

Date: 18 November 2021

Title: Primary Care Access in Buckinghamshire

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Report Sponsor: Robert Majilton, Deputy Chief Officer, Buckinghamshire CCG; Dr Raj Bajwa, Clinical Chair, Buckinghamshire CCG

Purpose of Report: To provide an update to the Health and Wellbeing Board on Primary Care Access in Buckinghamshire presenting the national activity data collected from GP practices. In addition, clinical members of the Health and Wellbeing Board will be able to provide an update from their perspective.

Report for information, discussion, decision or approval: For discussion

Recommendations:

- Note content of the report

Executive Summary

The report provides information on primary care (GP Practice) appointments and summary of the recent GP survey in Buckinghamshire.

Next steps and review

Primary Care resilience and support is included in the system winter surge plan. As part of Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB), the CCG in Buckinghamshire is working on a response to recent publication by NHS England of the 'Improving Access and Supporting General Practice' document.

Background Documents

Links to relevant information are included in the paper.

Primary Care in Buckinghamshire – Access

This report provides an update to the Health and Wellbeing Board on access to Primary Care in Buckinghamshire. The report uses national data at Buckinghamshire level to give an overview.

Background

Primary Care has continued to be operational during the pandemic and practices have needed to adapt both to delivering national operational model with services to the populations they serve.

Primary Care across Buckinghamshire have continued to offer face to face consultations. The proportion of appointments delivered face to face reduced during the pandemic with more offered, largely by telephone with the addition of on-line and video consultations.

Referrals have continued into other services such as for planned operations and suspected cancers. Practices have offered and increased the percentage uptake in the flu vaccination and increased the percentage of people with Learning Disabilities who have had a health check during 2020/21. Since December 2020 Practices, working through Primary Care Networks (PCNs) have also delivered over 350,000 COVID vaccinations.

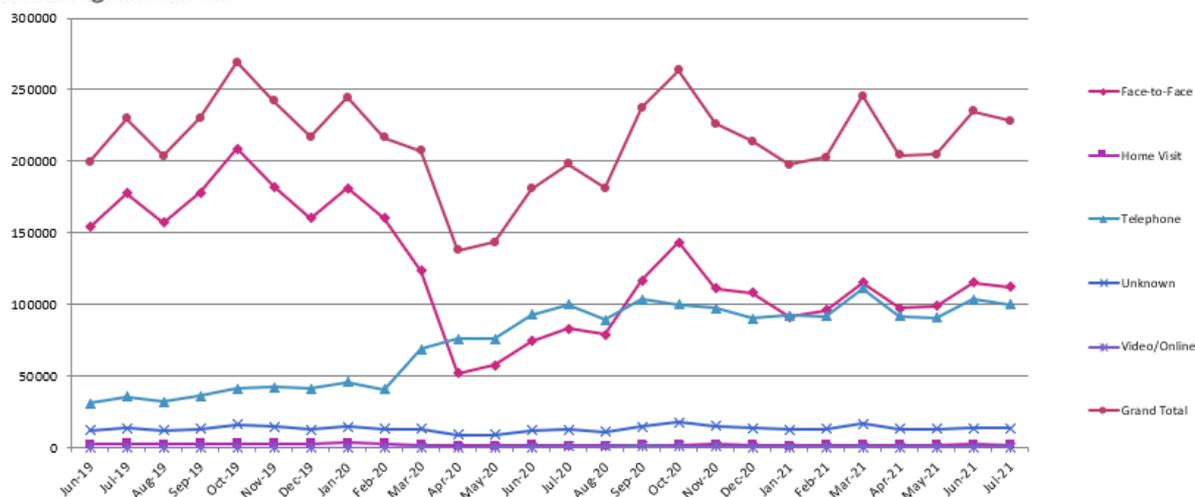
Activity - appointments

Primary Care appointments information is collected and published nationally¹ with aggregate activity data at a CCG level. Currently practice level data is not available but NHS Digital has been required to remedy that as part of 'Improving Access and Supporting General Practice'. In addition, until recently there has been no uniform way of recording appointments in primary care but work has started to provide systematic recording of appointment data. By 30 September, all practices were required to allocate appointments into nationally defined appointment types. This will improve the accuracy of appointment data and facilitate comparison at a practice, PCN and Integrated care systems (ICS) level.

The data available does however provide comparable data on pre-pandemic and current activity. **Activity broadly returned to pre-pandemic (i.e. 2019) levels since September 2020** (i.e. within 6 months of the first lockdown) and average circa 98% since then. Significantly, the data does not include the work undertaken by primary care to deliver COVID vaccinations, which started at the end of 2020 and continues today.

There are an average of 217,000 appointments per month with practices. Between April and July 2021 there were 872,000 appointments plus 183,000 COVID vaccinations undertaken by Practices in Buckinghamshire. There were 19,000 extra appointments (2%) than in April – July 2019 (where there were 853,000 appointments).

¹ [Appointments in General Practice - NHS Digital](#)



In July 2021 114,000 (50%) of all appointments were on the same day – in July 2019 this was 106,000 (an increase of 7.5%) – this compares with circa 45% nationally. 40% of these same day appointments were face to face (69% in July 2019).

Face to Face appointments

There have been national concerns on the ability to access face-to-face appointments with practices and Buckinghamshire is not unique in that regard. Practices in Buckinghamshire have continued to offer face to face appointments through the pandemic. **Between April 2020 – July 2021 there were circa 1.6m face to face appointments in Buckinghamshire.** The proportion of total appointments that are face to face has reduced nationally and locally since April 2020. Pre-pandemic about three quarters of appointments were face to face, now about half are (compared to circa 57% nationally).

A new “Single Operating Procedure” was produced by NHS England in March 2020 as part of the primary care element of the pandemic response and moving to a “Level 4” incident (i.e. under national direction). This included total triage which increased the proportion of appointments that were undertaken on telephone with an assessment on the requirement for a face-to-face appointment.

GP Patient Survey

The annual GP survey was published in July 2021² (based on surveys of circa 6,500 residents). 84% rated their practice as good (in line with the national average), with a range of between 56% - 99%.

Largely the Buckinghamshire results are in line with previous years and in line with the national average with variability across practices. 9 out of 10 patients tried to book appointments by the telephone with 7 out of 10 finding it easy to do so.

² [GP Patient Survey \(gp-patient.co.uk\)](http://gp-patient.co.uk)

Overall experience of GP practice

Q30. Overall, how would you describe your experience of your GP practice?

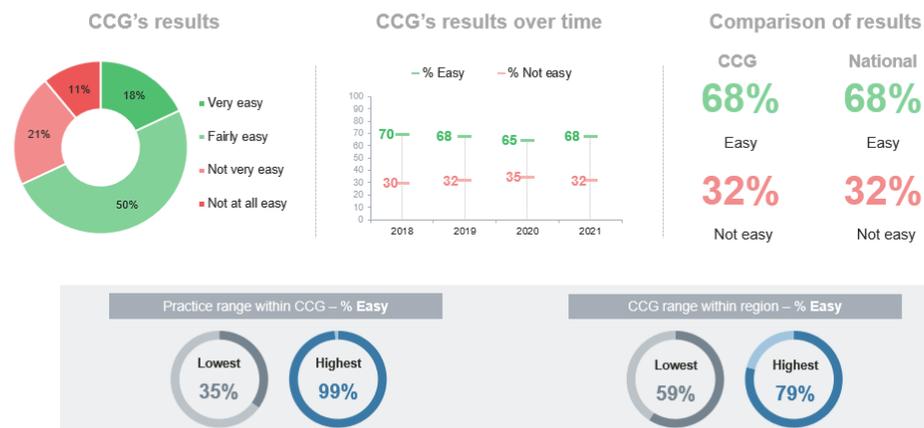


Base: All those completing a questionnaire: National (536,008); CCG 2021 (6,519); CCG 2020 (5,389); CCG 2019 (5,850); CCG 2018 (5,874); Practice bases range from 106 to 162; CCG bases range from 1,631 to 25,714

%Good = %Very good + %Fairly good
%Poor = %Very poor + %Fairly poor

Ease of getting through to GP practice on the phone

Q1. Generally, how easy is it to get through to someone at your GP practice on the phone?



Base: All those completing a questionnaire excluding 'Haven't tried': National (809,235); CCG 2021 (6,266); CCG 2020 (5,332); CCG 2019 (5,706); CCG 2018 (5,539); Practice bases range from 102 to 148; CCG bases range from 1,547 to 24,849

%Easy = %Very easy + %Fairly easy
%Not easy = %Not very easy + %Not at all easy

Improving Access and Supporting General Practice³

Whilst practice level appointment data is not currently available, through its commissioning and support activity the CCG is aware of the areas in the county where patients are having difficulty accessing primary medical services. The reasons for this are complex and the programme of work set out in the 'Improving Access and Supporting General Practice' document is proving helpful in defining the problems and facilitating solutions. This work, which is required to be managed at an ICS level, is at a very early stage but an update will be available at the Board meeting on 18 November.

³ [BW999-our-plan-for-improving-access-and-supporting-general-practice-oct-21.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/BW999-our-plan-for-improving-access-and-supporting-general-practice-oct-21.pdf)