# Proposal for 24-Hour GP Appointment Access Gains Support Among Patients Amidst Challenges



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Healthwatch England has called on the government to address public frustration over long delays in securing GP appointments. The appeal follows research indicating that 71% of voters in England support guaranteed access to a family doctor within 24 hours of requesting an appointment for urgent health concerns.

Healthwatch England’s Chief Executive, Louise Ansari, highlighted that delayed GP access often results in patients abandoning efforts to get consultations, potentially exacerbating their conditions and leading to increased A&E visits. The advocacy group has urged for these guarantees to be included in the NHS constitution.

Current NHS patient rights mostly pertain to hospital care, such as operations within 18 weeks of referral and cancer diagnoses within 28 days. These goals are frequently unmet due to hospital pressures and staff shortages. The Department of Health and Social Care recently indicated plans to amend the NHS constitution to include new patient rights.

The Royal College of GPs and the British Medical Association have expressed skepticism regarding the feasibility of guaranteeing 24-hour GP access. Professors and GPs cite a shortage of family doctors and increased practice closures over the past decade, complicating the ability to meet such a mandate.

Additional findings from the survey included a preference for varying appointment methods (in-person, phone, or online) and improved communication from the NHS. The Department of Health and Social Care reiterated that patients should be informed about the management of their appointment requests on the day they contact the practice, with necessary appointments offered within two weeks.