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## **Introduction**

In4Health conducted a survey of 100 delegates at the NHS Alliance conference in Manchester on October 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> to provide a temperature gauge of reaction to topical and political health issues.

The results provide insight into attitudes of GPs, nurses and those in the health service (from practice managers and pharmacists to professors of health economics) – in their health roles and as patients.

The results reveal their concerns about political promises for the NHS, admissions of feeling undervalued in their jobs, experiences as a patient and confessions of missing medical appointments.

## **Responses:**

Using hand-held touch-screen devices, we collected and analysed a total of 100 individual surveys. The In4Health system allows 'real-time' results so users have immediate feedback.

## **Analysis:**

The respondents were split by:

- Sex: male, female
- Age: grouping choices - 18-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 60+
- Profession: GP, Nurse, Manager, Allied Health Professional, other
- SHA location: East of England, London, North East, North West - Merseyside, Greater Manchester) South Central, South East Coast, South West, Midlands, Yorkshire and The Humber

Questions:

In4Health asked respondents to reply to some questions both as a patient and as a health professional:

- As a patient, how many medical appointments, arranged with your GP/hospital have you ever missed?
- As a patient, what is most and least important to you in your patient experience?
  - efficient, expert diagnosis and advice from a professional and swift treatment
  - Kindness, care, concern and emotional support throughout visit and treatment
  - Cleanliness and hygiene – from waiting areas to treatment venues, modern facilities
  - Information – from doctors/nurses/surgeons in language you understand and time to ask questions
  - Choice – to be seen/treated by the health professional you want
- As a patient, what do you feel about your GP's waiting area?
- As a health professional, do you feel valued and appreciated in your job - by patients, by your PCT/Trust and by the DOH/Government?
- What you think of Health Secretary Andy Burnham's promise to do everything he can "to protect primary care budgets"?
- Given the Conservatives' commitment to 'slash NHS Bureaucracy', do you think an election of a Tory government would improve the quality of patient care?
- The Government is encouraging patients to leave feedback about their GP surgery on the NHS Choices website. Do you think this initiative will give an accurate picture of GP practice quality?

## **THE FINDINGS**

### **Bye Appointment**

More than 3 out of 10 health professionals (38%) admitted to missing up to five medical appointments with their GP or a hospitals, costing the NHS around £100 a time.

A third (33%) confessed to missing one appointment while a shocking 5% revealed they'd missed up to five booked appointments.

The NHS Information Centre estimates that DNAs (Did Not Attend) appointments cost the NHS in the region of £600 million a year.

### **The Ex Factor**

Speaking as patients, 59% of health professionals rated expert diagnosis and advice coupled with efficient, swift treatment as the most important factors in their healthcare experience.

Kindness, care, concern and emotional support throughout their visit was top choice of almost a fifth (19%) of those surveyed, and despite the high importance assigned to infection control in the NHS, only 13% believed cleanliness and hygiene – from waiting areas to treatment venues – and modern facilities were the most important factors.

The most important factor for 6% of respondents was that doctors and nurses gave them information in language that they understood.

Simple, clear communication and being allowed time to ask questions without feeling under pressure was vital to 2% of respondents.

And overall, just 3% saw choice as most important - the ability to be seen and treated by the health professional they wanted.

### **The Waiting Game**

With waiting areas the first impression many people have of the NHS, the survey revealed frustration among health professionals who were eager to de-clutter and overhaul public areas, and make them more welcoming.

According to 57% of respondents, GP and hospital waiting areas were over-filled with leaflets and posters, mismatched seating, and “could do better”.

However, more than a third (39%) felt their own waiting areas were wonderful, featuring clear health messages aimed at all audiences, suitable child-friendly facilities, minimum clutter and high standards of hygiene.

### **Value Added Facts**

The survey revealed that the majority of GPs, nurses and health service workers do not feel valued by patients, their PCT/Trust and the Department of Health or Government.

Sixty-six percent feel unappreciated by patients, 70% say their employers do not value them and 78% say the same of the Government.

The In4Health survey asked NHS Alliance delegates what they felt about the health secretary Andy Burnham's promise to do everything he could to "protect primary care budgets" from public sector spending cuts.

While 13% welcomed the news as "wonderful", most said they were "concerned", "cautious" and "suspicious" about the promise.

Forty-one per cent said the pledge was "good" but added they felt "cautious" with some fearing that savings would have to be made from elsewhere – raising further issues.

Almost a third of respondents (32%) were "suspicious" of the Secretary of State's promise. A further 13% said they were "concerned" about the promise.

We also asked delegates what they thought of the government's initiative to encourage patients to leave feedback about their GPs on its NHS Choices website. Nearly half (48%) thought this would **not** give an accurate picture of the quality of GP care. Only 19% of respondents thought that it would give an accurate picture, while 33% were unsure.

### **Political Transfusion?**

Despite the Conservatives' commitment to 'slash NHS Bureaucracy' only 26% of health service workers believe a Tory government would improve the quality of patient care.

More than four in 10 (44%) felt a Conservative government would not improve the quality of patient care while 30% of respondents were unsure.

Louise Ford, Programme Director at In4Health commented: "The survey gives a fascinating insight into the views of health professionals on a range of vital issues, both professionally and as patients using health services. For instance, it reveals that

they are prone to forgetfulness like the rest of us, and occasionally miss NHS appointments, despite knowing the high cost of these.

“It’s worth noting that the majority of respondents would like to see an improvement in public waiting areas, with more modern facilities, including up-to-date and relevant information displayed for patients.

“Another interesting finding is that the most important factor in their healthcare experience as patients is expert diagnosis and first class treatment – which of course is something that they and other professionals in the NHS strive to provide every single working day.”

-ENDS-

#### NOTES TO EDITORS

**In4Health is the national information channel created to make it easy for patients in GP surgeries and hospitals to ask questions, access information and leave feedback**

#### **In4Health provides**

- **Real-time feedback from patients on what matters most**
- **Advertising-free broadcast screens delivering national and local tailored health messages**
- **The opportunity for patients to ‘self-serve’ information that is important to them**
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**Following trials in Wiltshire, Sussex and London, surgeries have benefitted from time saved at busy GP receptions, and an increase in registrations for organ donation and smoking cessation programmes**

**Since its inception in 2008, In4Health has been working successfully with University College London Hospitals (UCLH) NHS Foundation Trust, Wiltshire Primary Care Trust and Brighton & Hove PCT to refine and develop its LCD screen offer to patients**

**In4Health aims to roll out its interactive system to 50 hospitals and 2,000 GP surgeries UK-wide by the end of 2011**

**[www.in4health.com](http://www.in4health.com)**