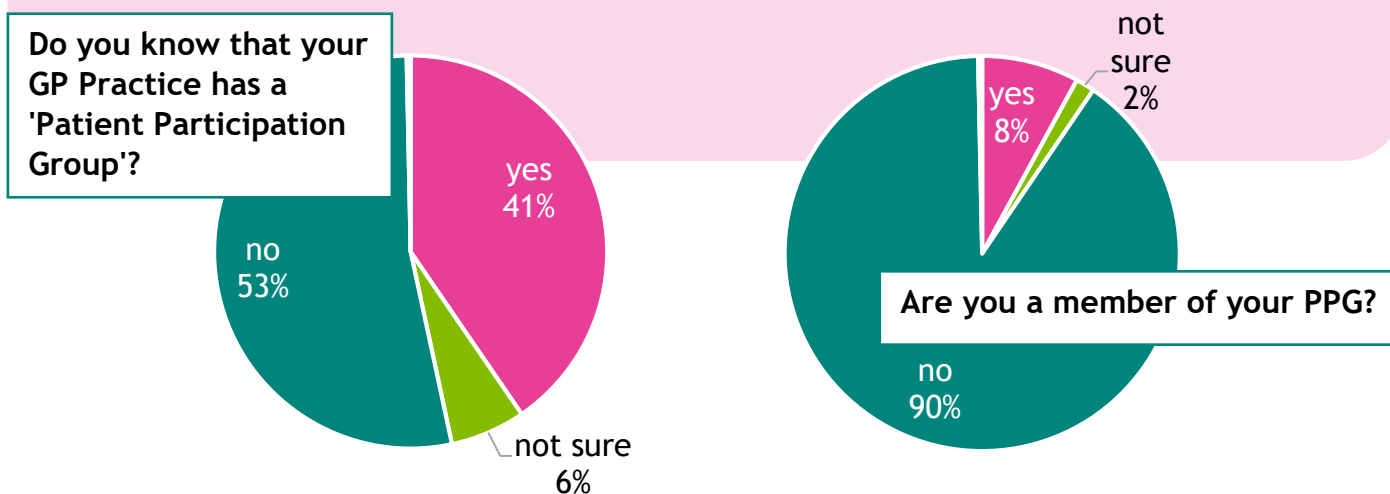
- **Patient Participation Groups (PPGs)** offer patients an opportunity to be involved with and support their local General Practice.
- **Primary Care Networks (PCNs)** will bring general practices together to work at scale.

What is this research about?

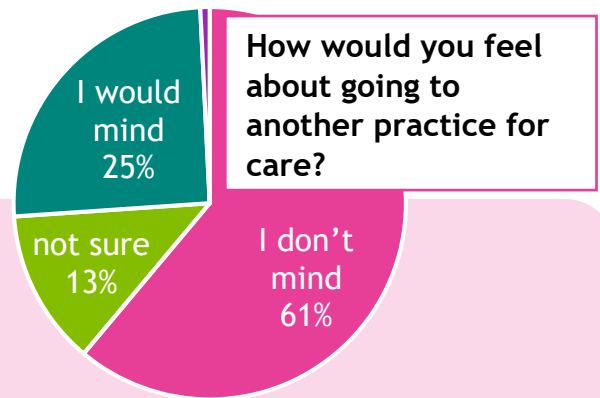
Following our Standing Conference in May (which aimed to galvanise patient voice by bringing patient representatives together) Healthwatch Warwickshire set out to discover more about whether individuals were aware of their Patient Participations Groups (PPGs), how Primary Care Networks (PCNs) were being introduced, and how any changes should be communicated.

What did we do?

From July-September Healthwatch Warwickshire held multiple sessions across two outpatient departments (Rugby St. Cross and George Eliot Hospital), talking to the public about changes to GP services (PCNs) and how they receive communications from primary care. We promoted this survey to other groups and online, in total hearing from 905 people.



We were told that digital means, such as social media and websites, might be additional ways to communicate changes, as notices are only useful for regular surgery attendees.



What else did people have to say about the potential changes to primary care?

“Only if I don't have to travel too far”

While most respondents did not have concerns about attending other GP practices, many stated that distance could be an issue. For some this concern was not strong, others however felt that attending another GP or travelling far would be a great burden. This was particularly important for those who couldn't drive (who walk or using public transport instead), especially those living in rural villages or with mobility issues.

“I live in a village and buses only go every 2 hours so going to different places would be difficult for me.”

While most respondents did not have concerns about attending other GP practices, many stated that distance could be an issue. For some this concern was not strong, others however felt that attending another GP or travelling far would be a great burden. This was particularly important for those who couldn't drive (who walk or using public transport instead), especially those living in rural villages or with mobility issues.

Would it mean improvements in accessing services?

There were some positive suggestions on how PCNs might lead to improvements in services*:

- Increased availability of appointments
- Access to more services or specialists in the community

*Some respondents also said they wouldn't mind travelling further for these improvements.

Continuity of care

Many told us that they liked the current service they were receiving and didn't want it to change or that they had concerns over the lack of continuity in care - not being able to see a known health care professional or someone who knew their details.

“I am happy for practices to refer to other GP's to share specialist staff and equipment. However, I do not want this to affect my continuity of care. I like my GP knowing me.”

Will we be consulted?

Finally, there was a lot of interest in the topic of PCNs. Respondents asked for more information and wanted to know whether there would be engagement with patients.

Next Steps

We will promote these findings with various organisations, including those who pay for delivery of services and those who hold the system to account, in order to ensure services are meeting people's needs by listening, and reacting, to them.

We will continue our work on patient voice, including holding future Standing Conferences, and watch the changes to services as PCNs progress.