

**Healthwatch
Southampton GP
website audit 2023**

About us

Healthwatch Southampton is your local health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and other decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

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Introduction

Earlier this year, Healthwatch Southampton recarreied out its annual priority survey for Southampton residents to feedback on what is most important to them in relation to health and social care in the city. GP services were people's top priority, which included how they access their GP services/practices. GP websites are a key tool for practices to communicate with patients accessing their services. GP websites also support practices to manage patient expectations and improve patient experiences.

As a result, Healthwatch Southampton decided to complete a GP website audit for all NHS practice websites in Southampton. The audit evaluated websites' accessibility and useability against 36 criteria which have been developed by NHS England (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/gp-website-benchmarking-and-improvement-tool/>). The website audit took place between September 1st 2023 and September 15th 2023.

The audit evaluated 25 practice websites, and a list of these practice websites can be found here: <https://www.hantsiowhealthandcare.org.uk/about-us/primarycare>. The only Southampton practice website this audit did not assess was Solent NHS Trust's Homeless Healthcare as this website offers services that are different from the typical general practice and will need to contain different information.

This report summarises the key findings of the GP website audit, focusing on common areas of improvement and examples of best practice. Healthwatch Southampton will also send each practice its own practice-level results separately and stay connected with practices to observe how they implement the improvements suggested by our audit.

Overall results

A website could meet each of the audit's tool criteria well, adequately, or inadequately. Ideally, all criteria should be met well. If all criteria are met well, then these key user journeys are likely to be highly usable for the patient.

The average score across the 25 GP websites in Southampton was 10 well, 15 adequate, and 11 inadequate (out of the 36 total metrics). However, there was significant variation in GP websites' scores. The highest-scoring website received 30 well and 0 inadequate, whereas the lowest-scoring website received 3 well and 26 inadequate. Figure 1 displays the overall results of the GP website audit. The 36 metrics in the table run in order from those with the lowest number of inadequate scores to the highest number scoring inadequate.

Number	Requirement	Total Inadequate	Total Adequate	Total well
21	Finding the 'Contact Us' page	1	4	20
12	Finding the prescriptions page	1	13	11
1	Overlays and pop ups	1	17	7
13	Information about ordering repeat prescriptions	1	22	2
31	Navigation: Practice name/logo in the header links back to home	2	1	22
11	Home visits	2	11	13
2	Finding the appointments page	2	11	12
23	Opening hours on the 'Contact Us' page	2	18	5
26	Online accessibility statement	3	6	16
30	Menu visibility	3	6	16
14	Information about online ordering	3	11	11
17	Content on the prescriptions page is well structured (with clear headings and short paragraphs)	3	14	8
6	Information about routine/ pre bookable appointments	3	16	6
27	NHS look and feel	3	16	6
24	Out of Hours information on the 'Contact Us' page, including information about 111	3	20	2
8	Information about using an online form/OC to request help from the practice	4	13	8
22	Information on the 'Contact Us' page	4	20	1
3	Appointments page	6	9	10
7	Information about changing/ cancelling an appointment	6	11	8
5	Information about urgent on the day appointments	6	15	4
9	Using recommended terms to describe Online form/OC - content	7	17	1
4	Length and structure of the content on the appointments page	8	9	8
10	Explanation of when and how to use NHS app or alternatives	9	8	8
32	Search box visible to users	10	6	9
35	Volume of copy on the homepage	11	6	8
19	Get my test results via phone	11	12	2
28	Using NHS design components	11	12	2
20	Get my test results online	12	7	6
15	Information about how to raise a query about my medication.	13	10	2
25	Physical accessibility statement	14	9	2
18	Finding test results information	18	3	4
33	Search results delivering relevant results for key patient tasks	18	4	3
36	Homepage provides quick links to key patient tasks	19	3	3
16	Find your nearest pharmacy	20	4	1
34	Reading age of key copy	20	5	0
29	Main menu	21	2	2

Figure 1: Summary of Southampton GP Website audit results.

Best performing metrics

The metrics in which GP websites performed most well tended to cover the general principles of web design. The metric for which the largest number of websites scored well was “Navigation: Practice name/logo in the header links back to home”, for which 22 out of 25 websites scored well. To score well on this metric, a website needed a practice name or logo in the top left of the header on the desktop which linked to the homepage.

Furthermore, 20 out of 25 websites scored well for the “Finding the 'Contact Us' page” metric. To score well on this metric, a website required one click to navigate from the main menu to a 'contact us' page.

16 out of 25 websites scored well for having an “Online accessibility statement”. To score well on this metric, websites needed an accessibility statement which contained the required information, including the website’s accessibility levels and how it intends to improve.

16 websites also scored well for “menu visibility”. To score well on this metric, websites needed a main menu that is visible on the desktop view and accessible on the mobile view, such as by clicking a clearly labelled button.

Key areas for improvement

Main menu

The metric which had the largest number of websites scoring inadequate, with 21 out of 25 scoring inadequate, was for the main menu. Only 2 websites scored well. To score well on this metric, a website needed one main menu with seven or fewer items. The menu needed to contain sections for home, appointments, and prescriptions.

Lordshill Health Centre and The Old Fire Station Surgery were the two practice websites to do this.

Figures 2 and 3 display images of their menus as best practice:

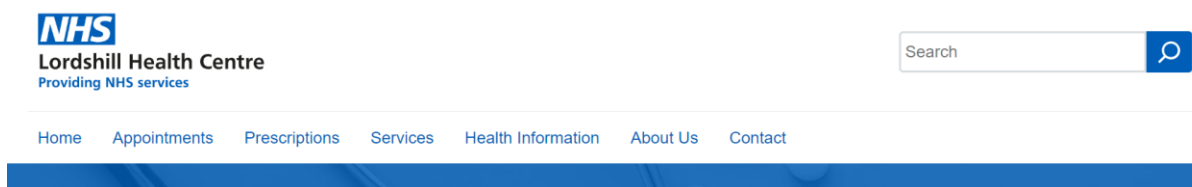


Figure 2: Lordshill Health Centre's main menu.



Figure 3: The Old Fire Station Surgery's main menu.

Reading age of website text

In the UK, 7.1 million adults read at, or below, the level of an average nine-year-old. More than four in 10 adults struggle to understand health content written for the public.

The Hemingway Editor (<https://hemingwayapp.com/>) provides automated estimates of a text's reading age. For a website to score well on this metric, the text on both the "appointments" and "prescriptions" pages needed to score grade 5 or below on the Hemingway Editor. This would indicate a reading age of 10-11 years or lower. A website scored inadequate if either of these pages scored grade 8 or above, which is a reading age of 13+ years.

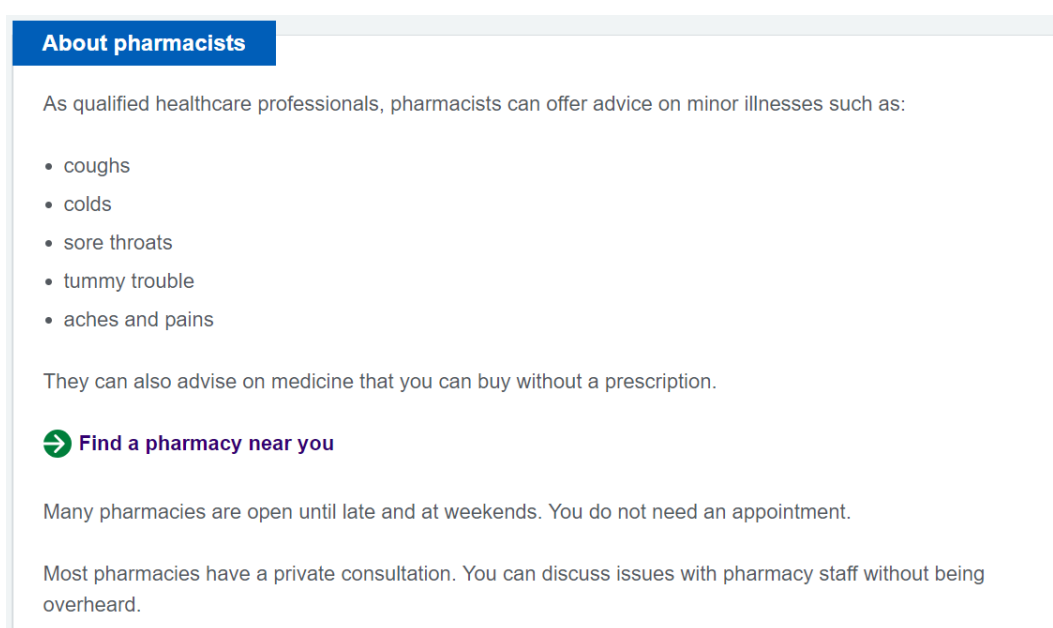
20 out of 25 websites scored inadequate on this metric and 5 scored adequate. None of the websites scored well, and this is the only audit metric for which this was the case.

Although the Hemingway Editor is one of many methods to assess a text's reading age, the fact that none of the websites had an estimated reading age at or below 10-11 years suggests the text reading age is a key area of concern. If users are unable to understand the website text, they will be unable to source the information needed to access the correct GP services.

Finding your nearest pharmacy

To score well on this metric, a website needed to include information about what pharmacies can do, including information on finding a local pharmacy. To score well, this information needs to be on the website's main prescriptions page.

20 websites scored inadequate for this metric, 4 adequate, and 1 well. When a website scored inadequate, it was usually because they had little to no information about pharmacies on their website. Lordshill Health Centre was the only website to score well for this metric and an image of its "About pharmacists" section is below as an example of best practice.



About pharmacists

As qualified healthcare professionals, pharmacists can offer advice on minor illnesses such as:

- coughs
- colds
- sore throats
- tummy trouble
- aches and pains

They can also advise on medicine that you can buy without a prescription.

[→ Find a pharmacy near you](#)

Many pharmacies are open until late and at weekends. You do not need an appointment.

Most pharmacies have a private consultation. You can discuss issues with pharmacy staff without being overheard.

Figure 4: Lordshill Health Centre's "About pharmacists" page.

Homepage provides quick links to key patient tasks

Research has found that the homepage is the first place that 80% of users will look when searching for a task on a GP website. To score well on this metric, a website homepage needed the five most common patient tasks in the top 1/3 of the homepage. These five tasks were appointments, prescriptions, sick/fit notes, test results, and registering with practice.

19 practices scored inadequate for this metric, meaning that not all five of these tasks were on the homepage. 3 were adequate, meaning all five tasks were on the homepage but difficult to find. 3 scored well, meaning all five were identifiable in the top third of the homepage.

Peartree Practice and Bitterne Surgery used the same homepage design, and both scored well.

Figure 5 displays an image from the Peartree Practice website for best practice.

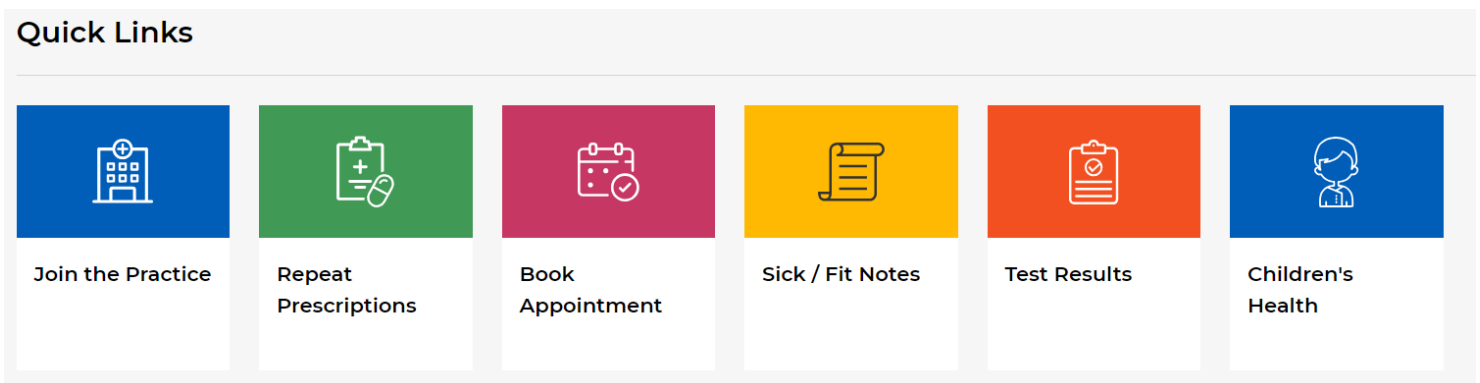


Figure 5: Peartree Practice homepage.

Search results delivering relevant results for key patient tasks

For this metric, auditors entered the search terms of the five most common patient tasks on a GP website to see whether the search tool generated relevant results. These five search terms were “Appointments”, “Prescriptions”, “Sick note”, “Test results”, and “Register with practice”.

18 websites scored inadequate on this metric. 4 scored adequate and 3 scored well. For the websites that scored inadequate, this was either because they did not have a search tool or because three or fewer terms returned relevant results.

Using the search bar is one of the three main strategies patients use for finding information on a website- alongside links on the homepage and using the main menu. Therefore, ensuring GP websites have search bars that return relevant results is a key area of focus.

Finding test results information

Getting their test results is one of the top tasks for patients on a GP surgery website. To score well on this metric, websites needed a link to test results information in the top third of the homepage.

18 GP websites scored inadequate for this metric, 3 adequate, and 4 well. Please see Figure 5 (on page 8) for an example of best practice for designing GP website homepages with test result links included.

Physical Accessibility Statement

14 out of 25 websites scored inadequate for the level of information about physical accessibility on the website. Only 2 websites scored well.

Below is Stoneham Lane Surgery's website which scored well on this as best practice for this metric.

Stoneham Lane Surgery

Search

Accessibility

Accessing the surgery if you have a disability or particular needs

[contact us if you wish to discuss your specific needs](#)

Disabled Parking Spaces

These are located immediately outside the surgery front door.

Mobility

Mobility scooters and wheelchairs can be used inside the surgery. The reception front desk has a lower section at wheelchair-user height. The surgery is on two levels. Most consulting rooms are on the ground floor. There is a large lift to the first floor. A member of staff can accompany you in the lift if needed. We have a wheelchair that can be borrowed for use within the surgery.

Sight impairment

Guide dogs are welcome in the surgery.

The surgery meets current regulations for colour contrast between floors and walls to help sight impaired patients move around safely.

Hearing impairment

We provide a text relay service for people who are deaf, hearing impaired or have a speech impediment.

Our reception desk has an audio induction loop, or if you contact us before your visit we can arrange a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter.

Learning Disabilities & Neurodiversity

Busy waiting rooms can be stressful places to spend time in. If you, or the person you care for, would benefit from additional support to be able to enter and spend time in the surgery, please [contact us](#) or discuss with reception when you book the appointment.

Toilets

There are disabled toilets on both floors.

Figure 6: Stoneham Lane Surgery's physical accessibility page.

Information on “Contact Us” page and Out of Hours information on the 'Contact Us' page, including information about 111

Although the number of websites scoring inadequate for these two metrics was low, at four and three respectively, there was only one website which scored well for these metrics.

For the first metric, a website would score well if there was one page that contained all the practice’s contact information, including opening times, address, phone number, out-of-hours, and accessibility. For the second metric, a website would score well if there was clear out-of-hours information, including links to 111.

The Walnut Tree Surgery’s website was the only one to meet both criteria. Figure 7 displays its contact page as best practice:

[Home](#) > [Contact](#)

Contact

With patients’ needs at the heart of everything we do, our website has been designed to make it easy for you to gain instant access to the information you need.

Walnut Tree Surgery


14 Carlton Road,
Southampton,
SO15 2HQ

[Get Directions](#)

[023 80333326](tel:02380333326)

hiowidb-hsi.walnuttreesurgery@nhs.net

We have Disabled Access.



Opening Hours

Monday	8:00 am to 6:00 pm
Tuesday	8:00 am to 6:00 pm
Wednesday	8:00 am to 6:00 pm
Thursday	8:00 am to 6:00 pm
Friday	8:00 am to 6:00 pm
Saturday	Closed
Sunday	Closed

Surgery office hours are 08.00 to 18.30.

Extended Hours & Out of Hours

We provide extended hours surgeries, by appointment only, at the following times:
Tuesday 07:30 – 08:00
Wednesday 07:30 – 08:00

Out-of-hours cover is provided before 08:00 and after 18:30 on weekdays and at all times over weekends. If you have an urgent medical problem which cannot wait until the surgery re-opens, a duty doctor can be contacted by telephoning **111**.

Out-of-hours services are generally busy so please think carefully before asking to see a doctor and only do so if you genuinely cannot wait until the surgery re-opens.

In a genuine emergency you should call 999. Chest pains and / or shortness of breath constitute an emergency.

Figure 7: Walnut Tree Surgery's contact page.

Conclusions

Overall, the GP website audit identified significant variations in the accessibility and useability of GP websites within Southampton. However, the audit found common areas of best practice and improvement. The website areas that most often performed well were the principles of web design, such as having a visible practice logo, contact us page, accessibility statement and main menu.

Key areas of improvement were:

- The main menu and homepage's content
- The text's reading age
- Pharmacy information
- Website search tools
- Physical access information
- Information on the contact page.

As a result of this work, we intend to provide each practice with a detailed website report to help them improve the information, and accessibility of their website which will help their patients.

References

- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care System. "Primary Care Networks". Available at: <https://www.hantsiowhealthandcare.org.uk/about-us/primarycare> [Accessed 26 September 2023].
- NHS England. "GP website benchmarking and improvement tool". Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/gp-website-benchmarking-and-improvement-tool/> [Accessed 26 September 2023].