

**Survey examining why
patients and service
users '*did not attend*' or
'*could not attend*' their
health and care
appointments**



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Healthwatch Lincolnshire is an independent consumer champion, here to gather and represent the views of the public.

Why is Healthwatch Lincolnshire important?

- To give patients and carers a chance recommend how services can improve.
- To share and celebrate good service.
- More than half of us who experience poor care never report it.



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Overview

- During early 2014 Healthwatch Lincolnshire was made aware of the increasing number of patients not attending appointments with their doctor.
- The issue was raised by both Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) linked to GP Surgeries, and by the GP surgeries themselves. Our findings from the work we completed in 2014 certainly confirmed that patients failing to attend their GP appointments was definitely impacting the surgeries.
- As a result of this work we also identified DNA (Did Not Attend) as a potentially bigger problem for all health and care services in Lincolnshire and with the support of PPGs and CCG (West CCG has been particularly supportive in this work), we have conducted a further survey which has focused more on the reasons ‘why’ patients and service users are not attending their health or care appointments. The following slides provide an overview of these most recent results.



Background

- During 2014 Healthwatch Lincolnshire conducted research to understand the situation regarding patients not attending their GP appointment. The final report and outcomes can be downloaded at www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/public-docs/.
- We discovered the average cost of patients DNAs in GPs across Lincolnshire to the NHS was **£6,632,000**.
- 33% of patients admitted to forgetting to attend their appointment.
- Alongside the impact of this problem, we recognise there are many issues concerning DNAs:

- Concerns of what impact on the wider healthy community GP DNAs have. For instance, if a patient is unable to visit their doctor for treatment, are they then presenting themselves at a Walk-in Centre or A&E, creating more demand on already overstretched services?
- A need to better understand the reasons why a patient or service user fails to attend their appointments and how many of these factors are ‘organisational rather than individual barriers’.



The Kings Fund diagram above provides an overview of estimated costs per NHS service





Background

- Focus on this ‘Did Not Attend (DNA)/Could Not Attend (CNA)’ survey was from November 2015 to January 2016.
- We wanted to hear from individuals who had a problem with attending hospital, doctor, dentist, day care or any other health and social care appointment of the reasons why they didn’t attend.
- The findings from our survey will be shared with health and social care providers and commissioners to help them understand what the trigger points are with areas such as patient transport, appointment systems or individual barriers, to enable services to be designed for everyone to access vital treatment.

“Although our DNA rate is low in comparison to some organisations it is still a colossal waste of clinical time, money and effort. In some cases patients book and DNA on the same day. There is also a cost to the remainder of our patients who have to wait for appointments”





Methodology

- Patient response involved completing a short survey. The questionnaire was uploaded to Survey Monkey, an online survey service. The survey was circulated across our distribution list, to the wider network of providers and stakeholders, through our website and featured in our E-news as well as part of a social media marketing campaign. It was also featured in local media (Lincolnshire Echo).
- The questions within the survey aimed to explore:
 - How many people report not attending a health or social care appointment.
 - The types of appointments individuals DNA.
 - **Most importantly the reasons for DNA.**
 - Giving those the opportunity to Have their Say.

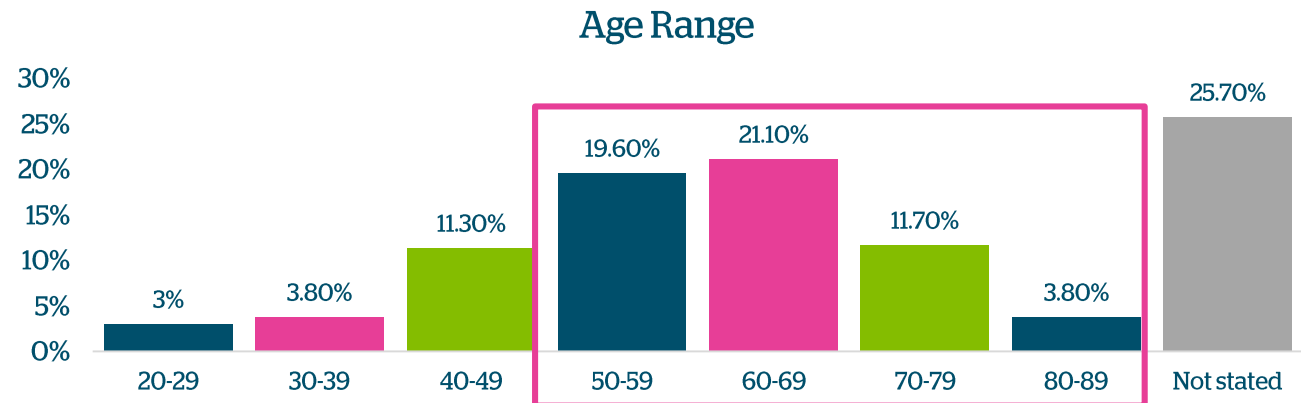
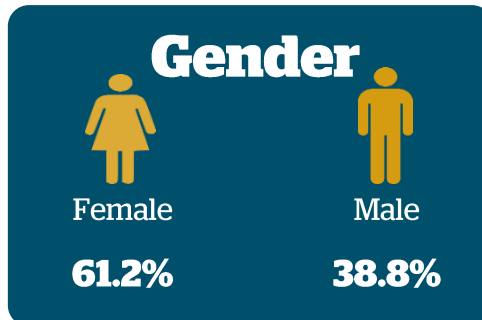
“I remembered on the actual day but forgot as the day went on. I am currently suffering from mental health problems and alcohol addiction so find it hard to remember things.”





Demographics

- Respondents were asked to answer 3 questions that invited them to share demographic information about themselves.
- Respondents were asked to record their postcode so that we could map the locality of respondents. Out of 265 respondents, as you can see (on the right), responses came from a widespread range of Lincolnshire residents.
- Respondents were asked to provide basic details including age and gender. We had a larger proportion of females than males taking part; it is also worth noting that as this was a totally online survey, a surprising but fantastic 56.1% of respondents were between the ages of 50 and 89 years.





Results

1 in 4 respondents told us that during the last 12 months they had booked an appointment they hadn't attended.



Patients told us that organisational barriers such as transport and appointment booking problems were the 2 biggest reasons why they couldn't attend.



Results



59.5% were hospital appointments



37% were GP appointments



1.3% were Dental appointments.

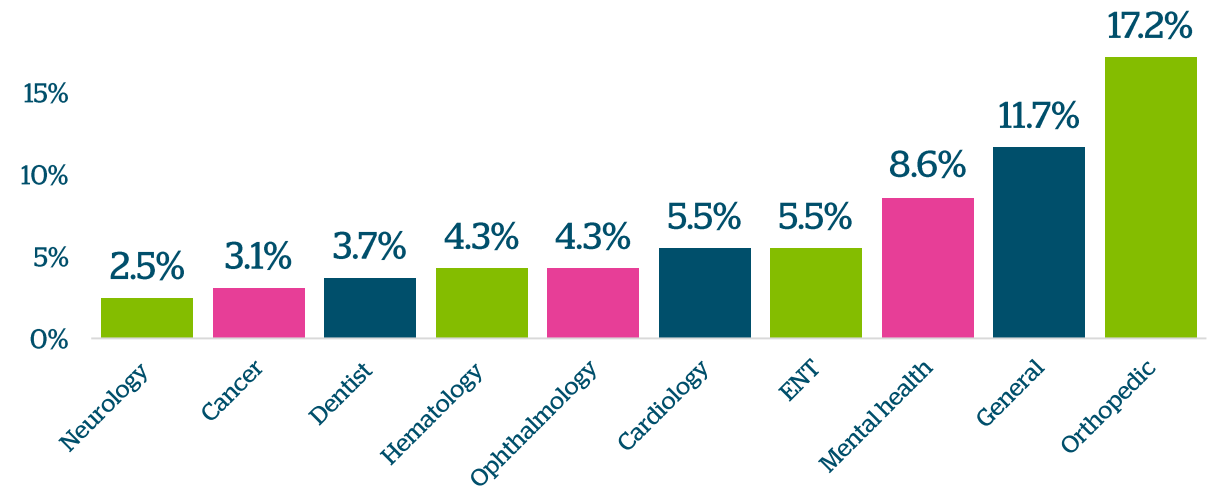


0.7% were pharmacy, physio and mental health appointments.

We encouraged individuals to tell us about any health or social care appointment they may have had but did not attend. The vast majority were for hospital appointments. In particular:

- Orthopaedic.
- General.
- Mental Health.

"It's got to the point where if consultation so much as hints at mental health being the cause, I am likely to cancel any treatment for fear of not being taken seriously"





Results

Answer Options	Response Percent
Transport Issues	25.9%
Administration and booking issues	24.1%
Forgot	12.5%
Not well enough to attend	11.6%
Seriousness of illness/Nature of illness	4.5%
Fear/Anxiety	4.5%
Caring responsibilities/child care	3.6%
Illness or condition improved	2.7%
Organisation of clinics	2.7%
Other (please specify)	2.7%
Employment/not able to take time off	1.8%
Previous experience	1.8%
Communication/language difficulties	0.9%
Bereavement in family	0.9%

- Patients told us that organisational barriers such as transport and appointment booking problems were the 2 biggest reasons causing them not to attend. Simply forgetting the appointment was the third most common response
- We received 29 transport-related comments (see some of the comments received below taken from a range of reasons given by patients for not attending their appointments).

“June 16th appointment cancelled by second class post sent 16th arrived 18th June”

“Transport to hospital is extremely uncomfortable”

“Receptionist wrote down a different time to what I was originally told”

“Appointment was made without any consideration for choice, therefore unable to attend”

“Sometimes it’s difficult getting child care”

“We used to get transport to and from hospital, now we are trying to find lifts”



Conclusion



- **Patient transport** issues played a significant factor in patient and service user attendance. *We welcome the work of Lincolnshire Total Transport in addressing transport access issues, however, we believe the only solution would be a complete health and social care system-wide approach to understanding and dealing with patient access to transport services.*



- **Administration** issues such as hospital cancelling appointments late, providers sending multiple appointments on the same day and clinics not having patients booked in correctly were all raised as a problem. *We feel that patient appointment services need to reassess the robustness of their current procedures, particularly within hospital settings, which is where the biggest problems arise.*



“Sometimes too ill to drive and I live alone. Difficult to get transport”

“Didn’t receive appointment letter”

“Time of appointment was changed without notification”

“Hospital cancelled appointment”



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Conclusion



- Individual's own barriers such as fear, caring responsibilities or health conditions were all factors. *On behalf of vulnerable patients Healthwatch Lincolnshire would like to see better recognition of personal barriers and what support mechanisms can be put in place to help eg peer mentoring (fear), carers sitting services.*



- Sadly, one of the highest reasons why patients and service users are not attending is that they forgot. For providers that have in place support such as text reminders sent the day before has definitely proved to help with this.



"I suffer from Dementia and don't always understand."

"I received a letter about the appointment well in advance but unfortunately I forgot about it."

"It would really help me as a person with special needs if we have text reminders. On the night before with the time on and an hour before the appointment."



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