



GP WEBSITE AUDIT 2025

healthwatch
North East Lincolnshire

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1.1 About Us

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We exist to make sure that people are at the heart of care. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area.

We have the power to make sure that people's voices are heard by the government and those running services. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them. Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

In summary Healthwatch is here to:

- Help people find out about local care.
- Listen to what people think of services.
- Help improve the quality of services by letting those running services and the government know what people want from care.
- Encourage people running services to involve people in changes to care.

Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire GP website audit

Introduction

Online journeys via GP websites and apps are a key 'front door' to healthcare for patients alongside telephone and face-to-face contact. 74.4% of respondents (702,837 completed surveys) in the GP Patient Survey (July 2025) reported using at least one online GP service in the 12 months prior to taking part in the survey. This was an increase from 69.0% in 2024.

If a user gets stuck on their first steps on a website it can reduce confidence in accessing NHS information and services.

NHS England have developed a benchmark and improvement tool (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/gp-website-benchmarking-and-improvement-tool/>) within the National General Practice Improvement Programme

The tool breaks down key website tasks into 50 elements – 36 patient priorities and 14 practice priorities. The practice website is assessed whether it achieves the criteria well, adequately or inadequately. Ideally, all criteria should be met 'well,' which would indicate a user friendly website.

Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire undertook training in the use of the tool with the Primary and Community Transformation and Improvement team at NHS England.

North East Lincolnshire has 19 GP websites in total that were audited by Healthwatch using the tool.

The websites were accessed by mobile phone as default as recommended by NHS England.

A sample from the NHS England benchmarking tool.

All sites should be tested on mobile by default.				
Stakeholder	Information	Requirement	Tasks and priorities	Item no
SECTION 1: PATIENT PRIORITIES: Criteria are based on patient research: identifying key patient tasks and design and interaction elements that make a journey usable or highly usable				
Patient priorities				
1	<p>Our research has indicated that overlays/pop up banners are creating huge issues for patients. We found that 27% of participants who visited a site with an overlay as the first thing they saw struggled to get past the overlay, especially on mobile.</p>	<p>COOKIES ARE INTEGRATED IN THE PAGE - NOT AN OVERLAY.</p> <p>No pop-ups or overlays before landing on the homepage.</p> <p>The only pop-up or overlay is for cookies which needs to be dismissed by user, but NO other pop-ups or overlays are present on the site.</p>	<p>MOBILE</p> <p>Getting an appointment is the top patient task for a GP surgery website. The word 'appointments' is the word that patients scan a website for when they want to request help.</p>	<p>Well</p> <p>Adequate</p> <p>Inadequate</p>
2	<p>Appointments' immediately visible in the main menu AND Link to appointments in the top third of the homepage.</p> <p>One of the following: -Appointments on in the main menu (not hidden in a sub menu). OR -Clear link to the appointments page in the top third of the homepage.</p>	<p>Appointments' immediately visible in the main menu AND Link to appointments in the top third of the homepage.</p> <p>No 'appointments' in the main menu (top level), or the homepage, or in the top third of the homepage.</p>	<p>Task 1: Booking, changing or cancelling appointments (inc OC tools)</p> <p>Finding the appointments page</p>	

Completed benchmarking tool for all G.P Practices in North East Lincolnshire

Criteria number in audit tool(out of 50)	Requirement	Total 'Well'	Total 'Adequate'	Total 'Inadequate'
31	Navigation -practice name in header links to homepage (on desktop)	19	0	0
1	No overlays or pop ups obscuring the homepage	18	1	0
23	Opening hours clearly laid out	17	1	1
32	Search box visible to users	17	1	1
38	Join/register with practice – information and link	17	1	1
11	Home visits – clear information on the 'Appointments' page	16	1	2
37	Join the practice – quick link	16	2	1
14	Clear instructions and link to order medication on website	15	3	1
21	Finding the 'Contact us' page – one 'click' from main menu	15	3	1
30	Menu visibility	15	3	1
17	Prescription page – content is broken into sections with clear headings	14	2	3
7	Clear instructions on how to change/cancel appointments	14	1	4
13	Instructions on how to order repeat prescriptions with number/link + information on nominating a pharmacy	14	3	2
3	One 'Appointments' page – clear information with links about what to do in what circumstances	13	2	4
4	'Appointments' page – sections with clear headings & short paragraphs	13	3	3
16	Pharmacies – what they can & can't help with. Link to Find a Pharmacy.'	13	1	5

3	Volume of text on homepage – no paragraphs, short sentences only	12	4	3
2	'Appointments' page immediately visible in main menu & in top third of homepage	11	2	6
15	Medication query – information on how to raise a query about medication + link/contact number	11	0	8
29	One main menu, seven or fewer items, including 'home,' 'appointments' and 'prescriptions.'	10	4	5
5	'Urgent appointments' – clearly labelled section and options available and how to access them	9	3	7
6	'Routine appointments' easy to find section with options available	9	6	4
8	Easy to find online consultation form and link	9	9	1
10	On 'Appointments' page clear information about which apps can be used, links provided	9	5	5
20	Results online – guidance and link provided	9	1	9
50	Links provided to Health A-Z and Medicines A-Z	9	4	6
24	Clear information about what to do 'Out of hours.' Links to III. Info on 'Appointments' page AND practice info page	8	8	3
25	Physical accessibility of the building	8	1	10
28	Website is built largely using NHS design components	8	8	3
40	Information about becoming a patient proxy	8	0	11
43	Information about obtaining a fit/sick note (& link provided)	8	9	2
12	Finding the 'Prescriptions' page	7	9	3

36	Homepage provides links to 5 key patient tasks: - appointments - Prescriptions - Sick/fit notes - Test results - Register with practice	7	4	8
39	Register with practice including catchment area information and postcode checker	7	7	5
49	Find your NHS number	7	0	12
18	Finding test results	6	4	9
22	Information on the 'Contact us' page	6	7	6
26	Quality of online accessibility statement	5	12	2
33	Search results deliver relevant results for key patient tasks	5	8	6
34	Reading age of the content of the pages for 'Appointments' and 'Prescriptions.' **	5	5	9
42	Complaints information	5	8	6
44	Finding information about updating patient contact details	5	7	7
45	Link to update patient details	5	7	7
48	Clear information that patients have a GP they are assigned to	5	0	14
41	Patient feedback – Friends & Family Test – information and link provided	4	7	8
9	Use of recommended words to describe the online consultation process	2	16	1
46	Information about flu and covid vaccinations	2	5	12
19	Get test results via phone <u>and</u> text	1	13	5
47	Detailed list of staff members inc: role, gender and qualifications	1	1	17
27	NHS look and feel – use of NHS primary care logo	0	14	5

General Website Navigation

General website navigation varied widely. A crucial element audited was that the homepage should provide links to 5 key patient tasks;

- making an appointment
- ordering a repeat prescription
- how to request a sick note
- how to get test results
- how to register with the practice

Only 7 of the 19 websites did this 'well.'

4 were 'adequate;' – the links were on the homepage but not clear.
8 were 'inadequate,' meaning that less than 5 of the key tasks were linked or shown on the homepage.

Key Patient Tasks

Appointments

Booking appointments was the most commonly used online feature according to the GP Patient Survey (July 2025). 45.2% of respondents reported booking appointments online.

Out of the 19 GP websites audited, 11 had the 'Appointments page immediately visible & in the top third of the homepage.' 3 websites did not have an appointments page at all.

Ordering a repeat prescription

Getting a repeat prescription is the second most important task for accessing a GP website. The key element is the ease of finding the page which should be visible in the main menu and a link to the page in the top third of the homepage. Only 7 of the websites achieved 'well' for this element. Scoring was better for the content of the prescriptions page. It needs to be in clear sections with clear headings and short paragraphs,

have instructions on ordering medication, a link to do so and information on nominating a pharmacy.

Requesting a sick (fit) note

Providing clear, concise information on obtaining a sick note and a link to request one would potentially reduce the number of telephone calls to a GP practice. However, only 8 of the 19 GP websites audited scored 'well.'

How to get results

Information about how to obtain test results, obtaining results online and obtaining results via telephone and text were all elements audited for this key patient task.

The highest scoring of these was information about how to access results online with a link provided – 9 websites achieved 'Well.'

The lowest scoring was the ability to obtain results via telephone AND via text. Only 1 website achieved 'Well,' as they were the only site that provided information about receiving results by text.

How to register with the practice

To score 'well' for this element the page needed to contain both information about joining the practice AND a link to a form to submit online. The majority of practices (17 out of 19) achieved this 'well.'

Top 3 best performing tasks

The top performing task where all of the GP websites scored 'Well' was on the element

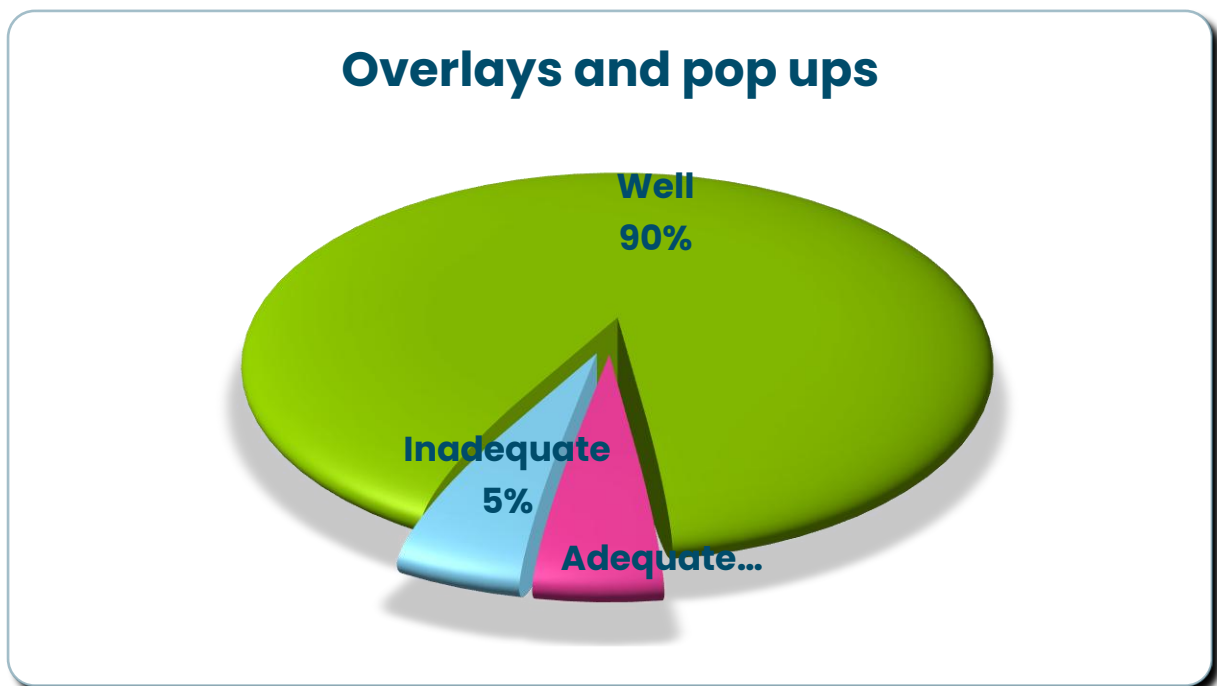
'Navigation – the practice name/logo in the header links back to the homepage.'

This was achieved by all the websites in the audit.

The second best performing element was that related to 'pop up' or 'overlays,' ie; anything obstructing access directly to the homepage. 18 of the 19 websites achieved 'well.'

I was 'inadequate' as there was a huge banner taking up the top part of the homepage, the first words visible being, 'REGISTERING WITH OUR PRACTICE – BENZODIAZEPINE, HYPNOTICS, OPIOIDS AND GABAPENTINOIDS POLICY.'

This banner then changed every few seconds to display 7 other panels of information.



The third best performing task regarded opening hours information. Elements detailed to achieve this included spelling days out in full and the use of the 12 hour clock and

'When writing opening times for the practice, use "to" not a dash as they can't be read by a screen reader and can be confusing for patients. So, 8am to 6pm, NOT 8am - 6pm.'

17 websites scored 'Well.'

Reading age of website text

In the UK, 7.1 million adults read at, or below, the level of an average nine-year-old. The reading age of any website text therefore, is of paramount

importance to the user to ensure they are able to access the appropriate service.

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.

Of the 19 websites audited, 5 achieved this 'well,' 5 were adequate and 9 were inadequate – scoring grade 8 or higher on both pages which is concerning when these pages are included in what are considered key patient tasks.

Key areas for improvement

'NHS look and feel – use of the NHS primary care logo'

None of the 19 websites used the primary care logo in their headers.

'Detailed list of staff members including: role, gender and qualifications'

One website achieved 'well' for this element.

17 were 'inadequate' as they failed to list qualifications or genders or both.

Impact of website provider

One of the websites was revisited to double check an element and it became apparent that they had changed their website provider, consequently this changed their audit result.

With the original provider (audited 11th July 2025) they achieved a total of 25 'inadequate' across all elements and only 8 'well.'

When the website was re-audited with the new provider the total of elements scored had reduced to 6.

Elements scoring 'Well' had increased to 31.

This illustrates the importance of the website provider and template used.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The GP websites in North East Lincolnshire vary widely in their useability and accessibility (see appendix 1 for an individual break down).

The style and content also significantly differ between sites therefore it's very difficult to suggest broadly applicable recommendations.

Healthwatch would however recommend that all GP practices utilise the guidance 'Written content templates for key GP website pages,' published by NHS England to achieve a level of uniformity.

The guidance was produced by NHS England as, stated by them,

'writing highly useable and accessible content for websites requires many skills, time to rewrite and edit, knowledge of accessibility requirements and ideally should be tested with patients. We know practices do not always have the time to do this.'

As highlighted in the guidance, content needs to

- meet patient needs
- be well structured
- have clear links
- be concise and use plain English.

References

NHS England. "GP website benchmarking and improvement tool." Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/gp-website-benchmarking-and-improvement-tool/> (Accessed September 2025)

GP Patient Survey 2025

Available at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhse-gp-patient-survey-results/2025>

NHS England. "Creating a highly usable and accessible GP website for patients." Available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/creating-a-highly-usable-and-accessible-gp-website-for-patients/>

Appendix 1

Scores for individual websites

The table below lists all 19 practice websites and the total audit score for each out of 50 elements – starting with the highest scoring of 'Well'

Name of practice	Well	Adequate	Inadequate
Clee Medical Centre	43	6	1
Pelham Medical Group	39	10	1
Woodfield Medical Centre	38	12	0
Core Care Family Practice	36	9	5
Littlefield (Freshney Green)	34	13	3
Dr Quereshi	31	13	6
Healing Health Centre	30	15	5
Quayside Medical Centre	30	13	7
Open Door Surgery	28	16	6
Birkwood Medical Centre	28	14	8
Raj Medical Centre	28	11	11
Beacon Medical Centre	25	15	10
Dr Matthews (Cromwell Rd)	24	15	11
Dr Babu	22	12	16
Greenlands Surgery	15	18	17
The Roxton Practice	14	18	18

Dr Kumar	9	14	27
Dr Sinha	8	19	23
SLC Medical Group	7	13	30

Feedback Form

We request that the feedback form below is completed.

Please complete the form and return to:

lwilkinson@healthwatchnortheastlincolnshire.co.uk

Organisation	Responsible person	Comments / Actions



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Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire

www.healthwatch.northeastlincolnshire.co.uk

t: 01472 361459

e: enquiries@healthwatchnortheastlincolnshire.co.uk

