

Report reveals what you told us about evening and weekend appointments

Being able to get a GP appointment in the evening or at the weekend is greatly valued by patients, but getting an appointment is not always easy.

These are the key findings of our **latest report** which takes a closer look at how the GP Improved Access Service, launched in October 2018, is running across the county. The scheme involves GP practices working together to provide more routine appointments for patients in the evenings and at weekends, which can mean you're offered an appointment at another surgery, or with someone other than a GP, such as a nurse or paramedic.

We worked with the Wiltshire GP Alliance, who provide the service, to see how well the service is working and whether any improvements could be made.

What did we do?

- We visited GP surgeries across Wiltshire during daytime, evening and weekend hours and interviewed more than 170 people.
- We carried out a mystery shop, calling surgeries to ask about evening and weekend appointments.
- We sent out a survey to gather the views of staff, which was completed by 85 staff.

What did people say?

- Access to evening and weekend appointments is valued, but patients' awareness of, and ability to access these appointments, was inconsistent.



- Most patients said they would be happy to see a nurse, paramedic or pharmacist where appropriate.
- 60% said they would consider travelling to be seen at another surgery. But there was concern that those who are unable to travel are not disadvantaged.
- Surgery staff were not clear about what Improved Access appointments were available at other surgeries and some reported difficulties booking these.
- Staff thought the service had improved access for patients, but their views whether it was a good use of their time was more mixed.
- People we spoke to were very positive about the treatment they had received at appointments.

Stacey Sims, Healthwatch Wiltshire Manager, said: "We were pleased to work with the GP Alliance to evaluate the Improved Access Service and to hear how patients, GPs and other staff feel it is working.

"It's clear that the Improved Access Service is a real benefit to patients, and feedback about their appointments is very positive, but there is still some work to be done on how the service is implemented, and making sure that both public and staff are getting clear information about what appointments are available, when and where.

"Thank you to everyone who stopped to share their honest thoughts, and to the GP practices for facilitating our visits."

Read the report on our website.