

# GP Mergers & Closures

## RESEARCH SUMMARY REPORT

---

A study into the experiences of patients in Portsmouth  
with GP Practice mergers and closures

PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 2018

## CONTENTS PAGE:

	Page:
Introduction	3
Aims & Objectives	5
Methodology	6
Individual Practice Findings & Recommendations	10
Summary of Findings & Recommendations	18
Conclusion	20
Healthwatch Portsmouth contact details	20
Appendix - Full summaries of each Practices' feedback	21

## INTRODUCTION

Healthwatch Portsmouth is an independent statutory body that gathers the views and experiences of local people, enabling them to speak up about health and social care services in their area. We collect local evidence-based information through community engagement to ensure that the people who plan, commission and check services listen and respond to the people who use those services.

A variety of GP practices have merged or closed across the country in recent years. The British Medical Association's (BMA) guide to GP mergers (<http://www.bmalaw.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/BMA-Law-Practice-Merger-Guidance-Sept-2016.pdf>) confirms that a Practice merger is:

*“...when two or more practices join together to form a single practice. A practice merger can occur in a variety of ways, for example when two or more practices merge or where one practice takes over another practice. Ultimately, each practice wishing to merge will need to weigh up the potential advantages and disadvantages of merging to establish whether it is right for them.”*

A closure is where a GP Practice ends its provision of service and results in the current patients needing to find an alternative Practice to register with.

The BMA outlines potential advantages of merging as:

- *“sustainability in providing services*
- *economies of scale through the ability to increase the volume and type of services offered to patients*
- *the ability to offer increased/extended patient access*
- *a greater chance of successfully bidding for contracts*
- *the ability to bulk buy and reduce costs*
- *the ability to share facilities...premises...administrative work*
- *the potential to gain greater clinical expertise and skills*
- *the ability to offer greater training functions to develop a more skilled workforce*
- *the potential to reduce workload pressures...”*

and disadvantages as:

- *“poor planning and preparation can lead to a breakdown in relationships*

- *the liabilities which belong to each practice may pose an issue unless positive action is taken to mitigate the liabilities or ring-fence them*
- *cost and time constraints may pose difficulties during the infancy of a merger*
- *patients may have difficulty in accessing the services if the practice operates from one location*
- *individual GPs may have less influence in decision making within a large partnership*
- *each practice will sacrifice an element of their independence*
- *it may result in a reduction in funding, for example a reduction in the value of the core contracts.”*

In Portsmouth, a number of GP Practices have merged or closed for varying reasons during the last three years. The Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) assesses each application against an agreed procedure prior to any approval being given.

The CCG wanted to understand more about what benefits have been realised for patients through mergers and also what the experience has been for patients affected by practices closing.

In light of this, the CCG asked Healthwatch Portsmouth to undertake a piece of independent research with patients of four Practices in the city which had experienced these changes. These practices were:

1. CRANESWATER - Waverley Rd/Salisbury Rd merger (2015)
2. EAST SHORE - Baffins/Milton merger + relocation of Milton Park (2016)
3. PORTSDOWN - Portsdown/Northern Rd mergers + Northern Road site closure (2016)
4. TRAFALGAR - Ramilies/Osborne merger + Ramilies site closure (2016) followed by the Trafalgar/Eastney merger (2018).

focusing on what benefits each merger had realised and learn from any resulting closures and how these were managed / communicated. The CCG was at the same time assessing the benefits of mergers with practice GPs, staff and financial/quality data as part of a wider review with findings from both activities being reported to the CCG's Primary Care Commissioning Committee.

The research was undertaken in August 2018 and gained the feedback of 441 people.

## AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The aim of this report is to:

- Provide a summary of the research undertaken
- Outline the key themes and findings highlighted from the feedback
- Suggest recommendations as to how the patient experience might be improved through the realised benefits proposed in each of the mergers.

The report provides background regarding the methodology used to capture feedback and experiences and highlights key findings to suggest how the approach by commissioners and Practices might be improved.

We recognise this report is a 'snap-shot' of local experiences with mergers and closures at a point in time. However, we believe the findings and recommendations provide themes which can be used to improve the patient experience with current GP services and also inform processes for any future mergers and/or closures should they arise.

Healthwatch Portsmouth would like to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers who gave up their time to plan and participate in this research along with the Practice staff and Patient Participation Group (PPG) members who promoted the activity and encouraged local people to get involved and give their feedback. Finally, we would like to thank everyone who gave their feedback, whether by paper survey or online.

## METHODOLOGY

### Planning:

Conversations with the CCG and also the CCG's Practice Manager lead for Portsmouth GP Practices were held to confirm the scope of the research along with agreement over how Practices might best be engaged.

Volunteer workshops were held to outline the aims of the research and confirm more about the principles and aims of GP Practice mergers and closures to provide volunteers with greater context and information to be better informed about these topics and to also outline the timescales for completion of the work.

### Communication & Engagement:

From discussions with the group and CCG leads, it was agreed to base the questions on the benefits proposed in each of the application forms which had been submitted by each Practice ahead of their mergers.

From this, we were able to confirm the methods of engagement, questions to be asked, where to make the survey available, how to promote the research, how to analyse the data, along with opportunities for volunteers and ground rules for being involved.

Methods of engagement included:

- PPG reps and Healthwatch volunteers to collect feedback from patients via drop-ins and surveys in waiting rooms
- Comments boxes with short surveys to be provided in waiting room areas
- Online / postal surveys

with promotion undertaken by:

- Waiting room posters / TV screen slides / literature
- GP practices websites and social media
- GP text messaging
- PPG contacts/networks
- Volunteer visits to practices at busy times.

Throughout this time, Practice Managers were briefed on the development of the research and consulted on the best and busiest times for volunteers to visit and meet with patients.

### Surveys:

In total, it was agreed for 5 surveys to be designed to target feedback from as many people as possible. These surveys were as follows:

GP Practice	Questions asked based on proposed benefits
1. <u>Craneswater</u> - one survey for Salisbury Road and Waverley Road (regarding their merger)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Providing patients with a choice of two surgery sites instead of one.</li><li>ii. Aim to recruit more permanent GPs and use less temporary GPs</li><li>iii. If patients need to see a GP, they have more GPs available to choose from when booking appointments</li><li>iv. Improvements made to the home visiting service</li></ul>
2. <u>East Shore</u> - one survey for Baffins and Milton Park (regarding their merger)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Wider selection of appointment times for patients</li><li>ii. Greater access to specialised staff for particular treatments and advice</li><li>iii. Better access to GPs where needed</li><li>iv. Better site location (now at St. Marys site rather than Goldsmith Avenue)</li></ul>
3. <u>Portsdown</u> - one survey for Cosham Park House and Paulsgrove surgery (regarding their merger and the closure of the Northern Road Practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Providing patients with greater choice over gender of GPs to see</li><li>ii. Providing patients with access to more specialist care</li><li>iii. Offering extended opening hours at other sites for patients to book</li><li>iv. Improved access for urgent appointments</li></ul>

<p>4. <u>Trafalgar</u> - one survey for Osborne Road Practice (regarding the closure of Ramilies Practice)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Providing patients with greater choice over gender of GPs to see</li> <li>ii. Providing greater access to the nursing team through number of nurses increasing</li> <li>iii. Increased opening hours (8am-8pm weekdays and open Saturday mornings)</li> <li>iv. Providing greater access to urgent day time home visits to patients</li> <li>v. Easier to book appointments through use of a centralised call centre to take calls</li> </ul>
--	---

The fifth survey (Trafalgar - for the Eastney Practice, regarding its merger with Osborne Road earlier this year), looked at the process of the merger and early signs of benefits as time had not long passed since the merger had taken place.

The research, undertaken during August 2018, gathered views from around 441 local people as follows:

GP Practices	Paper responses	Online responses	Total responses	% of total
CRANESWATER (merger of Waverley Road & Salisbury Road)	45	3	48	11%
EAST SHORE (merger of Baffins & Milton)	31	275	306	69%
PORTSDOWN (merger of Portsdown & Northern Road)	13	1	14	3%
TRAFALGAR (merger of Ramilies & Osborne <u>and</u> then with Eastney)	67	6	73	17%
TOTAL responses	156	285	441	

plus two blank returns which were discounted

### **Data collection & analysis:**

A summary of the feedback received was shared and discussed with members of the volunteer working group to draw out key trends and views and to inform which findings and themes should be highlighted within the report. As well as reviewing feedback data from all respondents, this group also compared responses from different population profiles to see if experiences varied. The comparison categories chosen were:

- Male or female
- Different age groups
- Different ethnicities
- If respondents had a disability or health condition.

The report was then shared with the CCG and individual summaries sent to each of the respective Practices.

### **Assumptions:**

For the purposes of this research, it was assumed that people completing the surveys had:

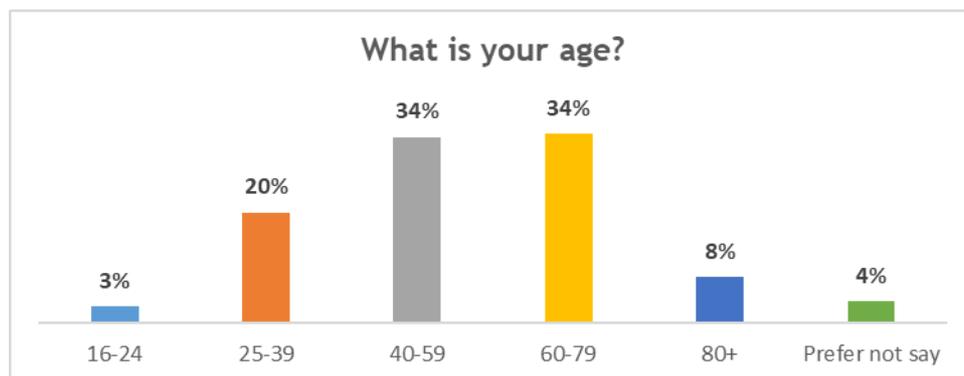
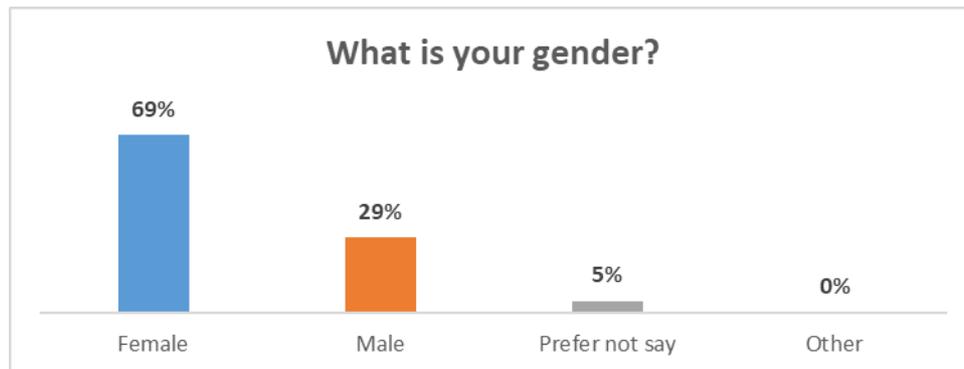
- Capacity to do so and the ability to comment on their experiences or
- Permission and insight into the experiences of the person if the respondent was commenting on behalf of someone else.

Also, due to the rounding of percentages in calculations, some data in graphs contained in this report add up to just over or under 100%.

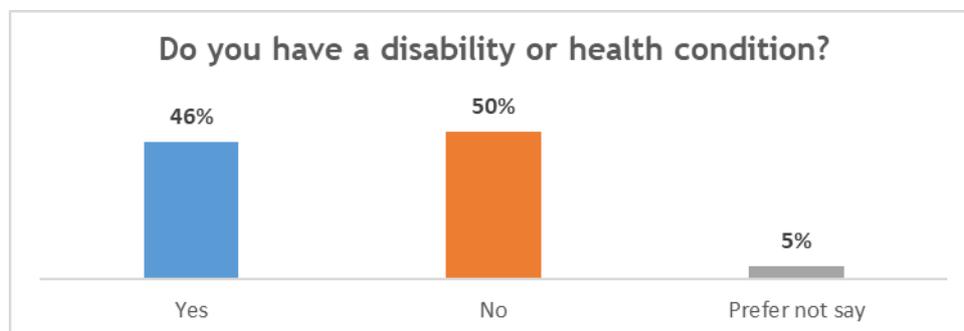
# INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

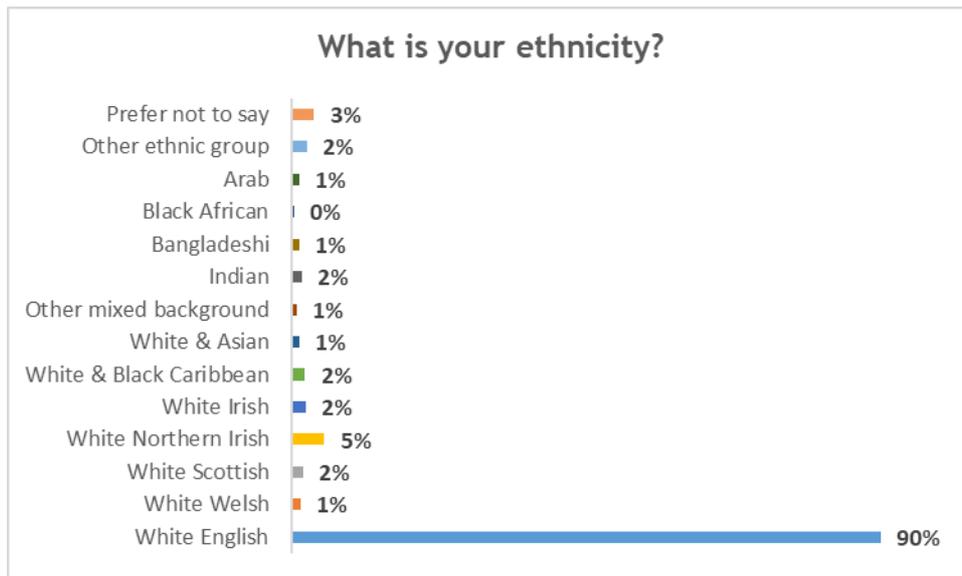
## Profile of Respondents

Over two-thirds of respondents were female, with the most popular age groups to complete the survey being 40-59 years and 60-79 years (34% each):



Nearly half stated they had a disability or health condition and the majority said their ethnicity was White English (90%), followed by White Northern Irish (5%):





**Mergers**

Generally, patients were on the whole very aware (85%) that a merger had taken place at their Practice:



As highlighted earlier, each Practice had a different set of benefits to assess due to their differing reasons for merging and two had also been through site closures. A summary of findings for each of the Practices is outlined below with more detail contained within the appendices:

## 1. Craneswater Practice:

### Evaluation:

- The response level of 48 surveys.
- Two-thirds of respondents were female and 52% were aged between 16-59 years, with the majority white English and 41% stating they had a disability or a health condition.
- There was very good awareness about the merger, with 83% stating they knew it had taken place.

Of the proposed benefits, improvements to the home visiting service seemed less important (only 52% stating it was a good idea), with the other benefits all felt to be a good idea.

With reference to benefits, respondents provided a very positive response, stating all four benefits had been for the better, with scores ranging from 88% to 93%.

People with a disability or health condition seemed less positive about the realisation of the benefits and there were some variations in views across the different age groups and genders.

It was no surprise that the 'one thing' patients would like to see improved the most was a reduction in waiting times, followed by extended opening times and then improvements to the actual premises (reception and waiting room areas).

Further comments received provided positive feedback about the Practice as well as requests for changes to how services are provided, with most focus on improving the appointments system and waiting times.

### Recommendations:

Based on the feedback received, Healthwatch Portsmouth recommend the following actions to be taken to improve patient experience at this Practice:

1. **Involve the PPG and Healthwatch in seeking feedback and improvements to the way the appointments system is used.**
2. **Offer walk-in at both sites if not already an option for patients.**
3. **Undertake some targeted research as to why less positive feedback from patients with a disability or health condition.**
4. **Provide information as to other non-GP alternative options for patients to use instead of relying on an appointment with a GP.**

## 2. East Shore Practice:

### Evaluation:

- The response level of 304 surveys.
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents were registered at Baffins with the remainder at Milton Park.
- More than two thirds were female and there was a good spread across the age groups, with 25% between 16-39 years old and 46% aged 40-59 years, with the remainder 60+.
- The majority (90%) were white English and 41% stated they had a disability or a health condition.

There was very good awareness about the merger, with 95% stating they knew it had taken place.

Of the proposed benefits, all had fairly low levels of positive feedback, with better site location (with the move of Milton Park to St Marys hospital site) particularly unfavourable with nearly 40% stating this had not been a good idea. Of the other proposed benefits, there were high levels of responses suggesting patients were not aware of these benefits.

With reference to benefits realised, respondents again provided a less than positive response, with the majority suggesting none of the four benefits had been achieved.

People with a disability or health condition seemed less positive about the wider choice of appointments times and access to specialised staff, with other variations in views across the different age groups (younger patients seemed happier with wider choice of appointments but less so with the change in site location, as were those aged 80+).

Some feedback seems to suggest patients are instead going to the St Marys walk-in centre or even the QA Hospital emergency department for advice and treatment as they do not feel confident regarding the performance of the practice appointment booking system.

It was no surprise the 'one thing' patients would like to see improved the most was a better selection and number of appointment times, followed by easier GP access and then improvements to communication (particularly regarding phone answering times, the call back / triage system and waiting times for prescriptions).

Further comments provided positive feedback about the Practice as well as requests for changes to how services are provided, with most focus on improving the appointments system and waiting times.

### Recommendations:

1. Review the use of the telephone system with patients / Healthwatch to improve access and performance, including how many patients need to travel to appointments to the surgery site furthest from their home.
2. Consider providing longer drop-in sessions and some planned telephone advice slots.
3. Undertake some work with patients with a disability or health condition to understand why this group may be less satisfied with changes to services.
4. Improve communication with Chemist/s over prescriptions

### 3. Portsmouth Practice:

#### **Evaluation:**

- The response level of 12 surveys.
- The majority of respondents (83%) were registered at Cosham Park House surgery.
- 80% of feedback came from female patients and the majority (60%) were aged 60+, all white English and half stated they had a disability or a health condition.

There was good awareness about the merger, with 79% stating they knew it had taken place.

Of the proposed benefits, there were significant numbers of respondents who were not aware of the offer of extended opening hours (43%) or the greater opportunity they had to choose the gender of the GP to see (36%). 69% felt improved access for urgent appointments was a good idea along with 69% supporting the opportunity to provide patients with access to more specialist care.

With reference to benefits realised, respondents provided a very positive response for greater access to specialised care (82%) and improved access to urgent appointments (70%). 40% of respondents had not seen the benefit of being offered extended opening times at other sites or a greater choice over the gender of the GP to see.

Respondents aged 40-59 years seemed to have had a more positive experience about the choice of gender of GP, access to more specialised care and extended opening hours.

The 'one thing' patients would like to see improved and further comments received through the survey seemed to focus on access to appointments, with some also highlighting a need to improve the experience of patients interacting with practice staff.

With reference to the closure of the Northern Road Practice, the vast majority (82%) were registered there before the closure. Of those respondents who were previously a Northern Road patient, the feedback was positive regarding how informed they were kept during the closure (80%) but less so with regards to being able to ask questions to clarify matters during the process (67%), which suggests information was provided at the time but possibly not so much emphasis was put on involving and seeking feedback from patients whilst the closure went ahead.

**Recommendations:**

- 1. Promote the offer of extended opening hours at other sites and opportunity for patients to choose the gender of the GP they see.**
- 2. Online system demonstrations and coaching for patients to make better use of the system.**
- 3. Customer service training for staff.**
- 4. Involvement of the PPG/Healthwatch in future service changes to increase level of information for patients and opportunities to ask questions.**
- 5. Due to low numbers, compare with wider patient satisfaction to see if any similar themes.**

**4. Trafalgar (Osborne Road):**

**Evaluation:**

- The response level of 14 surveys.
- Two thirds of respondents were female and the majority (67%) were aged between 16-59 years, white English (92%) and 60% stated they had a disability or a health condition.

There was very good awareness about the merger, with 86% stating they knew it had taken place.

Of the proposed benefits, only providing patients with a greater choice over gender of GPs to see received a good level of support (64%) whereas the other four benefits had significant levels of patients not being aware of these (between 36% and 43%). The use of a centralised call centre received feedback to confirm 43% of respondents did not feel this type of system was a good idea.

With reference to benefits perceived to have been realised, respondents provided a very positive response for increased opening hours (77%) and around two-thirds also felt providing greater access to urgent home day visits, greater access to nursing team and the greater choice over gender of GPs. However, feedback suggests the introduction of a centralised call system has not been welcomed, with 55% stating it has not been a positive experience.

Female respondents seemed happier with the changes giving greater choice of gender of GP, access to the nursing team and the urgent day time home visiting service. People with a disability or health condition seemed to be less positive about the realisation of the benefits regarding the centralised booking system and extended opening hours but happier regarding greater access to the nursing team. There were also some variations in views across the different age groups.

The 'one thing' patients would like to see improved the most seemed to focus on access to appointments, with some also highlighting a need to improve the experience of patients when at reception.

With reference to the closure of the Ramilies Practice, less than a third of respondents were registered there before the closure. Of those respondents who were previously a Ramilies patient, the feedback was positive regarding how informed they were kept during the closure as well as being given the opportunity to ask questions to clarify matters during the process.

**Recommendations:**

- 1. Offer more support and coaching for patients to use the call booking system.**
- 2. With support of the PPG/Healthwatch, review the morning booking system capacity to see if compatible with demand and the extent to which online appointments are promoted.**
- 3. Promote alternatives to seeing non-GPs for advice and treatment (including review how much GPs are involved in endorsing this).**
- 4. Due to low numbers, compare with wider patient satisfaction to see if any similar themes.**

**5. Trafalgar (Eastney Practice):**

**Evaluation:**

- The response level of 59 surveys.
- The vast majority of respondents (83%) were aware that the merger recently took place.

- However, less than half (47%) felt they had been kept informed during the process and only 41% stated they had been given the opportunity to ask questions at the time. This seems to suggest patients knew of the merger but were not given sufficient information throughout to answer any queries or concerns they may have had.

In terms of different profiles of patients, female respondents seemed more aware of the merger taking place compared to the overall group but younger patients (16-24 years old) stated they had not been informed or involved at all. Those from non-white English / Welsh / Scottish / Irish or Northern Irish backgrounds felt less aware of the merger and less informed throughout.

This low level of information may suggest another communications and engagement plan is needed for any future mergers - it would therefore be helpful for a review of what methods were used by the Practice to engage and which groups, such as the PPG or Healthwatch Portsmouth, were part of this process.

With reference to any benefits realised, it is recognised it is still early days since the merger took place but there are some hopeful views from patients as to improvements the process may bring. However, some challenges have arisen and these seem to focus on an increase in waiting times and difficulties with the telephone booking system, which in turn may not be providing reassurance about the merger itself.

**Recommendations:**

1. Undertake some targeted engagement with younger adults to understand how to improve communication with this group.
2. Review communications between GPs, reception and patients to assess if consistent messages about booking appointments is being provided.
3. Greater involvement of PPG and HWP in future service changes to ensure more information is provided to patients and opportunities are given to ask questions.
4. Undertake a similar piece of research in 12 months to compare results, having given time for the merger to bed in.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Mergers:

Overall, respondents were aware their GP Practice had merged with another.

Of the Practices reviewed, the benefits proposed from mergers could be grouped into nine different categories with a summary of Practice performance against each one noted below:

	GP Practice performance			
Benefits proposed	Craneswater	East Shore	Portsdown	Trafalgar (Osborne Rd)
Site location / 2 sites offered	88%	38%		
More permanent GPs	90%			
More GPs available	88%	18%		
Home visiting services	93%			64%
More specialised / nursing teams		26%	82%	69%
More appointments created (inc urgent)		20%	70%	
Increase in opening times			60%	77%
More choice of gender of GP			60%	62%
Centralised booking service				45%
<b>AVERAGE SCORE</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>63%</b>

Craneswater achieved the highest average score of 90%, followed by Portsdown (68%), Trafalgar re Osborne/Ramilies (63%) and then East Shore (26%). East Shore, however, may have been negatively impacted by the sheer number of responses (69% of the 441 received overall), when considered against other Practices where smaller numbers may have skewed comparisons - although the East Shore responses were consistently focused on particular areas for improvement.

#### Closures:

Of the two closures covered in this research, there were good levels of feedback to suggest Practices had informed patients of the changes (Northern Road 80% and Ramilies 75%). However, this dropped slightly at Northern Road when respondents were asked about the opportunities to ask questions (67%). This is still over two-thirds so is a good outcome but a reminder as to how important it is to have two-way communication with a significant service change such as this to ensure patients understand what is happening, and why, and are in turn reassured about the planned outcome.

#### Recommendations:

Each Practice has also been provided with suggested recommendations as a potential way to improve patient experience with each of the proposed benefits. Key themes for these recommendations include:

- Involve patients, the PPG and Healthwatch in reviewing part of the service - particularly with regards topics such as:
  - The way appointment system work and is used by patients
  - How patients are signposted to non-GP staff or agencies for non-essential GP matters
  - Access to different locations
  - Promotion of extended opening hours
- Consider introducing longer walk-in sessions or planned times for telephone consultations to cater for different lifestyle patterns for patients
- Undertake some targeted research into why some groups have lower levels of positive feedback or engagement
- Improve communication with other agencies such as pharmacies regarding prescription services
- Provide mini-tutorials re how to get online and book appointments
- Customer service training for staff
- Comparing this research with findings from the annual patient surveys to assess any common themes.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to assess the extent to which proposed benefits from GP mergers have been achieved for patients and what learning there might be to take into the future.

Despite the challenging times faced by GP Practices, there have been a number of positive outcomes to confirm a range of benefits have been experienced by patients.

However, there are still significant concerns regarding access to GPs, the user-friendliness of booking systems, appointment waiting times as well as changes in Practice location.

Another significant theme arising from the feedback is that of customer service and the deterioration of the 'personal touch'. Whilst recognising the pressures faced by Practices and the need to do more with less, there is the suggestion that as Practices merge and grow, patients feel less like an individual who is known by the Practice and more like just a name on a computer record.

The research also sought to review patient experience with site closures and has provided some reassurance that patients have, to an extent, been informed about these processes.

Healthwatch Portsmouth hopes the feedback, findings and recommendations highlighted in this report, based on the feedback of the 441 local respondents, will inform service design and change and encourage Practices to put patients more fully at the centre to inform the way GP mergers and closures are considered and managed across Portsmouth in the future.

### Healthwatch Portsmouth contact details.

For more information about Healthwatch Portsmouth, please contact the team at:

- Email - [info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Tel - 02393 977097
- Web - [www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Twitter - @HealthWatchPO
- Facebook - [www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth](http://www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth)
- Post - c/o Learning Links, Unit 3, St Georges' Business Centre, St Georges' Square, Portsmouth PO1 3EY.

## APPENDICES

Full summaries of each of the Practice's feedback.



### GP merger benefits - research summary

<b>Practice name:</b> <u>Craneswater</u>	
<b>Practice sites involved:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salisbury Road</li> <li>• Waverley Road</li> </ul>
<b>Review type:</b>	Benefits realised for patients from the merger of Salisbury Road and Waverley Road sites.
<b>Methodology:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper surveys - made available for completion in Practice waiting rooms and face-to-face with Healthwatch Portsmouth volunteers visiting each site.</li> <li>• Online surveys - made available through links shared on Practice website and social media, Practice text messaging service and Healthwatch Portsmouth website and social media.</li> </ul>
<b>Areas of proposed improvements due to arise from merger:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing patients with a choice of two surgery sites instead of one.</li> <li>Better recruitment of permanent GPs and less use of temporary GPs (locums)</li> <li>Patients have more GPs available to choose from when booking appointments</li> <li>Improvements to the home visiting service</li> </ol>
<b>Number of respondents:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salisbury Road - 25</li> <li>• Waverley Road - 23</li> <li>• Total - 48</li> </ul>

## Profile of the respondents:

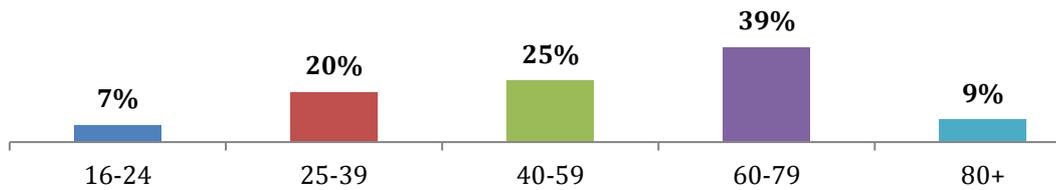
### At which practice are you registered as a patient?



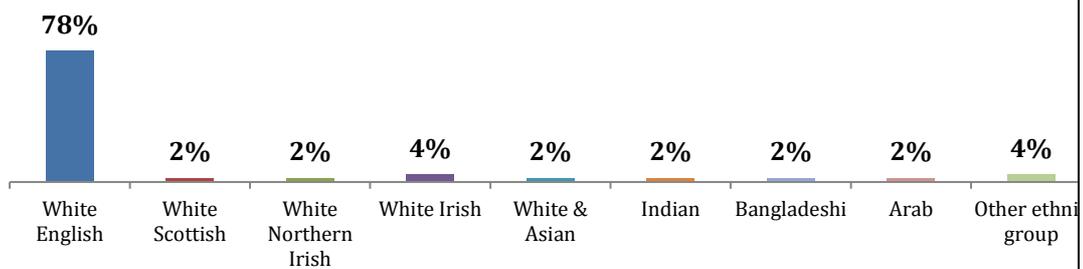
### What is your gender?



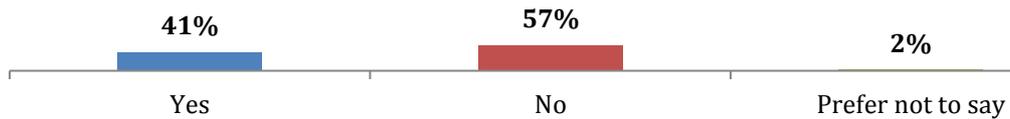
### What is your age?



### What is your ethnicity?

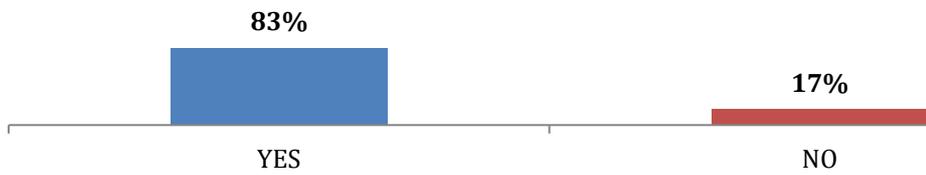


### Do you consider yourself to have a disability or health condition?

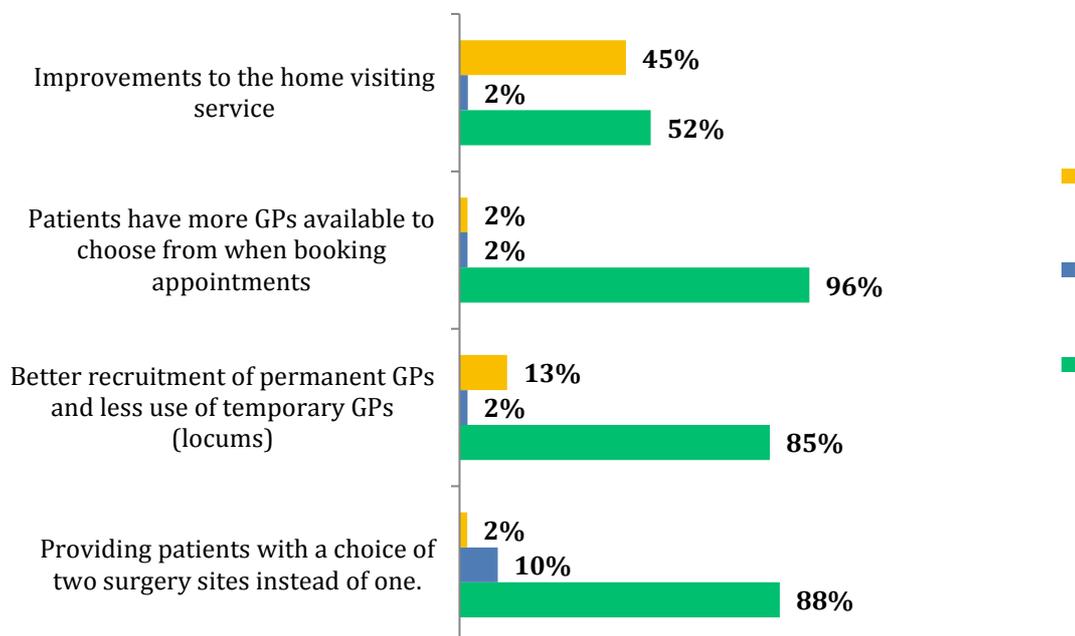


## Summary of feedback from respondents:

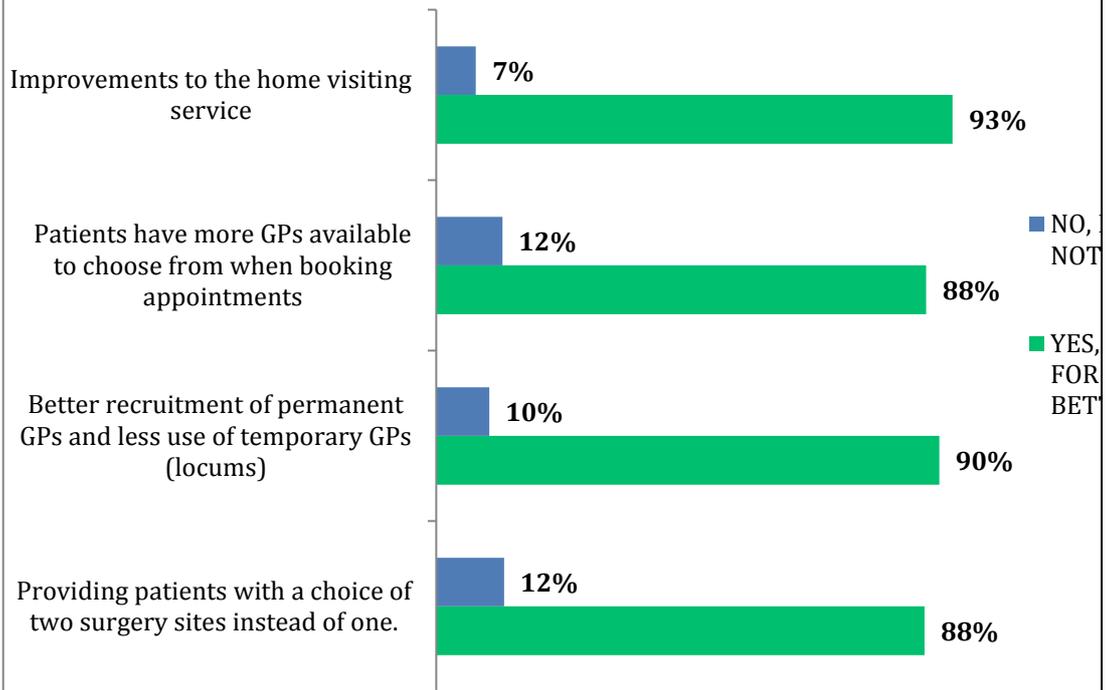
### Are you aware a merger took place at your GP practice?



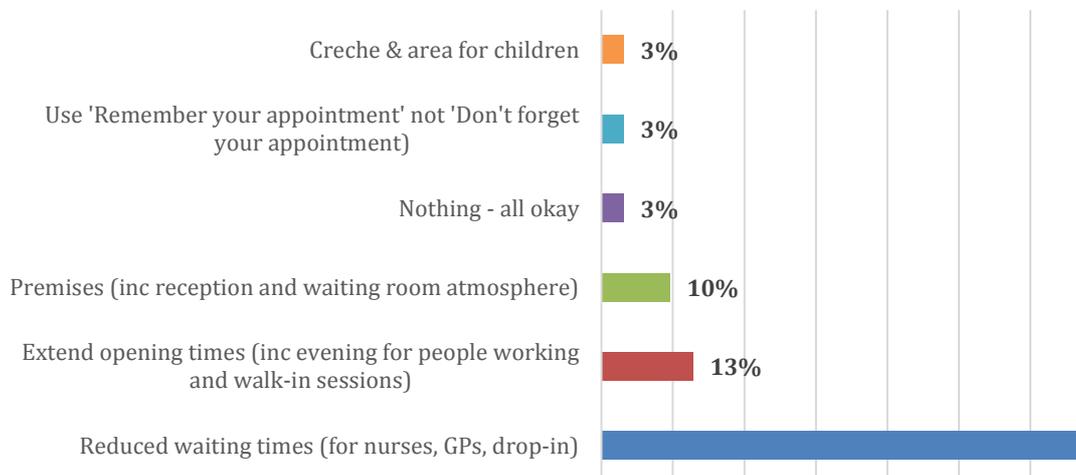
### Which of these planned benefits do you think were a good idea?



**Which of the planned benefits have turned out to have been for the better or have you not liked?**



**What one thing would you like to see improved?**



**Any further comments about these changes (quotes from feedback):**

- *"I think it is generally a good thing*
- *improvements in booking times*
- *Prefer to see my regular GP at Salisbury Road. Always at least a 3-week wait to see a named GP*
- *Thank you to the staff*
- *I cannot really comment as to whether these have been for the better as I have only just registered*

- *Walk-in clinic at Waverley Road is good but waiting times are long and service isn't a substitute for the lack of availability/long waiting times for booked appointments*
- *Reduce waiting times to get an appointment - 2 weeks is too long*
- *more available appointments at Salisbury Road*
- *Very happy to have both*
- *these GP Practice don't care. and the Nurses. that why I am hear today*
- *Walk-in appointment at Waverley Road works well. Still frustrating that there is such a long delay to get an appointment with a preferred GP. Having said that I have nothing but praise for the way both surgeries work. There is excellent team work, professional and friendly service. Many thanks to all the staff.*
- *I am a new patient, too new to be able to make judgements in Q4*
- *Less waiting time to see preferred GP, by appointment. Less waiting time at the walk-in clinics.*
- *Everything is fine, very very happy, belonged to practice since 1963, You are all brilliant, best in Pompey for a long time.*
- *The Salisbury Road practice is brilliant. I have been with them for over 5 years and I have always had good experiences with them. The doctors are wonderful, especially Dr Amy Durnford, and all of the front-line staff are so polite and professional, while also being really friendly and welcoming. I have always received excellent client/customer/patient service from them. The merger was a fantastic idea and there have been so many benefits. Thank you.*
- *There are less appointments overall, difficult to make any - less month. Less/none online. Difficult to know if merger has helped or not, just know service is worse for me as cannot get appointment. Still shortage of GPs and still temps rather than permanent after over 1 year.*
- *It seems to me to be more of a cost-cutting exercise than an improvement in provision and access. The waiting room at Waverley Road is still full with long waits.”*

#### **Comparison between sites:**

There were no perceivable differences in feedback between the Practice sites involved in this research.

#### **Comparison between different profiles of respondents:**

- Gender
  - i. Female: experienced more benefits of access to GPs
  - ii. Male: less benefits seen re use of permanent GPs and access to GPs. Benefits experienced regarding improvements to the home visiting service.
- Age
  - i. 16-24: all 3 respondents stating better experiences with all proposed improvements.
  - ii. 25-39: less benefits experienced re GP access

- iii. 40-59 all respondents stating better experiences with all proposed improvements.
- iv. 60-79: Seen benefits of having two sites to choose from but less with regards improvements to the home visiting service.
- v. 80+: Less positive experience with better recruitment of permanent GPs and the choice of sites. Benefits experienced include improvements in the home visiting service and GP access.
  - Ethnicity - no perceivable differences.
  - Disability / health condition -less benefits seen regarding all 4 areas for proposed improvements.

**Evaluation:**

The response level of 48 surveys, although not a large percentage of the patient list at this Practice, does provide some themes which are likely to be consistent with other patient views.

Two thirds of respondents were female and 52% were aged between 16-59 years, with the majority white English and 41% stating they had a disability or a health condition.

There was very good awareness about the merger, with 83% stating they knew it had taken place.

Of the proposed benefits, improvements to the home visiting service seemed less important to respondents (only 52% stating it was a good idea), with the other benefits all felt to be a good idea (more GPs available to choose from, better recruitment of more permanent GPs and providing patients with choice of two surgery sites instead of one).

With reference to benefits perceived to have been realised, respondents provided a very positive response, stating that all four benefits had been for the better, with scores ranging from 88% to 93%.

People with a disability or health condition seemed to be less positive about the realisation of the benefits and there were some variations in views across the different age groups and genders.

It was no surprise that the 'one thing' patients would like to see improved the most was a reduction in waiting times, followed by extended opening times and then improvements to the actual premises (reception and waiting room areas).

Further comments received provided positive feedback about the Practice as well as requests for changes to how services are provided, with most focus on improving the appointments system and waiting times.

Please note: due to rounding, some charts may not add up to 100%.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the feedback received, Healthwatch Portsmouth recommend the following actions to be taken to improve patient experience at this Practice:

- 5. Involve the PPG and Healthwatch in seeking feedback and improvements to the way the appointments system is used.**
- 6. Offer walk-in at both sites if not already an option for patients.**
- 7. Undertake some targeted research as to why less positive feedback from patients with a disability or health condition.**
- 8. Provide information as to other non-GP alternative options for patients to use instead of relying on an appointment with a GP.**

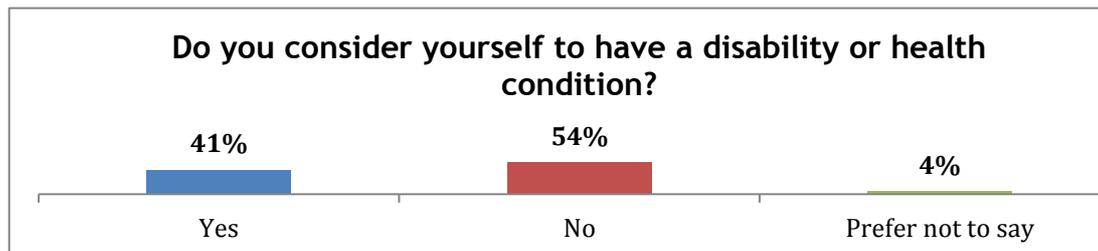
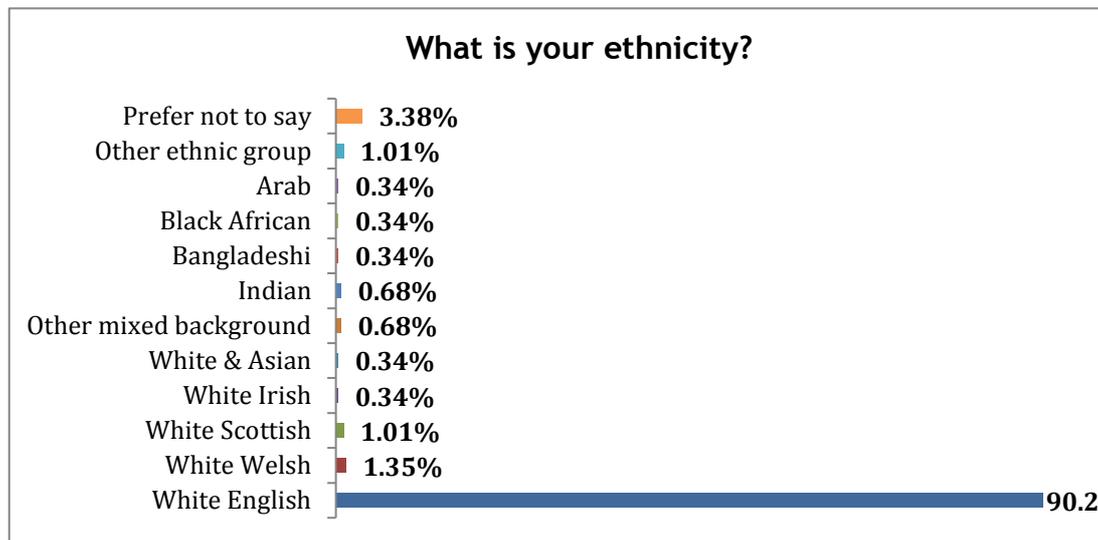
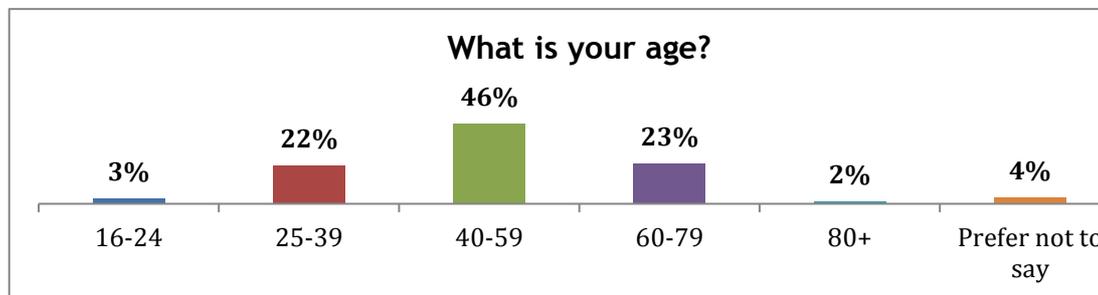
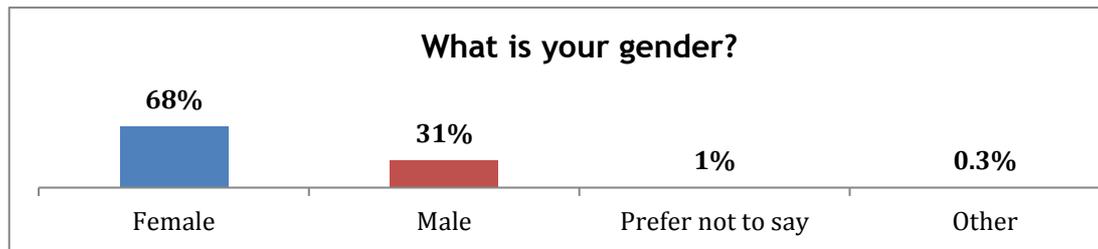
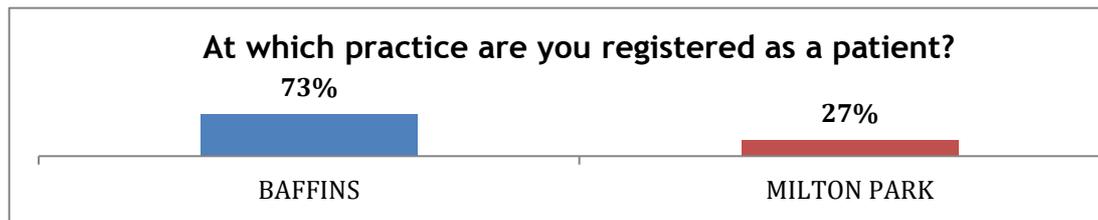
For more information about Healthwatch Portsmouth, please contact the team at:

- Email - [info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Tel - 02393 977097
- Web - [www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Twitter - @HealthWatchPO
- Facebook - [www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth](http://www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth)
- Post - Healthwatch Portsmouth, c/o Learning Links, Suite 103, Technopole, Portsmouth PO2 8FA.

**GP merger benefits - research summary**

<b>Practice name: <u>East Shore</u></b>	
<b>Practice sites involved:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baffins</li> <li>• Milton Park</li> </ul>
<b>Review type:</b>	Benefits realised for patients from the merger of Baffins (Hayling Ave) and Milton Park (St Marys Hospital campus) sites.
<b>Methodology:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper surveys - made available for completion in Practice waiting rooms and face-to-face with Healthwatch Portsmouth volunteers visiting each site.</li> <li>• Online surveys - made available through links shared on Practice website and social media, Practice text messaging service and Healthwatch Portsmouth website and social media.</li> </ul>
<b>Areas of proposed improvements due to arise from merger:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Wider choice of appointment times for patients</li> <li>ii. Greater access to specialised staff for particular treatments and advice</li> <li>iii. Better access to GPs where needed</li> <li>iv. Better site location (now at St. Marys site rather than Goldsmith Avenue)</li> </ol>
<b>Number of respondents:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baffins - 221</li> <li>• Milton Park - 83</li> <li>• Total - 304 (plus 2 blank returns discounted)</li> </ul>

**Profile of the respondents:**

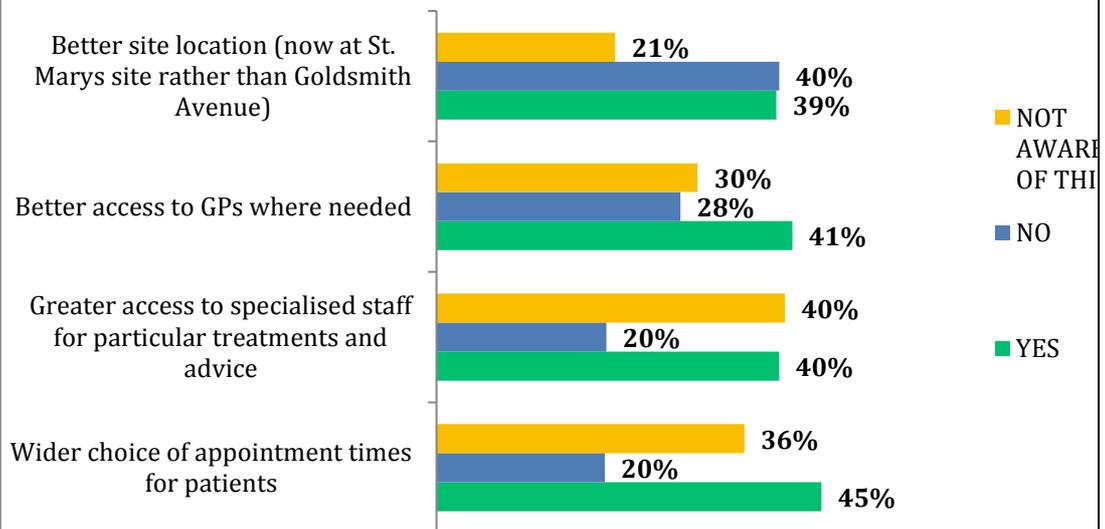


**Summary of feedback from respondents:**

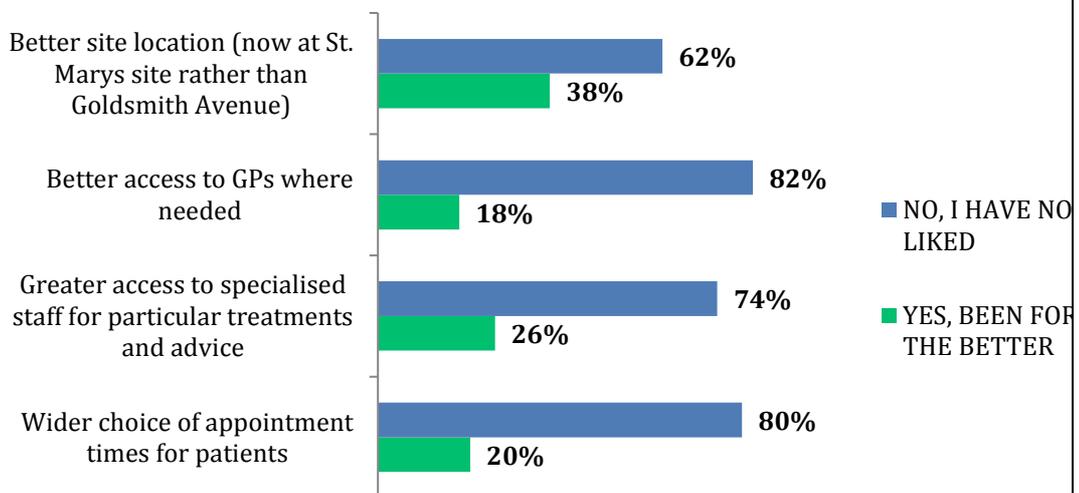
**Are you aware a merger took place at your GP practice?**



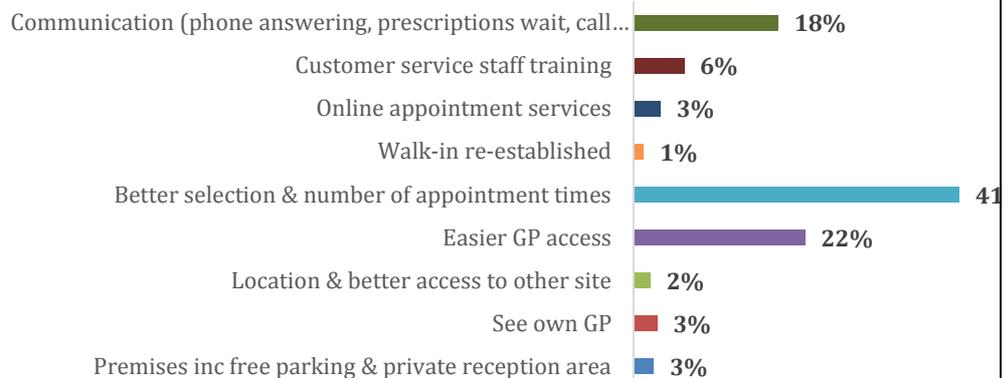
**Which of these planned benefits do you think were a good idea?**



**Which of the planned benefits have turned out to have been for the better or have you not liked?**



### What one thing would you like to see improved?



with comments received including :

- *“I can go to St Marys (...I live in Southsea and most of the time have to go to St Cuthberts Surgery which is further to go!)*
- *Having to wait for a call back to discuss condition & not being able to give times when this is not available, ie not between 8am-9am as on public transport.*
- *Unfortunately I now dread contacting the surgery ... as I have to take morning holiday from work just to wait in a queue to speak to someone ... If I ‘qualify for a call back then need to wait at home for a callback to decide whether I need to come in. All rather inconvenient as I work for the NHS and unable to spend all morning sitting by a phone waiting to speak to someone. Would much rather be able to walk in if needed or book an appt say 2 weeks time. Find the new system frustrating and stressful*
- *... the last time I called I had to hold on the phone for 58 minutes. I needed an urgent appointment otherwise I would have hung up.*
- *More availability of qualified doctors. We have recently had to cope with being told that, across both sites, there was one doctor available, one sick and one on holiday. There were no appointments available at all that were not weeks and weeks away. Even the telephone consultations had at least a month wait.*
- *It's impossible to get appointments so resort to looking online to find out my illnesses...Booking on phone is impossible.*
- *There have been no increased access to GPs; at best you might be able to see the practice nurse on a triage basis but access to GP is definitely reduced*
- *Really clear explanations / expectations shared to all patients. I recently witnessed a very distressed man, obviously suffering carer stress (wife with Alzheimers) - who just wanted to talk to a doctor about her deteriorating condition (as he would have been able to prior to merger). He was unaware that surgery had moved to triage calls, (which I would agree are more efficient). So trying to*

sort / explain in front of busy waiting room just added to overall distress.

- *I suppose this is the same as everyone else. There is still far too longer wait to get a general routine appointment...I don't blame our surgery, not at all... A full triage system like we had in the military where EVERYONE has to see the nurses. Nurses are so brilliantly qualified now that I'm sure they have that ability. I certainly have full confidence in their diagnostic skills. This is an endemic problem for the NHS.*
- *Being able to access a GP for review of long term condition. Before merger access was sometimes difficult but you could get an appointment, since the merger the access to a GP for review of long term condition is now almost impossible.*
- *Appointments hard to get. Too difficult to get prescriptions signed at Milton park. Hard to get through on the phone. Doesn't feel like a local personal practice any more*

**Any further comments about these changes (main themes):**

- *We are continually being told to be "aware", to self-examine etc. and to get in touch with a doctor if we find any problems or issues, so they are dealt with quickly. I have had skin cancer in the family. I have had skin tags/moles/"lumps" that have bled, but when phoning for an appointment kept waiting for months. This is just one small problem I'm prepared to share. Waiting 9 months for "wart clinic", never waited this long before. The surgery appears to have got considerably worse since the merger and retirement/leaving of some doctors and nurses.*
- *I work full-time and due to the nature of my job am not allowed to have my mobile on me so the process of having to have a doctor call back makes it pretty difficult to arrange an appointment. Not being able to make an appointment by visiting the reception or calling myself seems ridiculous. The times I have visited the surgery on behalf of a relative the waiting rooms are invariably empty so I find it hard to understand why the surgery can't go back to the old system of booking appointments.*
- *I moved from queens rd practice to baffins and before I had all my medication on online reorder plan now 1 item has to be done separate now or I have to make an appointment to see a doctor which is such a waste of the doctor time and using an appointment up for someone that needs it*
- *The so called planned benefits have made no improvement. Also, it takes longer waiting on the phone to make an appointment, and when you get an appointment you have to have a phone triage before physically seeing a doctor. One positive is the online consultation which you get a quick feedback and help.*
- *Was sent to Milton without explanation and had to ask twice where it was. Didn't know until this survey that you'd merged.*
- *I used to be able to walk/cycle to my go. Now I have to take a car to an area where parking is an issue. Appointments are very*

*difficult to access. I am in the process of moving to a different surgery*

- I use the walk in centre over the drs as if you don't phone at 8am you have no chance to be seen.*
- Confidentiality at reception not good...*
- I am not aware of the changes I can never get an appointment I have had to use At Mary's walk in Center 5 times in the last 8 months because phone at 8 am oh no appointments (all gone by 8am !!!!so phone after 2pm sorry no appointments amazing all gone !!!!)*
- Very happy with this practice and the merger. Since the merger, I have been to see a gp and each time been more than happy with how quickly I was seen and the emergancy appointment system (being called back before getting an appointment). Very pleased with the merger. Both lovely surgeries with lovely doctors. Keep up the brillaint work eastshore.*
- .. There should be an entrance therefore at the back as the front is right on the main road and taxis have problems parking...*
- It's very hard to see doctor now was so much easier before merger, I've found it easier to see nurses which is good, lots of silly issues with prescription leave at Milton then it's not there but at baffins, now only put in at baffins so I get them*
- .. I am also frustrated that I am no longer able to visit my local GP surgery (Milton) as appointments are always at Baffins which is more difficult to access from central Southsea. So whilst it is claimed that there may be more appointment times, wider specialists and better location of Milton park practice I have been unable to access ANY of these so called improvements and am VERY DISSATISFIED.*
- ....As a working parent, trying to get an appointment I can attend is a nightmare, and my online record shows I have declined treatment when actually when I have made appointments they have been cancelled and other appointments at times I could attend were not available. Only being able to book 4 weeks in advance is useless, as appointments get taken up so quickly. I feel the standard of care I receive for my long term health problems has therefore declined since the merger. The surgery is now further from my home, meaning I have had to incur either transport or parking costs to attend appointments, and given that Doctors inevitably run late, these can be quite high...*
- The process of telephone triage is a good idea. However, access to routine appointments is poor. Waiting up to 5 weeks for a simple telephone triage slot before an appointment is ridiculous. Not having abilities to book appointments/triage outside of the 8:30am window is poor for people who work. ..*
- Staff are still great, however I have not seen any of the proposed benefits actually happen. If anything it is harder to get an appointment, particularly when working full time...*

- *The theory was good but with fewer doctors to more patients, it just doesn't work. The availability of appointments has never been worse!*
- *I really appreciate my GPs. I have a long term condition which has needed major surgery - and even as a health care professional I have struggled to negotiate how the practice now runs. I don't think it is clear (to some patients) why there is a paramedic working in the surgery and the benefits of this... I would suggest the surgery considers rear access to the surgery from the St.Marys car park - drop off outside the front door is an impossibility for anyone with physical limitations (double yellow lines / traffic lights/ bus route).*
- *The best thing recently has been the advice online, avoiding the necessity of repeating yourself several times to get an appointment*
- *It states better appointments but it's still near on impossible to get an appointment*
- *... no wonder why st Marys walk in and QA are so busy because it is so hard to get to see a doctor when you need to ....if I need a doctor or a nurse my time is as precious as yours and I find myself coping with illnesses and worrying things because I am reluctant to go through this process that if you get an appointment at all I don't like being negative but I was taught that you learn from the mistakes better .*

#### **Comparison between sites:**

The main difference in feedback between the Practice sites centred on the proposed benefit of 'Better site location for Milton Practice' - Milton Park respondents seemed to feel more strongly that this had not been a benefit of the merger.

#### **Comparison between different profiles of respondents:**

- Gender - no significant differences
- Age
  - vi. 16-24: Less benefits seen re site re-location and access to GPs. Better experiences re access to wider choice of appointments.
  - vii. 25-39: Seem to experience better GP access
  - viii. 40-59 / 60-79: Less benefits seen re access to GPs and specialised staff.
  - ix. 80+: Less benefits seen re site re-location, choice of appointment times but better experience with access to GP and specialised staff.
- Ethnicity
  - i. Non-white groups: Less benefits seen re site re-location and access to GPs. Better experiences with access to wider appointment times.
- Disability / health condition - slightly less benefits seen re wider choice of appointment time and access to specialised staff.

**Evaluation:**

The response level of 304 surveys, although not a large percentage of the patient list at this Practice, is a very good number and does provide themes which are likely to be consistent with other patient views.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents were registered at Baffins with the remainder at Milton Park.

More than two thirds were female and there was a good spread across the age groups, with 25% between 16-39 years old and 46% aged 40-59 years, with the remainder 60+. The majority (90%) were white English and 41% stated they had a disability or a health condition.

There was very good awareness about the merger, with 95% stating they knew it had taken place.

Of the proposed benefits stated to arise from the merger, all had fairly low levels of positive feedback, with better site location (with the move of Milton Park to St Marys hospital site) particularly unfavourable with nearly 40% stating this had not been a good idea. Of the other proposed benefits (better access to GPs, greater access to specialised staff and wider choice of appointment times), there were high levels of responses suggesting patients were not aware of these benefits.

With reference to benefits perceived to have been realised, respondents again provided a less than positive response, with the majority suggesting none of the four benefits had been achieved.

People with a disability or health condition seemed to be less positive about the realisation of the benefits regarding wider choice of appointments times and access to specialised staff, with other variations in views across the different age groups (younger patients seemed happier with wider choice of appointments but less so with the change in site location, as were those aged 80+).

Some feedback seems to suggest that patients are instead going to the St Marys walk-in centre or even the QA Hospital emergency department for advice and treatment as they do not feel confident regarding the performance of the practice appointment booking system.

It was no surprise that the 'one thing' patients would like to see improved the most was a better selection and number of appointment times, followed by easier GP access and then improvements to communication (particularly regarding phone answering times, the call back / triage system and waiting times for prescriptions).

Further comments provided positive feedback about the Practice as well as requests for changes to how services are provided, with most focus on improving the appointments system and waiting times.

Please note: due to rounding, some charts may not add up to 100%.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the feedback received, Healthwatch Portsmouth recommend the following actions to be taken to improve patient experience at this Practice:

9. Review the use of the telephone system with patients / Healthwatch to improve access and performance, including how many patients need to travel to appointments to the surgery site furthest from their home.
10. Consider providing longer drop-in sessions and some planned telephone advice slots.
11. Undertake some work with patients with a disability or health condition to understand why this group may be less satisfied with changes to services.
12. Improve communication with Chemist/s over prescriptions

For more information about Healthwatch Portsmouth, please contact the team at:

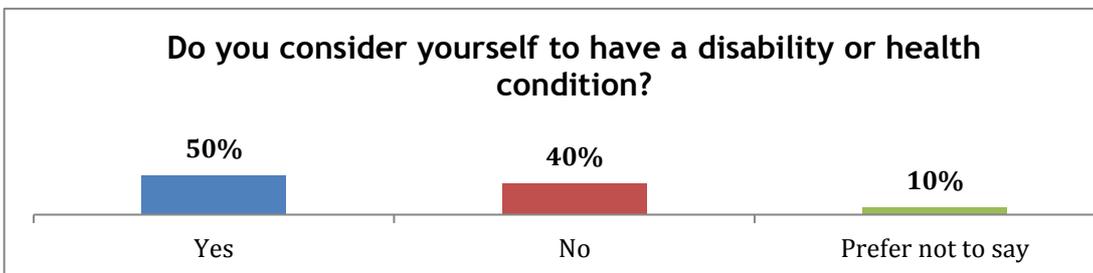
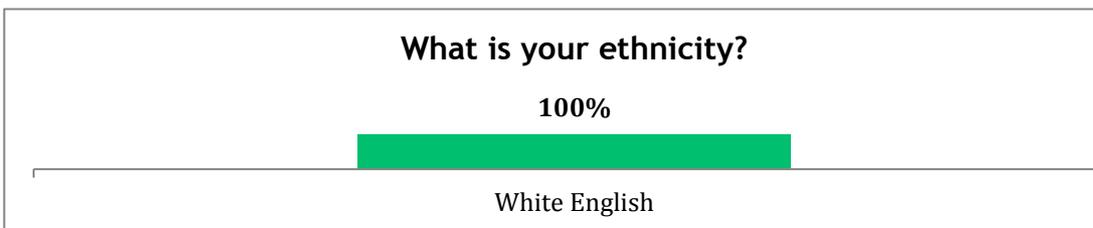
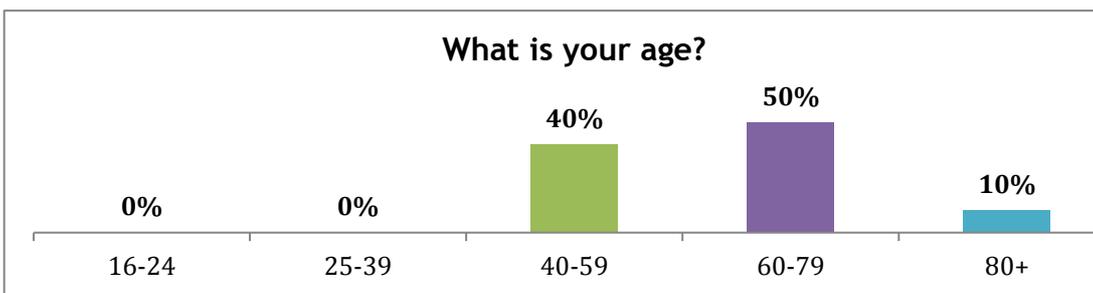
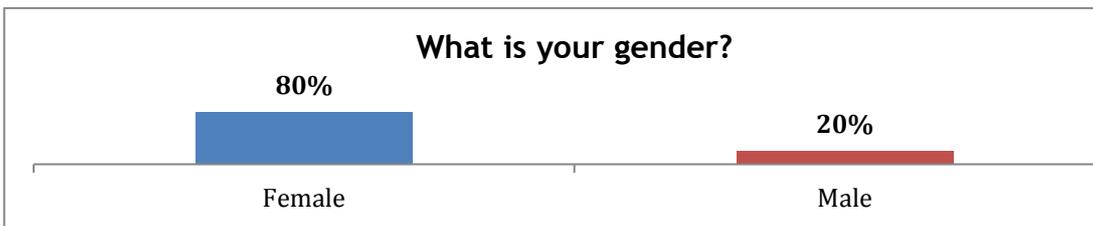
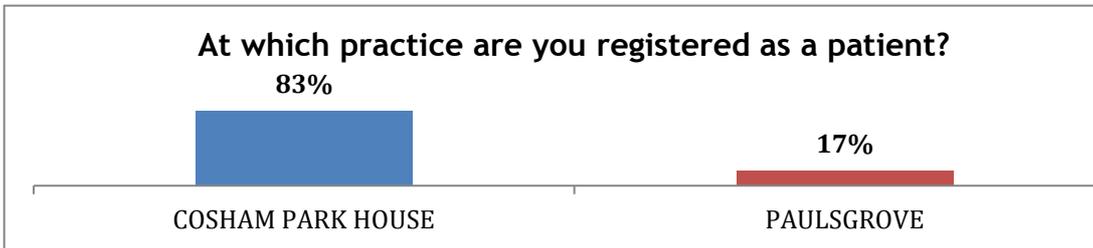
- Email - [info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Tel - 02393 977097
- Web - [www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Twitter - @HealthWatchPO
- Facebook - [www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth](http://www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth)
- Post - Healthwatch Portsmouth, c/o Learning Links, Suite 103, Technopole, Portsmouth PO2 8FA.

**GP merger benefits - research summary**

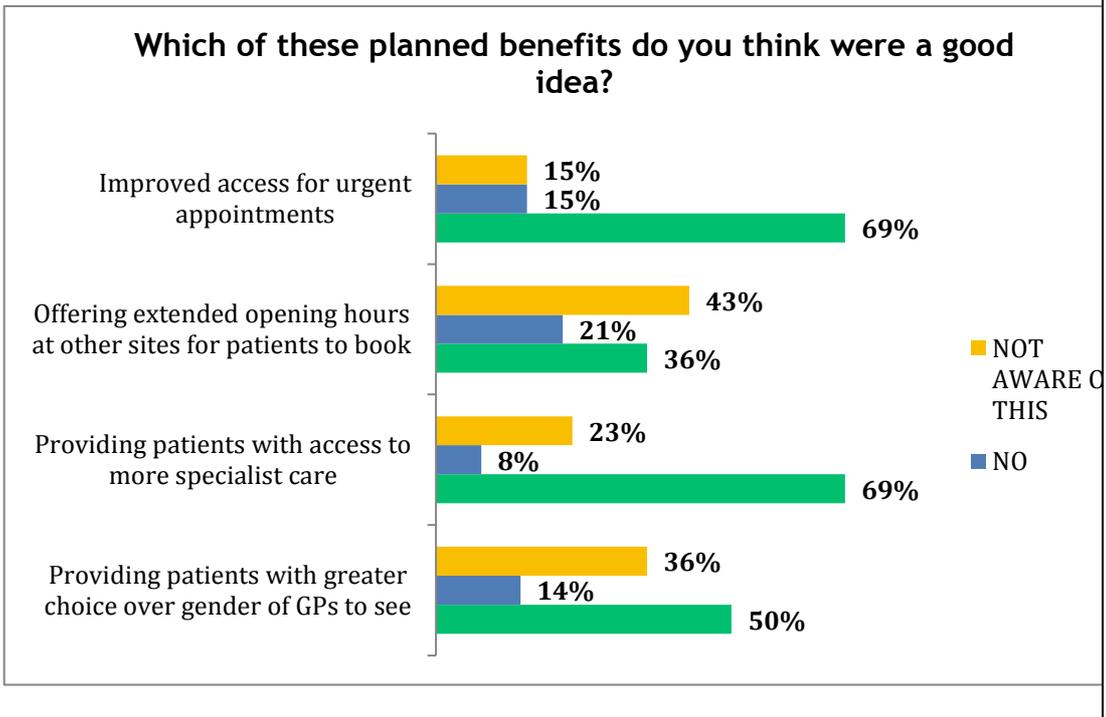
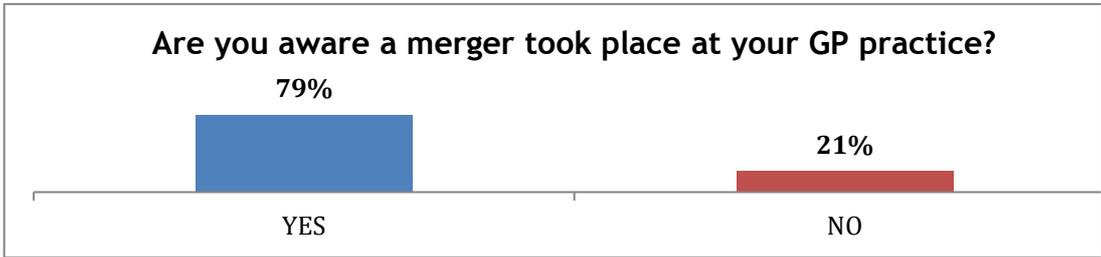
<b>Practice name: <u>Portsdown</u></b>	
<b>Practice sites involved:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cosham Park House</li> <li>• Paulsgrove</li> <li>• Northern Road</li> </ul>
<b>Review type:</b>	Benefits realised for patients from the merger, and subsequent closure, of Northern Road with the Portsdown Group (Cosham Park House and Paulsgrove sites).
<b>Methodology:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper surveys - made available for completion in Cosham Park House and Paulsgrove waiting rooms and face-to-face with Healthwatch Portsmouth volunteers visiting each site.</li> <li>• Online surveys - made available through links shared on Practice website and social media, Practice text messaging service and Healthwatch Portsmouth website and social media.</li> </ul>
<b>Areas of proposed improvements due to arise from merger:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing patients with greater choice over gender of GPs to see</li> <li>Providing patients with access to more specialist care</li> <li>Offering extended opening hours at other sites for patients to book</li> <li>Improved access for urgent appointments</li> </ol>
<b>Number of respondents:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cosham Park House - 10</li> <li>• Paulsgrove - 2</li> </ul>

• Total - 12

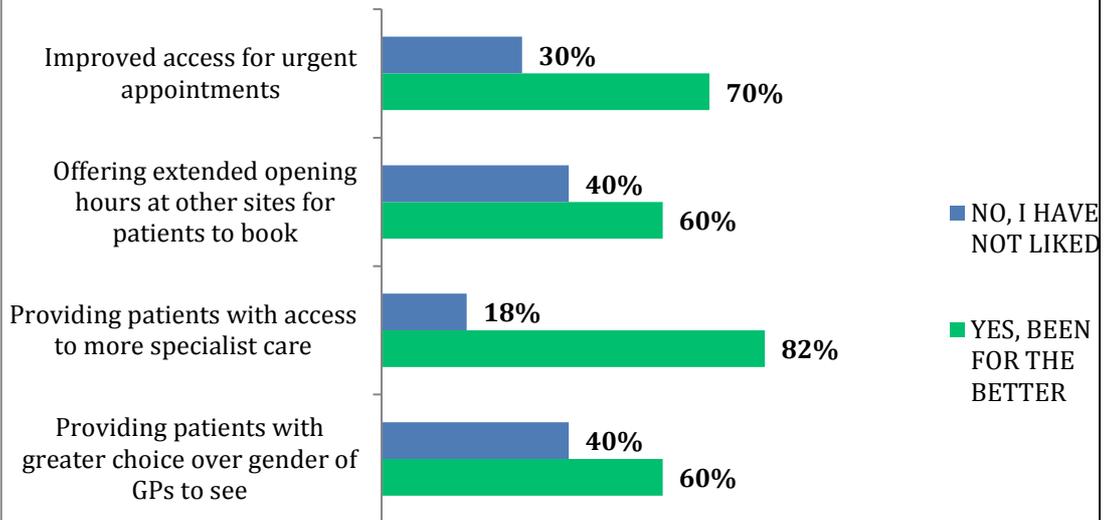
**Profile of the respondents:**



**Summary of feedback from respondents:**



**Which of the planned benefits have turned out to have been for the better or have you not liked?**



**What one thing would you like to see improved?**

Comments were:

- *“easier appointment system*
- *the ability to see a doctor*
- *More urgent appointments*
- *Getting an appointment*
- *shorter appointment times*
- *Attitude of Cosham Park House Reception staff*
- *Appointments - can be hard to get one*
- *More ease for making appointments. We are not all online or mobile”*

**Further comments about these changes included:**

- *‘Previous practice was easier to access and seemed more friendly and personal. No problems with prescriptions.*
- *...No choice of male/female doctor offered...*
- *When we have had a test it would be nice to have feedback on this - instead of thinking no news is good news, that's not always the case. After a heart scan I never had feedback, when I called the surgery I was told by Reception to make an appointment. This is 3 weeks after, saw a doctor, told I have heart infarction, put on betablockers. I was shocked and didn't ask many questions. Now I will have to make another appointment to find out what this means... Just a call and a talk would be appreciated.*
- *Some Receipts (Receptionists?) need to be more understanding*
- *Good idea to provide patients with choice of gender of GPs, but female doctors keep leaving or never available. Paulsgrove Practice are amazing but unfortunately CPH are not. They never*

*send prescriptions to Tesco Chemist. It's so bad when at Tesco even the staff ask if we are from CPH because of the issues! ... Appointment availability is terrible if you work Mon-Fri 8-6. ... I was receiving fantastic treatment from female doctor and advice on my early menopause, but now she has left and no help has been offered since and no other female doctor is ever available...*

- *Although the benefits of merging are clear, smaller practices are more personal and I feel that this is more beneficial for older and very young patients.*
- *Continuity of GP is a non event. Getting an appointment is a challenge. 20 minutes plus on the phone is an expensive business. Unable to make an appointment at desk in Cosham Park House. I don't know the doctors or they me. All they have to go by are the medical notes but have no idea about what makes me tick... Diabetic care and blood testing, flu jabs etc. has been very good.'*

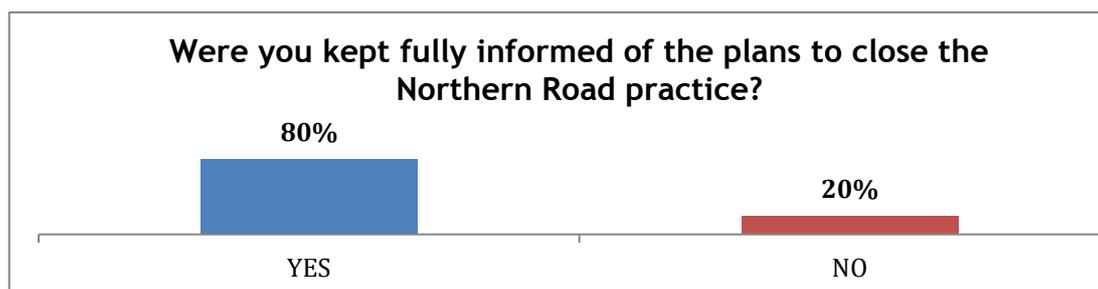
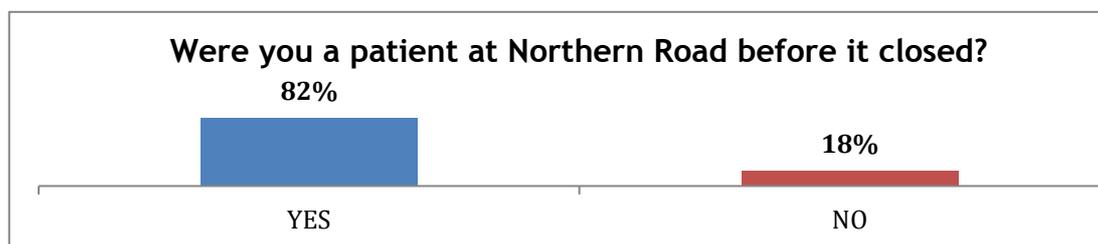
**Comparison between sites:**

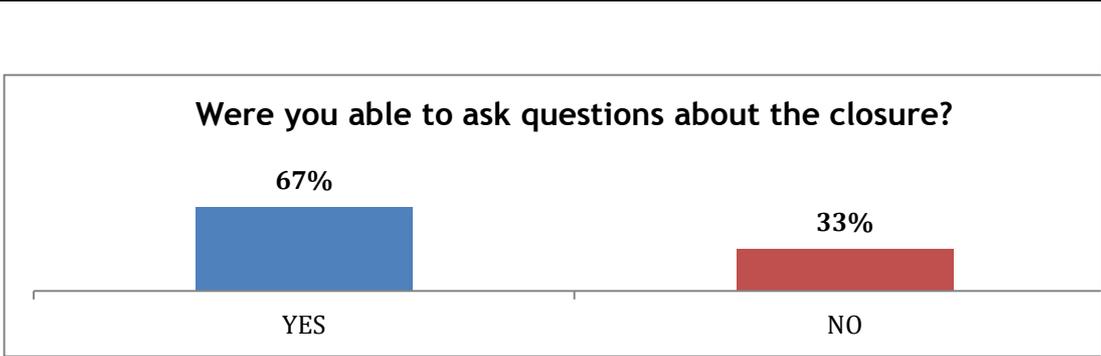
The main difference in feedback between the Practice sites centred on 'Providing patients with greater choice over gender of GPs to see' with patients registered at Cosham Park House seeming to feel this had improved when compared with patients at Paulsgrove.

**Comparison between different profiles of respondents:**

- Age
  - x. 40-59: more positive about the choice of gender of GP, access to more specialised care and extended opening hours.
  - xi. 60-79: less positive experience with offer of extended opening hours.
- Disability / health condition - more positive with regards a greater choice of gender of GP.

**Closure of Northern Road:**





**What has been the best thing for you about the closure of the Northern Road practice? (comments received)**

- *'Nothing - sorry*
- *Nothing. It's all very difficult and impersonal*
- *more appointments'*

**What has been the thing you have least liked about the closure of the Northern Road practice? (comments received)**

- *'not so easy to access things*
- *The loss of a very pleasant practice, where appointments were made in person, and able to request a specific doctor, who had been dealing with one's case.*
- *GPs knew about all history and had known them since birth*
- *Getting an appointment*
- *Feeling like a number not a person. Rushed appointments. Never see same doctor to continue care.*
- *Difficulty in getting appointments. Sometimes travelling to Paulsgrove as I live in Farlington. Feeling totally insecure about the whole thing.'*

**Evaluation:**

The response level of 12 surveys was lower than hoped for but does provide an indication of some themes which may be consistent with other patient views.

The majority of respondents (83%) were registered at Cosham Park House surgery, with the remainder at Paulsgrove.

80% of feedback came from female patients and the majority (60%) were aged 60+, all white English and half stated they had a disability or a health condition.

There was good awareness about the merger, with 79% stating they knew it had taken place.

Of the proposed benefits, there were significant numbers of respondents who were not aware of the offer of extended opening hours (43%) or the greater opportunity they had to choose the gender of the GP to see (36%).

69% felt improved access for urgent appointments was a good idea along with 69% supporting the opportunity to provide patients with access to more specialist care.

With reference to benefits perceived to have been realised, respondents provided a very positive response for greater access to specialised care (82%) and improved access to urgent appointments (70%). 40% of respondents had not seen the benefit of being offered extended opening times at other sites or a greater choice over the gender of the GP to see.

Respondents aged 40-59 years seemed to have had a more positive experience about the choice of gender of GP, access to more specialised care and extended opening hours.

The 'one thing' patients would like to see improved and further comments received through the survey seemed to focus on access to appointments, with some also highlighting a need to improve the experience of patients interacting with practice staff.

With reference to the closure of the Northern Road Practice, the vast majority (82%) were registered there before the closure. Of those respondents who were previously a Northern Road patient, the feedback was positive regarding how informed they were kept during the closure (80%) but less so with regards to being able to ask questions to clarify matters during the process (67%), which suggests information was provided at the time but possibly not so much emphasis was put on involving and seeking feedback from patients whilst the closure went ahead.

Please note: due to rounding, some charts may not add up to 100%.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the feedback received, Healthwatch Portsmouth recommend the following actions to be taken to improve patient experience at this Practice:

13. Promote the offer of extended opening hours at other sites and opportunity for patients to choose the gender of the GP they see.
14. Online system demonstrations and coaching for patients to make better use of the system.
15. Customer service training for staff.
16. Involvement of the PPG/Healthwatch in future service changes to increase level of information for patients and opportunities to ask questions.

17. Due to low numbers, compare with wider patient satisfaction to see if any similar themes.

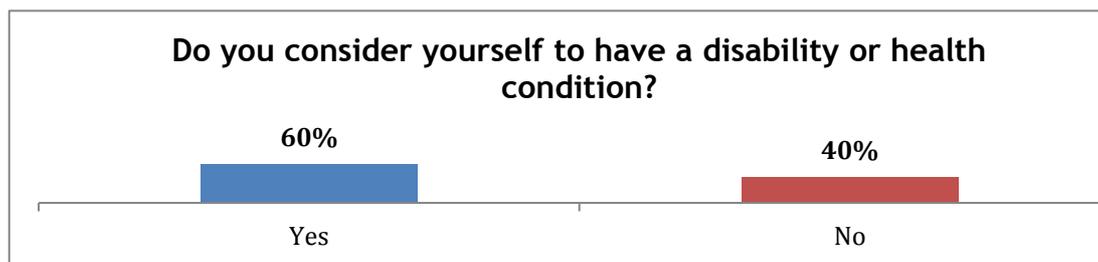
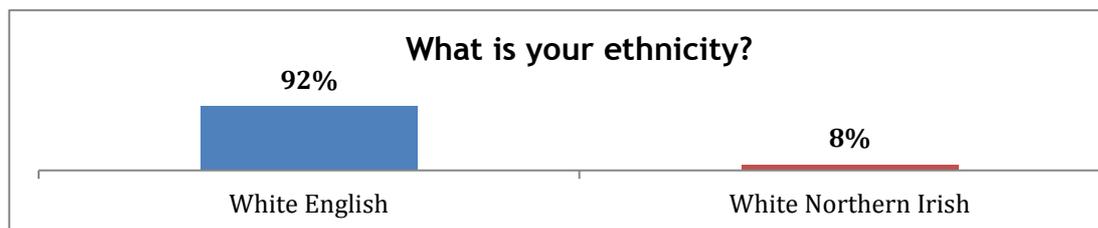
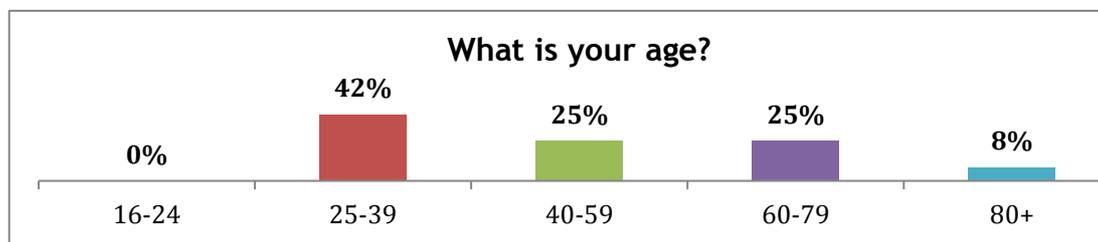
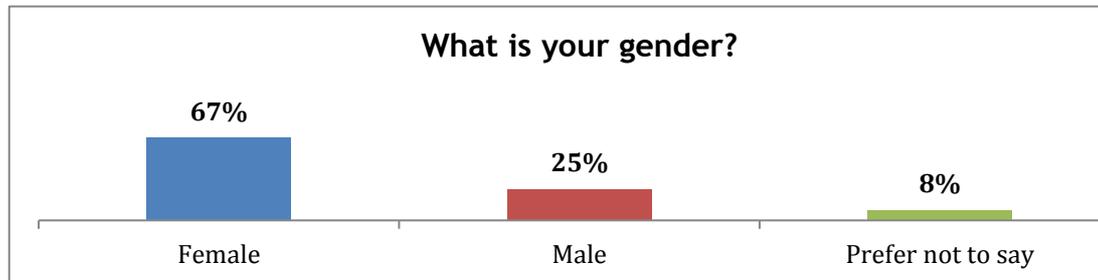
For more information about Healthwatch Portsmouth, please contact the team at:

- Email - [info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Tel - 02393 977097
- Web - [www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Twitter - @HealthWatchPO
- Facebook - [www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth](http://www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth)
- Post - Healthwatch Portsmouth, c/o Learning Links, Suite 103, Technopole, Portsmouth PO2 8FA.

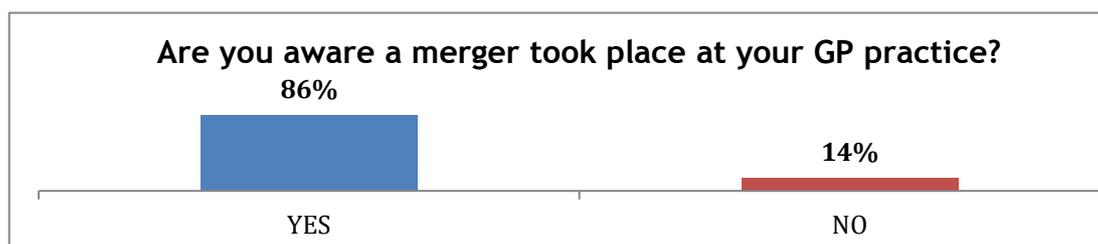
**GP merger benefits - research summary**

<b>Practice name:</b> <u>Trafalgar</u>	
<b>Practice sites involved:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ramilies</li> <li>• Osborne Road</li> </ul>
<b>Review type:</b>	Benefits realised for patients from the merger, and subsequent closure, of Ramilies with the Osborne Road practice.
<b>Methodology:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper surveys - made available for completion in Osborne Road waiting room and face-to-face with Healthwatch Portsmouth volunteers visiting each site.</li> <li>• Online surveys - made available through links shared on Practice website and social media, Practice text messaging service and Healthwatch Portsmouth website and social media.</li> </ul>
<b>Areas of proposed improvements due to arise from merger:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing patients with greater choice over gender of GPs to see</li> <li>Providing greater access to the nursing team through number of nurses increasing</li> <li>Increased opening hours (8am-8pm weekdays and open Saturday mornings)</li> <li>Providing greater access to urgent day time home visits to patients</li> <li>Easier to book appointments through use of a centralised call centre to take calls</li> </ol>
<b>Number of respondents:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Osborne Road - 14</li> </ul>

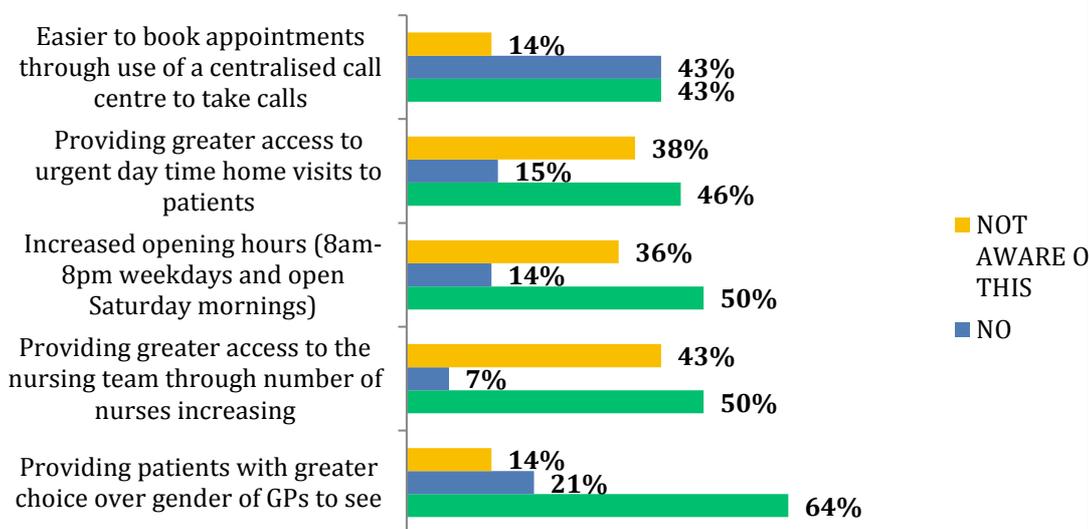
**Profile of the respondents:**



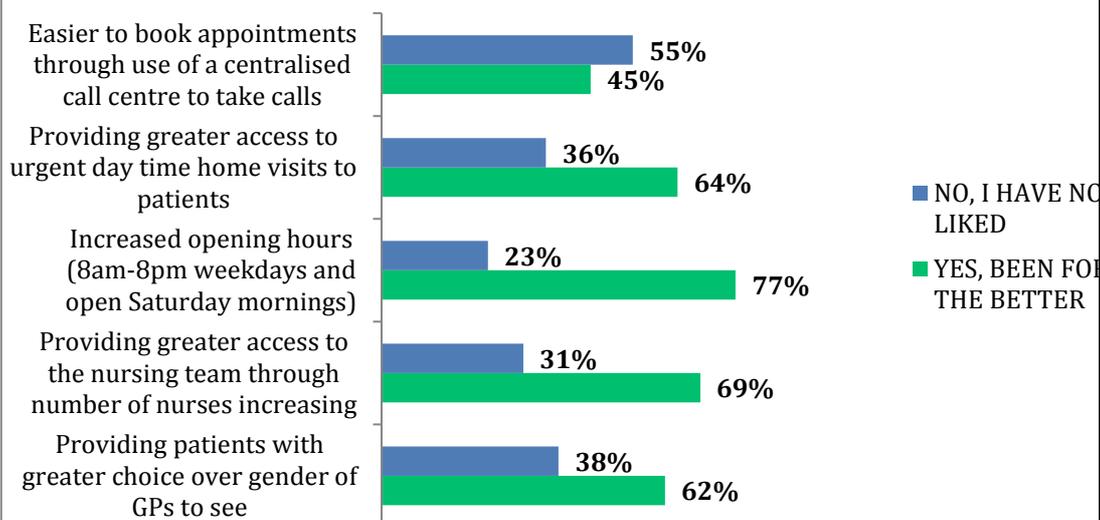
**Summary of feedback from respondents:**



### Which of these planned benefits do you think were a good idea?



### Which of the planned benefits have turned out to have been for the better or have you not liked?



### What one thing would you like to see improved?

Comments received were:

- *“to be able to see the same GP*
- *more to staff to answer calls*
- *Appointments*
- *Waiting times for an appointment too long - 3 weeks*
- *I would like to be able to phone the surgery and get through between 8am and 8.30am to get an appointment for later the same day, without needing to come round to the surgery at 7.50am and*

*stand outside in a queue until the surgery doors open. This is a very retrogressive step at this surgery. We have a car to do this, but other patients may have quite a long walk, as one lady behind me in the queue just recently told me - she could not rely on the bus to get her to the surgery in time, so she'd had to walk. OK in summer, not in winter.*

- *Medication that works*
- *Call waiting time*
- *The answering of the telephone in the morning, it is constantly engaged from 8.30 to 11 am.*
- *Reception staff better trained, more professional and aware that they are dealing with people who are unwell*
- *Appointment booking system is hopeless.'*

**Further comments received about these changes included:**

- *'waiting three weeks for an appointment is not good*
- *less appointments available*
- *Staff have bad attitude*
- *Pleased with service*
- *It does not seem to have made any difference to getting an appointment or trying to get through on the telephone in fact if anything it has become worse.*
- *See next page section 10*
- *The practice needs to improve it's booking system, it is absolutely hopeless. The practice also needs to put some serious thought into the appropriate communication to patients. For example, one doctor ordered a series of blood tests for my husband to try and diagnose a problem. The blood test results have never been communicated back from the surgery - a simple text to say "all is fine" would suffice. Plus no callback on the original problem which still exists .....simply not good enough.'*

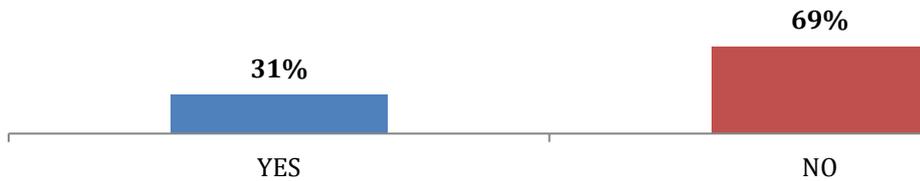
**Comparison between different profiles of respondents:**

- Gender
- iii. Female: experienced more benefits of access to urgent day time home visits, the nursing team and preferred the greater choice of gender of GPs to see.
- Age
- xii. 25-39: happier with the greater access to the nursing team and urgent day home visits.
- xiii. 40-59 less positive experience with access to appointments through the centralised booking service, with choice of gender of GP and increased opening hours.
- xiv. 60-79: Seen benefits of choice of gender of GP to see and increased access to the nursing team but less positive experience with increased opening hours.
- Disability / health condition - less benefits seen regarding the centralised booking service and extended opening hours but more

positive with regards access to the nursing team and choice of gender of GP.

### Closure of Ramilies:

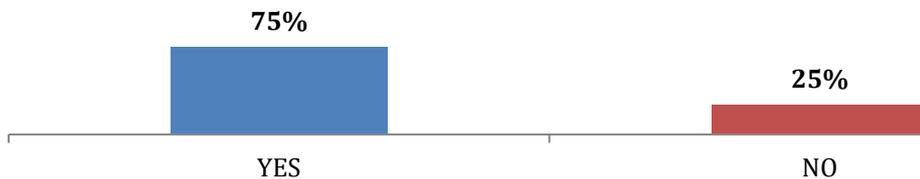
Were you a patient at Ramilies before it closed?



Were you kept fully informed of the plans to close the Ramilies practice?



Were you able to ask questions about the closure?



What has been the best thing for you about the closure of the Ramilies practice?

- *'Nothing at all*
- *Choice of GP Osborne Road or Highland Road surgery'*

What has been the thing you have least liked about the closure of the Ramilies practice?

- *'Lack of appointments, promised increased hours not happened*
- *Being a patient for many years it's difficult to alter one's way.*
- *Had bad service from some of the reception staff and also miss prescribed by GP. I wrote a complaint letter about this experience and received a very unsatisfactory reply (denial from GP, no apology, no lessons learnt by the practice). I have left this surgery now due to this.'*

**Evaluation:**

The response level of 14 surveys was lower than hoped for but does provide an indication of some themes which may be consistent with other patient views.

Two thirds of respondents were female and the majority (67%) were aged between 16-59 years, white English (92%) and 60% stated they had a disability or a health condition.

There was very good awareness about the merger, with 86% stating they knew it had taken place.

Of the proposed benefits, only providing patients with a greater choice over gender of GPs to see received a good level of support (64%) whereas the other four benefits had significant levels of patients not being aware of these (between 36% and 43%). The use of a centralised call centre received feedback to confirm 43% of respondents did not feel this type of system was a good idea.

With reference to benefits perceived to have been realised, respondents provided a very positive response for increased opening hours (77%) and around two-thirds also felt providing greater access to urgent home day visits, greater access to nursing team and the greater choice over gender of GPs. However, feedback suggests the introduction of a centralised call system has not been welcomed, with 55% stating it has not been a positive experience.

Female respondents seemed happier with the changes giving greater choice of gender of GP, access to the nursing team and the urgent day time home visiting service. People with a disability or health condition seemed to be less positive about the realisation of the benefits regarding the centralised booking system and extended opening hours but happier regarding greater access to the nursing team. There were also some variations in views across the different age groups.

The 'one thing' patients would like to see improved the most seemed to focus on access to appointments, with some also highlighting a need to improve the experience of patients when at reception.

With reference to the closure of the Ramilies Practice, less than a third of respondents were registered there before the closure. Of those respondents who were previously a Ramilies patient, the feedback was positive regarding how informed they were kept during the closure as well as being given the opportunity to ask questions to clarify matters during the process.

Please note: due to rounding, some charts may not add up to 100%.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the feedback received, Healthwatch Portsmouth recommend the following actions to be taken to improve patient experience at this Practice:

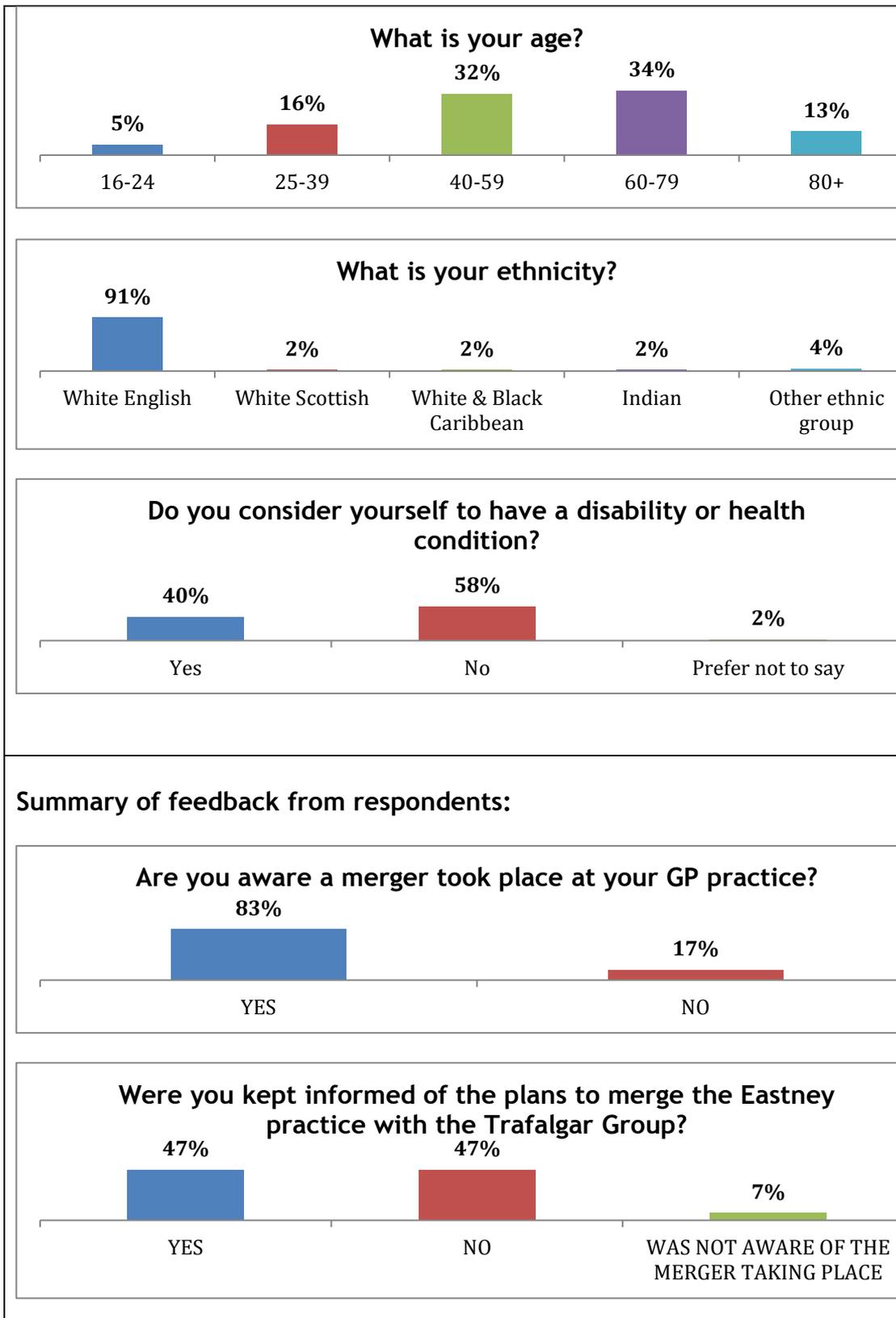
- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>18.</b> | <b>Offer more support and coaching for patients to use the call booking system.</b>   |
| <b>19.</b> | <b>With support of the PPG/Healthwatch, review the morning booking system capacity to see if compatible with demand and the extent to which online appointments are promoted.</b> |
| <b>20.</b> | <b>Promote alternatives to seeing non-GPs for advice and treatment (including review how much GPs are involved in endorsing this).</b>  |
| <b>21.</b> | <b>Due to low numbers, compare with wider patient satisfaction to see if any similar themes.</b>  |

For more information about Healthwatch Portsmouth, please contact the team at:

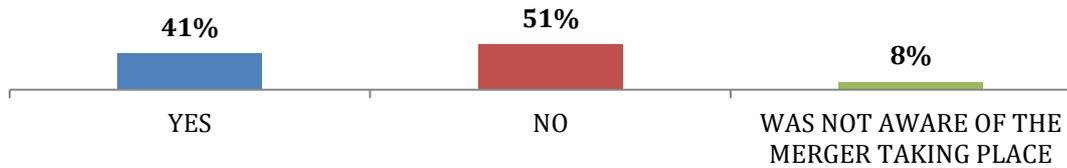
- Email - [info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Tel - 02393 977097
- Web - [www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Twitter - @HealthWatchPO
- Facebook - [www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth](https://www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth)
- Post - Healthwatch Portsmouth, c/o Learning Links, Suite 103, Technopole, Portsmouth PO2 8FA.

**GP merger benefits - research summary**

<b>Practice name:</b> <u>Trafalgar</u>							
<b>Practice sites involved:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eastney</li> <li>• Osborne Road</li> </ul>						
<b>Review type:</b>	To assess the awareness of patients of the recent merger with Osborne Road and see if any early benefits had been realised for Eastney patients.						
<b>Methodology:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper surveys - made available for completion in Eastney waiting room and face-to-face with Healthwatch Portsmouth volunteers visiting each site.</li> <li>• Online surveys - made available through links shared on Practice website and social media, Practice text messaging service and Healthwatch Portsmouth website and social media.</li> </ul>						
<b>Number of respondents:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eastney - 59</li> </ul>						
<b>Profile of the respondents:</b>							
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>What is your gender?</b></p> <p>A bar chart titled 'What is your gender?' showing the distribution of respondents by gender. The x-axis has two categories: 'Female' and 'Male'. The 'Female' bar is blue and reaches 66%. The 'Male' bar is red and reaches 34%.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Gender</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>66%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Male</td> <td>34%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Gender	Percentage	Female	66%	Male	34%
Gender	Percentage						
Female	66%						
Male	34%						



### Were you able to ask questions about the merger?



### What, if anything, is the best thing for you about the merger of the Eastney practice with the Trafalgar Group?

Many responses noted 'Nothing' / 'Too soon to tell'. Other feedback included comments such as:

- *'Flexibility*
- *Easier appointments*
- *None - it caused me to make a formal complaint*
- *No, prefer old surgery (were Ramiles)*
- *Easier to get an appointment*
- *Can go to two locations*
- *Nothing. Staff and nurses are good though.*
- *Able to choose different location*
- *more choice of doctors*
- *Surgery is closer to home address*
- *Experiences brought together strengthens practice*
- *supposedly efficiency'*

### What, if anything, has been the thing you have not liked about the merger of the Eastney practice with the Trafalgar Group?

- *'Booking system, attitude of receptionists*
- *Bad communication*
- *More people phoning, harder to get through*
- *Slow to set up*
- *Various aspects including time wasted on the phone*
- *Telephone - waiting*
- *Ages for phone to be answered - was good*
- *Appointments less available*
- *Longer waiting time*
- *Telephone system*
- *Telephone system*
- *Suffering an obnoxious doctor*
- *Telephone contact very difficult*
- *Appointments in advance NOT possible*
- *Osborne Road - parking bad (Eastney not too bad)*
- *waiting times no better*
- *Appointments!*

- *Still have to wait*
- *Telephone system*
- *Nothing bad*
- *Generally worse*
- *Bad telephone system*
- *Phone system bad*
- *Getting appointment - waited for a month for appointment for daughter*
- *Harder to get an appointment*
- *Location - not always aware*
- *Nothing different, but it is confusing now that there is a choice of two surgeries*
- *No direct phone to practice - hub is useless*
- *Telephone contact very difficult*
- *Longer waits for appointments*
- *Can't get through on the phone*
- *Appointment wait when trying to get follow-ups*
- *the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing'*

#### **Further comments about these changes:**

##### Main themes included:

- *'I have only been registered with the Eastney practice, and never had any problems, but since the merger 3 things have gone wrong, and appointments and prescriptions have not been dealt with due to lack of communication with Osborne Road.*
- *Not noticed differences as infrequent user. Understand need to rationalise due to workforce issues*
- *Appointment system is the MAIN issue, more patients, more doctors - worse. 4 days to get through.*
- *Different doctors - no consistency. Not ALL the same.*
- *Had to take hours off work to get through on the phone. Treatment sessions now 5 minutes shorter. Shuttle service. Tried for 2 weeks to get through*
- *Telephone waiting VERY bad first thing and during day. Cannot book online anymore. Emailing GP works well*
- *Osborne Road phone TERRIBLE. Eastney not too bad on phones.*
- *Waited 3 weeks for an appointment, wish we had more. Should open up at St James's as a large surgery*
- *Can book appointments online, but never any available*
- *about the same as before*
- *Very long wait - never like this before. Longer wait for appointments. Lost some of personal touch, impersonal now*
- *Same day appointments which is good BUT downside is that phones are continuously engaged*
- *About the same*
- *All good*

- *Difficult if you work and can't call at 8.30 - had to go in and insist on seeing a doctor. Very unhappy with the new system - stupid and ridiculous*
- *I am presuming any current issues are down to teething'*

**Comparison between different profiles of respondents:**

- Gender
  - i. Female respondents seemed aware of the merger taking place.
- Age
  - xv. 16-24: less aware of the merger taking place than the overall group, with no respondents stating they had been kept informed of the process or been given the opportunity to ask questions during the process.
  - xvi. 40-59: more positive about being kept informed during the merger process.
  - xvii. 60-79: more positive with regards being aware of the merger, being kept informed and also being able to ask questions throughout.
  - xviii. 80+: generally less aware, informed and felt able to ask questions than the overall group.
- Ethnicity: respondents other than those stating they were white English / Welsh / Scottish / Irish or Northern Irish felt less aware of the merger and less informed throughout although had a similar experience of being able to ask question during the process (around 505).
- Disability / health condition - more positive with regards being aware of the merger, being kept informed and having the opportunity to ask questions.

**Evaluation:**

The response level of 59 surveys, although not a large percentage of the patient list at this Practice, does provide some themes which are likely to be consistent with other patient views.

The vast majority of respondents (83%) were aware that the merger recently took place. However, less than half (47%) felt they had been kept informed during the process and only 41% stated they had been given the opportunity to ask questions at the time. This seems to suggest patients knew of the merger but were not given sufficient information throughout to answer any queries or concerns they may have had.

In terms of different profiles of patients, female respondents seemed more aware of the merger taking place compared to the overall group but younger patients (16-24 years old) stated they had not been informed or involved at all. Those from non-white English / Welsh / Scottish / Irish or Northern Irish backgrounds felt less aware of the merger and less informed throughout.

This low level of information may suggest another communications and engagement plan is needed for any future mergers - it would therefore be

helpful for a review of what methods were used by the Practice to engage and which groups, such as the PPG or Healthwatch Portsmouth, were part of this process.

With reference to any benefits realised, it is recognised it is still early days since the merger took place but there are some hopeful views from patients as to improvements the process may bring. However, some challenges have arisen and these seem to focus on an increase in waiting times and difficulties with the telephone booking system, which in turn may not be providing reassurance about the merger itself.

Please note: due to rounding, some charts may not add up to 100%.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the feedback received, Healthwatch Portsmouth recommend the following actions to be taken to improve patient experience at this Practice:

**22. Undertake some targeted engagement with younger adults to understand how to improve communication with this group.**

**23. Review communications between GPs, reception and patients to assess if consistent messages about booking appointments is being provided.**

**24. Greater involvement of PPG and HWP in future service changes to ensure more information is provided to patients and opportunities are given to ask questions.**

**25. Undertake a similar piece of research in 12 months to compare results, having given time for the merger to bed in.**

For more information about Healthwatch Portsmouth, please contact the team at:

- Email - [info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Tel - 023 9397 7097
- Web - [www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)
- Twitter - @HealthWatchPO
- Facebook - [www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth](http://www.facebook.com/HealthWatchPortsmouth)
- Post - Healthwatch Portsmouth, c/o Learning Links, Suite 103, Technopole, Portsmouth PO2 8FA.