NHS GP Capacity Analysis

Analysing GP appointment trends across England to understand staffing capacity and resource utilisation

Key Questions

Staffing & Capacity

Has there been adequate staff and capacity in the networks to meet demand?

Resource Utilisation

What was the actual utilisation of resources across GP practices?

This analysis examines NHS databases covering 743 million appointments from January 2020 to June 2022, seeking insights to improve GP practice operations across England.

[redacted]

Data Overview

1

Actual Duration (AD)

168 million appointments

Dec 2021 – June 2022

106 unique locations with appointment duration data

2

National Categories (NC)

296 million appointments

August 2021 – June 2022

17 appointment types across 5 service settings

3

Appointments Regional (AR)

743 million appointments

Jan 2020 – June 2022

3 healthcare providers, 5 appointment types, 8 waiting time categories

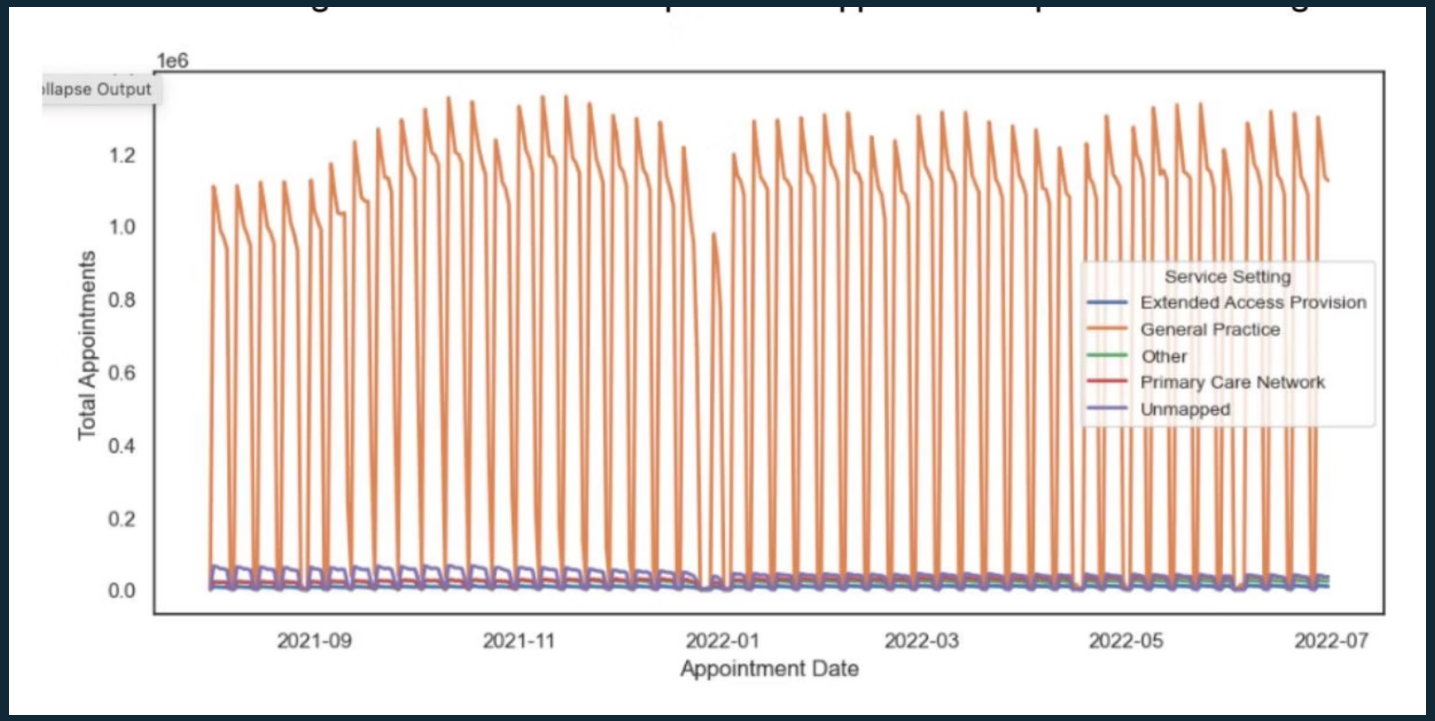
Analysis focused on AR dataset for broader time frame coverage. Nearly 24% of AD data grouped as 'Unknown/Data Quality Issue' – a significant concern for resource allocation.

[redacted]

Weekly Appointment Patterns

Clear weekly patterns emerged showing significantly higher appointments on Mondays, with no appointments during bank holiday weekends. Peak appointment totals varied across different service settings throughout the data period.

- Monday surge in demand
- Bank holiday closures
- Service setting variations



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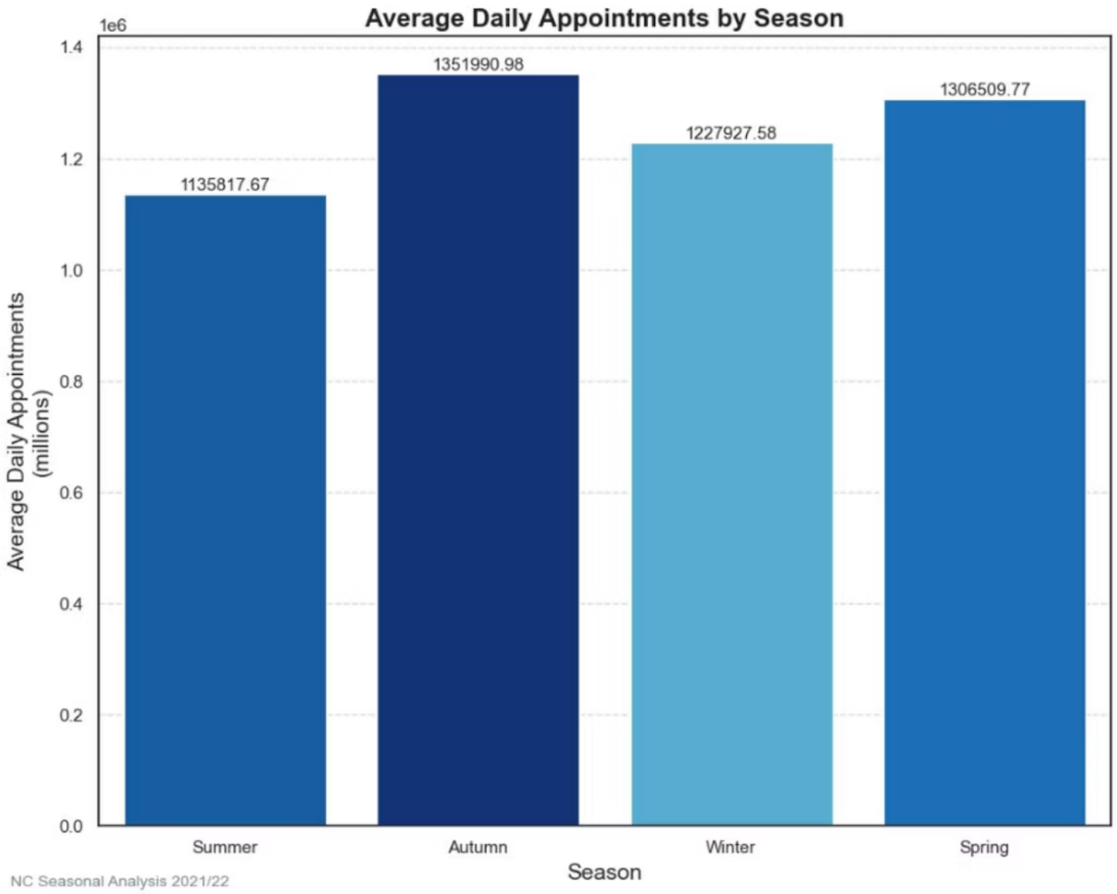


Seasonal Trends

Seasonal analysis revealed increasing average daily appointments from summer through to spring, based on a 5-day working week across the National Categories dataset.

1

Summer

Lowest demand

2

Autumn

Rising appointments

3

Winter

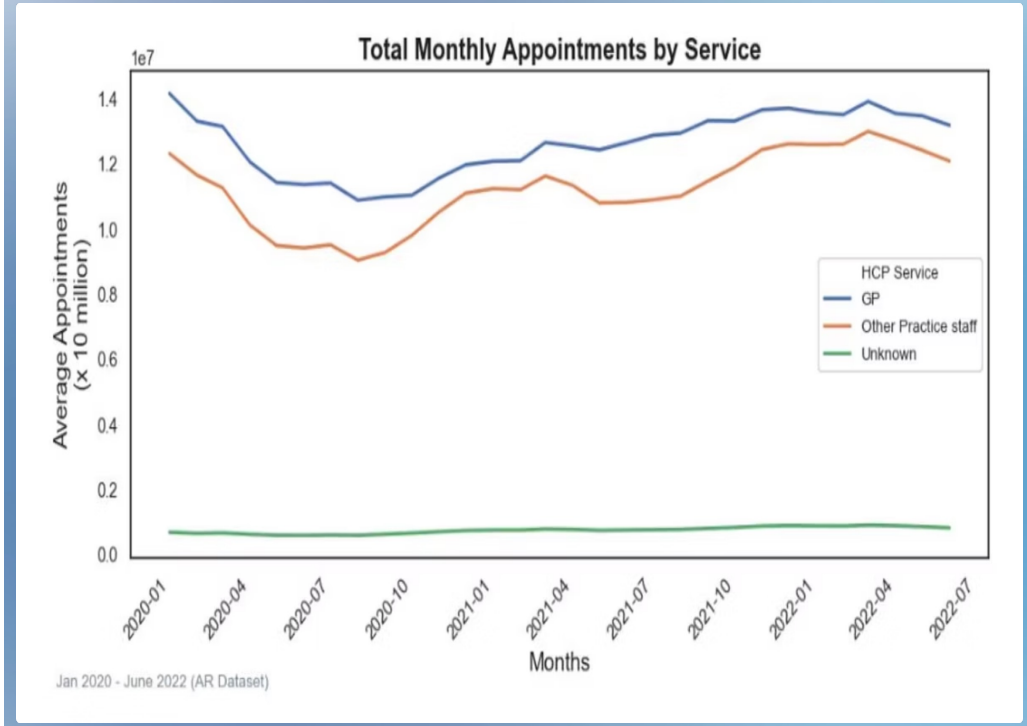
Peak pressure

4

Spring

Sustained high demand

[redacted]



Healthcare Provider Appointments

Practice staff now account for almost the same number of appointments as GPs – a significant shift in service delivery.

The data shows a clear increase in appointments over time, with practice staff playing an increasingly vital role in patient care delivery.

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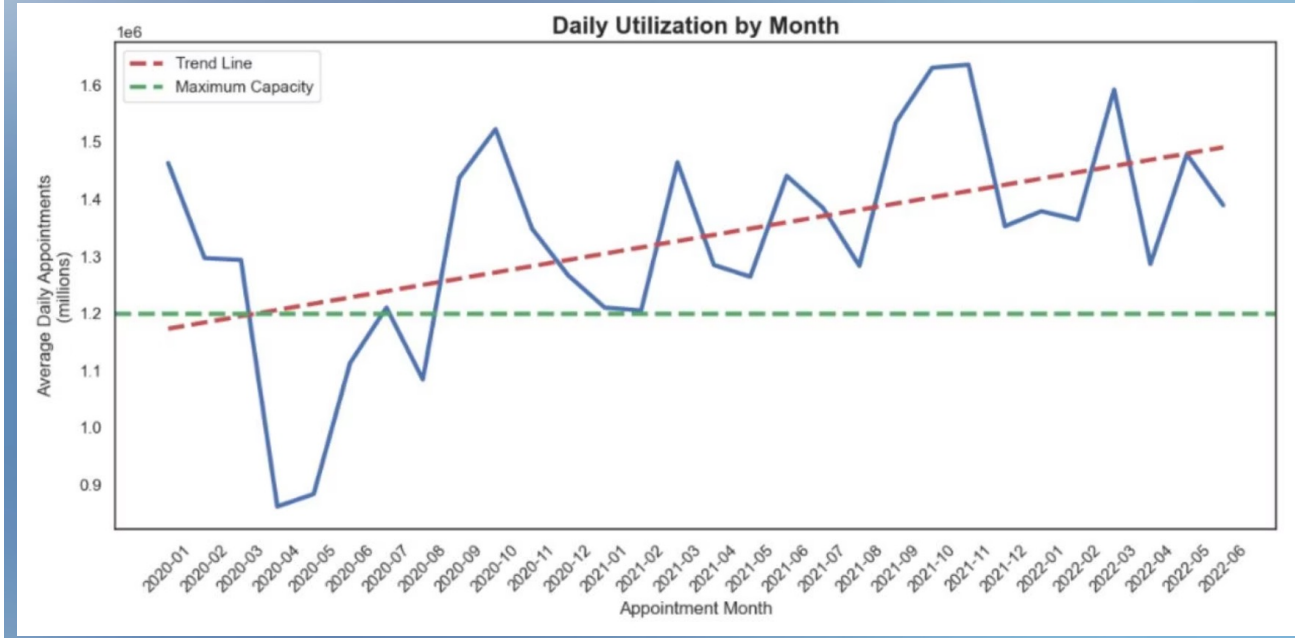

System Under Pressure

Wild Percentage Swings

Healthcare provider service data reveals dramatic fluctuations over time, indicating a system operating under significant pressure with inconsistent capacity.

Despite challenges, there's a clear upward trend in total appointments over time when accounting for actual working days (5-day week, bank holidays, 27 days annual leave).

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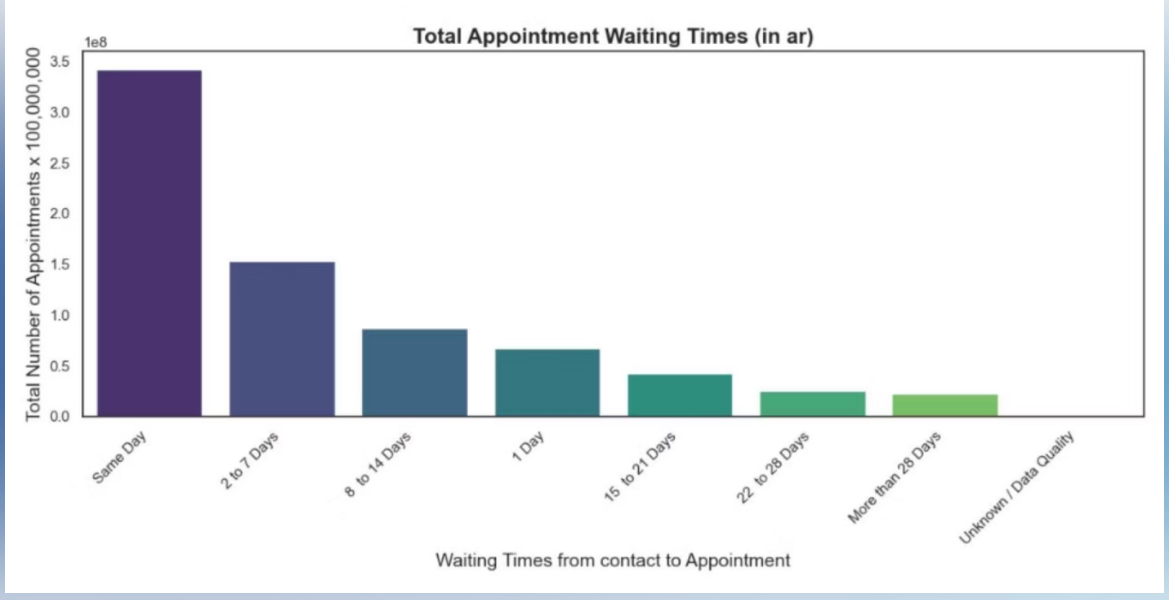
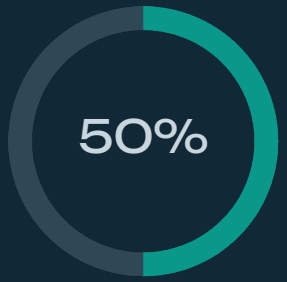
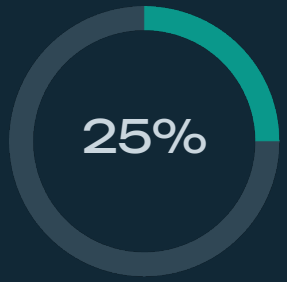


GP practices consistently exceed the daily appointment target of 1.2 million, demonstrating remarkable commitment despite resource constraints.



Same-Day Appointments

Half of all appointments booked and attended on the same day



Week+ Wait Times

Less than a quarter of appointments take over a week

[redacted]

Telephone Appointments: The Future?

Significant Growth

- Investigate correlation with waiting times
- Analyse attendance patterns
- Examine location-based trends
- Review national category impacts

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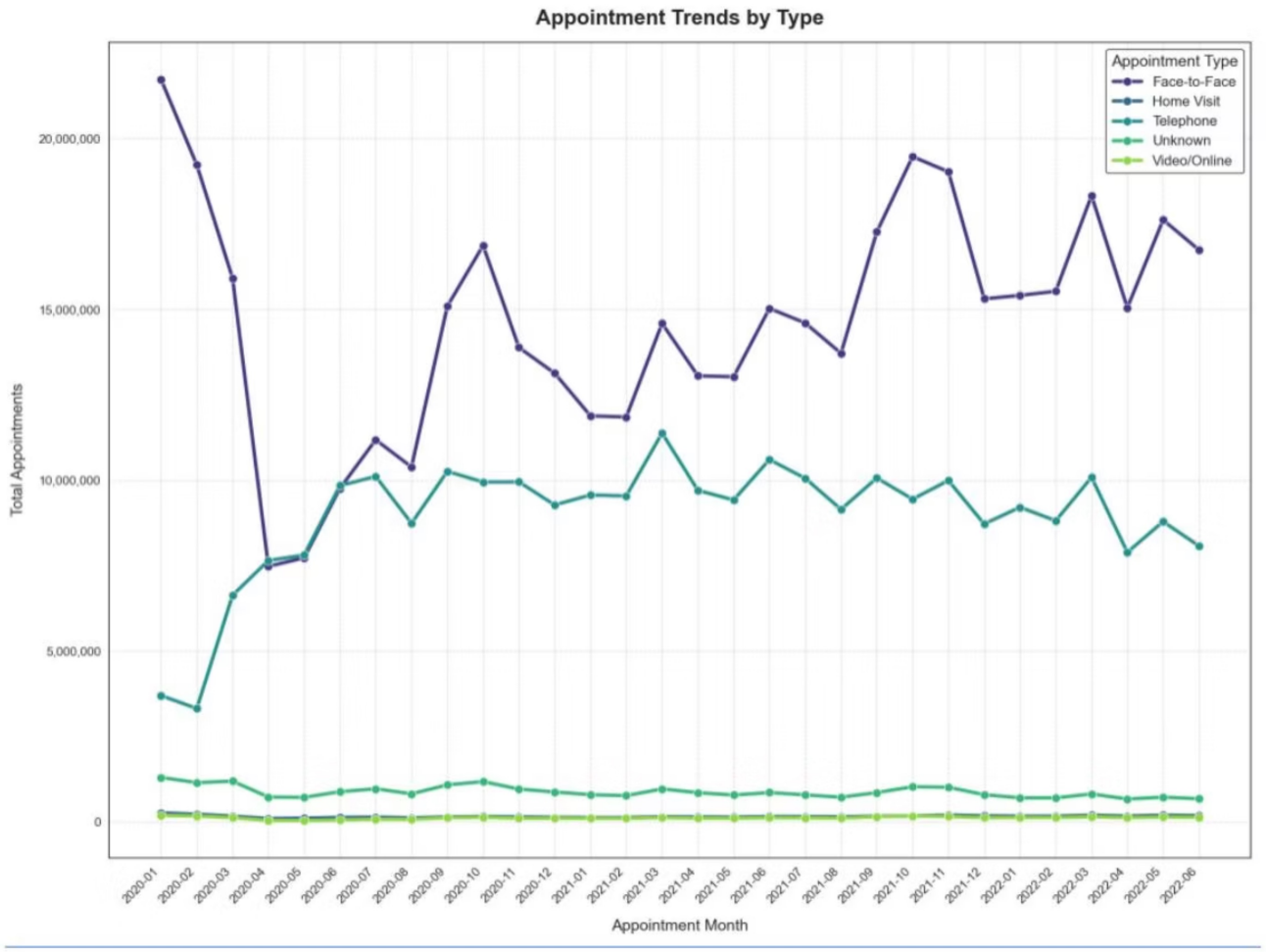

Significant Growth

Telephone appointments have increased dramatically over time, likely driven by COVID-19 but offering potential long-term benefits for resource optimisation.

Recommendations

Redistribute Weekly Staff

Allocate resources to handle Monday demand surges and weekly patterns more effectively.

Weekend Appointments

Consider weekend services to ease weekday pressure and improve patient access.

Expand Telephone Services

Further investigate and optimise telephone appointment utilisation as a resource-efficient solution.

Improve Data Collection

Gather more granular HCP data and location-based insights to enable better resource planning.

Conclusion: Staffing levels are inadequate within GP practices. Telephone appointments show promise for easing system pressure, but data inconsistencies require resolution for optimal resource utilisation.

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