



**The Tutbury Practice Patient Forum**  
<http://www.thetppf.org/>

**Patient Survey 2025  
Final Report**

The patient triage system for making appointments was introduced in June 2024. It has been refined and modified several times. The main purpose of this patient survey is to collect patients' experiences of this triage system.

The survey ran from 21<sup>st</sup> July – 31st August. The responses are now being analysed, and a draft report will be written. We will then hold a meeting with the surgery to see whether changes can be made to improve patients' experiences. A record of this discussion will then be added to the report and made publicly available for patients to read.

In the past, the survey was only carried out, in paper format, within the surgery waiting room, with completed questionnaires being placed within the box provided. This same format was also available for this year, with all the information and forms beginning at the front of the waiting room.

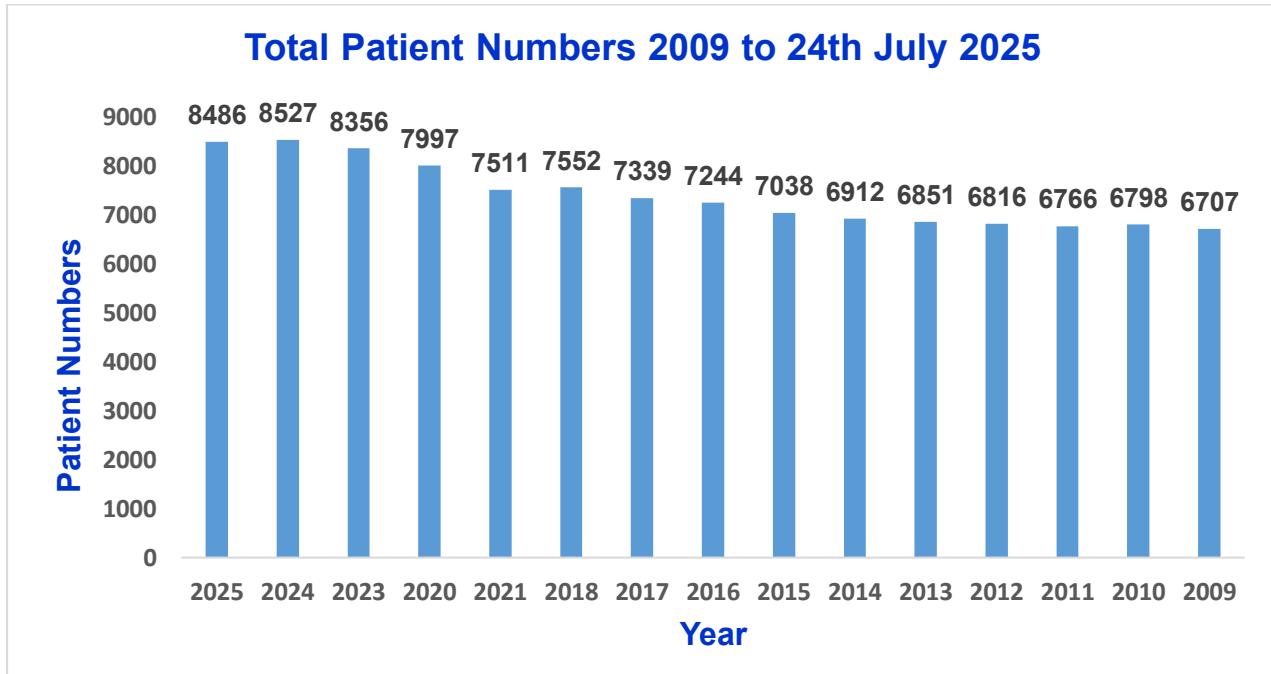
Naturally, doing a survey in this manner is only applicable to those patients who are visiting the surgery during the survey period. Therefore, to include as many patients as possible, we also set up the questionnaire on Google Forms, with the link being distributed, via text, to patients via the surgery both at the start of the survey and again near the end. By doing the survey in this manner produced a tremendous response, with the numbers being excessively more than any previous surveys. In total 1002 responses were received, 49 in paper format and 953 via Google Forms

The survey questions did not ask for information that would identify the patient. What was documented did not, therefore, prejudice the patients current/future relationship with the practice.

We wish to thank all those patients who completed this survey.

## Background Information

### Total Patient Numbers over the Years



### Number of Patients Surveyed by Age Group

The survey was conducted with patients aged 16+

The total number of 16+ patients registered with the practice as the time of the survey was **7161**.

The total number of 16+ patients surveyed was **1002**

**This equates to 13.99%**

### Survey Questions and answers

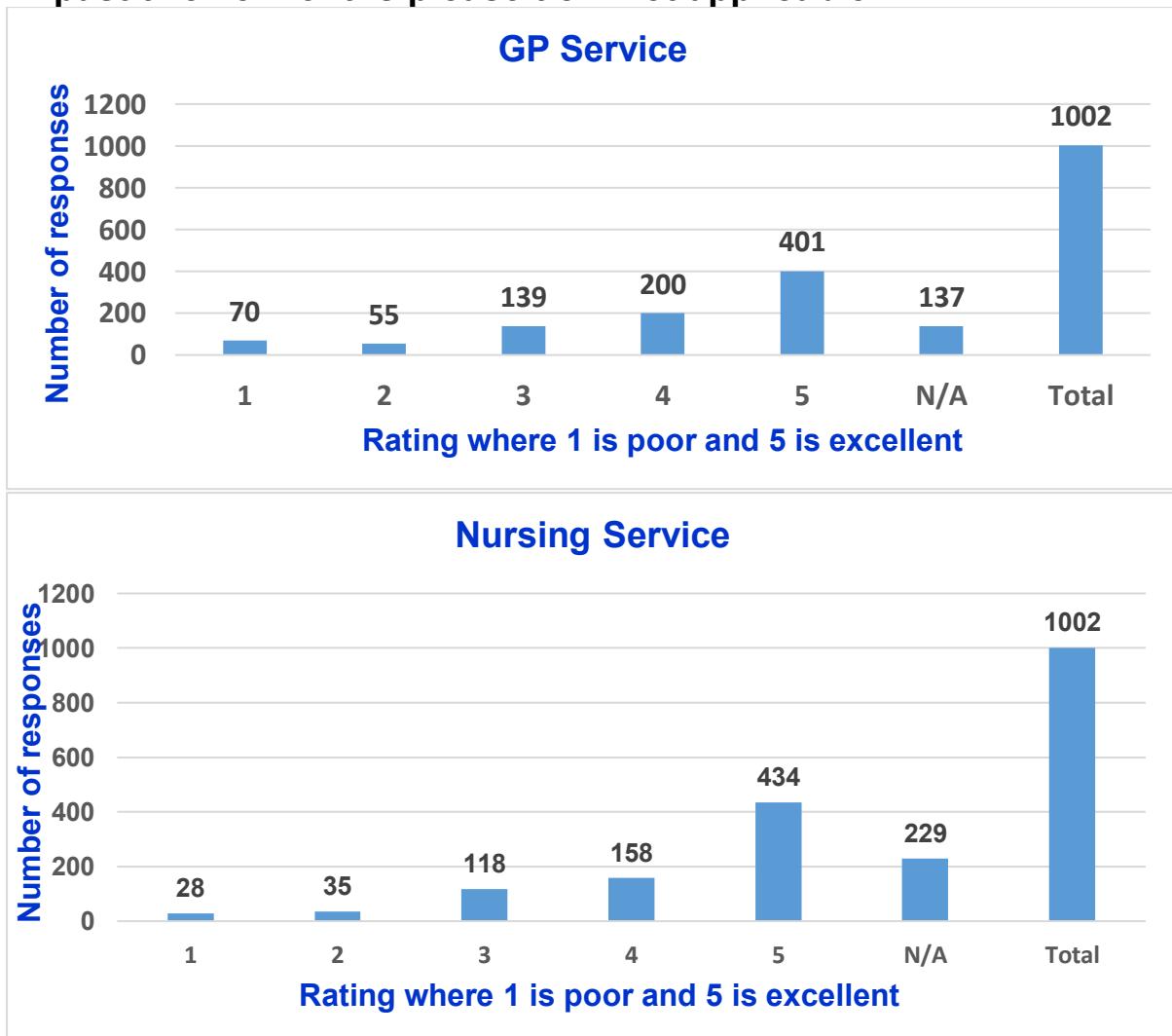
#### 1. Gender

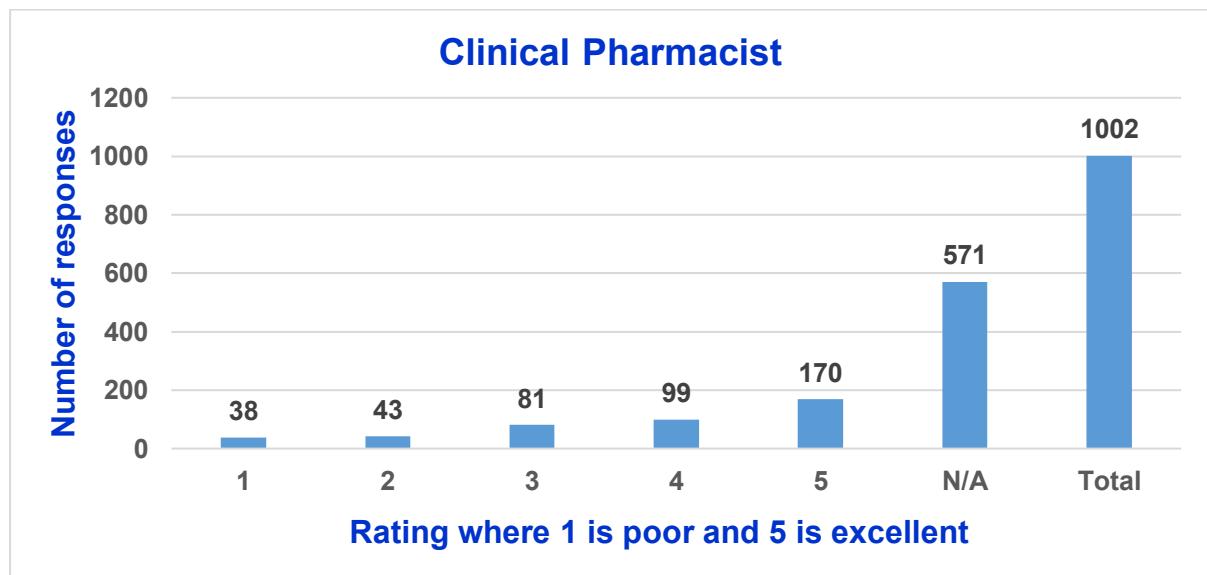
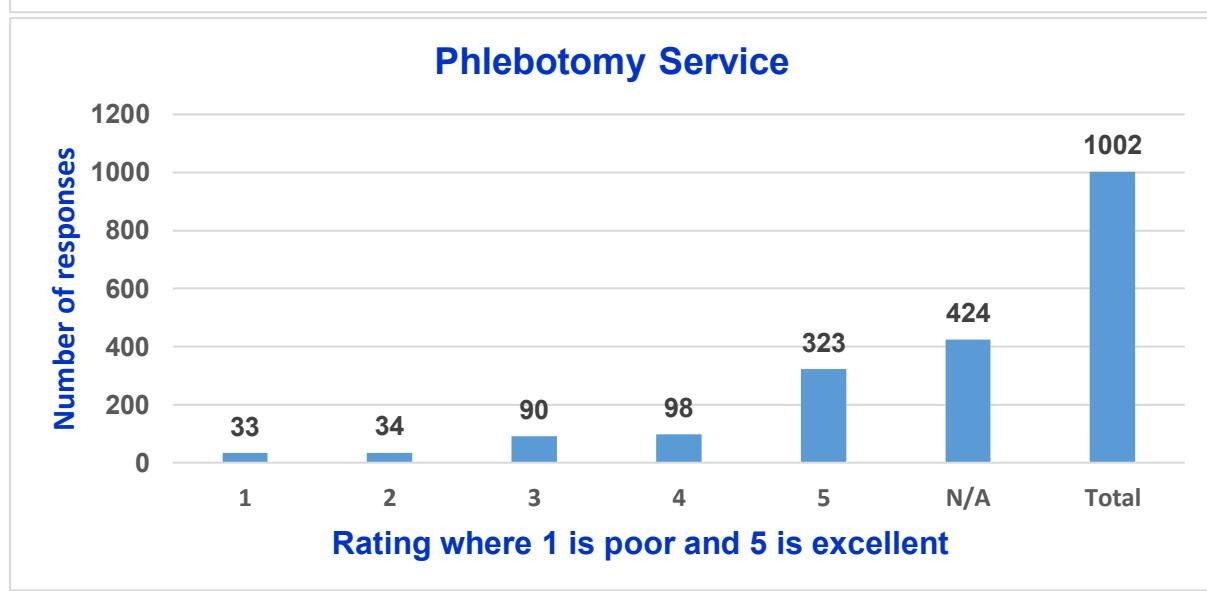
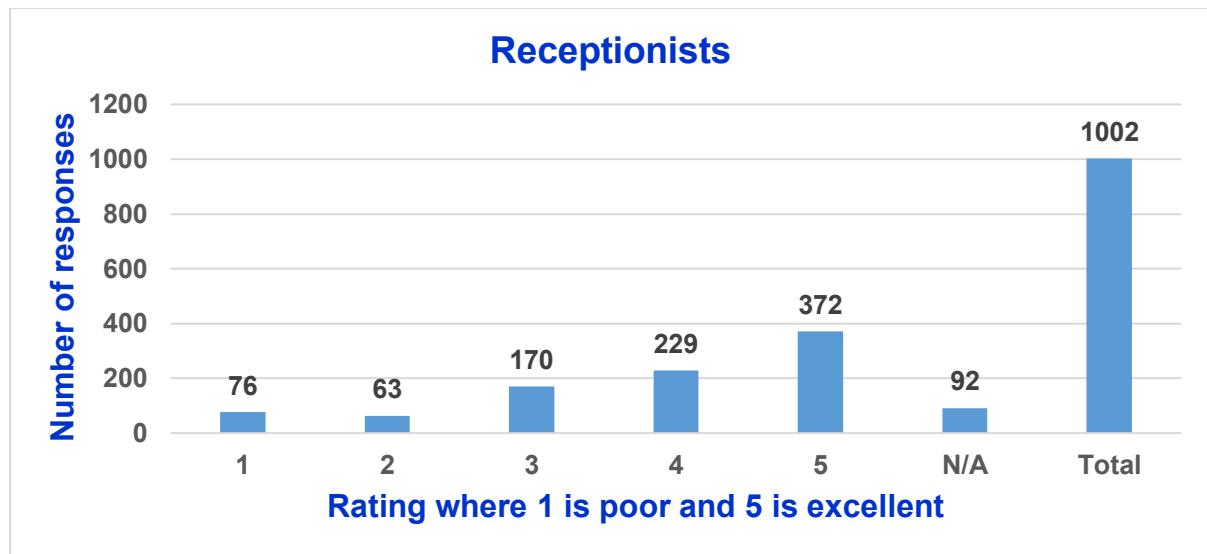
Gender	Number	%age
Male	387	38.62%
Female	606	60.48%
In another way	2	0.20%
Prefer not to say	7	0.70%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1002</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

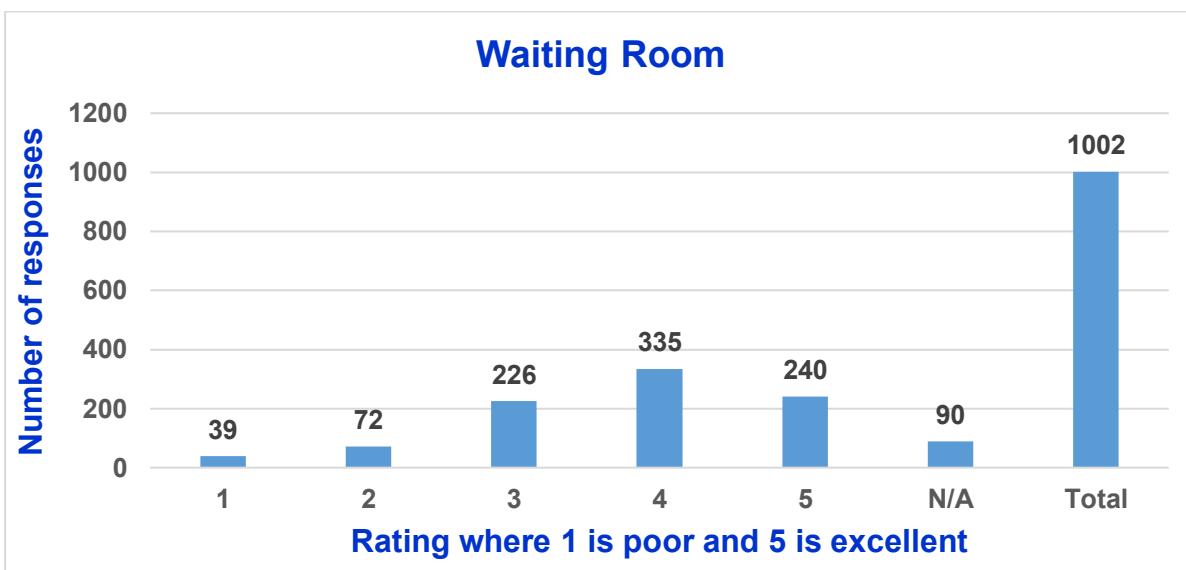
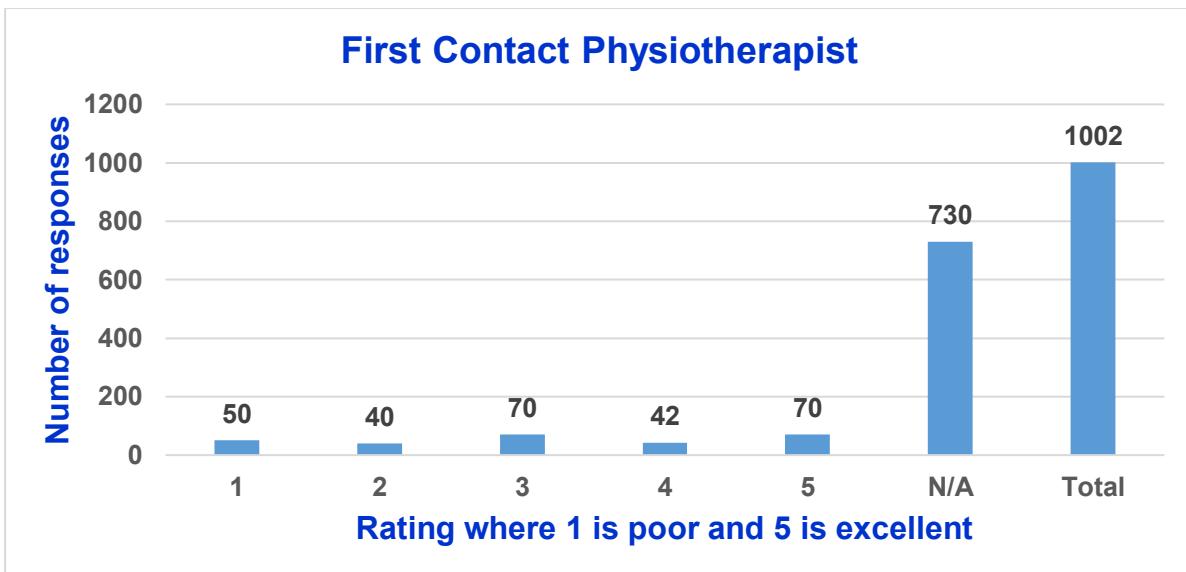
## 2. Age Group

Age Group	Number	%age
16-17	0	0
18-30	29	2.89
31-50	145	14.47
51-65	359	35.83
66-74	258	25.75
75+	209	20.86
Not Given	2	0.20
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1002</b>	<b>100</b>

3. Thinking about your experiences over the past twelve months, please rate the following services using marks 1 – 5, where **1 is poor** and **5 is excellent**. For services you have not used in the past twelve months please tick ‘not applicable’.







#### 4. Have you used the triage system?

Response	Number	%age
Yes	778	77.64%
No	224	22.36%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1002</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**The remaining questions are about the triage system.**

If you have answered 'No' to question 4, you have now finished the survey.

**PLEASE NOTE:** After question 7 there is a space for you to add any comments, you have about the Tutbury Practice.

#### 5. If you have answered 'Yes' to question 4, which of the following services did you use? Please tick all that apply.

758 responses in total

Service used	Number of responses
Admin enquiry	303
Medical enquiry, speak to GP, appointments etc	739
Online advice	103
Sign in screen	179

#### 6. How did you access the triage system? Tick all that apply

788 responses in total

Access method used	Number of responses
Online without help	625
Online with help (family/friend)	114
By telephone helped by the receptionists	109

**7. Based on your experience of using the triage system, please give the service a score of 1 – 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent**

861 responses in total

Score	Number	%age
1	143	16.61
2	89	10.34
3	175	20.33
4	199	23.11
5	255	29.62
<b>Total</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Comments received**

539 responses were received and are documented, as received below.

Reaches capacity too quickly

I am not IT literate so have to find someone to do this for me.

In my case the nurse was able to diagnose my issue and prescribe appropriate medications. It wasn't a serious issue but I would worry that something serious could be missed by over the phone appointments.

The triage system is much better than before but it is still tricky for me to access in my job as a teacher. I am at school working when the triage system opens in the morning and again in the afternoon which makes it difficult to get an appointment when needed. I can't take time off my job like other jobs. I have to have appointments after school hours.

Previously I have requested a phone call after 3.30pm and have found several missed calls after I have dismissed the children meaning I have to ring and reschedule. It would be useful therefore to have the option to say could I have an appointment at a set date and time.

Brilliant service no complaints from me! Thank you all

Much prefer the triage system to the previous phoning system.

So difficult to get to see GP but when you eventually do there are no patients there...what are the GPs doing if not seeing patients? Its so hard when feeling ill and can get no help but 111 tell you go to a&e then

you wait there for 8.5 hrs to be told if symptoms carry on go to your GP!!!  
Ridiculous situation

The survey has a fault on it, asking for an answer to question 7 when not used triage system..... attention to detail lacking

The issue with the triage system is that if you don't log on really early, you can't use it until the next day. When you can get on I have found it to be an excellent system.

My experience has been excellent, especially now the opening time is later. Thankyou

Couldn't get through so used nhs111 and pharmacy. Lucky not urgent

Cancelling the blood tests for regular patients wasn't good and making you go to the hospital. Not good, especially if you dont have transport and are elderly and find it easier to come to the drs clinic.

The Tutbury practice needs to ensure that the technology they use works for the majority of the time and not just some of the time

All is ok for me I do worry about less able and elderly accessibility to the triage service

The triage system is definitely a step in the right direction – it must help the medical team allocate appointments more efficiently. However as a patient it's stressful having to complete the online questionnaire at 8 am on the dot – as within 10 minutes the system is closed down for the day stating capacity reached.

Triage is an excellent idea, well it works well for me, seems to agree with my own level of priority with various ailments I've requested assistance with.

The triage system leaves people feeling vulnerable and anxious and further dehumanises gp services

I can not go on line i can not do it

On receiving a text message inviting the patient to book an appointment, currently only the times of available appointments are listed. This could be improved by adding which GP these appointments are with.

Triage system gets full to capacity sometimes within 3minutes of opening. However, a much better system than calling. Just have to be superfast to submit form. Reception staff are super helpful and friendly,

nurses fabulous. Dr Lucy a star Dr Enid wonderful. Thank you for your hard work. Menopause clinic was fantastic, very well run and informative. Thank you

If I need to speak to a doctor about a none urgent matter why can I not make an appointment for say two weeks time. Why do I have to enquire on the day when some people urgently need to be seen on that day? Why is it taking so long for prescriptions to be verified by the doctor.

The triage system combined with the online booking procedure is excellent trying to get an appointment 8pm by telephone was prehistoric

Reception not very helpfull, they want to know why you want to see the doctor. When it is between patient and doctor. Especially when its intimate that you want to discuss with the doctor. They have the same answer, no appointments today or for the next week or two. When you need to see the doctor you need to see a doctor not a receptionist .

I find it difficult using the triage not sure if it is me doing something wrong more than the system itself

I am in need of getting an appointment and not able to I find the system poor and feel frustrated

I had prepared what I wanted to put on the form, waited until the right time of morning to submit it. Copied it into the form, didn't realise half of it was chopped off. Obviously that's the only was I can communicate an issue to a GP, I put a lot of effort into what I had written, my symptoms were not describe, high blood pressure and readings and other stuff all cut off. I got sent for bloods, don't feel right then all I get is "all clear" - end of conversation. Terrible, I'm not right now still but it's a total chore, won't bother again

Never any appointments available. Always says reached capacity. Slow replies. Poor service.

I have no problem using the system myself however my mother is not tech-savvy and therefore when she needs an appointment I have to set an alarm, go to her house which is 15 minutes away to physically type submit the request on her device and submit it before the surgery reaches capacity. I appreciate the telephone system was far from ideal however I feel that my mother and people of her generation are being discriminated against as she cannot access the help she needs. I shouldn't have to do this for her, she deserves her privacy and not

having to share such sensitive information with me and it puts everyone under a lot of stress.

I have found it almost impossible to get a GP or nurse appointment. Triage system says: see your GP, however, getting an appointment is almost never possible. I was sent a message from the surgery telling me to make an appointment for yearly review, the link will be active for 7 days, tried everyday for 7 days without success, therefore did not get review. I do not blame the staff, they are clearly doing their best, but as a patient it is very frustrating.

Prescriptions taking too long to arrive at chemist. Can not click onto the system, not everyone has a smart phone. A few weeks ago I was taken poorly and phoned surgery for advice and help, told to ring 111. They took all my details which they were sending to the surgery and I was told to then ring the surgery. Did this to be told ring 111 again. I asked the receptionist when she received the details from my call with 111 and what she would do. The reply was nothing. I ended up at Dean and Smedley, Tutbury who were very helpful. I was 24 hours in pain and discomfort at 84 years old and a diabetic. Does the receptionists have the right to act in this way if she is not medically trained.

It is impossible to get an appointment now. When you phone in a morning all appointments have gone. People will give up trying and before long people will die trying to engage. Myself and my husband have health issues and we've given up trying to get an appointment. We feel the system is broken

Not good at times, as it is full within a few minutes. It asks for details of inquiry, when personal information should be between Doctor and patient only.

This system works o. The basis of completing information at 8am and by the time it's completed there are no appointments left. Therefore no better than previous system. Improvement could be made by releasing more appointments or callback appointments. When I eventually was successful in accessing an appointment it was several weeks ahead. My appointment was the. Cancelled by the surgery and reset for a further week ahead. Phlebotomy appointments are equally difficult to access. I feel that messages related to staff training irritatating and would question how much ongoing training do surgery staff really need when patient appointments and queries are priority.

It would seem to me that this system like so many others these days are specifically designed to exhaust the patients patience to the point where they give up trying and find another solution. Rather like banking

It isn't a triage system as you only limit it to a few enquiries per day. All you have done is transfer the 8:00 phone call battle into a 8:00 email battle. Great for your receptionist but useless for patients. If you truly wanted to be helpful you would commit to read and respond to an unlimited number of triage enquiries that could be submitted at any time of day. As it is the service is unusable. 0/10

What is not addressed in the Survey is the difficulty in accessing appointments. The appointment slots via the online access are filled in a matter of minutes this doesn't address fairly some patients requirements being more important or urgent than others with it being a first come first serve process. If there was a triage system applied to the appointments and then allocation done then this would be a far fairer system based on how urgent the appointment is. First over the line is not fair, some people are far better with their IT than others and some don't have online access and have to get support to get it arranged.

Tried many days to get through using triage system. Ended up in hospital. Better access required

While being aware of the problems that GPs are facing, I have never joined a practice where it is virtually impossible to actually see a doctor. I have had 2 things that, I think, needed a face to face but had to put up (especially in the case of one of them) with an inadequate phone call that did not ask thorough questions). Another required a phone call followed by a photo but I had to check it had been received and receptionist said send another so 2 were received in the end. I am still working, luckily part time now, but I do not feel the triage system is ideal for the call back...I received one call in the middle of invigilation when I was told they would call later. I needed a physio appointment but the process took weeks and weeks (phone calls) and eventually was sent to a surgery Stapenhill way...even they were surprised to have someone from Tutbury. Likewise, for bloods, I have had to organise my own appointments at the hospital because the practice is fully booked. The receptionists are always polite, but I think I would probably have to say I think I am going to die for them to give me an appointment. I couldn't really comment on the waiting room because I have only been in to pick up blood test bags...it is tidy with no one waiting. Rightly or wrongly, it

gives the impression that there may be one doctor in and the rest are working from home. The nurse for my smear was wonderful. I am sorry for being so negative, but I have very little confidence that I would get the right treatment if I was very ill, because the whole system seems to be that you could only see a doctor face to face in an emergency and, even then, you'd have to fight for it. I am aware that GP surgeries are struggling with the number of patients, but it seems silly that they have to accept new patients when they can't actually care for the ones they do have. The impression I get, is that the practice is woefully understaffed. I am sure the doctors are amazing, I am only sorry that I do not feel confident that I will ever see one. I am amazed that things have changed so much in the last 15 plus years. I am sorry.

It would be useful to receive an email to say that your form has been submitted.

No longer taking blood samples on behalf of the hospital is appalling, resulting in unnecessary cost and inconvenience for patients

I have found the triage system works well. Certainly better than waiting on the phone. A good service. Long may it continue.

I find the triage system really difficult to use when I am working as once I have submitted at 8am there is no indicator at all or time slot as to when you will be contacted and I am unable to access my phone in work apart from specific break times due to safeguarding when working with children. It makes it really difficult to plan as I can't just nip out of work without any notice, especially when it's for my children. I also find it difficult that when an appointment is given for that day there is often no options. I have also specified specific times before within the day that I will/ will not be able to answer my phone and on several occasions I have been contacted during those times I am unable to answer which can be frustrating. I appreciate this system is to remove the long phone waiting times but for s

Inconsistent service, its shortcomings are compensated for with helpful staff

Thank you so much for all that you do.

poor practice appointments to hard to get i don't bother any more

You still cannot access the system before a certain time, if you work that still gives you very little chance of seeing anyone. However, if you just want a repeat prescription then it's great.

The system opens too late (is it 8am now??) where I'm trying to get nursery run done. It was much better when opened earlier e.g. at 7am. Had mixed experiences with GPs. Felt VERY dismissed by one on two occasions - one when trying to sort preemptive care & have a plan in place. The other when, as expected, I then needed care but felt they were unwilling to listen to my wants and needs (care should be a two-way conversation). Different GP - had excellent conversations around care & felt very supported. Thank you. Why the stark difference in approach? Would appreciate if it wasn't a lottery.

I have needed an appointment for months and haven't been able to get it. It's a follow up appointment for my sinusitis that still hasn't cleared up after being told by the doctor to come back and I just can't get seen. It's absolutely ridiculous

Triage test result shouldnt be given by reception.,

Unable to access the surgery to get an appointment. Surgery closed at 7.59 am all appointments gone at 8.02 am if you can get through. When I asked how many appointments were available for the day I was told 4. This is shockingly disgraceful. When I asked if I could book an appointment for the next day I was told that I could not . So what are the doctors doing all day?

Tried to use booking link I was sent for a medication review, tried several times every day for the whole length of time the link was open for but could not get an appointment .

I feel the wording used to make the difference between asking for advice and GP appointment is not clear enough and I fell foul of this when asking for GP appt.. Having to repeat the process if you fill in the wrong form is upsetting and frustrating and in my case meant having to wait another day for the Roulette of getting GP appointment. Not used it for several months so this might have changed I'm not sure. I found the experience difficult when in significant pain. I'm not a regular user of GP. Seems like there are not as many appointments as previously. They are unavailable very quickly - I worry about people who can not use computer quickly - they'll struggle to get into the site in a timely manner.

I'm pleased to hear this system is reviewed and revised regularly as I feel it doesn't work for everyone.

Website triage system is as hopeless as the phone system. If you aren't pressing the buttons at 7.59am all the slots for the day are gone.

Medical attention is not available for anyone. I dread being seriously ill.



Yearly check up with phlebotomy was rushed not taking into account of medical disability and felt rushed and not listened too ..reception area poor and desk speaker I think allows other patients to hear you discussions.

We have NEVER been successful to get an appointment

In my experience we have never had a problem with Tutbury Practice all staff and Gp's included.

I had no problem with booking an appointment with a doctor. I did however have a problem with trying to book a blood test as requested by the hospital. I was presented with a list of options on a drop down box, but was unable to find what I wanted. In the end I gave up and booked with the hospital

It's more difficult for me to get an appointment now with not being able to use the online service until 8am. This is the time I start work and by the time I get chance to get online, the system is shut at its reached capacity. It was better when the online availability time was earlier. I wish you could go online to book blood tests at the surgery too. That would be very helpful.

The online form is awful. It freezes, goes blank after I've started answering the questions, doesn't always submit. It is very difficult to get the form. 8 am the website freezes. 8.05 am it says capacity reached

Not ideal in that to be you have to make sure you use the triage prompt when opened at 0800, as spaces soon fill up , and then you have to do the process all over again another day. Aldo the need to access a GP is not apparent until later in day It can be difficult and stressful I to use this system when feeling unwell Sometimes results or review are s not followed up by Gp as planned , and so we have to follow this up ourselves

Always a call back the same day and offer off appointment in a timely manner, except for an appointment with the physio which for far to in the future.

In January 2025 I begged to speak to a doctor as I felt unwell. The Triage System did not work for me as I work shifts. Felt like no-one actually cares. Left to sort my health problems out myself. I think the timings have now been altered. I was penalised because I work, on complaining I was quite flippantly told to ask my manager to allow me time out to fill in the triage form. Totally unrealistic understanding of a workplace.

Good and professional team

The triage system works really well when available, however I have recently experienced trying to access it daily when the form is supposed to open and it appears to be at capacity straight away so unable to use it - having tried for weeks and been unable to get through for a minor issue, I am now left with a worsening condition. I feel this is not a viable service if it is unable to 'triage' anymore than you would over the phone. Given that we are rarely able to book appointments in advance it means all traffic is being diverted to a triage system that is not fit for purpose. I really feel for those with greater medical needs and elderly who will likely struggle with this system

Unable to speak or get an appt. When required have to through everything each time. did t know about physio!!

Whilst I've found the Triage system very efficient and responses very good, if you don't get online as soon as possible after 8am you miss out that day. It would be much better if you could enter non urgent issues and perhaps get a slower response time

Find reception staff help and friendly. Nurses and doctors actually listen  
Your survey in Section 3 does not give not applicable (NA) if you haven't used a particular service so I took the middle option being 3 but not really correct.

I answered yes to question 4 because I wanted to get an appointment but I never got any further than being told all the appointments for that day were full on several occasions I don't know how to get beyond that place. As you can see I am not a regular user of the practice I do not abuse the system so if I want an appointment it is because it is

necessary. I read articles saying that if you have symptoms contact your doctor. just how do I do that? ,!

An excellent practice. I'm always impressed with the care

Really like the service but would be better if it was available earlier in the day!

I appreciate the stress the NHS is under and, whilst accessing a GP can be frustrating at times, I think that Tutbury Practice does it's best and I have found all staff at the surgery to be approachable, kind and helpful.

What has happened to the annual CHD check ups?

The triage system works fine but I have had trouble accessing it.

Even though I went onto the system as soon as it opened I was unable to get an appointment - this happened on three consecutive days. I spoke to a Receptionist who said to phone NHS direct and "don't let them fob you off and direct you back to us". NHS direct said I needed to see my GP! Finally got an appointment after four days of trying and GP asked why I hadn't come sooner!!!

Needed help to use it but it's very good, somebody will read what I've put whereas the morning phone scramble used to result in no appointment at all for days

All very good

It's better, but extended opening hours would assist those that work in the day

Opening hours change

Sometimes the accessibility is turned off because numbers have been reached for the day. It would be good to have an option for booking ahead , particularly for people who cannot access personal mobiles during the working day. For this reason too, it would be good to have the option to select a time slot (a 90 minute window perhaps) for a call-back. Overall I think it's a good system & you'll never please everybody! Thank you for all you do.

I am realy happy with the professional service that is given

Brilliant service but woefully under staffed at all levels of the practice hence long waiting times to see a dr etc.

Staff scores low because difficult to see them Waiting Room is like being "in Limbo", what is happening? Pressure needs to be put on local MP for improvements.

Unable to get a GP appointment for extended periods of time

It's still as difficult to see a doctor as it was before apart from not sitting waiting on phone in que. I find triage better in all other ways

It's time you could just ring up and make an appointment, not 500 questions beforehand, and being asked why you are ringing instead of using the triage booking system when on the day it wasn't working and this was later clarified by the receptionist

System worked well even when asked to send photos

Getting an appointment is very difficult when everyone is online at 8am. Am used to the internet but still find myself putting up with health issues as getting an appointment seems very random. Not sure how the system can prioritise patients needs.

Still difficult to get a same day appointment

The Triage system works. Much easier for the patient and, I imagine, for all the staff. It obviously sorts the urgent from the 'can wait a bit longer' patients. It's very easy to use and stress free.

Not that happy at all with the tutbury practice . It's got recently to get in , !!

Filling in the online request is still time sensitive and needs to be completed and submitted asap. It is similar to the phone system in that the capacity is soon reached (within 5 -10 minutes) for the day.

When the triage system is accessible, it is easy to use. Unfortunately, the window of opportunity is small, resulting in having to wait until the next day. It is disappointing that blood tests to check PSA post prostatectomy are no longer available at the surgery.

Very very difficult to get an appointment to see a doctor. Doctors will only discuss what they are aware of through triage and will not discuss anything else. Very poor service!

The waiting area does not have wheelchair spaces, by removing a few chairs i wouldnt need to keep moving the chair for people to get past. Guest internet is pretty poor too

Not user friendly have to seek help from family to sort app / appt

Just that it would be a big advantage to see the same GP regularly. Also less waiting time for appointments. Other than that I am satisfied. Thank you

Unbelievably poor, was made to wait to end of day to be seen even though appointment was at 2pm. The nurse only agreed to see me as I had turned up. Practitioner thought I was a caller not a face to face. Ironically I was a face to face. Getting an appointment is ridiculous, I have contacted my local MP and raised my concerns about the poor practice. Not had a MOT for years, not a clue what my blood pressure is, cholesterol readings ect. Not impressed with practice, for all your training days, Tutbury Practice continues to be viewed in a negative way by those who are fortunate enough to have made it to the practice. Many elderly residents suffer in silence, with issues that need attention but for so many the idea of even making contact with the practice is "to complexed" . In the past I know from personal experience that the practice had an excellent reputation, a far cry from where it is now!

The system is excellent when you can get onto it . If you're not sitting with finger poised at 8am forget it for the day. The 8am rush is still there.!

The whole place needs a shake-up The online triage is pathetic no reception service, they just say you need to do it online it's ridiculous What about people who don't have access to broadband

## **Analysis of Patient Feedback**

### **• System Capacity and Accessibility**

Many patients have highlighted that the triage system reaches its capacity extremely quickly, sometimes within just a few minutes of opening. This makes it difficult for those with other commitments, such as work or caring responsibilities, to secure an appointment. Several individuals noted that unless they log on at the precise opening time, they are unable to access the system until the following day, causing delays in receiving care. There is also concern that the system, by operating on a first-come, first-served basis, does not fairly prioritise patients according to need, leaving those less adept with technology or unable to access the system early at a disadvantage. Some patients compared this to the previous phone system, noting that the rush at 8am has merely shifted from telephone to online. Suggestions included

releasing more appointments throughout the day or enabling submission of enquiries at any time.

- **Technological Barriers and Support Needs**

A significant number of patients reported difficulties using the triage system due to limited IT skills. Some rely on family members or friends to submit requests on their behalf, which raises concerns about privacy and independence. There is worry that elderly or less able patients may struggle even more to access care, potentially leading to their needs being overlooked. Furthermore, not everyone owns a smartphone or has reliable internet access, which further excludes certain groups from timely medical support.

- **Appointment Booking Challenges**

Patients described frustration at being unable to book appointments for future dates. The system only allows for same-day bookings, which is particularly challenging for those with rigid work schedules or other commitments. Teachers and shift workers, for instance, find it nearly impossible to secure appointments, as the system opens during their working hours and appointments are often gone by the time they are able to log on. Requests for more flexible appointment options, such as specifying preferred dates and times, were common. Some patients also expressed frustration at being unable to book for non-urgent matters and felt that the system should allow for advance booking.

- **Experience with Appointments and Follow-Up**

Feedback on the quality of care was mixed. Some patients felt that the triage system efficiently allocated appointments and that nurses and doctors were helpful and caring. However, others reported that, after finally securing an appointment, communication was sometimes rushed or incomplete. There were instances where patients felt their symptoms were not fully addressed, or test results were given without adequate follow-up. Several patients noted that repeat prescriptions and phlebotomy appointments were difficult to obtain, and that changes in blood testing arrangements had caused inconvenience, especially for those without transport.

- **Reception and Communication Issues**

Reception staff received mixed reviews. Some patients found them helpful and friendly, while others felt that receptionists asked for too much personal information or were unable to offer solutions when appointments were unavailable. There were concerns about sensitive information being discussed with non-clinical staff and a desire for more privacy in these interactions. Additionally, some patients felt that automated communications, such as survey links or appointment booking links, were confusing or did not work as intended.

- **Impact on Vulnerable and Working Patients**

Several patients expressed concern for those who are vulnerable, elderly, or less technologically skilled, worried that they may not receive the care they need due to barriers in accessing the triage system. Working patients, especially those in education or on shift patterns, found it particularly difficult to fit the system's opening hours around their jobs. The lack of flexibility and inability to specify convenient times for call-backs or appointments was a recurring issue.

- **General Feedback on the Practice and Service**

While there was praise for the professionalism and dedication of clinical staff, many patients felt that the practice was understaffed and unable to meet the demand for appointments. There was disappointment that the practice accepted new patients when existing patients found it difficult to receive timely care. The waiting area and facilities were also mentioned, with suggestions for improved accessibility and privacy. Some patients felt that the system had led to a dehumanised experience and were concerned about the impact this could have on patient outcomes.

- **Suggestions for Improvement**

- Allow appointment booking in advance for non-urgent matters.
- Extend the system's opening hours or release appointments throughout the day.
- Provide options to specify preferred appointment times, especially for those with work commitments.
- Improve accessibility for less able, elderly, or non-tech-savvy patients.

- Enhance privacy in communications with reception staff.
- Ensure blood tests and routine reviews remain accessible at the local surgery.
- Offer confirmation emails upon form submission for patient reassurance.
- **Conclusion**

Overall, while many patients appreciate the intentions behind the triage system and improvements over the previous phone-based method, significant challenges remain regarding accessibility, fairness, and responsiveness. Addressing these issues could help ensure better patient experiences and outcomes for all.

### **Update November 2025**

As people will be aware in June 2024 the triage appointment system was introduced. This was after full consultation with the Patient Forum sub-committee and involvement of the full Forum. The system has been modified over time and at all stages the Forum was involved. Following Government, Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Integrated Care Board instructions and changes in the GP Contract as from October the 1<sup>st</sup> 2025 all surgeries now must operate the triage system from 8am until 6.30pm Monday to Friday. Prior to this the system closed once all appointments were taken for that day although access to the surgery for emergencies was of course still available and patients will receive a same-day response.

This means the surgery are currently seeing a significant rise in triage requests, and the GPs are finding the volume challenging. The processes are constantly being reviewed to help manage this more effectively. If there isn't a suitable appointment available, the surgery are required to direct patients to the most appropriate alternative service to ensure they receive the care they need.

Although the surgery must respond to all patient requests within 24 hours, this will not always involve offering an appointment. In some cases, the response may be clinical advice or signposting to another service that can provide timely and appropriate support.

This change also affects the protected training afternoons, which are no longer protected under the new requirements. During these sessions,

our doors will remain open via intercom, triage will remain available, and one GP and at least one receptionist will stay on site. These staff members will need to complete any missed mandatory training later. The only service that will be unavailable during training afternoons is our telephone line. Routine clinics will still not run during this time. Currently, it is not unusual for the GP to be working from 8am until 9pm

The Forum discussed these changes at the November meeting especially on the long-term effect this could have on the health and well-being of GPs and staff as well as increasing the possible risks of mistakes.

- **Extended Access**

In line with East Staffordshire Primary Care Network guidance, The surgery has resumed extended access face-to-face appointments during evenings and weekends which were previously changed to telephone calls during COVID. This will support patients who work full-time or have difficulty attending daytime appointments. Appointment dates are set by the Primary Care Network and therefore vary each month.

Naturally, this will start to answer the queries on access raised earlier in this document but of course it adding further pressures onto the staff.