

# GP websites survey report

March 2022

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## Introduction

General Practitioners (GPs) represent the first port of call for many people in responding to both new and existing health and wellbeing needs. GP practices perform a key role in providing information, signposting, and referring to other services, with guidance on how people can obtain support when surgeries are closed being especially important.

Providing accessible information helps people to make effective decisions on how and when to access services in the minimum number of steps, and how to self-care appropriately. This potentially reduces the number of enquiries and requests made to practices, which is particularly important when pressure on GPs and other health and care services is high, as is the case at the time of this survey and throughout the Covid 19 Pandemic.

In November 2020, Healthwatch Portsmouth reported a picture of variation across the city's GP practices websites, with examples of good and poor information provision.

### In 2020, Healthwatch Portsmouth recommended:

- As a specific regulatory breach, surgeries' non-compliance with NHS regulations relating to proof of ID needed to be urgently addressed to ensure the practice of requiring 2 forms of ID for patient registration no longer occurs.
- Further analysis of the variation in quality across the Primary Care Networks (PCNs).
- Service improvement and development on the provision of patient information on GP surgery websites.

The purpose of this new survey, which was conducted in March 2022, is not only to follow up on our recommendations as listed above, but to also investigate the ease of accessibility of information on GP practices websites within the Portsmouth Primary Care Network.

This project is also in response to the wider expectation that there is improved access to primary care services through digital enquiry. In NHS England's [Improving Access to General Practice Communications Guide and Resource Pack](#) (published in 2017 and updated in 2018), it states that commissioners and providers should "as a minimum, ensure that information regarding improved access to general practice services is placed on each practice's website, and that this information can be easily accessed i.e. on the website homepage."

## Methodology

This survey was an observational review and was carried out in a non-invasive way – by visiting the websites online and looking at the accessibility of the information within a specified checklist.

All the information is in the public domain and all data collected remains in the public domain, therefore no explicit consent was required from the surgeries for Healthwatch Portsmouth.



An experienced group of Healthwatch Portsmouth volunteers were involved in the coproduction of survey questions and open text/comment boxes. They were designed to evaluate the GP practices websites for the stated purpose of the research.

The questions were discussed over a series of volunteer drop-in meetings and by sharing during development. These questions were placed on Smart Survey as yes/no answers to avoid ambiguity and to give a clear indication of the respondent's experience. Open text boxes were inserted for additional comment on the experience of using GP practices websites.

## The purpose of this survey March 2022

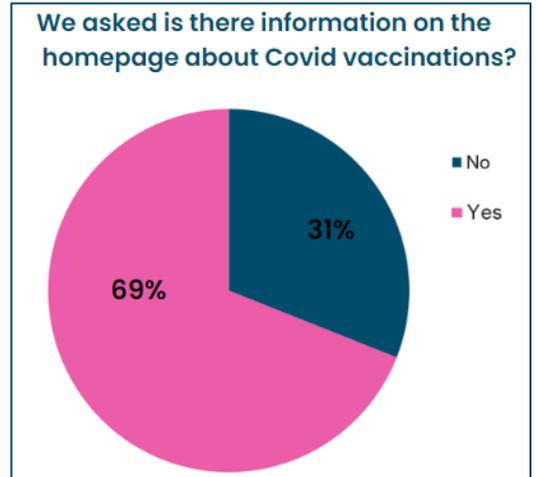
The purpose of this survey was to follow up on our recommendations of November 2020 and the issue of easily accessed information on GP websites:

1. To identify the information that could and could not be found on each GP website
2. To gather feedback on the patient experience of using GP practice websites
3. To share this information by publication to members of the public
4. To make recommendations to commissioners and providers

# Key findings

- 1. Healthwatch Portsmouth volunteers reviewed 13 GP practices websites within the Portsmouth PCN.

Nearly all the websites reviewed (92%) were found to be welcoming on first impression. However, 31% of these websites' homepages did not contain information on Covid vaccinations.

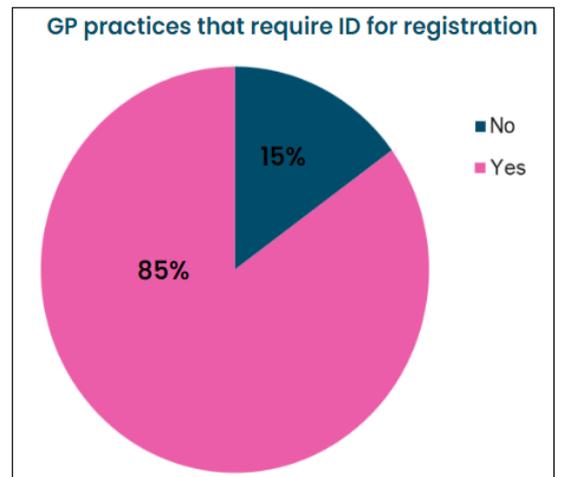


**62% of websites do not have differing language formats and translation available**

- 2. Volunteers researched the differing language formats and translations available. Only 38% of websites had this functionality.

- 3. We found there continues to be a high regulatory breach of GP surgeries' non-compliance with NHS regulations relating to proof of ID needed to register at surgeries.

In November 2020 we recommended (see page 1) this needed to be urgently addressed, so that ID for patient registration no longer occurs. 85% of websites still asked for this requirement.



**69% of websites have no information on how to make a complaint**

- 4. Only one third of websites (31%) published information on how to make a complaint.

5. Nearly a quarter (23%) of our volunteers did not feel confident enough in selecting the best services to get help, based on the information provided on GPs website.



**100% of our volunteers** found it easy to find information on how to book an appointment online.

6. Information on how to book an appointment was easily found.

7. Nearly one third (31%) of websites explained that personal questions may be asked by the practice's receptionist/care navigator, in order to book a GP appointment.



**77% of our volunteers** said they would visit a GP website if they needed an NHS service.

8. 23% of our volunteers said they would not visit a GP website if they needed an NHS Service.

For all observational survey results, see page 9.

## Survey comments

Comments informed us that websites are wordy, but well written and on an easy-to-read level. All the volunteers had a high level of literacy, which would meliorate the focus on the written word.

Some websites have more information, are formatted better and are clearer than others. Some were friendlier to use whilst others were quite stark, but not hard to read. These sites didn't have a friendly feel and the colours seemed cold.



There shouldn't be much difficulty finding the information a patients may need by using the search bar on the top. However, to allow for easier access, it seems that essential information such as appointments and patients' online access rather than the news, should be placed in a more prominent position.



On access to different languages on websites, comments included:

"The language choice could be put somewhere in the upper right corner of the website. It would be easier to find for different language speakers."

Information on the variety of professionals that can be accessed through the PCN, varied:

"Had to dig a bit and have an awareness of PCN and multi-disciplinary teams"

"It was interesting and very informative"

"Unlike the other sites, there are not details about the Doctors/professionals with names and a brief potted history."

"This is rather confusing - not sure how a person with little computer literacy would get on with this."

When looking at GP registration on websites, comments included:

"Proof of address is requested. Not sure how a person with no fixed address would get on."

"Without ID you may only have temporary registration for 2 weeks."

## Recommendations

Based on the findings from the reviews of GP practices websites this year, Healthwatch Portsmouth recommends:

- A need for GP website development to ensure that information is accessible in different language formats.
- Homepages need to be refreshed and renewed to avoid becoming cluttered with information.
- Website development should look at the number of words being written, and required to read, and look to convey information in other formats, such as audio, video, animation and slides.
- Information on how to make a complaint needs to be more readily available.
- The Portsmouth Primary Care Commissioning Group should consider supporting a campaign such as the [My Right to Healthcare Cards](#), as an internal means of raising awareness and to promote access as an equality and diversity initiative.

## Acknowledgment

Our thanks go to the volunteer team that have given their time to conduct this research and share their views. As ever, this work could not be done without them; Pauline Morris, Avril Adams, Graham Keeping, Michael Hammond, Pam Pritchard and Hua Yu-Knight.

## Distribution and comment

If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences, please contact us.



Any enquiries regarding this report should be sent to:  
[info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)

You can download a copy of this report from:  
[www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)

## Appendix 1: Full survey results

Question	Answer
1. What is the name of the GP Practice whose website you are accessing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drayton Surgery</li> <li>• Portsdown Group Practice</li> <li>• Craneswater Group Practice</li> <li>• The Drayton Surgery</li> <li>• Kirklands</li> <li>• University Surgery</li> <li>• Trafalgar Medical Group</li> <li>• Lake road</li> <li>• Derby Road Portsmouth</li> <li>• East Shore Partnership</li> <li>• Sunnyside</li> <li>• North Harbour Medical Group</li> <li>• Lighthouse Group Surgery</li> </ul>
2. Are you accessing the website by PC, tablet or mobile phone?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PC – 77%</li> <li>• Mobile phone – 15%</li> <li>• Tablet – 8%</li> </ul>
3. First impressions; is the homepage of the website welcoming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 92%</li> <li>• No – 8%</li> </ul>
4. Is the homepage clear and easy to navigate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 85%</li> <li>• No – 15%</li> </ul>
5. Is the homepage cluttered with information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 77%</li> <li>• No – 23%</li> </ul>
6. Is there information on the homepage about Covid Vaccinations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 77%</li> <li>• No – 23%</li> </ul>
7. Is there any information that has not been updated and is it beyond it's review date?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 77%</li> <li>• No – 23%</li> </ul>
8. Are there differing language formats and translation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 38%</li> <li>• No – 62%</li> </ul>

9. Can you email the surgery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 69%</li> <li>• No – 31%</li> </ul>
10. Is there information/phone number or email on how to make a complaint?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 31%</li> <li>• No – 69%</li> </ul>
11. Any comments on the look and feel of the website – free text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is written language translation.</li> <li>• No Covid warnings – are we beyond this requirement?</li> <li>• There are clear accessible information routes.</li> <li>• There is a "have your say" option, but complaint is not mentioned. It is bright and quite clear.</li> <li>• It is wordy, but as it is well written it isn't as much of an issue.</li> <li>• It is very similar i.e., same background to the Craneswater Group Practice but it has more information, formatted better and clearer.</li> <li>• I liked this site very much, although it was wordy, it was written in very easy to read manner, plain, easy to understand.</li> <li>• It has less information and seems less user friendly than the other sites.</li> <li>• It was quite stark, but not hard to read, it just didn't have a friendly feel to it, the colours seemed cold.</li> <li>• Well laid out, easy access.</li> <li>• Very difficult to identify where to go on the website.</li> <li>• Busy and quite difficult to access.</li> <li>• The website is easy to navigate. If the language choice could be put somewhere in the upper right corner, it would be easier to find for different language speakers.</li> <li>• Opening hours: 8.00 am – 6.30 pm subject to change. Doesn't include early bookings for pre-booked appts.</li> </ul>

12. Is there information on how to book an appointment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 100%</li> <li>• No – 0%</li> </ul>
13. Is there information on the different types of appointments you could book; urgent/routine/nurse and others?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 85%</li> <li>• No – 15%</li> </ul>
14. Is there information about the different professionals at the practice and the types of issue they can help you with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 77%</li> <li>• No – 23%</li> </ul>
15. Are there ID requirements to register as a patient at the practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 85%</li> <li>• No – 15%</li> </ul>
16. Is information being provided by GP surgery websites on the use of electronic prescriptions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 92%</li> <li>• No – 8%</li> </ul>
17. Any comments on information about booking an appointment – free text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Without ID you may only have temporary registration for 2 weeks.</li> <li>• It is quite long winded, and I think that I am computer literate, but I had to work it out, quite difficult.</li> <li>• It was very clear what was needed.</li> <li>• Difficult to access anything.</li> <li>• Not taking new patients at the moment.</li> <li>• Proof of address requested. Not sure how a person with NFA would get on.</li> </ul>
18. Are there alternatives to a GP appointment e.g., trying services like a pharmacist or 111, offered on the website?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 92%</li> <li>• No – 8%</li> </ul>
19. Is the information about alternative services clear and easy to understand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 92%</li> <li>• No – 8%</li> </ul>
20. Does the information provided make you feel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 77%</li> </ul>

confident about selecting the best place to go for help?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No – 23%</li> </ul>
21. Is there information that explains the Receptionist/Care Navigator may ask personal questions in order to make appointments with the best person/service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 31%</li> <li>• No – 69%</li> </ul>
22. Any comments on the information provided about practice process/professionals. Free text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had to dig a bit and have an awareness of PCN and multi-disciplinary teams.</li> <li>• It was interesting and very informative.</li> <li>• It was clear and easy to navigate.</li> <li>• There doesn't appear to be any.</li> <li>• Unlike the other sites, there are not details about the Doctors/professionals with names and a brief potted history.</li> <li>• Reading patients survey, they found reception difficult for making appointments.</li> <li>• Not easy to access.</li> <li>• This is rather confusing – not sure how a person with little computer literacy would get on with this.</li> </ul>
23. Is it clear what eConsult is for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 85%</li> <li>• No – 15%</li> </ul>
24. Is it clear where to seek help in using eConsult?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 69%</li> <li>• No – 31%</li> </ul>
25. Would you go to the website if you needed an NHS Service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – 77%</li> <li>• No – 23 %</li> </ul>
26. Any other overall comments about the Practice website? Free text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has a lot to get over and I think does well to get it all in, but in getting it all in it is not easy to navigate if you are not computer literate</li> <li>• It has more personalised information, i.e. profiles of each of the Doctors and the other staff, which was very friendly.</li> </ul>

- Overall, this is a very good site, very wordy but this proves it can be wordy but well-presented and easy to read.
- Overall, this is one of the better sites, the only criticism was that the doctor information was one line each where some of the others were more personal and customer friendly
- It was the most impersonal website I have seen so far.
- It was clinical.
- As i see with most NHS staff in most cases the staff are doing all they can to help you. But again, looking at the surveys, it's getting through the red tape that is causing many problems. But as one comment said the staff have got to be protected in these present days.
- Difficult to access any information.
- Cluttered.
- There shouldn't be much difficulty finding the information a patients may need by using the search bar on the top. However, to allow for easier access, it seems that essential information such as appointments and patients online access rather than the news should be placed in a more prominent position.
- The eConsult is rather laboured - a lot of questions and not that clearly put.



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