

# GP websites review

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# Report summary

This report is an observational assessment of information provided on GP practice websites in Wiltshire.

Our review was designed to examine the current content of websites for all 49 GP practices in the county.

The aim of this piece of work was to look at how useful, accessible, up-to-date and informative the GP websites were and identify examples of best practice. This report is to be shared with service providers.

The findings have been summarised along with recommendations for improvement and examples of best practice. This was largely a benchmarking exercise and the recommendations can be used as a form of checklist.

The majority of the websites were easy to find, navigate, read and understand. However, there was significant variation in the quality and quantity of the information.

GP practices are to be advised to consider the information from the users' perspective.

# What we did

An online survey was designed by Healthwatch Wiltshire staff and volunteers.

The volunteers conducted the review of the individual websites online to examine the current content of GP practice websites in Wiltshire. The majority of the websites were each reviewed by two volunteers.

The content was assessed against 40 questions which were used as a checklist to answer whether the information was easy to find, useful and up-to-date. Six volunteer researchers took part, putting themselves in the position of someone needing to contact their surgery.

The results were collated by the research team, including the freeform comments. The reviews took an average of 1.5 hours each to complete and took place during May and June 2022.

# Summary of findings

**Accessing the websites:** All the websites were easy to locate. The majority were easy to read and understand.

Most contained a large amount of information. However, access to the information could be confusing, with numerous points of access (for example, site map, practice leaflets, 'about us' sections, and search bar). There was positive feedback from volunteers where there was a good search function.

**Home page information:** The information available on home pages was variable, with some missing altogether or difficult to find – for example, opening hours accessed by a variety of approaches, including reception, dropdown menus, contact us and view buttons – most of these being one click from the home page.

Some researchers found the quantity of information to be helpful, but it could be overwhelming.

The easiest websites to navigate were intuitive, clear and straightforward, with a search function and the key information on the home page.

**Covid-19:** A significant number of websites had a pop-up link to NHS Covid-19 information on their front pages. It would be helpful if all surgeries followed this practice, to ensure that the general Covid-19 information provided is consistent and up-to-date.

**Accessibility:** There was a varied response to the provision of a facility to translate information into other languages, ranging from excellent and easy to access to inadequate or unavailable.

Practices have a requirement to adhere to the Accessible Information Standard. Most practices went some way towards facilitating access to the website by variation of presentation. However, this was very patchy in that while some offered only variations in sizes of print, others offered changes of font or colour. Some had a wide range of facilities including speech recognition, and screen readers.

Information on parking and access for people with disabilities and their carers wasn't always available.

The majority of websites had information for carers including designated Carers' Leads; however, in a number of cases the information was only found using the search function as it was not obvious where to look. A home page link or reference would be helpful here.

**Current Information:** Most websites had up-to-date information including some form of news page. The majority varied in their position from headings along the top of the website to drop down boxes. However, several websites had Covid-19 information (symptoms, precautions and vaccinations) that was out-of-date, not dated, or missing.

A lot of the websites did not have dated pages which could contain time-sensitive information and some had very old information, for example, Christmas opening hours.

**Accessing medical help:** The majority of websites clearly describe how to access GP practices for medical help, and explain how to book an appointment and the options available.

Consultations were offered by telephone, online and face-to-face, with other options of video calls or home visits.

The treatment pathway was not always clearly explained and the majority of surgeries did not describe how to prepare for a consultation.

Many of the websites did not have information on the home page about accessing help when the surgery was shut.

Patients were encouraged to use online services but overall, it didn't seem to be clearly explained why these systems were being promoted or why patients should register.

**Prescription services:** There was clear information about prescription services and about ordering repeat prescriptions. Websites that had useful links for information on local pharmacies were appreciated.

**Patient registration:** There was a range of options about how to register as a new patient and a few had additional support such as a Registration Champion and information for those whose first language is not English, or who have a hearing or visual impairment.

However, there was a lack of information on the majority of the websites about how to register as a patient with no fixed address, for example, boaters, gypsies, travellers and asylum seekers. The ID information required to register as a new patient was very variable.

None of the websites had information on the GP Access Card for England. This outlines that everyone in England is entitled to register and receive treatment from a GP practice, without providing proof of address or ID.

**Staff, teams and their roles:** The majority of the websites had information about staff teams but there were some inconsistencies, for example, only the GPs were mentioned. The best websites had photographs of staff and those attached to the practice, along with a description of their roles, working days, and gender.

**Additional information:** The majority of practices had information about how to give feedback, how to make a complaint, recent patient survey results, their Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating and latest report, and how to join a Patient Participation Group.

There was a wealth of information across the websites with links to useful websites and contact numbers. The links to local community information was considered by the volunteers to be the most useful. However, only a minority had information on Healthwatch Wiltshire.

*Please refer to the Appendix for examples and further suggestions.*

# Recommendations

Based on our findings, we make the following recommendations for improving the websites, which can be used as a checklist:

## Home page

The following information to be available:

- Telephone number and address of the GP practice.
- How to book an appointment.
- The treatment pathway.
- Opening hours.
- How to access medical help out of hours.
- Prescriptions.
- How to register as a new patient (with current ID information)
- COVID-19 information.
- Links to online services.

## Accessibility

- Websites should have a search function, and allow the user to alter the font size. The website text should be in a consistent font size, colour and type, and offer text to speech reader facilities and a translation function.
- Provide clearly signposted information about accompanying children, facilities for people with disabilities, and parking.
- Provide a home page or prominent link to information for carers.

## Website management

- GP practices should routinely review their websites to ensure information is relevant, accurate and up-to-date.
- Work with online consultation providers (if used) to clearly explain to patients the purpose and value of registering with them.
- Provide links to local prescription services.
- Make sure Out of Hours information is given prominence with a home page or clear link. Explain NHS 111.
- Information to be available for those with no fixed address such as boaters, gypsies, travellers and asylum seekers.
- The proof of ID rights to be clarified.
- Information on the GP Access Card should be included in order to inform patients of their right to register and receive treatment from a GP practice.
- Make new patient registration forms available in PDF format as well as online.
- Update staff pages with photographs, a description of their roles, working days and gender.
- Provide clear, dated guidance about local Covid-19 related protocols – what happens when you visit the surgery (for example, do patients need to continue to wear face masks).
- Include how to contact the Patient Participation Group.
- Make sure information about outside organisations provides tailored local information, including a reference and link to the local Healthwatch.

## Treatment pathway

- The treatment pathway should be clearly defined so that a patient knows what to expect.



- Give clear information to users on how to prepare and make the most of a consultation whether by telephone, video or face-to-face.

### Other suggested improvements

- Use a friendly welcoming tone, inviting people to ask the receptionist questions.
- Provide a surgery price list for non-NHS treatment.
- Provide details of how to raise a concern or complaint.
- Give information on Friends and Family Test results and Patient Participation Groups.
- Consider using contact forms for different staff.
- Provide a list of nursing services.
- Provide information on access that's specific to the elderly and the young.

## Next steps

This report will be shared with service providers and we will monitor how our recommendations are taken forward by GP practices.

Since this review has been carried out, NHS England have produced a guide, *Creating a Highly Usable and Accessible GP Website for Patients* (August 2022), which echoes much of our work and which we recommend practices follow.

# Thank you!

A huge thank you to our research team of volunteers who led this project with such dedication and commitment.



# Response

**Dr Andy Purbrick**

**Joint Chief Executive, Wessex Local Medical Committees Ltd**

6 It is always good to receive feedback from a user's perspective. It's good to know that the majority of the websites were easy to find, navigate, read and understand.

Often websites can become a victim of their own success, becoming a huge piece of work for practices to keep up to date, especially with the rapidly changing landscape of the NHS. Practices are constantly faced with the dilemma of what and when to prioritise, against the backdrop of a workload and workforce crisis in general practice.

It isn't surprising that there was significant variation in the quality and quantity of the information on practice websites. Practices vary significantly in size and population demographics.

Constructive feedback with examples of what 'good' looks like are always welcome. Your list of recommendations will provide a useful crib sheet for practices to refer to when reviewing their websites.



# Appendix

## Links to useful information

There was positive feedback around the links to information. The majority of volunteers highlighted websites that had other features that were helpful or useful.

- Self-help guides and advice on symptoms and treatment of common ailments.
- Links to useful websites and telephone numbers to obtain further advice from other organisations and NHS local services.
- Practical information, for example, asthma, bereavement, pregnancy, weight loss, giving up smoking, sexual health, abuse and cancer.
- Self-referral for services such as physiotherapy.
- Self-assessment for conditions such as alcohol consumption, blood pressure, knee and hip pain, and male UTI problems.
- Up-to-date news via newsletter, website link or Facebook page.
- Link to Carers' Support Wiltshire.
- Community support (an example is Parkrun).
- Section for young people.
- Elderly care co-ordination.
- MiServiceProvider/Finder or MiDoS, which on submission of a postcode leads to NHS information about support including local and community organisations.

# Healthwatch Wiltshire

GP Website Review (building on DCM checklist October 2021)

V3 29/02/22

## Intro

The aim of the exercise is to look at how useful, accessible and informative the websites are to use and identify examples of best practice that could be applied across Wiltshire GP practices' websites.

## Methodology

[Two] researchers will review each Practice website and complete this survey. The results will be collated by the research team. The freeform comments will be reviewed and summarised by the research team.

Researchers will put themselves in the position of someone needing to contact their surgery.

Researchers are not expected to devote disproportionate time to navigating the website.

There may be a lot more on different GP Practice websites than is specifically covered in this survey. Information that the researchers find particularly useful can be noted at the end.

## Preliminary

Could you find the Practice website address easily?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Comment box

If the site identifies a website provider/manager please record who this is

.....

## 1.First impressions and organization of the site:

1.1 Does the site appear:

- well laid out and clear
- easy to navigate
- confusing to navigate
- other (please comment in box)

1.2 Type size etc: is the site easy to read and understand?

- Yes
- No
- Partially/unsure

Comment: what was easy or not so easy (box)

(i) Does the site date its front page and other key pages (so the reader can tell how old the information is)?

- Yes
- No

Comment box

(ii) Do the key pages state when they will next be reviewed?

- Yes
- No

Comment box

1.4 Finding Information:

(I) Is there a search function?

- Yes
- No

(ii) Does any search function work easily?

- Yes
- No

Comment box

1.5 Accessibility

(I) Is there an option for information to be translated into other languages?

- Yes
- No
- Unclear

Comment box

(ii) Are there larger typeface, "read aloud/audio" or other accessibility functions available?

- Yes
- No
- Unclear

If Yes, please specify which functions in the comment box

Comment Box

(iii) Are there any areas of the website that need a password to access?

- Yes
- No

## 2.Practice Organisation

2.1 Are the basic Practice details clearly displayed on the front page of the site? Please tick as appropriate Eg:

Address

Tel no

Email

Opening hours

Other - Please specify (comment box)

- Yes
- No
- Partially

Comment box

2.2 News: Is there a news page with recent announcements (eg date of next flu clinic):

- Yes
- No

If Yes, is it clearly signposted?

- Yes
- No

Comment box

### 3. Dealing with the Practice

3.1 Does the site clearly describe how to access the Practice for medical help?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Comment box

3.2 Does the site explain how to book an appointment and the options available?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, does the site explain any options? Please tick as appropriate

- online
- telephone
- video
- face to face options
- other (please specify in Comment box)

Comment box

3.3 Does the site clearly describe what the treatment pathway is? (eg reception referral to triage nurse or doctor, call back, appointment booking, etc)

- Yes
- No

Comment box

3.4 Out of Hours information - Is there prominent information how to get help when the Practice is closed? (eg 111)

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Comment box

3.5 Is there any information how to prepare for a consultation or appointment?

Yes No

Telephone

Video

Face to face

Comment box

3.6 For face to face appointments in the surgery, is there any information about:

Yes No

Taking a child or carer

Disability support

Parking

Comment box

3.7 Carers - is there information for carers and any support given to them by the Practice

- Yes
- No

Comment box

3.8 Is there any information on other support organisations/Healthwatch/ Voluntary organisations and links?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, please give details (comment box)

3.9

Is an online consultation system (e.g., Doctorlink, eConsult, Footfall, PATCHES, or TPP/Ardens Airmid) offered as an option? (These are online systems that allows patients to submit their symptoms or requests to their own GP electronically)

- Yes
- No
- Can you specify which one?

If Yes, is it clearly explained how to access and use this?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Comment box

#### **4. Prescriptions**

4.1 Is there clear information about the prescription services offered or available?

- Yes
- No

Comment box

4.2 Is there information about ordering repeat medication online or in other ways?

Comment box

4.3 Is there information on pharmacies?

- Yes
- No

Comment Box

#### **5.Registration as a new patient**

5.1 Is there information about how to register as a new patient?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, is it easy to find?

- Yes
- No

Comment box

5.2 Can the registration form be completed: (Please tick all that apply)

Online

In printed form

By Email

By post

Other (please specify in comment box)

5.3 Is there information about accessing GP and NHS services for people with no fixed address (eg boaters, gypsies, travellers, asylum seekers)?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, does it include reference/access to the NHS GP Access card?

- Yes
- No

Comment box

5.4 Does the Practice require ID (or suggest ID is required) in order to register?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, what does it state?

Comment box

## 6.Practice performance and Staff

6.1 Is there information on: (Please tick all that apply)

Yes

No

Some

How to give feedback

How to make a complaint

Care Quality Commission(CQC) rating

CQC Latest report

How to join any Patient Participation Group

How to contact any PPG

Recent patient surveys (and outcomes)

6.2 Is there clear information about the staff teams and their roles (e.g. GPs, Nurses, Social prescribers, Practice Managers etc.)

- Yes
- No
- Unclear

Comment box

## 7.Covid-19

7.1 Is Covid 19 information automatically displayed on the home page or as you enter the site?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, is the information clearly dated?

- Yes
- No

Comment box

7.2 Is there clear and dated information about Covid-19 Symptoms?

- Yes
- No

Comment box

7.3 Does the website tell you what to do if you think you have Covid-19 symptoms?

- Yes
- No

Comment box



7.4 Is there clear and dated guidance about:

Please tick as appropriate:

Yes

No

Partial

Use of face masks

Social Distancing

Hand Hygiene

Entry/Access to GP Practice

Other (please specify in comment box)

## 8 Final impressions

Having navigated the website for the purposes of this review, do you think that overall the site was:

(tick all that apply)

- easy to navigate,
- easy to read and understand
- had accurate and update information
- difficult/confusing to navigate
- over-complicated
- out of date
- filled with too much information
- other (please specify)

Your answer does not have to be the same as the answer to Q1

## 9 Other features

Did you notice other features on the site which seemed particularly helpful (e.g.contact details for other organisations; link to a Facebook page) or which were unnecessary and unhelpful?

- Helpful/useful

Comment box

- Unnecessary /unhelpful

Comment box

## 10 What was good about this website and could be used as “best practice”?

Comment box

## 11 What would you recommend could be improved on this website?

Comment box





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