



Access to GP Services

Snap survey results

September 2025

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Throughout the what works well and what could be improved parts of this report, there are boxes like this. These boxes contain key information/context as well as “You said, we did”, highlighting how your feedback is being actioned.



Thank you

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their views and to the ICB for providing additional context and highlighting how the feedback is being actioned.

Please note that all quotes included in this report are presented verbatim unless otherwise indicated. Only filler words such as 'um' and 'you know' have been omitted for clarity and brevity.

What is a primary care network?

Throughout this report we talk about primary care networks or PCNs.

What is a primary care network or PCN?

“Primary care networks (PCNs) are groups of GP practices working together with other local organisations, such as community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital and voluntary services.” – NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (ICB).

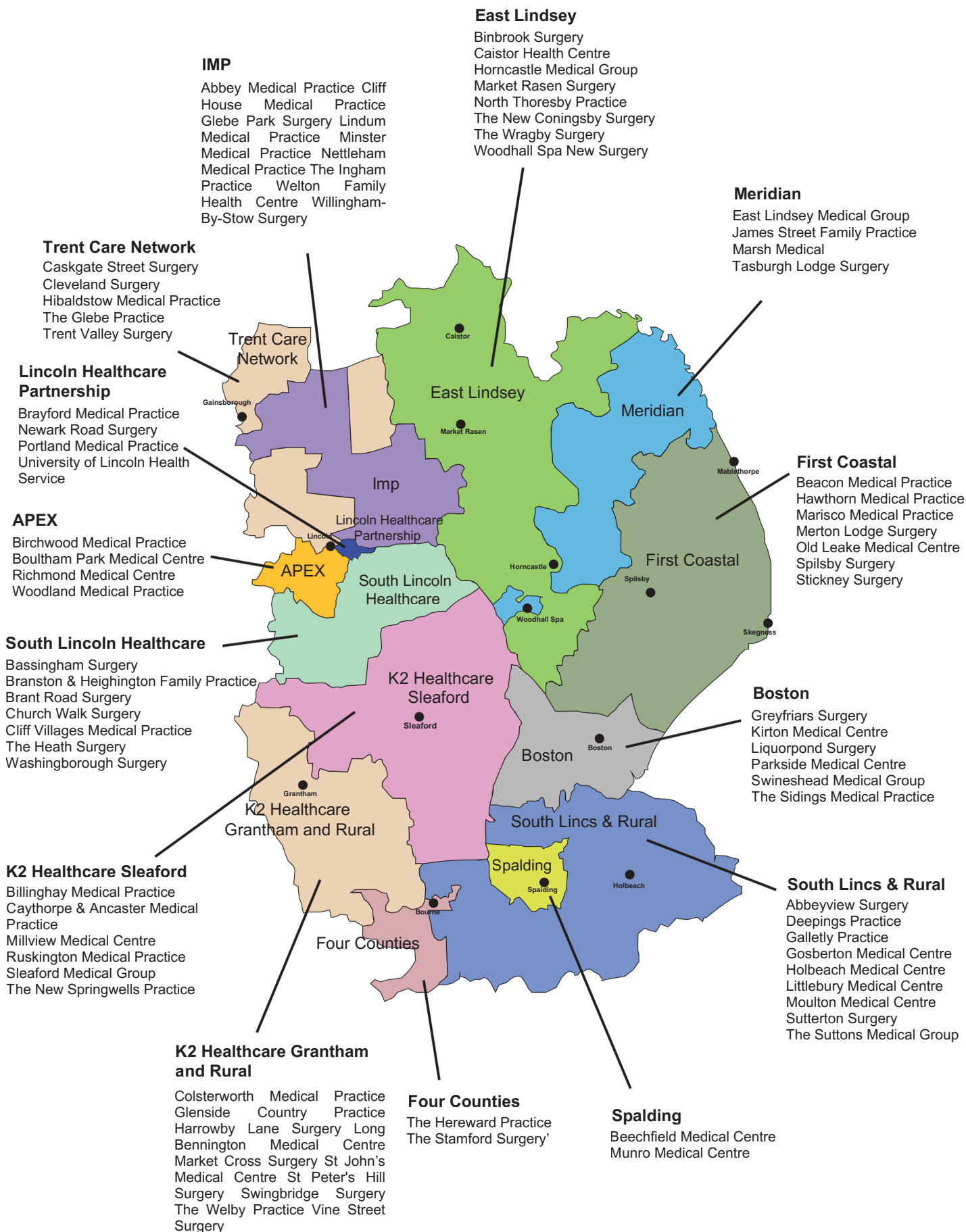
Click here to watch a short video explaining PCNs.

The next page shows a map of the Lincolnshire PCNs and the GP practices within them.



Map of Lincolnshire PCNs and GP practices

Names of the PCNs are in **bold**.

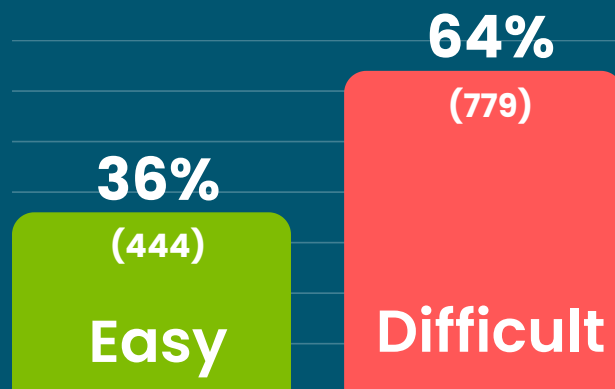


Executive Summary

This snap survey focused on access to GP services, including appointments with GPs, practice nurses, paramedics and other clinicians within GP surgeries/practices. The insights collected highlighted what is working well and where improvements are needed.

We heard from

1,255
people



How easily can you get an appointment at your GP surgery?

Where was access easiest?
% easy

1. South Lincoln Healthcare – 63.0% (58)
2. K2 Healthcare Sleaford – 60.6% (60)
3. IMP – 53.1% (43)
4. K2 Healthcare Grantham and Rural – 50.6% (43)
5. Spalding – 44.4% (32)

Where was access hardest?
% difficult

1. Four Counties – 91.0% (131)
2. First Coastal – 82.8% (111)
3. Meridian – 74.3% (78)
4. Trent – 73.5% (25)
5. Boston – 72.3% (34)

A closer look

Further analysis sought to understand if specific groups found it easier or harder to access GP appointments. **Those with a disability appeared to find it hardest to get an appointment.**



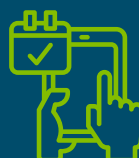
Executive Summary

Many of the suggestions for improving the experience of booking an appointment mirror the aspects that others identified as working well. This highlights the variability in experiences and services available throughout the county. The graphic below illustrates the themes that were common to both what works well and areas for improvement, as well as those unique to each category.

Shared



Being able to prebook



Being able to book appointments online



Timely access to appointments/responses



Choice of booking (online, phone or in person)

What works well?



Online systems/ services/appointments



Helpful and understanding staff



Call-back system



Emergency, face to face and out of hours appointments

What could be improved?



"8am scramble"



More appointments needed



Need for face to face appointments



Online systems be open longer



More staff both clinical and administrative

Background

Healthwatch Lincolnshire is running a series of short surveys to gather public feedback on different aspects of health and care during 2025. The insights we collect will help us understand what is working well and where improvements may be needed.

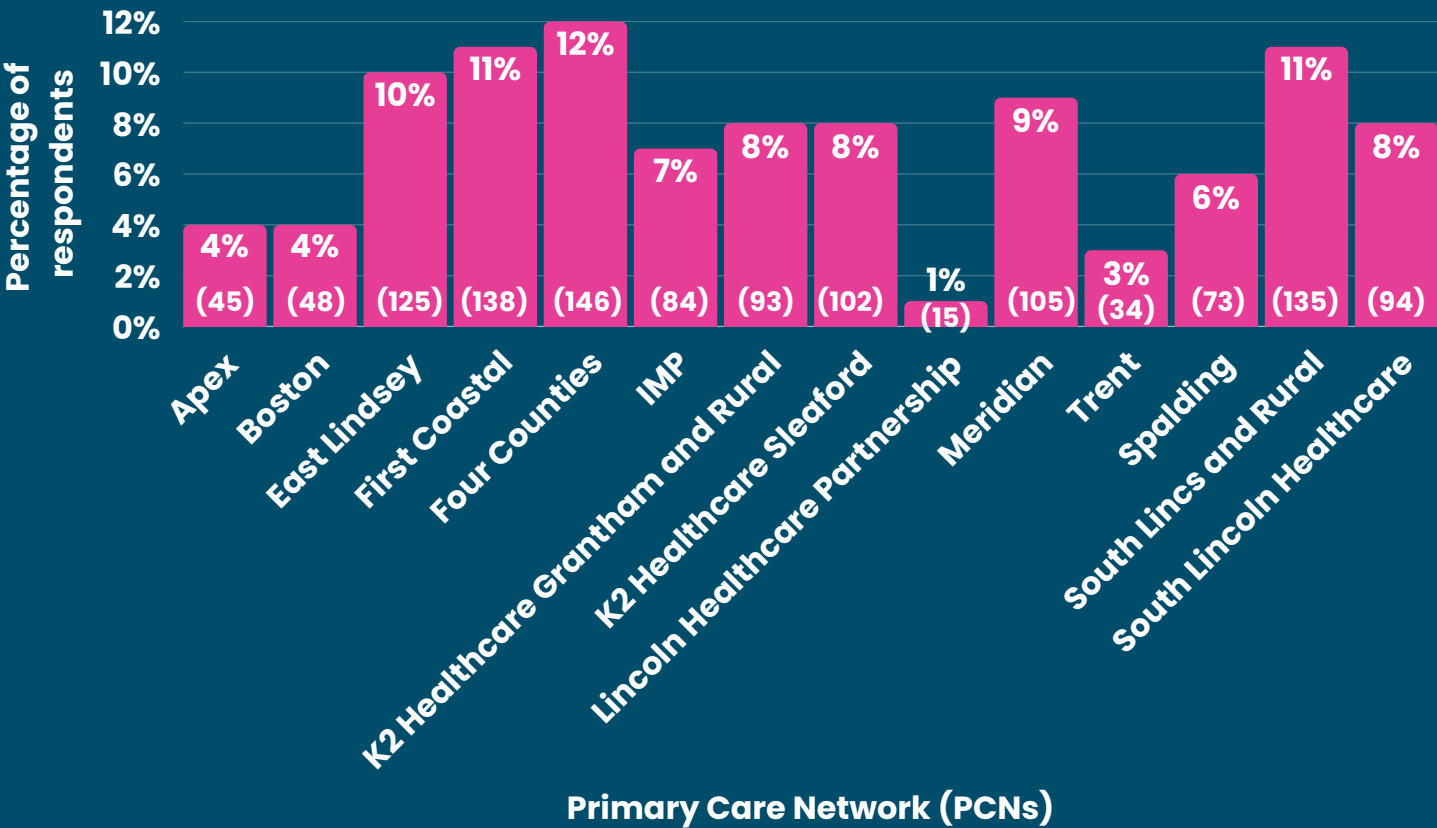
Our latest snap survey focused on access to GP services, including appointments with GPs, practice nurses, paramedics, and other clinicians within GP practices.



1,255 people shared their views

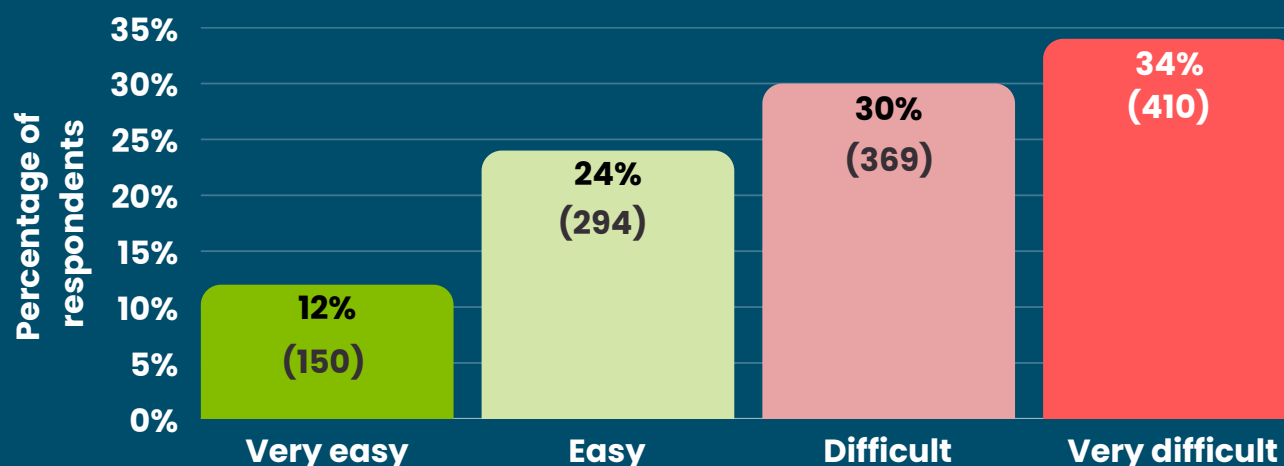


Breakdown of respondents by primary care network (PCNs) (%)



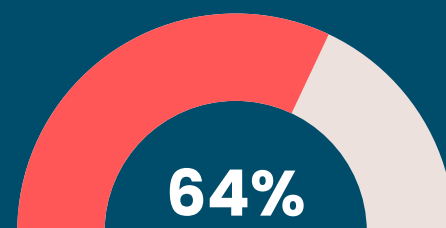
Results

How easily can you get an appointment at your GP surgery?



Overall, 64% (779) found it difficult to get an appointment.* However, ease of getting an appointment varied considerably between PCNs and individual GP surgeries.

**'Difficult' in this context refers to respondents who selected either 'difficult' or 'very difficult'*



64%
(779) found it difficult to get an appointment at their GP surgery*.

Where was access easiest? % easy

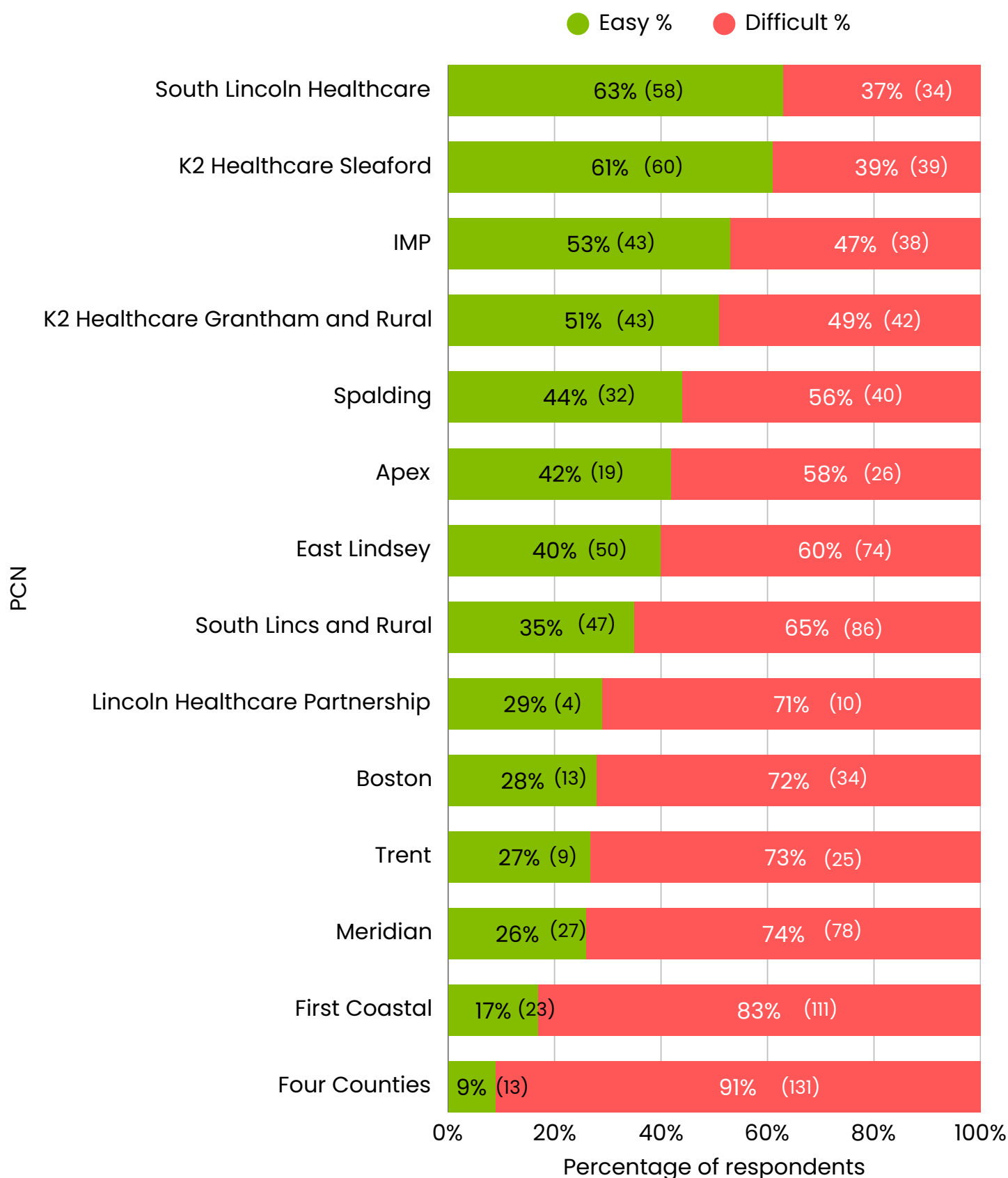
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Where was access hardest? % difficult

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A full breakdown can be seen in Appendix Table 1.

Respondent-reported ease of getting an appointment at their GP surgery grouped into PCNs (ordered easiest to get an appointment to most difficult)

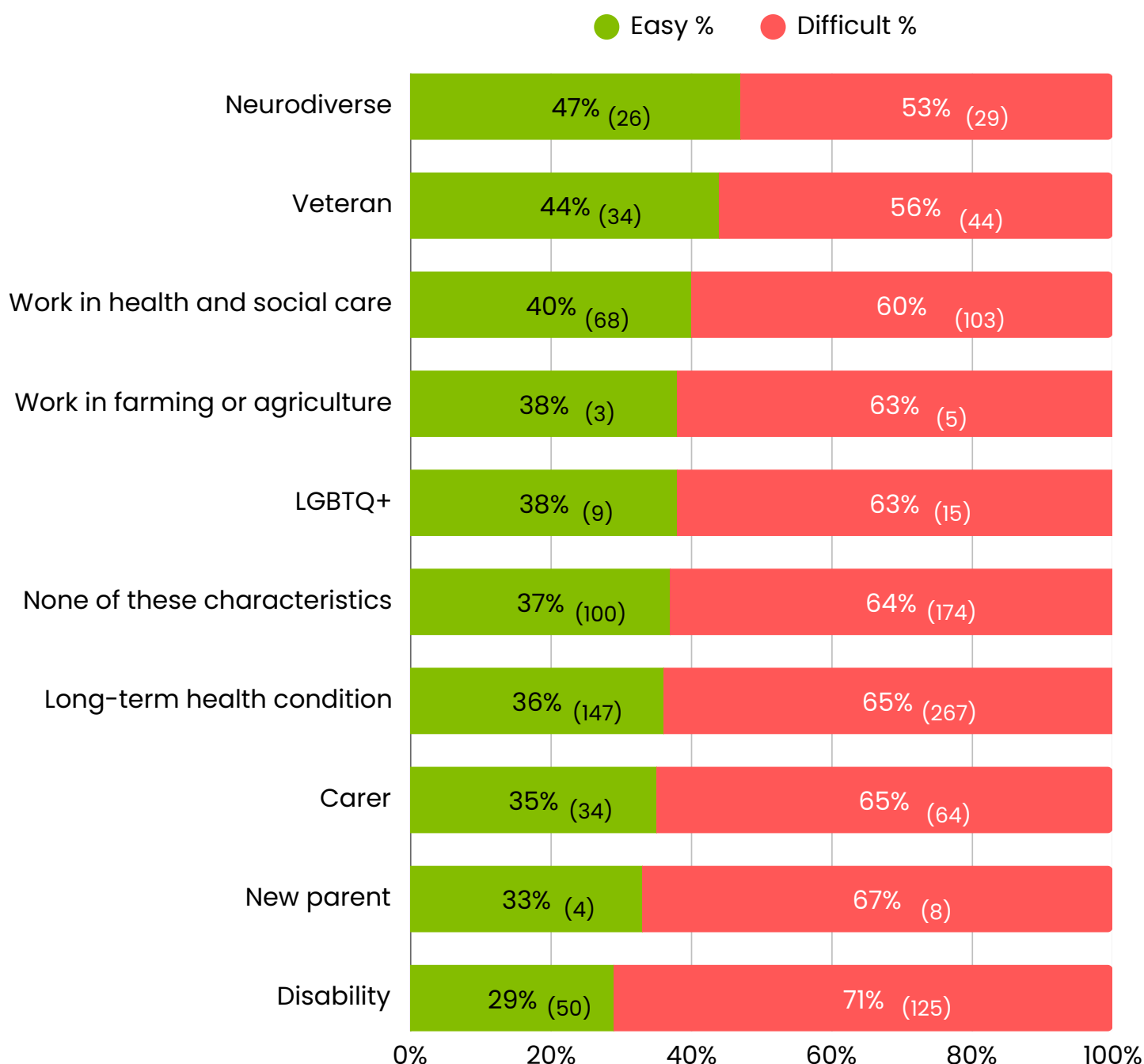


Note: To highlight overall trends in access to appointments, responses have been grouped into two categories: Easy (combining 'Very Easy' and 'Easy') and Difficult (combining 'Difficult' and 'Very Difficult'). For Lincoln Healthcare Partnership only 14 respondents shared their views, so results should be viewed with caution. To see this information ordered alphabetically by PCN please see Appendix Graph 1.

A closer look

Further analysis sought to understand if specific groups found it easier or harder to access GP appointments. Those with a disability appeared to find it hardest to get an appointment. Those who were carers and/or had a long-term health condition also found it especially hard to get an appointment.

Respondent-reported ease of getting an appointment at their GP surgery by demographic characteristics (ordered easiest to get an appointment to most difficult)



Note: To highlight overall trends in access to appointments, responses have been grouped into two categories: Easy (combining 'Very Easy' and 'Easy') and Difficult (combining 'Difficult' and 'Very Difficult'). The sample size for new parents and those working in farming and agriculture was less than 15 respondents, so results should be viewed with caution. A full breakdown can be seen in Appendix Table 2.

A closer look continued

Context

Those with a disability

The distribution of disabled respondents across the PCNs mirrored trends seen in the census data for Lincolnshire: the proportion of disabled respondents was often higher in more deprived, rural areas of the county, which often also have an older population.

Exploring these observations further, the PCNs First Coastal and South Lincs and Rural had the highest proportion of respondents who identified as disabled (27–28 respondents). In these PCNs, 75% of the individuals who identified as disabled found it difficult to get an appointment. However, access challenges in these areas, especially First Coastal, appeared to be broader and not limited to disabled respondents.

Carers

Similar observations could also be seen when exploring the experiences of those who identified themselves as carers. This was both in terms of distribution of carers throughout the PCNs in comparison to census data and difficulties in access. Again, First Coastal had the highest proportion of respondents who identified as carers (n= 15) and 73% of these individuals found it difficult to get an appointment.

Those with a long-term health condition

Similar patterns were seen when exploring access for those with a long-term health condition. First Coastal, Four Counties, South Lincs and Rural, East Lindsey and Meridian PCNs had the highest proportion of respondents with long-term health conditions (n = 37–59). For First Coastal and Four Counties, more than 83% of respondents with a long term-health condition find it difficult to get an appointment.



A closer look continued

Context

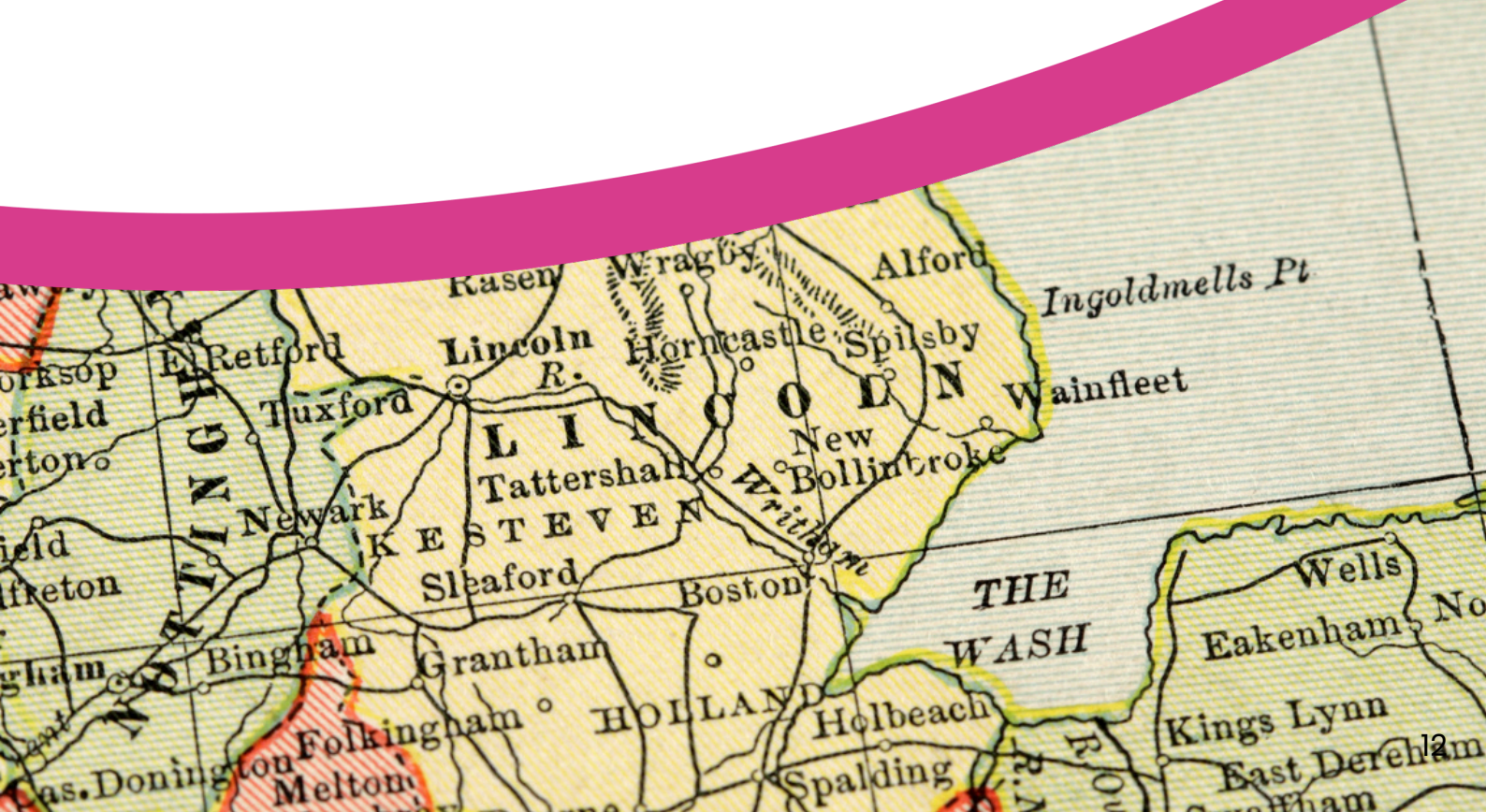
The analysis of the experiences of those who were disabled, carers and/or had a long-term health condition showed a recurring trend: PCNs with higher proportions of these groups were where respondents often reported more difficulty getting a GP appointment.

The distribution of these demographics across the PCNs broadly aligned with the trends seen in the Census and local Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs), where coastal and rural areas such as East Lindsey, South Holland and Boston are known to have older populations and higher rates of disability and long-term conditions.

First Coastal often had the highest number of respondents with these demographics and some of the highest rates of reported access difficulty.

This suggests that PCNs with higher levels of health and care need might be experiencing greater pressure on primary care services. For instance, PCNs with more individuals with disabilities and/or long-term health conditions might be facing increased strain due to more complex or intensive care needs within their populations.

Note: It is important to note some limitations. The data reflects self-reported experiences and might not be fully representative of the wider PCN populations. Response rates varied across PCNs, and smaller base sizes in some areas could limit comparisons. Therefore, findings should be interpreted with caution and seen as indicative rather than definitive.



You said, we did

Working Together to Improve Access to Care – Healthwatch works closely with NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and GP practices to ensure that people's voices are heard and used to shape local health services.

This *Access to GP Services* snap survey has provided valuable insight into the experiences of people across Lincolnshire. The findings will be used constructively to inform future improvements.

Throughout this report, we'll share not only what people told us, but also highlight key services and information that can help improve access to care, as well as a "You Said, We Did" section to show how feedback is making a difference.

In the following sections of this report which cover what you told us works well and what could be improved about booking appointments at your GP surgery, additional information/context and the "You Said, We Did" parts will appear in boxes like this.



What works well about how people are booking appointments at their GP surgery?

Respondents were asked, “What do you think works well about booking appointments at your GP surgery/practice?”. **1,016** respondents shared their views. Free-text comments were grouped into themes. The approximate percentage of comments relating to each theme was then calculated to show how frequently each topic was mentioned.



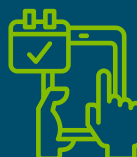
**18% (118) – Online systems/
services/appointments**



**9% (59) – Helpful and
understanding staff**



**8% (53) – Timely access to
appointments/responses**



**7% (46) – Being able to
book appointments online**



**6% (38) – Choice of
booking (online, phone
or in-person)**



**5% (33) – Call-back
system**



**2% (11) – Being able
to prebook**



**(<1%) (<10) – Emergency,
face-to-face and out of hours
appointments**



**44% (299) –
“Nothing”**

**In response to this question
approximately 44% of the
comments explicitly stated nothing
or a similar sentiment.**



What works well about how people are booking appointments at their GP surgery?

Key themes

Online systems/services/appointments – 18% (118)

This theme related to online systems/services and virtual appointments. Respondents praised services such as *askmyGP* for their ease of use, convenience, prompt responses and appropriateness, particularly in situations where respondents felt they didn't require a full appointment. Respondents appreciated being able to make requests throughout the day.



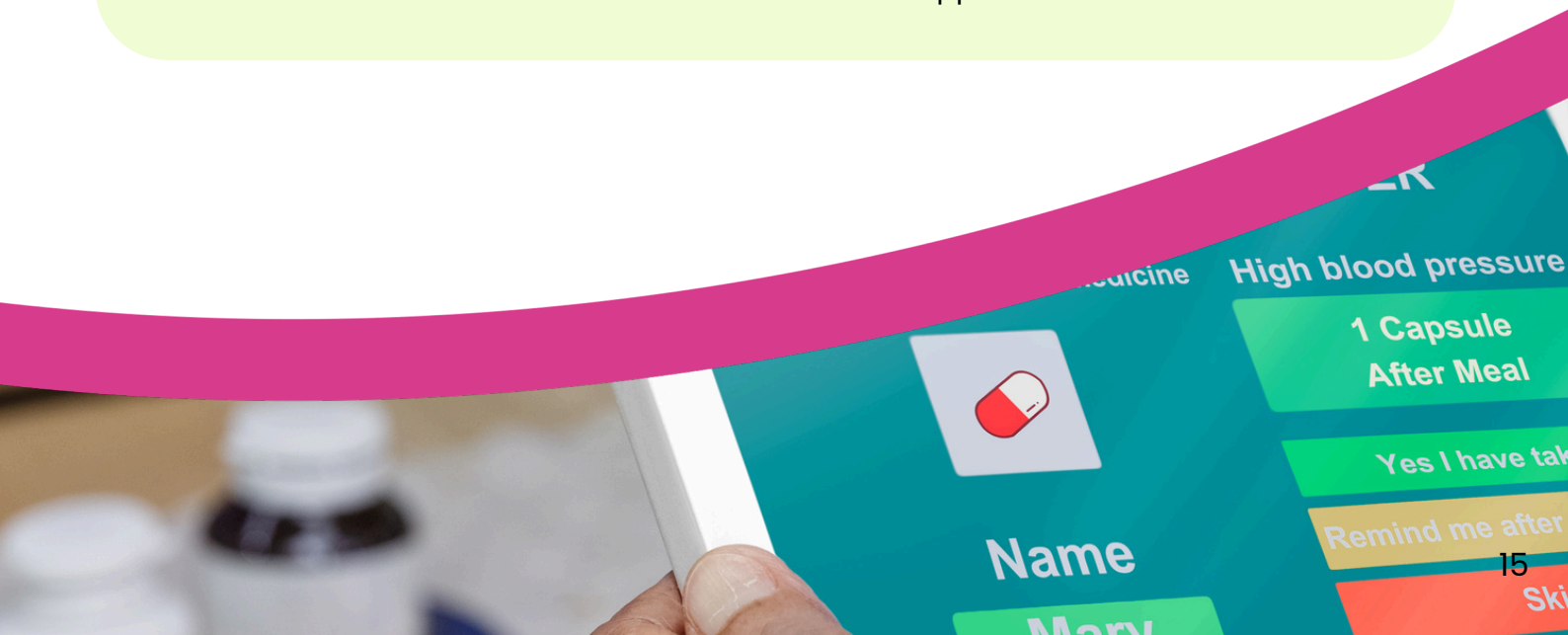
Note: This theme does not include being able to book appointments (whether online or in-person appointments) online. This is because booking appointments online was discussed frequently enough to be considered a distinct theme, discussed later on in this report.

"askMyGP works really well as sometimes it is unnecessary to actually need a face-to-face appointment."

"The practice now primarily uses an online consultation form, which is helpful as it allows me to think about all the things I want to discuss before having an appointment (whether over the phone or in person). I find the system easy to navigate, and I will usually hear a response within a day of putting in the consultation request."

"In the last year to 18 months, they have opened the *askmyGP* page earlier, so there is not a scramble as soon as you wake up to put a request in. I have found the requests have been triaged appropriately when I have asked for help or an appointment."

"Simple system where you tell your problem online and then the reception or a GP will ring you back and either consult there and then or arrange an appointment – or they send a text with a link to make an appointment."



What works well about how people are booking appointments at their GP surgery?

Key themes

Helpful and understanding staff – 9% (59)

Comments under this theme praised staff (reception staff and care navigators) for listening, being polite and helpful.



You said: “Staff are helpful and understanding. However unfortunately not everyone felt this way, some felt dismissed or turned away.”

ICB response: “We’re feeding this back to practices and encouraging them to build on what’s working by training more care navigators and ensuring booking choices for patients, as well as direct signposting to services where appropriate.”

Timely access to appointments/responses – 8% (53)

Timely access referred to phones being answered promptly when making an appointment, the ability to secure an appointment quickly, and receiving swift responses to online queries.

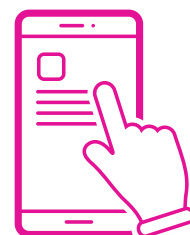
“The phone was answered quite quickly – despite it being a Monday morning. The receptionist was pleasant and told me when to expect a call from a healthcare professional. Nurse phoned back an hour later and I saw her in the afternoon.”

“I don’t have to wait too long on the phone and I can usually get a same-day appointment.”

“askmyGP works for us. Always respond in a timely manner.”

Being able to book appointments online – 7% (46)

This theme referred to being able to book appointments online – both urgent appointments and those in advance.



What works well about how people book appointments at their GP surgery?

Key themes

Choice of booking (online, phone or in person) – 6% (38)

Respondents appreciated having multiple options for booking appointments, including by phone, online, and in person.

“Range of ways to book making it inclusive for all. Patients encouraged to use NHS app or online form to seek help and free up telephone line for those who are non-digital. Reception staff will help patients over telephone or in person to complete form which is then triaged and contact made to complete appropriate action including same day appointments if needed.”

“We have several ways to book appointments – online or phone in the morning. There is also the option to go into the surgery to speak to the receptionists to see if there any available appointments if you don't have access to the other methods.”



Call-back system – 5% (33)

Respondents appreciated the use of a call-back system, whereby if they contacted their surgery to make an appointment but they were met with a long queue, the surgery would ring them back and they would not lose their place in the queue.

“The ring back system was an improvement & you did not lose your place in the queue.”

“When booking an appt you can request a call-back if you are in a long queue this saves you holding on for ages.”



You said: “The call back system is helpful”.

ICB response: “The NHS has invested in new digital telephone systems which enable this.”



What works well about how people book appointments at their GP surgery?

Key themes

Being able to prebook – 2% (11)

Being able to prebook appointments was another feature appreciated by respondents, especially for routine check-ups, new non-urgent issues or to talk to a specific member of the team.

Emergency, face-to-face and out of hours appointments – (<1%) (<10)

Less than 1% of respondents praised the following in relation to what works well about booking appointments at their GP surgery:

- Same-day emergency appointments
- Face-to-face appointments
- Extended opening/out of hours appointments – especially praised by those who work, have childcare or other caring commitments.

“If you do need an emergency appointment and phone up they have been amazing at getting us seen on the same day. I suffered a miscarriage in 2021 and they saw me the same day and the care was amazing. The same with mental health, when I had my son the following year on 2022 I phoned saying I thought I had post partum anxiety and was seen just a few hours later.”

“The only positive experience I had recently is when I rung up with poor mental health and feeling very low and upset they prioritised me as a same day appointment, I reiterated I was “safe” and didn't need to use up an appointment however they felt it was a priority and were able to get me seen that day.”



What could be improved about booking appointments at their GP surgery?

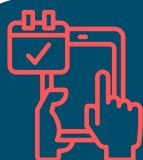
Respondents were also asked “What do you think could be improved about booking appointments at your GP surgery/practice?”. **1,012** respondents shared their views. Free-text comments were grouped into themes. The approximate percentage of comments relating to each theme was then calculated to show how frequently each topic was mentioned.



16% (148) – “8am scramble”



13% (115) – Be able to prebook appointments



12% (106) – Be able to book appointments online



10% (99) – More appointments needed



10% (89) – Choice of booking (online, phone or in person)



5% (47) – Need for face to face appointments (or at least choice)



5% (43) – More staff both clinical and administrative



4% (38) – Timelier access to appointments



4% (33) – Online systems be open longer



11% (98) – No issues and no improvements needed



<2% (<25) – Out of hours appointments, continuity of care, providing an estimated call back time for phone appointments and population growth (mainly Stamford).

What could be improved about booking appointments at their GP surgery?

Key themes

“8am scramble” – 16% (148)

By far the most common issues discussed in relation to what could be improved about booking appointments was the “8am scramble”. Respondents expressed their frustration and confusion at the current system, whereby at the vast majority of surgeries in order to get an appointment you had to ring (or even use online systems) at 8am to try and get an appointment. However, this still often left respondents without an appointment. Experiences of ringing straight away at 8am, being stuck in a queue and by the time their call got answered all the appointments being gone appeared to be common. These individuals were frequently told to ring again the next day, becoming stuck in a cycle.



Additionally, those working and/or with childcare or other caring commitments shared how this process of booking was particularly challenging often conflicting with other commitments.

Respondents felt this process needed to be changed, suggesting being able to ring throughout the day to book an appointment, appointments being released throughout the day or in two groups, i.e. morning and afternoon. Also, respondents felt being able to prebook and book appointments online would be useful solutions.

Some of these suggestions will be implemented under the reforms outlined by the UK Government and NHS England to address the “8am scramble”. To read more about the planned changes, [click here](#).

What could be improved about booking appointments at their GP surgery?

Key themes

“8am scramble” – 16% (148)

“I absolutely dread the 8am call where I call on the dot of 8am but am already 37 in the queue and then have to go to work still on hold for 20-30 minutes not able to leave my phone, which as a teacher is impractical. I then get through to no appointments left or someone will ring me but no idea when so again I have to be able to answer my phone whenever it rings when I ought be teaching. I would love to be able to book an appointment myself.”

“Take a booking request at the moment you have to phone at 8am ,go into a long queue the be told all appointments gone, try again tomorrow.”

“Not having to ring early in a morning to get an appointment, if there are any left, for that day because if there aren't any appointments left they tell you to ring every morning on the off chance there is an appointment.”

“If there is no bookable appointment – you can ring at 8am to see if an appointment has become available. This time is completely impractical for those who have children at school and need to do school run. The length of time you are on hold – both cannot be done.”

You said: “The 8am scramble is stressful and confusing; having to call or go online exactly at 8am to try and get an appointment to find they're all gone and be told to try again the next day.”

ICB response: “Upcoming national changes to the 2025-2026 GP contract aim to improve how appointments are accessed and reduce pressure at 8am. From 1 October 2025, GP practices will be encouraged to:

- Open online consultation tools throughout the day
- Keep phone lines accessible for those who can't go online
- Manage appointment requests based on clinical need, rather than first come, first served.”

What could be improved about booking appointments at their GP surgery?

Key themes

Be able to prebook appointments – 13% (115)

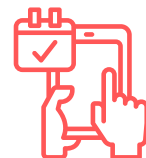
Being able to prebook appointments was praised by those whose surgery allowed it, and was highlighted as a desired improvement by those who were unable to do so. Again respondents expressed a wish to be able to prebook appointments for routine check-ups and new non-urgent issues. Some also wanted the option to be able to prebook urgent appointments instead of facing the “8am scramble”.

You said: “Being able to prebook appointments rather than having to call daily for routine or non-urgent appointments would be helpful.”

ICB response: “We’re advocating for more pre-bookable slots to be made available across practices. We’re sharing best practices from surgeries already offering this successfully via various routes, including the NHS App.”

Be able to book appointments online – 12% (106)

Being able to book appointments online was praised by those whose surgery allowed it, and was highlighted as a desired improvement by those who were unable to do so. These individuals expressed interest in being able to book all types of appointments including routine, urgent and emergency appointments online.



“Allow a certain number of appointments to be bookable online. Allow certain services to be accessed online. It makes no sense to have the function and deactivate it. Send every patient a user guide with which app and what services September be done online. Remember that there is a huge neurodiverse population who struggle with telephone communication and offer them a way to be able to make doctor appointments without having to communicate by telephone.”

“Being able to see availability online and the same day appointments are a no-goer for someone who can’t hold on the telephone for ages at 8am when there is school drop off to do.”

What could be improved about booking appointments at their GP surgery?

Key themes

Be able to book appointments online – 12% (106)

“To actually book an appointment online, instead of having to wait for a call back, so have to remain in house all day. Not happy talking about health in public on mobile, and anyway, if driving, or working can't accept call. I always end up ringing surgery and then no appointments available, unless emergency. Also to be able to book appointment in advance, for routine or non urgent issues – e.g. a hernia.”

“Online booking service is often offline, the 8am scramble calling into surgery is inconvenient when you are on way to work/taking kids to school, but appointments have gone if you ring later in the day. Not being able to book appointments ahead of time, only available on the day. Having a telephone call from GP who then needs to see you in person, when it was the type of complaint that needed face to face to start with.”

You said: “Being able to book appointments online would be useful. However, sometimes online systems were unreliable, closed too early in the day or are difficult to use.”

ICB Response: “We’re encouraging practices to support patients in downloading and using the NHS App, especially those less confident with digital tools and have developed a poster with our Primary Care Digital Coproduction group on three ways to register for the NHS app.”



HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE NHS APP

4 EASY WAYS

BENEFITS OF THE NHS APP

Order repeat prescriptions; book and manage appointments; view your GP health record; book and manage COVID-19 vaccinations; register your organ donation decision; choose how the NHS uses your data; view your NHS number and use NHS 111 online to answer questions and get instant guidance.

TO ACCESS THE NHS APP
AND CREATE AN NHS LOGIN
SCAN THIS QR CODE:



Four Different Ways to Register for the NHS APP:

- 1) If you're already registered with your GP's online services, use the mobile phone number you have used to register for their service to complete the NHS app registration.
- 2) After downloading the NHS app, you may submit a photo identification and complete a face scan to complete registration.
- 3) Submit a photo identification and a video. When you register you'll be asked to submit photo identification, but instead of completing a face scan you can record a video.
- 4) If you have trouble with any of the above, please use registration details from your GP surgery. You need to ask your GP surgery for the following three items:
 - a Linkage Key (also known as Passphrase)
 - an ODS Code (also known as Organisation Code or Surgery ID)
 - an Account ID

What could be improved about booking appointments at their GP surgery?

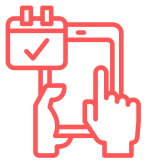
Key themes

More appointments needed – 10% (89)

Some respondents felt more appointments were needed to meet the demand.

Choice of booking (online, phone or in person) – 10% (89)

While around 12% of respondents mentioned online appointment booking as a way to improve the booking process at their surgery, approximately 10% discussed the need for greater choice in how appointments can be booked. These individuals felt their options currently were too limited – either having to call or go online – with no option to book in person.

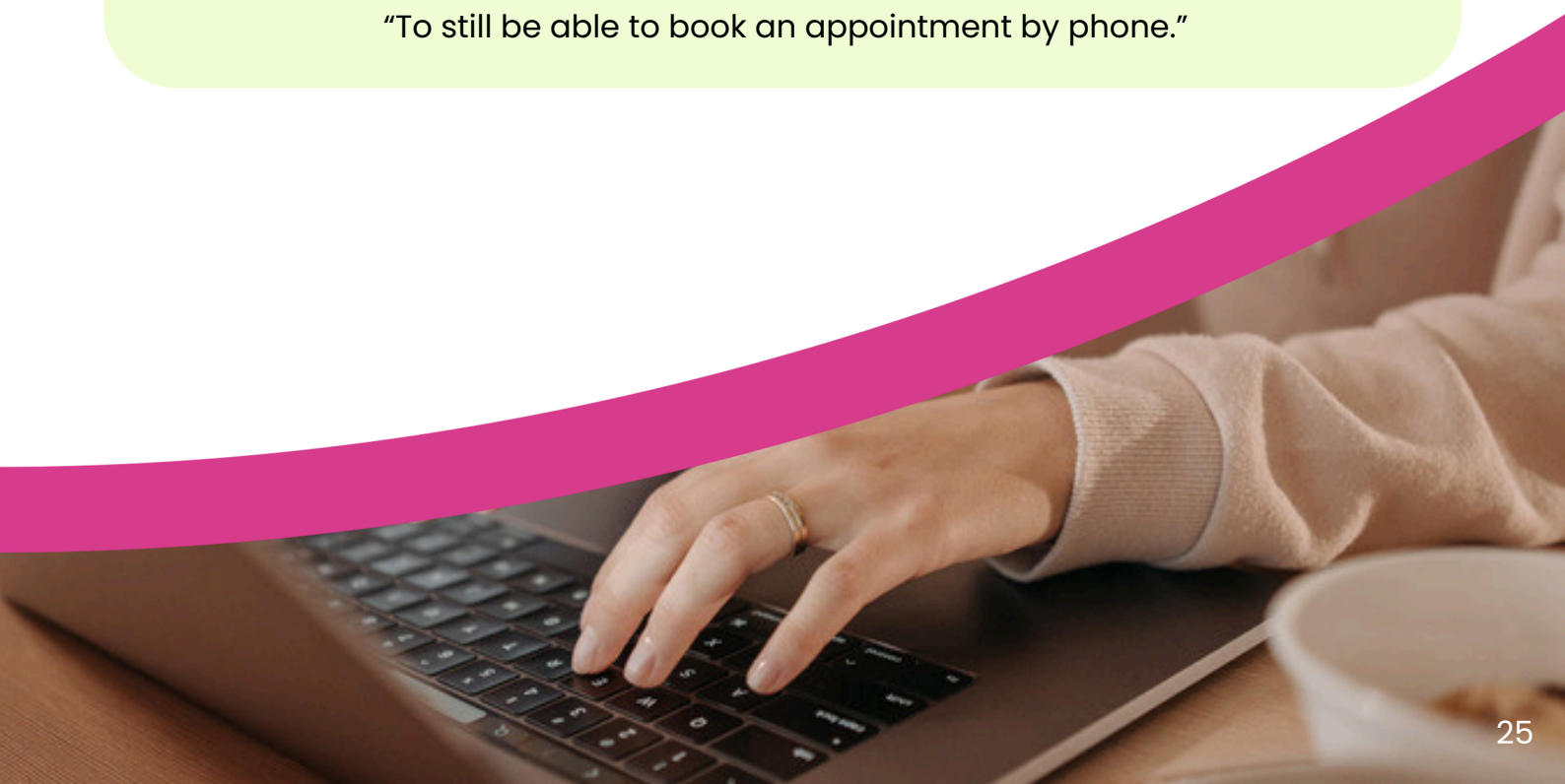


“Allow patients to call by phone especially the elderly who might not have access to a computer or smart phone.”

“It would be nice to be able to make an appointment by popping into the reception, but they don’t allow that and direct you to the online system. This could be difficult for some people who don’t have smartphones.”

“Allow face to face bookings; if you can't get through by phone and there's no e-consult, it makes sense to present and book. The receptionist turned me away. I am not elderly or vulnerable, but I imagine this would be a bar to making appointments in those groups, especially if people are turned away.”

“To still be able to book an appointment by phone.”



What could be improved about booking appointments at their GP surgery?

Key themes

Need for face to face appointments (or at least choice) – 5% (47)

Some respondents (around 5%) felt that more appointments should be face-to-face and expressed concern about whether issues could be appropriately discussed over the phone or online. These individuals wanted to have a choice in how they are seen.



More staff both clinical and administrative – 5% (43)

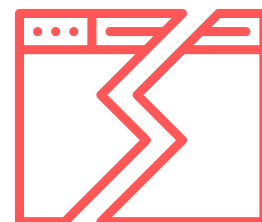
Around 5% of comments related to the need for more staff both clinical and administrative to improve the booking process and allow for more appointments.

Timelier access to appointments – 4% (38)

Timelier access to appointments was discussed both in the context of routine and urgent appointments. Timely appeared to mean the same day (for urgent) or in a couple of days/same week.

Online systems be open longer – 4% (33)

About 4% of comments discussed the need for online systems to be open for longer, with experiences being shared where services such as *askmyGP* were closed by 10am or even earlier. These individuals wished such services were open longer and requests could be made throughout the day.



You said: "Online systems are helpful, but not everyone can use them. Sometimes they close early too. Respondents also appreciated having multiple options for booking appointments including by phone, online and in person."

ICB response: "We're encouraging practices to extend the hours online systems are open. We're supporting practices to offer multiple booking options online, phone, and in-person to provide choice."

What could be improved about booking appointments at their GP surgery?

Key themes

Other issues – <2% (<25)

The following areas were also identified as areas for improvement, albeit by a small proportion of respondents:

- Need for out-of-hours appointments
- Better continuity of care
- Providing an estimated call back time for phone appointments – respondents shared struggles of having to wait all day for a call back or missing the call back due to being in the toilet.
- Population growth – discussed in relation to Stamford.

You said: “There needs to be more out-of-hours appointments.”

ICB response: “GP practices continue to offer patients an ‘Enhanced Access’ model of care, where appointments are available during the evening weekdays and 9am–5pm on Saturdays.

This model makes routine general practice appointments available at patients’ own GP practice, or another local NHS location, on weekday evenings from 6.30pm–8pm and on Saturdays from 9am–5pm.

Appointments will be available to book two weeks in advance, or on the day if there is availability. There will be a choice of ways to access appointments depending on clinical need, including face-to-face and remote appointments via telephone or online. For more information, [click here](#).”

It is understood that GP surgeries function as independent businesses. However, this autonomy appears to be contributing to a inequality or postcode lottery, whereby the scope and availability of services differs throughout the county.



What works well and suggested improvements by PCN

This table presents the key themes related to what works well and what could be improved about booking appointments, grouped by PCN. The number in brackets indicates how many comments from each PCN mentioned that theme.

PCN	What works well?	What could be improved?
Apex	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing (9) Helpful staff (6) Call back system (3) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to book online (9) "8am scramble" (6) More appointments (3)
Boston	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing (10) Helpful staff (4) Choice of and timely access (both 2) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Book online (9) "8am scramble" (8) More appointments and need for prebooking (both 5)
East Lindsey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing (33) Online systems/services (16) Call back system (6) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Need for prebooking (15) "8am scramble" (14) Book online and no issues (both 11)
First Coastal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing (45) Timely access (5) Online systems/services (4) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> "8am scramble" (22) Be able to book online (13) More appointments (13)
Four Counties	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing (59) Booking online (5) Call back system (5) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> "8am scramble" (33) Need for prebooking (28) More appointments (24)
IMP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Online systems/services (20) Nothing (12) Timely access (8) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> No issues (13) Online systems open longer (10) Process of booking (10)

What works well and suggested improvements by PCN

This table presents the key themes related to what works well and what could be improved about booking appointments, grouped by PCN. The number in brackets indicates how many comments from each PCN mentioned that theme.

PCN	What works well?	What could be improved?
K2 Healthcare Grantham and Rural	1.Nothing (17) 2.Online systems/services (12) 3.Timely access (9)	1.Process of booking (10) 2.No issues (8) 3.“8am scramble” (8)
K2 Healthcare Sleaford	1.Online systems/services (31) 2.Nothing (11) 3.Helpful staff (7)	1.No issues (25) 2.Process of booking (7) 3.More appointments (6)
Lincoln Healthcare Partnership	1.Booking online (3) 2.Nothing (3) 3.Online systems/services (3)	1.Need for prebooking (3) 2.Timely access (2) 3.“8am scramble” (2)
Meridian	1.Nothing (22) 2.Booking online (8) 3.Online systems/services (7)	1.“8am scramble” (18) 2.Need for prebooking (16) 3.Book online (8)
South Lincoln Healthcare	1.Helpful staff (12) 2.Nothing (9) 3.Timely access (8)	1.No issues (15) 2.Book online (11) 3.“8am scramble” (5)
South Lincs and Rural	1.Nothing (45) 2.Choice of access (6) 3.Online systems/services (5)	1.Process of booking (12) 2.Need for prebooking (10) 3.“8 am scramble” and book online (both 10)
Spalding	1.Nothing (16) 2.Callback system (5) 3.Helpful staff (3)	1.More appointments (10) 2.No issues (8) 3.“8am scramble” (7)
Trent	1.Online systems/services (6) 2.Nothing (4) 3.Book online (2)	1.“8am scramble” (4) 2.Process of booking (4) 3.More staff (3)

National GP Patient Survey

Ipsos runs a national annual GP Patient Survey on behalf of NHS England. The survey provides data at the integrated care system (ICS) and PCN level, to read more [click here](#).

In the survey, three questions are asked regarding access to GP appointments – discussing ease of access via phone, online and NHS app individually (Questions 1-3).

To enable a proxy comparison between the findings of our survey and those of the national survey, an average of the responses to the three questions from the national survey has been calculated for ease of comparison.

Note: The percentages for “easy” and “difficult” for the national survey do not total 100% as they include a third option – “I haven’t tried” – when calculating their percentages. However, the Healthwatch survey includes only those selecting “easy” or “difficult” when calculating the percentages. Differences between the results for the two surveys may be in some part due to the differences in this calculation.

Trends

Despite the potential discrepancies outlined above, both surveys show similar trends when it comes to access to GP services in Lincolnshire. For example in both surveys access to services appeared to be easiest and hardest in the following PCNs:

Where was access easiest?	Where was access hardest?
K2 Healthcare Sleaford	Four Counties
South Lincoln Healthcare	Boston
K2 Healthcare Grantham and Rural	First Coastal
IMP	Meridian

Comparing the results from the National GP Patient Survey 2024 to Healthwatch Lincolnshire's 2025 GP Survey.

Area	National GP Patient Survey 2025		Healthwatch Lincolnshire Survey 2025	
	Easy	Difficult	Easy	Difficult
Lincolnshire average	51%	36%	36%	64%
Apex	49%	36%	42%	58%
Boston	41%	43%	28%	72%
East Lindsey	58%	29%	40%	60%
First Coastal	41%	46%	17%	80%
Four Counties	38%	52%	9%	91%
IMP	56%	32%	53%	47%
K2 Healthcare Grantham and Rural	60%	28%	51%	49%
K2 Healthcare Sleaford	64%	24%	61%	39%
Lincoln Healthcare Partnership	56%	29%	29%	71%
Meridian	42%	47%	26%	74%
South Lincoln Healthcare	61%	26%	63%	37%
South Lincs and Rural	49%	41%	35%	65%
Spalding	52%	34%	44%	56%
Trent	46%	40%	27%	73%

Final Thoughts

This snap survey focused on access to GP services, including appointments with GPs, practice nurses, paramedics, and other clinicians within GP surgeries/practices. In total, 1,255 people shared their views and people shared their experiences about surgeries/practices throughout the county.

Overall 64% found it difficult to get an appointment at their GP surgery/practice. *Note: 'difficult' in this context refers to respondents who selected either 'difficult' or 'very difficult'.* When looking into access more closely, ease of access appeared to vary considerably via PCN. Generally, access appeared to be easiest in north and west areas such as Lincoln, Sleaford and Grantham and hardest along the east coast, in Boston and Stamford. These trends were also reflected in the 2024 National GP Survey results for Lincolnshire.

Respondents were also asked what works well and what could be improved in relation to booking an appointment. Many of the suggestions for improving the experience of booking an appointment mirrored aspects that others identified as working well (summarised in the graphic on page 27). This highlights the variability in experiences and services available throughout the county. It is understood that GP surgeries function as independent businesses. However, this autonomy appears to be contributing to a inequality or postcode lottery, whereby the scope and availability of services differs throughout the county.



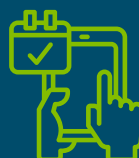
Final Thoughts

Many of the suggestions for improving the experience of booking an appointment mirrored aspects that others identified as working well.

Shared



Being able to prebook



Being able to book appointments online



Timely access to appointments/responses



Choice of booking (online, phone or in person)

What works well?



**Online systems/
services/appointments**



**Helpful and
understanding staff**



Call-back system



**Emergency, face to face and
out of hours appointments**

What could be improved?



“8am scramble”



**More appointments
needed**



**Need for face to face
appointments**



**Online systems be open
longer**



**More staff both clinical
and administrative**

Did you know? Think 'Pharmacy First' for Fast NHS Treatment

Need quick treatment for common illnesses? Skip the wait and head to your local pharmacy! No appointments, no hassle – just expert care when you need it.

🚶♂ Walk in for help with:

👃 **Sinusitis** (Ages 12+) – Blocked nose, headaches, facial pain

👄 **Sore Throat** (Ages 5+) – Pain, swelling, difficulty swallowing

👂 **Ear Infections** (Ages 1-17) – Ear pain, fever, discharge

🦋 **Infected Insect Bites** (Ages 1+) – Swelling, redness, pus

👉 **Impetigo** (Ages 1+) – Red sores, blisters, crusting skin

🔥 **Shingles (Ages 18+)** – Painful rash, blisters, burning sensation

🚽 **UTIs** (Women 16-64) – Pain when urinating, frequent need to pee

▶ **Quick & easy** – Walk in, get help, and carry on with your day

👨👩 **Perfect for busy lives & parents** – No need to wait for a GP

💙 **Trusted NHS service** – Pharmacists are trained healthcare professionals

💊 **Prescriptions are free** – For those who don't pay for NHS prescriptions

Find your nearest participating  pharmacy today and get the care you deserve!
www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy/

What have you told us about the Pharmacy First scheme?

As part of our work to support the Pharmaceutical Need Assessment (PNA), people shared their experiences of the Pharmacy First scheme.



78% (36)

said the pharmacist
helped with their issue.



80% (36)

rated their experience of
Pharmacy First as good.

To read more about experiences of pharmacy services in Lincolnshire check out our report on [pharmacy services](#).



Next Time

Think 'Pharmacy First'

Walk In, No Appointment Needed!

Next time you or your child have a minor illness, visit your local pharmacy first. It's quicker, easier, and helps keep urgent care services available for those who really need them.

What can be treated?

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Sinusitis
Aged 12+
Blocked nose, headaches, facial pain |  Impetigo
Aged 1+
Red sores, blisters, crusting skin |
|  Sore Throat
Aged 5+
Pain, swelling, difficulty swallowing |  Shingles
Aged 18+
Painful rash, blisters, burning sensation |
|  Ear Infections
Aged 1-17
Ear pain, fever, discharge |  Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)
Women aged 16-64
Pain when urinating, frequent need to pee |
|  Infected Insect Bites
Aged 1+
Swelling, redness, pus | |

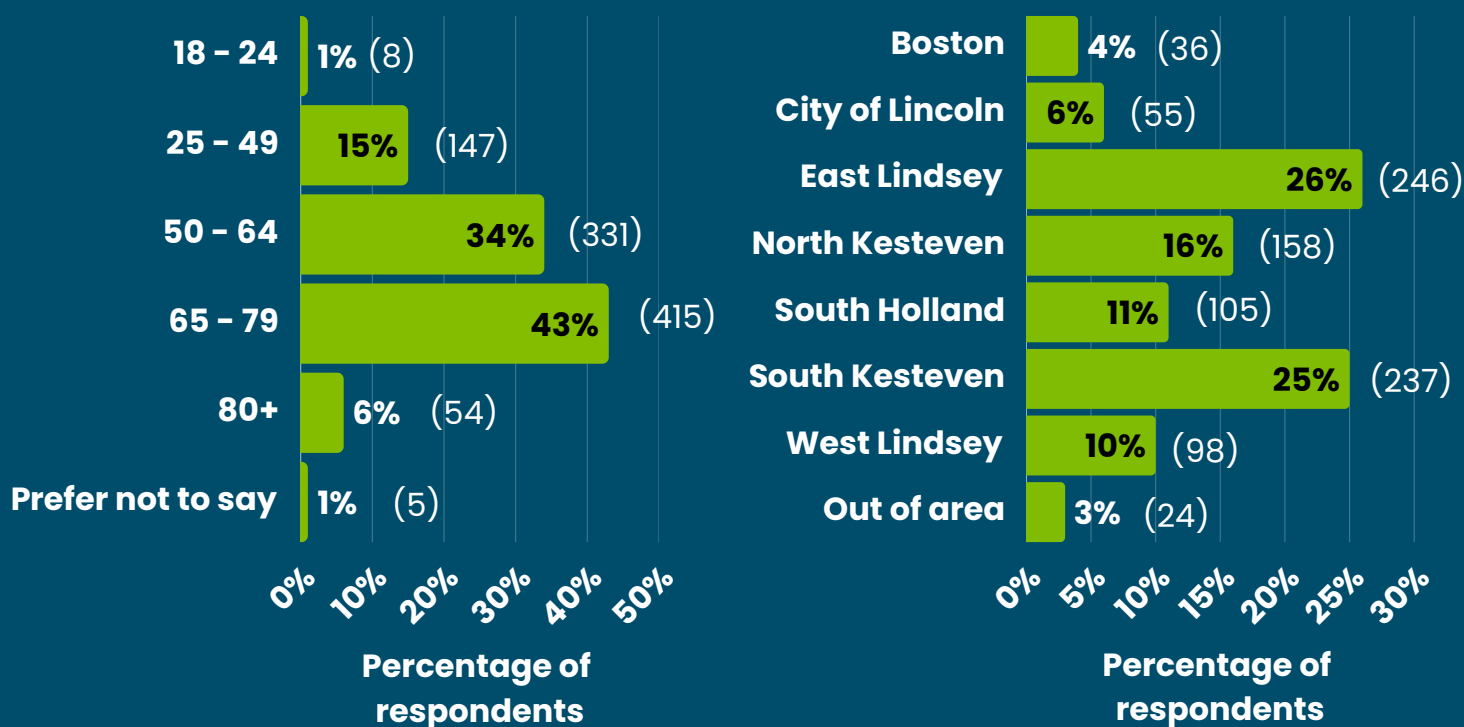
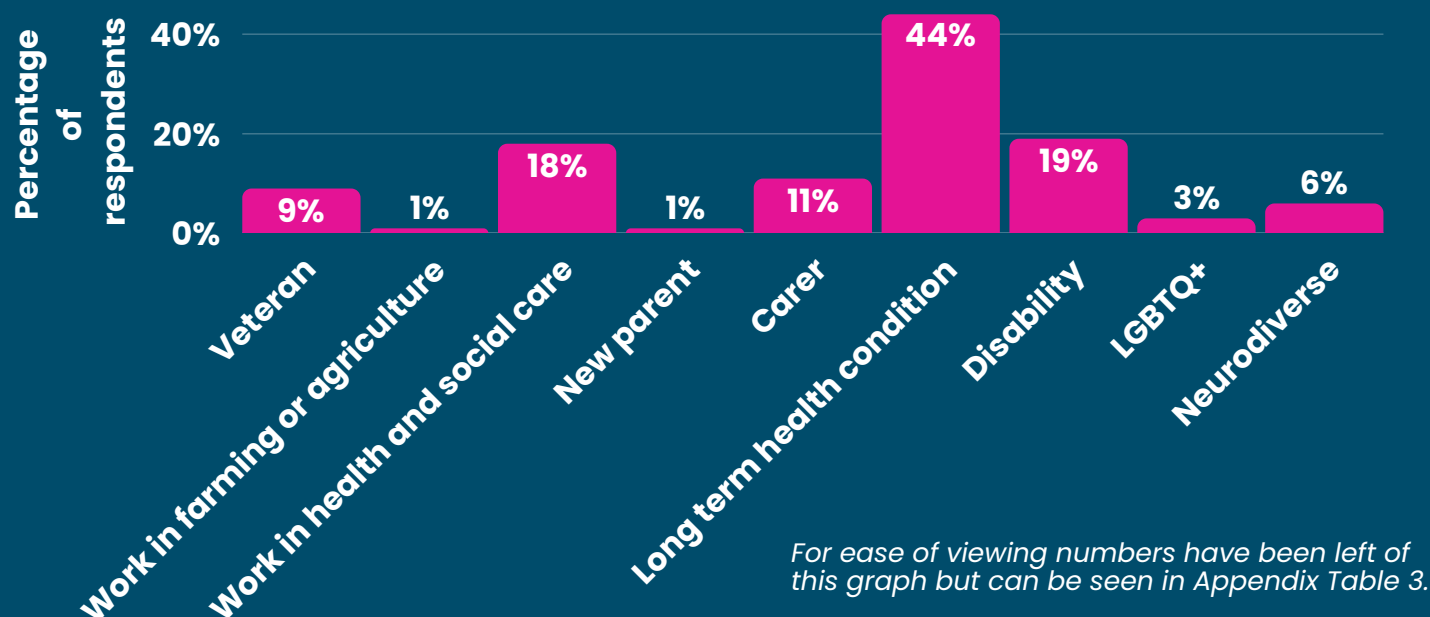
Why Choose Pharmacy First?

-  **Quick & Easy**
Walk in, get help, and carry on with your day.
-  **Flexible for Busy Lives**
No need to book time off work or wait for a GP.
-  **Perfect for Parents**
Get fast treatment for common childhood illnesses.
-  **Trusted NHS Service**
Pharmacists are trained healthcare professionals.
-  **Prescriptions are free**
For those who don't pay for NHS prescriptions.

Find your
nearest
pharmacy



Who shared their views?



- 74% (705) were female
- 92% (863) were White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh
- 58% (551) shared their financial situation was quite comfortable (enough money for essentials and a little for extras or saving)



Appendix
Table 1 – Ease of booking an appointment by PCN

PCN	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult	N/A	Total
Apex	6.7% (3)	35.6% (16)	28.9% (13)	28.9% (13)	–	45
Boston	10.4% (5)	16.7% (8)	37.5% (18)	33.3% (16)	2.1% (1)	48
East Lindsey	16.8% (21)	23.2% (29)	22.4% (28)	36.8% (46)	0.8% (1)	125
First Coastal	3.6% (5)	13.0% (18)	34.1% (47)	46.4% (64)	2.9% (4)	138
Four Counties	2.1% (3)	6.8% (10)	36.3% (53)	53.4% (78)	1.4% (2)	146
IMP	25.0% (21)	26.2% (22)	25.0% (21)	20.2% (17)	3.6% (3)	84
K2 Healthcare Grantham and Rural	12.0% (11)	34.8% (32)	27.2% (25)	18.5% (17)	7.6% (7)	92
K2 Healthcare Sleaford	32.4% (33)	26.5% (27)	21.6% (22)	16.7% (17)	2.9% (3)	102
Lincoln Healthcare Partnership	6.7% (1)	20.0% (3)	40.0% (6)	26.7% (4)	6.7% (1)	15
Meridian	4.8% (5)	21.0% (22)	40.0% (42)	34.3% (36)	–	105
South Lincoln Healthcare	14.9% (14)	46.8% (44)	23.4% (22)	12.8% (12)	2.1% (2)	94

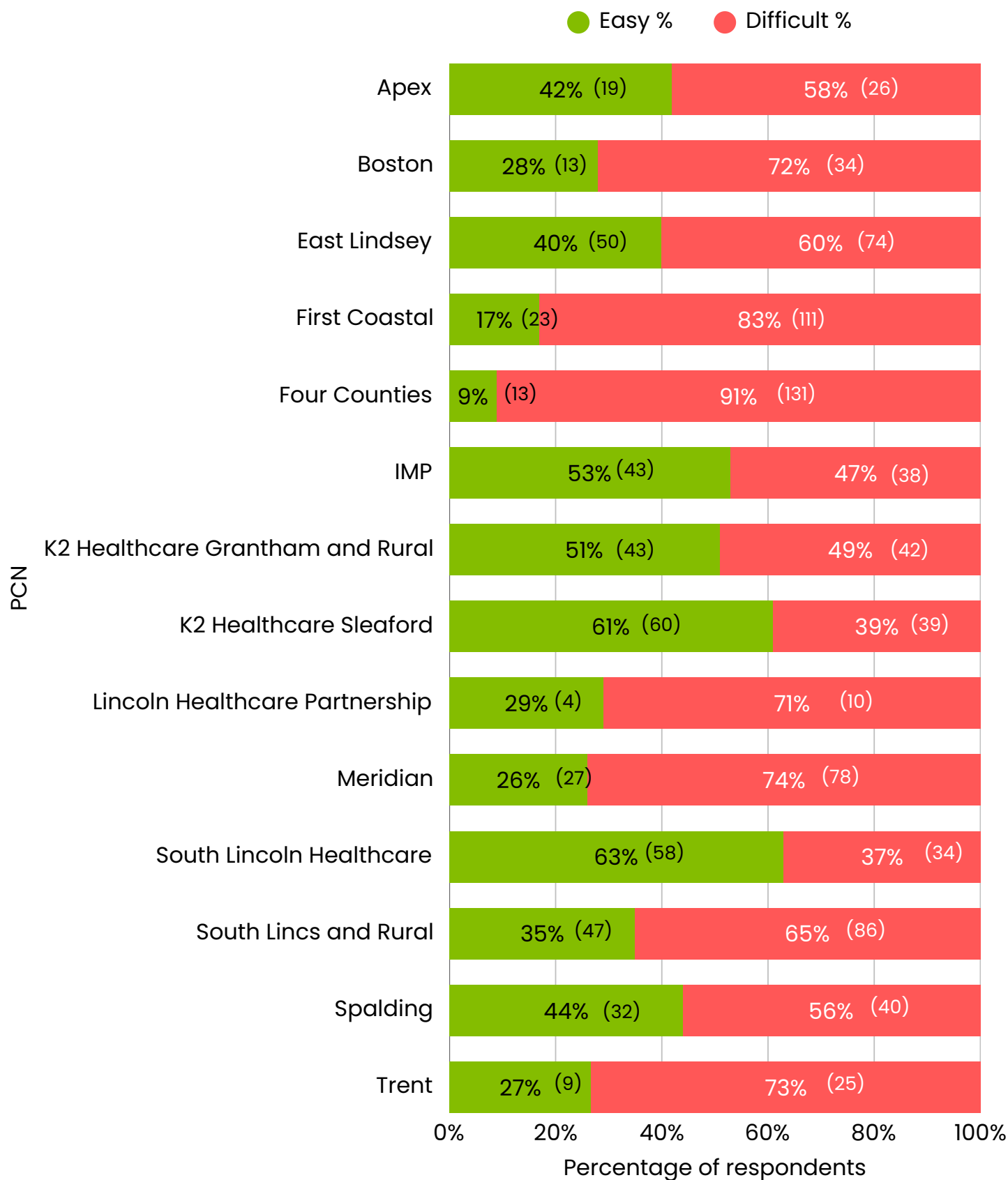
Appendix

Table 1 – Ease of booking an appointment by PCN

PCN	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult	N/A	Total
South Lincs and Rural	11.1% (15)	23.7% (32)	23.7% (32)	40.0% (54)	1.5% (2)	135
Spalding	15.3% (11)	29.2% (21)	16.4% (19)	29.2% (21)	–	72
Trent	2.9% (1)	23.5% (8)	38.2% (13)	35.3% (12)	–	34

Appendix

Graph 1 – Respondent-reported ease of getting an appointment at their GP surgery grouped into PCNs (ordered alphabetically)



Note: To highlight overall trends in access to appointments, responses have been grouped into two categories: Easy (combining 'Very Easy' and 'Easy') and Difficult (combining 'Difficult' and 'Very Difficult'). For Lincoln Healthcare Partnership only 14 respondents shared their views, so results should be viewed with caution.

Appendix

Table 2 – Ease of booking an appointment by demographic characteristics

	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult	N/A	Total
Veteran	20.0% (16)	22.5% (18)	31.3% (25)	23.8% (19)	2.5% (2)	80
Work in farming or agriculture	-	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	9
Work in health and social care	13.2% (23)	25.9% (45)	27.0% (47)	32.2% (56)	1.7% (3)	174
New parent	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	33.3% (4)	33.3% (4)	-	12
Carer	12.1% (12)	22.2% (22)	26.3% (26)	38.4% (38)	1.0% (1)	99
Long term health condition	10.8% (45)	24.4% (102)	31.3% (131)	32.5% (136)	1.0% (4)	418
Disability	8.0% (14)	20.5% (36)	30.7% (54)	40.3% (71)	0.6% (1)	176
LGBTQ+	16.7% (4)	20.8% (5)	54.2% (13)	8.3% (2)	-	24
Neurodiverse	10.7% (6)	35.7% (20)	25.0% (14)	26.8% (15)	1.8% (1)	56
None of the above	13.0% (37)	22.2% (63)	25.7% (73)	35.6% (101)	3.5% (10)	284

Appendix
Table 3 – Demographics

Demographic	Percentage (number)
Age	
18 to 24	1% (8)
25 – 49	15% (147)
50 – 64	34% (331)
65 – 79	43% (415)
80+	6% (54)
Prefer not to say	1% (5)
Gender	
Male	25% (238)
Female	74% (705)
Non-binary	0% (3)
Prefer not to say	1% (6)
Ethnicity	
Asian / Asian British: Indian	0.2% (2)
Black / Black British: African	0.1% (1)
Other Black British Background	0.1% (1)
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White	0.4% (4)
White: British/English/Northern Irish /Scottish/Welsh	92.1% (863)
White: Irish	1.3% (12)
White: Any other White background	4.1% (38)
Any other ethnic group	0.4% (4)
Prefer not to say	0.9% (8)
Area of Lincolnshire	
Boston	4% (36)
City of Lincoln	6% (55)
East Lindsey	26% (246)
North Kesteven	16% (158)
South Holland	11% (105)
South Kesteven	25% (237)
West Lindsey	10% (98)
Other (inc those who live on borders of Lincolnshire)	3% (24)

Appendix
Table 3 – Demographics

Demographic	Percentage (number)
Financial situation	
Very comfortable (I have more than enough money for living expenses, and a LOT spare to save or spend on extras)	9% (87)
Quite comfortable (I have enough money for living expenses, and a LITTLE spare to save or spend on extras)	58% (551)
Just getting by (I have just enough money for living expenses and little else)	20% (194)
Really struggling (I don't have enough money for living expenses and sometimes run out of money)	4% (42)
Prefer not to say	9% (84)
I am a veteran	8% (81)
I work in farming/agriculture	1% (9)
I work in health and/or social care	18% (174)
I am a new parent	1% (12)
I am a carer	11% (101)
I belong to the LGBTQ+ community	3% (24)
I have a long-term health condition	44% (419)
I consider myself to be neurodiverse	6% (56)
I have a disability	18% (177)

References

Lincolnshire Health and Care Intelligence Hub (LHIH) (no date) Health and wellbeing profiles by place. Available at: [<https://lhih.org.uk/profiles/>] (Accessed: 9 September 2025).

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That's why we want you to share your experiences of using health and care services with us – both good and bad. We use your voice to encourage those who run services to act on what matters to you.