

GP Services at Temporary Hotel Accommodation:

**A report looking into Asylum Seekers and
Refugees experiences of accessing GP
provisions at Temporary Hotel
Accommodation in Oldham.**

Introduction

Healthwatch Oldham surveyed people seeking asylum or refugee status, residing at a temporary hotel accommodation in Oldham, and having access to a local GP provision under a specific commissioned service.

People seeking asylum and who have refugee status should have access to medical services. We know that many of these people may also:

- Have limited awareness of the NHS and fear barriers to accessing treatment
- Come from countries of origin with poor healthcare
- Suffer health impacts (mental and physical) after leaving their country and being detained in the UK
- Have experienced war, conflict, or torture
- Be separated from family, have poor housing and be socially isolated

Healthwatch Oldham is part of the Red Cross Asylum Seeker and Refugee Network in Oldham, where a number of partners come together to support people who are seeking asylum or have refugee status and reside in temporary accommodation. This network had previously identified a number of concerns regarding access to GP services following feedback from attendees at the Red Cross drop-in sessions. As part of this broader work, Healthwatch Oldham was asked to engage with the current residents at this specific hotel to understand their experiences.

Methodology

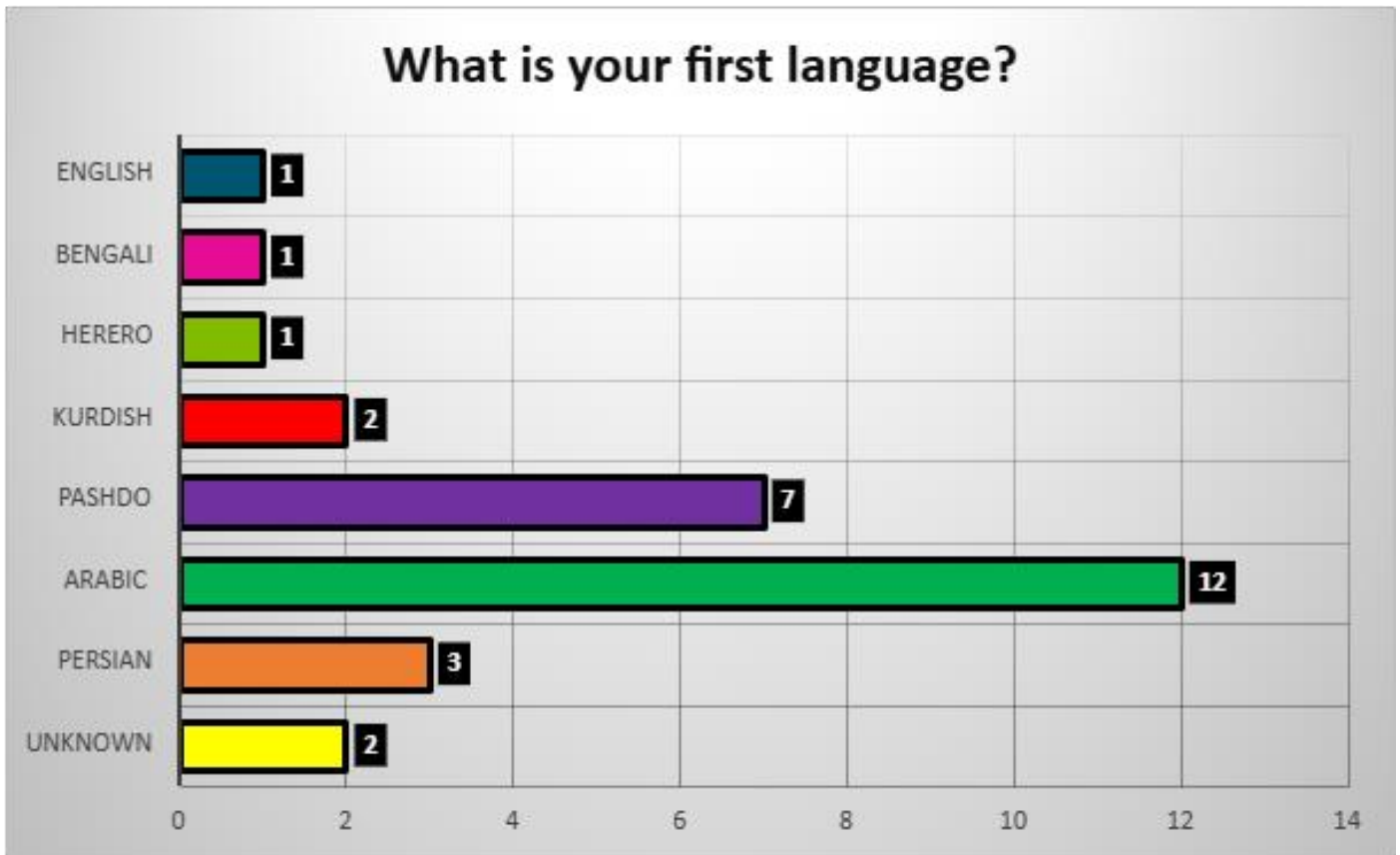
Healthwatch Oldham devised a questionnaire that is available in Appendix A.

The engagement took place on 7th December, 3 members of the Healthwatch Oldham team spoke with 29 residents who were present in the hotel at the time. The surveys were completed in person with the Healthwatch Oldham team member recording the answers.

This was a time-sensitive and limited piece of engagement, therefore only one engagement methodology was used and one visit to the hotel was made. We have received the views of 29 residents.

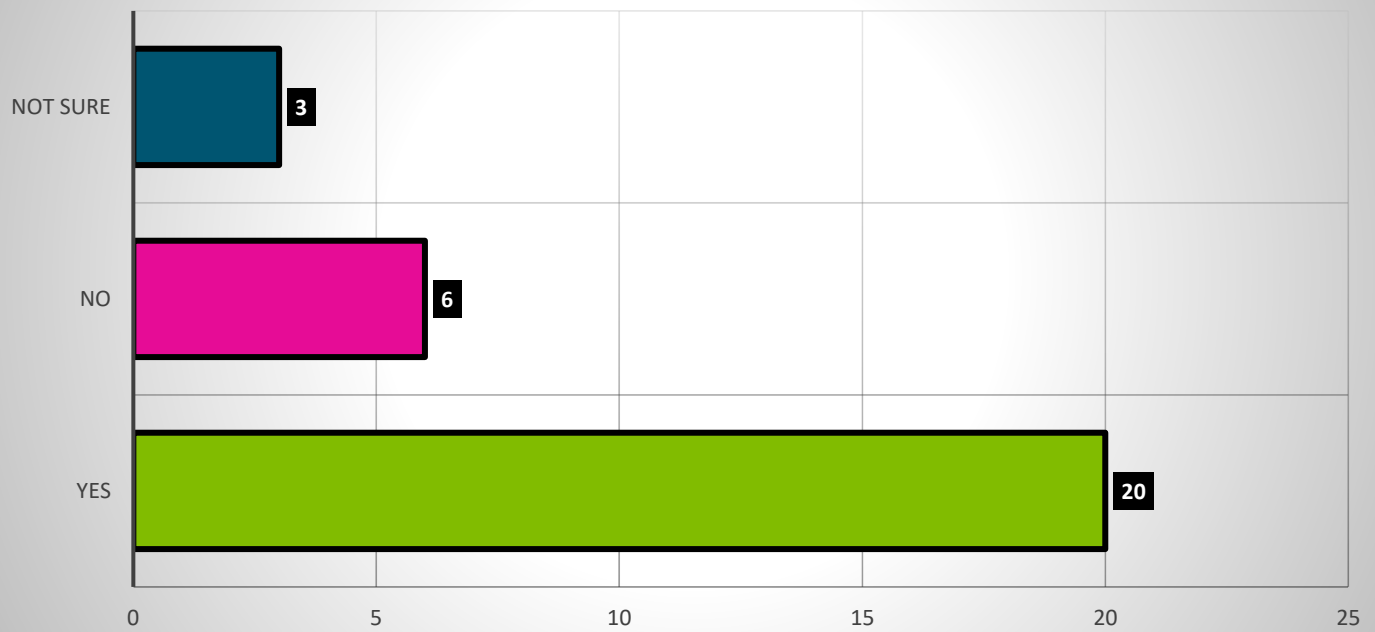
Survey Responses

The following section includes a graph relating to each question we asked, we have included quotes where we received additional comments or information. The final section is about the experiences people shared with us, which we captured as part of the open questions.



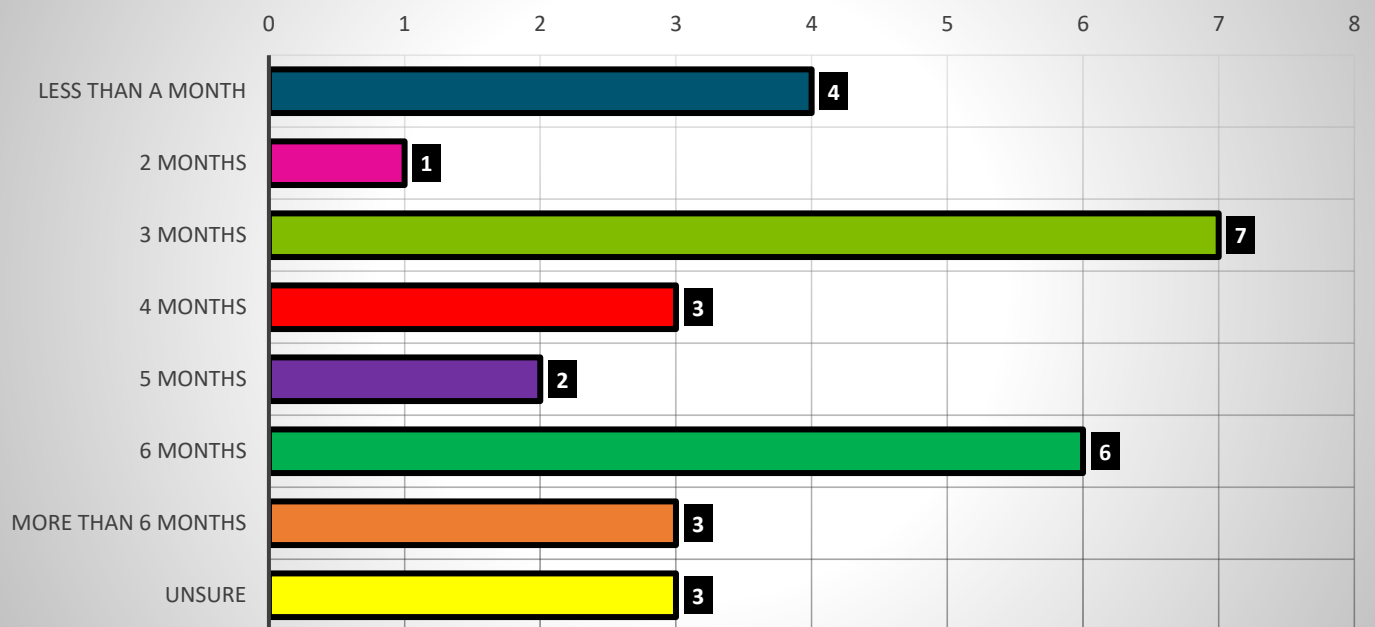
Most respondents (12 in total) said that Arabic is their first language. From the people we spoke to, the other common language spoken is Pashdo. Other languages are listed above. Two respondents were unable to ascertain their first language, and these are recorded as 'unknown'.

Are you registered with the GP at the hotel?



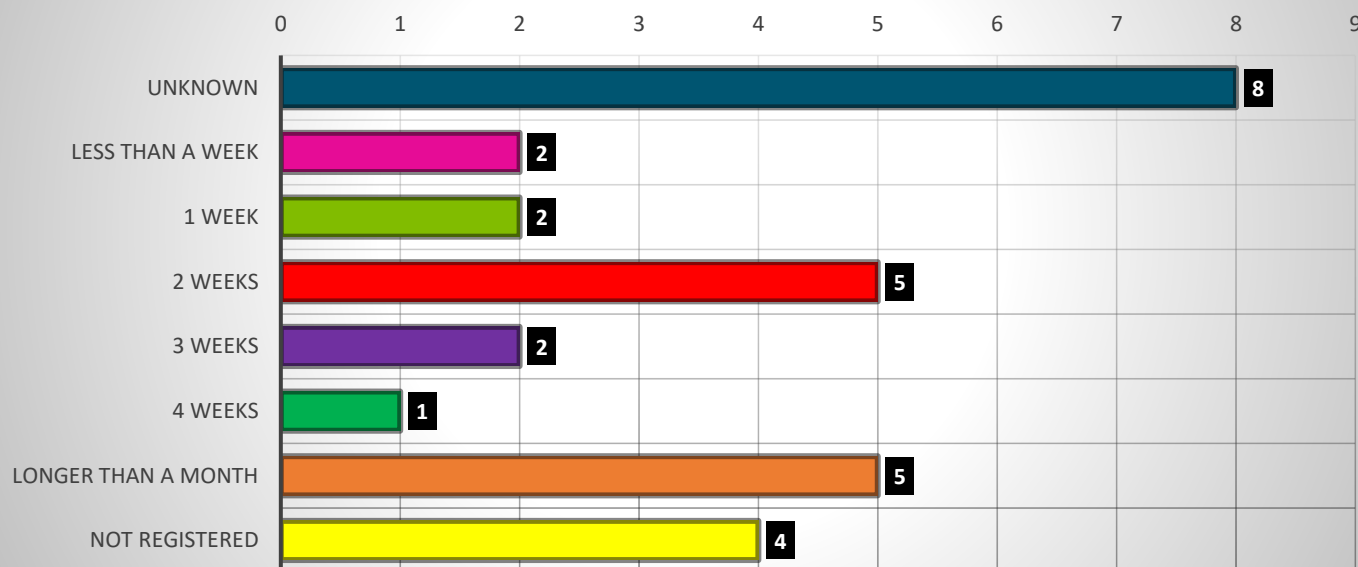
20 respondents said they are registered with the GP linked to the hotel, however, 9 people said that they either were not (6) or were not sure (3).

How long have you been at the hotel?



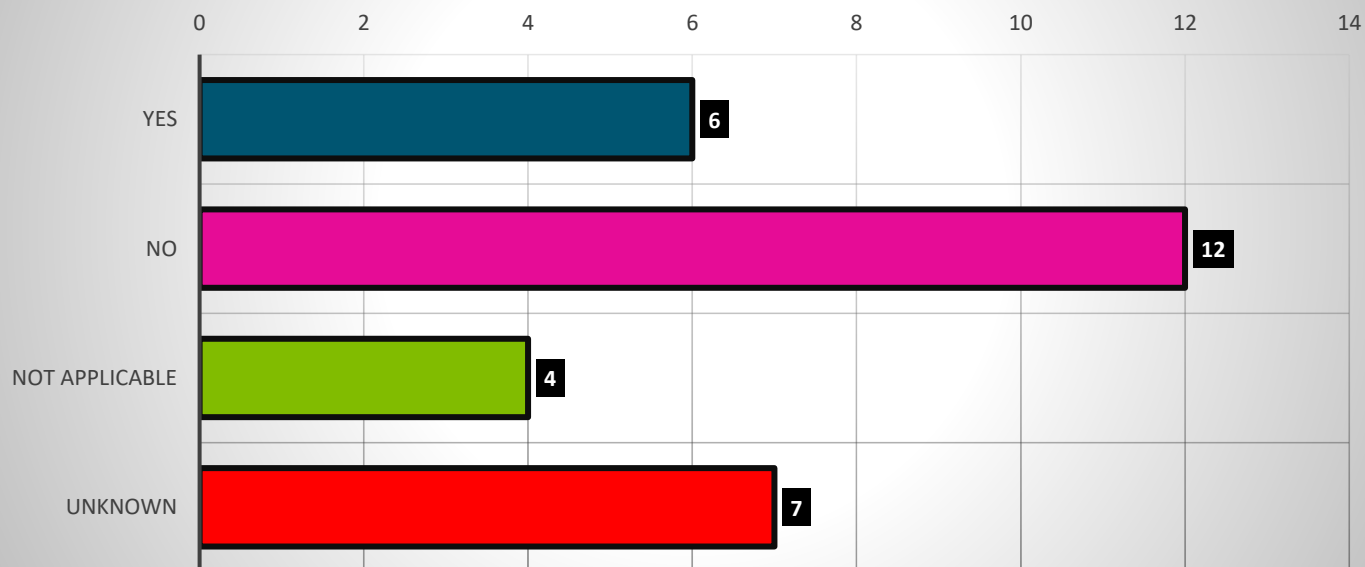
23 of the people we spoke to had arrived at the hotel at some point within the last 6 months. Within that 23, most people (7) said they had been at the hotel for 3 months, followed by (6) respondents who said they had been at the hotel for a total of 6 months. 4 people said they arrived at some point within the last month. Only 3 people we spoke to had been at the hotel for more than 6 months, and 3 people were unsure how long they had been there.

How long after arriving at the hotel did you register with the GP service?



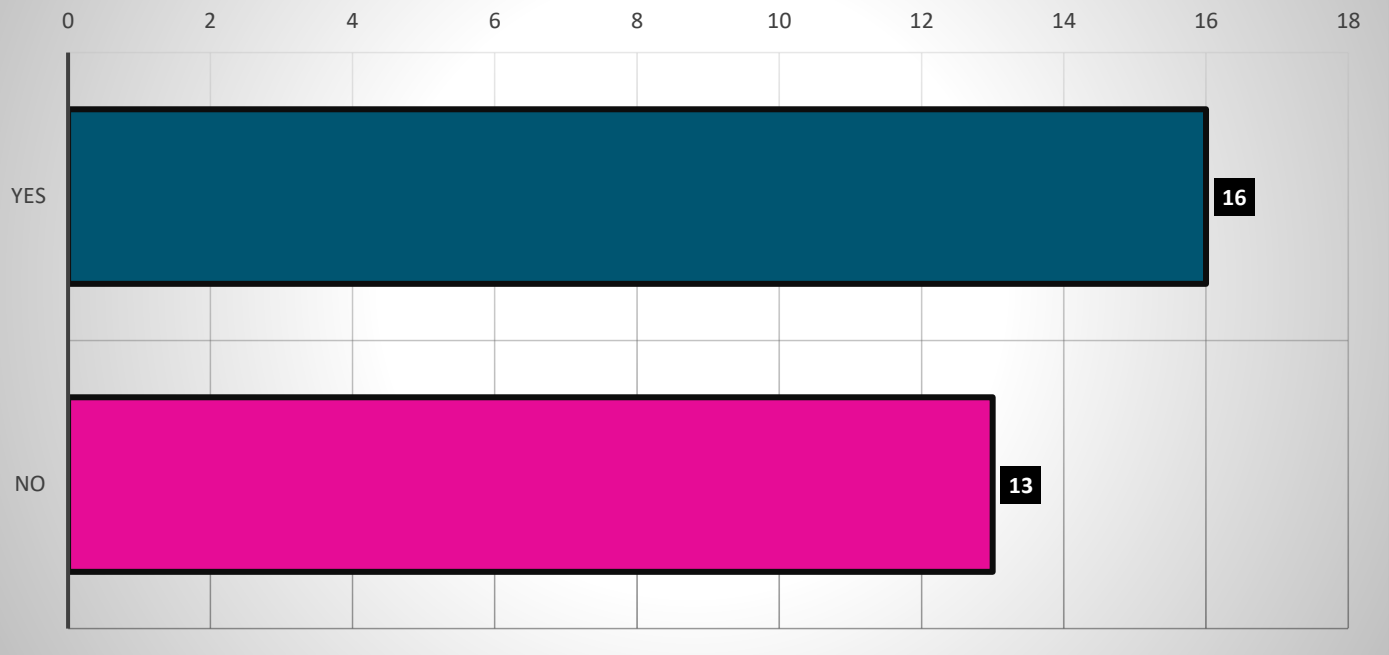
From the total 29 responses, most (8) responded that they did not know how long after arriving at the hotel, that they received GP services. 5 people told us that they waited 'longer than a month', whilst another 5 said it took two weeks. 4 People still had not registered with the GP.

Did you have a new patient health check following registration?



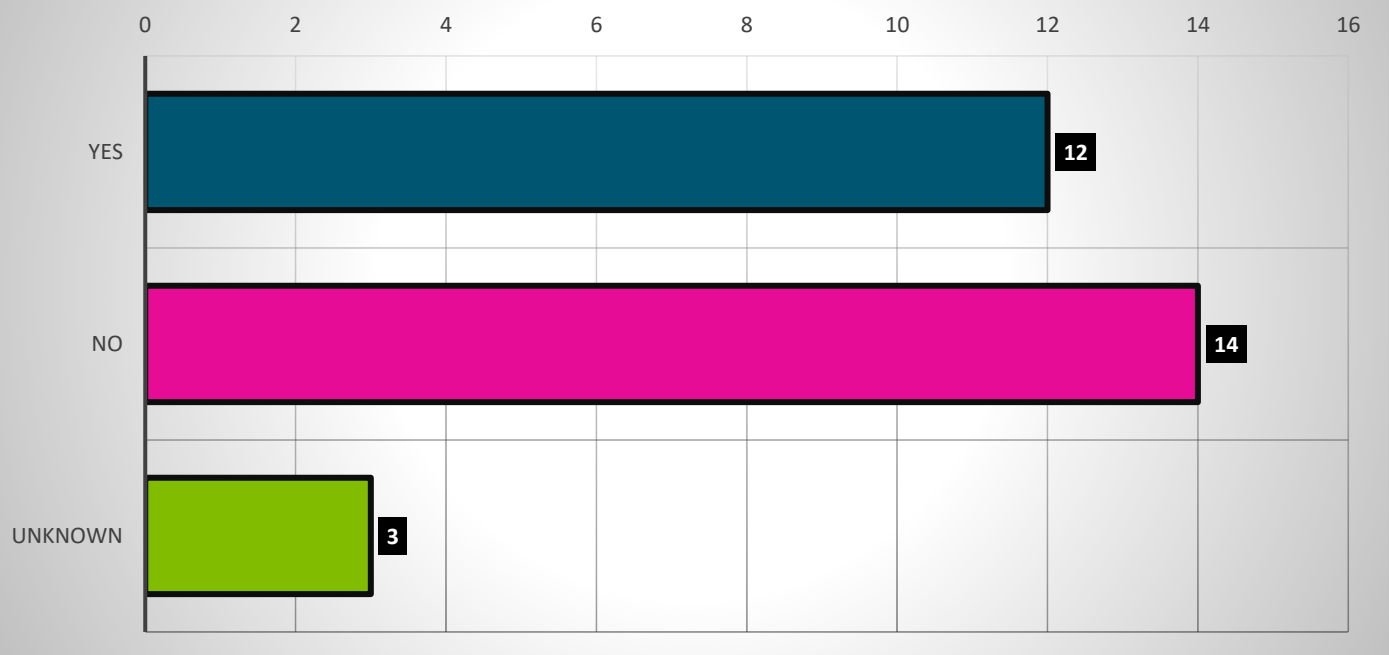
Only 6 people said they had a new patient health check following their registration. A total of 12 people said they did not have a health check. 4 people responded that it wasn't applicable, 7 people were unsure.

Are you aware when the GP visits the hotel?



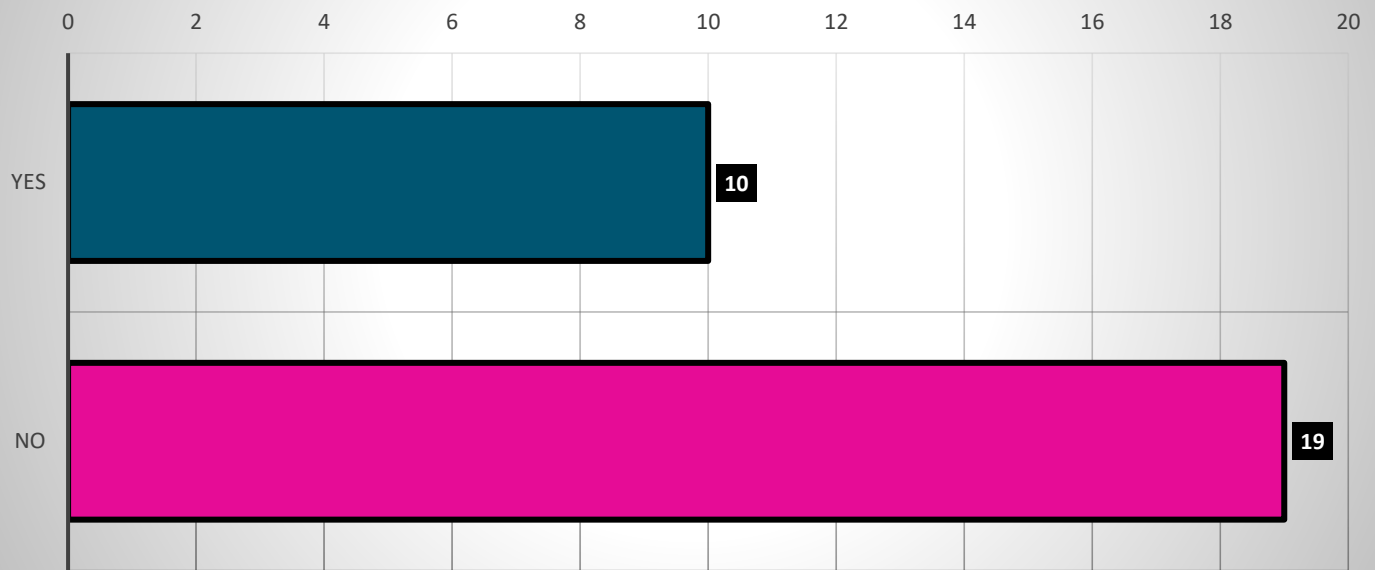
16 people from the 29 people we spoke to said that they were aware when the GP visited the hotel. However, 13 people did not know.

Do you know how to make a GP appointment?



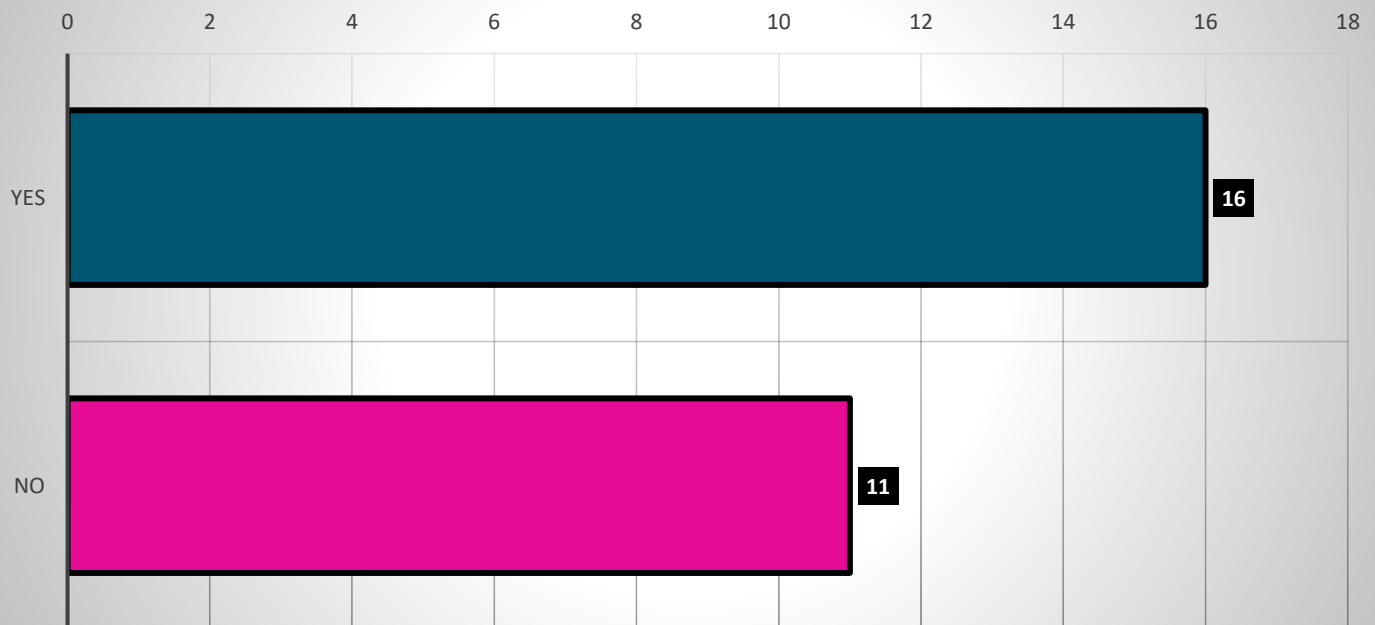
From a total of 29 respondents, the majority 14 said, they do not know how to make an appointment with the GP that is associated with the hotel. However, a total of 12 respondents said that they were aware of how to make an appointment with the GP. 3 people answered 'unknown' to this question.

Do you know you can see the GP at the Practice outside of the Friday visits?



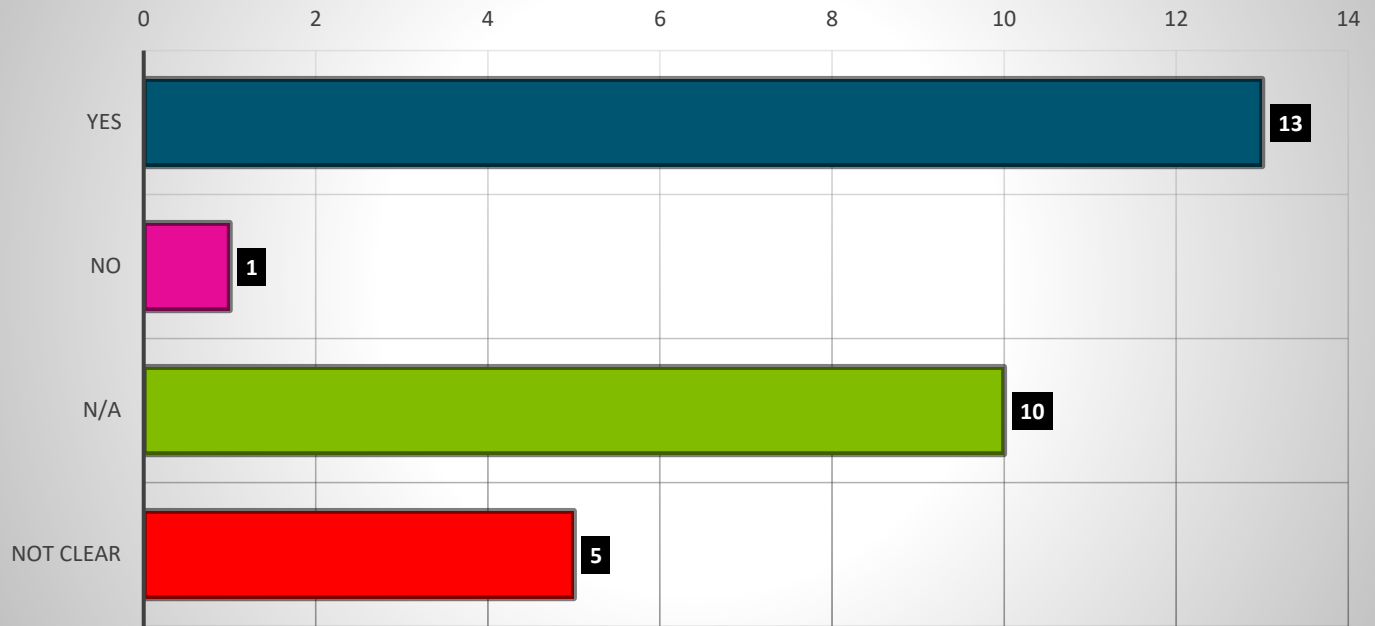
Of the 29 people we spoke to the majority, 19 people said they were unaware they could see the GP at the Practice outside of the weekly Friday visit to the hotel. 10 respondents told us that they did know that they could.

Have you had an appointment with the GP?



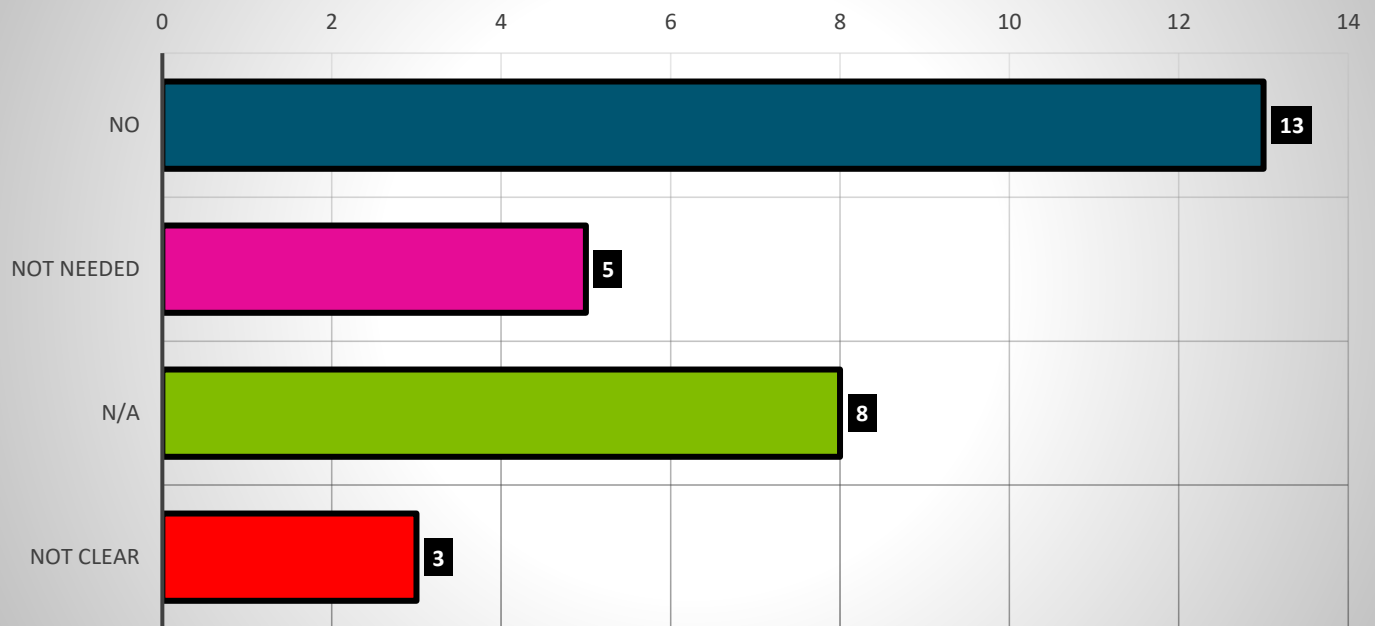
16 people told us they had an appointment with the GP, whilst 11 respondents told us they hadn't been through an appointment with the GP.

Was the GP appointment at the time you made it?



13 people told us that the GP appointment they had was on time, but only 1 person said that it was not. A significant number of respondents 10 felt they couldn't answer this question.

We're you offered an interpreter?



13 people told us that they were not offered an interpreter. 5 people said that they were not, but this was not needed. For 8 people this was not applicable and 3 people said they were not sure.

We asked a follow-up question, where appropriate to find out what the person did if they required an interpreter but were not offered one. We received the following responses.

- I had a problem speaking to the Doctor as we couldn't speak the same language and had no interpreter. I felt so poorly and just had to point to parts of my body that were hurting. I don't feel he took me seriously and no medicine was given
- I feel that the GP didn't help me or listen to me, also my friend had to interpret for me.
- My friend had to interpret for me
- The GP asked my friend who was interpreting a few questions and said there was no problem, it was all so rushed, I was in and out with no treatment.
- I had to point at parts of my body that were hurting

We asked people how the appointment with the doctor went.

These are some direct quotes from the positive experiences we heard.

- Appointment went well. I had an old injury in my right leg and some depression problems. I have been referred to a neuro consultant and on antidepressants that are helping.
- Appointment was not bad, I wasn't given any medication just advice.
- Yes all went ok and medical needs met
- My friend called the ambulance one day as it wasn't a Friday, they took me to the hospital and prescribed some medication.

These are some of the negative experiences we captured

- I had a back injury on arrival to the UK as I was tortured in my country. I have been given painkillers which aren't working and referred to a consultant, this was 3 months ago and not heard anything and I am struggling walking.
- I saw the Doctor one Friday, he didn't take my symptoms seriously or check me over.
- [The doctor] couldn't help - told me it was toothache and to go to the emergency dentist but I can't go to the emergency dentist as I have no money
- Appointment didn't go well I had a face rash he didn't speak to me just prescribed cream.
- The appointment was delayed as I was booked in for Monday- I got a message to say go on Monday but when I went they said I couldn't see a doctor that day and to see him on Friday at the hotel at the time given in the message
- When I met him (GP) he had very little time for us, wanted us to finish as quickly as possible and move on
- He hasn't listened to me or anyone it's so fast quick in and go I made the decision not to see him again - I move to Wigan next week I shall speak with the doctor there about my prostate cancer.
- One time Serco told me the GP wasn't there the following Friday, then the GP was at the hotel and I had to wait until the following week to see the GP. This was Serco's fault I believe.
- I have blood pressure and told him he didn't check my blood pressure or give me the medication I also have prostate cancer and was being treated for this before I moved here I have told my doctor this but he has not done anything for me that I know of has just given me painkillers for my headaches which is caused by stress.
- I am seeing the Parkinsons nurse on 22 December with members of the orthopedic team as I am unable to sleep in here with this bed, as I am struggling with what I have in my room as there is nothing suitable for my condition, I have seen the doctor twice.

Conclusion

We undertook a brief piece of engagement with the residents of this temporary hotel, who reside there as they are seeking asylum or have refugee status and require temporary accommodation.

We spoke to 29 people who were present at the hotel on the day we undertook the survey. Healthwatch team members spoke to people directly and recorded their responses against set questions (see Appendix A for the questions).

There was a mixed response to all the questions. This is a summary of what we heard.

The majority of people we spoke to are registered with the GP. There was however inconsistency in the length of time after arriving at the hotel that this registration occurred. The majority of people waited more than 2 weeks to be registered and 5 people reported they waited more than a month. 12 people said that they have not had a patient health check and a further 7 were unsure. Over half the people we spoke to were aware of when the GP visits the hotel, but a significant number (13 out of the 29) did not know. There was a similar mix when we asked if people knew how to make a GP appointment, with 14 (out of the 29) that did not know how to do this or know that you can book to see the GP outside of the Friday visits (19 out of 29). The majority of the appointments were carried out at the time they were made.

In terms of the experiences with the appointments themselves, a number of people (13 out of 29) were not offered interpreters and struggled to communicate with the doctor about what was important to them. There were some positive experiences of the appointments shared with us, where medical needs were met. However, there was a relatively high number of negative experiences shared which include experiences where the appointment was rushed, where people didn't feel appropriately listened to or that their medical needs were addressed.

Given the experiences contained within this report, we would recommend that the GP practice should;

- Ensure there is a new patient health check for every patient.
- Ensure there is a mechanism to check the quality of the experience with the GP, in particular, the length of time the GP is with each person and the degree to which people feel that the medical issues they raise are responded to appropriately.
- Ensure there is effective communication between the resident and the GP if there is not appropriate interpretation services in place.
- Ensure there is a consistent and well communicated system to inform residents when individual appointments will take place at the hotel.
- Provide information in appropriate formats to ensure residents know how to access GP services outside of the Friday slots.

Update The findings of the report were fed back to the GP Practice at the time it was received, with assurances that appropriate action would be taken to address the issues identified. The Practice subsequently served notice on the contract and ceased provision of the enhanced service on 31st March 2024, but has continued to register and see residents as part of mainstream provision. The recommendations made by Healthwatch Oldham have been incorporated into the proposal for ongoing GP provision which is currently being considered. The insights from the work done have highlighted opportunities for the wider system to come together to ensure holistic care and communication are provided through partnership and collaboration, and we will continue to work with Healthwatch and partners to ensure a quality service.

Appendix A

Copy of the survey questions

1. **What is your first language?**

2. **Are you registered with the GP surgery that visits the hotel?**

Yes

No

3. **If not, why?**

4. **How long have you been at the hotel?**

5. **How long after arriving at the hotel did you register with the GP service?**

6. **Did you have a new patient health check following registration?**

(prompt what a health check is - blood pressure, height, weight, cholesterol, diabetes check)

Yes

No

7. Are you aware when the GP visits the hotel?

- Yes
- No

8. Do you know how to make a GP appointment?

- Yes
- No

9. Do you know you can see the GP at the Practice outside of the Friday visits?

- Yes
- No

10. Have you had an appointment with the GP?

- Yes
- No

11. How did the appointment go and were your medical needs met?

12. Was the appointment at the time you made it?

- Yes
- No

13. If needed, were you offered an interpreter?

- Yes
- No

14. If not and you required an interpreter, what did you do?

15. What was the reason if you have ever not attended a booked GP appointment and not cancelled?

16. How was your experience? Please use this space to explain more or provide any further feedback.