

What makes a GP website patient friendly?



May 2021

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Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire is a charity (No: 1158487) and a company limited by guarantee (England and Wales No: 08187141). Registered office 3rd Floor, The Sion, Crown Glass Place, Nailsea BS48 1RB

Introduction

Healthwatch Bristol is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We are here to make sure that those running services, put people at the heart of care.

Our sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf, informing commissioners and providers about good practice and areas for service improvement.

Methods we used to audit websites

This project was carried out by three Healthwatch volunteers from Dec 2020 to February 2021. They undertook a 'snapshot' audit of a selection of GP websites.

The aim of the audit was to see if patients could find the information they need quickly and easily on their GP surgery website. This is especially important as more people use digital methods of finding information and interacting with their surgery.

Volunteers spent an agreed amount of time on each website answering the following questions: Can patients find out how to access the service they need? Do they know who to contact out of hours? What if they have particular support needs? Is information up-to-date, accessible, and easy to understand?

The audit results have been used to create a GP '**website review tool**' (page 7). We hope that this is a useful tool to help surgery staff note what information is missing from their surgery website, and how to make it patient friendly for as many people as possible.

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Summary of findings

Healthwatch Bristol carried out the audit of nine surgery websites across different areas of the city to provide a snapshot. Our volunteers noted gaps in information and found examples of inclusivity, support, and information that benefits patients and their families. These examples of good practice are:

Good practice

- GP surgeries had options for translating their website into different languages using flags so that non-English speakers can access it.
- Some practices included links to websites, leaflets, documents in pdf formats that could be printed out about different conditions and health topics.
- Several websites included links to, or details of, how to contact other support agencies across a range of issues that impact healthcare.
- Most surgeries include links to their Patient Participation Group (PPG).
- Most websites included details of changes to how they are supporting patients during the pandemic.

There were examples where the websites could be better in the following ways:

In need of improvement

Information about surgery location/access:

- Only one site provided information about accessibility of the practice for a disabled patient.
- Three did not specify the practice's catchment area.

Website accessibility:

- Eight did not include a link to accessibility standards.
- Seven did not provide information in alternative formats e.g., Easy-read, video.
- Four did not have a translate function.
- Two did not include a search function.

Feedback and Complaints:

- Three did not have clear information about how to make a complaint to the surgery.
- Three did not offer alternative routes for complaints or feedback e.g. Through Patient Advice and Liaison Services, Healthwatch, or the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Other:

- Eight did not include information about booking an interpreter.

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- Seven did not have a SMS text or textphone contact number for people with hearing loss.
- Four did not mention that NHS 111 is free to call.
- Four lacked information about their links to local pharmacies.

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Examples of good practice

The following pages were noted by volunteers as examples of good practice. This may be because information was clear or that they had included useful resources, links, or information.

- **Crest Family Practice** reference disabled parking and a low reception desk. They also mention a tannoy system linked to a hearing loop.
<https://www.crestfamilypractice.co.uk/info.aspx?p=13>
- **Wellspring Surgery** had a 'Directory of Services' in which you put your location/postcode to find nearby services including dental, optician, pharmacy, sexual health, maternity, smoking, alcohol and substance misuse, weight management, anxiety, stress and depression, carers support, coping with bereavement, and social care. (page no longer exists)
- **Stockwood Medical Centre** includes a link to the 'Ask 3 questions' website, a useful tool for helping patients feel more in control of their care and able to prepare important questions for their care providers.
<https://www.stockwoodmedicalcentre.co.uk/info.aspx?p=12&pr=L81009&t=1&high=ask+3+questions> and
- **Old School Surgery** includes a section with video explanations of a variety of health issues. <https://old-school-surgery.healthandcarevideos.com/>

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Other recommendations

We believe the following recommendations to be achievable and affordable.

We understand that some surgeries have direct access to update and change their websites whereas others may not.

- **Print out the GP website review tool** (Appendix 1, page 7) to help with annual website reviews and to use when updating and improving your website.
- Conduct regular **user experience reviews** of your website e.g., ask your PPG for feedback and suggestions.
- **Linking to other websites** which have more in-depth information about particular conditions or where information changes frequently (e.g., NHS website, charities to support people with particular conditions, patient support groups).
- Include a **link to Healthwatch** so that patients and members of the public can feedback about services (contact us if you would like to add the Healthwatch Gif or information to your site).

Useful information

- Ability Net (support for people using and accessing information digitally): <https://abilitynet.org.uk/>
- NHS information in Easy read format: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/about/resources/er/>
- NHS Health information in different languages: <https://www.nhs.uk/about-the-nhs-website/aboutnhschoices/accessibility/Pages/other-languages-section.aspx>
- Easy health - health information in video and easy read format: <https://www.easyhealth.org.uk/>
- Accessibility and assisted digital guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/helping-people-to-use-your-service>
- BNSSG Ask 3 questions: <https://bnssgccg.nhs.uk/health-advice-and-support/ask-3-questions/>

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Appendix 1:

Website Review tool

We have put together this tool for you to print out and use so that you can audit your own website, identify any issues, and make improvements.

Is information about your surgery clear, including the following...	Yes / No
Surgery name and address	
Opening hours (days and times)	
Phone number (you could include best time to call for test results)	
Text/accessible phone number	
Email address	
Is information up-to-date and clearly dated?	
Is information clear and concise, in easy-to-understand language without abbreviations?	
Your Comments	
Notes You could include information about how to register, make an appointment etc.	

Do you have the following out-of-hours information?	Yes / No
Contacting NHS 111 online at 111.nhs.uk/ or by phoning 111 (have you mentioned that it is free?)	
The British Sign Language link for 111	
Information on the NHS 111 option 2 First Response for mental health services	
Location of the nearest Minor Injuries Unit or Urgent Treatment Centre	
To call 999 in an emergency	
Your Comments	

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Do you have information about Covid-19?	Yes / No
Up-to-date information on Covid-19: prevention of spread, symptoms, vaccinations	
Information about changes to services or treatment due to Covid-19	
Link to government and/or NHS Covid-19 information	
Your comments	

Making an appointment - do you have the following?	Yes / No
A clearly marked 'How to make an appointment' section (including: face-to-face surgery visit, phone, email/website/app, other)?	
Information about how appointments can be attended (including face-to-face, phone, video, other)	
Information about if/when patients will receive text message reminders	
Your comments	

Registering	Yes / No
Is it clear how new patients can register?	
Is there information about whether someone can register a person they care for?	
Do you link to apps that you use e.g., Patient Access, E-consult, AskmyGP (and include/link to user guides to help people use them)?	
Your comments	

Prescriptions - does your website have the following...	Yes / No
Clear information on prescriptions and ordering repeat prescriptions	
A recommended pharmacy	
Information about whether the surgery speaks directly to the pharmacy e.g., if there is an electronic prescriptions service (EPS)	
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Accessibility - do you have the following...	Yes / No
Accessible information for people with sensory disability/learning disability	
A link to website accessibility standards	
Alternative formats for information such as easy-read, audio, etc.	
Text in a font that is large and clear with high contrast	
Information accessible to those who do not have English as a first language (this might include a translate function, welcome message in alternative languages, and information about how to book an interpreter)	
Information about accessibility to the practice including disabled parking, low reception desk for wheelchair access, tannoy system linked to hearing loop, etc.	
Your comments	
Notes By law information must be accessible for people with sensory impairments and learning disabilities. For guidance on how to make your website accessible visit: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/make-your-website-or-app-accessible-and-publish-an-accessibility-statement	

Feedback and complaints	Yes / No
Do you have a clearly marked section about how and where to make a complaint or give feedback (ideally a dedicated complaints page from the main menu)?	
Have you included multiple methods of giving feedback via the surgery, via the CCG, via an external organisation (e.g., advocacy)?	
Do you have a link to Healthwatch for feedback?	
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Community	Yes / No
Have you provided information about the Patients Participation Group (PPG), including the group's role, how it aims to benefit the patients, how patients can get involved, and who to contact? (You could also include meeting dates, agendas, and other information)	
Do you provide information about the catchment area for the practice?	
Your comments	

Self-management and long-term conditions. Do you have the following...	Yes / No
Information/links to advice about self-care?	
Links to support for specific conditions (for example cancer, stroke, diabetes)?	
Information about changes to treatments for long term conditions due to the Covid-19 the pandemic?	
Your comments	

Staff does your website include the following..	Yes / No
An up-to-date list of current staff, their specialities, and a photograph? (This is especially useful for people with learning disabilities or autism, who may be anxious about meeting new people.)	
Information about allied health professionals at the practice including mental health professionals, support for carers, support for young people, dementia specialists, etc?	
An introductory section on social prescribers/link workers and how to contact them?	
Your comments	

Last review date:	
Next review due:	

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Appendix 2: List of surgery websites reviewed

- Crest Family Practice
- Fireclay Health
- Greenway Community Practice
- Merrywood Practice
- Pioneer Medical Group
- Southmead & Henbury Family Practice
- Stockwood Medical Centre
- The Old School Surgery
- Wellspring Surgery

Appendix 3: we would like to thank the following volunteers for their input

- Suaad Walker - website audits, summary of findings
- Anne Pope - website audits
- Kate Mould - checklist creation and development, summary of findings and recommendations.

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