

**REPORT FOLLOWING THE
COVID-19 SURVEY CARRIED OUT
BY
THE EAST STAFFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT
PATIENT ENGAGEMENT GROUP
DURING JULY 2020**

Published August 2020

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East Staffordshire District Patient Engagement Group.

COVID-19 Survey

Forward by Chair.

A very sincere thank you to all of you that took the time to complete our survey. We were very pleased with the response from 82 people. This is impressive when you realise bigger surveys than ours get just over 100! It was our first survey and apart from the responses to the questions we have learned about formulating questions and surveys. The survey was a quick snap of how people were coping during 'lockdown 'and we gave ourselves 2 months. A month for responses and a month to get it published. Thanks must go to Chris Derby (Trent Meadows) for help and advice in formatting the questions, to Support Staffordshire, and Healthwatch for including it on their web pages, Derek Hoey, (Patient Board), for forwarding to people in Tamworth and Lichfield, the many people who assisted in circulating the survey.

Finally, the biggest thanks go to John Bridges who did, very much, the lion's share of devising the questions, circulating, collating, and writing up the results of the survey. Through John we achieved our goal of getting the survey completed in 2 months. Thank you, John.

Thanks again to everyone who did their 'bit '. Look out for our next survey whenever that may be.

Keep well, keep safe.

Best wishes

Sue

Susan J Adey-Rankin.

Chair, The East Staffordshire District Patient Engagement Group.

- **Background**

The District group consists of elected patient representatives, from each of the various Patient Groups' within the GP Practices based in East Staffordshire.

The groups' objective is to come together and discuss areas of good practice and those of concern so that meaningful discussion can be held across the whole spectrum of East Staffordshire GP surgeries.

This hopefully will lead to the provision of consistent high-quality medical care and services for all patients. The Group are also a means of 2-way communication from Patient Groups to the Patient Board to the CCG and vice versa. within East Staffordshire.

The current COVID crisis has meant the need for many changes within our local NHS system. The Group met, virtually, in June 2020 to discuss COVID and corresponding effects on local patients and health services. The conclusion of the meeting raised 21 areas of concern and comment and following this the group put together a questionnaire, via google documents, which was circulated to the local communities via various means. The questionnaire was available for the whole of July 2020.

This report is to give detail on the questionnaire and to correlate all the responses which will go firstly to the East Staffs District Patient Engagement Group for ratification before being passed upwards to the East Staffs CCG Patient Board for comment before being sent to the East Staffs Clinical Commissioning Group requesting their feedback and if requested their action plan.

- **The Questionnaire**

Firstly, people were asked to indicate the following:

- a. Their Gender
- b. Their Age Group which was split as follows:

16-18: 18-30: 31-50: 51-65: 66-74: 75+

Then they were asked to answer several questions. The full details can be found in Appendix (i) of this report

- **Means used to circulate the Questionnaire.**

Initially, the questionnaire was planned to go out as a word document, but it soon became obvious this was not an ideal method both in terms of its completion and return to the originator. It was therefore transferred to a google forms format which enable simple means of completion and when submitted came back to the originator without any personal details hence complying with GDPR.

The document was sent to numerous people and organisations with a request to circulate far and wide. In addition, both Support Staffordshire and Healthwatch put it onto their sites.

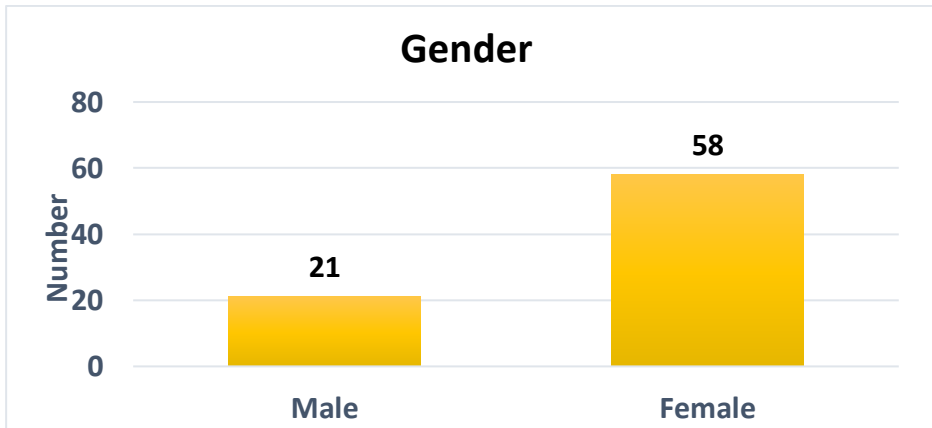
- **Dates of the Survey**

The survey went live between 1st July and 31st July 2020

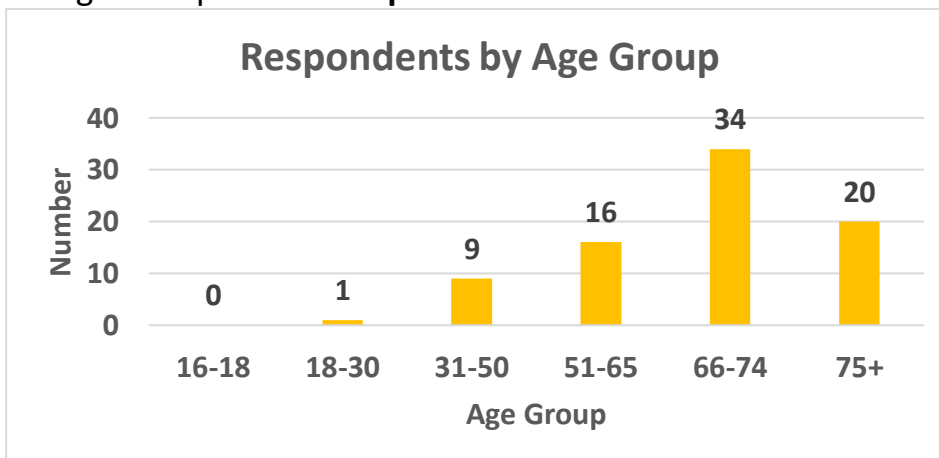
- **Results**

In total there were **82 people** who responded to the survey.
The results received were as follows:

a. Gender **79 responses**



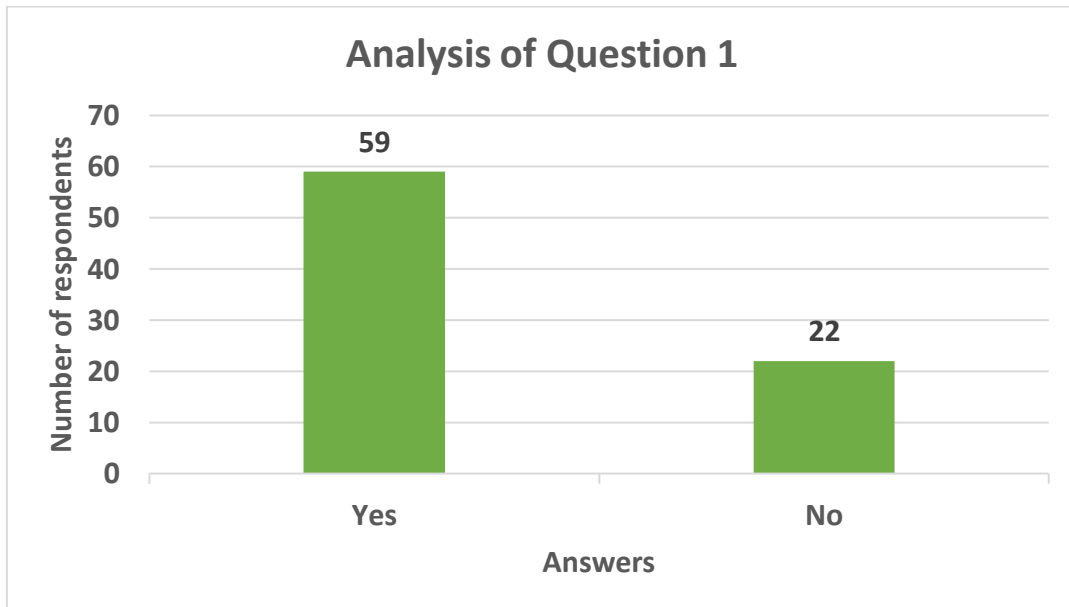
b. Age Group **80 responses**



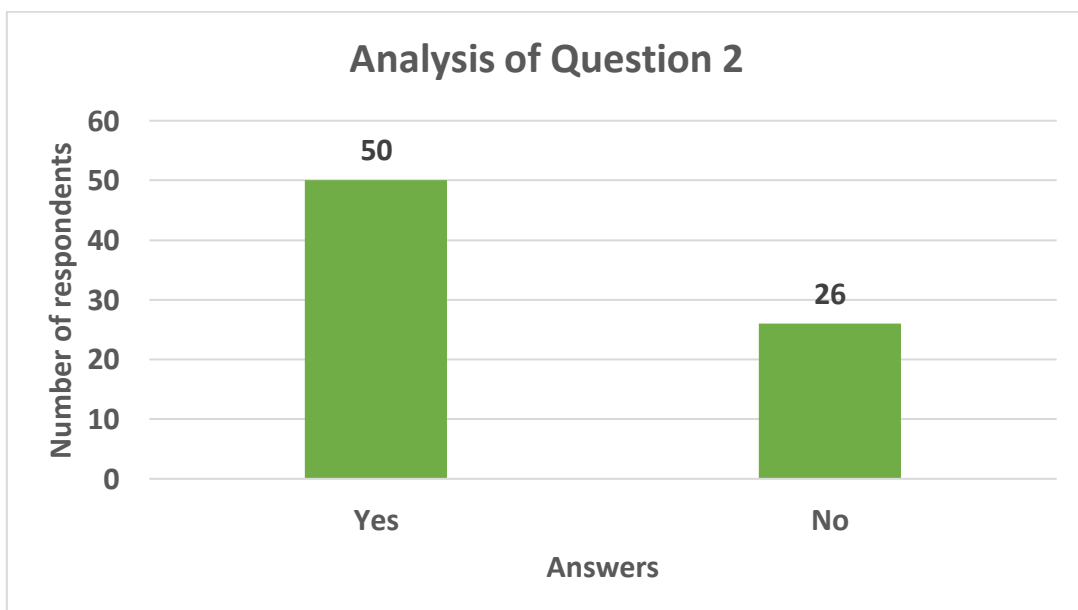
Answers to the main questions asked

(i). GP Surgery

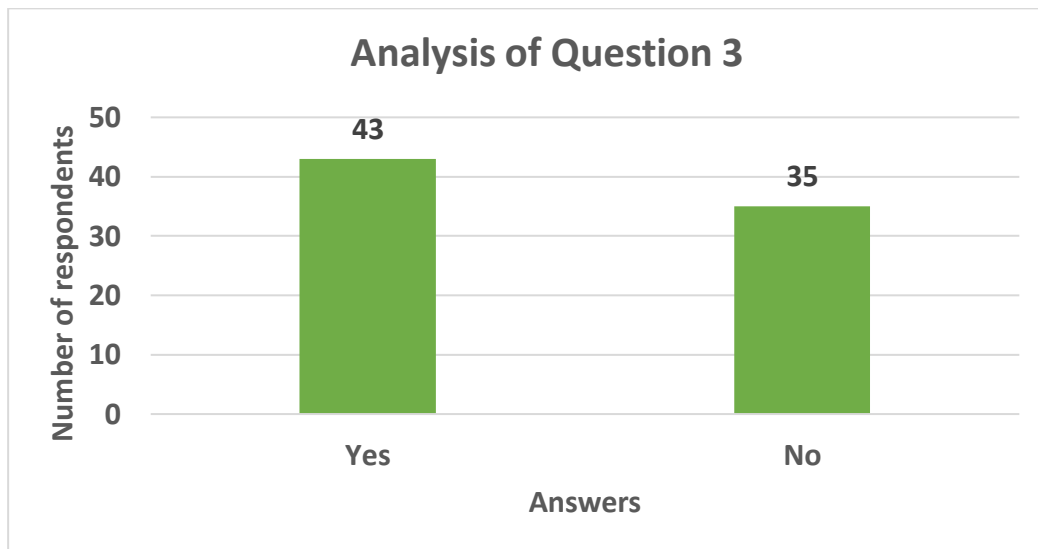
1. Have you been kept informed on what procedures to follow if you need to see your GP / Nurse? **81 responses**



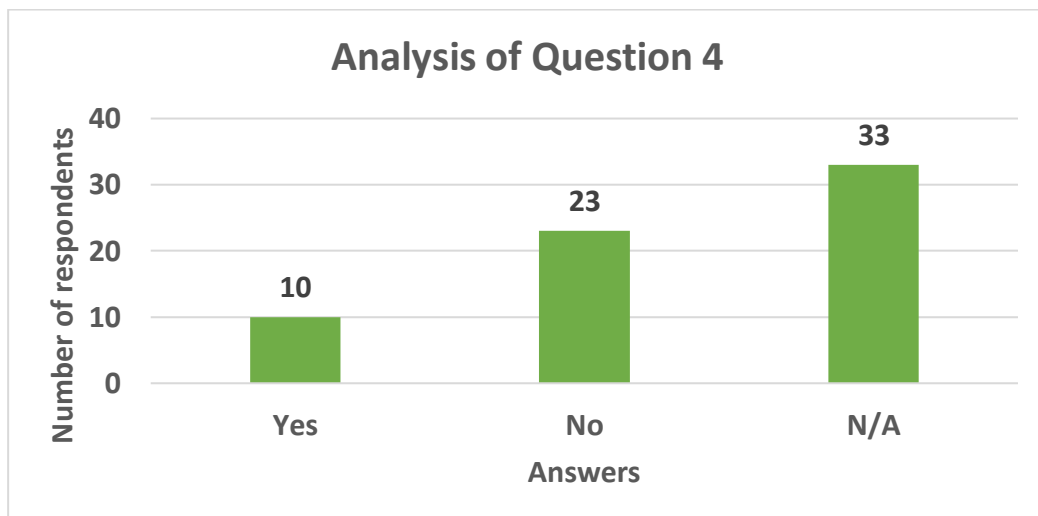
2. Is your surgery still operating its usual hours? **76 responses**



3. Are you still able to get the usual services provided by your Surgery? **78 responses**



4. If you answered **NO** to question 3 above have you been advised on where the service can be provided and how to contact? **66 responses**



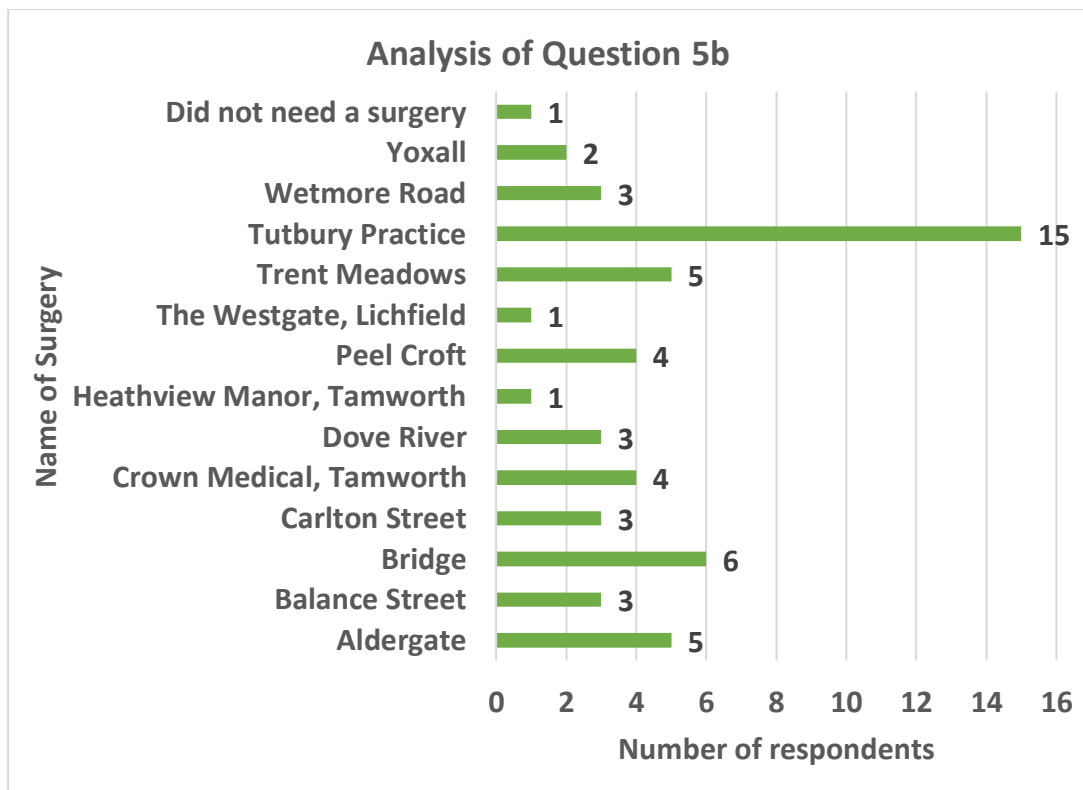
5. What type, of your surgery's normal services, can't you presently obtain? eg. Bloods, injections, blood pressure check-ups etc. **52 responses**. The responses below are as received but have been corrected for spelling and grammar for this report.

- Bloods
- Not sure as haven't needed any input
- Face to face appointments

- N/A
- Bloods
- All are still available with some changes to access
- face to face appointments/examination
- Cortisone injections
- Blood tests
- Bloods, blood pressure, check-ups must wait until September
- Nothing that I know of
- Injections
- Not sure, without requesting
- Ear syringing
- Face to face appointments with GP
- Medication review
- BP for my Mum and examination of my back by a GP
- n/a
- Having ears syringed
- I am type 2 Diabetic and not able to have my blood taken, due to being shielding
- Can't see GP as usual but can have a telephone call
- Not due for any routine Diabetes 6/12 check until August
- No services required.
- Podiatry
- I am unaware of any.
- No routine services at all
- Podiatry
- Bloods, injections, Diabetic 6-month reviews
- BP, Ear Wax Check,
- BP checks, medication review, check ups
- I am not aware of an any restrictions other than a reduced one to one facial meeting with a member of the clinical team.
- As far as I know, routine annual medication reviews have been suspended
- Everything
- Diabetic Nurse consultation
- Bloods and advice by telephone
- Not sure, depends on circumstances
- Asthma checks
- See a GP
- I can get anything I need

- Heart/pulse monitoring
- If treatment was required, they would do it. Had bloods done
- Face to face consultations, so I understand. I have not needed an appointment.
- Diabetes check-up, Injections
- Patient Review in person
- No service needed since the start of the pandemic so far.
- Got Diabetic yearly check-up next month, not sure if this will be one to one with Doctor or over the phone
- Chiropodist
- None

Name of your surgery [Optional] **56 responses**



Total 56

19.65% Lichfield/Tamworth Practices

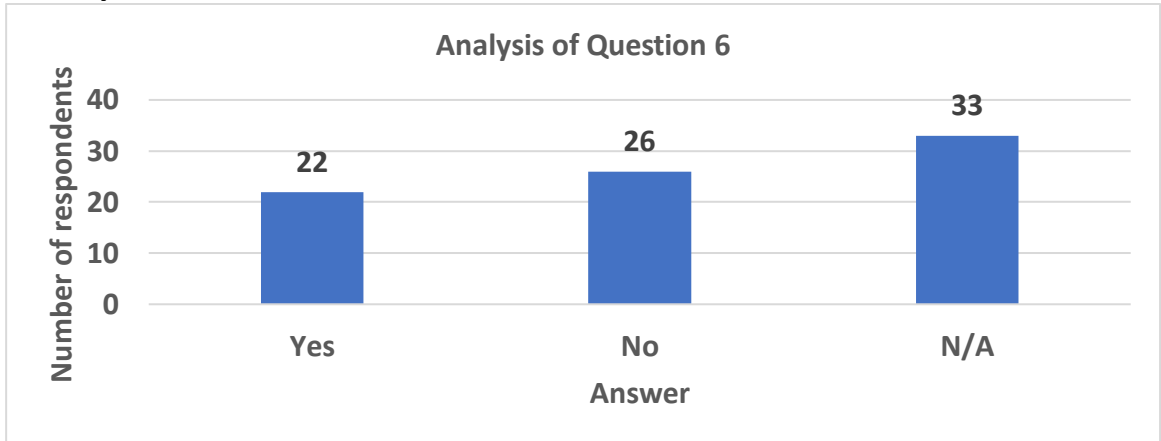
80.35% East Staffordshire Practices.

50% East Staffordshire Practices named, (9).

(ii). Hospital Environment

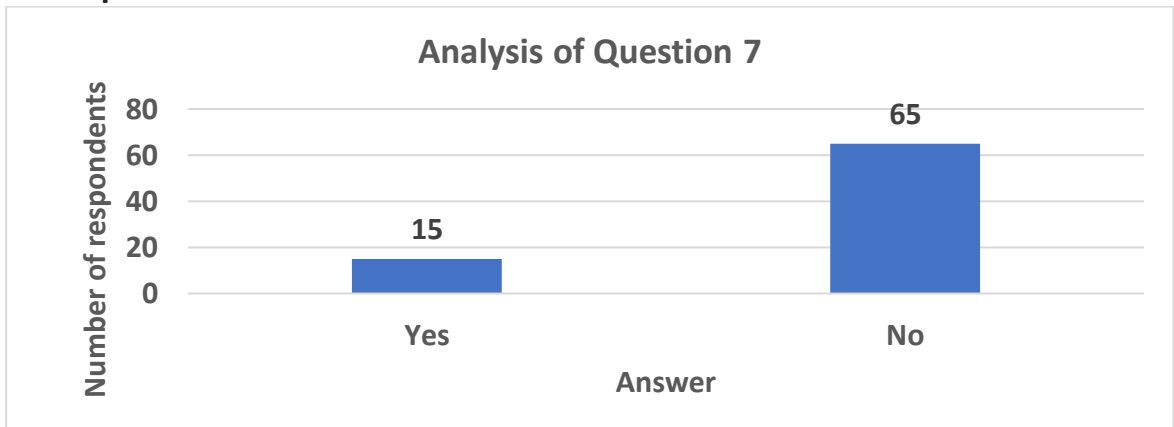
6. Have you been kept informed on what procedures to follow? If you need to see your Consultant / Hospital Nurse etc?

81 responses

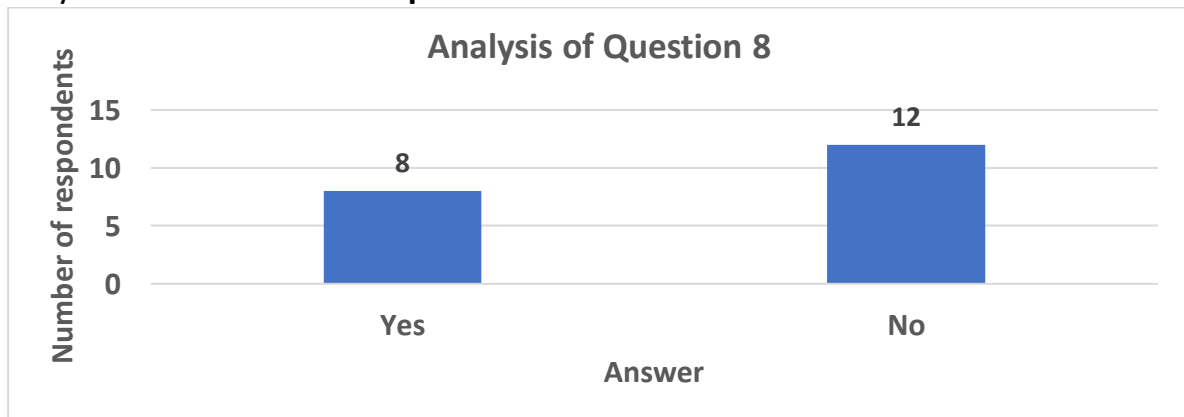


7. Prior to COVID were you receiving regular treatment at the hospital?

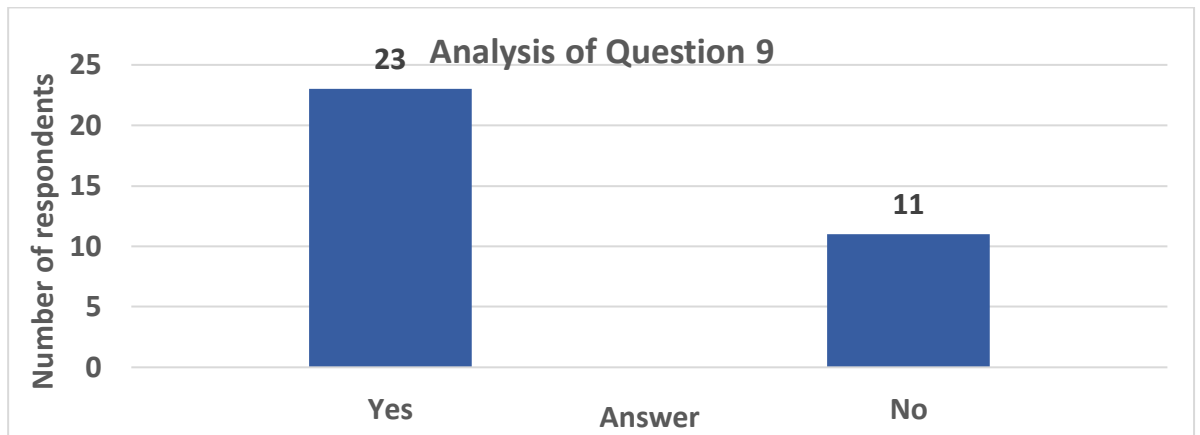
80 responses



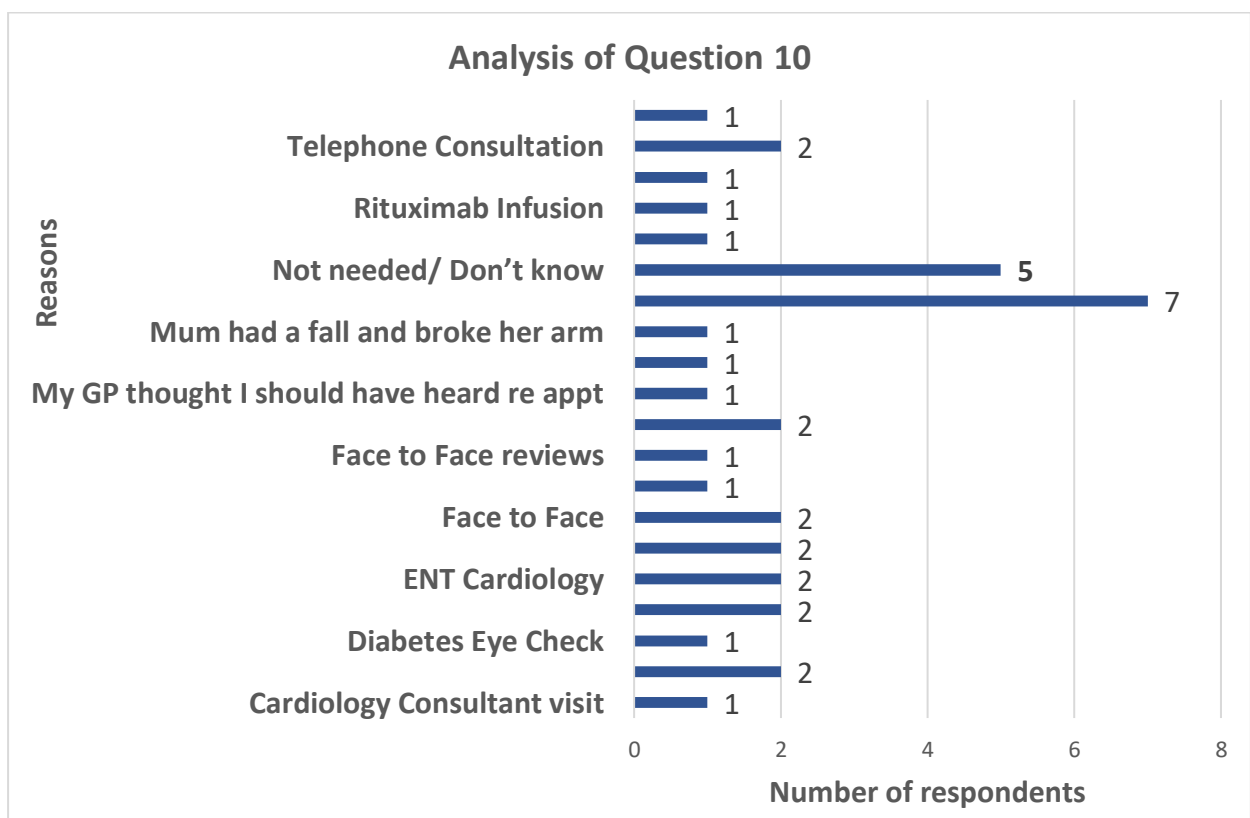
8. If you answered **YES** to the above have you been able to continue with your treatment? **20 responses**



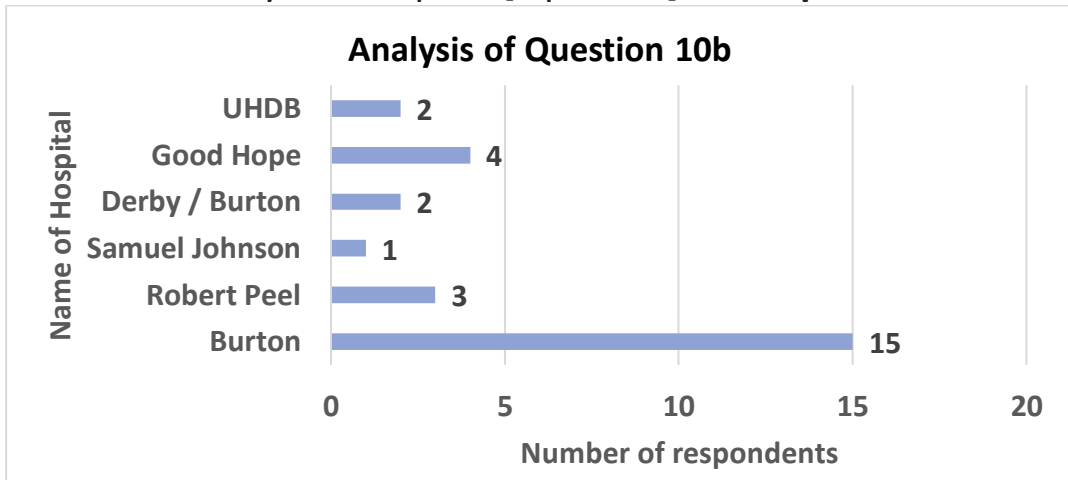
9. If you have had to visit the hospital for whatever reason, blood tests, ongoing treatment etc, were you made fully aware of the procedures to follow prior to the visit? **34 responses**



10. What type, of your hospital's services, current treatment can't you presently obtain? **37 responses**

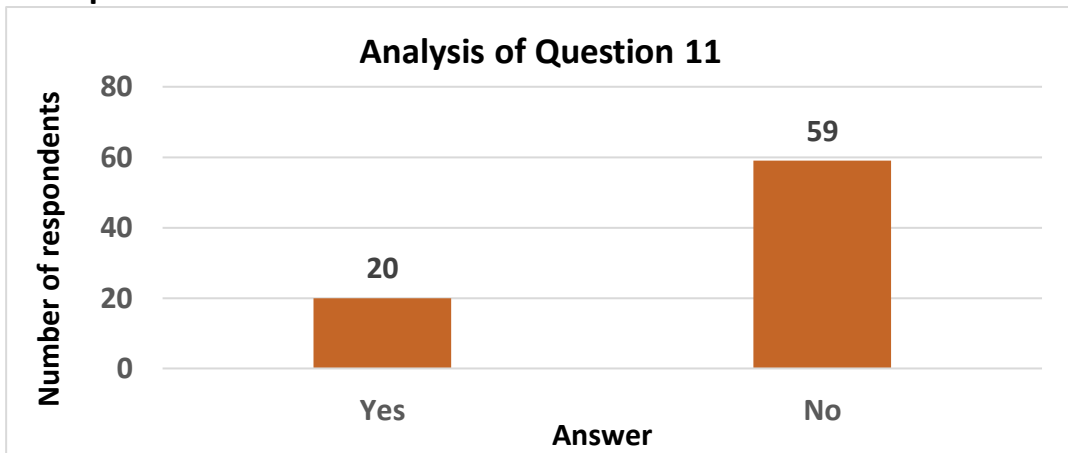


- Name of your hospital [Optional] **27 responses**

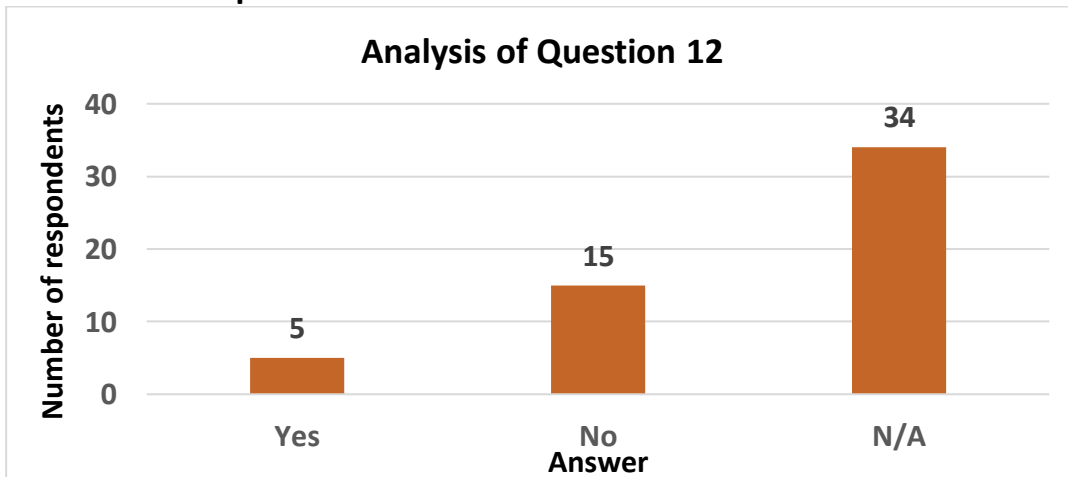


(iii). General

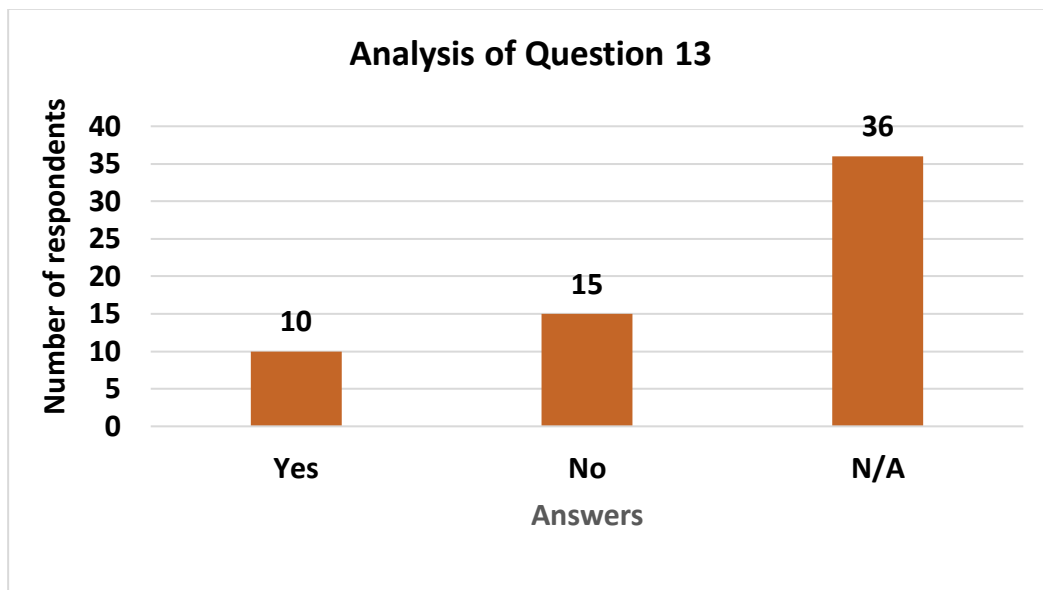
11. Do you use any other NHS services other than your Surgery or Hospital?
79 responses



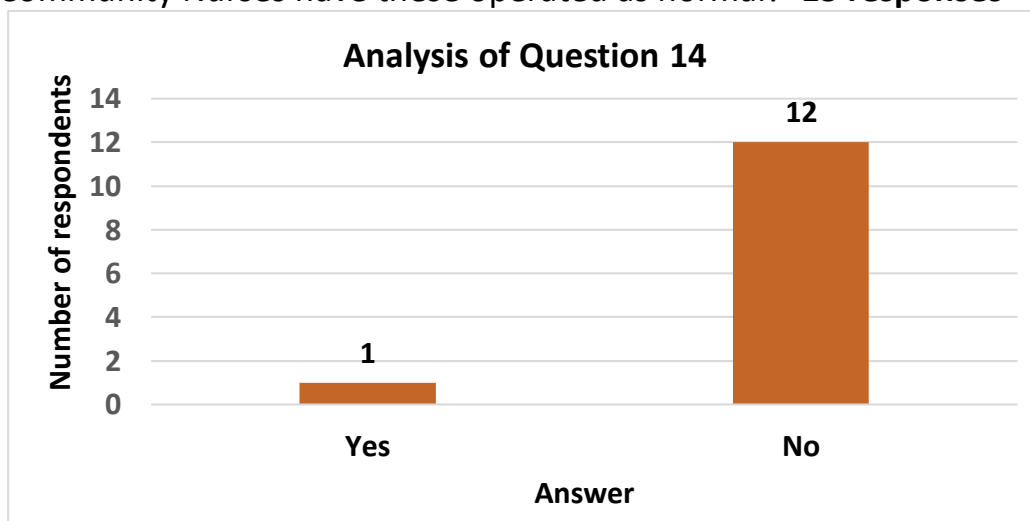
12. If you answered **YES** to Question 11, have you been able to access these services? **54 responses**



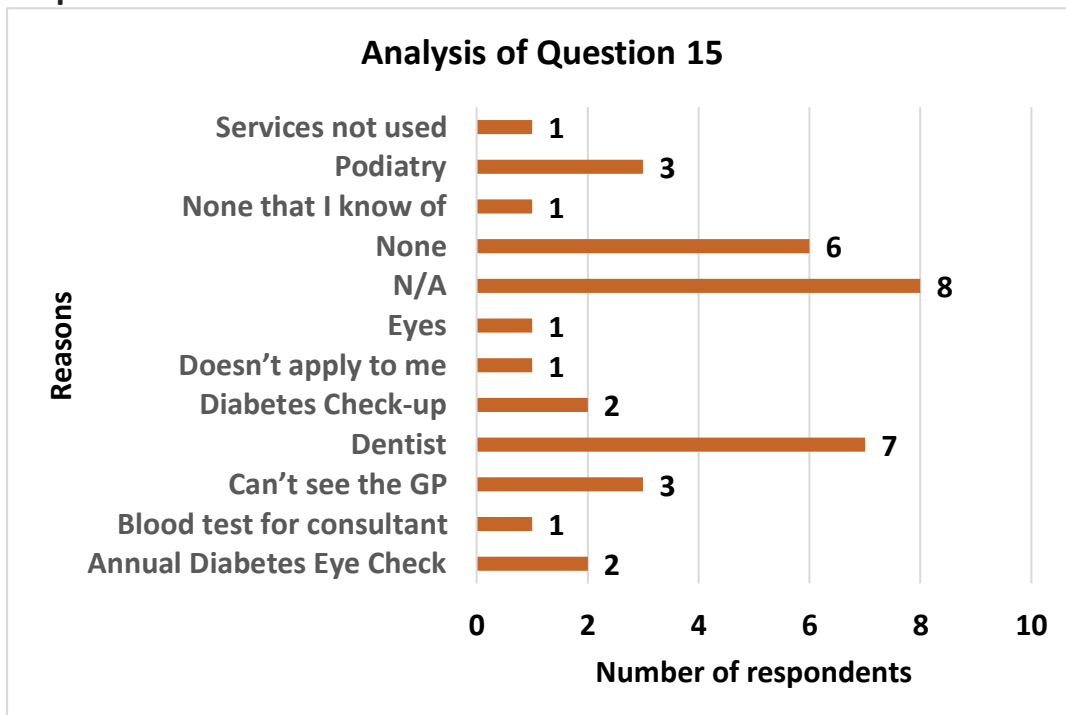
13.If you answered **NO** to Question 11, have you received advice from the service on what to do whilst the service is not operational? **61 responses.**



14.If you receive regular visits from either Carers, District Nurses, Community Nurses have these operated as normal? **13 responses**



What type, of services, can't you presently obtain but have needed? **36 responses.**



15. The effect of COVID and the isolation / lockdown affects people in various ways. Overall, do you consider the situation has affected the following personal thoughts? **54 responses**

- Feeling of Loneliness 5 (9.26%)
- Impact on Mental Health 15 (27.78%)
- Scared and fearful, not only in 34 (62.96%)
 Contacting your local NHS services, but returning
 to normal life after being isolated for so long **54** (**100.00%**)

(iv). Comments received

The 37 comments below are as received but have been corrected for spelling and grammar for this report.

- I was referred to local hospital for what might have been urgent, was seen within two weeks after seeing my GP, all was fine, I was scared to go but was looked after superbly and reassured by all What a service!! How lucky we all are
- Frightened of things being missed as don't get to see GP.
- My GP surgery can be appalling, my mum died of Covid-19 in hospital. I rang for emotional support. The GP showed no empathy at all. The following week I spoke to a locum who was much more understanding and gave me advice on counselling services.
- Since I am an infrequent user of my surgery, I have no idea what services/hours the surgery is working. However, I know that if I phone the surgery, the initial phone introduction will give me my options, or I can look at the surgery website.
- Experienced anxiety re Covid risks for a type 1 diabetic
- A total mess all round
- After so many weeks at home, a little nervous of the future!
- This isn't rocket science.
- We'd like an indication of how long we will be unable to access services we need
- One or two questions might also be better with a N/A answer
- I am lucky I have lots of family who I can talk to and my daughter lives next door. Even so, I feel worried about the future and have some feelings of depression. I have MS and know it is getting worse which adds to this.
- Been unprecedented time, overall feel NHS services have and are doing excellent job. Hindsight always easier but to reflect and feedback constructively is also important. to learn from this time and how we can do better if returns. Biggest issue for me is how social care, specifically care homes were not prioritised at the beginning. Our severely ill, vulnerable elderly population were treated badly as was the staff. Although can understand why hospitals took priority but our elderly, should have been better protected, tested etc, implemented much wider strategic planning, much sooner. Lessons to be learnt.

- Had to have ear wax removed privately as hearing / hearing aids severely affected by build-up of wax.
- In recent times, even, prior to Covid-19, it has been difficult to arrange appointments at my surgery, especially with a specific GP who may be treating and/or monitoring a patient. When a GP says he needs to see a patient in (say) 3 to 4 weeks, there should be some mechanism, where the GP can make sure that can happen!
- As we come out of Lockdown, how are Surgeries & Hospitals contacting their Patients to inform them that Appointments can be made for Treatments? I have elderly Neighbours who used to have Injections into their Knees to help with Arthritis, Chiropodists cutting difficult toenails, bloods taken at home because of limited mobility. These all stopped.
- Trying times do not want any reductions in local services
- Lack of appointments you can make when you need to see a Doctor at the surgery
- I fully understand why hospitals and GP's have had to reduce services and I am pleased they have done so currently. I have been extremely impressed by the measures Gibb lane surgery have taken as I have had to visit the nurse twice during lockdown and have also been Very impressed with the dispensary measures.
- Fortunately, even though I have underlying conditions, I have not had to seek any consultation with a GP or other medical staff. My only difficulty has been long periods of loneliness and the lack of social contact, but I have exercised outdoors and carried out many projects inside and outside of my home which concentrates the mind somewhat. The more use of social media etc has helped to keep in touch with family and friends and facetime and zoom have been a blessing and even an old-fashioned phone call.
- I have no major health concerns and have felt able to contact both surgery and hospital for advice when required and received helpful advice each time
- I felt completely abandoned by the GP service.
- this questionnaire is not clear on several points - needs more N/A options.
- Doctors, nurses, and pharmacists have been extremely helpful, though most of the services have been via telephone, understandably.

- Just wanted to comment on the varying degree of services offered by different GP surgeries. Some are offering almost normal levels of service including Flu Jabs, whilst others have very restricted levels of service.
- Hospital services seem similarly affected, some working hard to communicate, whereas others are making little contact.
- My husband has received excellent care from Lucentis Eye Clinic at Samuel Johnson Hospital throughout this difficult time.
- Need to urgently restore normal access to GP appointments
- Anxiety as well as loneliness
- if I felt lonely, I would ring someone does not wait for them to ring me. There is lots of help there. Perhaps there should be a list of contacts of some kind by your local GP. service so you always have it at home and updated regular. That is a problem people don't know where to start.
- Sorry about my less than useful answers. I fortunately have not needed any medical attention so cannot answer truthfully
- I am afraid that GPs are using Covid19 to expedite facetime consultations
- Some questions have been left blank as they are too vague to apply to myself. It has been a trial, self-isolating, and concern for the future as to whether getting out and about is safe; given that so many people have ignored medical advice.
- I find waiting around to be contacted for a telephone consultation stressful and a somewhat waste of time.
- If I contact the Surgery by phone a recording will give me information on symptoms and procedures to follow if I or my husband had them. Usual routine tests and examinations are suspended.
- I am receiving telephone calls instead of Rheumatology check-up.

(v). Analysis of the results.

- **Initial comments**

The aim of the survey was to gain a snapshot of patients' thoughts and feelings after 3 months of being in the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the survey was primarily aimed at patients within East Staffordshire it was extended to South East during the latter part of the period.

82 responses may appear a little low, but one must remember with the crisis we are currently in people may well have other priorities on their minds. It was also the first survey of this nature the East Staffordshire District Patient Engagement Group had carried out and during the month Healthwatch introduced their own survey which is running until September.

The survey initially was sent out as a word document but thanks to CD of TM PPG, it was changed into a google forms format and reissued. This method made completion and return of the document in an anonymous nature easy and hence meeting the GDPR requirements. From the comments received we will take on board the comments raised in terms of additional tick boxes to some questions such as "not applicable".

Finally, thanks must go to the District Group members and other third parties for all their work in getting the questionnaire circulated.

- **The Numerical Results**

(i). Demographics

The split between male and female responses is in line with that found when PPG's do their patient surveys. Age distribution was as expected with the 80% of completed questionnaires being from patients aged 51 and above. This not surprising bearing in mind the age of people affected by COVID-19 and those age groups who would normally be seeking treatment of one form or another.

(ii). GP Surgeries

The responses to questions 1 and 2 showed that communication from surgeries on procedures and opening times were getting out to an average of 69% of people.

However, when looking at the responses to availability of services, (questions 3 and 4), the feedback is not as positive.

Question 5 related to the type of services patients could not receive and this will be summarised in appropriate section later in this report.

It was pleasing that 68% of all respondents were happy to name their surgery. From the results 9 East Staffs GP Surgeries were recorded, (50% of the total GP Surgeries in East Staffs), and 4 surgeries from the Lichfield and Tamworth area.

(iii). Hospital Environment

Question 6 was as for GP's in that it was asking about being kept informed on procedures to follow. There were several N/A responses so when these are removed the ratio of answers between yes and no becomes 46% YES, 54% NO which is lower than the responses than the positive responses for GP Surgeries.

Questions 7 and 8 concerned continuation of treatment the positive responses for ongoing treatment were 40% against 60% negative. One would expect this when considering the emergency procedures that would have been in place during the first months of COVID-19.

Question 9 was around patients being informed of the procedures to undertake when they had to visit the hospitals for whatever reason. This would cover communications from both GP Surgeries and the Hospitals, and it was pleasing to see that 68% of respondents replied in a positive way.

Question 10 related to the type of hospital services patients could not receive and this will be summarised in appropriate section later in this report.

27 respondents were happy to name their Hospital. From the results 56% indicated Queens, Burton 15% for both Community Hospitals of Lichfield, and Tamworth, 15% Good Hope and the remaining 14% Derby/Burton.

(iv). General

To achieve meaningful analysis of the results under questions 11,12,13 and 14 the N/A answers have been ignored and the %ages being based on Yes and No responses only.

- In terms of question 11, 20 people out of 79 responded that they use other NHS services apart from their surgery / hospital.
- Question 12 asked those 20 if they had been able to access those other services and only 25% indicated they could not.

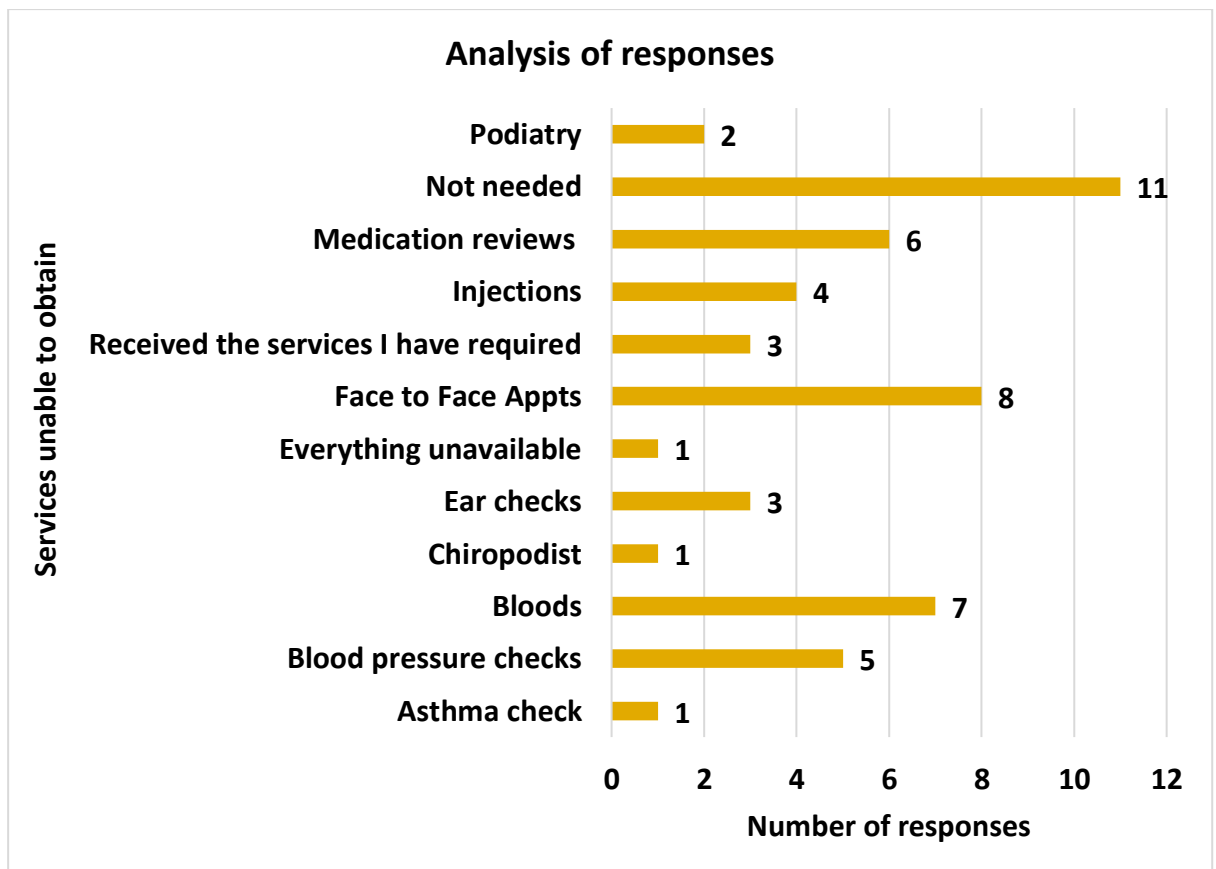
- From those who answered No to question 11 40% answered Yes and 60% No in terms of getting advice on what to do if a service was unavailable. These results are in answer to question 13.
- Question 14 was around the regular visits a patient was receiving from Carers, District and Community Nurses and whether they had operated as normal. 13 people responded and it was alarming to see that only 1 replied YES and 12 answered NO, (8%:92%).

Answers to Questions 15 and 16 are summarised in the next section below.

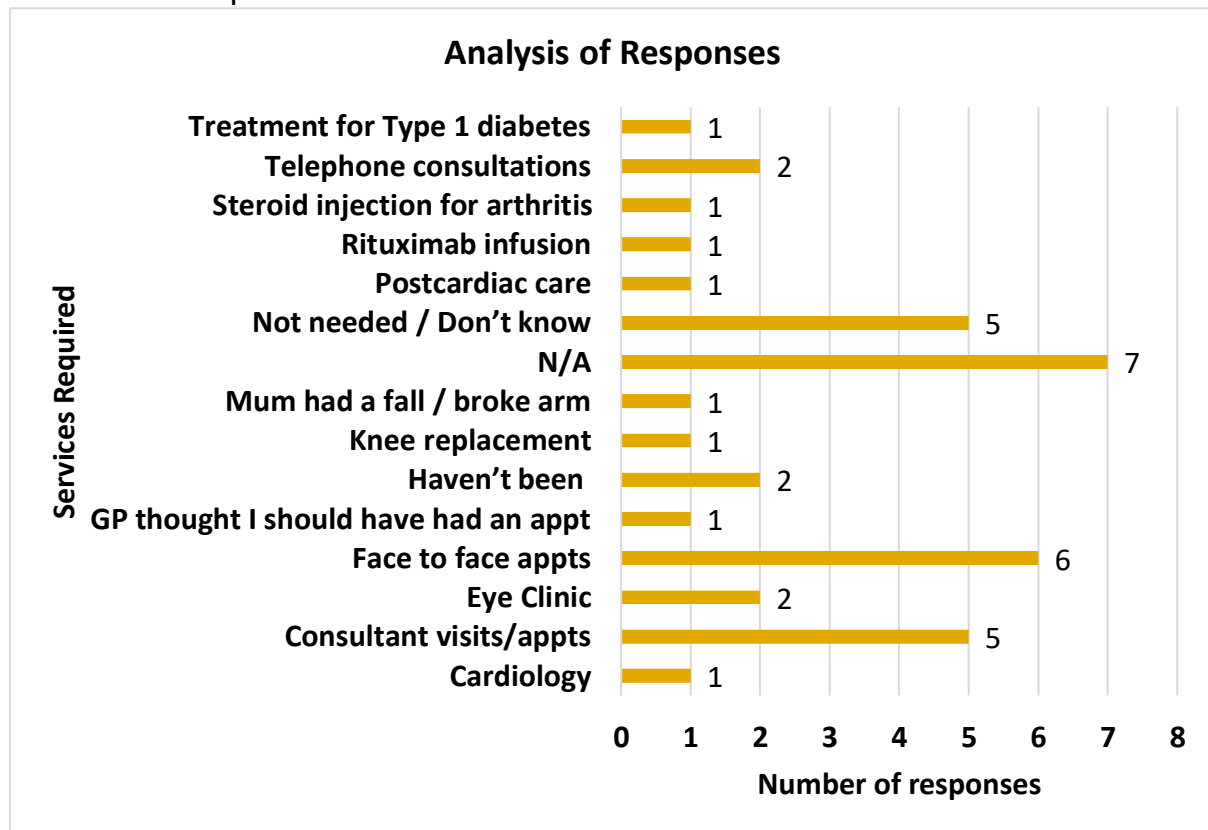
- **Services**

Questions 5, 10 and 15 are relating to services that patients have been unable to obtain, when required, from the appropriate NHS provider. The answers received have all been individually recorded in the main body of responses. However, here they have been grouped together for each question.

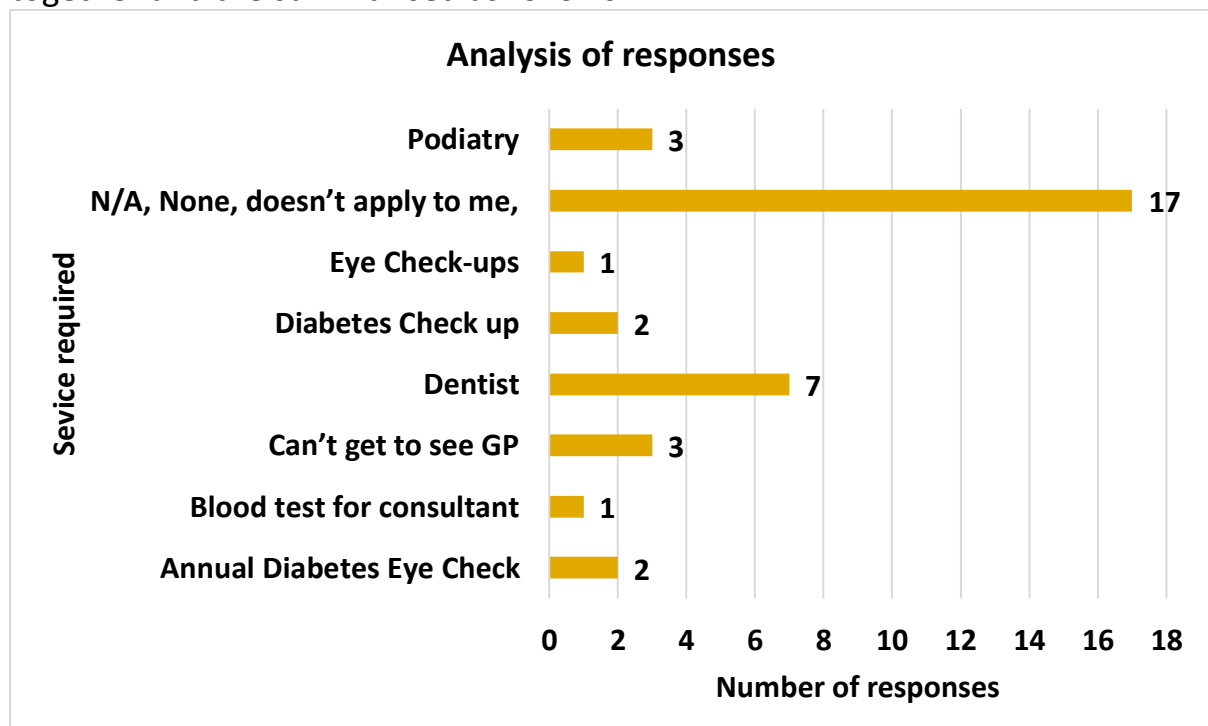
(i). Question 5 which deals with non-availability of routine GP services. 52 responses some of which gave multiple answers. They have been grouped as follows:



(ii). Question 10 related to the type of hospital services patients could not receive. 37 responses which have been summarised as follows:



(iii). Question 15 was concerned with those patients who needed a service but could not obtain. 36 responses which where possible have been grouped together and are summarised as follows



In summary the feedback to Questions 5,10 and 15 didn't flag up anything that we would have not expected to hear bearing in mind the service restrictions under COVID-19.

However, what patients are now telling us is that as restrictions are being lifted in many areas, shopping, eating out, bars, mixing with other people (with the necessary social distancing measures, they can't understand why NHS services have not been more available.

They understand that the NHS services can't return to that as prior to COVID but still find it extremely difficult to get and see someone for health care.

Another concern is with the flu vaccination season approaching what plans are in place especially with the increase in numbers with vaccines being for those aged 50 and above and Year 7 children.

Better communication from the NHS would have been a great asset and although it is recognised that the NHS was at Level 4 the opportunity was lost on involving Patient Participation Groups and local Community Groups from the beginning to assist in this.

Even since measures are lifting slightly, communication in all areas of health service is still poor.

In terms of the answers to the questions it has shown that future questionnaires must be more specific in their questions. This would hopefully reduce the number of N/A, etc answers etc.

- **Long Term Effects of COVID**

(iv). Question 16 was in 3 parts to get feedback from patients on what they considered the effects COVID, social lockdown and restriction on services had meant to them. The full results are shown on page 12

The results are not surprising and tend to follow what communities throughout the UK are generally saying.

27.7% of respondents said Mental Health is a worry as no one knows if this will be a short term or long-term issue for the people concerned. In addition, getting support at an early stage is vital and although some organisations are doing this are, they taking on new clients or concentrating purely on their current clients until some sort of normality returns?

Getting communication out on what mental services are available within our communities is vital during this restoration and recovery stage of the

pandemic. In addition, thoughts must be considered on how people can contact mental health service providers is a second wave of COVID hits.

As can be seen the highest number of responses, 63%, related to patients being scared and fearful both in contacting their local NHS services and going out into the public arena. The lack of communication from day one would be a contributory factor followed by inconsistency of what services people can get. This appears more so with General Practice where there is a variation.

Whilst it is appreciated the advancement in the use of technology has been of assistance to seeking help and advice it must be remembered that there will be a part of our communities will not have this means available to them. There may also be language issues as well.

Finally, the responses to loneliness, (9.3%), should not be ignored. There has been a great deal of excellent community work done via volunteers during lockdown in visiting known residents who live alone. That dedication would have contributed to the lower percentage and all those volunteers should be applauded.

- **Additional Comments Received**

There were 37 additional comments received and they can be seen on pages 11-14 of this report.

Overall, there were both positive and negative feedback on the services they had either received or not received during the pandemic. A lot of the comments have been already been discussed throughout the report so will not re hash what has already been said.

- **Conclusions**

In conclusion the questionnaire has been a useful exercise in getting feedback during a snapshot in time. The main issue that will be facing us, going forward, is the extreme backlog of patient appointments and treatments especially within the secondary care environment. We only hope that these delays have not endangered the long-term health and welfare of those involved

The other concerns going forward include the usual areas that have been expressed prior to COVID and it would be good to see that these will be addressed going forward. These include:

- (i) Accurate and timely communications at all levels and all organisations.
- (ii) More involvement of patients and local community groups. They are there to be of assistance and not a threat as some people tend to think.
- (iii) Clear plans on the way forward especially when dealing backlog of missed appointments, treatments, and restart of services.
- (iv) Ensure all services are communicating the same concise message so there is no ambiguity on what services are available.
- (v) When doing further questionnaires the District Group to ensure correct structure of the questions being asked.

Appendix (i)

Survey Questionnaire

The survey was split into various sections and the details are found below:

A. GP Surgery

1. Have you been kept informed on what procedures to follow if you need to see your GP / Nurse? Yes / No
2. Is your surgery still operating its usual hours? Yes / No
3. Are you still able to get the usual services provided by your surgery? Yes / No
4. If you answered NO to Q3 above have you been advised on where the service can be provided and how to contact? Yes / No
5. What type, of your surgery's normal services, can't you presently obtain? e.g. Bloods, injections, blood pressure check-ups etc.
Part (b) Name of surgery, (optional).

B. Hospital Environment

6. Have you been kept informed on what procedures to follow if you need to see your Consultant / Hospital Nurse etc? Yes / No / N/A.
7. Prior to COVID were you receiving regular treatment at the hospital? Yes / No
8. If you answered Yes to Q7 above have you been able to continue with your treatment? Yes / No
9. If you have had to visit the hospital for whatever reason, blood tests, ongoing treatment etc, were you made fully aware of the procedures to follow prior to the visit? Yes / No
10. What type, of your hospital's services, current treatment can't you presently obtain? Part (b) Name of Hospital, (optional).

C. General

11. Do you use any other NHS services other than your Surgery or Hospital? Yes / No
12. If you answered YES to Q11, have you been able to access these services? Yes / No / N/A
13. If you answered NO to Q12, have you received advice from the service on what to do whilst the service is not operational? Yes / No / N/A
14. If you receive regular visits from either Carers, District Nurses, Community Nurses have these operated as normal? Yes / No

15. What type, of services, can't you presently obtain but have needed?

16. The effect of COVID and the isolation / lockdown affects people in various ways. Overall, do you consider the situation has affected the following personal thoughts?

- Feeling of Loneliness
- Impact on Mental Health
- Scared and fearful, not only in contacting your local NHS services, but returning to normal life after being isolated for so long

Finally, people had the opportunity to add comments at the end of the questionnaire.