GP Practice

Website Analysis

March 2024

Contents

About Healthwatch South Tees

Healthwatch South Tees, the operating name for Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland, is the health and social care champion for people who live and work in South Tees. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision-makers listen to people's feedback to improve standards of care.

We use feedback to understand better the challenges facing the NHS and other care providers locally, to ensure people's experiences improve health and care services for everyone.

We are here to listen to the issues that matter to our local communities and to hear about people's experiences of using health and social care services.

Introduction

This report has been completed following a review of 38 GP Practice websites across the South Tees region. Healthwatch South Tees volunteers and students from Connections College Middlesbrough completed an evaluation of each of the websites.

With consultation from NHS Digital, who are reviewing and updating GP Practice websites locally, the main aim of this review was to ensure inclusivity by involving volunteers with diverse perspectives, such as those with visual impairment, neurodivergent individuals and people with learning disabilities, evaluated these websites individually and as group work within a local college setting.

By using this approach, we were able to address a range of needs, ensuring that the online resources of these GP Practice websites are accessible to everyone in the community.

The outcome of this review will help these Practices to improve the accessibility of information about their services and improve experiences for all their patients.

Key Findings: Summary

- Most of the GP Practice websites had telephone contact available in various places on the website, including the homepage, drop-down menu, and search function. There is also information on GP Practice's social media platforms and physical locations of practices which is helpful to those visiting or new to an area.
- Over 65% of the pages did not have email information available and it is also therefore not possible to request other services by email, such as repeat prescriptions, fit notes, etc.
- Whilst over 70% of GP Practice websites have information on how to register at the Practice, only 40% had this information on their homepages for those wanting to register temporarily, with over 15% not having this information available.
- Over 75% of GP Practice websites have information on how to make an appointment on their homepage, people can also find this information elsewhere on the websites. However, for those caring for others, this was less easy to find, with almost 20% of websites not having this information available. It was also significantly less easy to modify or cancel an appointment.
- A total of 19% of the Practice websites did not have information on how to make a comment, complaint, or compliment.
- There are very few GP Practice websites which provide information on advocacy services or Healthwatch.
- Whilst information was available in different languages on 76% of GP Practice website Homepages, there was a general lack of accessible information for BSL, Easy Read and Interpreters.

Survey Responses: full details

GP Practice Contact Information

A total of 93% of GP Practice websites had the telephone contact information shown on the home page and drop-down menu. Email information was available on 43% of websites. Other contact options included:
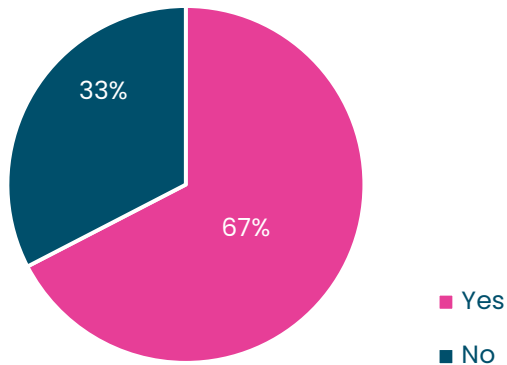
- Comments or online contact forms
- Have your say options
- Physical location of the practice
- Social media information

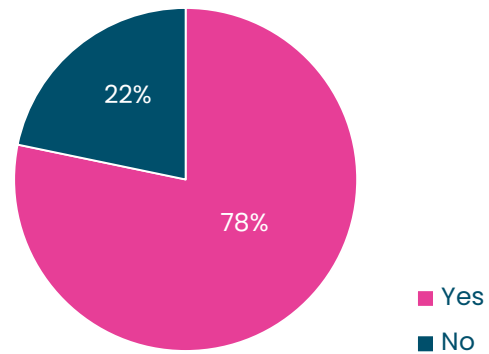**Are the contact details available on the website?**

- Telephone Number: 93%
- Email: 43%
- Any other contact options?: 65%
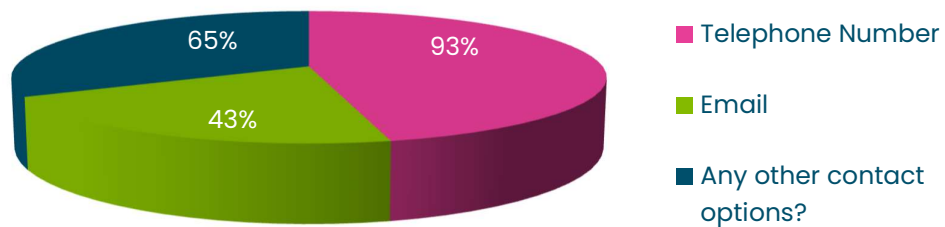
NHS Branding and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Identification

Is the NHS logo and distinctive blue colour visible on the homepage?

Is the GP Practice's CQC rating visble on the homepage?



33% No
67% Yes

■ Yes
■ No

22% No
78% Yes

■ Yes
■ No

According to the NHS Report 'Creating a highly usable and Accessible GP Website for Patients', 2022 '*GP websites should look like NHS websites to give patients confidence and trust that they are in the right place*.'

We asked respondents if the distinctive blue NHS logo and CQC ratings were visible on GP Practice websites. A total of 67% of the websites had the NHS logo visible, all of the websites had their CQC rating on their homepage, and five GP Practice websites had a link to their CQC report.

Patient Registration

We asked respondents how easy it was to find where patients can register (join) the GP Practice and where to find out how to temporarily register if visiting an area.
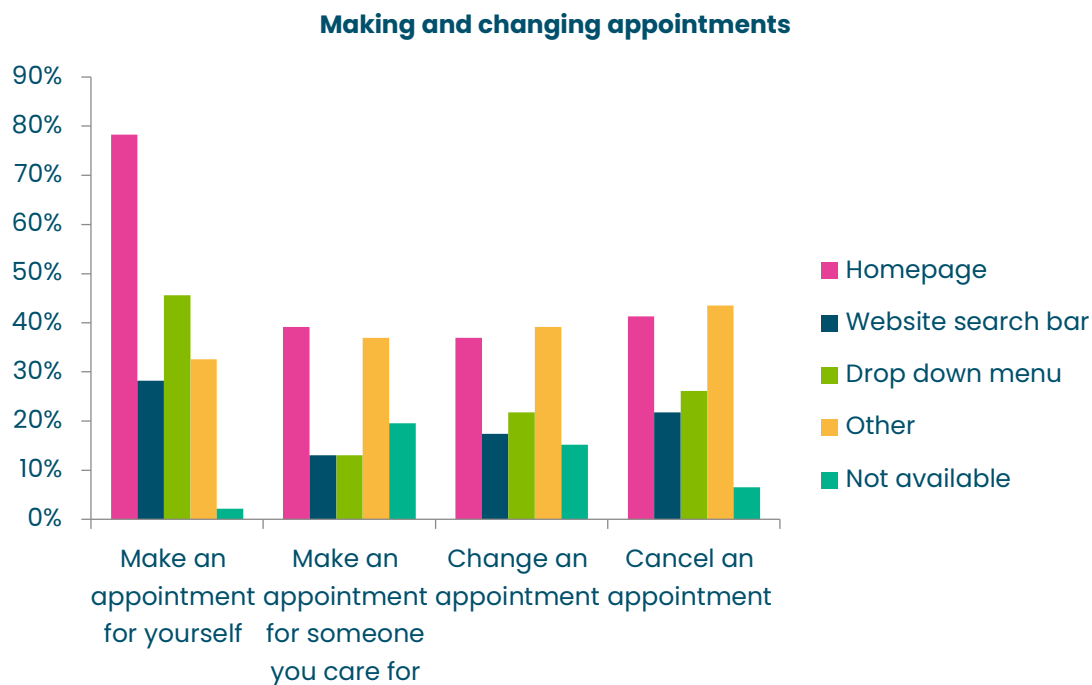
Most GP Practice websites had information about how to register on their homepage. However, this was significantly more difficult to find for patients wanting to temporarily register with a GP practice.

Patient Registration Information
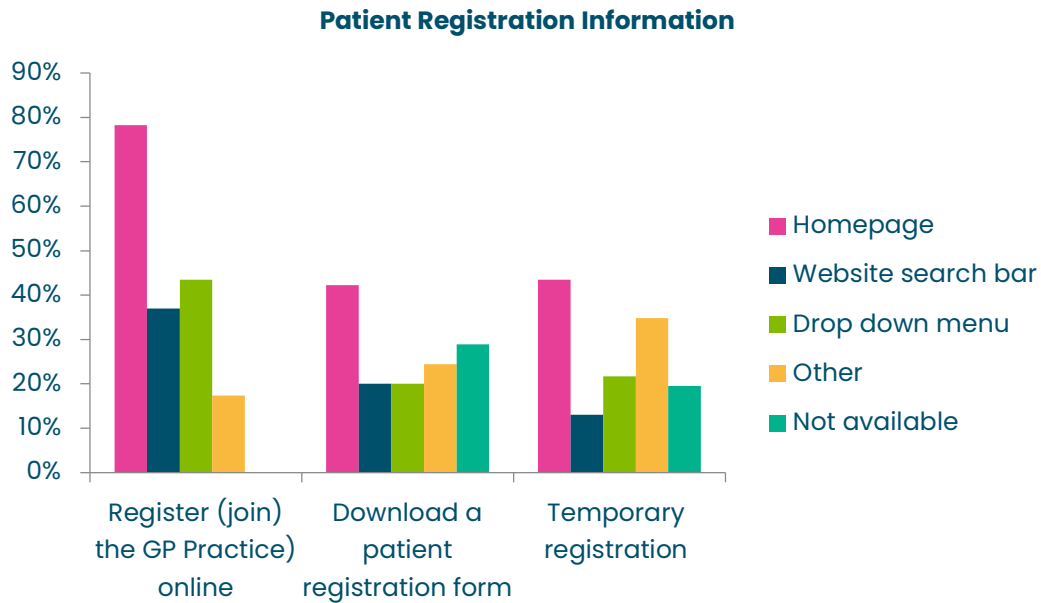
Making and Changing Appointments

The majority of respondents felt that it was easy to make appointments for themselves, with over 75% of GP Practice websites having this information available on the homepage. However, changing and cancelling appointments was less easy to navigate, with just over 36% showing this option this on the homepage.

Respondents found almost 20% of GP Practice websites did not have any information available on making appointments for someone you care for.
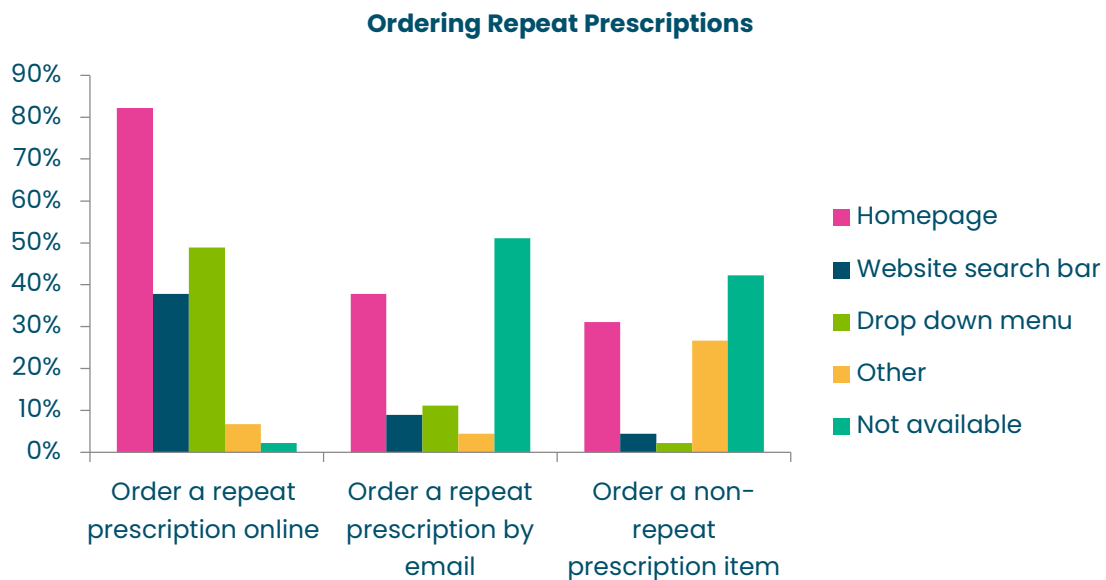
Making and changing appointments

Ordering Repeat Prescriptions

Respondents found that over 80% of GP Practice websites had information on how to order repeat prescriptions on the homepage.

It was more difficult to order repeat prescriptions by email, with over 50% of Practice websites not having this facility.

Ordering non-repeat emergency medication was also difficult to do, with 42% not having this facility. It should however be noted that due to these medications not being repeat items, it is likely that a medical professional will need to speak to a patient before issuing medication.

Ordering Repeat Prescriptions

Legend:
- Homepage
- Website search bar
- Drop down menu
- Other
- Not available

X-axis categories:
- Order a repeat prescription online
- Order a repeat prescription by email
- Order a non-repeat prescription item

Requesting or Amending Fit Notes

Over 50% of respondents could locate where to request and or amend a fit note (sometimes known as sicknote) from the GP Practice website homepage. A drop-down menu and search bar were also used to find information about fit notes. Other options included completing an e-consultation.

One respondent noted that on one of the Practice websites:

> *"Couldn't find information or a link on the website, e-consultation is available, other practices have indicated fit notes could be requested via this service, but no information was on this Practice's website."*
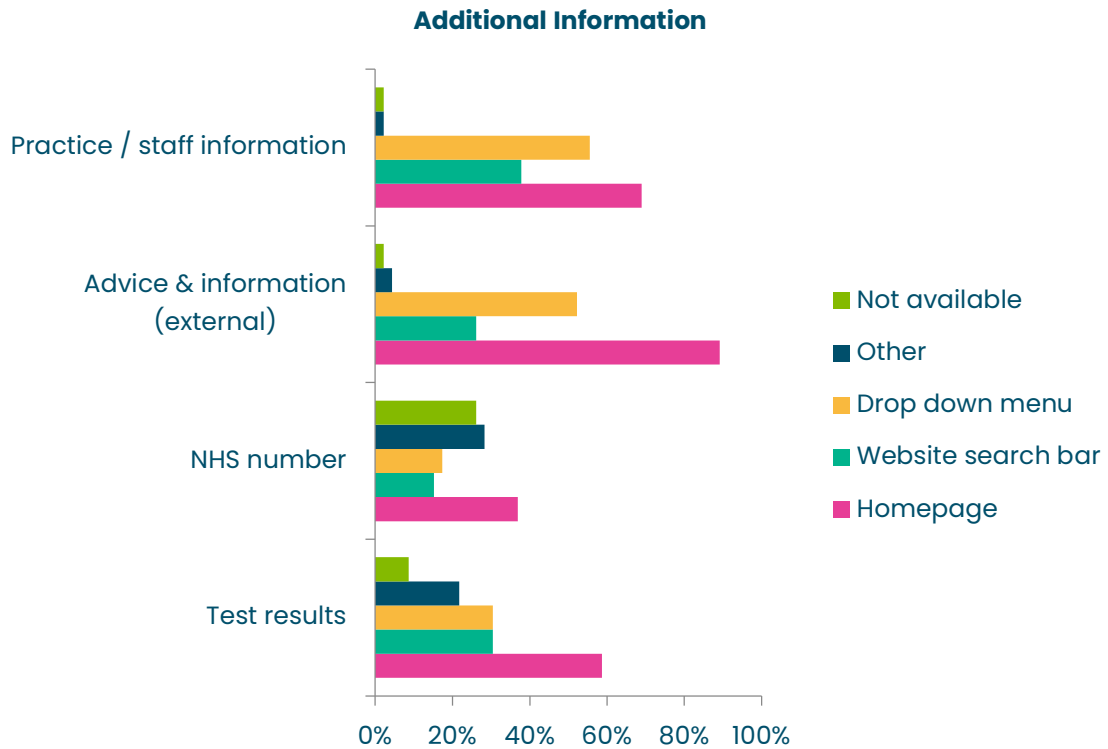
Requesting or amending Fit Notes
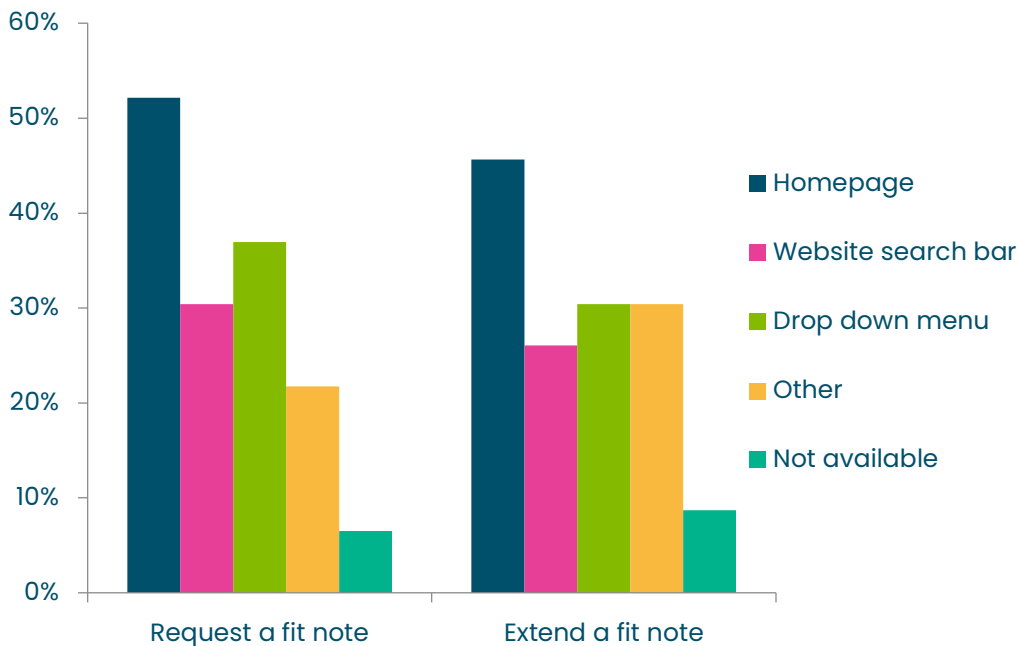
Additional Information

The majority of additional information including test results, staff information, and details on external sources of advice and information could be found on homepages.

It was less easy to find a patient's NHS number, with only 36% of GP Practice websites have this on their homepage and 26% of GP Practice websites not having this available at all.

Additional Information

Legend:
- Not available
- Other
- Drop down menu
- Website search bar
- Homepage

Categories: Practice / staff information, Advice & information (external), NHS number, Test results

X-axis: 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, 100%

Comments, Complaints, and Compliments

The majority of respondents were able to locate information about how to give feedback in the form of comments, complaints, or compliments via the website, there was also telephone contacts for these functions, however, there was a significant number of respondents (47%) who were unable to locate any contact information for advocacy services and also 19% of websites did not have links for their Complaints Policies.

It was noted that some websites had links for patient feedback that were not working and instead provided a postal address for complaints.

Comments, compliments and complaints.
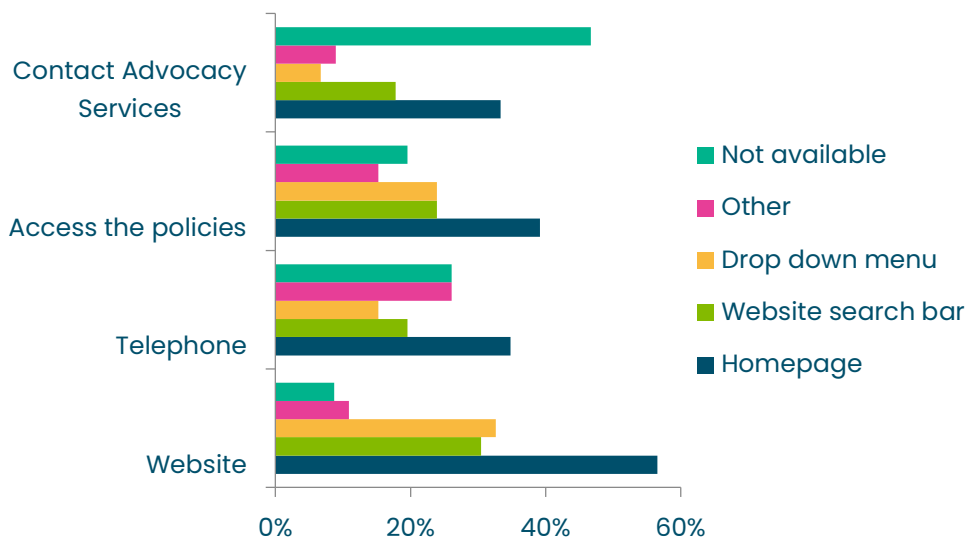
Up to Date and Accurate Information

Whilst 84% of respondents said that GP Practice websites were up to date, there were some GP Practice Websites that had old information including:

> *"Under the news heading, it says how there will be vaccinations offered to care home workers on 11 September, so this must be very old."*
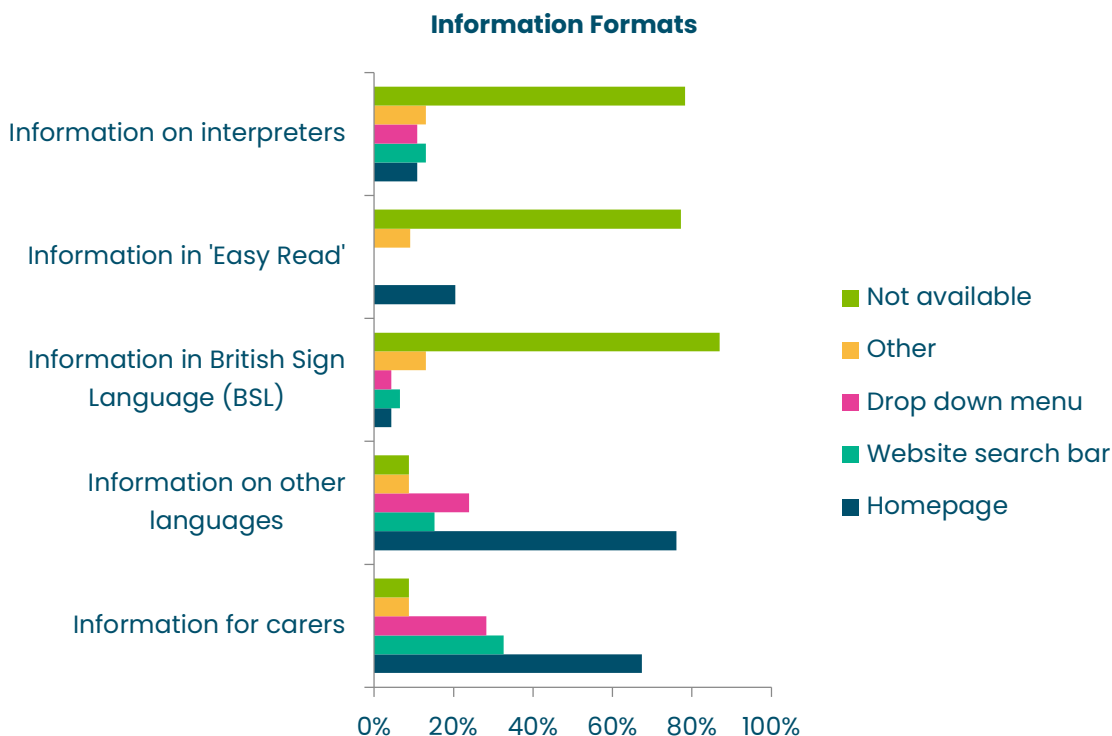>
> *"The latest inspection was conducted on 11 September 2016; this makes it very out of date".*

Information in Various Formats

With regards to information for carers, British Sign Language (BSL), different languages, easy read and interpretation services, respondents found that over 86% of GP Practice websites did not have information, 78% did not have information on interpreters. Patients need to understand that GP Practices are accessible, including information to confirm that interpretation services will be arranged on the GP Practice website, if required, is therefore needed.

77% did not have information available in easy read. Information in languages other than English and information for carers were more readily available.

> *"Dyslexia-friendly font available".*
>
> *A good accessibility statement but anyone with additional needs is advised to visit or phone the surgery before their appointment"*

Information Formats

Legend:
- Not available
- Other
- Drop down menu
- Website search bar
- Homepage

Categories: Information on interpreters, Information in 'Easy Read', Information in British Sign Language (BSL), Information on other languages, Information for carers

Additional Information

Information about GP Practice Patient Participation Group (PPG) groups were available on 97% of websites.

Over 50% of GP Practice websites had no information about Healthwatch.

The majority of respondents 87% said that websites were clear and jargon free.

Conclusion & Recommendations

- The shift towards digital access requires that GP Practice websites ensure information and services are readily available, from various points of their websites. Whilst ensuring accessibility for those not digitally inclusive remains important, those using digital services will ease phone blocking and enhance the experience.

- GP Practices should look to encourage people to register as a carer to support their own health and wellbeing, in order to be well enough to look after their loved ones. Making it easier for carers to complete simple tasks such as making appointments and obtaining prescriptions for themselves and those they care for should be considered by GP Practices. Linking in with local services for carers is therefore something that could be included on GP Practice websites.

- The data suggests that temporary patients may encounter challenges in finding information about how to register with a Practice in South Tees. GP Practices should ensure that people wishing to register temporarily can find this information more easily on their website, including having a link on the homepage, drop-down, and or search bar.

  By including this information, patients will have a clear understanding of the process. It would also allow GP Practices to monitor satisfaction levels and patients to have a clear method of providing feedback.

- Ordering one-off, non-repeat medication was also more difficult to do. However, this would likely be something that needed to be reviewed in more depth, hence the reason for this.

- Having test results available for patients on all of GP Practice websites would be valuable for patients and could also, reduce telephone congestion for those people who are calling to obtain these results.

- Linking to other local support organisations should be considered the norm; organisations providing patient advocacy, advice and information such as People First, Healthwatch and carer support services such as We Care You Care.

- There needs to be checks in place to ensure information is up to date. The PPG could look to volunteers to carry out this task. It is particularly important for opening times during holidays etc.

- GP Practices need to consider accessible standards, and as noted previously, information on interpreters, and a video in BSL explaining to patients how they will be able to access services / find information.

- Some GP Practice websites had links for patient feedback that were not working and instead provided a postal address for complaints. There needs to be various ways in which patients can provide feedback, for example, telephone, in writing or online.

Acknowledgments

- Healthwatch South Tees Community Champions
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- Healthwatch South Tees Volunteers
- NHS Digital

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Working for you,
across South Tees

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