

## Missed GP Appointments in North Somerset

October 2016



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# Missed GP Appointments

## Introduction

This report provides an overview of missed GP appointments across North Somerset. It should be noted that the term ‘missed’ appointments does not refer to those where the Practice is notified prior to the time of the appointment, but rather those where the patient is expected but does not attend. In view of this, missed appointments are often referred to as ‘Did Not Attend’ or DNA.

## About Healthwatch North Somerset

Healthwatch North Somerset’s statutory duty and remit, which is laid out in The Health and Social Care Act 2012, is to provide a voice for people who use health and adult social care services, by:

### Influencing

- Giving people an opportunity to have a say about their local health and social care services, including those whose voice isn’t usually heard.
- Taking public views to the people who make decisions - including having a representative on the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Feeding issues back to government via Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

### Signposting

- Providing information about health and social care services in the local area. Advising people on where to go for specialist help or information (signposting).
- Helping people make choices and decisions about their care.
- Working closely with other groups and organisations in the local area.

**Under the Health and Social Care Act (2012) Healthwatch North Somerset has the following powers and functions:**

- A duty on service providers and commissioners to respond to requests of information within 20 working days.

- A duty on service providers and commissioners to respond to recommendations made by Healthwatch North Somerset within 20 working days.
- Make reports and recommendations about services known to commissioners, providers and regulators of health and social care services in North Somerset
- A duty on service providers to allow entry to authorised Healthwatch North Somerset members to conduct announced or unannounced ‘enter and view’ visits to assess services.
- A seat on North Somerset’s Health and Wellbeing Board (People and Communities Board), to promote health improvements and tackle health inequalities.
- A mechanism to make recommendations to Healthwatch England, which may include advising the Care Quality Commission about special reviews or investigations to conduct.

### Our Mission:

*By offering all people of North Somerset a strong voice  
we will improve the quality of local health and social  
care today and for the future.*

## Background

Healthwatch North Somerset has identified an increase in feedback from the public relating to the issue of ‘Appointments’ and specifically around the availability of appointments and access to named GPs.

When a North Somerset resident fed back to us how many missed appointments their GP Practice had experienced in the previous month we were alerted to the fact that this could impact upon the availability of appointments and required further investigation.

In this report, we consider the number of missed GP appointments and how individual practices seek to manage and minimise the number of DNAs they experience.

Findings published in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine (Martin, Bassi & Dunbar-Rees, 2015) suggest that DNAs (Did not Attends) can be reduced by increasing engagement with patients and introducing the following steps:

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- Asking the patient to repeat the time and date of the appointment over the phone led to a 3.5% drop in DNAs the following month, in the practices taking part.
- Asking patients to write the time and date of their follow-up appointment (instead of nurses filling it out themselves) led to an 18% DNA reduction compared to the previous 6 month average in one nurse-led clinic.
- Communicating on posters how many patients had attended over the past month (rather than had not attended) positively framed the message and promoted the desired behaviour instead of normalising DNAs. This, combined with the other two interventions, reduced DNAs by 32% overall.

## Summary

A questionnaire was prepared using Smart Survey and a link to this survey was forwarded to GP Practice Managers in North Somerset providing background to work we were undertaking. The survey requested quantitative data on the number of missed GP appointments experienced by the GP Practice in the previous 12-month period together with qualitative information on how the Practice currently manages these at a local level.

Thirteen North Somerset GP Practice Managers responded to the request for information about missed appointments. A total of 13 Practice Managers responded: eight responded by completing the survey and five contacted the office separately by email to provide information.

Not all questions were answered by all Practices and this is shown in the data when the totals add to less than 13.

The results show that missed GP appointments are a serious concern for the vast majority of the responding GP Practices, and all but two of the responding Practices experience in excess of 100 missed appointments in an average month. At 10 minutes per appointment the equates to the equivalent of more than two working days a months of missed appointments per practice.

This report provides a breakdown of the information received, both quantitative and qualitative, and offers recommendations for change with regard to managing DNAs.

## Aims and Objectives

The aim of this report is to highlight the number of missed GP appointments, or 'Did Not Attends' (DNAs) as they are often referred to, and the potential impact this may have on the availability and provision of appointments at GP Practices across North Somerset.

Through media coverage and distribution throughout the Healthwatch North Somerset networks we are hoping to raise public awareness of the issue and encourage a change in patient attitude and behaviour with regard to effect of missed appointments and encourage the timely cancellation of appointments if necessary.

We aim to gain an insight into the reasons why patients fail to attend planned appointments. Healthwatch North Somerset is well placed to work alongside GP Practices and Patient Participation Groups to engage with patients regarding this issue.

## Methods

A short on-line survey was designed using Smart Survey and forwarded to every GP Practice in North Somerset.

A follow up email was sent several weeks later to the GP Practices that had failed to respond initially requesting the same information and stating that if staff were unable to find the time to complete the survey they could email the Healthwatch North Somerset office directly with any information they felt would be useful to report.

## Summary of our Findings

The following section provides a breakdown of the questionnaire results in both a written and visual format.

Of the 13 Practices that responded, eight did so via the Smart Survey link and five contacted Healthwatch North Somerset directly and responded by email.

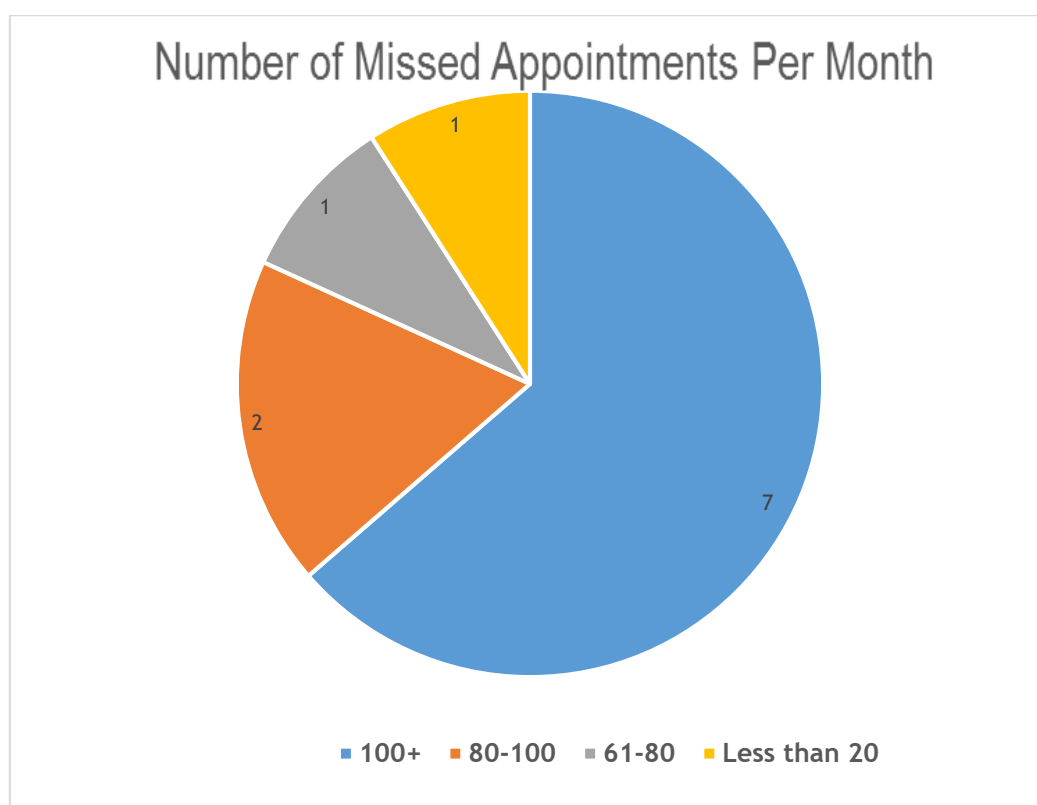
## Missed Appointments Survey

### Question 1

*How many missed appointments does your GP Practice experience on average in a month?*

Of the 13 Practices that responded, seven indicated that on average they experience more than 100 missed GP appointments per month. One Practice was not able to provide a breakdown over the previous twelve-month period but gave a figure for the previous month of 107 missed appointments.

Of those Practices that provided partial information, two Practices indicated that their monthly missed appointments amounted to between 80 and 100; one stated that they experienced an average of between 61 and 80, and the remaining Practice stated their missed appointments were less than 20 per month.



## Question 2

*Please provide a breakdown of missed appointments for the last 12 months.*

The following chart indicates the number of missed GP appointments experienced by the 13 North Somerset GP Practices that responded to our survey.

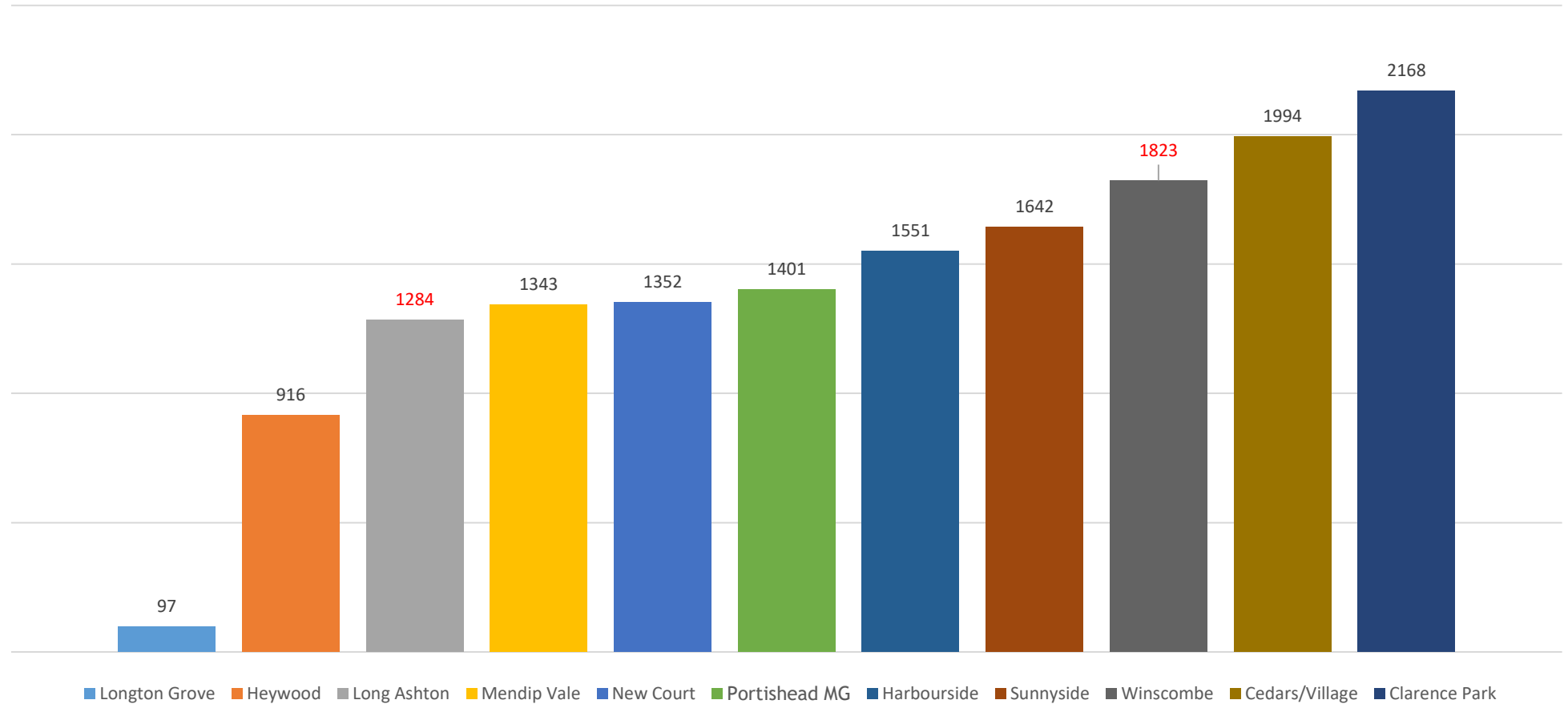
Please note the figures shown in red are estimated based on the partial information provided.

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## Missed Appointments for 12 Month Period



### Missed GP Appointments October 2016

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### Question 3

#### *What processes do you currently have in place to follow up missed appointments?*

The table below shows the range of techniques adopted by the GP Practices that responded to our survey to follow up with patients who have failed to attend an appointment; many use more than one method.

Follow Up Technique	Number of GP Practices Adopting Each Technique
Telephone Calls	5
Letters	3
Alert on Booking System	2
Not Specified	5
Text	1

### Question 4

#### *What reasons are given for missed appointments?*

The following table gives a breakdown of the reasons given by patients after a missed appointment. Respondents were able to provide more than one answer and could choose any or all that applied.

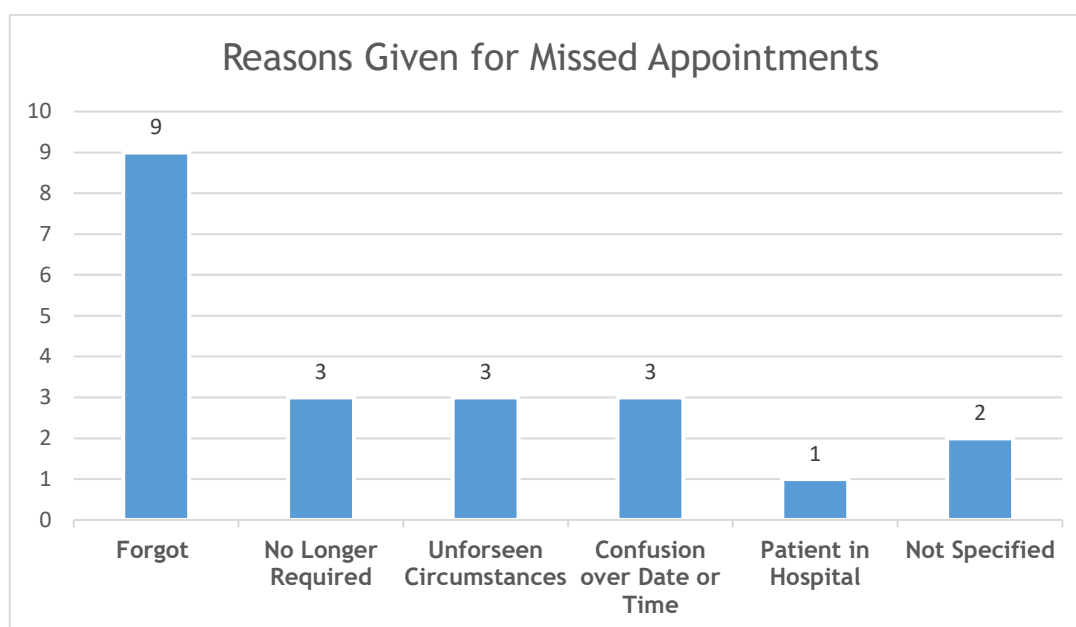
A total of 9 Practices responded that the most common reason given by patients for missed appointments is that the patient had forgotten they had made an appointment.

Of the 13 respondents, 3 Practices stated that another common reason for missed appointments is that the patient felt better and no longer required the appointment.

One Practice commented that they have experienced missed appointments during an afternoon Practice from patients who had made the appointment that same morning.

Four Practices stated that missed appointments are often be due to unforeseen circumstances or confusion of the date and time of the appointment.

One Practice specifically stated that they have experience of missed appointments due to the patient being in hospital and commented that appointments booked too far in advance can cause these sorts of issues. One Practice has changed to a book-on-the-day system due to high volumes of missed appointments to avoid this; although follow up appointments at the GPs request can be booked in advance.



## Question 5

### *What processes do you currently have in place to reduce missed appointments?*

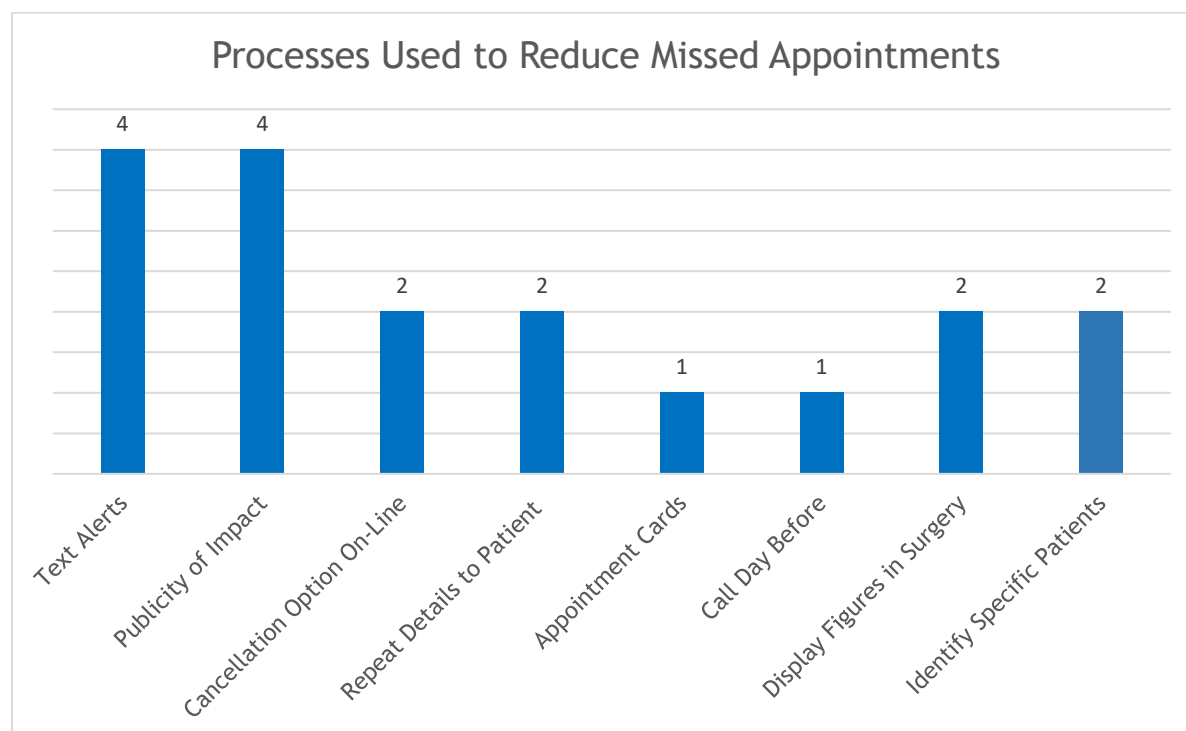
The table below shows the processes used by respondent practices to reduce missed appointments. Text alerts and publicising the impact in newsletters were the most common methods adopted by the responding Practices.

Two Practices indicated that they display the number of missed appointments in their waiting area. One Practice said that they had tried this method in the past but they had not seen any reduction in missed appointment numbers as a result.

Two Practices provide an on-line cancellation option to reduce missed appointments, making the process of cancellation quick and easy for many patients.

Other methods adopted by the responding Practices included calling the patient the day before their appointment, identifying patients with memory difficulties so that they can be given specific reminders, providing appointment cards at the time

of making an appointment and repeating back the details of appointments to confirm with the patient that they are correct.



Longton Grove Practice is the GP Practice with the lowest average number of missed appointments from those who responded to the survey. The processes they have in place to reduce the number of missed appointments include:

- Publicising the number and cost of missed appointments to patients
- Promoting on-line cancellations
- Providing specific reminders for patients with known memory problems
- Only booking appointments no more than two weeks in advance
- Sending a series of letters to patients after missing an appointment, these differ depending upon the number of times they have missed an appointment

Each of these techniques has been adopted by one or more of the responding GP Practices, but no others stated that they adopt all of these methods simultaneously.

## Public Awareness

In an attempt to gauge public awareness and opinion on the matter of missed appointments, we emailed Healthwatch North Somerset members asking them to estimate the number of missed appointments a GP Practice has in an average month.

The estimates received ranged from between 40 to 500 missed appointments per month suggesting that there is an awareness by the public that missed appointments are a regular occurrence.

Two members of the public contacted the Healthwatch North Somerset with their views on this particular subject and stated that they believe fines should be issued to people who fail to attend their GP appointment.

## 2016 GP Patient Survey

The 2016 GP Patient Survey run by Ipsos MORI on behalf of NHS England was an independent survey sent out to over a million people across the UK. The results show how people feel about their GP practice.

The following table outlines a small section of the full survey relating specifically to the process of making appointments. In this table the patient responses from two of the GP Practices referred to in this report are compared.

The results indicated the Practice with the least number of missed appointments (97 per year) scores highly in regard to offering convenient appointment slots and appointments with patients' preferred GPs compared to the practice with a much higher missed appointment figure (2168 per year).

	Practice with Least Missed Appointments	Practice with Most Missed Appointments
Percentage of patients who usually get to speak to or see their preferred GP	83%	50%
Percentage of patients who describe their experience of making an appointment as good.	94%	75%

*Source: GP Patient Survey 2016 by Ipsos MORI for NHS England*

## Recommendations

Healthwatch regulations stipulate that service providers and commissioners have a duty to respond to local Healthwatch reports and recommendations within 20 working days, in writing, to acknowledge receipt and to explain what action they intend to take or if they do not intend to take action they must explain why. (Health and Social Care Act 2012: Addendum to summary report: issues relating to local Healthwatch regulations).

Healthwatch North Somerset recommends the following based on the information received from the GP practices that responded to this survey. We believe these recommendations to be achievable, affordable and evidence based.

1. Engage in a coordinated approach with other local GP Practice Managers, Healthwatch North Somerset, North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, North Somerset Council and local media to increase patient awareness of the impact of missed GP appointments.
2. Provide immediate positive feedback to those patients who do contact the Practice to cancel an appointment. A suggested message could be “Thank you for cancelling your appointment, due to your consideration we can now release that slot so that someone else can be treated”.
3. Clarify the impact of techniques adopted to reduce missed GP appointments in order to identify the most effective measures.

## Distribution of the Report

This report has been forwarded to the following parties for a response prior to becoming available to the wider public.

1. North Somerset Council
2. North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group
3. North Somerset Community Partnership (NSCP)
4. North Somerset GP Practices
5. One Care Consortium

It will be forwarded to:

6. Healthwatch England
7. NHS England
8. Care Quality Commission

Responses received are shown in full in Appendix 2.

## Appendix 1: Acknowledgements

Healthwatch North Somerset would like to thank the following GP Practices for supporting and participating in the production of this report.

- Longton Grove Practice
- Sunnyside Practice
- Mendip Vale Practice
- Portishead Medical Group
- Heywood Family Practice
- Harbourside Medical Practice
- Winscombe and Banwell Practice
- Clarence Park Practice
- Cedars and Village Practices
- Long Ashton Practice
- Graham Road Surgery
- New Court Surgery



## Appendix 2: Responses from Commissioners and Providers

### NHS England

Thank-you for the report and as discussed at the North Somerset Joint Co-commissioning committee, we would welcome further discussions regarding the findings and how this can be built into further work.

At the meeting we agreed it would be mutually beneficial to work with Healthwatch when these pieces of work are carried out to see if the questions and data collected can get maximum benefit

In terms of the recommendations within the report, we agree that raising awareness of the impact of missed appointments with patients in a co-ordinated appraisal across practices will be beneficial and a consistent message and communications will add value.

We must be mindful of cost of introducing any messaging type system and value it will bring, your suggestions are credible - please can you work with the CCG, NHSE and GP practices to ensure costs are realised and discussed?

### The Cedars Practice

**Carol Jones, Practice Manager**

Thank you. Very informative.

Our response would be to activate ALL options as described by Longton Grove. We will be looking into this prior to the next Staff Meeting to discuss options with staff.

### Graham Road Practice

**Christine Perks, Practice Manager**

Thank you for sending me a copy of this report.

Our DNA rates are high although we have managed to reduce the numbers over this past year due to some of the changes below.

We have posters with monthly DNA figures on in the waiting room for patients to see.

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We have also put in place a texting service for people with mobile phones so that they get a reminder about their appointment.

We also have reminders put on for anyone with dementia to remind them of their appointment time.

We had to change to a book on the day service for GP appointments because of the high volume of DNA's although the patient can still book follow up appointments at the GP's request.

All Nurse and Advanced nurse practitioner appointments are available to pre-book.

We also offer some online appointments for those people with busy lives who need to pre-book an appointment for work reasons.

We are finding that the patients are more understanding now as to why we only book on the day after seeing our figures displayed!

I am sure it was the same story for all of the practices that took part in the survey I think unfortunately demand will always outweigh capacity.

Thank you for your continued support.

## **Mendip Vale Medical Practice**

### **David Clark, Executive Manager**

Thank you for your email and the really useful report on missed appointments.

Myself and my team would welcome any opportunity to work with Healthwatch and our patients to reduce the number of missed appointments. Our PPG Chair Geoff Matthews has raised this during a recent PPG meeting and we will ensure that this report is utilised in that forum.

One question I did have from reading the excellent report was if it would be useful to have a comparison against the missed appointments based on list size. For example, we had 1343 missed with a list size of 21,542 whereas say Long Ashton had 1284 with a list size of 6,877. This may indicate Practices where they have less of a problem than others and what they are doing may be shared as best practice? Looking at Longton Grove they are doing a fantastic job with just 97 (6654 patient list size).

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