



# **Patients' views about Woodingdean Medical Centre Part 2: Final Report July 2025**



**healthwatch**  
Brighton and Hove

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## Patients' views about Woodingdean Medical Centre (WMC) – Executive summary

As a result of patients raising concerns over making GP appointments at Woodingdean Medical Centre (WMC), Healthwatch Brighton and Hove first undertook a survey of patient's experiences in [April-July 2024](#). This highlighted:

- The practice had recently made some changes, such as adding content to their website informing people of the services available. However, less than one half of patients were aware of the majority of changes.
- There was high knowledge for how to use the NHS App.
- People showed preference for phone appointments and to extend the period of appointments bookable in advance from 2 to 4 weeks.
- E-Consult (online booking system) is rarely used. People with disabilities found e-Consult more difficult to use.
- However, of those who have used e-Consult, a greater proportion found it easy to use compared to those reporting difficulties.
- Once people are able to make an appointment at WMC, people showed that the quality of care is generally excellent.

As a result, the practice told us that they will be implementing changes based on our research, including offering patients the choice of having a telephone appointment and requesting pre-bookable appointments up to two weeks ahead.

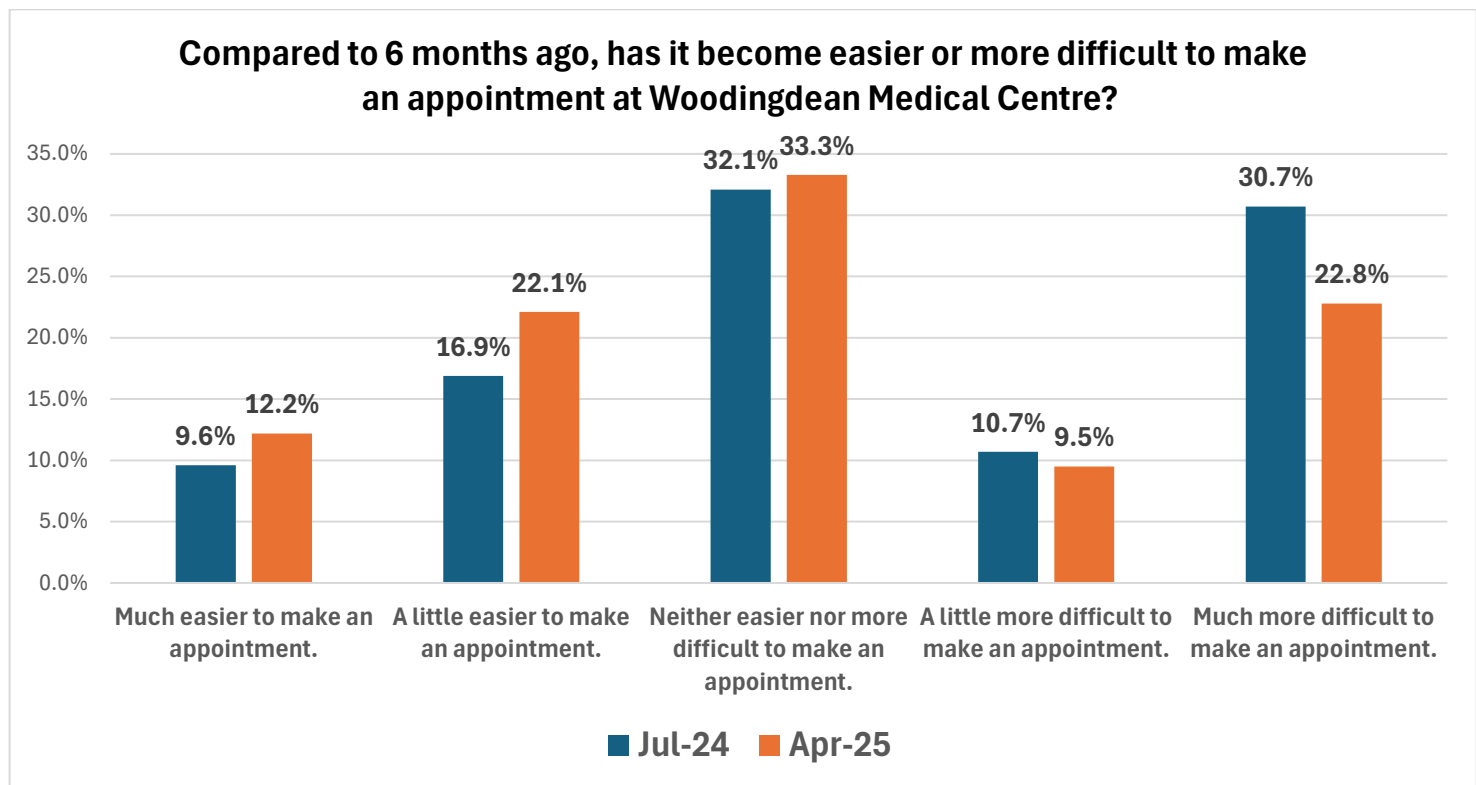
The main purpose of the 2025 survey was to repeat a question asked in 2024, namely: **'Compared to 6 months ago, has it become easier or more difficult to make an appointment at Woodingdean Medical Centre?'** These results can help to show the effectiveness of changes put in place by the practice after the 2024 survey. Several supplementary questions and comment boxes were added.

The survey was launched in April 2025 and a total of 1,612 people responded to the 2025 online survey sent by text from the practice. In terms of those

responding, 60.3% were female and 38.7% were male. Age ranged from 16 to 97 years with an average of 59.8 years. 84.8% were White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. 78.0% said that they had a long-term health condition and 27.8% said they had a disability.

Overall, our 2025 survey showed that people now found it slightly easier to book an appointment at WMC compared to 6 months ago.

The 2024 survey showed that 26.5% of patients had found it either 'much easier' (9.6%) or a 'little easier' (16.9%) to make an appointment (among those who had made an appointment at WMC within the last 6 months). In comparison, the 2025 survey shows a slight improvement as 34.3% who found it 'much easier' (12.2%) or a 'little easier' (22.1%) to make an appointment. Nonetheless, 33.3% found this a 'little more difficult' or 'much more difficult' to make an appointment compared to 32.1% 6 months ago.



The results show that people from Black and Racially Minoritised (BRM) backgrounds and men found it 'much easier' or a 'little easier' to make an appointment compared to 6 months ago. This is the same pattern for the 2024 survey, although the percentages are higher reflecting the slight improvement in overall ease of getting an appointment. People with disabilities continued to find it a 'little' or 'much more difficult' to make an appointment compared to 6 months ago.

Older people also found it 'much easier' or a 'little easier'<sup>1</sup> which is a different trend from last year. This is encouraging since the 2024 survey suggested older people were more likely to report difficulties in getting appointments.

Further analysis revealed that people with disabilities found it more difficult (almost twice as much) to make an appointment compared to people without disabilities – 59.7% of people with disabilities found it 'difficult' or 'more difficult' to make appointments compared to 6 months ago.

Around one-half of free-text comments expressed challenges in getting appointments. Indeed, some of the free-text comments had shown a preference for an online booking system although some had tried and not managed to complete the process.

Interestingly, the majority of respondents were familiar with the NHS app. 74% of respondents told us that they had used the NHS app, and only 26% had not. Reflecting the digital capability of some individuals, those who had used the NHS App were also more likely to find the website easy to use. For those having used the NHS App, 87.7% who found the website easy to use compared to 74.5% of those not using the NHS App.

However, a sizeable proportion of people (52.2%) had not used the Woodingdean Medical Centre website in the last 12 months. People with disabilities were significantly less likely (approximately 50% less likely) to use the WMC website. These figures may be underestimates considering this was an online survey and naturally excludes people who may not have access or the ability to respond online and least likely to use the WMC website.

Increasing people's access to appointments is still a concern at WMC. The trend is moving in the right direction. Also, among those in receipt of care, a similar number of people who raised concerns about getting an appointment also shared positive comments in relation to the practice, many in relation to the professionalism of the staff.

In conclusion, the recommendations are:

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<sup>1</sup> Findings for easier ('much' or a 'little') combined for this part of the analysis.

- **Offer more frequent online booking systems** as some people expressed positive opinions about this. Only 16% had used the website to book an online consultation and it is uncertain whether this reflects digital ability, how often this option is available, or a general preference to make appointments through another means such as phoning reception staff.
- **Support people with disabilities** as they are the least likely to use the website, find it more difficult to use, and disability status showed greatest difference in difficulties in making appointments compared to 6 months ago.
- It appears that **digital capability and familiarity of the WMC website** may be key in improving access to appointments. Those who found it easier to book an appointment relative to 6 months ago were 17 times more likely to find the website easy to use. Of the near one-half of respondents who preferred to telephone the practice to make an appointment, being able to book online may stop the frustration of bookable appointments not always being unavailable, at 8.30am.
- **Help people to use the WMC website** and demonstrate what information could be sourced, including an online booking system. There is a significant proportion of respondents who do not use the website but, among those who do, they find it easy to use.

The planned increase in capacity of GP hours and the ongoing improvements to the WMC website will support these learning points above. The challenge is to reduce the 32.3% of the sample who found making appointments a 'little more difficult' or 'much more difficult' compared to 6 months ago.

## Response from Woodingdean Medical Centre

### **WMC Healthwatch Brighton and Hove Survey response June 2025**

We would like to thank Healthwatch for organising the follow up survey on behalf of our patients and the Practice. Thank you to those patients who completed the survey.

We know the challenges that face patients nationally in obtaining GP appointments and we will continue to strive to offer our patients the best care we can within the capacity we work to.

We are pleased there has been positive impact in on our patients experience in making an appointment (see bar chart 'Results compared to 2024 Survey'). From August we will have increased our GP capacity with plans to improve continuity of care for those patients with the greatest need. Once this is embedded, we are hopeful this will go some way to address the concerns regarding GP continuity and repeat prescriptions.

It was useful to understand our patient population use of the NHS App and the Practice Website. We will continue to work on the improvement of both of these.

Thank you again for the feedback.

Woodingdean Medical Centre

# Patients' views about Woodingdean Medical Centre: Main Report

## Introduction and background

Woodingdean is an Eastern ward within the city of Brighton and Hove. It has a population of approximately 9,800 people according to the 2021 census published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). It is separated from the main part of the city by Downland and the Brighton Racecourse.

There is a wide variety in deprivation in Woodingdean. Comparing different locations within Woodingdean (typically housing between 1000 and 3000 people<sup>2</sup>), one of these areas is in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country and another is amongst the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, Office for National Statistics).

In general, Woodingdean is less diverse than other parts of Brighton and Hove in terms of ethnicity and it also has an older age profile. There are pockets of deprivation and there is a slightly higher proportion of people registered disabled compared to Brighton and Hove.

Recent Health Counts<sup>3</sup> data (2025) showed that residents in Woodingdean, relative to the city as a whole, less likely to be Trans, Non-Binary or Intersex (1.9%), LGBTQ+ (19%), have high anxiety (32%), have self-harm and suicidal thoughts (6%), to currently smoke or vape (13%), to drink at increasing risk of higher risk levels or possible dependence (32.3%), taken non-prescribed drugs in the last year (9.3%), to have ever had an HIV test within the last 12 months (4.8%), and to be a healthy weight (32%).

The Health Counts data also shows that residents in Woodingdean were more likely to be unpaid carers (20.0%), have higher levels of gambling (29.0%), do less than 30 minutes of sport and fitness within the last week

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<sup>2</sup> 'Lower Super Output Areas'.

<sup>3</sup> Gilchrist, K., Sherriff, N.S., Huber, J., Galvin, K., Mirandola, M., Murtagh, S., Llewellyn, C., Vass, C., Knight, L., Guzek, J., Aicken, C., Sawyer, A., Davidson, S., & Gray, C (2024). Health Counts 2024: Summary of Results. Brighton, Brighton and Hove City Council. A weighted sample of 16,729 adults in Brighton and Hove (7.2% of the resident population).



(59.8%), feeling that they belong very or fairly strongly to their local area (58.0%), and that they speak to their neighbours at least once or twice a week (61.8%).

65.3% of Woodingdean residents described their general health being good or excellent (Health Counts, 2024).

As a result of patients raising concerns over making GP appointments at Woodingdean Medical Centre (WMC), Healthwatch Brighton and Hove first undertook a survey in April–July 2024. The 2024 survey explored awareness and opinion about changes already made by the practice and tested the appetite for new options, such as preference for more phone appointments or more appointments offered in the future alongside those on the same day. A total of 1,129 people responded to the 2024 survey and the results can be viewed [here](#).

As a result of the 2024 survey, the practice responded to the feedback by introducing pre-bookable appointments up to two weeks ahead and is considering whether to extend this further. The website has been central to the changes made, including information on:

- How to book an appointment and the different types of health care professional you can see.
- Additional information about long term condition management and the way the practice can help patients.
- Information about help for patients outside the practice including the Enhanced Access Service and appointments provided by Brighton and Hove Federation.
- Easier website navigation.
- Enhanced the profile of eConsult on the website.

This report provides findings from a re-run of the 2024 survey to check if patient opinion has changed.

## Methods

The central purpose of the 2025 survey was to see whether people had found it easier or more difficult to make an appointment at Woodingdean Medical Centre relative to the last 6 months. This was achieved by asking

patients (via an online questionnaire) the same question in 2024 which asked: ***'Compared to 6 months ago, has it become easier or more difficult to make an appointment at Woodingdean Medical Centre?'***

These results would show the effectiveness of the changes in place after the 2024 evidence.

Supplementary questions asked about patient use of the Woodingdean Medical Centre website (including why used and ease of navigation), use of the NHS App, use of NHS 111 via the NHS App, and preferences about how to make an appointment (including by phone and an online request form). Equalities questions were also added as was a comment box for further responses.

The questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix 1 and typically took less than 5 minutes to complete.

The online survey was shared to 5,740 patients at WMC by text. A total of 1,612 people responded.

## Analysis

All responses presented are derived from all those people who provided a response and exclude missing data. In some cases, the percentage totals do not add to 100 per cent exactly due to the rounding up or down of decimal points.

Six headline findings were used to assess whether there were differences in findings. We ran series of tests to see if some of the findings differed by age, gender, ethnicity and disability (at the level of statistical significance<sup>4</sup>). We used a different test for the precise age that was recorded<sup>5</sup>.

Further tests<sup>6</sup> were also used to show which demographic factors predicted of the following outcomes:

- Those who found making appointments a little easier or much easier compared to 6 months ago.

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<sup>4</sup> Cross-tabs with Chi squared significance at the 0.05 level – or a 95% probability that the difference was not due to chance. The variables are mostly categorical comparing aspects that are yes/no e.g. gender differences.

<sup>5</sup> The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to show the differences in ranked age.

<sup>6</sup> Binary logistic regression.

- Those who found making appointments a little more difficult or much more difficult compared to 6 months ago.
- Those who have and have not used the NHS App.
- Those who have used the WMC website and those that have not.
- Those who found the website easy or very use to use compared to those who found it more difficult.
- Those who preferred to make appointments by phoning the practice.

Where there are no statistically significant differences, these are not specified.

The differences were presented in arbitrary order. For example, if people with disabilities are more likely to strongly agree to a viewpoint, then this can be reversed to mean that people without disabilities were less likely to strongly agree to this viewpoint.

## 2. Findings

A total of 1,612 people completed the survey. Not all of the 1,612 completed every question. We have included those who at a minimum completed the comparative question about ease or difficulty in making an appointment over the last 6 months.

Each set of findings will be presented as frequencies (%). including differences by gender, ethnicity, disability and age.

### Sample profile

As a context to the main findings, those who completed the survey were as follows:

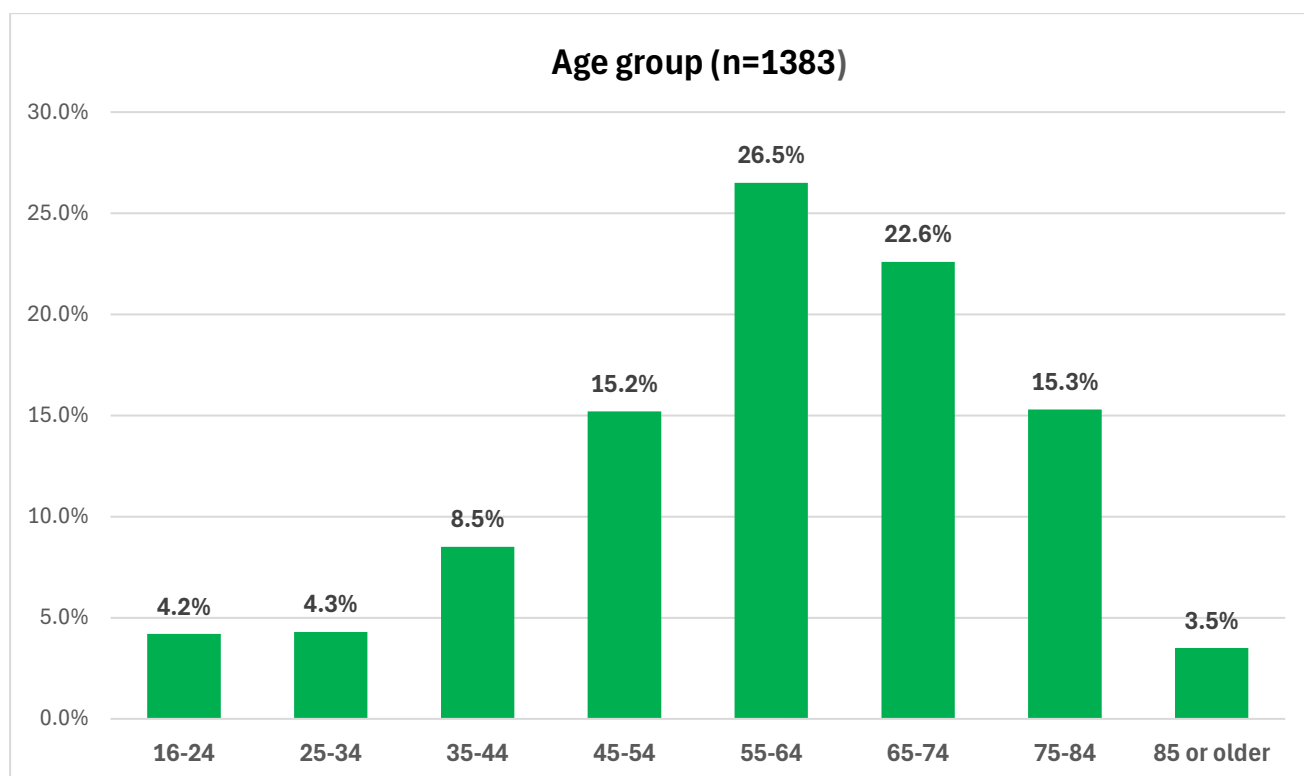
60.3% were female and 38.7% were male. The remaining were non-binary (0.4%) and 'prefer not to say' (0.6%). This gender imbalance is typical of those responding to surveys on health and care locally and nationally<sup>7</sup>. This compares to the Brighton and Hove figure of 51.1% female and 48.9% male<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Wang Y, Hunt K, Nazareth I, et al Do men consult less than women? An analysis of routinely collected UK general practice data. *BMJ Open* 2013;3:e003320. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2013-003320.

<sup>8</sup> From census 2021 data unless specified.

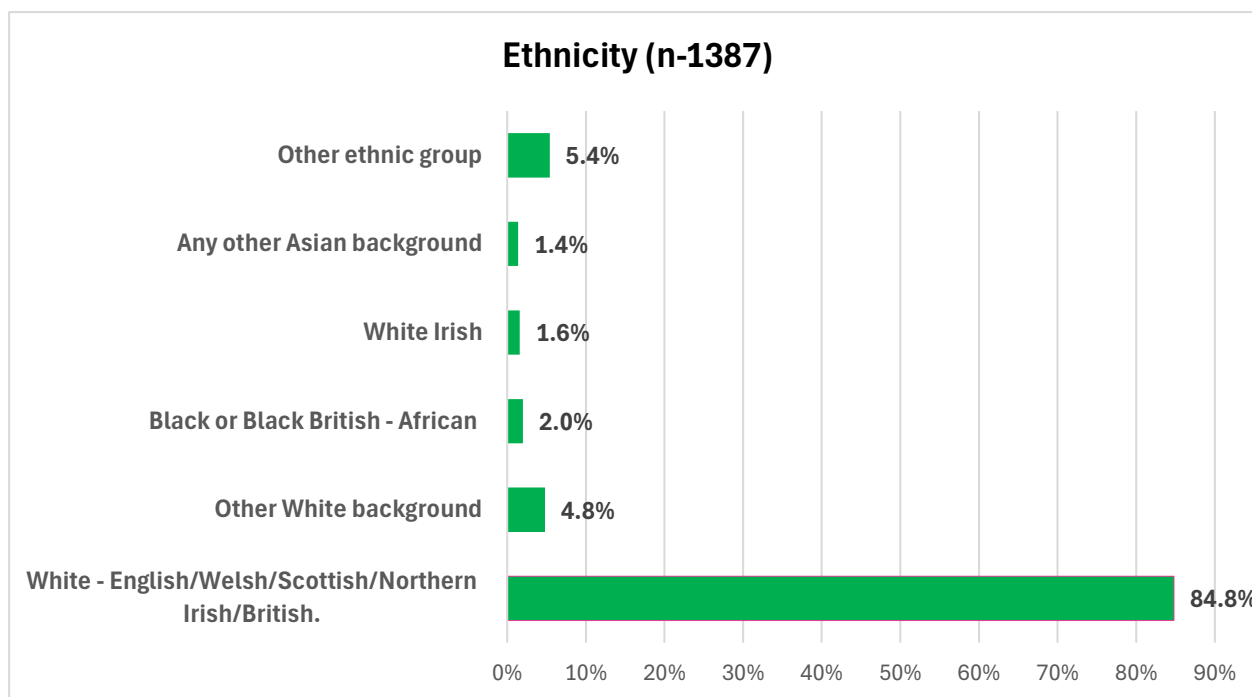
Age ranged from 16 to 97 years. The average age was 59.8 years. 49.1% of the sample were aged 55–74 years compared to the Brighton and Hove proportion of 19.1%<sup>9</sup>.



84.8% were White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. Larger other groups were any other White background (4.8%), Black or Black British – African (2.0%), White Irish (1.6%), Asian or Asian British – Indian (1.3%), Any other Asian background (1.4%). All other ethnic groups comprised 1.0% or less. The proportion of White-British people compares to the Brighton and Hove figure of 85.4%.

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<sup>9</sup> n denotes sample completing the question.



16% were unpaid carers. This compares to the Brighton and Hove figure of 7.8%.

A notable 78.0% said that they had a long-term health condition and 27.8% said they had a disability.

### **Making appointments at Woodingdean Medical Centre over the last six months**

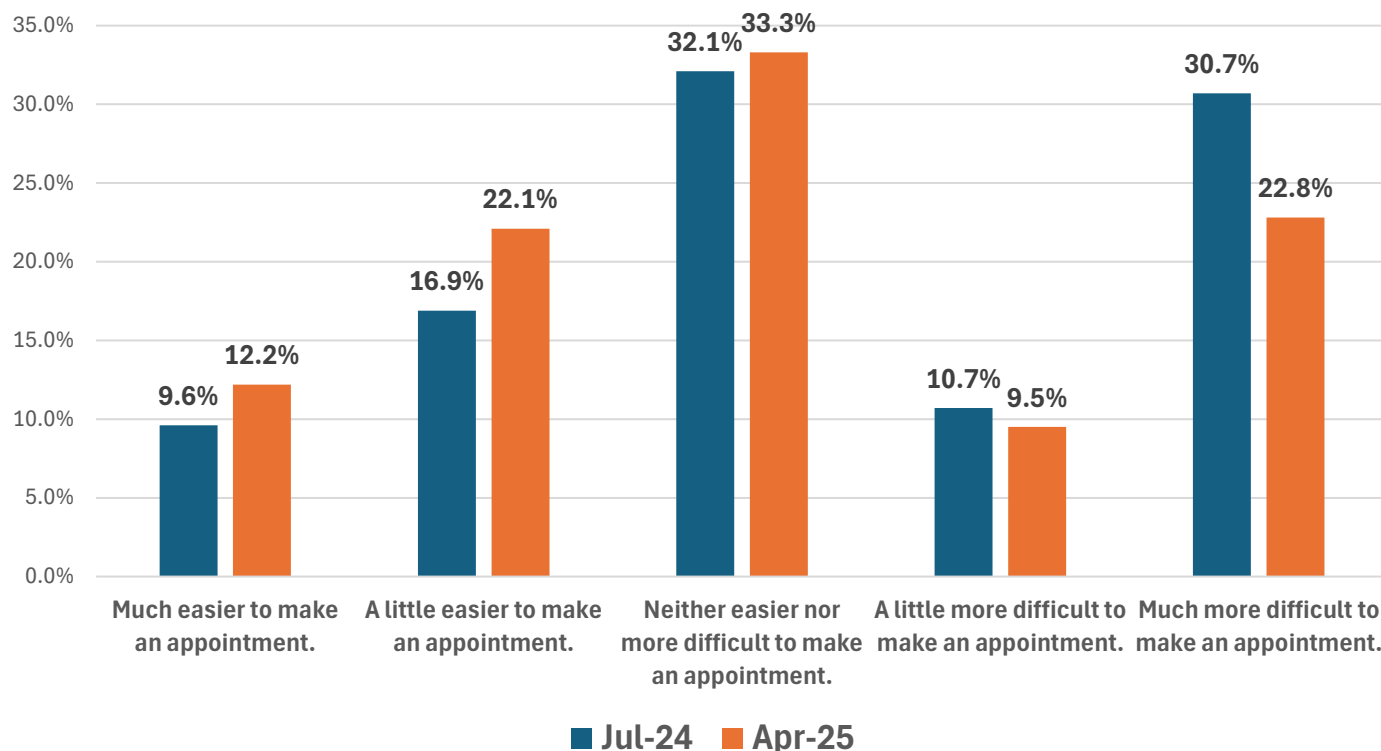
Overall, people found it slightly easier to book an appointment at WMC compared to 6 months ago.

The 2024 survey showed that 26.5% of patients had found it either 'much easier' (9.6%) or a 'little easier' (16.9%) to make an appointment (among those who had made an appointment at WMC within the last 6 months).

In comparison, the 2025 survey shows a slight improvement as 34.3% who found it 'much easier' (12.2%) or a 'little easier' (22.1%) to make an appointment. Nonetheless, 33.3% found this a 'little more difficult' or 'much more difficult' to make an appointment compared to 32.1% 6 months ago.

This slight improvement is shown below:

### Compared to 6 months ago, has it become easier or more difficult to make an appointment at Woodingdean Medical Centre?



People from Black and Racially Minoritised (BRM) backgrounds found it ‘much easier’ or a ‘little easier’ to make an appointment compared to 6 months ago – 64.2% of BRM people said this compared to 49.2% of White British people. This is the same pattern for the 2024 survey, although the percentages are higher reflecting the slight improvement in overall ease of getting an appointment.

Men also found it much or a little easier to get an appointment (56.2%) compared to 6 months ago, compared to women (48.3%). This is the same pattern for the 2024 survey.

Also, people with disabilities found it a ‘little’ or ‘much more difficult’ to make an appointment compared to 6 months ago (59.7%), relative to those without disability (46.8%). Again, this was the same pattern for the 2024 survey. In further analysis<sup>10</sup>, people with disabilities found it more difficult (almost twice as much) to make an appointment compared to people without disabilities.

<sup>10</sup> From a logistic regression where the effects of a person’s age, gender, ethnicity were controlled for.

Older people also had found it easier to get an appointment over the least 6 months. On closer inspection this was apparent from all those aged 25–64, with the older age groups reporting more difficulty. This was an interesting finding and different to 2024 where younger people found it easier to make an appointment relative to 6 months previously, indicating a particular area of improved access.

Difficulties in booking appointments were also the most frequently raised concern identified through the qualitative analysis of open-ended comments in the survey.

*"If you have any other comments about Woodingdean Medical Centre, Please use the space below to do so":*

All opened ended responses were analysed in Excel and grouped into themes. **860** people left a comment. **392** of these comments concerned the difficulties people experience when they try to make an appointment. General comments focused on how difficult it is to get an appointment included:

*"It's impossible to get an appointment even though I had shingles and couldn't get an appointment. I was told to contact 111."*

*"Not enough appointments available, more doctors are required. I have not had an doctor's appointment in the last 4 years."*

*"The appointment system is terrible the only way to get an appointment is to wait outside from 8am. This is a sad state of affairs, certainly for old or infirm people."*

*"You're doing a great job with all the resources you have. But it's a nightmare getting an appointment."*

Of these 860 comments, **176** of these focused on the particular difficulty of trying to get an appointment at 8:30am in the telephone call queue:

*"Staff are always helpful and considerate but trying to book and get an appointment twice since January has been unsuccessful – both times told none were available and once this was at 8.30 in the morning. On the day appointments booking not at all satisfactory."*

*"I can call at 8:30 on the dot and immediately be told that there are no appointments, s [...] I gave up trying to get one for my own problems and if it becomes urgent I'll go to the walk in centre as it's almost impossible to get an app here even if you call the second it opens."*

*"I am happy with Woodingdean Medical Centre but would just like to say I wish I could get an appointment over the phone. I have to wait over 30 minutes then when you get through there are no appointments left, so I walk to the surgery half an hour before they open to get an appointment."*

*"It's very hard for me to get an appointment if you're not on the phone by 8.30am you just won't get one. Sometimes I have to stay up all night to phone at 8.30am and then I don't always get one as I'm 30th in the queue but with 10 thousand people on their books I suppose it's understandable. I just carry on suffering as I'm disabled anyway and I feel like no one's bothered, it's such an unfair system, I was told some people manage to get 2 or 3 appointments a week surely that's not fair?"*

*"Phoning at 8.30 to make an appointment to find you're number 30..... sometimes longer in the queue is frustrating especially as I work in a school and can't always wait on the phone to be the 1st caller!! Isn't there a better way to make appointments? How do other practices make appointments for their patients?"*

**15** respondents left comments saying they had given up trying to get appointments for the same day and instead physically go to the surgery at 8:30am to get a same day appointment.

**61** comments concerned being able to book appointments for non-urgent issues in advance:

*"I find it frustrating that non urgent appointments cannot be scheduled some days in advance. This would presumably also ease the pressure on staff when only appointments on the day are available."*

*"An online booking system and more GP's would make a massive difference. Also the ability to book ahead, i.e my issue isn't urgent to be*



*seen same day but I require a GP to either prescribe something or a GP to diagnose."*

*"Why can't you make an appointment for during the week? All you get is we can't do that you have to phone on the day!"*

*"Trying to make a doctor's appointment causes me anxiety. The whole Russian roulette business with phoning each day at 8.30 to see if they can fit you in. Being able to make appointments in advance would be nice."*

*"Staff are always pleasant and helpful however the telephone line to make an appointment gets clogged on the dot of 8.30 and you find you have held for 20 minutes only to be told all the appointments have gone for that day to try the following day. Why can't appointments be booked in advance if the surgery is asking you to call and make an appointment?"*

**19 comments** focused on issues with the online booking system:

*"I've also tried to book an appointment in advance on the online service, and it goes up to 18 weeks with nothing I can book. You can never get on the e forms anymore the whole thing is a disgrace something needs to change."*

*"Would like to use the e-consult sometimes but can't get it on my Airmid app or the system on-line."*

*"I also tried to book online like they recommended but an automated message back saying they can't safely access me online and I need to speak to a doctor."*

*"Website not updated- cannot book e-appointments."*

Most worryingly, **16 people** commented on how being unable to get an appointment either meant their health had suffered or they had given up trying to get an appointment, for example:

*"Is it possible to see a doctor yet? We don't even bother trying these days."*

*"The difficulty in booking appointments, the waiting and triage process before actually getting an appointment (which is usually on the phone) has become a strong disincentive to contact WMC about anything. I am really concerned about my own and my partners health and don't really know what to do about it."*

*"The staff are lovely however getting to see a doctor is still very hard I have tried for 3 weeks and then give up."*

*"You cannot get past the receptionist for an appointment, so I tend to give up."*

*"If the doctor requests you to see them again in 2 weeks then please can we make this appointment on the way out [...] Being that I suffer from epilepsy and depression I literally cannot deal with this kind of issue so I will give up and risk my health."*

In summary, the analysis of qualitative data still clearly reveals the frustrations people have over trying to make an appointment at WMC.

## **NHS App and Woodingdean Medical Centre Website**

A further question in the 2025 survey focused on use of the NHS and Woodingdean Medical Centre website. It contained three questions with a yes or no response. The question were:

- 1) Have you ever used the NHS App?
- 2) Did you know that you can order repeat prescriptions and access IHI via the NHS app?
- 3) Have you used the Woodingdean Medical Centre website in the last 12 months?

The majority of respondents were familiar with the NHS app. 74% of respondents told us that they had ever used the NHS app, and only 26% had not. Interestingly, those who had used the NHS App were more likely to find the website easy to use: 87.7% who found the website easy to use had ever used the NHS App compared to 74.5% who found the website more difficult to use.

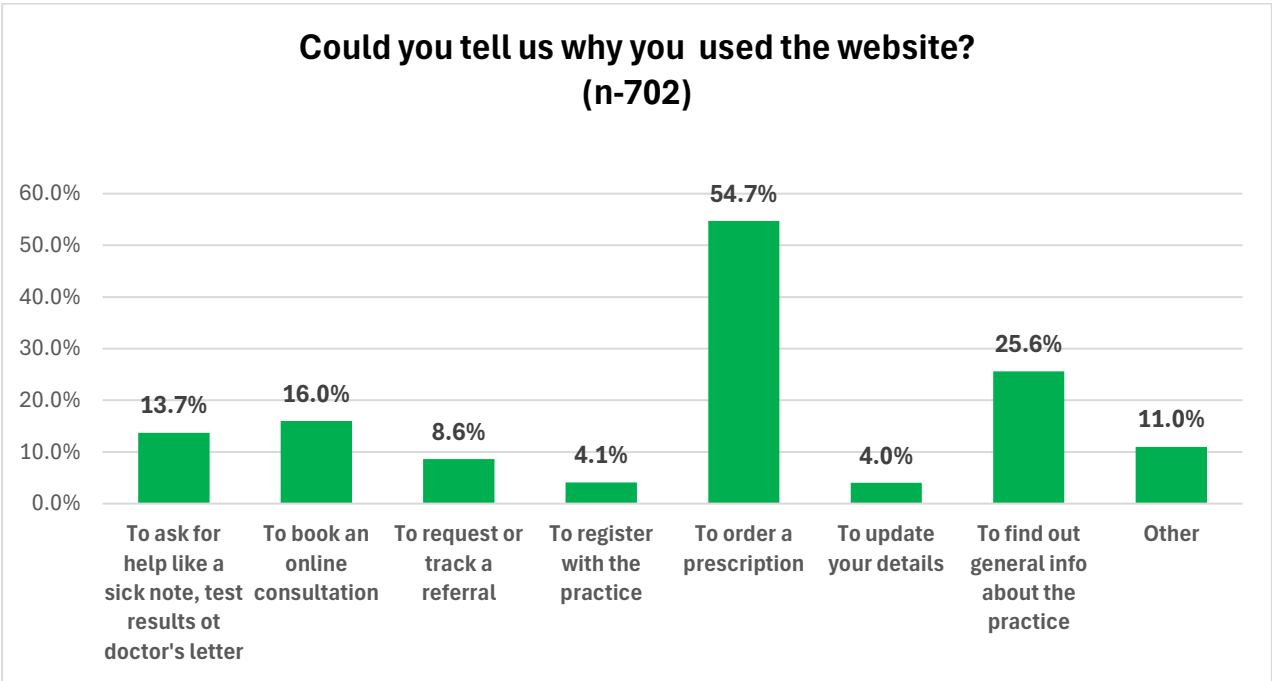
75.1% told us that they knew that you could order repeat prescriptions and access 111 via the NHS app. Only 25% did not know this.

In terms of using the Woodingdean Medical Centre website, 47.8% of respondents told us they have used the website in the last 12 months. 52.2% told us that have not used the Woodingdean Medical Centre website in the last 12 months. People with disabilities were significantly less likely (approximately 50%) to use the WMC website.

### Purpose of using the Woodingdean Medical Centre website

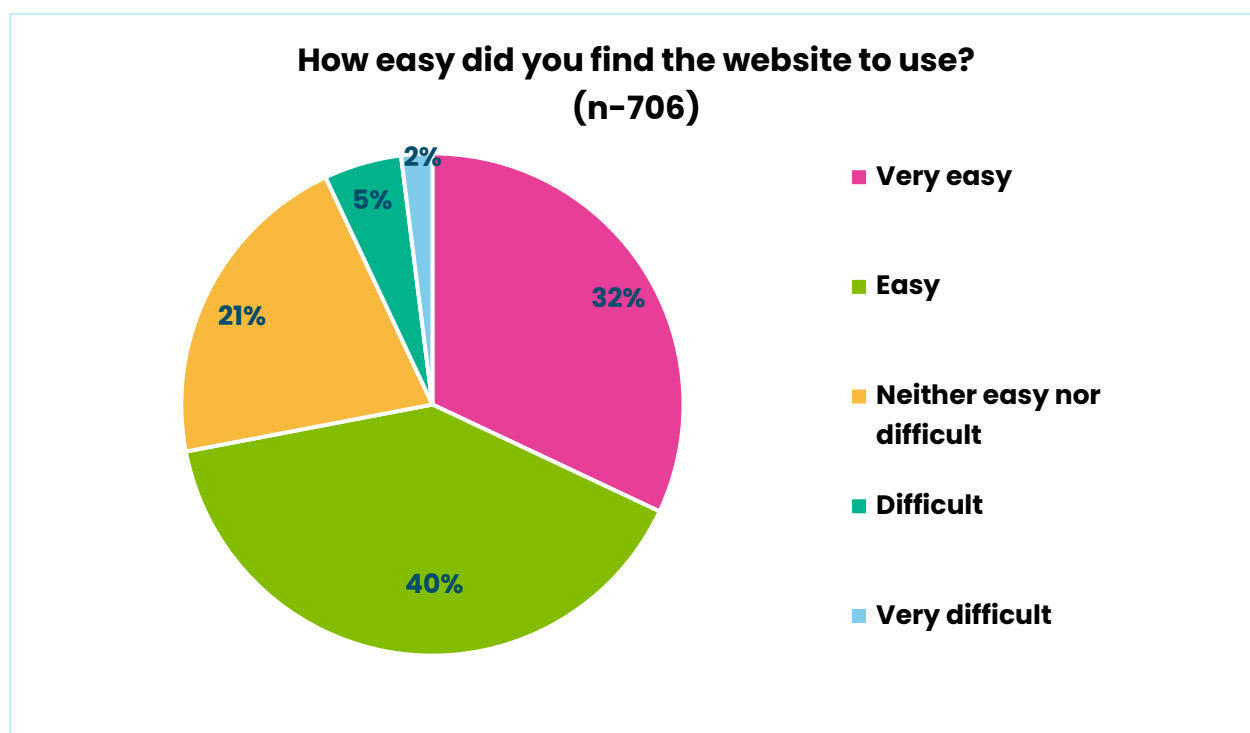
People could choose more than one option for why they had visited the website. The most popular response was to order a prescription (54.7%) followed by to find out general information about the practice, for example opening hours/ services provided (25.5%). Only 16% had used it to book an online consultation. 13.7% had used it to ask for administrative help, like sick notes, test results or Doctor’s letters.

11% of respondents ticked they had used the website for another reason. When asked to specify the reason a significant number of people said they had attempted to book an appointment but had not been able to do so. Please see the bar chart below:



## Ease of using the Woodingdean Medical Centre website

When asked how easy was the website to use, 71.4% of respondents found the site either very easy or easy to use, as the pie chart below demonstrates. Only 7.2% of respondents found the website either difficult or very difficult to us.



In terms of differences in people's ease at using the WMC, people without disabilities were significantly more likely to find it easy ('very easy' or 'easy') compared to those with disabilities (92.1% relative to 85.1%). Those who had found it easier to book an appointment relative to 6 months ago were 17 times more likely to find the website easy to use.

## Requesting an appointment to see a clinician

When asked about the preferred ways to book an appointment with a Clinician at Woodingdean Medical Centre. 49.8% of respondents said they would prefer to telephone the practice and speak to a member of staff to give details of their request. 15% said they would prefer to complete an online request. 35.6% said they didn't mind or that either option is acceptable.

Further analysis of this question showed that that Black and Racially Minoritised (BRM) people were slightly in favour of booking online (20.9% compared to 14.1%) as were younger people. Both BRM and younger people were less in favour of telephoning the practice.

## Quality of care and qualitative analysis of open comments

The final question in the survey gave respondents an opportunity to share any further comments they may have about Woodingdean Medical Centre. **860** people left a comment. These comments were grouped into themes and analysed in Excel.

As discussed earlier, the main issue raised in the comments section was around being able to make an appointment at the medical centre (**392** comments). However, once people are able to make an appointment at WMC, the qualitative comments show that respondents feel that the quality of care they receive is generally excellent. **365** people shared positive comments in relation to the surgery, many in relation to the professionalism of the staff, for example:

*"It is a good surgery; staff are very responsive and always kind and professional."*

*"All there make us feel welcome and are very thorough with the way we are treated."*

*"We registered with this practice about 6 months ago & have been very pleased with the excellent service we have received."*

*"Have found the doctors very supportive when going through some very stressful work difficulties leading to mental health issues – was very grateful for their understanding."*

*"They are a very hard-working team who try their best. Reception staff are polite, helpful and kind and clinicians are attentive and communicate well."*

*"The staff and doctors are very caring and helpful. My only dislike is the restrictive appointments system. There has to be a better way!"*

*"Once you get an appointment, service is excellent. Front desk staff are friendly and helpful. Nurses are also excellent."*

There were far fewer negative comments around the quality of care provided by WMC. Only **52** people raised concerns over services being provided by WMC. Comments included being unable to see the same GP, problems with repeat prescriptions and general complaints about the practice as the quotes show below:

*"Badly run, never the same doctor twice, always no appointments."*

*"Doctors change frequently which means care is at times conflicting and inconsistent and not followed up. It can feel like it's a bit of a battle, whilst some of the doctors have been so caring, it's difficult when advice is conflicting from different practitioners."*

*"It's impossible to see a GP. Always given appointment with nurse, who is great. Sometimes I need & want to see a GP."*

*"I don't have a doctor at the medical centre. Mine left 18 months ago yet nobody told me. Yet I'm still registered here, so does anybody care? Does anyone read my results from other doctors?"*

*"When Dr Sager was in practice we knew Jim and he knew us. Now any doctor seems to be seeing us and there's no continuity."*

*"What I want is to have a preferred GP, which was possible until the practice moved to the new surgery. Now it is always someone different and the previous one is never faced with having to explain why their recommended treatment doesn't work, so they never learn anything."*

Comments on difficulties around prescriptions included:

*"Smooth repeat prescriptions are essential for the chronically ill. In the last 18 months my repeat prescriptions have worked without issue twice. Every other time surgery related issues – mainly caused by ignoring the information I provide – [this] has resulted in multiple flare-ups as my medication has been interrupted."*

*"Ordering prescriptions is dire, I've tried always, now I write it down and put through the door which works nearly all the time. Why can't it be just a standing order for people like me, same medication and regular blood tests. Dire!"*

*"It is sometimes difficult to get my prescriptions signed, if needed, in a timely manner."*

*"Repeat prescriptions – often items are missed."*

A further **10** people were concerned about unwelcoming receptionists, for example:

*"Disgraceful service, rude reception staff! Unhelpful and dismissive! To the point of looking at private care."*

*"I find the practice staff rude not very helpful especially the receptionists (not all)."*

*"Unfortunately, the receptionist I spoke to in the morning was "off" and didn't seem interested in helping, which is a shame as everyone else goes out of their way."*

### **3. Conclusion**

From the 1,612 responses the headline finding is that, compared to the 2024 survey, patients were finding it slightly easier to book an appointment at WMC compared to 6 months ago.

From the 2024 survey, 26.5% found it either 'much easier' or a 'little easier' to make an appointment (among those who had made an appointment at WMC within the last 6 months). In comparison, the 2025 survey this shows a slight improvement as 34.3% who found it 'much easier' or a 'little easier' to make an appointment. Nonetheless, 32.3% found this a 'little more difficult' or 'much more difficult' to make an appointment compared to 6 months ago.

People with disabilities found it more difficult (almost twice as much) to make an appointment compared to people without disabilities – 59.7% of

people with disabilities found in 'difficult' or 'more difficult' to make appointments compared to 6 months ago.

It appears that a proportion of people are digitally capable when it comes to using the website and the NHS App. However, a sizeable proportion of people (52.2%) had not used the Woodingdean Medical Centre website in the last 12 months and preferred to contact the Practice by phone to make appointments (rather than use the online booking facility).

In conclusion, the recommendations are:

- **Offer more frequent online booking systems** as some people expressed positive opinions about this. Only 16% had used the website to book an online consultation and it is uncertain whether this reflects digital ability, how often this option is available, or a general preference to make appointments through another means such as phoning reception staff.
- **Support people with disabilities** as they are the least likely to use the website, find it more difficult to use, and disability status showed greatest difference in difficulties in making appointments compared to 6 months ago.
- It appears that **digital capability and familiarity of the WMC website** may be key in improving access to appointments. Those who found it easier to book an appointment relative to 6 months ago were 17 times more likely to find the website easy to use. Of the near one-half of respondents who preferred to telephone the practice to make an appointment, being able to book online may stop the frustration of bookable appointments not always being unavailable, at 8.30am.
- **Help people to use the WMC website** and demonstrate what information could be sourced, including an online booking system. There is a significant proportion of respondents who do not use the website but, among those who do, they find it easy to use.

The planned increase in capacity of GP hours and the ongoing improvements to the WMC website will support these learning points above. The challenge is to reduce the 32.3% of the sample who found making appointments a 'little more difficult' or 'much more difficult' compared to 6 months ago.



# Appendix 1 – Questionnaire



Your views about Woodingdean Medical Centre 2025

## 1. Why we are doing this survey?

This 2-minute survey, run by Healthwatch Brighton and Hove, is a follow up survey to see how access to Woodingdean Medical practice has changed. We ran a larger survey last year and you can read the report [here](#).

[Healthwatch Brighton and Hove](#) helps to improve health and social care services across the area by listening to people, and using this to influence people who design services. We are completely independent of the NHS and Council. Sign up to our free newsletter [here](#)

There is also an opportunity to enter a prize draw to win one of three £20 High-Street vouchers.

If you have any questions about the survey please contact [office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk](mailto:office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk).

All findings are treated in the strictest confidence. For details of our privacy policy please click [here](#).

Thank you for taking part!

**1. Compared to 6 months ago, has it become easier or more difficult to make an appointment at Woodingdean Medical Centre?**

Much easier to make an appointment	A little easier to make an appointment.	Neither easier nor more difficult to make an appointment	A little more difficult to make an appointment	Much more difficult to make an appointment	Not applicable - I have not tried to book an appointment in the last 6 months.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**2. Please answer the following questions:**

	Yes	No
Have you ever used the NHS App?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you know that you can order repeat prescriptions and access 111 via the NHS App?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you used the Woodingdean Medical Centre website in the last 12 months?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**3. Could you tell us why you used the website? Please tick all that apply**

- ☐ To ask for administrative help like sick notes, test results or doctor's letters
- ☐ To book an online consultation
- ☐ To request or track a referral
- ☐ To register with the practice
- ☐ To order a prescription

- ☐ To update your details (i.e your contact details and/ or communication and consent preferences)
- ☐ To find out general information about the practice (for example opening hours/ services provided)
- ☐ Other (please specify):

**4. How easy did you find the website to use?**

- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Neither easy nor difficult
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very difficult

**5. Were you able to find the information you needed on the website?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other (please specify):

**6. When requesting an appointment to see a clinician would you prefer to:**

- ☐ Telephone the practice and speak to a member of staff to give details of your request
- ☐ Complete an online request form
- ☐ Don't mind/ either option is acceptable

**6. Open comments**

**7. If you have any other comments about Woodingdean Medical Centre, please use the space below to do so:**

We have a legal duty to make sure that we provide our services in a fair way to all members of the community.

To help this, we collect equality data to better understand the demographic profile of our community so we can identify and address barriers to inclusion.

We do this so that we can show that we are acting in accordance with the law as well as to help us review and improve our services.

**8. How old are you?**

**9. Please tell us your gender:**

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Non-Binary
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Prefer to self describe (please specify)

**10. How would you describe your ethnic origin?**

- ☐ Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
- ☐ Asian or Asian British – Indian
- ☐ Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
- ☐ Asian or Asian British – Chinese
- ☐ Any other Asian background (please give details)
- ☐ Mixed – Asian & White
- ☐ Mixed – Black African & White
- ☐ Mixed – Black Caribbean & White
- ☐ Any other mixed background (please give details)
- ☐ White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- ☐ White – Irish
- ☐ White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- ☐ Any other White background (please give details)
- ☐ Black or Black British – African
- ☐ Black or Black British – Caribbean
- ☐ Any other Black background (please give details)
- ☐ Arab

Other (please specify):

**11. Please select any of the following that apply to you:**

(Please tick all that apply)

- ☐ I have a disability

☐ I have a long term health condition

☐ I am a carer

**12.** Are you interested in taking part in the prize draw to win one of three £20 high-street vouchers? If yes, please leave your email and phone number.

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