

# Mystery Shopping of GP websites and out-of-hours messages in East Sussex

How informative and accessible are they?



**Full Report: February 2022**

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## Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank our dedicated team of volunteers for their contributions in delivering this project.

## Contact Details:

Healthwatch East Sussex  
Freepost RTTT-BYBX-KCEY  
Greencoat House  
32 St Leonards Road  
Eastbourne  
East Sussex  
BN21 3UT

Telephone: [0333 101 4007](tel:03331014007)

Email: [enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk)

## 1 Introduction

This study is an independent review of the content of GP practice websites and out-of-hours phone messages across East Sussex. It has been undertaken by Healthwatch East Sussex volunteers and staff.

General Practitioners (GPs) represent the first port of call for many people in responding to both new and existing health and wellbeing needs.

As well as providing services directly to patients, GP practices also perform a key role in providing information, signposting and referring to other services, with guidance on how people can obtain support when surgeries are closed being especially important.

Providing accessible information helps people to make effective decisions on how and when to access services in the minimum number of steps, and how to self-care appropriately.

### THIS WAY

This potentially reduces the number of enquiries and requests made to practices, which is particularly important when pressure on GPs and other health and care services is high, as is the case in late 2021.

### 1.1 Our aim

**Our aim:** *To provide an overview of the status of GP websites and out-of-hours phone messages, assessing how informative and accessible they currently are for people.*

This report provides a summary of the key themes identified from the review process. We have highlighted positive examples and best practice, together with the barriers and challenges identified by reviewers.

A number of recommendations have been proposed for GP practices, the commissioners of GP services and Healthwatch so that all parties can work collaboratively to develop and sustain high quality sources of information for residents in East Sussex.

### 1.2 Background

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic required GP practices to engage with patients and conduct appointments remotely unless there was an urgent need for a face-to-face consultation.

This in turn increased the importance of online and phone communication with patients in order to keep them up-to-date with changes to services and support them to get to the right service at the right time.

Whilst the speed of adopting remote and virtual forms of communication has been impressive, pressures on primary care services (doctors, dentists etc.) and the ongoing changes to other services has created challenges in ensuring public-facing information is kept accurate, up-to-date and accessible.

People have frequently told Healthwatch that it is not always clear what appointments or methods of contact are available, whether to use online booking systems and how to raise a concern or complaint. Knowing how to get health and care support outside of normal working hours is also often unclear.



Results from the 2021 GP Patient Survey<sup>1</sup> run by Ipsos MORI indicated that people in East Sussex haven't always found GP websites in East Sussex easy to use to get the information or services they are seeking, and this experience had got worse during the pandemic.

*Table 1 - Ease of using GP practice's websites to look for information or access services - East Sussex averages 2021*

	Easy	Not easy
2021	75%	25%
2020	79%	21%

Healthwatch recognises the significant and ongoing pressures on GP practices to respond to high demand for services, update frequently changing information and communicate regularly with local people.

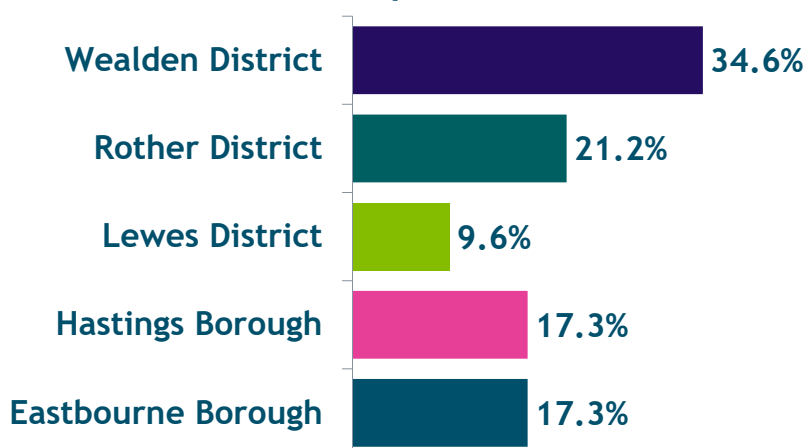
This review is focused on positively supporting practices, both individually and collectively, to understand lay experiences of the information they are presenting. Any barriers, gaps, omissions, or issues identified are accompanied by recommendations on how these could be overcome, improved, or changed for the better.

<sup>1</sup> <https://gp-patient.co.uk/about>

## 2 What we did...

During October and November 2021, Healthwatch staff and volunteers undertook a ‘Mystery Shopping’ review of the 52 websites<sup>2</sup> and out-of-hours phone messages used across GP practices in East Sussex (see Appendix 1).

### Which East Sussex Local Authority area is the GP practice located in?



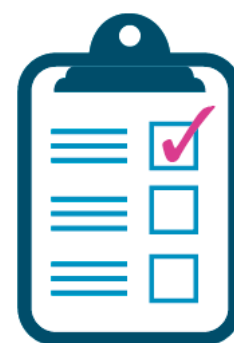
Of the practices websites we reviewed:

- 17 were in Wealden District
- 11 were in Rother District
- 5 were in Lewes District
- 9 were in Hastings Borough
- 9 were in Eastbourne Borough

We wanted to see if we could find key information about the practice and other health and community services without having to telephone or contact the practice directly, and to identify what was good, bad or indifferent about the website/message.

We reviewed:

- **Quality of information:** was it accurate, up-to-date and regularly refreshed?
- **Clarity of information:** was it clear and in plain language, and was it accessible to people with particular needs e.g. visual or hearing impairments. Was it available in other languages?
- **Ease of navigation** - was information easy to find, or is lots of searching required? *Websites only*
- **Presentation of information** - was information engaging in its use of text, images and diagrams? Was there too much or too little? Was it clear where to go for more assistance?



We used a standard set of questions for websites (see Appendix 2) and out-of-hours phone messages (see Appendix 3) so they could be compared in a uniform way.

<sup>2</sup> We recognise that there are more practices than websites, but this reflects some GPs operating in groups (Primary Care Networks) and having one shared website, even if they have multiple surgery sites.

Reviews were undertaken by eight Healthwatch volunteers and one Healthwatch staff member from a range of age groups and backgrounds. Each reviewer was provided with the name, website address and phone number of a set of GP practices. The process was tested and piloted before roll-out, and reviewers did not review their own practices.

Please note that not all the assessment questions were completed for each practice that was reviewed. These are shown in graphs as 'No response'.

Percentages shown in this report are as a proportion of the total number websites or messages reviewed (identified above) unless otherwise stated.

We recognise that there may have been changes or amendments to websites and out-of-hours messages both during and after our review period. The reviews were current as at the end of the review process (14<sup>th</sup> November 2021).

## 3 Key Findings Summary

We undertook a ‘Mystery Shop’ review of 52 websites and out-of-hours phone messages for GP practices in East Sussex during October and November 2021. The summary below provides the key findings from this process.

### 3.1 GP websites

Our review of GP websites in East Sussex found that:

- Appointment options and triage mechanisms are not always explained on GP practice websites, with some providing limited detail on the options available and how to access them.
- Navigation on GP websites varied but was made more complicated by long or ambiguously titled menus and lots of page layers, making content challenging to access. The best examples used a combination of a well organised home page combined with clear menus to guide swift access to content.
- Not all websites had search tools or functionality, making it harder to find the content sought quickly and efficiently, especially if the design was complicated. Similarly, where present, search tools were not always easy to find.
- Few practice websites referred to any delays or increased wait times for patients as a result of the pandemic or other factors, either when contacting the surgery (especially by phone) or receiving an appointment.
- Staff information primarily focused on GPs, rather than other health professionals and practice staff. Contact details were not always publicly available for key individuals such as the practice manager.
- Accessibility features and information such as translation services, Browsealoud and details on the physical accessibility of surgeries varied considerably, with these and accessibility statements not featuring on all websites.
- Compliance information such as Care Quality Commission (CQC) ratings and reports were not present on all websites, with some examples that were present being out-of-date. Similarly, the NHS Friends and Family Test was often visible but often not clearly explained.
- Complaint processes, policies and timescales were not always easy to find, often with limited information on how to make a complaint about practices, rather than to a practice. Feedback mechanisms from patients to surgeries and vice-versa were not always clear and information (e.g. patient surveys results) not regularly shown.



- Information on Patient Participation Groups, Healthwatch, Advocacy Services, Carers or Veterans support was present on a majority of GP websites, but often wasn't easy to find and varied in detail.
- COVID-19 information, such as precautions, testing and vaccinations, wasn't present on all websites and was not always current or up-to-date. Information was a mix of what the practice was/wasn't doing in relation to COVID-19 vaccinations, how to access vaccinations and COVID-19 precautions when visiting practices face-to-face.
- GP websites were not always compatible or user-friendly when accessed from tablets and mobile phones rather than computers.

### 3.2 Out-of-hours messages

Our review of GP out-of-hours phone messages found that:

- Our calls connected to the practice promptly (generally in 5 rings or fewer). These were generally answered by a human rather than an automated voice and did not provide a menu of options for callers to use.
- Content of messages varied, generally including the practice name (but not in all cases), that it was closed, opening hours, and signposting to NHS 111 and 999. A few limited examples provided further information.
- Only one message mentioned the triage/appointment process in place at the practice, and only one indicated the possibility of delays or barriers for patients when contacting the practice.
- It was difficult to determine how up-to-date practice messages were, as no information on when they were posted is generally provided. Most of the content was regarded as current.
- Reviewers felt that messages could generally be improved by slowing down the speed of delivery, making the voice louder and ensuring that background noises were not present.
- Overall, messages were found to be factually accurate and generally provide information in a clear and accessible way. However, the information offered was regarded as relatively basic in most cases and offered little that most people would not already be aware of.

## 4 Response from East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

The findings and recommendations set out in our report were shared with the East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) who commission General Practices (GPs) across the county, and they provided the following response:

*“We would like to thank Healthwatch East Sussex for this valuable report, which highlights the positive work that GP practices are doing in terms of their websites and their phone systems, and clear areas for further improvement.*

*We recognise how important it is that people can access helpful, informative and supportive information about health services, especially when they need help or care. We are working with GP practices to ensure that there is good quality, consistent information about their practice team and the care they provide, in order to support people to access advice and treatment appropriately.*

*Many of the recommendations made in this report align to work already underway with our GP practices; we have committed funding through the national Winter Access Fund and through other local Primary Care funding streams to ensure improvements are progressed rapidly. Improvements underway include close work with Healthwatch to develop an exemplar website, which includes adherence to accessibility standards and provides an example of how high-quality information can be provided to patients.*

*We intend to offer the opportunity to GP practices for them to develop their websites over the course of this year and help them, where necessary, to implement these positive changes. We would endorse the recommendation to include Patient Participation Group members and others in the ongoing role and use a GP practice’s website in order to ensure they are accessible and in line with the needs of patients and carers.*

*As part of our work to respond to feedback about access to primary care, we are also developing new telephony systems for practices, which will facilitate easier and more timely access; we will be rolling this out by mid-2022.*

*We would welcome the opportunity to continue to work with Healthwatch to assess the impact of these changes and improvements, and to ensure that their other recommendations to improve information and access for patients are taken forward.”*

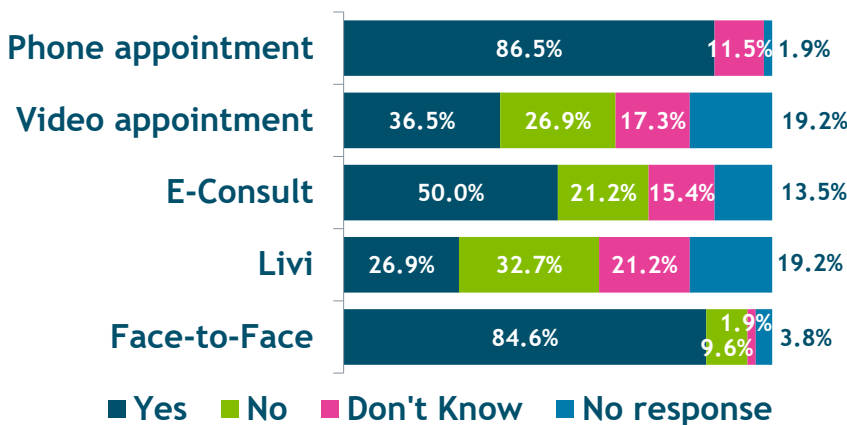
## 5 GP Practice Websites - What we found

### 5.1 Booking appointments

All the reviewed websites provided information on the appointment booking process, with reviewers rating three-quarters (73.6%) of sites as having clear and detailed information, but the remainder were less clear on what was being offered.

Where information was available, reviewers found that:

**Which appointment methods are currently shown as available with the surgery?**  
Please tick all that apply

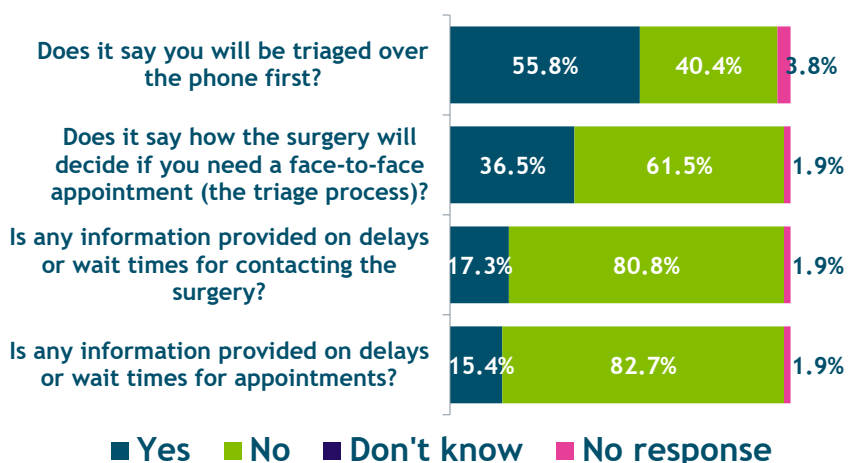


- Most practices were offering phone (86.5%) and face-to-face appointments (84.6%).
- Half of practices were offering E-Consult (50.0%), a third video appointments (36.5%) and a quarter Livi (the App) (26.9%).
- On up to a fifth of websites, it wasn't possible to find out if practices were offering Livi, E-Consult or video appointments.

Approximately half of the websites (55.8%) made it clear that patients would be triaged over the phone. However, few detailed how this would actually work i.e. which symptoms/cases would be seen by which staff.

Only a third of websites (36.5%) made it clear how the surgery will decide whether patients need a face-to-face appointment.

**What does the website say about making and having an appointment at this time?**



Less than a fifth of websites (17.3%) made any reference to delays or wait times for contacting the surgery, or on delays or wait times for appointments (15.4%).

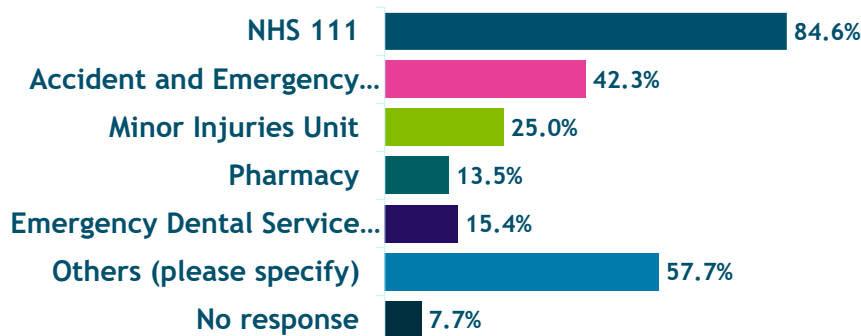
Lack of information about delays or waits (where appropriate) may provide false expectations for patients, and not prepare them for an extended wait, either to get through on the phone or to receive an appointment.

**Our suggestion(s):**

- Websites should make patients aware of the triage process, including how this may impact on the medical professional that they consult with.
- Alternative methods for making contact or appointments with GP surgeries should be clearly featured on websites, as this may reduce demand on phone calls.
- More information on likely delays or wait times (e.g. average wait times) would help in guiding and managing patient expectations.

### 5.2 Out of hours and Emergency support

**Which services, if any, does the website direct you to if you have an emergency or urgent medical need or the surgery is closed (out-of-hours)?**  
*Please tick all that apply*



An important signposting function of GP practice websites is what patients should do when the surgery is closed, or they need urgent or emergency support.

The most common service that people were directed to was NHS111, which was identified on more than 4 out of 5 websites (84.6%).

999 was referenced for immediate emergencies.

It is noticeable that limited reference was made to wider services such as Pharmacy and the Emergency Dental Service (EDS).

A variety of ‘other services’ were mentioned on websites, including IC24, the out-of-hours GP service. However, the accuracy and detail of listings varied. For example, a number mentioned the ‘Walk In Clinic’ at Eastbourne Station (which has closed) and the Hastings Walk In Centre which has become the Hastings Primary Care Hub.

**Our suggestion(s):**

- Whilst redirecting to NHS111 is useful as a one-stop-shop point of referral, provision of more detailed information about other health and wellbeing services and how to use them could help patients to access the right service in a more direct and timely way.
- Listings of ‘other’ support services need to be regularly reviewed to ensure they are up-to-date and accurate, to prevent patients being forced to return to the practice. Social prescribing should form part of this offer.

### 5.3 Website accessibility features and content

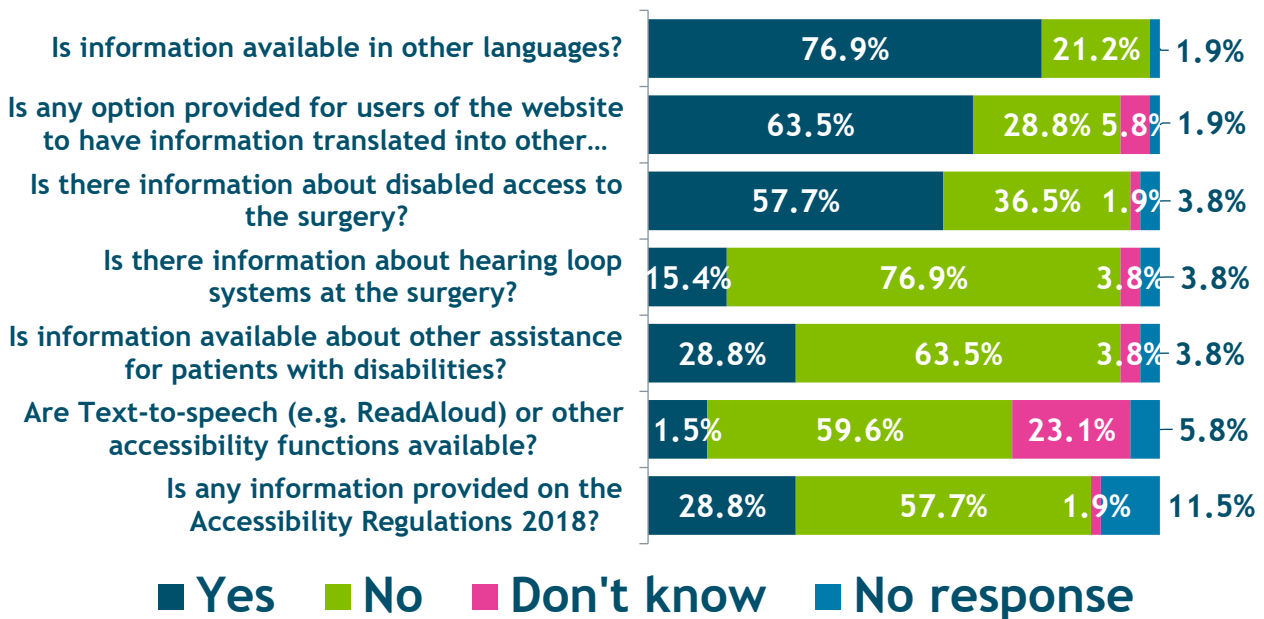
Accessibility is key to making any website effective for all potential users, but content related to the physical accessibility of surgery sites is also important.

By law, all GP websites should comply with the Accessibility Regulations 2018 and include an accessibility statement on their website.

Reviewers identified that:

- Over three-quarters (76.9%) had information available in other languages, and on nearly two thirds (63.5%) it could be translated if required.
- Just over a quarter (28.8%) of practices had a statement or information available on the Accessibility Regulations.
- Over half (59.6%) of sites didn't have accessibility features such as Readaloud, and on nearly a quarter (23.1%) reviewers couldn't identify whether these were present or operational.

### Please identify whether information is provided on the following accessibility themes:



Reviewers identified that information on the accessibility features at physical GP surgery sites varied and was often limited.

Over half of the websites (57.7%) included information about disabled access to the surgery, but more than a third (36.5%) did not. Primarily the information that was available related to disabled parking, disabled toilets and some details on access to the building.

Over three quarters of practices (76.9%) didn't clarify whether they had a hearing loop available, and nearly two thirds (63.5%) didn't provide any wider information on the support available for patients with any disabilities. This may cause issues for patients when visiting the practice.

**Our suggestion(s):**

- NHS Commissioners should clarify and re-iterate the accessibility obligations that GP surgeries websites need to meet, as set out in the Accessibility Regulations 2018, but also wider best practice.
- Websites should ensure that they include key accessibility features such as Readaloud or BSL are available, and information is available or translatable into other languages.
- Information on the physical accessibility of surgery sites should include as a minimum: detail about parking provision, hearing loops, physical access (ramps, steps and doorways), toilets and any other provision in place, including how assistance can be requested.

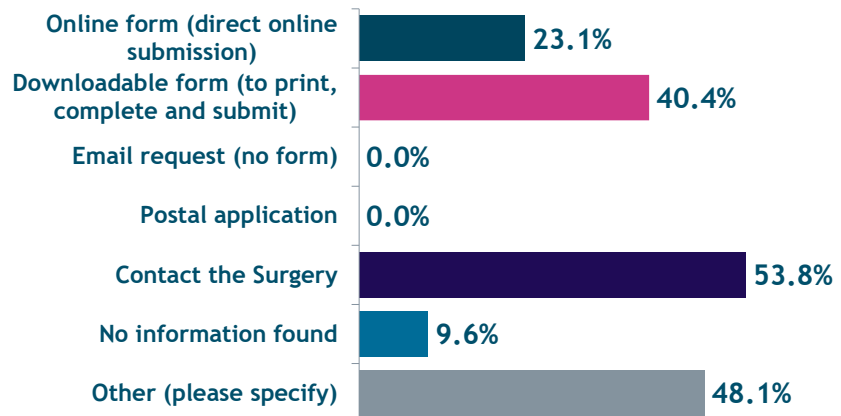
### 5.4 New patients

An overwhelming majority (94.2%) of websites provided information on how people could join the patient list at practices, with 15.4% practices stating that they were not currently accepting new patients.

Many practices offer multiple ways for people to apply to join a patient list.

More than half (53.8%) of the practices reviewed stated that enquirers needed to contact the surgery, either to request that an application pack be sent to them or to arrange face-to-face collection.

**Which of the following formats can patients use to apply to register as a patient at the practice? Please tick all that apply**



Some practices also required these to be returned in person to practices, with applicants bringing supporting ID.

Practice websites also commonly provided print & return forms (40.4%) and online forms (23.1%). One practice website stated that overseas patients may be treated privately until NHS eligibility has been confirmed.

Whilst it is important to maintain access to face-to-face contact and minimise digital exclusion through a reliance on websites, the need to contact (call/attend) practices for patient applications could be minimised through a wider rollout of online application processes and downloadable packs.

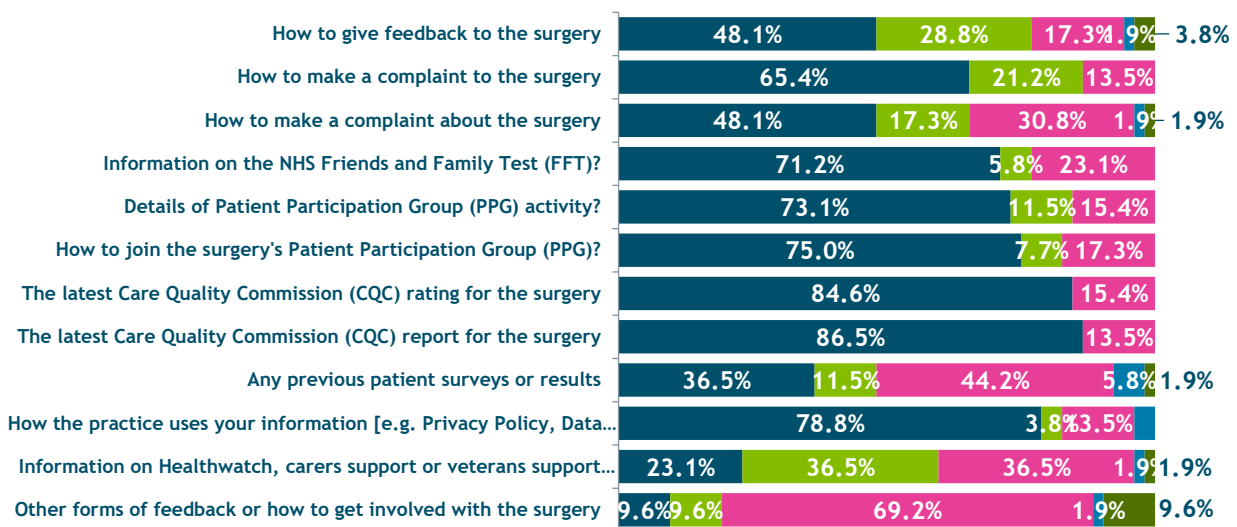
**Our suggestion(s):**

- Practices should explore the adoption of online forms and application packs for new patients, to minimise the need to contact or attend practice sites.

**5.5 Core website information**

One of the first activities reviewers undertook was an audit to assess whether the same core information was available on all websites. This included: CQC ratings, how to complain or feedback to the surgery, details of practice reviews/surveys, signposting to others and information on data security.

**Does the website provide the following information:**



■ Yes - clear and detailed ■ Yes - limited information ■ No ■ Don't Know ■ No response

**5.5.1 Care Quality Commission rating and reports**

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) monitors health and care services to ensure they meet essential standards of quality and safety. All service providers (including GPs) must, by law, display their CQC ratings where users can see them, including their website<sup>3</sup>.

Whilst the vast majority of practices (84.6%) displayed their CQC ratings, others did not, or they could not be found. Similarly, CQC review reports were available for the majority (86.5%), but not for all. Where these were displayed, some documents were identified as out-of-date or not the latest rating/review report.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cqc.org.uk/what-we-do/how-we-do-our-job/ratings>

### 5.5.2 Patient Participation Groups (PPGs)

Details of the Patient Participation Group (PPG) (84.6%) and how to join it (82.7%) were present on a majority of GP websites but not all.

Similarly, some of information presented was limited in detail, and other pieces (such as contact details, meetings notes and other activities) were out-of-date, some by several years. This may give the impression that such groups are not particularly active or engaged.

### 5.5.3 Making a complaint or providing feedback

Whilst the mechanisms for making a complaint to the surgery were identified on 86.6% websites, this was only felt to be clear and detailed in 65.4% of cases and couldn't be found in 13.5% examples.

The best websites included a complaints policy and explained how to proceed, such as who and how to contact, what would happen and timescales. However, even where complaint content was present, many websites didn't include all of these features.

Sometimes complaint content wasn't immediately obvious and was only found through rigorous searching or viewing practice policies.

Nearly a third (30.8%) of websites reviewed displayed no information about how to make a complaint about a surgery, such as to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) or Care Quality Commission (CQC), and/or how they would deal with any complaints.

### 5.5.4 Patient Feedback/The NHS Friends and Family Test

Mechanisms for providing [non-complaint] feedback to the surgery were found on three-quarters of websites (76.9%), although it wasn't always made clear how this feedback would be used by the practice. Nor were details always provided of the feedback received.

Only 48.1% of websites displayed results or details from any patient surveys, which means that the 'feedback loop' back to patients is not always completed. Even where present, these details were not always up-to-date.

Information on the [NHS Friends and Family Test](#) was found on three-quarters of websites (76.9%), but it wasn't always made explicitly clear what the purpose of the test was.

### 5.5.5 Information use and data security

Four out of five practices (82.6%) included details of how they used visitors' information e.g. privacy policy, data protection etc.

### 5.5.6 Support organisations

Just over half of websites (59.6%) had information on or contact details for Healthwatch or Carers/Veterans support, but more than half of this (36.5%) was considered by reviewers as limited in detail.



### 5.5.7 Search functions

One of the key lessons of this exercise was that even where website information was present, it didn't mean it was easy to find.

Reviewers identified that a 'search' box/tool was invaluable in quickly finding content, rather than trawling through menus and pages. However, not all websites had this facility and on others it was present but didn't always work effectively or was itself hard to find.

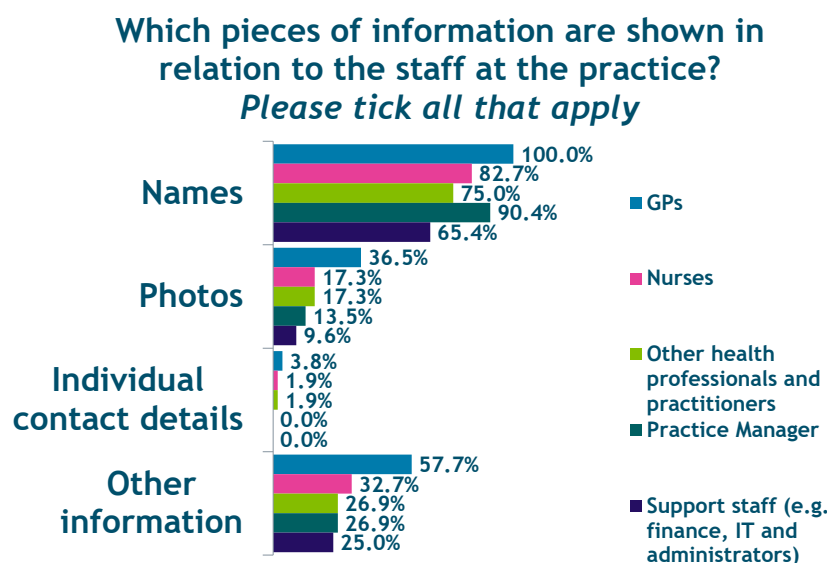
#### Our suggestion(s):

- Practices should undertake regular audits of core information (especially CQC ratings/reports) to ensure these are up-to-date.
- Guidance on how to make a complaint to, or about, a GP practice should be made prominent and included on all websites. This should ideally include a policy that sets out the process, timescales and responsibilities as well as a named contact who is able to support them.
- Wherever possible all practice websites should include search boxes or tools to enable users to quickly and easily identify and access content.
- Websites may benefit from the inclusion of 'site maps' through which all pages can be viewed.
- Information, contact details and links to Healthwatch, carers support and veterans support could be included on more websites.

### 5.6 Staff details

Volunteers reviewed what information was available about the staff at each practice, as having this is often felt to increase trust and familiarity amongst patients, as well as to simplify the process of contacting people.

Whilst GPs (100%) and practice managers (90.4%) were named on nearly all websites, this was less common for nurses, other health professionals and support staff.



A minority of websites accompanied staff names with photos, with the bulk of these being limited to photos of GPs.

Very few websites included contact details for individual members of staff, irrespective of their role. Whilst understandable, this can create challenges in contacting staff, especially practice managers.

**Our suggestion(s):**

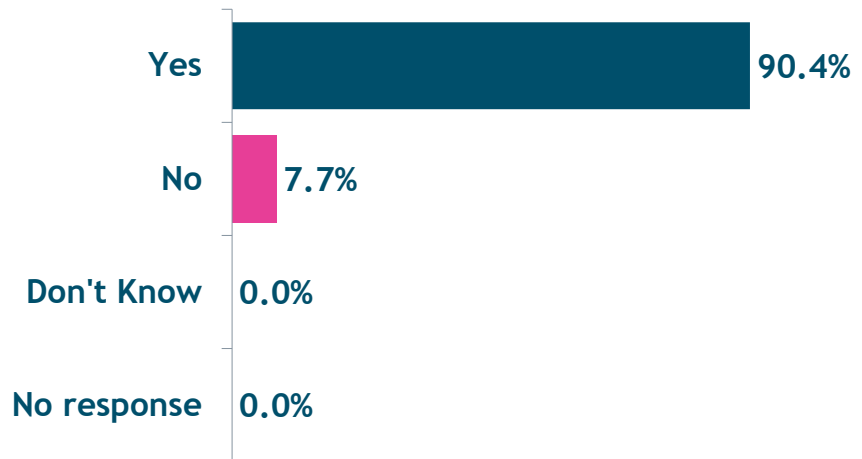
- GP practices should provide details of all of their staff, with names as a minimum.
- Individual contact details should be provided for key individuals within practices, especially the practice manager (even if these are non-personalised).

**5.7 Access to prescriptions and medication**

Nine out of ten websites (90.4%) contained information related to prescriptions and medication, but 7.7% did not.

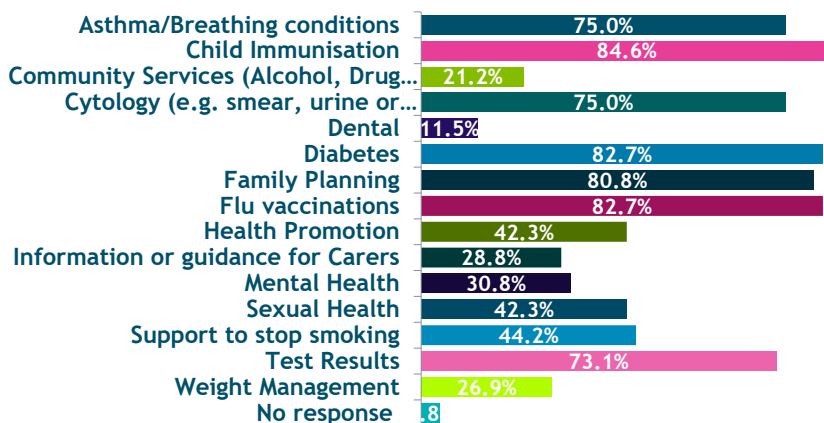
As with other website content, the quality and quantity of information varied. Information was not always up-to-date or easy to access.

**Is information provided about the process for access to prescriptions/medication?**



**5.8 Practice and linked services**

**Please identify if information is provided in relation to any of the following services?  
Please tick all that apply**



Practices often offered or linked to a wide range of health and wellbeing services.

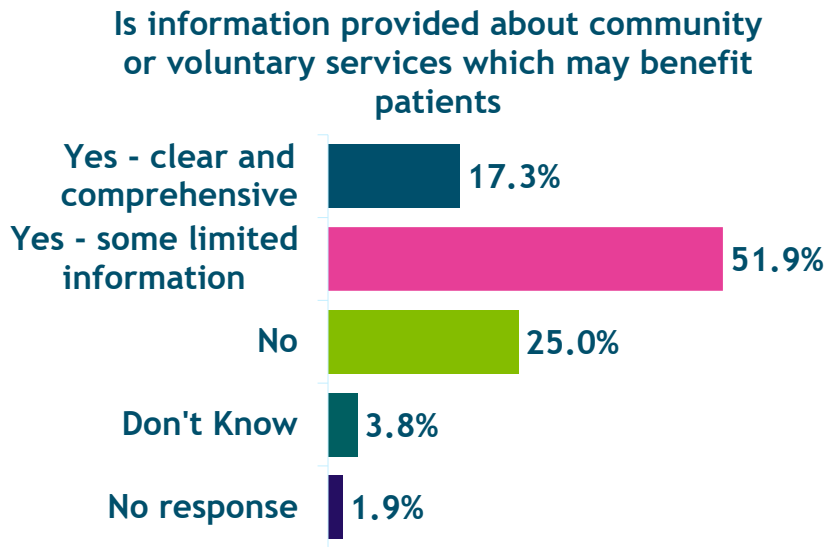
The most commonly found information related to services that practices offer themselves e.g. child immunisation, flu vaccinations etc.

Whilst services were referred to, it wasn't always made clear how and when people could or should seek to access them.

Information that was less common often related to services offered by other organisations, even where this related to themes identified by evidence as significant or prevalent, especially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic e.g. mental health.

Less than a fifth (17.3%) of practice websites contained clear and comprehensive information on community or voluntary services, with a quarter (25.9) not providing any at all.

Providing clear and up-to-date signposting on these themes to patients and the public may reduce demands on GP practices and allow people to contact them directly (where appropriate).



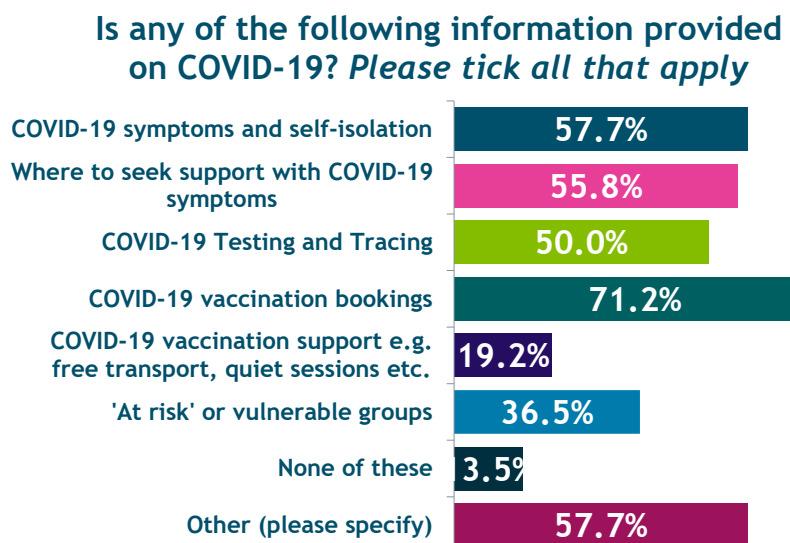
**Our suggestions(s):**

- To explore how practices can provide more information or link to other services, especially those identified as being outcomes from the pandemic, including: mental health support, sexual health support, emergency dental provision, carers information and community services (alcohol or drug dependency support).
- Community and Voluntary sector information should be included where possible.
- Linkages with the East Sussex VCSE Alliance should be explored with a view to the members collating and providing information on services to GP practices.

**5.9 COVID-19 information**

Given the significance and prevalence of COVID-19, the number of websites providing information is lower than anticipated, being approximately 50% in the headline categories.

Less than a fifth of sites (19.2%) had information on the support available to assist people in accessing vaccinations (e.g. Quiet sessions, free transport etc.), and 13.5% of websites had no COVID-19 information at all.



Whilst vaccination booking information was more commonly identified (on 71.2% of sites), this was a mixture of the services the practice/Primary Care Network (PCN) was

offering, as well as wider information on the vaccination programme locally or a combination of these.

As with other themes, some websites provided up-to-date, comprehensive information and links on COVID-19 vaccinations, the Sussex enquiry line and the NHS App, whilst others provided less detail, with some simply providing links to other sources such as the NHS or BBC websites.

It was observed that several websites had COVID-19 related information on pop-ups which appeared when visiting the site. However, in several examples, reviewers found that once the information pop up had been closed it could not be re-opened. And in others once closed the information could not be identified elsewhere on the website. Conversely, on other sites the pop-up opened on every page, which reviewers found tiresome.

**Our suggestion(s):**

- Details of the support available for the COVID-19 vaccination (quiet sessions, free transport etc.) should be posted on GP websites where possible.
- The use of pop-up pages should be limited to presenting priority information to website visitors. Content in pop-ups should also be available on websites as well.
- Information on the Sussex COVID-19 vaccination programme should be provided, with as a minimum links to the Sussex Health and Care Partnership website and details for the Vaccination Enquiry phonenumber.

**5.10 COVID-19 precautions at GP practices**

The main focus of information on COVID-19 precautions at GP practices found by reviewers related to the use of face coverings/masks, which was identified on two thirds of websites (67.3%).

Other common precautions referenced were social distancing requirements (32.7) and hand hygiene (28.9%).

However, very limited information was provided on what to expect when attending GP practices at the current time, and how the practice expected people to act when they do so.



Especially important, but a notable omission from many websites, is guidance on attending practices with dependents and/or carers whilst COVID-19 restrictions may be in place. Clarity either way would be helpful.

**Our suggestion(s):**

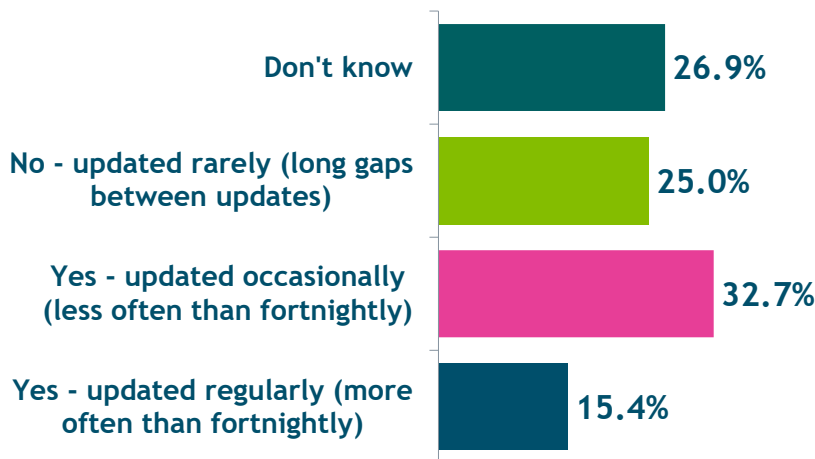
- Details of the full range of COVID-19 precautions people should take, and what to expect when attending practices would be valuable information to share in advance of people attending.
- Guidance on attendance of dependents/carers at surgery sites and during appointments should be included on websites.

### 5.11 Updates to content

Having up-to-date information is important on any website, so it fulfils its purpose and gives confidence to those who use it.

Reviewers found that website news was updated on a range of timescales, but only on 15.4% of sites was it updated regularly.

**Is the practice news on the website up-to-date?**



The latest content on many sites often related to news or processes that have subsequently changed e.g. COVID-19 vaccinations, Flu etc.

In a quarter of examples (26.9%), reviewers could not identify when websites or pages had last been updated, as this information was not shown.

The absence of posting/publication dates can lead people to be uncertain of how up-to-date information is.

**Our suggestion(s):**

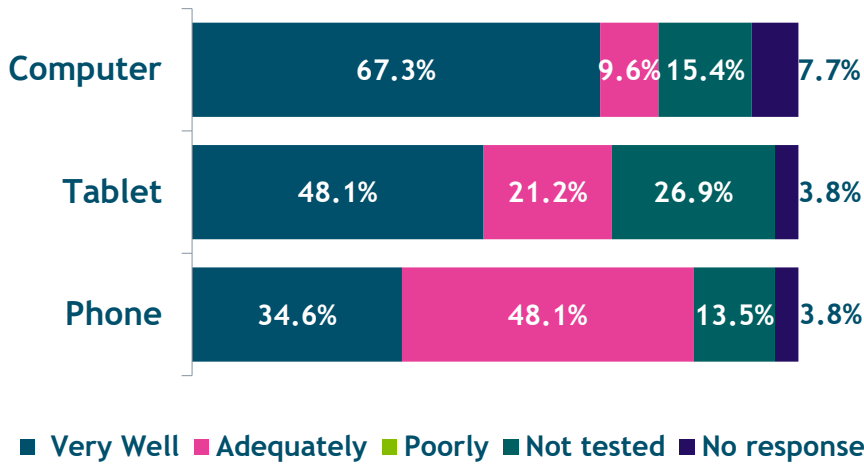
- All webpages and content should include the date when they are posted and/or updated (including the home page).
- Websites should be regularly reviewed (ideally quarterly, and at least annually) to remove out-of-date and old information and links to minimise confusion.

### 5.12 Website compatibility

Given the increasing use of platforms other than computers to access websites, especially mobile phones, sites were accessed on different devices to assess how they looked and operated.

Whilst a majority of websites performed very well on computers, they performed less well on tablets and mobile phones.

### How well does the website display on a mobile device, such as a phone or tablet?



Reviewers indicated that when viewing websites on tablets and mobiles phones the text could become too small to read, the navigation became challenging as it involved lots of scrolling, and some features were less likely to function as they should.

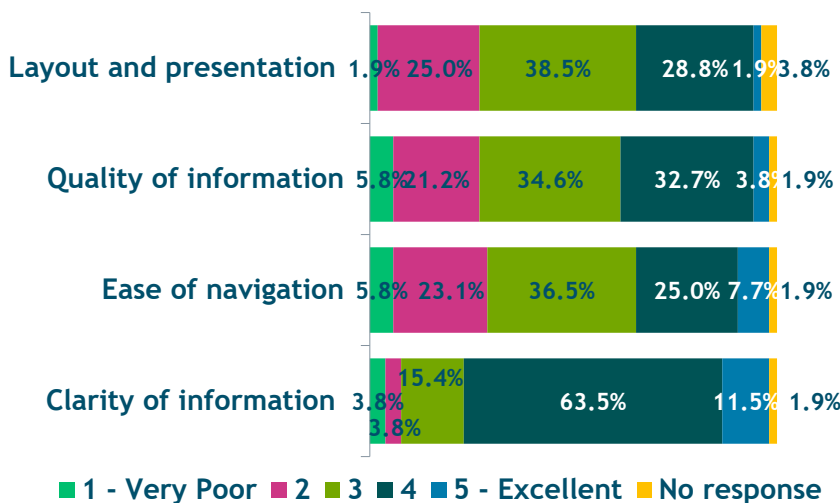
#### Our suggestion(s):

- All websites should be tested for their compatibility with mobile devices (tablets and phones), rather than just desktop computers or laptops. *Where possible, upgrades should be undertaken to maximise functionality and compatibility.*
- Website compatibility with all devices (including tablets and mobiles) and browsers should be included as key components when new GP websites are commissioned.

### 5.13 Overall ratings

Reviewers were asked to provide overall ratings for each website they reviewed, assessing them against the four key criteria: clarity of information, ease of navigation, quality of information, layout and presentation.

#### Overall how would you rate the website?



Whilst clarity of information was regarded as excellent or very good on three quarters (75.0%) of websites, reviewers identified that it was not always easy to find what they were looking for.

The layout and design of many sites made it challenging to navigate and find what they were seeking quickly and without lots of clicks and

searching, with only a third (32.7%) being rated as very good or excellent for ease of navigation.

Quality of information was also mixed, with websites not achieving a balance between too little and too much information. Some also had content that was out-of-date. Approximately a quarter of GP websites (27.0%) were rated as very poor or poor for the content they contained.

**1. Clarity of information** - overall clarity of information was rated as excellent or very good on three quarters (75.0%) of GP websites, with 7.6% rating it as poor or very poor.

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear, up-to-date information written with patient friendly wording</li> <li>• Good overview of practice and other health, wellbeing and community services</li> <li>• Use of clear site/page design, and incorporation of clear font sizes, styles and colours</li> <li>• Use of video to explain key messages and updates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much information as problematic as too little</li> <li>• Use of technical and medical terms, rather than plain English</li> <li>• Websites for PCNs/GP groups can make it difficult to find information on individual practices</li> <li>• Lack of accessibility functions e.g. Browsealoud, BSL etc.</li> <li>• Limited information related to disabilities - support and access</li> </ul>

**2. Ease of navigation** - Only a third of websites (32.7%) had navigation which reviewers identified as excellent or very good, with 28.9% rated as very poor or poor.

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of alphabetically ordered menus and headings</li> <li>• Use of icons and images instead of text to simplify navigation and make content more engaging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly organised and presented home page makes access to other pages challenging</li> <li>• Lack of search functionality</li> <li>• Search functions not able to locate content</li> <li>• Broken links</li> </ul>

**3. Quality of information** - Only a third of websites (36.5%) had information which reviewers identified as excellent or very good in terms of quality, with 27.0% rated as very poor or poor.

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear contact information for the practice</li> <li>• Information on appointment processes (including triage)</li> <li>• Regularly updated news and information that is patient-centric</li> <li>• Inclusion of practice social-media feeds to ensure cross-referencing between website and other messaging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited information on how to access support 'out-of-hours'</li> <li>• Out of date content and documents with limited and irregular updates</li> <li>• Inability to identify when content is posted and how old it is</li> <li>• Limited content related to COVID-19 precautions and vaccination programme</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of ‘You asked/said - We did’ content to complete the feedback loop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of contact details for key staff e.g. practice managers</li> <li>• Complaints policies and processes not clear or fully explained</li> <li>• Limited information on carers, Healthwatch or support organisations</li> </ul>
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4. **Layout and presentation** - Fewer than a third of websites (30.7%) had layout and presentation which reviewers identified as excellent or very good, with 26.9% rated as very poor or poor.

<b>Positives</b>	<b>Negatives</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well organised home page, with clear menus and headings</li> <li>• Nice clear and easy to read font</li> <li>• Text large enough to read easily</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much text</li> <li>• Challenging to view on mobiles or tablets</li> <li>• Lots of scrolling</li> <li>• Lots of menus with ambiguous names</li> <li>• Pop-up information can appear/disappear without warning - needs to be replicated on site</li> </ul>



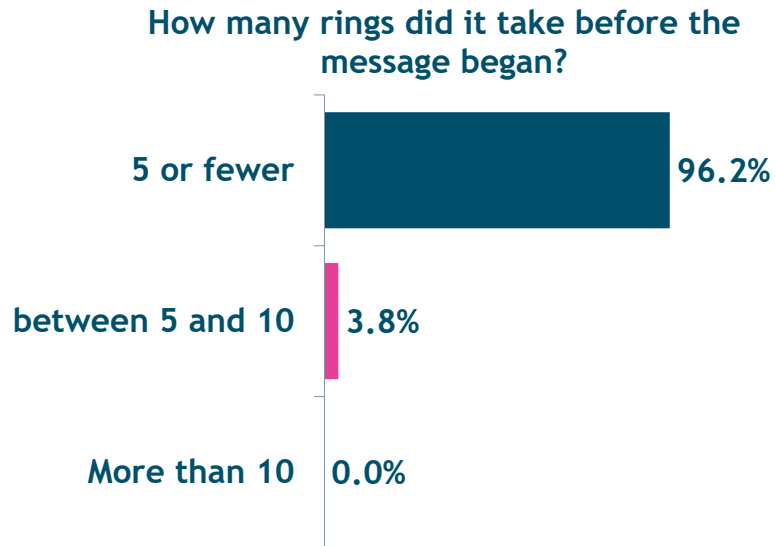
## 6 GP Practice Out-Of-Hours messages - What we found

### 6.1 Time taken to answer

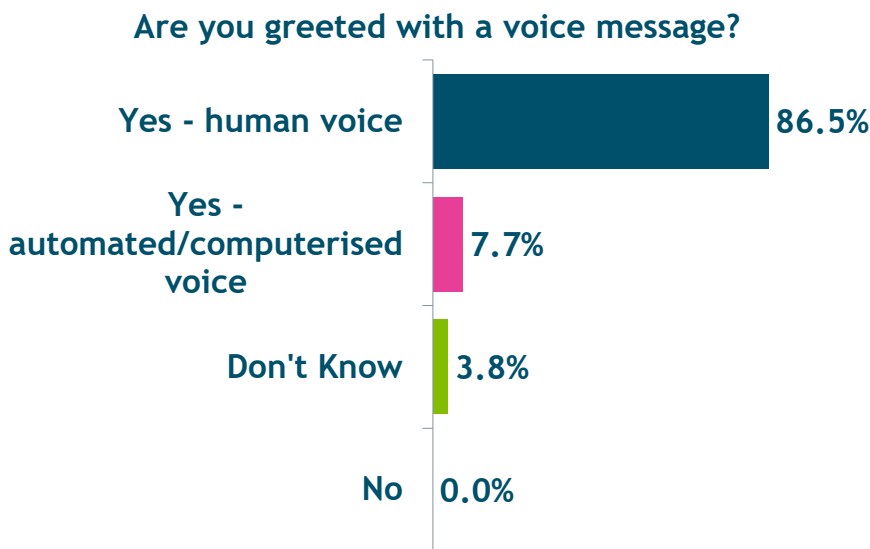
One of the first things monitored by reviewers was the number of rings taken before the out-of-hours message began.

Most messages began very quickly, with 96.2% beginning in 5 rings or fewer.

Out-of-hours messages were found to be in place at all of the 52 practices contacted.



### 6.2 Voice on message



The overwhelming majority of messages used a human voice (86.5%), with a smaller number being automated or computerised.

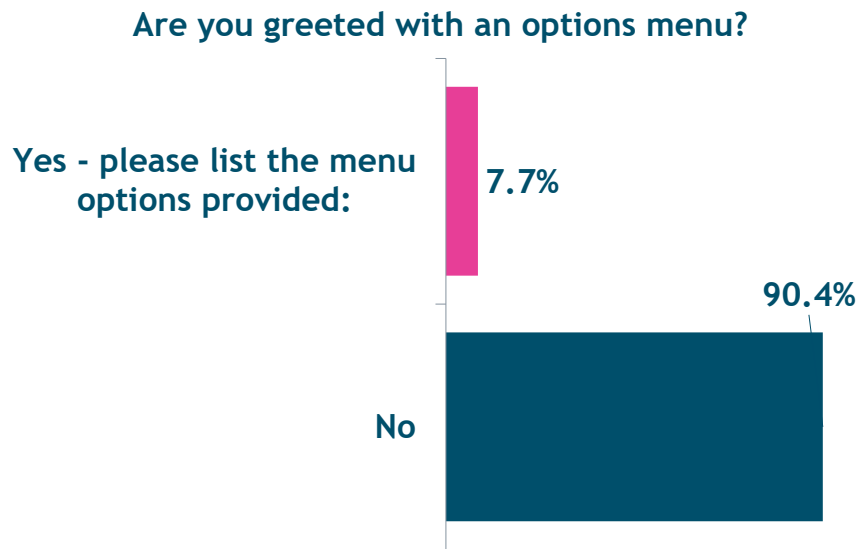
In a small number of examples, reviewers found it difficult to determine if the voice was human or artificial.

### 6.3 Use of menus

Reviewers found that nine out of ten messages at GP practices were short, recorded voice messages.

Only at four practices were callers presented with a menu of options by the phone system when ringing out-of-hours.

Menu options were primarily focused on making and cancelling appointments.



#### Our suggestion(s):

- GP practices and NHS commissioners could jointly explore the wider use of automated menu systems for out-of-hours callers, which could potentially simplify signposting to other services e.g. press 1 for a medical emergency.

### 6.4 Out-of-hours message content

The content of out-of-hours messages was reviewed to establish what information messages were providing. Overall reviewers found that messages were generally very short in duration and contained a very limited amount of information.

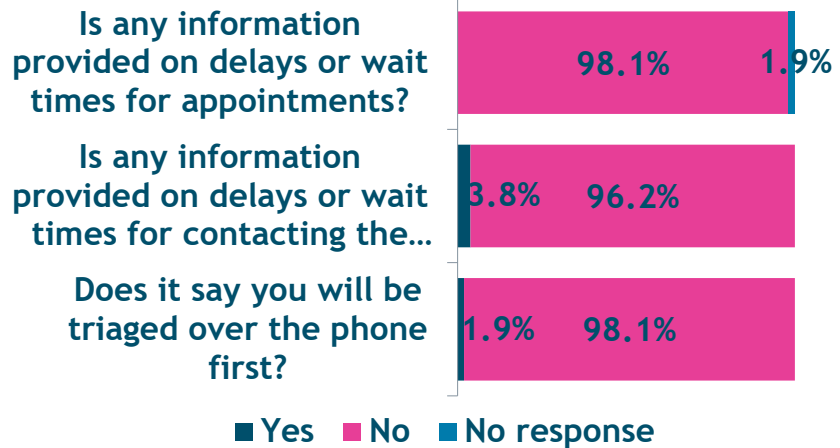
- More than nine out of ten practice messages (92.3%) provided signposting to other services for anyone experiencing an emergency. Whilst a handful provided detail of the various options available, most messages referenced NHS111 or 999.

Only one message referenced Pharmacy, and another out-of-hours GP services.

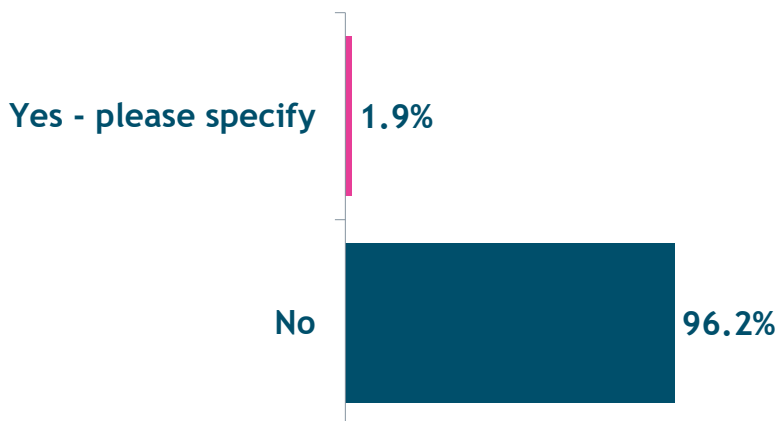
- Three-quarters (75.0%) of messages stated the practice name, but this wasn't included in all examples.
- Approximately half of messages (55.8%) stated the practices opening hours. Some messages suggested calling the practice during these times or using the website instead.

Reviewers found that few, if any messages, contained information related to the appointment process, including any details about delays or waits in contacting the practice or in receiving an appointment.

**What does the message say about making and having an appointment at this time?**



**Does the message identify any services or support that the surgery cannot or is not providing at the current time?**



Similarly, only one message made reference to any of the services that the practice was not providing, and this related to COVID-19 vaccinations.

Identifying anything not being offered is useful in minimising the likelihood of further enquiries related to these services.

**Our suggestion(s):**

- All out-of-hours messages should include the practice name in order to reassure callers that they have reached the correct service or organisation.
- Practices could include greater detail on the support available (beyond NHS111 and 999) out-of-hours, including self-help, mental health and Pharmacy options.
- Information on any delays or wait times could be included in out-of-hours messages if and when practices are experiencing high levels of demand.

### 6.5 Are messages up-to-date?

**When was the phone message last updated?  
Please answer based only using the content  
of the message. If no date is provided -  
please answer 'Don't know - doesn't say'.**



Reviewers assessed whether out-of-hours messages were up-to-date, listening to references of updates or trying to make judgements based on the content.

No messages explicitly identified when they had last been updated. No examples of obviously out-of-date information was identified.

Reviewers commented that many were so short that it was difficult to judge what was current. In just over half of the messages reviewed (27), the message length was 30 seconds or shorter. The shortest message reviewed was 12 seconds in length and the longest 185 seconds.

**Our suggestion(s):**

- All out-of-hours messages would benefit from indicating when they were last updated. They could end with *“This message was last updated on....”*

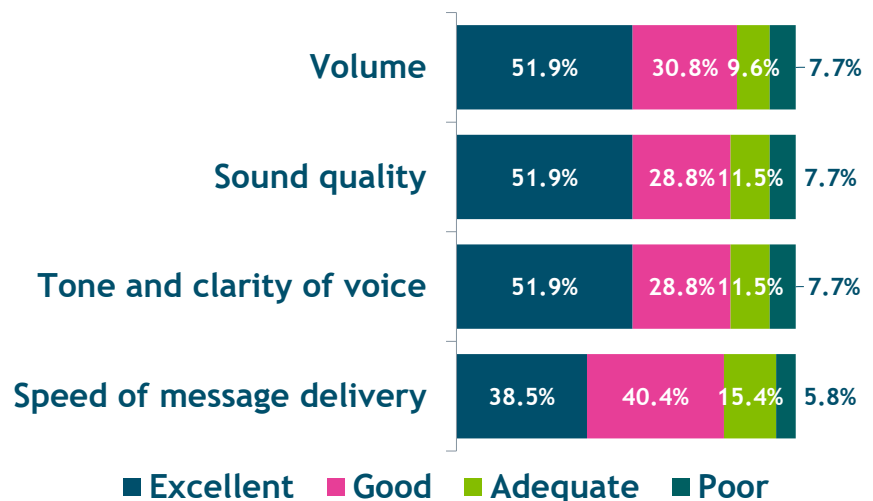
### 6.6 Message delivery

The way in which out-of-hours messages were delivered was assessed to determine how clear and audible they were.

Whilst overall most messages were well delivered, reviewers suggested the following improvements:

- Slower and more even paced delivery, especially of key information such as contact details
- Greater volume in the recorded voice, making it easier and clearer to hear
- More enthusiasm in the voice to make the message more appealing and engaging

**Please rate the message on the following:**



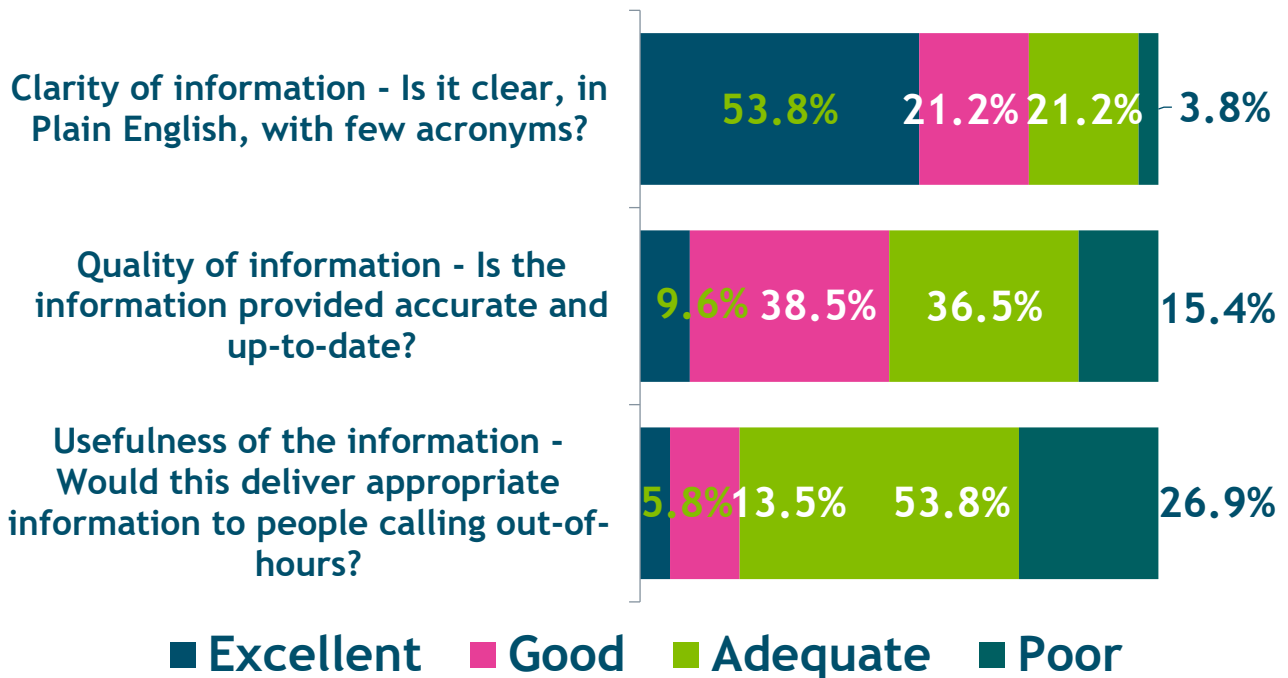
**Our suggestion(s):**

- All out-of-hours messages should ensure that they are provided in a form accessible to patients and the public, being appropriately paced, clearly spoken at an even pace and of sufficient volume for people to hear them.
- Out-of-hours phone messages should be regularly reviewed by practice staff and ideally by lay people/representatives (e.g. Patient Participation Groups) to ensure that they are accessible, accurate and up-to-date.

**6.7 Overall quality of Out-of-hours messages**

Reviewers were asked to provide overall ratings on the usefulness, quality and clarity of information included of out-of-hours messages.

**Overall how would you rate the OOH message, in terms of:**



**6.7.1 Usefulness of information**

Reviewers identified that the information in out-of-hours messages was most commonly ‘adequate’, giving this rating to half of those reviewed (53.8%). In a quarter of cases (26.9%), they were rated as ‘poor’, with some providing no information at all as to how patients or the public could obtain medical or other support.

Supporting comments identified that reviewers felt that most of the information provided was very basic, and that most people calling GP practices may be aware of NHS111 or 999.

### 6.7.2 Quality of information

Approximately half (48.1%) of messages were rated as excellent or good for the quality of information provided. Most information was accurate and up-to-date, but was generally basic in nature, largely identifying the practice was closed and referring people to NHS111 or 999.

### 6.7.3 Clarity of information

Three quarters (75.0%) of messages were rated as excellent or good for clarity, with only 3.8% rated as poor. However, these ratings may reflect the very short length and limited content included in most out-of-hours messages.

## 7 Conclusions and recommendations

### 7.1 Conclusions

#### 7.1.1 GP websites

Effective, well-designed and well-maintained GP practice websites support patients in quickly accessing the information they need and may assist practices by reducing demand for phone and face-to-face enquiries.

This review has found that there was a wide variation in the design, quality, content and navigability of GP practice websites in East Sussex. Similarly, variation was also identified in the quality of out-of-hours phone messages, however, these were generally more consistent than websites.

We identified some good examples of well-maintained, regularly updated and engaging websites which present content in a patient-centric and user-friendly way. However, these were limited in number, and some sites were also identified as particularly poor.

Most GP websites were assessed by reviewers as having the bulk of the right content, but there were issues about how this was presented, particularly how easy it was to find quickly and efficiently. We recognise that each practice (or PCN) may have its own priorities, offer different services, or use different processes, but the inclusion of accessibility tools and core compliance documents should be universal, as should consideration of health literacy.

Home page design and navigation headings were identified as key areas for improvement. Prioritising content on those things most visit people a GP website for may simplify the process of developing and maintaining them. Similarly, adding search tools could help people find information quickly.

Given the increasing use of mobile technology, one key area for development is ensuring that practice websites are compatible with mobile phones and tablets, especially given the direction of travel for these devices as the 'go to' means by which people access the internet.

Both patients and staff could benefit from websites providing improved signposting to health, care and community services, especially those supporting mental health. As people look to trusted websites for information, the inclusion of mental health and other key service details on GP websites may help people access them, and free up practice capacity.

#### 7.1.2 Out-of-hours messages

Most out-of-hours phone messages were found to be very short in duration (30 seconds or shorter) and provided only minimal information, largely identifying that the practice was closed and those with urgent/emergency needs should contact NHS111 or ring 999. However, these often didn't clarify what is meant by urgent or emergency.

Recorded messages did not generally provide any information of guidance to patients about any pressures, delays or wait times that they may experience in either contacting

the practice or obtaining an appointment during normal operating hours. Similarly, very few signposted to the practice's own website or other sources of information.

The consensus amongst reviewers was that out-of-hours messages were not particularly useful, either to patients seeking specific information (as this was not generally provided), or to those requiring urgent or emergency support, as the services signposted to (NHS111/999) were widely known amongst the populace.

Whilst all out-of-hours messages for GP services should be well paced and clearly spoken at a volume that people can easily hear, consideration should also be given to help people undertake self-care or seek support from other services which may be operating e.g. Minor Injury Units, out-of-hours GP services, mental health support and pharmacies. By not providing other alternatives, people may automatically default to services such as Emergency Departments.

## 7.2 Recommendations

1. GP practice websites should provide an up-to-date home page that provides clear, simple and quick navigation to key pieces of information for all users.

GP practices should involve patients and other lay representatives (e.g. Patient Participation Groups) in regularly reviewing their websites (ideally quarterly, and at least annually), or during the development of new or updated websites.

NHS commissioners should share feedback and best practice on effective designs and content with and between practices and Primary Care Networks (PCNs).

2. The content most regularly used by patients and the public should be prioritised and made prominent and easy to access on GP websites. This could include:
  - Appointment processes and triage mechanisms, including contact details.
  - Clarity on opening hours, with clear information and contact details for support organisations, especially for urgent or emergency care out-of-hours.
  - Simple, plain English explanations about the meaning of clinical terms such as “urgent” “emergency” and “triage”. It should be made clear to patients how and when they should contact each service.
  - Information on any delays or wait times, where practices are experiencing high demand.
  - Accessibility information, including the accessibility and facilities available at practices and how people with disabilities can access support.
  - Language and translation features should be integrated and tested regularly.
  - Latest news (with dates) and updates on practice or wider health and care system issues.

Healthwatch should work with practices to develop a shortlist or checklist of the key content and operational functions valuable for inclusion on a GP practice website. This should align with recommendations proposed by Healthwatch in Sussex



following input into the Sussex-wide System Pressures Task and Finish Group in mid-2021.

GP practice staff should engage with website hosts, developers and managers to obtain and review website analytics in order to better understand the most and least accessed webpages to help them organise content effectively.

3. All GP websites should include a search function to enable visitors to identify relevant content quickly and efficiently.

NHS Commissioners should provide resources (financial and/or support) to underpin sustainable improvements in the functionality and content of GP websites.

4. Website content (pages, articles, posts and documents) should have the date of production or posting included wherever possible. This will allow visitors to determine how up-to-date information is. It may also assist practice staff in managing and overseeing website content.

GP practices should include the date of posting on all website articles and content.

GP practices could explore how social media channels and streams could be embedded on their websites to simplify the development and sharing of news and content, especially where this changes regularly e.g. COVID-19 vaccination guidance.

5. Website accessibility, health literacy and quality of presentation all need to be considered and balanced when developing website content. Websites should be developed to meet NHS accessibility standards, and also be assessed through regular reviews and lay testing of content/formatting.

Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) or independent organisations such as Healthwatch could be approached to support regular reviews of GP practice websites to ensure that they meet accessibility standards, but also lay needs and expectations.

NHS Commissioner should communicate and re-iterate the accessibility standards to East Sussex practices.

6. Compliance information such as Care Quality Commission reports and ratings, data protection and privacy policies, and complaints processes (including to commissioners) should be up-to-date and clearly accessible on all websites. Local Healthwatch and Advocacy details should also be included on all GP websites.

NHS commissioners should undertake audits and spot-checks of practice websites to ensure they are meeting their statutory requirements.

7. Information on key watchdog and support organisations such Healthwatch and Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Services (IHCAS) should be included on all practice websites to support the independent capturing of feedback and provision of support to patients.

Healthwatch East Sussex should provide template website content to all GP surgeries in East Sussex identifying the role of Healthwatch, contact details and how to leave feedback. Information should also be provided on the Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Services (IHCAS).

8. GP practice out-of-hours phone messages should provide clear, simple and quick navigation for users to key pieces of information, including as a minimum:
  - Practice name
  - Practice opening hours
  - When to call 999 or 111
  - Brief details of support on their website
  - The date when the message was last updated

Healthwatch East Sussex should collaborate with the Clinical Commissioning Group and Primary Care Networks to develop and share a checklist for out-of-hours message content to all GP surgeries in East Sussex.

9. Exploration of the technical functions of phone systems should be undertaken to assess the ability of systems to automatically re-direct patients to other services and support mechanism outside of normal practice practices.

NHS Commissioners could commission research or a practical exploration of the capabilities of the latest phone systems at GP practices to assess the viability of providing menus and options for callers out-of-hours, in the same way as they do during operating hours.

10. The outcomes and learning from this mystery shopping exercise should be shared with key stakeholders and inform the ongoing process of GP practices providing information to the public.

Healthwatch East Sussex should share the learning from this exercise with NHS Commissioners, other local Healthwatch and Healthwatch England to contribute to a pan-Sussex, regional and national picture of the status of GP websites and Out-Of-Hours messages.



## Contact Us



Healthwatch East Sussex

Freepost RTTT-BYBX-KCEY  
Greencoat House  
32 St Leonards Road  
Eastbourne  
East Sussex  
BN21 3UT

[www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk](http://www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk)

0333 101 4007

[enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk)

Twitter: @HealthwatchES

Facebook: [Facebook.com/HealthwatchESussex](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchESussex)

## 8 Appendix 1 - List of GP practices reviewed

GP Practice Name	Primary Care Network (PCN)	Local Authority area
<i>The Anchor Field Surgery See Foundry Healthcare</i>	<i>Foundry Healthcare Lewes</i>	<i>Lewes</i>
Arlington Road Surgery	ALPS Group	Eastbourne
Ashdown Forest Health Centre	High Weald	Wealden
Beacon Surgery	High Weald	Wealden
Beaconsfield Group Practice	Hastings and St Leonards	Hastings
Bird-in-Eye Surgery	Greater Wealden	Wealden
Bridgeside Surgery	Hailsham	Wealden
Buxted & East Hoathly Surgery	Greater Wealden	Wealden
Carisbrooke Surgery	Hastings and St Leonards	Hastings
Chapel Street Surgery	The Havens	Lewes
<i>Churchwood See Hastings Old Town Surgery</i>	<i>Hastings and St Leonards</i>	<i>Hastings</i>
Collington Surgery	Bexhill	Rother
Downlands Medical Centre	East Eastbourne, Pevensey & Polegate	Wealden
Fairfield Surgery	Rural Rother	Rother
Ferry Road Health Centre	Rural Rother	Rother
Foundry Healthcare	Foundry Healthcare Lewes	Lewes
Groombridge & Hartfield Medical Group	High Weald	Wealden
Grove Road Surgery	ALPS Group	Eastbourne
Hailsham Medical Group, Vicarage Field	Hailsham	Wealden
Harbour Medical Practice	East Eastbourne, Pevensey & Polegate	Eastbourne
Harold Road Surgery	Hastings and St Leonards	Hastings
Hastings Old Town Surgery	Hastings and St Leonards	Hastings
Havens Health	The Havens	Lewes
Heathfield Surgery	Greater Wealden	Wealden
Herstmonceux Integrative Health Centre	Greater Wealden	Wealden
High glades Medical Centre	Hastings and St Leonards	Hastings
Lighthouse Medical Practice	ALPS Group	Eastbourne
Little Common/Old Town	Bexhill	Rother
Manor Park Surgery	East Eastbourne, Pevensey & Polegate	Wealden
Martins Oak surgery	Rural Rother	Rother
Meads Medical Centre	Greater Wealden	Wealden
Mid Downs Medical Centre	Greater Wealden	Lewes
Northiam & Broad Oak Surgery	Rural Rother	Rother
Old School Surgery	Seaford	Lewes
Oldwood Surgery	Rural Rother	Rother

Park Practice	ALPS Group	Eastbourne
<i>Pebsham Medical Practice See Collington Surgery</i>	<i>Bexhill</i>	<i>Rother</i>
Princes Park Health Centre	East Eastbourne, Pevensey & Polegate	Eastbourne
Priory Road surgery	Hastings and St Leonards	Hastings
Quayside surgery	The Havens	Lewes
Quintin Medical Centre	Hailsham	Wealden
<i>River Lodge Surgery See Foundry Healthcare</i>	<i>Foundry Healthcare Lewes</i>	<i>Lewes</i>
Rotherfield Surgery & Brook Health Centre	High Weald	Wealden
Rye Medical Centre	Rural Rother	Rother
Saxonbury House Medical Practice	High Weald	Wealden
Seaford Medical Practice	Seaford	Lewes
<i>Sea Road Surgery See Collington Surgery</i>	<i>Bexhill</i>	<i>Rother</i>
Seaside Medical Practice	ALPS Group	Eastbourne
Sedlescombe & Westfield Surgeries	Rural Rother	Rother
Sedlescombe House Surgery	Hastings and St Leonards	Hastings
<i>School Hill Medical Practice See Foundry Healthcare</i>	<i>Foundry Healthcare Lewes</i>	<i>Lewes</i>
Sidley Medical Practice	Bexhill	Rother
South Saxon Surgery, Whatlington Rd	Hastings and St Leonards	Hastings
<i>St Andrews Surgery See Foundry Healthcare</i>	<i>Foundry Healthcare Lewes</i>	<i>Lewes</i>
Stone Cross Surgery	East Eastbourne, Pevensey & Polegate	Wealden
The Station Practice, Station Plaza	Hastings and St Leonards	Hastings
VMC (Victoria Medical Centre)	Victoria Primary Care Network	Eastbourne
Wadhurst Medical Practice	High Weald	Wealden
<i>Warrior Square Surgery See Hastings Old Town Surgery</i>	<i>Hastings and St Leonards</i>	<i>Hastings</i>
Woodhill Surgery	High Weald	Wealden

## 9 Appendix 2 - Website review questions



### GP Websites Mystery Shopping 2021 Surgery Information

\* 1. Name of Mystery Shopper (reviewer)

\* 2. Date and time of review

Date / Time

Date	Time	AM/PM
<input type="text" value="MM/DD/YYYY"/>	<input type="text" value="hh"/> <input type="text" value="mm"/>	<input type="text" value="-"/> <input type="button" value="↓"/>

\* 3. What is the name of the GP practice being reviewed?

\* 4. What is the web address (url) of the website you are reviewing for this practice?

\* 5. Which East Sussex Local Authority area is the GP practice located in?

- Eastbourne Borough
- Hastings Borough
- Lewes District
- Rother District
- Wealden District
- Other (please specify)

6. Which Primary Care Network (PCN) is it part of? (if known)



**GP Websites Mystery Shopping 2021**  
Website Information

7. Is key COVID-19 information automatically displayed when entering the website (via a pop-up) or prioritised on the home page?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
COVID-19 information shown via pop-up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
COVID-19 information shown on Home page (first page you come to)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
COVID-19 information shown on Other pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Which basic facts about the Surgery are located on the website?

	Yes - clear and detailed	Yes - limited information	No	Don't Know
Postal Address	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phone Number	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Email address	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opening Hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contact Form	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The date when the website was last updated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please describe how easy to find and up-to-date these pieces of information are:

9. Which pieces of information are shown in relation to the staff at the practice?

Please tick all that apply

	GPs	Nurses	Other health professionals and practitioners	Practice Manager	Support staff (e.g. finance, IT and administrators)
Names	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual contact details	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Is the practice news on the website up-to-date?

- Yes - updated regularly (more often than fortnightly)
- Yes - updated occasionally (less often than fortnightly)
- No - updated rarely (long gaps between updates)
- Don't know

Comment:

11. Does the website provide the following information:

	Yes - clear and detailed	Yes - limited information	No	Don't Know
How to give feedback to the surgery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How to make a complaint <u>to</u> the surgery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How to make a complaint <u>about</u> the surgery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information on the NHS Friends and Family Test (FFT)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Details of Patient Participation Group (PPG) activity?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes - clear and detailed	Yes - limited information	No	Don't Know
How to join the surgery's Patient Participation Group (PPG)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The latest Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating for the surgery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The latest Care Quality Commission (CQC) report for the surgery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Any previous patient surveys or results	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How the practice uses your information [e.g. Privacy Policy, Data Protection policies, Information statement)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information on Healthwatch, carers support or veterans support organisations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other forms of feedback or how to get involved with the surgery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please describe how easy to find and up-to-date these pieces of information are or are not

12. Is there information or guidance about how to book an appointment?

- Yes - clear and detailed
- Yes - limited information
- No
- Don't Know



13. Which appointment methods are currently shown as available with the surgery?

*Please tick all that apply*

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Phone appointment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Video appointment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E-Consult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Livi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Face-to-Face	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

14. What does the website say about making and having an appointment at this time?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Does it say you will be triaged over the phone first?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does it say how the surgery will decide if you need a face-to-face appointment (the triage process)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is any information provided on delays or wait times for contacting the surgery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is any information provided on delays or wait times for appointments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please list any other information about booking appointments eg: advance booking options or same day only.

15. Which services, if any, does the website direct you to if you have an emergency or urgent medical need or the surgery is closed (out-of-hours)?

*Please tick all that apply*

- NHS 111
- Accident and Emergency Department
- Minor Injuries Unit
- Pharmacy
- Emergency Dental Service (EDS)
- Others (please specify)

16. Is there information on how to register with the practice as a new patient?

- Yes - and it is accepting new patients
- Yes - but it isn't accepting any new patients
- No
- Don't Know

17. Which of the following formats can patients use to apply to register as a patient at the practice? *Please tick all that apply*

- Online form (direct online submission)
- Downloadable form (to print, complete and submit)
- Email request (no form)
- Other (please specify)
- Postal application
- Contact the Surgery
- No information found

18. Please identify whether information is provided on the following accessibility themes:

	Yes	No	Don't know
Is information available in other languages?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is any option provided for users of the website to have information translated into other languages?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is there information about disabled access to the surgery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is there information about hearing loop systems at the surgery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is information available about other assistance for patients with disabilities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are Text-to-speech (e.g. ReadAloud) or other accessibility functions available?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is any information provided on the Accessibility Regulations 2018?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate specific types of disabled access mentioned eg: wheelchair access or Autism friendly

19. Is information provided about the process for access to prescriptions/medication [including changes taking effect during the COVID-19 pandemic]?

*Please tick all that apply*

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

20. Please identify if information is provided in relation any of the following services:

*Please tick all that apply*

- Asthma/Breathing conditions
- Child Immunisation
- Community Services (Alcohol, Drug or Mental Health-relates issues)
- Cytology (e.g. smear, urine or sputum tests)
- Dental
- Diabetes
- Family Planning
- Flu vaccinations
- Health Promotion
- Information or guidance for Carers
- Mental Health
- Sexual Health
- Support to stop smoking
- Test Results
- Weight Management

Please identify any others services which are provided but which do not appear in the list above:

21. Is information provided about community or voluntary services which may benefit patients

- Yes - clear and comprehensive
- Yes - some limited information
- No
- Don't Know

Other (please specify)

## GP Websites Mystery Shopping 2021

### COVID-19 related information

22. Is any of the following information provided on COVID-19?

*Please tick all that apply*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 symptoms and self-isolation         | <input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 vaccination support e.g. free transport, quiet sessions etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Where to seek support with COVID-19 symptoms | <input type="checkbox"/> 'At risk' or vulnerable groups  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 Testing and Tracing                 | <input type="checkbox"/> None of these   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 vaccination bookings                |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                       |  |

23. Is any guidance offered for anyone physically visiting the surgery in relation to:

	Yes	Some	No	Don't Know
Use of face masks/coverings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social distancing requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hand hygiene/sanitising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accompanying individuals with support needs (children, carers etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What to expect when attending	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How to act when attending	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

24. Please list any other information related to COVID-19 which is provided:

## GP Websites Mystery Shopping 2021

### Overall rating and comments

25. How well does the website display on a mobile device, such as a phone or tablet? (test home page only)

	Very well - clear and easy to view	Adequately	Poorly - unclear and difficult to view	Not tested
Phone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tablet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Computer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. Overall how would you rate the website, in terms of:

	1 - Very Poor	2	3	4	5 - Excellent
<b>Clarity of information</b> - Is it clear, in Plain English, with few acronyms?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Ease of navigation</b> - Is it clear what information is in different parts of the website?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Quality of information</b> - Is the information provided accurate and up-to-date?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Layout and presentation</b> - Is the design engaging and easy to read? Is there too much or little information?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. Do you have any other comments in relation to the content and effectiveness of this website?

## 10 Appendix 3 - Out-of-hour messages review questions

**healthwatch**  
East Sussex

### GP Out-Of-Hours Phone Messages - Mystery Shopping 2021

Surgery Information  
Questions 1 to 6 (below) can be completed **before** making the phone call. This is recommended.

\* 1. Name of Mystery Shopper (reviewer)

\_\_\_\_\_

\* 2. Date and time of review

Date / Time

Date	Time	AM/PM
MM/DD/YYYY	hh mm	- ▾

\* 3. What is the name of the GP practice being reviewed?

\_\_\_\_\_

\* 4. What is the phone number you are reviewing for this practice?

\_\_\_\_\_

\* 5. Which East Sussex Local Authority area is the GP practice located in?

Eastbourne Borough

Hastings Borough

Lewes District

Rother District

Wealden District

Other (please specify)

\_\_\_\_\_



6. Which Primary Care Network (PCN) is it part of? (if known)

[Redacted]

## GP Out-Of-Hours Phone Messages - Mystery Shopping 2021

### Message content

7. How many rings did it take before the message began?

- 5 or fewer
- between 5 and 10
- More than 10

8. Are you greeted with a voice message?

- Yes - human voice
- Yes - automated/computerised voice
- Don't Know
- No

9. Are you greeted with an options menu?

- No
- Yes - please list the menu options provided:

10. Which basic facts about the Surgery or its services are provided in the OOH message?

	Yes - clear and detailed	Yes - limited information	Not provided	Don't Know
Practice name	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Practice opening Hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Signposting to other services in an emergency out-of-hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Signposting to COVID-19 support e.g. 119	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Signposting to the surgery/practice website or other sources of information (e.g. NHS App)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information related to prescriptions/medication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Which types of appointments are available (e.g. face-to-face, phone etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
COVID-19 precautions at the practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Test results	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other COVID-19 related information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please describe how clear these pieces of information are:

11. What does the message say about making and having an appointment at this time?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Does it say you will be triaged over the phone first?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is any information provided on delays or wait times for contacting the surgery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is any information provided on delays or wait times for appointments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Does the message identify any services or support that the surgery cannot or is not providing at the current time?

- No
- Yes - please specify

13. Please identify which service or services the messages suggests contacting in an out-of-hours emergency:

*Please tick all that apply*

- Call 999
- NHS 111
- Urgent Treatment Centre
- Accident and Emergency Department
- Minor Injuries Unit
- Pharmacy
- Another GP service
- Emergency Dental Service (EDS)
- Others (please specify)

14. When was the phone message last updated?

*Please answer based **only** using the content of the message. If no date is provided - please answer 'Don't know - doesn't say'.*

- In the last month
- Between one and three months ago
- Between four and six months ago
- Between six months and 12 months ago
- More than a year ago
- Don't know - doesn't say

If no date is given, please describe if you feel the message is out-of-date and why this is so:

## GP Out-Of-Hours Phone Messages - Mystery Shopping 2021

Overall rating and comments

15. How long does the message last [in seconds]?

16. Please rate the message on the following:

	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor
Volume	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sound quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tone and clarity of voice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speed of message delivery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please describe any positive or negative aspects of the message here:

17. Overall how would you rate the OOH message, in terms of:

	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor
<b>Clarity of information</b> - Is it clear, in Plain English, with few acronyms?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Quality of information</b> - Is the information provided accurate and up-to-date?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Usefulness of the information</b> - Would this deliver appropriate information to people calling out-of-hours?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Do you have any other comments in relation to the content and effectiveness of this OOH message?

