

# **Spotlight on how GP surgeries have been supporting people during Covid**



**September 2020**

# Introduction

During the Covid pandemic, GP surgeries have understandably had to change their service over night in order to keep staff and patients safe.

At Healthwatch Medway we have been actively gathering feedback about all aspects of health and social care throughout the pandemic and have been sharing that feedback directly with decision makers to help them plan and adjust how best to support people during this difficult time.

During this exercise, people have been talking to us about GP services. We wanted to explore this further to understand how practices have been supporting their patients during Covid. Given that face to face communication is currently very restricted, their websites have become crucial ways for GP surgeries to inform, update and support their patients.

We wanted to look at what support they were providing and highlight what could be improved.

## What were we trying to achieve?

- Recognise what is working well and highlight what could be improved
- Encourage surgeries to provide the best information and support possible

## What did we do?

One of our volunteers reviewed 50 websites from every GP surgery in Medway.

Using a checklist, they reviewed each website. Key elements to the checklist included:

- What information was shared with patients and residents?
- Is there clear information about Covid symptoms and what to do?
- What information was available for shielders or had long term conditions?
- Information about how to get a repeat prescription and accessing a pharmacy
- Was it written clearly and could be understood by all?
- Was the information up to date and useful?
- Where there options for people who didn't have access to technology?

## What have we recommended?

Based on the feedback, we have made the following recommendations:

- All surgeries should have a website. Those that don't should urgently put one in place.
- All practices must share information about Covid on their website which must be regularly updated with the latest guidance
- All Medway surgeries should use our checklist to review the support and information they provide to patients
- Once they have completed the review, all surgeries should expand and improve the information they provide to patients especially details about other places to access support such as mental health organisations and support for carers
- All surgeries must clearly state how people without technology can access primary care services especially during a pandemic
- All surgeries should include information about Healthwatch Medway and encourage patients to share feedback about all health and social care services

## What did we find?

- 10 surgeries had no website at all (see appendix 1 for details)
- 9 practice websites had no information about Covid-19 (see appendix 2 for details)
- None of the websites included alternative ways for people who had no access to technology to access the GP service
- A quarter (26%) of websites had no information about the new procedures for visiting the surgery such as PPE or social distancing
- 75% of websites had no information about other sources of support for patients such as mental health
- 13% of websites had no mention of their Patient Participation Groups which suggests that PPG groups don't exist at that practice



For a detailed breakdown of how your surgery performed against our checklist, read the attached spreadsheet.

## Appendix 1 : Which surgeries do NOT currently have a website?

- Balmoral Malling (Red) (DMC)
- Glebe Family Practice
- Maidstone Road
- Malvern Rd
- Princes Park Medical Centre
- Pump Lane
- Railside Surgery
- Railway Street
- Waltham Road
- Wayfield Road Surgery

## Appendix 2 : Which surgeries had a website which offered COVID related information?

- Apex Medical Centre
- Balmoral Malling (Red) (DMC)
- Borstal Village Surgery
- Brompton Medical Practice
- Bryant Street
- Castle Medical Practice
- Church View Practice
- Churchill Clinic
- City Way
- Court View Surgery
- Eastcourt Lane
- Glebe Family Practice
- Gun Lane
- High Parks Medical Practice
- King George Rd
- Kings Family Practice
- Long Catlis Road Surgery
- Maidstone Road (Chatham)
- Maidstone Road (Rainham)
- Malvern Rd
- Marlowe Park Medical Centre
- Matrix Medical Practice
- Napier Road
- Orchard Family Practice
- Princes Park Medical Centre
- Pump Lane
- Railside Surgery
- Railway Street
- Reach
- Reach (Balmoral)
- Riverside Medical Practice
- St Marys Medical Centre (DMC - unaffected)
- Stonecross & West Drive Surgeries

- The Elms
- The Halfway Surgery
- Thorndike Health Care Centre
- Upper Canterbury Street
- Waltham Road
- Wayfield Road Surgery
- Woodlands Family Practice

#### Appendix 3: Which surgeries did NOT offer any COVID information on their website?

- Malling Health
- Parkwood Family Practice
- Parkwood Health Centre
- Wigmore Medical Practice
- Hoo St Werburgh (DMC)
- Pentagon (DMC)
- St Marys Island
- Sunlight Centre Surgery
- Yellow (Hoo Branch)

#### Appendix 4: Our Checklist used to review the websites

1. Does the website have information about the surgeries' Patient Participation Group (PPG)?
2. Have a clear tab/section leading the viewer to COVID-19 related information.
3. Clearly inform the viewer of up to date information on COVID-19.
4. List the symptoms of COVID-19.
5. Inform the viewer of what to do should they have any symptoms of COVID-19.
6. Inform the viewer of who to contact to obtain a free COVID-19 Test, should they have symptoms.
7. Inform the viewer of how to obtain a medical certificate/digital isolation note for employers, should they be shielding due to COVID-19.
8. Explain the options for having a GP/Nurse consultation (e.g. Telephone consultation/Remote video consultation/Attending the Surgery).
9. Give an option for GP/Nurse consultation for people with no digital access (such as homeless/people without Internet/Phone).
10. Clearly explain what is required should a patient need to attend the Surgery in Person, i.e. use of PPE, Social Distancing.
11. Inform the viewer of how to get medical advice 'Out of Practice Hours' during the COVID Pandemic.
12. Inform the viewer of the process to obtain repeat prescriptions during the COVID Pandemic.
13. Offer support and help to organisations (giving names/links to organisations) that can support people within the community such as:
  - Mental Health Support
  - Elderly residents within the community
  - People living in Rural Areas
14. Give details of local Pharmacies with opening times and access information.
15. Give details of how to register at the particular practice during the COVID Pandemic.
16. Give information of how patients with diabetes can access testing/medication/support during the COVID Pandemic.

## Healthwatch Medway

**Healthwatch Medway is the independent voice for local people in Medway.**

**We gather and represent people's views about any health and social care service in Medway.**

**Our role is to understand what matters most to people and to use that information to influence providers and commissioners to change the way services are designed and developed.**

**Our FREE Information and Signposting service can help you navigate Medway's complicated health and social care system to ensure you can find and access the services that are available for you.**



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