



PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 28 September 2021

REPORT TITLE:	GP CONSULTATIONS
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The report provides the opportunity for the Partnerships Committee to discuss and consider access to General Practitioner (GP) consultations.

The matter of access to GP appointments was raised at Council on 6 September 2021 as part of a question to the Chair of Partnerships Committee, and consequently the Chair and Group Spokespersons of Partnerships Committee have agreed that the matter be scrutinised by the Committee.

The matter affects all wards in the borough.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Partnerships Committee is recommended to note the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The report has been produced to enable the Partnerships Committee to undertake its scrutiny function in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act 2006.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Another option would be to not undertake scrutiny on the issue. The issue was raised at Council and has been identified as something for the Partnerships Committee to discuss and scrutinise.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 At Council on 6 September 2021, Cllr Allan Brame put a question to Councillor Jean Robinson as Chair of Partnerships Committee relating to access to GP consultations. The question is listed at section 3.2.
- 3.2 “The Chair of the Partnerships Committee is probably aware that of 45% of Wirral’s patients have to wait more than two days for a GP appointment and that 42.5% are unable to have a face-to-face appointment. While it was understandable that face-to-face appointments couldn’t go ahead at the height of the pandemic, if she agrees that both surgeries and residents are now being let down by a Government that is failing to grapple with rising waiting times and a backlog of people waiting for treatment, will she now agree to make representations to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, urging him to act urgently to train more GPs and other primary healthcare staff such as nurses and physios; increase funding; and fully support our practices?”
- 3.3 In response, the Chair undertook to refer the matter to Partnerships Committee in order for the Committee to be able to scrutinise it.
- 3.4 In order to inform the Committee and aid the discussion, the information detailed in sections 3.5 to 3.8 was provided by Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group.
- 3.5 During the Pandemic a Total Triage Model was introduced in practices nationally, as a way to reduce patient footfall into practices to minimise virus transmission between other patients and practice staff. Total Triage means a patient’s need or enquiry to access primary care services is received via telephone or online through an on-line consultation, which then allows practices to triage patients to determine how best to meet a patient’s needs which has, and continues to include, face to face consultations. All practices have remained open for business throughout this unprecedented time. Practices are also providing a combination of appointment types, especially with the consideration that not all patients are able to access their practice digitally (online) i.e. the elderly.
- 3.6 The below table and graphs of Wirral GP practice data, shows the various appointment activity and how face to face appointments have increased with telephone appointments decreasing.

Attendances 2020

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov
Digital	2,900	3,476	5,556	9,047	8,963	10,138	9,251	8,798
Face to Face	7,487	9,202	14,063	18,955	18,676	29,274	27,392	22,503
Home Visit	1,399	1,720	2,155	2,153	1,754	2,003	2,052	1,989
Telephone	23,185	24,304	27,365	23,964	19,801	23,311	24,133	24,149
Grand Total	34,971	38,702	49,139	54,119	49,194	64,726	62,828	57,439

Attendances 2021

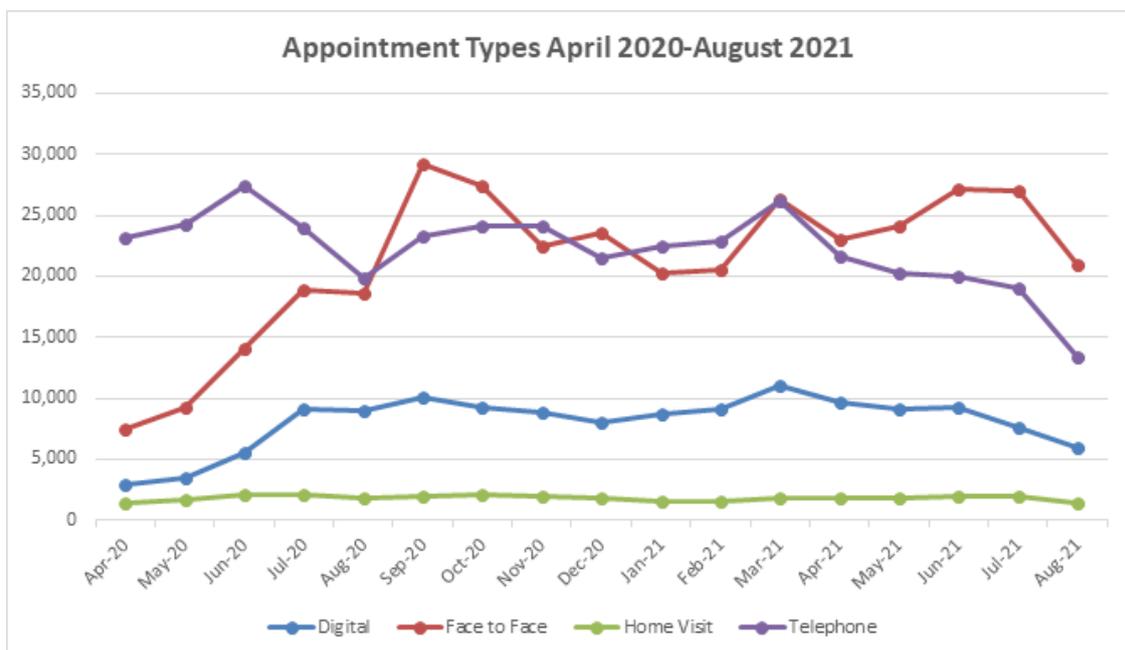
	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug
Digital	8,751	9,129	11,052	9,607	9,056	9,206	7,626	5,894
Face to Face	20,270	20,553	26,386	23,051	24,089	27,211	27,055	20,978
Home Visit	1,597	1,591	1,783	1,858	1,817	1,918	1,964	1,381
Telephone	22,451	22,923	26,224	21,683	20,300	19,951	19,074	13,343
Grand Total	53,069	54,196	65,445	56,199	55,262	58,286	55,719	41,596

Proportion 2020

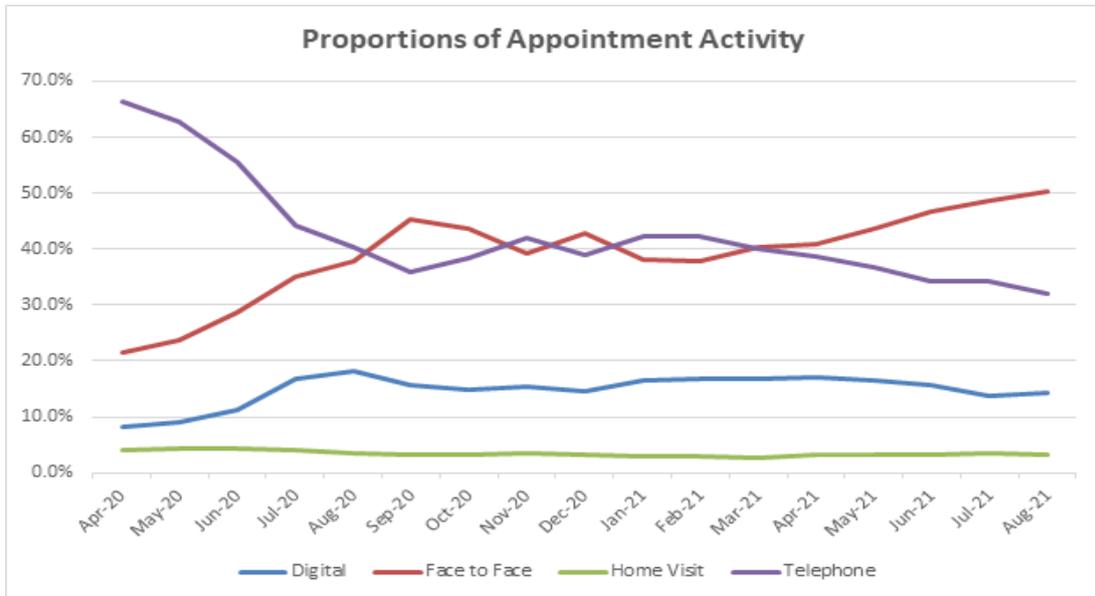
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Digital	8.3%	9.0%	11.3%	16.7%	18.2%	15.7%	14.7%	15.3%
Face to Face	21.4%	23.8%	28.6%	35.0%	38.0%	45.2%	43.6%	39.2%
Home Visit	4.0%	4.4%	4.4%	4.0%	3.6%	3.1%	3.3%	3.5%
Telephone	66.3%	62.8%	55.7%	44.3%	40.3%	36.0%	38.4%	42.0%

Proportion 2021

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug
Digital	16.5%	16.8%	16.9%	17.1%	16.4%	15.8%	13.7%	14.2%
Face to Face	38.2%	37.9%	40.3%	41.0%	43.6%	46.7%	48.6%	50.4%
Home Visit	3.0%	2.9%	2.7%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.5%	3.3%
Telephone	42.3%	42.3%	40.1%	38.6%	36.7%	34.2%	34.2%	32.1%

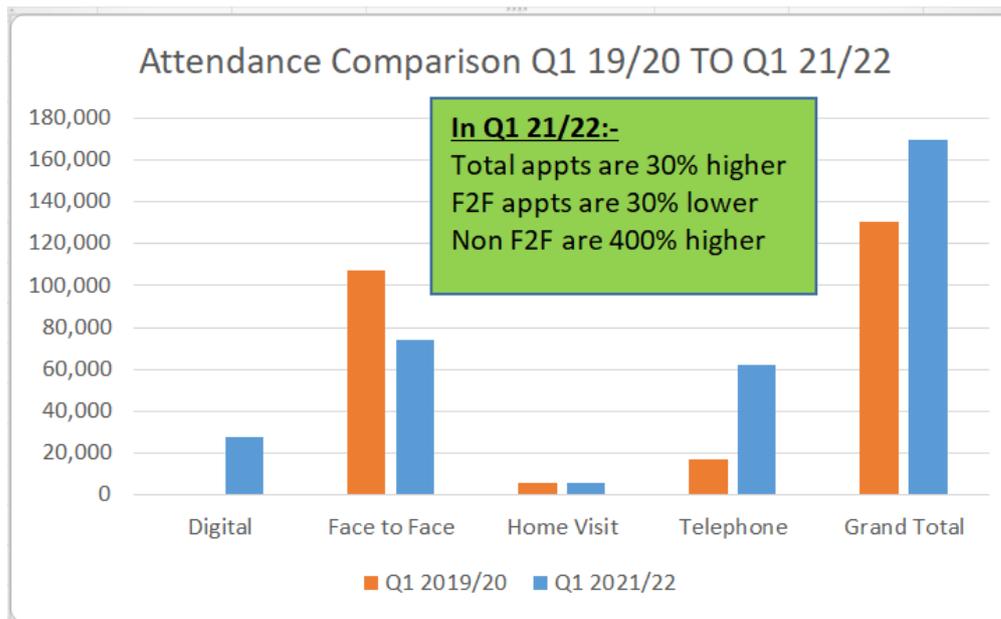


Graph displaying appointment types from April 2020 to August 2021



Graph displaying appointment types from April 2020 to August 2021

- 3.7 The information provided is based on a population of 23 practices who have been fully validated by the Apex data team. August 2021 only relates to the period 1st August to 24th August.
- 3.8 In addition, additional appointments across multiple GP practices called Extended Access (not necessarily where the patient is registered) was re-purposed at the start of the pandemic to establish GP COVID Hubs across Wirral to manage suspected COVID positive patients from all practices. Thankfully due to the successful Vaccination Programme to-date, practices are now able to re-introduce extended access appointment capacity, as demand upon the Hubs reduces. Recent data on Wirral GP appointment capacity shows the overall number of appointments are back to pre-pandemic levels, however, understandably patient demand has increased, with additional demand upon GP practices via the digital route of online consultations in particular.
- 3.9 The graph below shows the attendance comparison pre-pandemic. The data collection system Apex did not collect the same level of data in the same format in 2019, but the data available shows that:
- Total GP contacts increased
 - The number of face to face appointments has increased since the first lockdown, but is currently 30% below the pre-pandemic level
 - Telephone and digital appointments increased at the start of lockdown, have subsequently reduced, but remain higher (+400%) than pre-pandemic levels.



Graph displaying GP attendance comparisons from quarter 1 of 2019/20 and quarter 1 of 2021/22

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications to the Council in relation to GP services.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Partnerships Committee is charged to undertake responsibility for the Council's responsibilities for scrutiny as stated in the Health and Social Care Act 2006 as amended. This includes the functions to investigate major health issues identified by, or of concern to, the local population.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no direct resource implications to the council arising from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There is a risk that the Council does not fulfil its statutory duty for scrutiny as stated in the Health and Social Care 2006. This report enables the Partnerships Committee to undertake that function.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The report has been produced for information and to enable further debate and discussion by members of the Partnerships Committee. Colleagues in Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group have contributed to the report by providing further detail on GP appointments. A member of the GP Federation has been invited to speak to the Committee.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 It is acknowledged that the way in which people access GP Services can have an impact on the use of vehicles and therefore the environment.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no direct community wealth implication arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Health and Social Care Act 2006

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date