

# PHLEBOTOMY SURVEY



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# Introduction

## Background

Kingston Hospital contacted Healthwatch Richmond to conduct a survey that would help understand better the needs of patients in terms of blood tests appointments. The aim of the initiative is to simplify the phlebotomy booking process as well as the results process for patients and clinicians alike.

## Our role

We were approached by Kingston Hospital to assess the patient experience of the pilot project.

The **aim** was to collect patient's views on their phlebotomy experience, in order to better understand patients' needs and preferences.

## Healthwatch

[Healthwatch Richmond](#) is the independent champion for health and social care services across the London Borough of Richmond. We led on survey design, promoting it and collecting responses, analysing the qualitative and quantitative data and writing the final report.

## Methodology

Originally the data collection method was for Sangix - the phlebotomy booking system provider - to email each person after they had booked a phlebotomy appointment. Due to technical issues, the message in the email was not prominent, and insufficient responses were collected through this route. For this reason we decided to collect data via a different communications strategy.

Printed posters with QR codes linked to the survey were placed in Kingston Hospital waiting rooms. The survey was promoted via the Healthwatch Richmond email bulletins and social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook and Twitter) and those of our partners.

In total, 190 people responded to the survey:

- 1 respondent scanned the QR code in Kingston Hospital
- 3 respondents via the Kingston Hospital website
- 13 respondents via the SANGIX confirmation email
- 19 respondents via Kingston Hospital social media
- 33 respondents via Healthwatch Richmond communications
- 121 respondents via our K&R partners communications

## Demographics

The sample reflects the demographics<sup>1</sup> of the borough<sup>2</sup> in age and ethnic diversity.

### Limitations:

- A lack of representation of people age 18-24 (1.81%) and 85+ (3.81%)
- An over-representation of women respondents (78.18%)
- An over-representation of respondents with a long-term condition (50.30%).

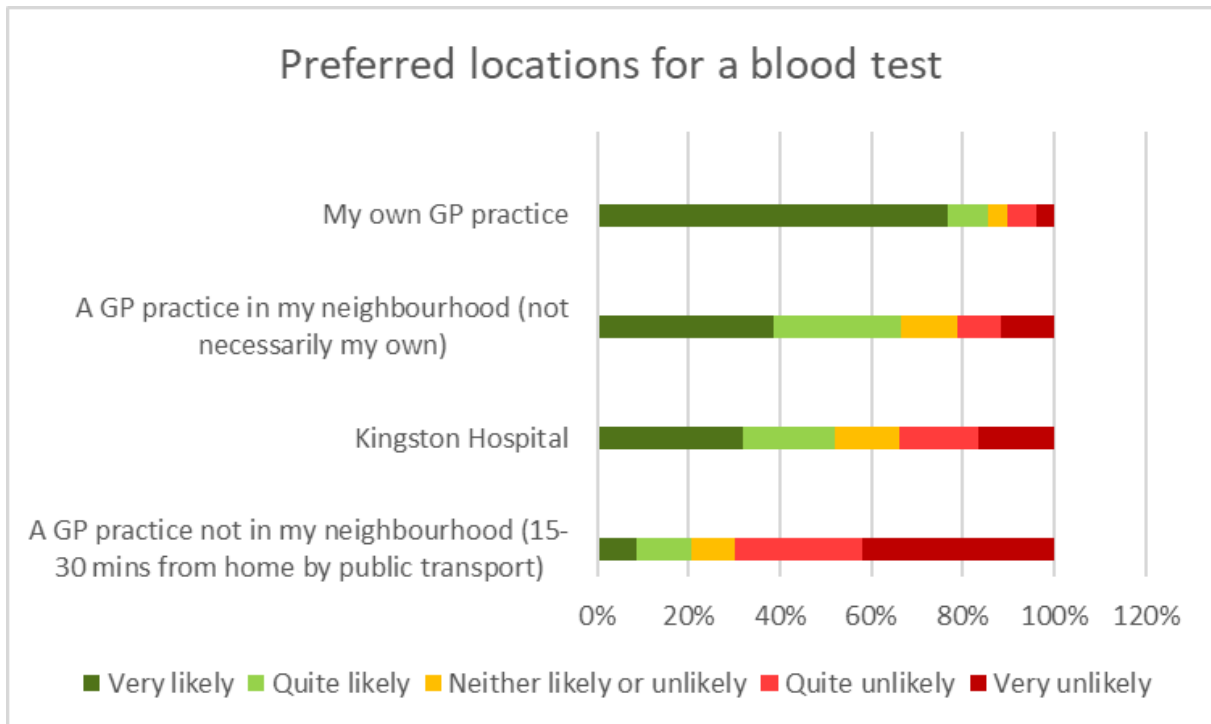
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.datarich.info/data-catalog-explorer/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/22834/richmond\\_jsna\\_people.pdf#page=8](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/22834/richmond_jsna_people.pdf#page=8)

## Key Findings

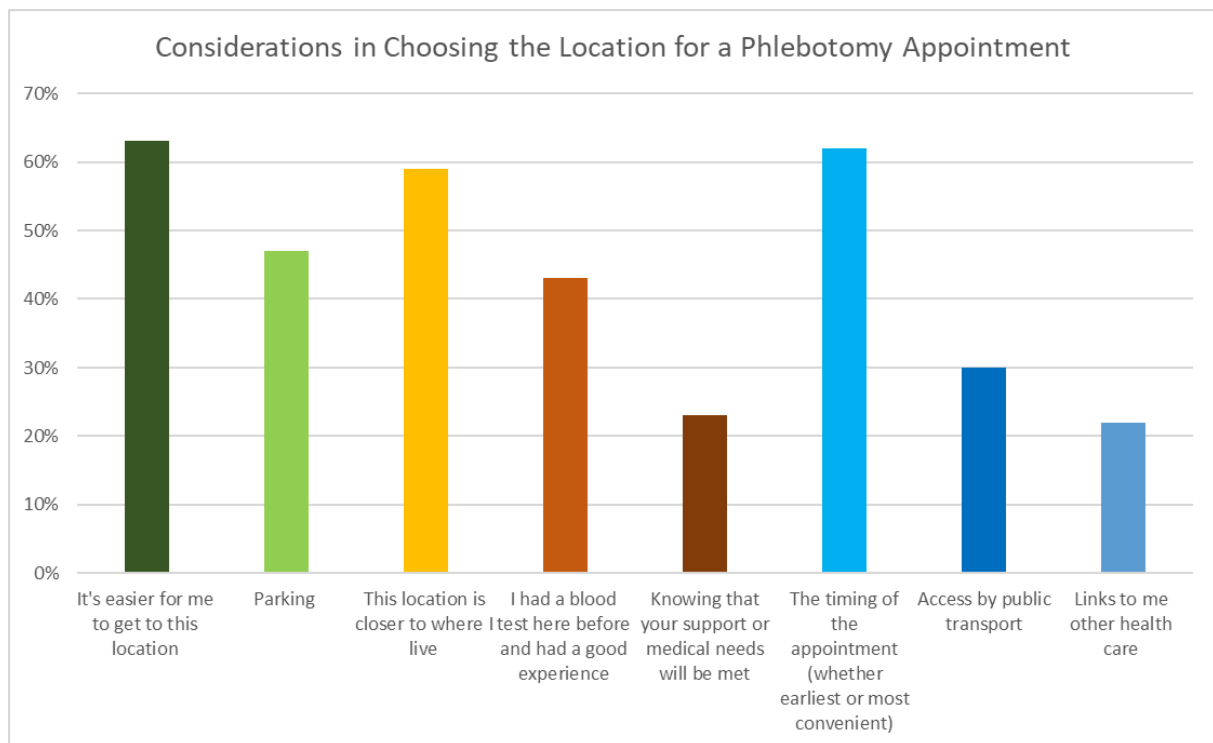
How likely would you be to choose the following for a blood test if it were an available option? (Q1)



Respondents were much more likely to book a blood test at their GP practice or a practice in their neighbourhood than at Kingston Hospital. Whilst most would be likely to take up an appointment at a GP practice in their neighbourhood, they were *unlikely* to make use of appointments more than 15 minutes away from their own homes. This demonstrates considerable appetite for phlebotomy provided in the community at a neighbourhood level.

It is noted that the pilot offered phlebotomy at 3 sites across Richmond and Kingston. For many people these locations would have been outside of the 15 minutes that they were willing to travel.

## Why people choose a specific location for having bloods taken (Q2)



The main reasons listed in favour of local services were the following:

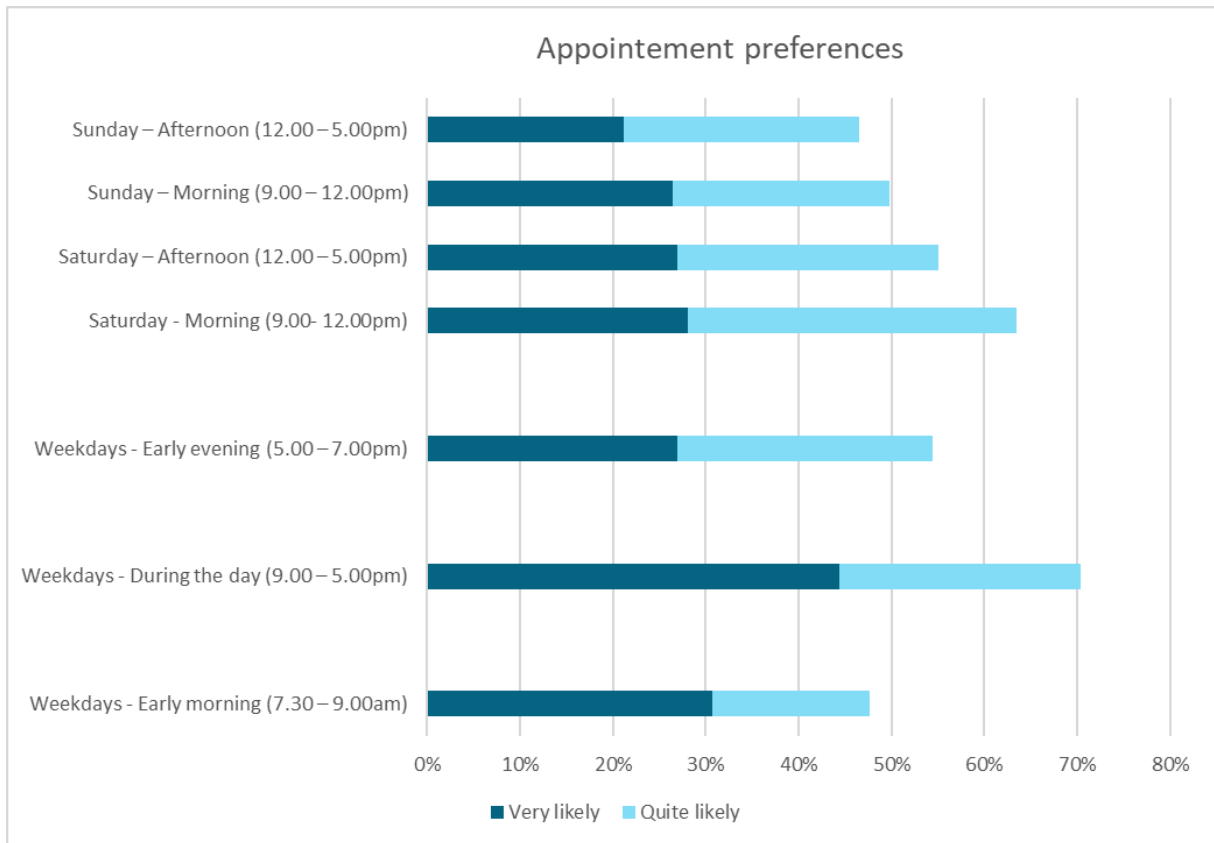
1. It's easier to get to the location (62.96%)
2. The timing of the appointment (whether earliest available date or most convenient) (62.43%)
3. The location is the closest to where the respondent lives (58.73%)
4. Parking availability (47.09%)
5. The respondent had blood test there before and had a good experience (43.39%)
6. Access by public transport (30.16%)
7. Knowing that their support or medical needs will be met (23.28%)
8. Links to their other health care (21.69%)

The four first answers seem to indicate that convenience and a nearby location are primary considerations in choosing a phlebotomy appointment. It is also interesting to note that between those 8 possible answers, the responses were evenly distributed across age categories, and also evenly distributed between able bodied people and people living with a disability or a long-term condition.

Moreover, the comments point in the same direction: convenience. They indicate that geographic proximity is a primary consideration in the choice for a phlebotomy appointment. Indeed, most comments were about the importance of local services, answering that they would go to a *"local pharmacy"*, a *"local walk-in clinic"*, a *"local health centre"*, a *"local hospital"*, with many occurrences of the adjective *"local"*. Additionally, whilst we did not specifically ask about them, travel time and cost were mentioned several times, including parking space, parking charges and ULEZ prices (see page 15 - *Specific comments about transport*).

One respondent mentioned specific labs for blood tests that he/she came across outside of the UK : *"Other countries have the ability to go to collection centres that are owned and run by the laboratories conducting the analysis"*, and we thought it might be food for thought for phlebotomy locations.

### Time preferences for phlebotomy appointments (Q3)

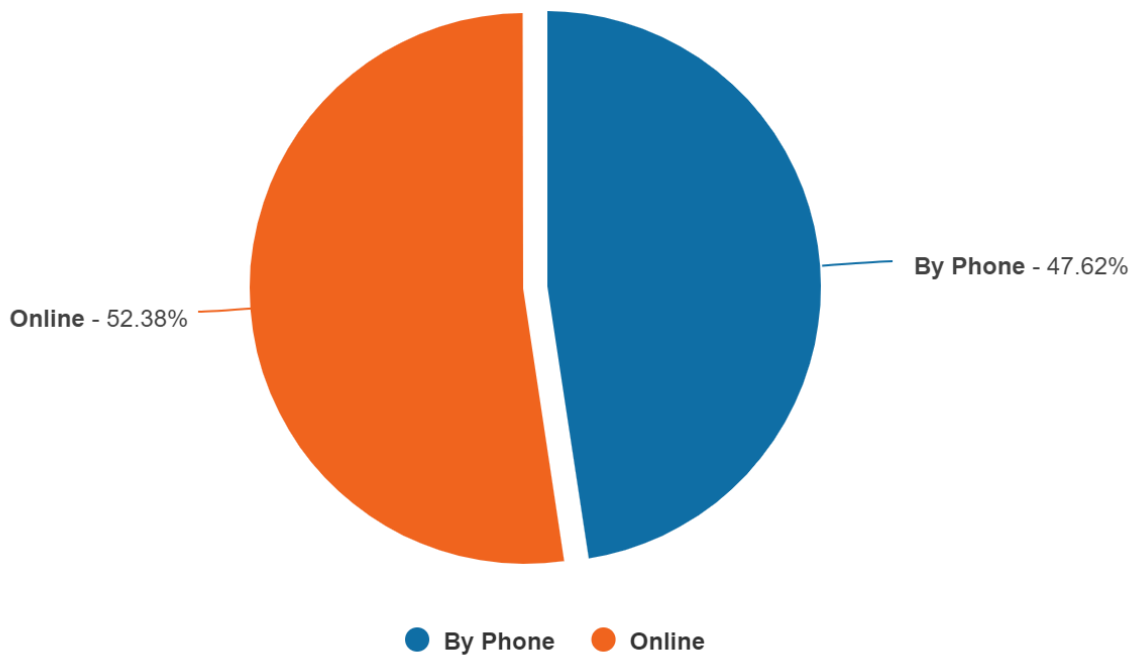


The results about the time preferences for an appointment show an almost even distribution between weekdays and weekends. This finding was consistent across all demographic groups. It is notable that during the pilot, appointments were limited to weekday mornings and would therefore had appealed to limited numbers of people.



## Booking (Q4)

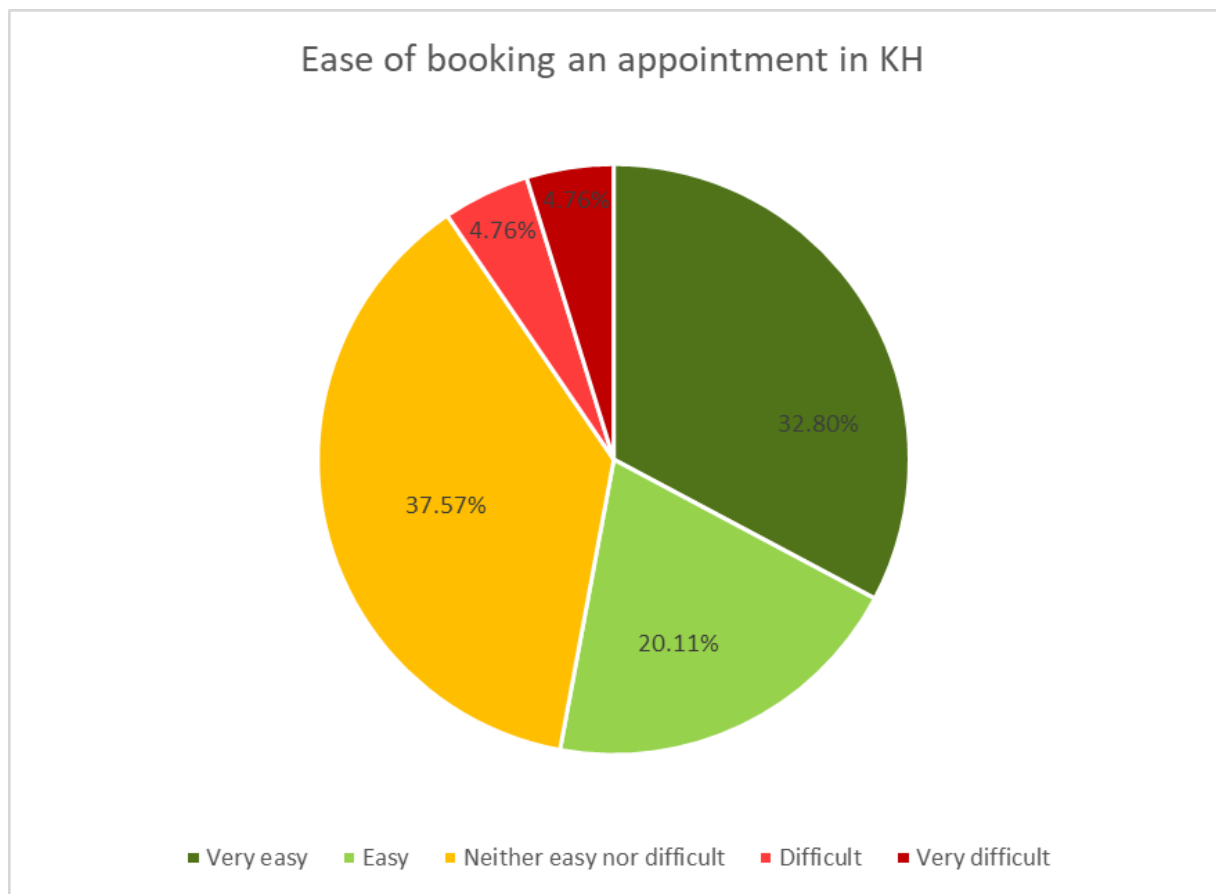
How did you book your last phlebotomy appointment?



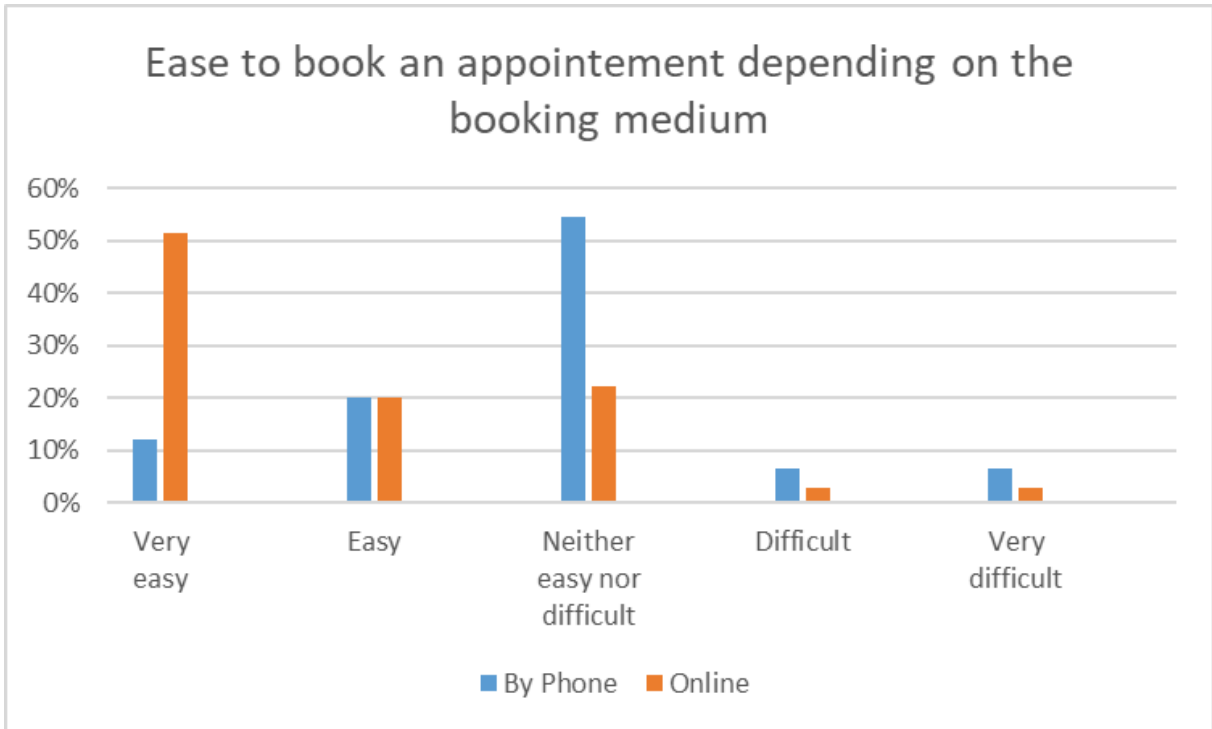
Question 4 focused on the channel used to book the appointment. The distribution is almost evenly split between phone (47.62%) and online (52.38%) bookings. This finding underlines the importance of both platforms for patients according to their abilities and preferences. These results support the findings and comments of the following questions (Q5 and Q6).

Should local phlebotomy be offered in the future, it should be bookable by both phone and online to avoid creating inequalities of access.

## Ease of the booking process in Kingston Hospital (Q5)



The experience of booking was predominantly positive: 52.91% of the respondents found the process *very easy* or *easy*. 37.57% had a neutral experience of booking and found it *neither easy nor difficult*. Lastly, 9.52% of the respondents qualified the process as *difficult* or *very difficult*.



For the people booking via phone, 38% found the process *easy* or *very easy*, and 13.4% found it *difficult* or *very difficult*. In parallel, for the people using the booking website, 72% of them found the experience *easy* or *very easy*, versus 6% finding it *difficult* or *very difficult*. In terms of age demographics, the respondents who had answered *difficult* or *very difficult* were evenly distributed across all age categories.

The analysis of the comments allowed us to better understand how to improve the service.

### **a. Online booking system**

Several comments referred to **technological literacy**:

*"I think it is very hard for those who are not good online though"*

*"Can't do things online properly don't understand"*

*"I need paper letters as I don't have access to email"*

It appeared that some patients had **trouble booking appointments for other members of their family**, especially children:

*"System doesn't allow multiple user profiles on one email address which makes it difficult to organise appointments for my children".*

One patient was **not able to book several appointments** on the same day, despite the doctor's prescription:

*"I was asked to book 2 appointments 2 hours apart by my GP, the online system is capped at 1 appointment."*

### **b. Phone Booking system**

Two comments were about the **complexity of the phone booking system**:

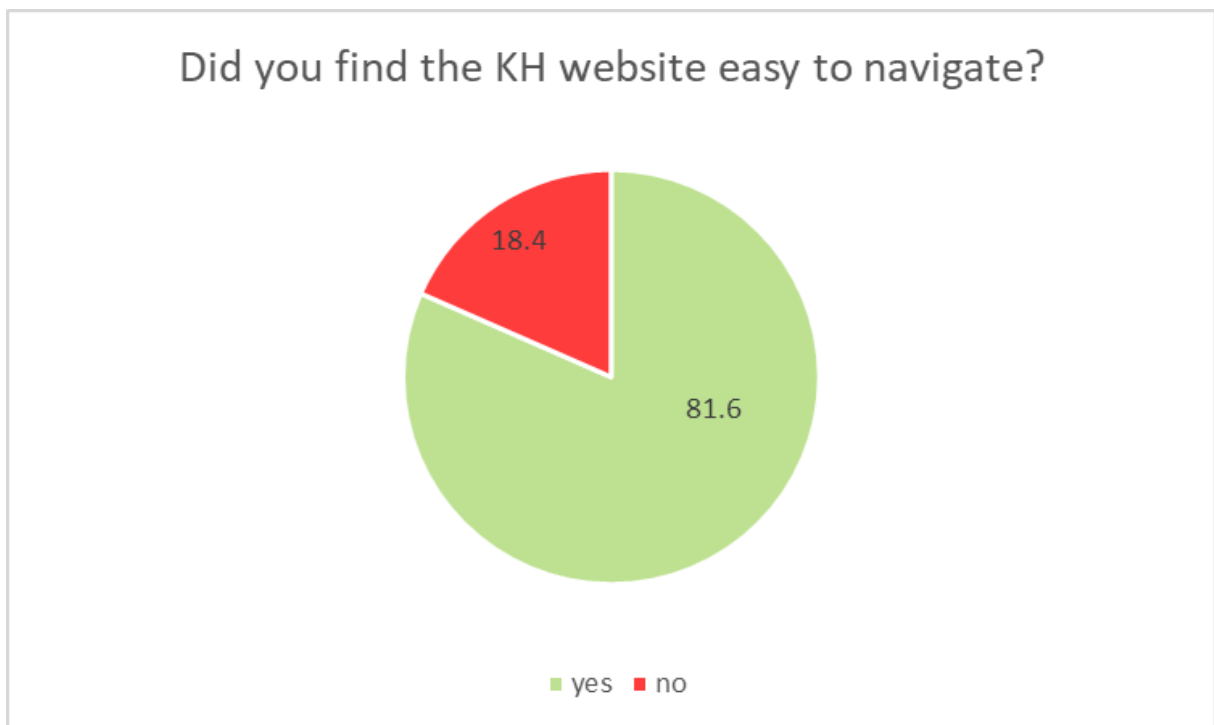
*"and phone line was just a robot with no option to speak to a human..."*

*"Phone system is a nightmare"*

One user suggested that **integrating booking with the NHS App** would be helpful:

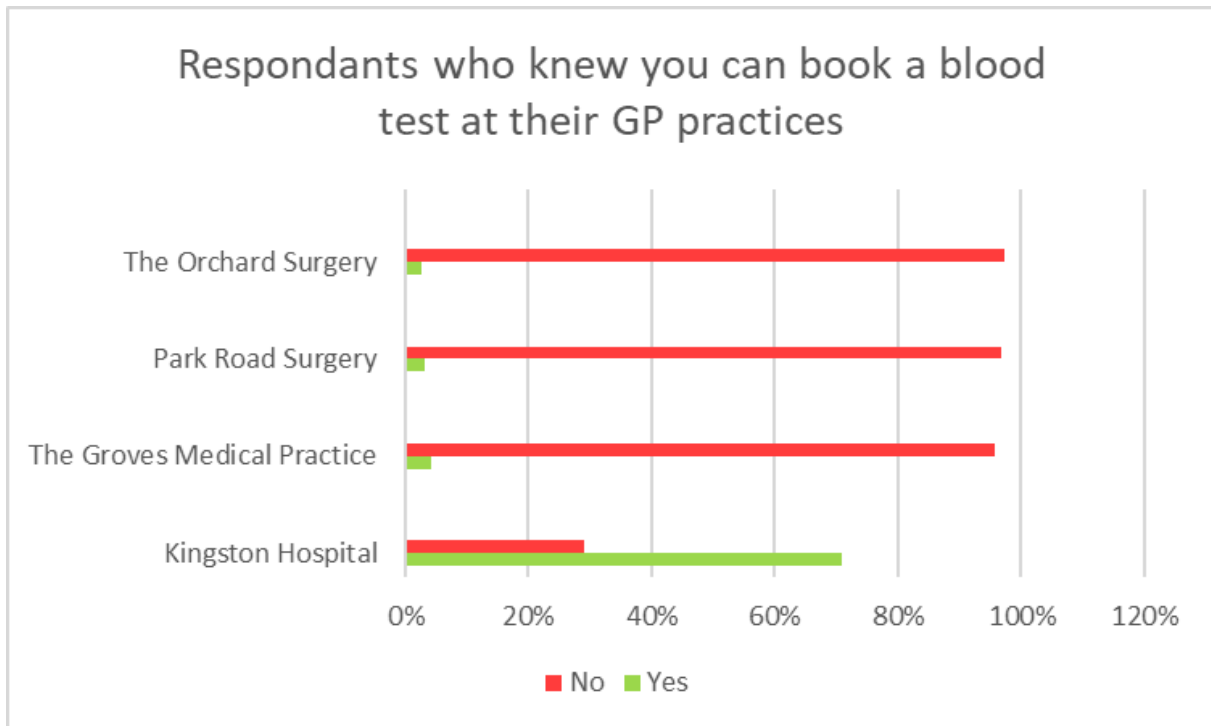
*"it would be good if it was better integrated with the NHS app."*

## Navigating the Kingston Hospital website (Q6)



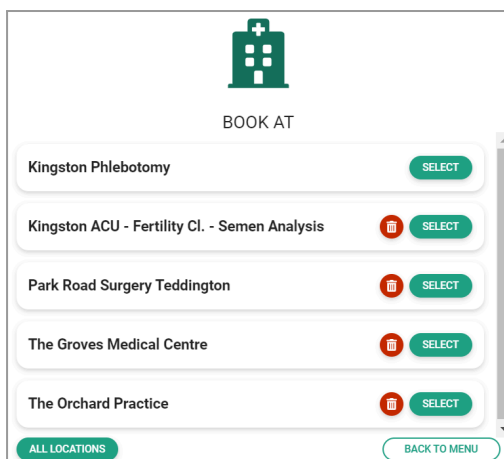
Question 6 was specifically about the online booking system, and 81.60% found it easy to navigate, whereas 18.40% did not. This answer underlines the importance of keeping the in-person and phone booking system open. It can also be an opportunity to improve the website, as almost 1 in 5 did not find it easy to use.

## Knowledge about getting blood tests at GP practices (Q7)



The overwhelming majority - more than 95% - of respondents did not know that GP practices offer blood tests. This is despite the fact that 81.6% of the respondents stated that the booking website was easy to navigate.

In light of those two divergent answers, it appears that the booking website is easy to navigate only if you want to book a blood test at Kingston Hospital and that the availability of phlebotomy appointments at GP practices is insufficiently advertised. We note that the website (<https://myappointments.online/patient/booking>) doesn't provide this information, indeed the appointment booking process for the GP practices doesn't specify that you can actually get a blood test there.



Home page of the booking website.  
<https://myappointments.online/patient/booking>

## Support when going to a blood test (Q8)

Out of all the respondents, 90.73% did not have special needs requiring support when they attended their phlebotomy appointment.

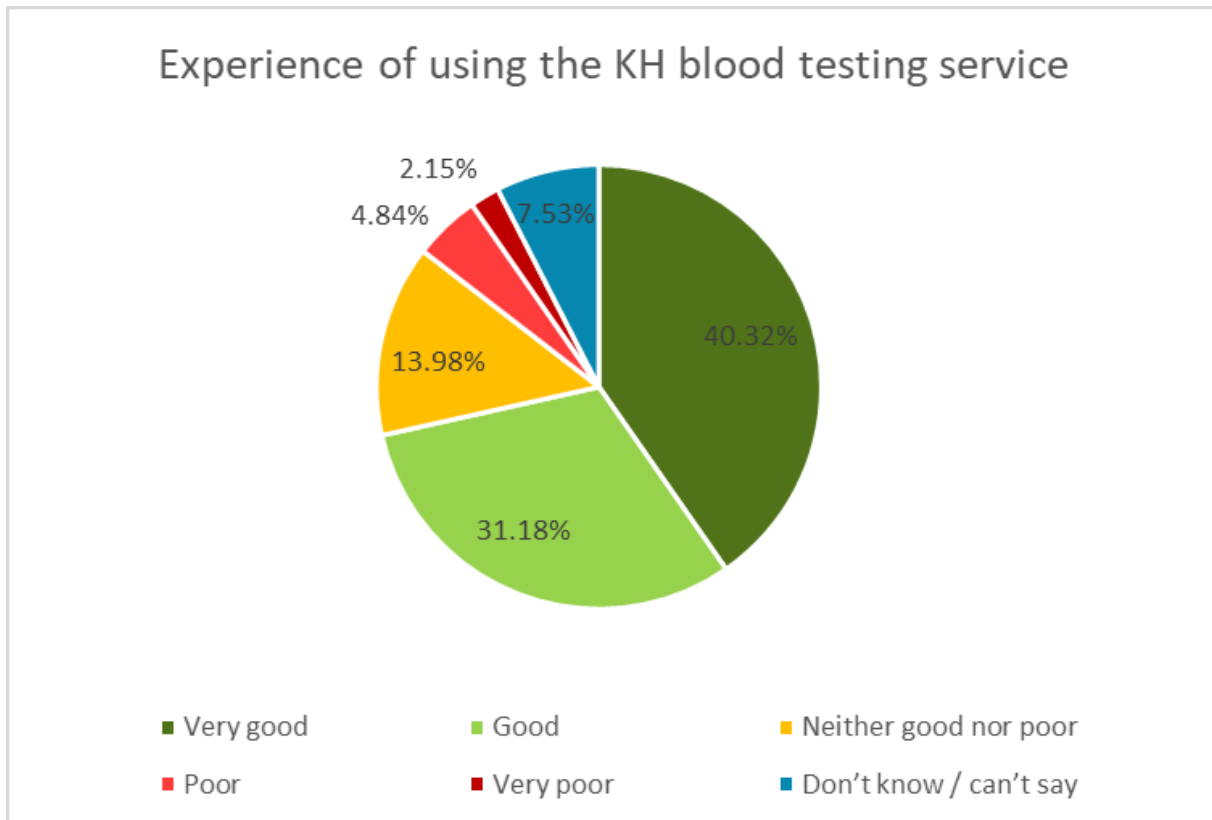
Among the people with special needs:

- 9 people have **mobility special needs** (wheelchair access or access that accommodate mobility needs)
- 7 people need **support from a carer**
- 6 people need information or **communication in a format that they find easy to use and understand** (for example large print if they have problems with your eyesight, or needing to lip read, or needing written information in easy read to help with a Learning Disability)
- 1 person needs an **interpreter**

Other specific needs were added in the comments section:

- 2 people mentioned suffering from **COPD** (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease): *"Often cannot take bus, cannot stand on a crowded bus. Need to be taken by car. Parking an issue", "Parking close by as I have COPD".*
- 1 person lives with a **hearing disability**: *"I have a hearing disability and need either visual cues or my name called extra loudly."*
- 1 person has **Difficult Intra-Veinous Access**: *"DIVA need specialist to take blood".*
- 1 person mentioned they were living with **diabetes**: *"Diabetic, so not very long waits and in the morning".*

### Experience of using the blood testing service (Q9)

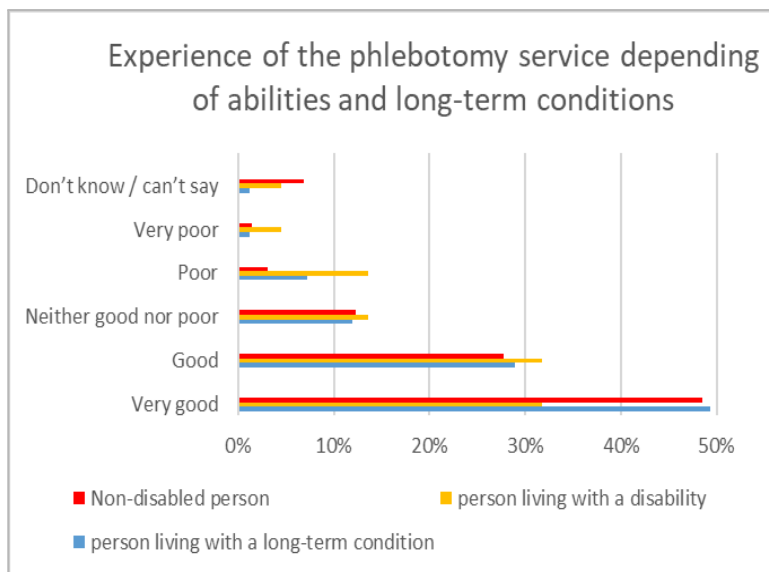


In total, 71.5% of respondents had a positive experience at the Kingston Hospital phlebotomy service (*good* 31.18%, *very good* 40.32%). For 13.98% of the respondents the service was considered *neither good nor poor*, and 7.53% didn't know or couldn't say. Lastly, 6.99% of the sample found the service either *poor* or *very poor*.



A specific focus showed that able bodied people and people living with long-term conditions reported similar experiences.

Nevertheless, more people living with a disability had *poor* or *very poor* experience (18.10%) than people with a long term condition (8.40%) or able bodied people (4.60%).



### Specific comments about transport

One of the most striking findings in the comments – despite any specific questions highlighting the topic – was the importance of transport in the responses.

Nevertheless the biggest axis for improvement seemed to be the Kingston Hospital parking situation that was described successively as *“expensive and difficult”*, *“limited and expensive”* and *“difficult and stressful”*.

The parking cost was mentioned on several occasions and always described as *“expensive”*. Other than the cost, the limited number of parking spaces was also mentioned.

*“Kingston phlebotomy service was good but trying to park took twice as long as having the blood test”*

In the end, we noted at least three occurrences of the word *“nightmare”*, and several mentions of other strong phrases which vividly depict and summarises a quite stressful experience.

*“Parking at Kingston hospital is a nightmare and very stressful”*

*“It’s a nuisance getting to Kingston hospital”*

*“Parking at Kingston hospital is last resort but a complete nightmare!”*

Those comments led us to believe that the transport and specifically the parking situation could be improved. The time and cost of ULEZ were also mentioned several times and under other questions.

### **Kingston Hospital phlebotomy staff review**

The comments about the phlebotomy service were absolutely outstanding. The adjectives used to describe both the organisation and the staff were very powerful. Both the efficiency of the service, and the empathy, thoughtfulness and exceptional skills of the staff were mentioned on many occasions.

Spontaneous comments about the staff are grouped under the following three different headings.

#### **Organisation of the service**

*“The phlebotomy department at Kingston is fantastic”*

*“Speedy, well organised, always seen on time”*

*“Marvellous experience at Kingston Hospital”*

*“Very efficient service”*

#### **Technical skills of the staff**

*“Very skilled. The phlebotomy team is very helpful and efficient”*

*“I can almost guarantee Kingston Hospital will find my vein first time”*

*“My veins are very difficult to find and the phlebotomy staff always find a vein first try”*

*“Kingston hospital are quick and efficient at taking blood samples”*

#### **Relational skills of the staff**

*“I cannot praise enough the politeness, competence and efficiency of the staff. I have seen them also be very kind to less able people”*

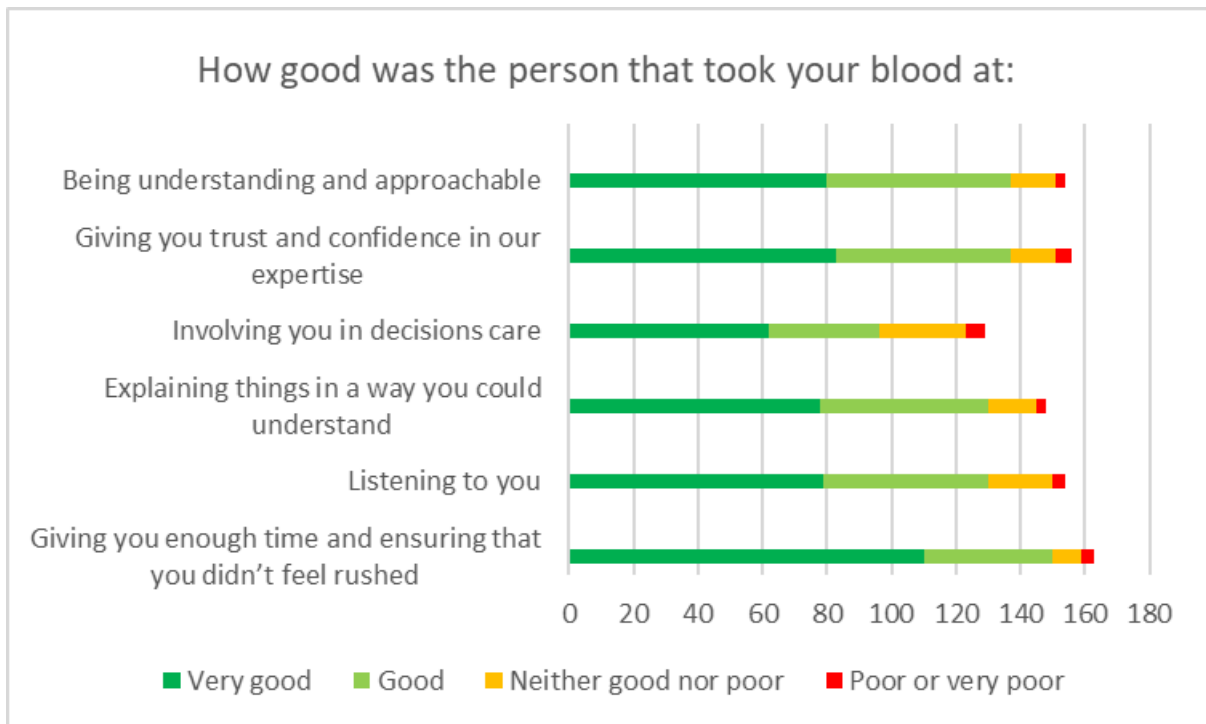
*“Delightful”*

*“Amazing and empathetic”*

*“Staff at Kingston hospital are fantastic”*

## About the Kingston Hospital staff (Q10)

The reviews of the phlebotomy service at Kingston Hospital are excellent. The vast majority of the patient's experience with the staff is neutral, positive or very positive.



### About the blood test results (Q11, 12 & 13)

More than 90% of the responses received their blood test results within 2 weeks or less.

How long did it take for you to get your test results?	#	%
Less than a week	78	55.31%
1 week - 2 weeks	49	34.75%
2 weeks to 4 weeks	8	5.67%
1 month plus	6	4.26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

People expect to receive their results within 2 weeks, with a considerable proportion expecting results within a week. Results received 2 weeks after an appointment were largely viewed as taking longer than expected.

	Longer than expected	Less time than expected	About the same as expected
Less than a week	1.3%	35.9%	62.8%
1 week - 2 weeks	26.5%	2.0%	71.4%
2 weeks to 4 weeks	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%
1 month plus	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%

## Conclusion

The survey offers some granularity on what patients are looking for while booking a blood test appointment.

- People are interested in accessing blood tests at their GP practices or practices in their immediate neighbourhood.
- Nevertheless, there is very limited awareness of phlebotomy outside of Kingston Hospital within the sample.
- Location and travel play key roles in decisions around phlebotomy appointments. People are unlikely to travel more than 15 minutes.
  - Cost and the time of travel arose as major obstacles. Without having a specific question about it in the survey, many concerns about the parking situation in Kingston Hospital were raised including the lack of parking spots, the time it consumes to look for a parking spot, and the cost.
- Patients want to access phlebotomy appointments across a range of times and days. Uptake of phlebotomy at GP practices is dependent on providing broad access.
- A considerable amount of unsolicited praise for the phlebotomy service at Kingston Hospital emerged. Many comments described the service as outstanding from an organisational, skill and human perspective.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and considerations outlined above, the following recommendations have been made.

### Patient information about GP practices performing blood tests

One of the main takeaways from this survey is that the people are not aware of the possibility of getting their blood drawn at GP practices, despite it being their preferred location for a phlebotomy appointment.

We recommend that people are made aware of this possibility. This info could be brought up directly by their doctors, via printed materials in the GP reception areas and hospital's wards, on the GP websites and on the Kingston Hospital website.

### Booking website

For a phlebotomy appointment in Kingston Hospital, the website is efficient and easy to use. Nevertheless, the website doesn't mention that blood tests are available at GP practices.

This is why our second recommendation is to promote that blood tests can be booked at GP practices to the main menu of the booking website. At the moment, "phlebotomy" is only mentioned in the option for Kingston Hospital.

### Kingston Hospital parking situation

The cost and time-consuming use of ULEZ as well as the Kingston Hospital parking heavily weigh on the patients' experience. We are aware of similar feedback from patients and the public about this from our more general work. There is some evidence that indicates that work to improve transport and parking for Kingston Hospital would be valuable.