



Britons resorting to DIY medicine because they're unable to see a GP, new research suggests

Description

The findings have been described as a “national scandal” by the Liberal Democrats, who commissioned the survey. The party claims this is the result of “mismanagement and neglect” of local health services by the government.

Some unwell Britons are resorting to DIY medical treatments because they cannot get a face-to-face appointment with a family doctor, new research suggests.

More than 25% of adults have tried getting an in-person consultation with a GP in their local area but were unable to do so in the past 12 months, according to a survey by Savanta ComRes.

While some delayed seeing a doctor or gave up altogether, about 16% of those who could not get an appointment either administered treatment themselves or asked somebody else who was not medically qualified to do so.

The findings have been described as a “national scandal” by the Liberal Democrats, who commissioned the survey. The party claims this is the result of “mismanagement and neglect” of local health services by the government.

Involving more than 2,000 adults, the survey found that 72% had tried to get a face-to-face GP appointment in their local area in the past year. About 43% proved successful, while 29% did not.

Of those who were unsuccessful, 32% said they delayed seeing a GP despite being in pain, while 31% simply abandoned their attempt to get an appointment.

Meanwhile, 24% said they bought medication at a pharmacy or online without seeking a doctor's advice, and 19% went to A&E.

The survey also found that 11% paid for a private consultation and another 10% travelled a long

distance to find a GP surgery that had available appointments.

Following the survey's findings, Lib Dem leader Sir Ed Davey said the government has repeatedly broken its promises to recruit more doctors and called on ministers to bring in another 8,000 GPs.

He said: "This is a national scandal. Face-to-face GP appointments have become almost extinct in some areas of the country.

"We now have the devastating situation where people are left treating themselves or even self-prescribing medication because they can't see their local GP.

"The British public pay their fair share to the NHS, but years of government mismanagement and neglect of local health services has left millions unable to see their GP."

In response, a Department of Health and Social Care spokesman said that there were almost 2,300 more full-time equivalent doctors working in general practice in September 2022 when compared with September 2019 – and record numbers are training.

"We recognise the pressures GPs are under and are working to increase access for patients," the spokesman said.

"This year GP teams have delivered 80,000 more appointments every working day compared to last year, and we plan to deliver over a million more appointments this winter by bolstering general practice teams with other professionals.

"Guidance is clear that GP practices must provide face-to-face appointments, alongside remote consultations – and over two-thirds of appointments in November were face to face."

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