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**ACCESS TO GP APPOINTMENTS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP –  
PROGRESS REPORT**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To report the progress of the Access to GP Appointments Task and Finish Review Group (being undertaken by this Scrutiny Committee), to gather views and opinions of the general public, Healthwatch, GP Surgeries and Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group regarding access to GP appointments.

**Summary**

2. At a meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> June, 2013 Members agreed to undertake a piece of work to consider that access and availability of GP appointments across the Borough.
3. To progress this work Members have met on three occasions, conducted their own primary research, met with GP Practices and the Practice managers and Members of the Healthwatch Board.
4. Members are aware that their interim conclusions reflect the time of year that this piece of work has been undertaken and agreed at the last Scrutiny Committee meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2013 to extend the work for a further six months. They will continue with this piece of work during the winter months to compare the findings from the summer survey to assess any change, in access, by undertaking another questionnaire.
5. It was also agreed that Members meet with the MP for Darlington who has also carried out some work on access to GP appointments to share intelligence and avoid duplication. It was also noted that Members would be meeting with the Chair of the Local Professional Network to establish the role Pharmacies have in supporting improved access to primary care, therefore it was envisaged that work would continue into the spring with a Final Report anticipated in April 2014.

**Recommendation**

6. That the progress and next steps be noted and the notes of the recent meeting of the Task and Finish Group be approved.

**Paul Wildsmith**  
**Director of Resources**

## Background Papers

Abbie Metcalfe : Extension 2365

S17 Crime and Disorder	It is not considered that there will be a significant impact on crime and disorder as a result of this report.
Health and Well Being	This report has no direct impact on health and well-being, but the Strategic Grants do allow organisations to provide service for people which impacts positively on their health and well-being.
Carbon Impact	There are no issues which this report needs to address.
Diversity	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address.
Wards Affected	All Wards will be affected
Groups Affected	Groups within the Voluntary and Community Sector will be affected most by this report.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report has no impact on the budget or policy framework although, cabinet may agree that further work is needed to feed into the Budget Advisory Panel process.
Key Decision	This report does not constitute a Key Decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not considered an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The report contributes to the delivery of the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
Efficiency	The report details scrutiny and monitoring of Strategic Grants efficiently (and effectively), however this report does not identify specific efficiency savings.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

7. The Access to GP Appointments Task and Finish Review Group was established to gather views and opinions of the general public, Healthwatch, GP Surgeries and Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group regarding access to GP appointments.

### Review Group

8. The Access to GP Appointments Task and Finish Review Group has met on two occasions and all Members have been invited to participate in the Review.
9. Every Member of the Scrutiny Committee was allocated a GP Practice and asked to approach the Practice to complete a series of questions. The majority of Members contacted the Practice Managers and met with them in person and discussed issues around whether there was sufficient number of appointments to meet the increased demand.
10. Members also sought public opinion at the GOLD Tea Dance with the aid of the questionnaire seeking views of the members of the public on how easy it was to make appointments at their GP Practice and whether they were able to ring up and get an appointment the same day.
11. Members have met with Healthwatch Board members to discuss the information they have received from the current live online survey. One of the elements included a series of questions in relation accessing GP appointments.
12. Two Members attended a meeting of the GP Practice Managers to discuss their views about the demand of the GP appointments and the capacity to meet the demand. Other issues were also brought to Members appointments such as 'Do not Attends', cancellations, communications and self-management of ailments.
13. The Group has recently met with Mike Maguire, Chair of the Local Professional Network (LPN) – Pharmacy for Durham, Darlington and Tees, to gain an understanding of the LPN, how its operates, its vision, Darlington's commitment to it and how Pharmacies can assist with alleviating the pressure and demand for GP appointments. The notes of the meeting are attached as **Appendix 1**.
14. The Group has reflected on its findings so far and have assessed how the further work would be beneficial and provide a true reflection of how accessible GP appointments are to Darlington residents.

### Next Steps

15. Members have agreed that further work is required to enable them to gather as much evidence as possible over a prolonged period of time to create a true reflection of the availability of appointments.

16. A meeting with Jenny Chapman MP has been arranged for 17<sup>th</sup> January 2014 to share intelligence and discuss her concerns.
17. Members will carry out a further survey with residents seeking information about any difficulties they have encountered accessing GP appointments during the winter months.
18. Members will continue to be updated from local NHS partners about winter preparedness and pressures and consider how this links and impacts upon the availability of GP appointments.
19. A further meeting with Healthwatch will be arranged to share intelligence and consider the feedback collected in Healthwatch's survey.