

Minor Illness Management Through Community Pharmacy

Activity Analysis

Data from 1st October 2005 to 31st March 2006 were obtained from 11 Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) using the Webstar Health Service PACT software. Throughout the 11 PCTs, a total of 230 community pharmacies are commissioned to provide a Minor Ailments Service (MAS) to their patients. The number of community pharmacies involved in each PCT ranges from three to forty-five with an average of 20.

In the 6-month period, a total of 32,304 patient consultations were carried out in the 230 pharmacies.

Figure 1 illustrates the spread of consultations across each PCT.

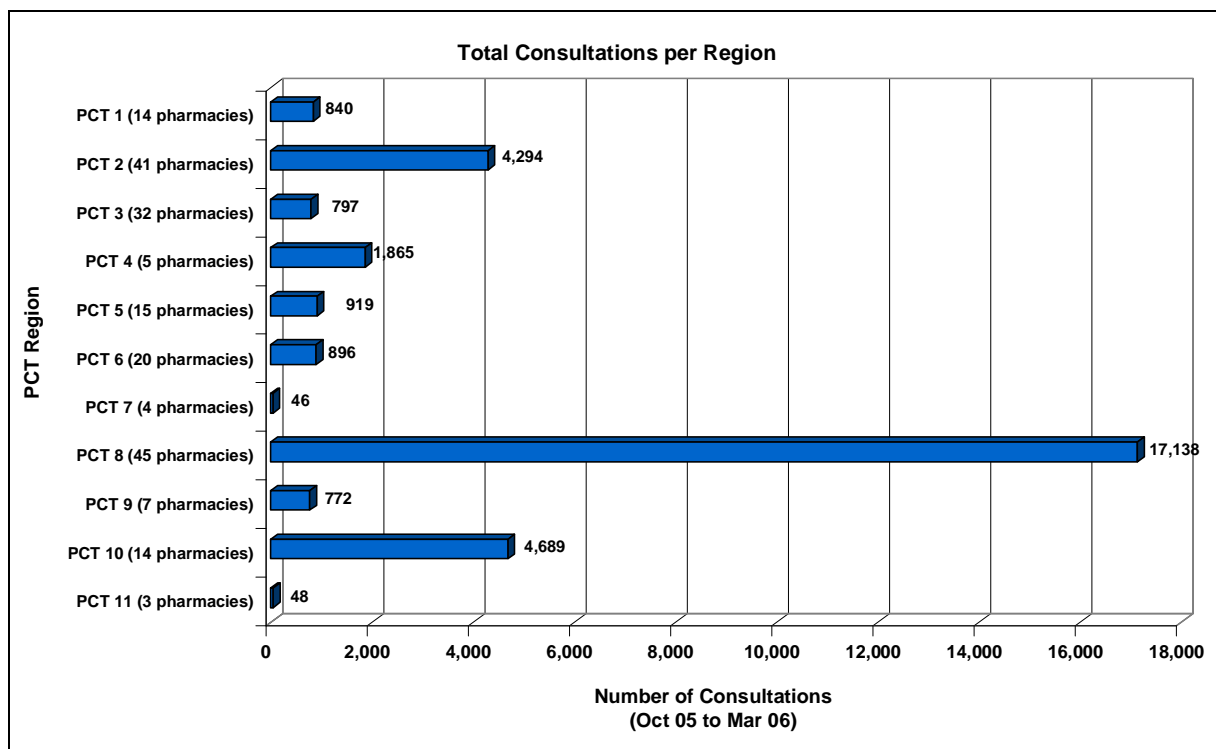


Figure 1: Spread of consultations across PCTs, for 6-month period

The average number of consultations per month per PCT was 2,937, equating to an average of 140 consultations per pharmacy, per month. However, as one PCT was very high performing (PCT 8) this figure contributes to an increase in the overall average. Excluding PCT 8 the average number of consultations is 1,517 per PCT or 82 per pharmacy per month.

Remuneration to pharmacy contractors providing MAS consultations varied considerably in each PCT reflecting local negotiation. The majority of MAS schemes pay the pharmacy contractor a fee for each patient consultation. Fees for all 11 PCTs ranged from £1.50 to £6 per patient consultation. The total consultation fee spend in the 6-month period was £162,578.80, which equates to an average of £5.03 per consultation, based on 32,304 consultations. In addition, some PCTs may choose to pay each contractor an annual retainer or administration fee. Figure 2 illustrates the total paid in consultation fees for each PCT.

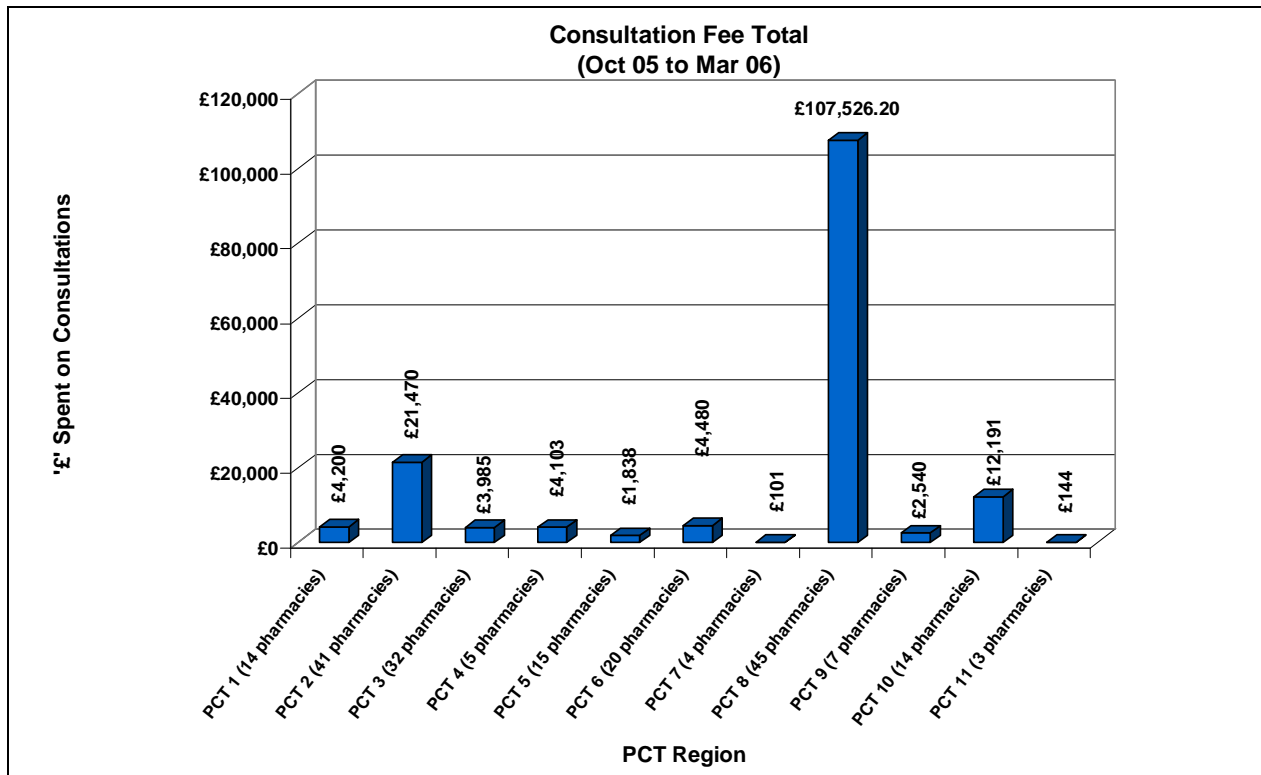


Figure 2: Total paid by PCTs as remuneration for consultations carried out, over 6-month period

A range of 29 minor conditions are incorporated into the treatment protocols, across the 11 PCTs. Individual PCTs have varying combinations of ailments, tailored to the needs of the population in the area. Figure 3 below illustrates the spread of conditions included in each PCT and the number of consultations for each ailment.

CONDITION	PCT 1	PCT 2	PCT 3	PCT 4	PCT 5	PCT 6	PCT 7	PCT 8	PCT 9	PCT 10	PCT 11
Athlete's Foot	6	106	18	-	5	16	-	224	4	-	0
Back Pain	-	-	26	-	-	-	-	566	-	-	-
Cold Sore	-	152	13	-	-	-	-	100	13	-	-
Colds & Flu	-	1,966	480	-	-	58	-	-	410	-	-
Conjunctivitis	30	270	36	-	-	-	-	175	29	2,050	5
Constipation	10	70	5	-	14	28	-	308	0	-	0
Contact Dermatitis/ Eczema	-	-	14	-	6	-	-	991	2	-	-
Coughs	270	0	-	1,318	322	-	24	4,884	211	-	6
Cystitis	9	54	4	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-
Diarrhoea	51	250	34	-	29	46	-	800	37	-	0
Dyspepsia/ Indigestion	3	98	-	-	14	51	-	545	33	-	-
Fever/ Headache/ Earache	266	683	55	1,303	267	388	19	5,035	123	392	15
Haemorrhoids	-	61	6	-	-	-	-	23	-	-	-
Hay Fever	22	144	23	-	4	31	-	311	18	29	1
Head Lice	174	850	67	52	145	184	0	1,376	3	2,103	19
Insect bites/stings	-	119	6	-	10	11	-	166	-	-	-

Minor burns/ Lacerations	-	119	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-
Mouth ulcer	14	107	4	-	11	14	-	340	15	-	-
Nappy Rash	-	107	2	-	-	-	-	65	10	-	-
Nasal congestion	136	-	-	177	132	-	8	-	76	-	3
Oral Thrush	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	8	-
Period Pain	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	0	-	-
Soft Tissue Injury	-	111	4	-	-	27	-	199	0	-	-
Sore Throat	65	371	-	161	136	98	14	1,329	12	105	2
Teething	-	135	-	-	40	12	-	590	11	-	-
Threadworms	36	137	-	-	54	55	-	-	2	-	-
Vaginal Thrush	43	323	58	-	93	43	-	626	15	334	4
VURTI	-	-	-	-	-	55	-	4,491	-	-	-
Warts & Verrucae	13	81	14	-	-	19	-	22	-	-	-

Figure 3: Conditions treatable via the MAS in each PCT, and number of consultations

Following a consultation with the pharmacist and having made an assessment of the patient, MAS allow the pharmacist to provide treatment to patients where required using an agreed formulary. The treatment is supplied to the patient free of charge where the patient is exempt from prescription charges. From the 32,304 consultations carried out, a total of 43,140 products were supplied in 6 months across the 11 PCTs; this is an average of 1.3 products per patient consultation.

The total spent on drugs was £81,230.29, averaging £1.88 per drug supplied. Figure 4 illustrates the total spend on drugs, over the 6-month period by each PCT.

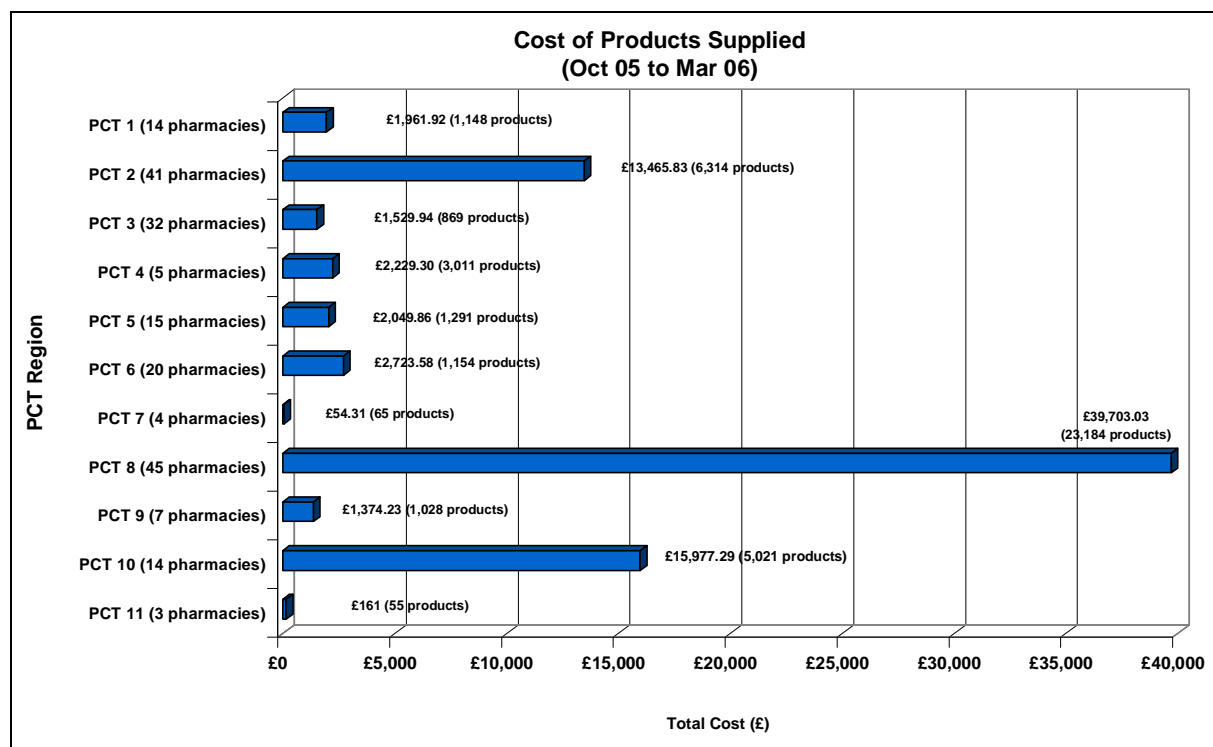


Figure 4: Total spent on drugs over 6 months, across 11 PCTs

The pricing of drug treatment by the schemes varies according to local preference. Some PCTs calculate the drug price using the drug tariff, others using the Chemist & Druggist.

The majority of Minor Ailments Schemes are targeted at patients who are exempt from the NHS prescription charge (e.g. under 16's, over 65's, deprived areas), as these are often the patients who

request GP appointments for conditions that can be managed in community pharmacy. This was evident in the extracted data. A total of 99% (n=42,712) of drugs supplied to patients under the MAS, were done so under the standard NHS exemption criteria, with only 0.6% (n= 264) paying a prescription levy charge and 0.4% (n=204) paying an over-the-counter price.

As the aim of MAS being to remove patients from general practice, unless they present with symptoms which cannot be addressed in the pharmacy, is also evident in the data extracted. Figure 5 illustrates the number of referrals that needed to be made to GPs, for patients whose conditions/symptoms fell outside the protocol guidelines.

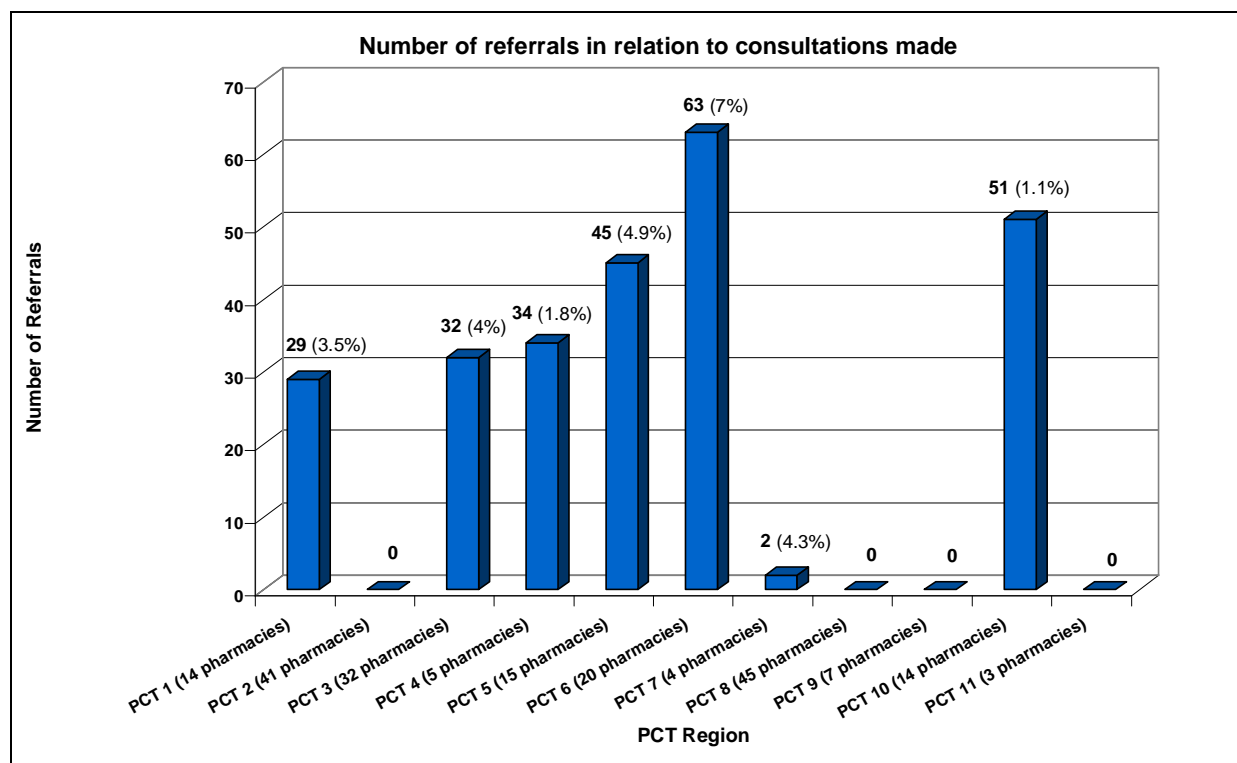


Figure 5: Number of referrals made to GP, for patients who could not be treated in the pharmacy

MAS help to reduce demand for GP appointments by encouraging patients to have their condition assessed and treated by the pharmacist instead of their GP. The graph in Figure 6, illustrates where patients would have sought alternative treatment/advice in the absence of the MAS.

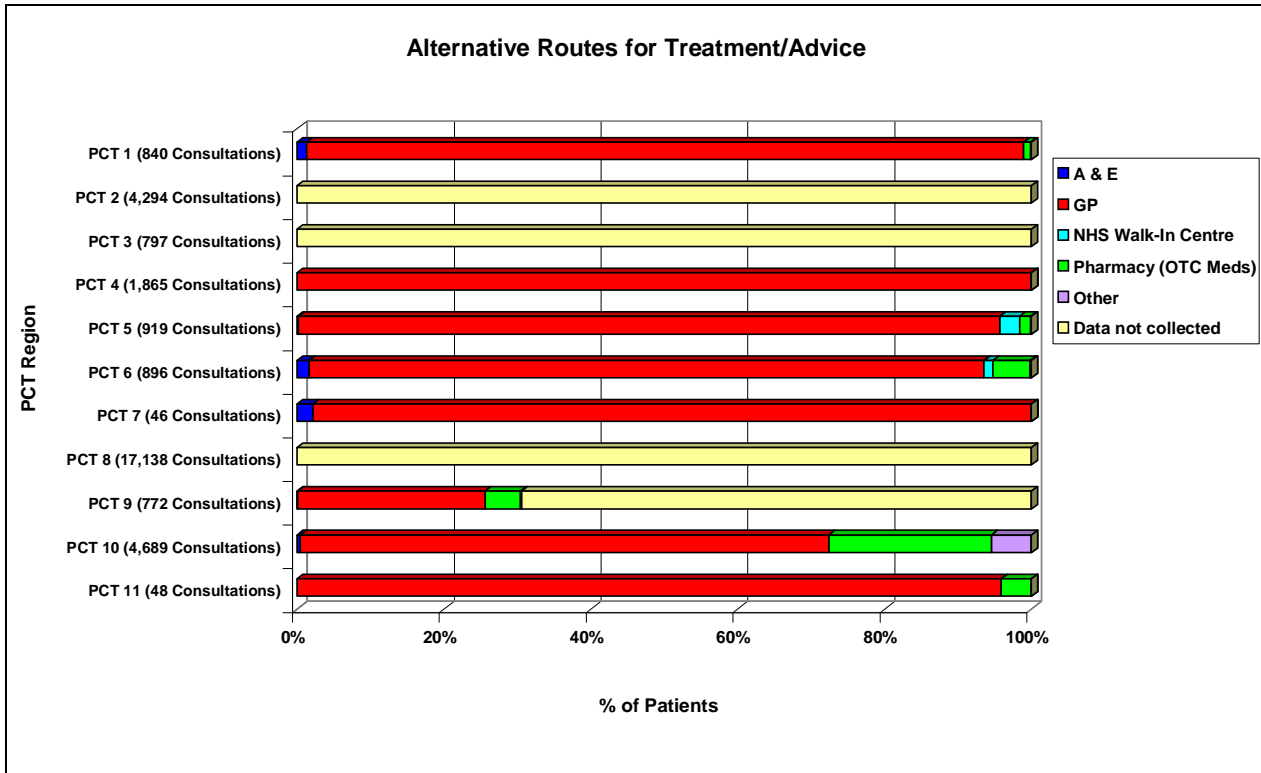


Figure 6: Routes of alternative advice/ treatment

As outlined briefly previously, patients accessing MAS tend to be those who are exempt from prescription charges, as they can receive treatment free of charge via community pharmacy without seeing their GP. The total proportion of patients under 16 years who accessed the service was 63%, whilst the proportion of patients over 65 using the service was 5%. The full age ranges of patients who accessed a MAS is illustrated in Figure 7.

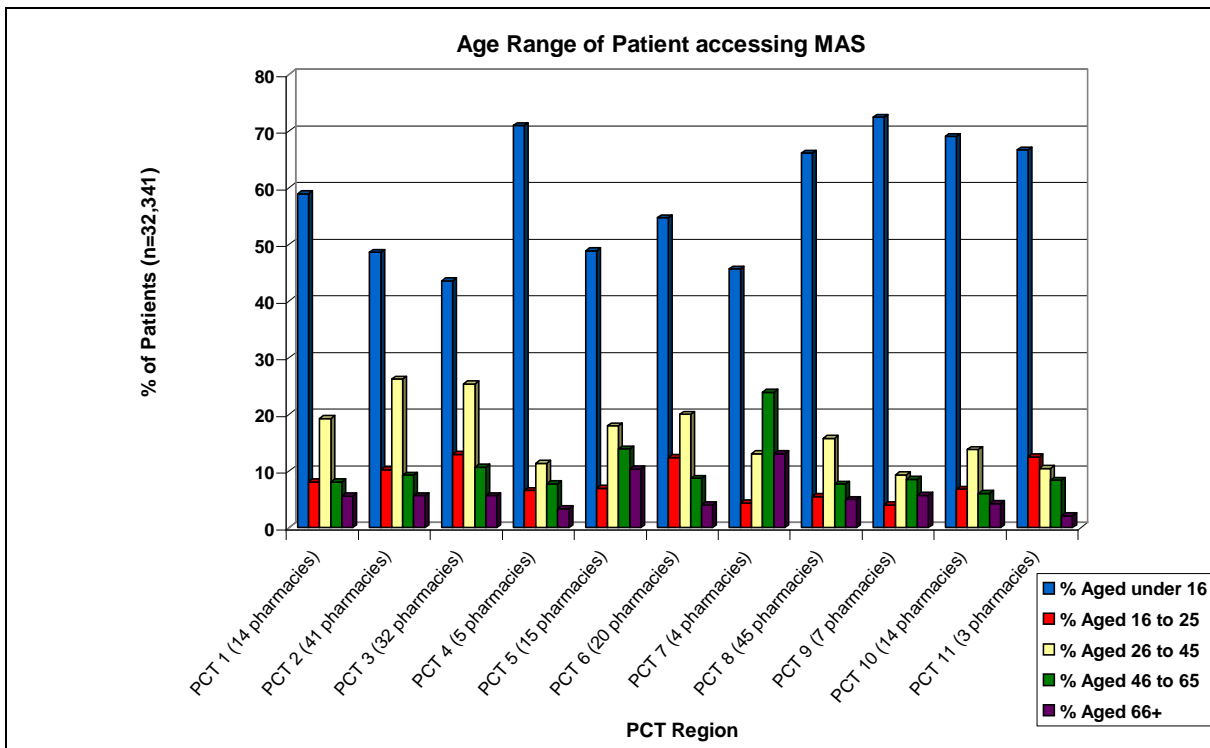


Figure 7: Age range of patients using the community pharmacy MAS, in each PCT

Summary

	PCT 1	PCT 2	PCT 3	PCT 4	PCT 5	PCT 6	PCT 7	PCT 8	PCT 9	PCT 10	PCT 11
N° of pharmacies	14	41	32	5	15	20	4	45	7	44	3
N° of consultations	840	4,294	797	1,865	919	896	46	17,138	772	4,689	48
N° of medicines supplied	1,148	6,314	869	3,011	1,291	1,154	65	23,184	1,028	5,021	55
Payment method e.g. per consult or retainer (PC or R)	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	R	R	PC	PC
Consultation Fee (where relevant)	£5	£5	£5	£2.20	£2	£5	£2.20	-	-	£2.60	£3
Proportion of under 16s	59%	49%	43%	71%	49%	55%	46%	66%	72%	69%	67%
Proportion of over 65s	6%	6%	6%	3%	10%	4%	13%	5%	6%	4%	2%
Proportion exempt	99%	99%	96%	99%	98%	99%	98%	99%	100%	95%	100%
How patients access service (voucher/passport)	V	-	-	-	-	V	V	V	-	-	V