

Review of GP Practice Websites



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Introduction

Swindon Primary Care Networks include 28 GP practices and serve a population of more than 220,000 people. In Swindon, there are 6 primary care networks: Brunel PCN 1-4, Wyvern Health Partnership PCN, and Great Western Healthcare PCN. All the GP practices are working toward the NHS England guidelines for Primary Care Networks.

The NHS Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) Integrated Care Board (ICB) was established in July 2022. The ICB is the new statutory NHS organisation responsible for planning and delivering health and care services and is being set up as part of the Government's new health and care reforms.

The new statutory organisation will develop a plan for meeting the health and care needs of our local population, manage the NHS budget allocated to the ICB and its area and arrange for the provision of health and care services. It will work collaboratively to improve outcomes in population health, provide better joined-up care, reduce health inequalities and enhance productivity and value for money, while also supporting broader social and economic development.

The CQC inspections which were undertaken in practices in Swindon showed that out of 27 GP practices 2 required improvements, 20 were rated as good overall and 5 practices had not been inspected recently. This shows the majority of practices within Swindon are meeting the CQC standards of providing people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care.



Since the start of January 2022, Healthwatch Swindon has received **105** pieces of feedback on individual practices. The main themes are around accessibility to GP practices, whether that is booking an appointment either over the phone or via GP websites, registering at the practice or gaining access to a timely referral.

“Takes at least 30 mins on hold to get through to reception, only to find out there are no appointments. I live off £77 a week and every time I have to call the Dr it costs £6 in phone credit.” (anon)

GP practice websites ought to be valuable sources of information and data for existing and potential patients, providing key details on what services the practice offers and a wide range of useful information and links that patients can use to access local and national provisions. Websites also need to store up to date information, be easy to navigate and accessible to all regardless of age or disability, whilst catering to people within the local communities whose first language may not be English.

If a website is not accessible to everyone who needs it, this may be breaking the 2010 Equality Act. PCN or GP practice websites need to meet accessibility standards.

Healthwatch Swindon knows the Covid 19 pandemic overwhelmed the way in which GP practices consulted with their patients due to social distancing measures in place. Digital consultations had overtaken the main form of engagement for patients and more people accessed GP practices through their websites. This may have included making an appointment or obtaining general information and advice/guidance.

We wanted to carry out an observational review of the websites of the local GP practices in Swindon, to see if patients are getting the right information when they first visit their GP practice website and how accessible the information is. Focusing on the virtual services available, remote access to primary care and local provisions, including provisions of cancer information, Healthwatch Swindon, Patients Participation Group (PPG), complaints process and option to view information in other languages.

What we did

The Healthwatch team designed an online survey, using a set of key questions for our volunteers to complete while visiting the websites.

What we looked for:

- Is there evidence of the website being kept up to date?
- Are there details on how the practice can be contacted?
- Are the opening times clearly displayed?
- Are there a range of ways offered to book appointments and how easy are they to find?
- Are there out of hours appointments?
- Is there an explanation why receptionists may ask questions about why you want to see a GP?
- Is there a catchment area or boundary clearing explained on the website?
- Is there current Covid-19 information?
- Does the website include links to the NHS Covid-19 website?
- Does the website include any information about cancer support during Covid-19?
- Is there a link to the Macmillan Covid-19 web page?

- Are there links to cancer support groups?
- Is there information about how homeless people can register at the practice?
- Does the website have links to selfcare and support organisations to support health and wellbeing?
- Does the website have a link to the Swindon Local Offer?
- Does the website have an accessibility statement?
- Is there a good example of good practice for accessibility?
- Does the website have the option to view in different languages and formats?
- Is there an explanation of the primary care network?
- Does it contain current PPG information?
- How easy is it to make or leave a complaint?
- Is there any mention or link to Healthwatch Swindon?
- Is the web provider easily identifiable?

This review was conducted over a 6-month period between January 2022 and July 2022 by Healthwatch Swindon Volunteers and staff alongside Wiltshire Sight service users.

Our team of 12 volunteers visited all 28 GP Practice websites, at least once and a number were reviewed by Wiltshire Sight. With an aim to see how accessible and relevant information is for a patient, to avoid needing to call the practice.

The volunteers were asked to complete the survey on a range of devices; laptop, iPad and smart phone etc.

Context

This insight into GP practice website accessibility, is to help practices ensure they are meeting the needs of their patients. At a time when the functionality of a GP practice is evolving and under pressure, it is important that their websites are up to date in order to minimise the need to phone the practice.

Following the pandemic, the need for up to date information has proven invaluable, alongside ensuring information is presentable in a range of formats.

We recognise that there may have been changes made to the websites during or since we carried out our survey.

During the pandemic, NHS services were under immense pressure and we acknowledge that staffing and capacity to maintain a website remains challenging.

The [GP Patient Survey](#) undertaken by NHS England and published by Ipsos, showed that 55% of patients had used an online service offered by their GP Practice.

However, from the information we collected there are major gaps in what information is shared with patients.

- 17% of websites had not been updated in the last month or showed no evidence if they had been updated.
- Only 36% of practices can be contacted by email.
- 1 practice did not have their opening times clearly displayed.
- 1 practice did not offer a range of ways to book an appointment.
- On 6% of websites, it was not clear how to book an appointment.
- 33% of websites did not display how to book an out of hours appointment.
- 54% did not explain why a receptionist will ask why a patient needs to see a GP.
- 16% did not share what the catchment area was.
- 15% did not provide any current Covid-19 guidance.
- 21% did not have a link to the NHS Covid-19 website.
- 71% did not provide any advice for cancer patients.
- 87% did not have a link to Macmillan Covid-19 webpage.
- 71% did not have any links to cancer support groups.
- 94% had no information on how a homeless person can register with the practice.
- 82% did have links to self-care and support for health and wellbeing.
- 90% did not have links to the Swindon Local Offer.
- 81% of websites did have an accessibility page, BUT it was not easy to find.
- 33% did not have options to view different languages and formats.
- 90% did not explain what a primary care network is.
- 69% mention their PPG.
- 81% made it easy to know how to make a complaint.
- 63% do not mention Healthwatch swindon.

Recommendations

We have outlined the following key points for improvements:

- **Websites need to be kept up to date** - With an evolving health climate following the pandemic, website information needs to be kept up to date with the latest information and guidance. In particular, the methods of how to get in touch with their practice and how to book an out of hours appointment. This also includes an explanation of current processes to help ensure patients are booked in correctly. With **54%** of practices not explaining why a receptionist will ask why the patients needs to see a GP.
- **Patient registration needs to be improved, catchment areas need to be clearly explained and we recommend all practices seek CQC guidance on registering homeless patients** - With 94% of all practice websites in Swindon not displaying how a homeless person can register, in particular that they DO NOT need a fixed address.
- **Language and formats need to be improved to ensure information is accessible to everyone** - Swindon is a multi-cultural town, an element that helps enrich our community. It is therefore important that information is accessible to everyone. This includes languages and different formats available. Earlier this year Healthwatch England launched their Your Care Your Way campaign ([Your Care, Your Way | Healthwatch](#)), with the view of ensuring everyone gets healthcare information in a format that's right for them. Although 81% of GP practice websites had an accessibility page, none of them were easy to find.
- **Links to Local Offer, Healthwatch Swindon and other support organisations** - whilst support for health and wellbeing could be found on 82% of websites, **90%** of websites **did not** have links to the Swindon Local Offer, a free resource, cataloguing a whole range of services to those living in and around Swindon.
- **All websites should actively support PPG's and their link to a Primary Care Network** - Only 69% of websites referenced their own PPG and 90% did not explain what a PCN is. In order for patients to understand how healthcare is commissioned and be able to have their say to improve patient communication, it's imperative that this information is displayed.

Feedback and Findings

Websites need to be kept up to date.

“Last two updates were posted on 27th September, 2021 walk in clinic for covid and posted on 31st January, 2022, booster and flu” (this website was reviewed on 21st Feb 2022).

Patient registration needs to be improved, catchment areas need to be clearly explained and we recommend all practices seek CQC guidance on registering homeless patients.

“Not clear what the area is, New Patients Click here to check if you live in our catchment area in order to register you must complete two forms so that we have some knowledge of your area.”

“Under the patient information, in the "How to register tab," it says to click on the link to check by putting your own postcode, but it is not clearly mentioned which postcode this surgery accepts.”

“Map provided under practice info - registering”

Language and formats need to be improved to ensure information is accessible to everyone.

“there are approximately 132 different languages. The Konkani language is Goa’s official language. The Konkani language is divided into several dialects. The Konkani translation on the website is written in the traditional Sanskrit style. People from Goa will be unable to read this old style of the Konkani.”

“Using the "Read Aloud" function in Microsoft Edge was hit and miss. It failed on the home page but worked where there was a lot of text”

“Needs updating. What to do if you cannot access parts of this website If you need information on this website in a different format like accessible PDF, large print, easy read, audio recording or braille: Call or email us”

Links to Local Offer, Healthwatch Swindon and other support organisations.

“I couldn't find anything. "Cancer" search brought up nothing.”

“I put this ‘Macmillan Covid-19’ in the search and nothing was found.”

“I put ‘cancer support’ in the search and nothing was found.”

“Could not find any information about homeless people”

“Yes, per Registration Link Though it says Temporary Residents not Homeless specifically”

“All websites should actively support PPG’s and their link to a Primary Care Network.”

Next steps

- Discuss and share the report findings with the Integrated Care Board and NHS leaders and Primary Care Networks along with their PPG’s.
- Offer GP practices an opportunity to discuss their individual results, recommendations and offer support making improvements.
- Publish our findings on our website and social media platforms and share the report with Healthwatch England.
- Continue to listen to our community and encourage them to share their experience of GP websites and practices.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our Healthwatch volunteers and Wiltshire Sight who gave a substantial amount of their time and support to this project.

Appendix One: Answer Table

	Surgery	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
1	Merchiston Surgery	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y		Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
2	The Whalebridge practice	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
3	Lawn medical Centre	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y		N	Y	N		Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y		Y
4	Hawthorn Medical Practice	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y		N	Y	Y
5	Penhill Surgery	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N		Y	Y		N	Y	N	Y	Y	N		N	Y	Y
6	Crossroads Surgery	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y		N	Y	N	Y	Y	N			Y	Y
7	Kingswood Surgery	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y		Y	N	Y
8	Taw Hill Medical Practice	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
9	Hermitage Surgery	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
10	Blunsdon Surgery	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y			Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
11	Phoenix Surgery	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y		N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y
12	Ridge Green Medical Centre	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y		N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
13	Freshbrook Surgery	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y		N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
14	Westrop Surgery	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
15	Victoria Cross	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y				Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y
16	Great Western Surgery	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y

Surgery	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
17 Sparcells Surgery	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
18 Carfax NHS Medical Centre	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N
19 Eldene Surgery	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y		Y		N
20 Abbey Meads Medical Practice	Y	N		Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N		N		
21 Moredon Medical Centre	Y			Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N		Y
22 Park Lane Practice	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	N	Y		Y	N	Y	N	N
23 Ashington House Surgery	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		N	N	N	Y		Y	Y	Y	N	N
24 Ridgeway View Family Practice	Y		N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y		Y	N	N	N	N
25 Elm Tree surgery	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y		N	N	Y
26 North Swindon Practice	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	N	N
27 Priory Road Medical Centre	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
28 Old Town Surgery	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y

Question Key:

- A. Have website?
- B. easily accessible?
- C. Up to date?
- D. Opening times shown?
- E. Various ways to book appointments?
- F. Easy to book appointment?
- G. Out of hours offered?
- H. Receptionist questions explained?
- I. Catchment area shown?
- J. Current COVID info shown?
- K. Cancer info and advice shown?
- L. Homeless person registration
- M. self-care and support organisations links
- N. Local offer shown?
- O. Accessibility statement?
- P. Support for learning difficulties
- Q. Language formats
- R. Primary Care Network mentioned?
- S. Patient Participations Group (PPG) information?
- T. Link to Healthwatch Swindon?
- U. Web provider listed?



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