

GP website revisited

Follow up report on progress against recommendations made in April 2021 report 'GP website check-up'

A report for all GP practices and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

December 2021

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Background

In April 2021 Healthwatch Oxfordshire published a report detailing findings of a review of the websites of 67 GP surgeries in Oxfordshire 'Healthwatch Oxfordshire GP website 'check-up'. <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Healthwatch-Oxfordshire-GP-website-check-up.pdf>.

In October 2021 we reviewed all GP websites to see what progress had been made against the recommendations.

1 Summary of findings of October review

Healthwatch Oxfordshire acknowledge that the preceding months have been a challenging time for GP surgeries and their staff and thank them for their continuing commitment to delivering quality health care.

Our review of the 67 GP websites looked for changes made against the recommendations in our April 2021 report. We found that not all websites had addressed our recommendations, however there are improvements in:

1. accessibility of information about registering at practices
2. availability of information about Patient Participation Groups

The importance of accessible GP websites has grown over the past 18 months and Healthwatch Oxfordshire believe that a consistent website across all GP surgeries would provide greater access to patients. Earlier this year, because of our first report, we had discussions with the OCCG about how this might be achieved. We would welcome a discussion with OCCG and GP practices about the practicalities of achieving this, recognising it will take time and resourcing.

Of concern is that websites did not give information to patients who to contact if they cannot find a GP to register with. This must be addressed by clear signage to the OCCG website and giving the contact telephone number for the OCCG.

Reviewing websites regarding translation and interpreting services there is a mixed bag on offer. All GP websites should:

- Make it more obvious on the front page how to translate the website and check this is working
- There needs to be, on the front page, clear and easily accessible information about all patient's right to interpreter (spoken language and sign language) at all appointments and how to ask for this.

A consistent website across all GP surgeries would address these requirements.

2 April to October what had changed?

The following section records progress against recommendations made in April 2021.

2.1 Summary of April findings:

We found that across the 67 Oxfordshire GP websites information was often:

- Inconsistent across different web pages.
- Out of date.
- Links to internal and external pages not working.
- Links led to pages with no content.

Specifically:

- There is no consistent place to find information about how to make a complaint and the information available was often insufficient.
- How to find accessible sources of information were hard to find - 10 sites had no accessibility information or capability for the site to be made more accessible.
- The translate option did not work on 12 of the 67 sites.
- Two websites had no self-care information.
- Often difficult to find how to contact the Patient Participation Group (PPG) and most PPG postings were old.
- Only one site had a direct link to Healthwatch Oxfordshire.
- Requirements to complete registration at the practice included:
 - 43 practices asked for patient identification
 - 43 practices required proof of address

3 Progress against recommendations made in April 2021

We made several recommendations and asked all GP surgeries to review and update their websites before we reviewed the websites again. Each surgery was provided with a copy of our report and the individual assessment sheet completed by our volunteers.

3.1 Registration with a GP - April recommendations

- a) All GP surgeries must make information about how to register with the practice easy to find on the website and accessible.
- b) Information about how to register with the practice must be clear and in line with the NHS guidance and documentations. This can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery/>
- c) The registration document must be the NHS GMS1 registration form. This form together with guidance on completion can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gms1>
- d) A clear statement must be posted saying that:

Anyone in England can register with a GP surgery.
You do not need proof of address or immigration status, ID or an NHS number.

If you have problems registering with a GP surgery:

Call the NHS England Customer Contact Centre on 0300 311 22 33

or

Contact Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group:

Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

Jubilee House

5510 John Smith Drive

Oxford Business Park South

OX4 2LH

Tel: 01865 336800

Email: oxon.gpc@nhs.net

Or

Contact Healthwatch Oxfordshire

Healthwatch Oxfordshire

The Old Dairy

High Cogges

Witney

OX29 6UN

Telephone 01865 520 520

Email hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk

More information about Healthwatch Oxfordshire can be found on their web site

www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk

3.1.1 October 2021 review of progress against recommendations

- All sixty-seven GP websites provide clear information as to how to register as a new patient, whether asking patients to download forms, complete forms online or to contact the surgery.
- Many GP websites are now using the GMS1 as the main registration form for patients to register, some have an additional information questionnaire that they ask patients to complete.
- A few GP websites have registrations forms that are a copy of the GMS1 but not on the official form, and others have registration forms that have been designed by the GP surgery.
- The majority of the sixty-seven websites are still requesting patients to provide some form of ID, ranging from NHS number, Photographic ID, proof of address and utility bills, none have the NHS statement about not needing to provide ID.
- Many of the GP website are providing clear information about their practice boundaries, with some explaining about boundary moves but that they will still accept patients in the area.

Regarding 1.1 d) above none of the sixty-seven GP websites mention who to contact if can't register with a GP surgery. OCCG should ensure this information is available to the public on GP websites.

3.2 Patient Participation Group information - recommendation

Easy to find and updated information on what a Patient Participation Group (PPG) is, how to join it, and how to make contact. This should be done in conjunction with the practice PPG.

3.2.1 October 2021 review against recommendation

1. From the assessment question completed by the volunteers most reported that their GP website provided links to a Patient Participation Group (PPG).
 - a. Not all provided a link on the surgery front page to the PPG information, and where there are links some gave no information or it appeared dated.
 - b. Despite using the search facility at least two websites had no information about PPGs at all.

4 General update on review of the GP's websites

1. All sixty-seven GP website are still providing some form of pop up or some form of Covid-19 information on their homepage. Many link directly to the Gov.uk or NHS websites which ensures the information is up to date.
2. Information about changes in cancer care regarding Covid-19, the volunteers reported that a majority of the sixty-seven websites only provided information relating to cancer and cancer support in general. One website clearly mentions that 'cancer screening was back to catch up with Covid-19'
3. All sixty-seven GP websites have available information on how to make an appointment.
 - a. On some websites the information is in more than one location on the website and can sometimes prove to be contradictory with what being explained to patients about the appointment system.
 - b. Many of the websites provide links to both e-consult and Patient Access to allow patients to communicate electronically.
 - c. A comment was made by one volunteer was that some websites have a lot of text to read which can make it difficult to understand.
4. Many of the GP websites are providing links for self-care for health conditions although this isn't always easy to find.
5. With regards to sensory loss and learning disabilities very few GP offered support within the surgery.
6. Support with BSL, Induction loops and large font leaflets are offered in some surgeries.

7. Several GP websites provided a link to ‘Accessibility’ which was normally at the bottom of the webpage in very small font, this link allowed users to modify the website, i.e. change font size, colour.
8. Other websites have a link to a ‘blue person’ shape on the side of the website linking to ‘Userway’ which enables users to modify the website.
 - a. Unless you were aware of what these links meant it might mean as a user you wouldn’t be able to access the website.
9. More GP websites are providing links to Healthwatch Oxfordshire website, up from one to six.
10. Fifty nine of the sixty-seven GP website provided information about a privacy policy and data sharing, this policy was usually found but not always in practice policies. Many of these policies were not dated 2021.
11. Sixty-four of the sixty-seven websites provided information about how to make a complaint. This was easy to find on most websites.

5 Translation and interpretation information

The following are new questions that we asked following hearing from patients about their experiences.

5.1 Is there any guidance for patients who may need information translating?

- Of the sixty-seven GP websites twenty-six provided some form of information for patients who may need information translating most of this was to allow patients to translate the GP website itself.
- Only two GP website mentioned being able to provide a patient someone who could sign for them if required.
- In the new patient registration forms on one GP website there was a question asked about the needs translating support during appointments, many other websites referred to new patients who may be ‘asylum seekers’ and needing information in another language with some linking to leaflets about the NHS for asylum seekers, several GP websites also provided links to leaflets that were to links that didn’t open or where information had been archived.

5.2 Can the website be translated?

Of the sixty-seven GP websites:

- 47 websites provided a link to via Google translate on their website, not all of these were obvious links, for example some showed a world logo which didn’t identify what it was.
 - Several of these translate links did also not work, with one directing people to an external website that didn’t work.

- It was pointed out by one volunteer that when many of these websites are translated, telephone numbers don't necessarily translate in the correct order. For example, in Arabic the area code comes after the main number which can cause confusion.

5.3 Is there information about your right to have an interpreter and how this will be provided?

- Eighteen of the sixty-seven GP website provided information about the patients right to an interpreter.
 - This information was found in several different areas of the websites, under new patient registrations, in the practice policies under chaperoning and even under the complaints procedure.
 - Several surgeries had some information about this under an Accessibility label.