

Patient feedback report: visit to Circuit Lane Surgery, 21 June 2018



Report Summary

This is a report of a visit carried out by Healthwatch Reading on 21 June 2018 to Circuit Lane Surgery, 53 Circuit Lane, Reading RG30 3AN, to collect patient feedback. This visit was carried out using statutory Enter and View powers available to local Healthwatch.

Why did we carry out this visit?

We wanted to find out if patients thought services had improved since 1 April 2018, when the practice was taken over by Western Elms Surgery from the previous provider OneMedicalGroup, following concerns about quality of care. Our visit focused on getting feedback on main areas of previous concern, including access to appointments, and the turnaround time for repeat prescriptions.

How did we carry out this visit?

We agreed the date and time of our planned visit with the practice manager. Three Healthwatch Reading staff arrived at Circuit Lane Surgery at 7.45am and left around 10.45am. We asked people in the waiting room to voluntarily complete an anonymous short survey, offering any help to complete it, and the opportunity to talk in more depth if desired. We also observed staff and the waiting room.

Who gave us feedback?

A total of **39 people completed the survey**, 37 of whom were patients attending for an appointment and two who were carers or relatives. Around three-quarters were female and all respondents were fairly evenly spread across age categories from 25 to 85-plus. Most described themselves as white British, with seven (13%) saying they members of ethnic minorities. Two people had only joined the practice since 1 April 2018, so were unable to make comparisons to the service before this time.

Main Findings

- 31 out of 37 people (84%) felt there had been positive changes at Circuit Lane since 1 April, including 20 who felt it had 'improved a great deal'
- 31 of 36 people (86%) felt that that Western Elms was keeping them informed about changes or improvements to the service
- 22 of 38 people (58%) had found it easy to make appointments since 1 April
- On the day of our visit, 18 of 33 (55%) people had been given a same-day appointment
- 28 out of 38 people (74%) felt they were due to see that day, a health professional best suited to their needs; 21 of 38 (55%) were due to see a GP
- 14 of 25 people (56%) said it had taken 2-5 days for their repeat prescription to be ready, since 1 April

Background to our visit

Circuit Lane Surgery in Southcote was taken over by another Reading NHS practice, Western Elms, on 1 April 2018, after a troubled period under its previous management by OneMedicalGroup (OMG), a Leeds-based company.

Soon after OMG took over, patients began reporting problems and by January 2017, Circuit Lane had been placed in ‘special measures’ by the Care Quality Commission after inspectors found serious safety concerns due to leadership problems, lack of doctors and poor administration. In all, the CQC inspected Circuit Lane five times when it was run by OMG, visits that were partly prompted by a large amount of evidence of poor care collated from patients by Healthwatch Reading.

NHS commissioners responsible for funding and overseeing primary care in Reading, ‘mutually agreed’ with OneMedicalGroup to end its 10-year contract early and chose Western Elms as the new provider. Just before taking over, Western Elms’ surgery on the Oxford Rd had been rated ‘good’ with some ‘outstanding’ features, by the CQC. An earlier Healthwatch Reading visit to Western Elms, in February 2016, found that 86% of people we spoke to were happy with the surgery.

Since 1 April 2018, Circuit Lane Surgery has continued to be run from its longstanding site on Circuit Lane for around 8,800 local patients. Western Elms’ Oxford Rd site is also still in place, for around 18,000 people.

When Healthwatch Reading previously visited Circuit Lane, in May 2017, we found less than half of patients we talked to felt the surgery had improved, and more than one-third found it difficult to make appointments.

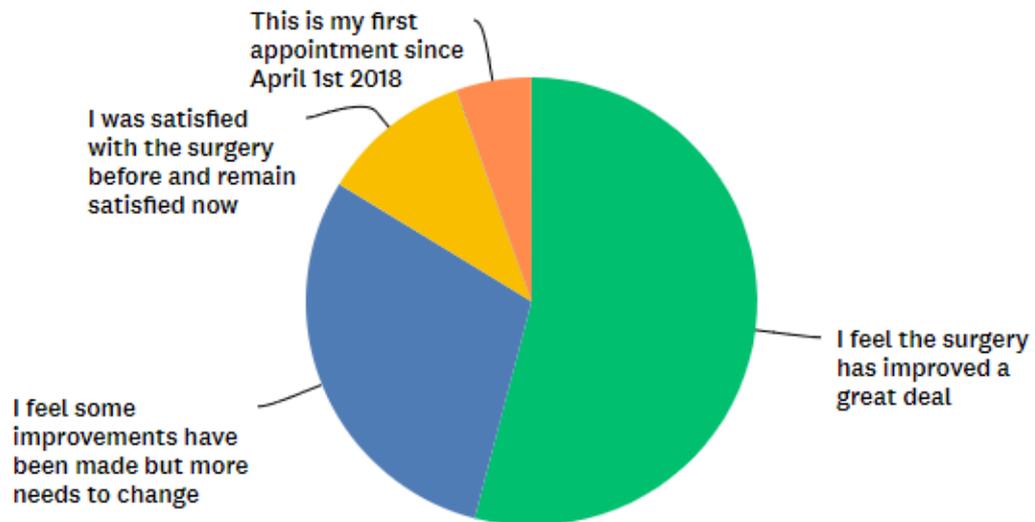
Our latest visit aimed to see if the change of management had finally led to improved services for patients who had endured changes, uncertainty and poor services for more than three years.

Before OMG, Circuit Lane had had been run by Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust under a temporary contract from 1 February 2015, as a result of Circuit Lane GPs deciding that they were unable to run the practice themselves due to staffing, premises and financial issues.

Main findings of our patient survey

The comments that people gave us were mostly positive. None left any negative feedback in the free text boxes on their survey forms.

Views on the change of management



- Overall, 31 out of 37 people felt there had been ‘a great deal’ or ‘some’ positive changes since 1 April 2018
- No-one said that their experience as a patient had got worse since 1 April
- 31 of 36 people felt that Western Elms was keeping them informed about changes or improvements to the Circuit Lane service
- 18 out of 34 people said that the best way to be kept informed was a regular copy of the patient newsletter in the waiting room

‘Much improved since Western Elms took over, it was all higgledy piggledy before - it seems so much better now. The women are nice that answer the phone. Sometimes they don’t get the recognition, do they?’

‘Overall the services have improved greatly - doctors are here more regularly and can get to see the same one - not like before!’

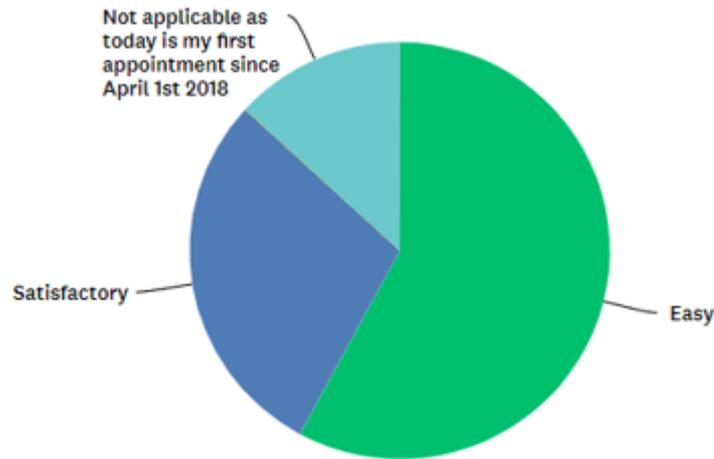
‘All good.’

‘The surgery is much tidier and cleaner and the staff are very helpful. Hopefully the new providers will bring back cardio clinic.’

‘I am happy with everything.’

‘Phone answering now really quickly.’

Views on making appointments



- Overall, most people (22 out of 38 people) had found it easy to make appointments since 1 April
- Most people (18 out of 33) who answered our questions about appointments had come to the surgery that day and been offered a same-day appointment
- It was striking that people who had had to wait longer for an appointment, were often keen to tell us that there was a valid reason for this (e.g. some were attending for a regular review of their diabetes).

'Came in today to make appointment - was able to get appt for today.'

'Due to me asking for a doctor to call me, as I felt my issue wasn't serious, they told me to come in next day. In today, appointment given for 38 mins time but doctor came out and saw me straight away.'

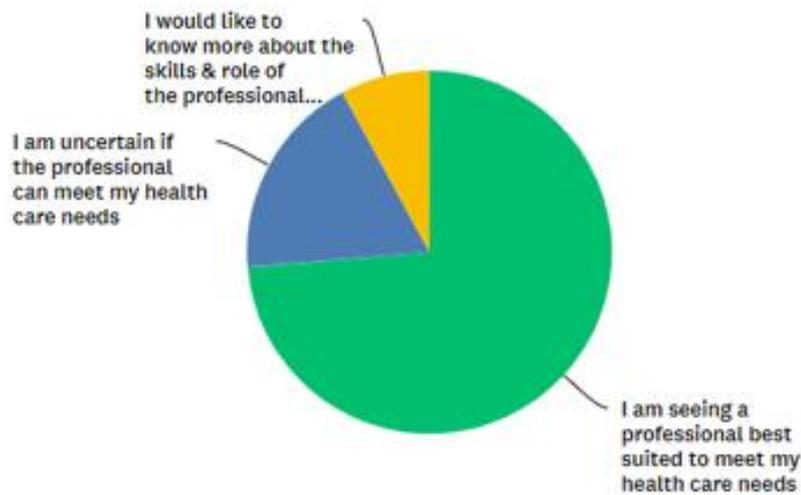
'Came in at 8am and got appointment at 8.35.' (This person had asked to see a female doctor and told us they were very pleased that this was possible).

'I booked my appointment online with the doctor I wanted to see and has seen before with the same issue.'

'Western Elms taken over - I get appointment.'

'Took longer to make an appointment before [1 April] - used to be long queues. Better to come at 10.30am to book, better for older people like me to come [then] as not paying on bus pass.'

Views on health professionals



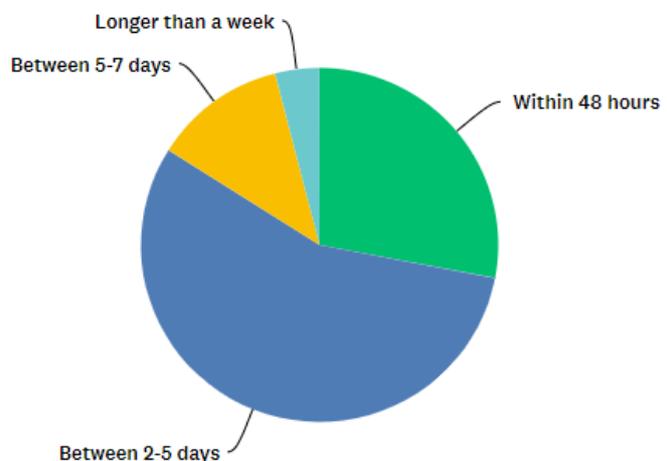
- Nearly three quarters of respondents (28 out of 38) felt they were due to see the best professional to meet their needs for that day
- 21 of 38 were due to see a GP, 14 of whom were seeing a GP they knew

‘Doctors [here] don’t mess about - they refer you if any doubt - I think that’s really good, really pleased at the way they deal with my problem.’

‘The lady I have just seen was lovely!’ (Comment from a patient who specifically came back to the waiting room after her appointment to tell us)

Views on repeat prescriptions

- 29 people indicated that they have medication on repeat prescription
- Of these, 18 people said it takes longer than 48 hours to be ready after requesting it. The surgery’s website says: ‘Please allow two working days excluding weekends and Bank Holidays before collection.’



Patients' suggestions for change/improvement:

'I think it would be great if you could choose which surgery you can get an appointment at e.g. if none at Circuit Lane, go to Western Elms.'

'Would be an idea to notify patients if GP is running late by [it] coming up on the electronic board [in the waiting area].'

Healthwatch Reading's observations

- Signage and access were good, and parking spaces were available when we went outside to check at 9.45am.
- There was a noticeboard for patients with general information (such as social prescribing, sepsis, and the clinical commissioning group) and a separate notice board with information on engaging with the practice (including the Practice Patient Charter, the Patient Participation Group, and 'How to make a Complaint'). The screen in the waiting room provided a rolling programme of information (on topics such as antibiotic use and shingles vaccinations).
- The whole reception and waiting area was clean with a calm atmosphere, and the staff professionally presented - we noted in particular that:
 - the phones for people ringing to make an appointment are now out of earshot in a back room, which appeared to enable staff to concentrate better on those patients who approach the desk
 - a notice encourages patients to use the electronic check-in screen, but those patients wanting to speak to a receptionist had no hesitation in approaching the desk
 - the receptionists on duty advised us that the doors open at 7.45am every day for the 8am appointments start time - and anyone standing outside is invited in immediately
 - during our visit there were no queues at all - every person who wished to speak to a receptionist was able to do so quickly
 - there were patient newsletters out on the seats in the waiting room, and people were both reading this and completing Family & Friends Test' forms that they had been handed on arrival
 - the waiting room seemed less cluttered to us than on previous visits, and we noted that the windows had been opened to adjust the temperature on what was a warm day, and water was available
 - information about the change in the provider of the surgery was displayed, including a report from the Healthwatch Reading website, and a letter from a local MP that mentioned past public concern and public meetings held to discuss that concern.

We asked staff about the appointments system and were advised that:

- the next bookable appointment was 25th June
- the practice has a number of spare appointments each day and we saw that two patients who arrived without an appointment were then seen very quickly
- there is an informal 'sit and wait' surgery at 5pm (we were told that patients are told where they are in queue), but it is now rarely used and will discontinue as the surgery has enough capacity in day - we were told that appointments are therefore generally not wasted
- a paramedic does home visits after a GP has telephone-triaged the patient.

Summary & recommendations

People who read Healthwatch Enter and View reports should note that the findings are a 'snap-shot' of a service on a particular date and time, and not an inspection or comprehensive judgement on the quality of the service. It is the role of the CQC to rate the quality of care of NHS services (and its most recent [inspection report](#) on Circuit Lane was published before Western Elms took over on 1 April 2018).

Healthwatch Reading's visit indicates that patients think that the practice has improved since Western Elms took over. In contrast to our previous visit in May 2017, when patients expressed frustration at difficulty in making appointments, patients now seem to be happy with how the appointments system is working.

It is concerning that a majority of patients we spoke were finding that it takes longer than the advertised 48 hours for repeat prescriptions to be ready, including four out of 29 respondents indicating that it took longer than a week.

However, overall, our impression generally was of a very much altered and improved service for patients, with some patients commenting to us that they expected that things would improve further as 'they're working on things at the moment'.

Healthwatch Reading recommends that the practice:

- reviews its records of the time that it is taking to process repeat prescriptions, to assess whether this sample is representative and, if so, takes steps to ensure that most prescriptions are processed within the advertised time, as this is a very important service to those with long-term health conditions
- continues to prioritise regular communication with patients via the patient newsletter that is available in the surgery, and on the website
- works with its patient participation group to explore whether there are ways to reach patients who are not online with significant updates about developments at the surgery (for example, the PPG might contact or visit local church groups or other faith groups, to share information).

Response from Circuit Lane Surgery

'We are really sorry to think that patients' perception is that a prescription takes 2-5 days. We audit our outstanding prescriptions at close of business every day and I am confident that they are turned around within 48 hours unless there is a clinical reason not to be. I wonder if the patients who believe this to be the case are ordering them from local pharmacies. We have met with Southcote Pharmacy and they have advised us that patients there are told 5 - 7 days for a prescription and they are now working on this to reduce it. The reason they give patients this message is that it takes 2 days to obtain it from us and then some additional time to dispense it etc. We will carry out an audit of our own in another three months to establish if things have improved further or perception has changed. Part of this will be to ascertain how patients order their prescription - in the surgery or via a pharmacy. To clarify, the surgery aspires to turn all prescriptions round in 2 days.

We would like to thank all of the patients for embracing the changes that we have made so far and we promise that we will continue to improve day by day.'

Lisa Trimble, Practice Manager

Healthwatch Reading will share the findings of this report with the director of primary care at Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group, the Care Quality Commission, and the general public via publication on our website or on request in other formats.

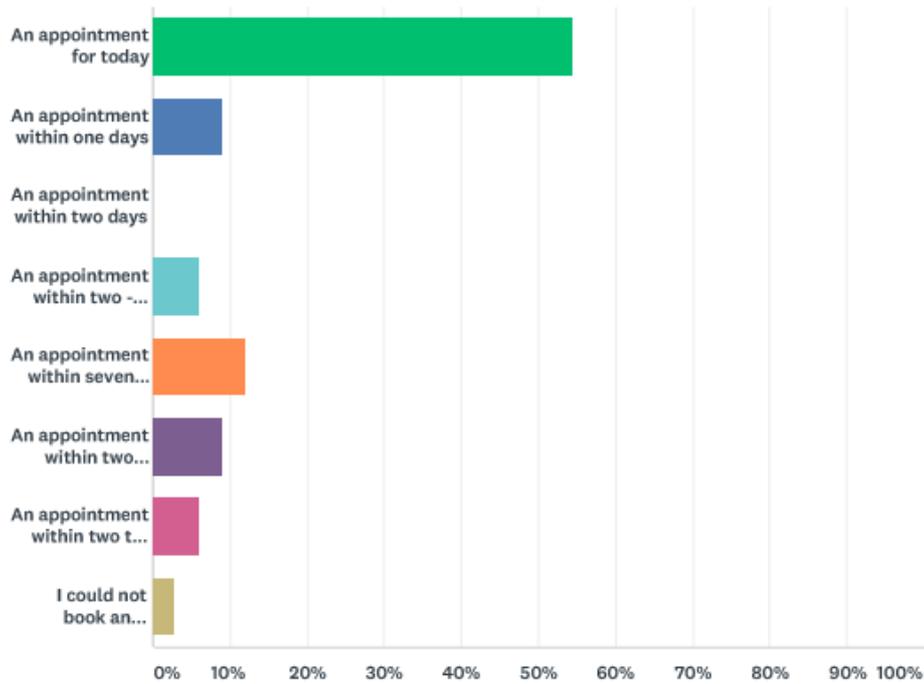
Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Reading would like to thank patients for taking the time to share feedback. We also thank Circuit Lane Surgery staff for welcoming us into the surgery.

Appendix 1: Survey findings in full

Tell us about when today's appointment was first available, when you first contacted the practice were you offered

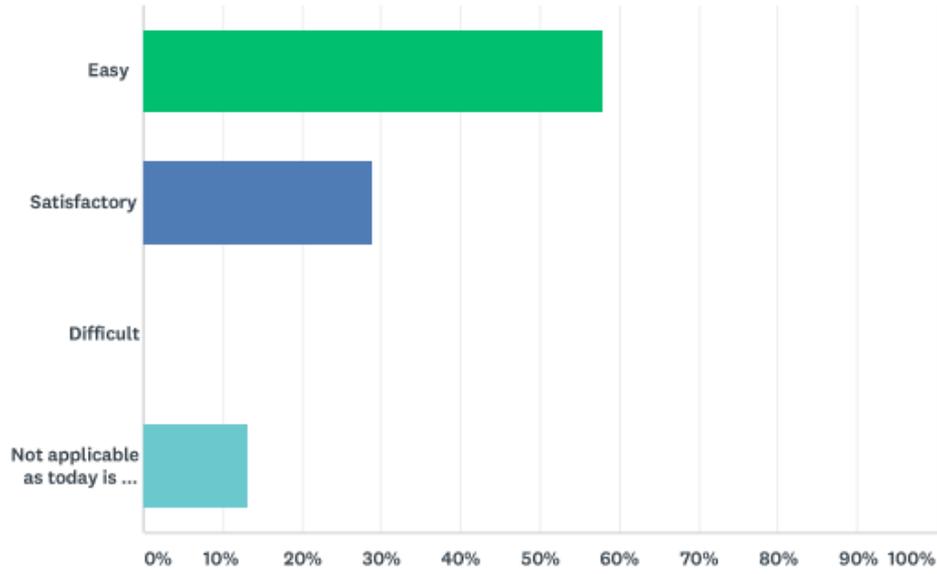
Answered: 33 Skipped: 6



An appointment for today	54.55%	18
An appointment within one days	9.09%	3
An appointment within two days	0.00%	0
An appointment within two -six days	6.06%	2
An appointment within seven days	12.12%	4
An appointment within two weeks	9.09%	3
An appointment within two to four weeks	6.06%	2
I could not book an appointment for my preferred day and was told by the surgery to:	3.03%	1
TOTAL		33

Since April 1st 2018, how have you found making an appointment?

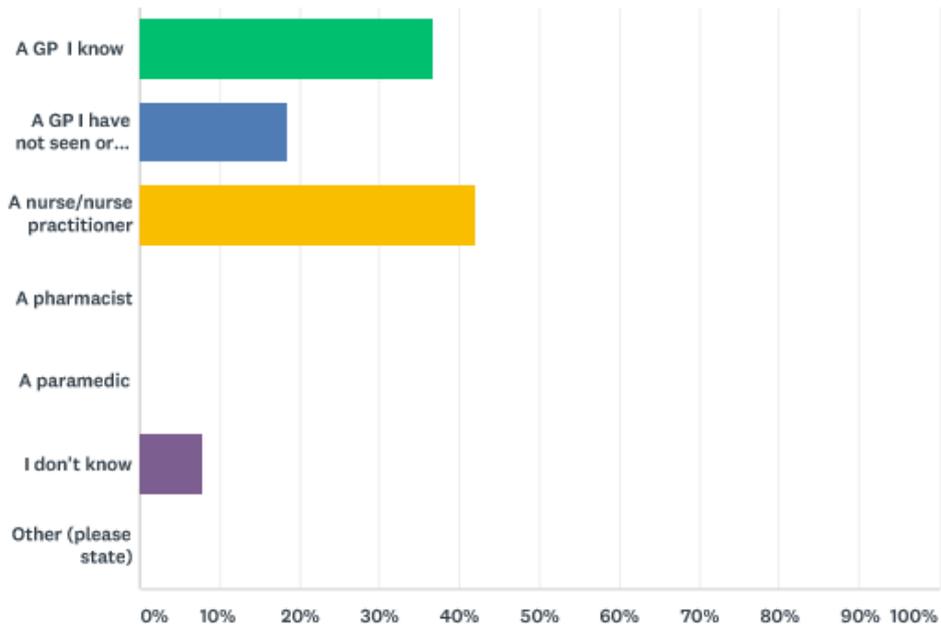
Answered: 38 Skipped: 1



Easy	57.89%	22
Satisfactory	28.95%	11
Difficult	0.00%	0
Not applicable as today is my first appointment since April 1st 2018	13.16%	5
TOTAL		38

What type of health professional are you due to see today for your appointment

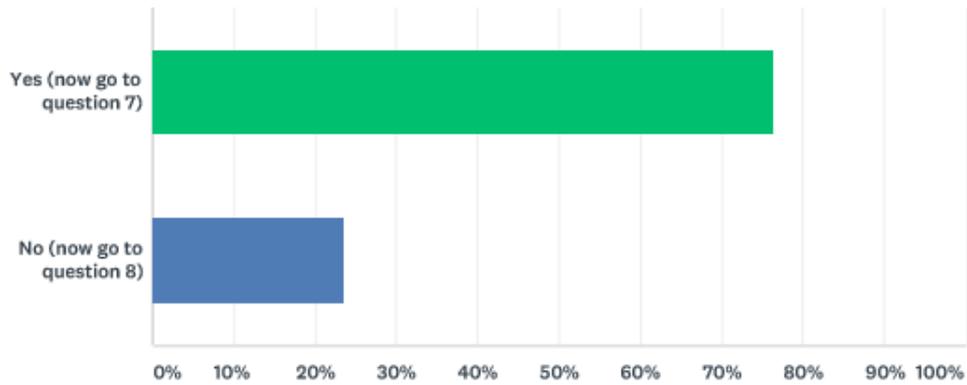
Answered: 38 Skipped: 1



A GP I know	36.84%	14
A GP I have not seen or spoken to before	18.42%	7
A nurse/nurse practitioner	42.11%	16
A pharmacist	0.00%	0
A paramedic	0.00%	0
I don't know	7.89%	3
Other (please state)	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 38		

Since April 1st 2018, have you asked for a repeat prescription for regular medication?

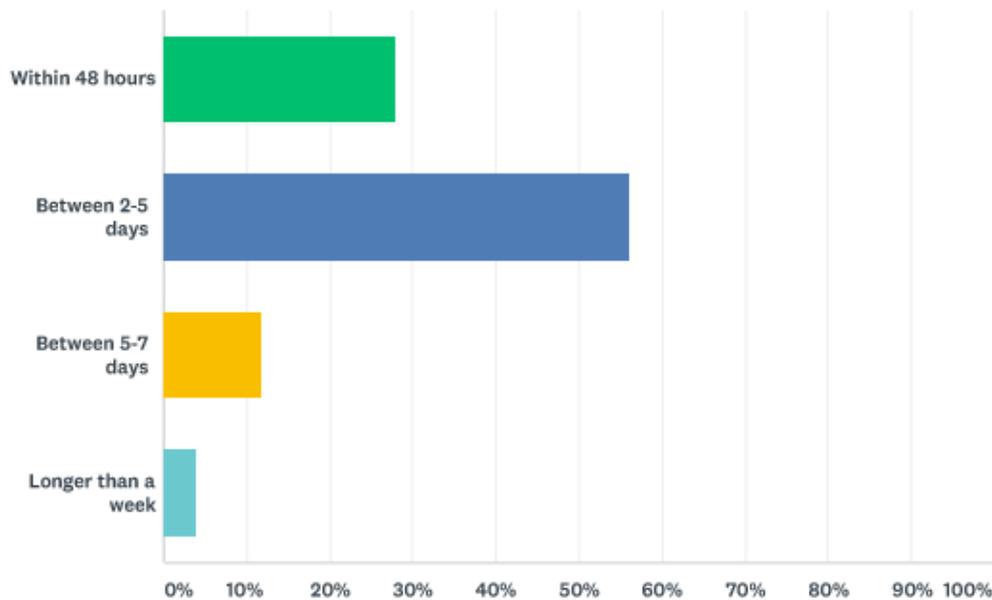
Answered: 38 Skipped: 1



Yes (now go to question 7)	76.32%	29
No (now go to question 8)	23.68%	9
TOTAL		38

How long did it take for your repeat prescription to be ready?

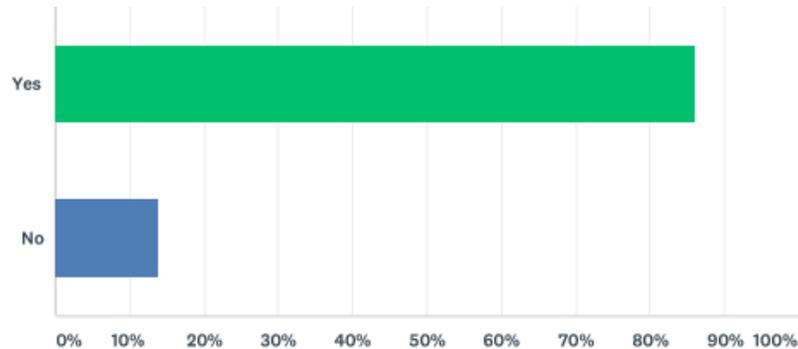
Answered: 25 Skipped: 14



Within 48 hours	28.00%	7
Between 2-5 days	56.00%	14
Between 5-7 days	12.00%	3
Longer than a week	4.00%	1
TOTAL		25

Do you feel that the surgery is keeping you informed about any changes or improvements it is making to patient services?

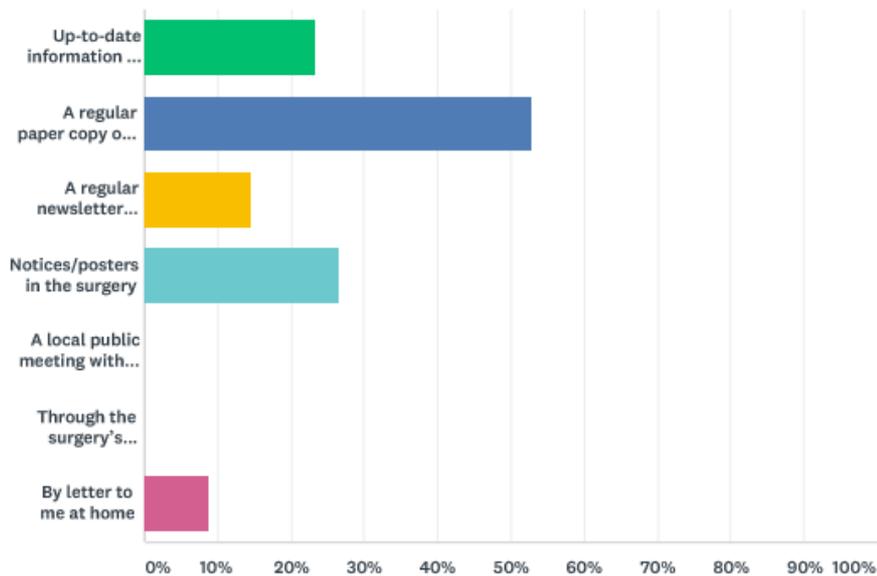
Answered: 36 Skipped: 3



Yes	86.11%	31
No	13.89%	5
TOTAL		36

How would you prefer to be kept informed about any changes, improvements or other important information about the surgery? (tick as many options as you wish)

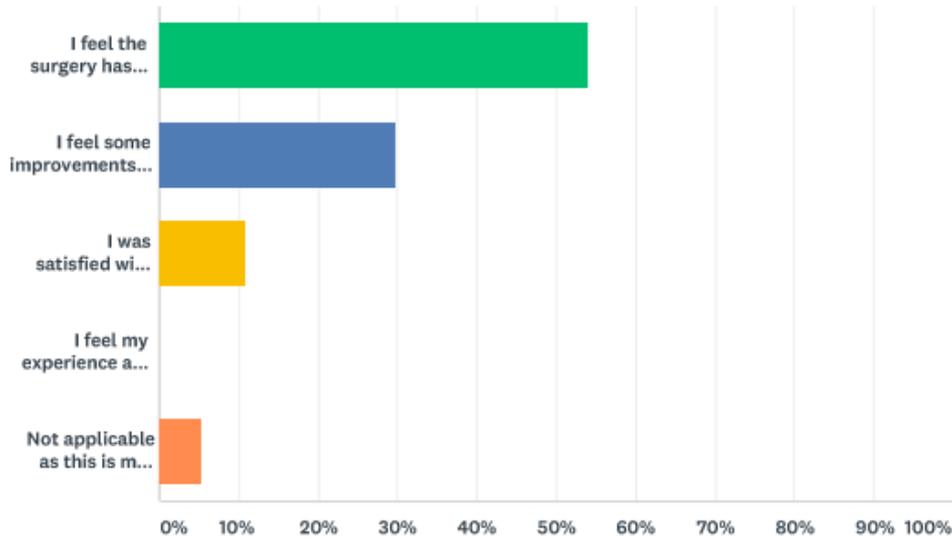
Answered: 34 Skipped: 5



Up-to-date information on the surgery website	23.53%	8
A regular paper copy of a patient newsletter in the waiting area	52.94%	18
A regular newsletter emailed to patients	14.71%	5
Notices/posters in the surgery	26.47%	9
A local public meeting with surgery staff to answer questions	0.00%	0
Through the surgery's patient participation group	0.00%	0
By letter to me at home	8.82%	3
Total Respondents: 34		

Overall, which answer best describes your experience as a patient now, compared to your experience before April 1st 2018?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 2

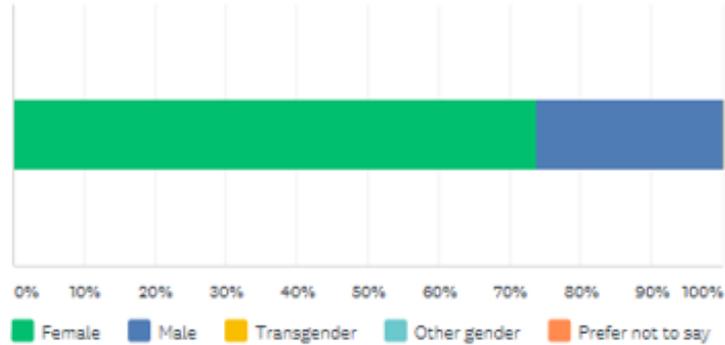


I feel the surgery has improved a great deal	54.05%	20
I feel some improvements have been made but more needs to change	29.73%	11
I was satisfied with the surgery before and remain satisfied now	10.81%	4
I feel my experience as a patient has got worse	0.00%	0
Not applicable as this is my first appointment since April 1st 2018	5.41%	2

Appendix 2: Demographic information

Gender

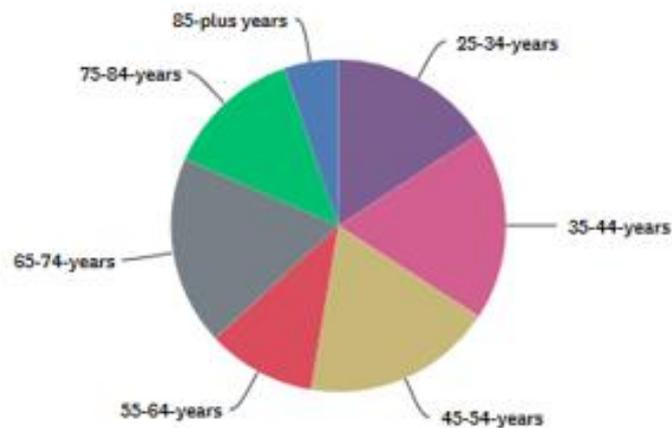
Answered: 38 Skipped: 1



▼ Female	73.68%	28
▼ Male	26.32%	10
▼ Transgender	0.00%	0
▼ Other gender	0.00%	0
▼ Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
TOTAL		38

Age:

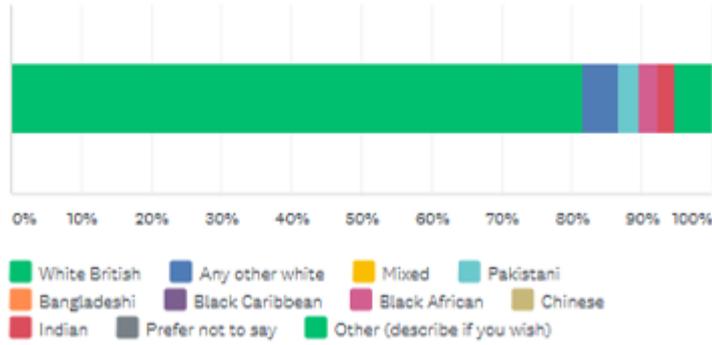
Answered: 38 Skipped: 1



▼ 0-6 months old	0.00%	0
▼ 7 months-4 years old	0.00%	0
▼ 5-10 years	0.00%	0
▼ 11-17 years	0.00%	0
▼ 18-24 years	0.00%	0
▼ 25-34 years	15.79%	6
▼ 35-44 years	18.42%	7
▼ 45-54 years	18.42%	7
▼ 55-64 years	10.53%	4
▼ 65-74 years	18.42%	7
▼ 75-84 years	13.16%	5
▼ 85-plus years	5.26%	2
TOTAL		38

Ethnicity

Answered: 38 Skipped: 1



▼ White British	81.58%	31
▼ Any other white	5.26%	2
▼ Mixed	0.00%	0
▼ Pakistani	2.63%	1
▼ Bangladeshi	0.00%	0
▼ Black Caribbean	0.00%	0
▼ Black African	2.63%	1
▼ Chinese	0.00%	0
▼ Indian	2.63%	1
▼ Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
▼ Other (describe if you wish)	Responses 5.26%	2
TOTAL		38

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