



A Review of North Somerset GP Practice Websites August 2014

Background

With the internet rapidly becoming an essential resource in most households, websites are of growing importance to our everyday lives. In August 2014, Healthwatch North Somerset carried out a review of the websites of GP Practices across the area.

This research took into consideration important features which make a website accessible and user-friendly. Nowadays, instead of picking up the phone, many patients will seek to clarify any queries they have by searching online. It is, therefore, important for GP Practices to keep their websites up-to-date with relevant information in order for patients to access them with ease.

The website of a GP Practice may also be considered as an online representation of that particular surgery, and so is expected to be as efficient and reliable as the service they strive to provide.

What we did

Over a period of two weeks in August 2014 Healthwatch North Somerset viewed each North Somerset GP Practice website and noted the following:

- The ease of accessing the telephone number for appointments
- The ease of accessing the Out of Hours service number (111)
- The ease of accessing times of the surgery opening hours
- Whether appointments can be booked on line

- How user friendly the site was eg how easy it was to navigate and find information
- The general feel of the site
- What other information was available on the site

Because the review was completed in August 2014 and websites are often updated on an ongoing basis it is possible that since the review was undertaken that some changes have been made to the sites.

We also acknowledge that issues such as the general feel of the site are subjective and the views in this report are those of the staff team who have broad experience of using and accessing websites and that others' experiences of the sites may differ.

Introduction

From the research carried out by Healthwatch North Somerset, we can conclude that most GP Practices in the North Somerset have websites which are accessible and user-friendly. However, there are some which require attention.

Comparing the websites clearly highlighted the stronger examples, and those which could be improved. It became clear that the first impression of a website is very important. If it is not aesthetically pleasing, a patient may be put off by it immediately.

A strong website should be clearly laid out and labelled, so that when a patient begins to navigate their way around the site, the information they are seeking can be found quickly and with ease.

What the Survey Tells Us

Overall, the websites for GP Practices in the North Somerset area were easy to use and included all the information required for patients. However, some were easier to use than others. For example, the websites for Backwell and Brockway Medical Centres, Tower House Medical Centre and The Green Practice, based at Clevedon Medical Centre, were all laid out very clearly. Important information, such as opening times and 'out of hours' details, could be located quickly and easily. These websites could be easily navigated using a clearly labelled menu. The use of images on the Green Practice website made it particularly clear, user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing.

Less accessible sites

There were a few websites which displayed the appropriate information, but were not so easily accessible. For example, the website for Riverbank Medical Centre, Weston-Super-Mare, has all the information that patients would require, but is not

laid out as clearly, or logically, as some of the others. The information given is thorough, and detailed, but sometimes you have to search around before you can find what you need.

For example, the website offers the service of ordering a prescription online, which is a very useful feature. However, is not advertised clearly and immediately on the page. Even under the 'Prescriptions' section of the website, you have to read a lot of text before it is made clear that you can order prescriptions online. It is stated clearly that patients must register before they can use this service, but it is difficult to see where to go to order a prescription once a patient has registered.

It was quicker and easier to use the 'Search' tool, which takes you to the information straight away. This information would be more easily accessed if there was a direct link on the homepage, or if it appeared more clearly in the 'Prescriptions' section of the website.

Similarly, the website for Portishead Medical Group gives detailed, relevant information, but is not laid out in the most logical way. For example, it would be more helpful for patients if the opening hours for the surgery were stated on the homepage, so that they can be seen immediately, or could be found by clicking on a clearly labelled link. However, the opening hours are found under the menu box titled 'Practice Overview.' Therefore, it could take a patient some searching and a few minutes to find this information.

Presenting information

The stronger websites we have looked at have taken into account the popular information that a patient is likely to check online and will want to find quickly and easily, and have displayed this clearly.

While it is important for a website to give lots of information and be detailed, it is also important for the site not to be too basic. The homepage of the website for Graham Road Surgery, Weston-Super-Mare, is simple, with a lot of unused space on the screen. Much like the website for the Portishead Medical Group, the opening hours are not clearly accessible, but after some searching, can be found in the 'How To...' section of the website.

It could be suggested that unused space on the homepage of the site could be filled with useful information for patients, so that they can be accessed immediately and with ease.

It may also be argued that a website that is basic, and not very pleasing to the eye, may not reflect the welcoming, warm environment that each GP surgery aims to create for patients.

For example, the website for Sunnyside Surgery, Clevedon, immediately welcomes their guests on the homepage, and has a short history of the surgery, which gives the website a warm, welcoming tone.

The Locality Health Centre, Weston-Super-Mare, is also fairly basic. The information is displayed in a list, rather than an interactive menu. However, they make up for the simplicity of the site by including a link to an online patient information booklet, which includes all the information that patients will require, and can be printed if desired.

On the other hand, it is important that a website does not overload its readers with information. The website for Harbourside Family Practice, Portishead, has a very large amount of text on their homepage. While this gives readers plenty of information, it could be presented in a more accessible format. Readers may be put off by such a dense section of text, and important information may be ignored.

Therefore, it may be more effective to present these points in smaller sections, via clickable links, to break up the text and make it more user-friendly. The website for the Clevedon Riverside Group has a similar layout. The text on the homepage is quite cluttered, making it a little unclear to read. All of the information displayed is relevant and useful, but presenting it in a clearer way would improve the website, and make it more accessible and user-friendly.

Out of Hours information

As well as advising patients when they can see their doctor, GP Practice websites should also give information about what a patient should do when the surgery is closed. There will be times when patients need medical advice quickly, and so it is important that this information is displayed clearly, and can be found easily.

Most of the websites looked at by Healthwatch North Somerset display this information clearly. For example, Heywood Family Practice clearly present their contact numbers at the top of their homepage, including the '111 Out of Hours' number.

Similarly, The Green Practice, Clevedon highlights this information in the middle of their homepage, in eye-catching blue text. This is the most accessible way to display this information, as it can be found immediately.

Some GP surgeries display contact information in a particular section of their website. Longton Grove Surgery, Weston Super Mare, has a menu across the top of the homepage that is very easy to follow. The 'out of hours' information can be found quickly by clicking on 'Opening Hours', and then going to the 'When We are Closed' section. Clarence Park Surgery, Weston Super Mare, and Tower House Family Practice, also display their 'out of hours' information in this way on their websites. They are laid out clearly, and logically, and important information can be found quickly and easily.

However, a few websites could look to improve the accessibility of this information. For example, The Cedars Surgery, Weston Super Mare, has this information in a scrolling 'noticeboard' on their homepage, which means it cannot always be seen clearly. This information can also be found by clicking on 'Opening Hours', much like the websites mentioned previously, but in the 'Contact Details' section, an out of date 'out of hours' number is given.

If this information is displayed on the homepage, it should be in a prominent place, and in bold text, so it can be found easily. Harbourside Family Practice displays the 'out of hours' number on their homepage, but you have to scroll right down to the bottom of the page, and past a dense section of text, before it can be seen.

It would be more helpful, and logical, if this information could be found in the 'Contact Us' section of their website or, even better, written in bold at the top of the homepage, in a clear, prominent place.

It is also important that only up-to-date contact details are given, otherwise it will be confusing for patients. Graham Road Surgery, Weston Super Mare, and Locality Health Centre, Weston Super Mare, both give out-of date numbers. This should be addressed because patients may need medical advice quickly and have access to a reliable number and service.

Website addresses

It may seem quite an obvious point, but it is important for a website to be found easily. GP surgeries should advertise their web address widely and make sure the address is logical. It should be possible to find websites with ease using search engines, or by searching directly.

Most of the websites looked at by Healthwatch North Somerset have clear web addresses, and can be found easily. However, there are a couple which aren't so clear. For example, Locality Health Centre, Weston Super Mare, shares the 'For All Healthy Living Centre' site, and has a single page on the site. As they do not have their own site, finding them on the shared site would be difficult without knowing this is the case. To make sure that patients can find the site, they must publicise the address well.

This is also the case for Winscombe and Banwell Family Practice, Winscombe. Their web address is 'www.waveringdownmedicalpractice.nhs.uk' which doesn't seem to relate to the practice group or surgery. Similarly, the web address of the Clevedon Riverside Group is 'www.mysurgerywebsite.co.uk', which is very general and doesn't relate to the surgery name. Again, it is important that these web addresses are publicised well so they can be found easily by patients. It may be useful to consider creating a new, clearer web address to use, which relates more closely to the name of the surgery.

Repeat Prescriptions

The majority of the websites looked at offer the service of ordering repeat prescriptions online. This is very useful for confident, frequent users of the internet, and those with disabilities who cannot attend the surgery in person. However, those with no internet access, or with disabilities, will be excluded from this service.

With an increasingly IT literate population and widespread use of smartphones many surgeries, such as The Cedars Surgery, Worle, and Yeovale Medical Practice,

plan to phase out their telephone prescription ordering systems. It is understandable that surgeries aim to keep up-to-date and make IT access easier but some patients may argue that ordering prescriptions online should be one option out of several, as opposed to the only option, in order to cater for all patients' needs.

If the telephone repeat prescription system is phased out, surgeries must ensure that patients are well advised and clearly instructed on how to order prescriptions using an alternative method. They must also make sure that these changes are well publicised, clearly stated in the surgery, as well as on their website.

Summary

In conclusion, there are many aspects that need to be considered for GP Practices to create accessible, user-friendly websites. The website should be easy to find, and users should be greeted by a welcoming, warm feel once they enter the site.

The website should then be easy to navigate, clearly laid out and labelled, and important information should be clear and easy to locate. It is important to find a balance between giving plenty of helpful information, while also aiming not to overload the reader, as this can be off-putting.

However, it is just as important for the website not to be too basic, as this does not give a warm, welcoming reflection of the GP surgery itself. It is also important to maintain a balance between having a modern, up-to-date website with the offer of online services, but also to make sure that a particular section of the patient population is not excluded by exclusively offering services online.

Overall, the websites in the North Somerset area, reviewed by Healthwatch North Somerset, were accessible and easy to use. Every website had its strengths, with some excelling in particular areas. As we have discussed, there are some which would benefit from some minor adjustments, in order to make them more accessible and user-friendly, but also to look appealing on the screen.

The overall appearance of the website is an important aspect, as it sets the tone of the site, and gives an overall impression of the GP surgery that it represents, and the service it has to offer.

North Somerset GP Practice Websites August 2014	Telephone local call rate	Out of hours 111 prominently displayed?	Opening Hours weekdays	Opening Hours weekends	Online booking appointment	User Friendly web site	Other comments	Website address
Backwell and Nailsea Medical Group (Backwell)	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30. Extended hours - one eve per week last appt 19.30, one morning per week 1st appt 07.30	Sat - am pre-booked appts	Yes	Yes - very accessible and user friendly, good website with lots to offer patients	Has a patient login system and offers online appointments booking, repeat prescription requests, change of details and update your record surveys, lots of useful advice, news. Map to show location. Links to NHS Choices & 111 info	www.backwellnailseasurgery.nhs.uk
Backwell and Nailsea Medical Group (Nailsea)	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30. Extended hours - one eve per week last appt 19.30, one morning per week 1st appt 07.30	Sat - am pre-booked appts	Yes	Yes - very accessible and user friendly, good website with lots to offer patients	Has a patient login system and offers online appointment booking, repeat prescription requests, change of details and update your record surveys, lots of useful advice, news. Map to show location. Links to NHS Choices & 111 info	www.backwellnailseasurgery.nhs.uk
The Cedars Surgery	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30. Extended hours - Dr Pimm from 7.00am Thurs, Dr Wright from 07.30 Tues & Thurs, Dr Williams until 19.30 Wed	Closed	Yes	Yes - very accessible and user friendly, good website with lots to offer patients	Has a patient login system and offers online appointments booking, repeat prescription requests, change of details and update your record surveys, lots of useful advice, news. Map to show location. Links to NHS Choices & 111 info. Also has online appointment cancellation and direct	www.cedarssurgerywsm.com

							telephone number for practice manager	
Clarence Park Surgery	Yes	No	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30.	Closed	No	Yes	Online repeat prescriptions, change of details and keeping your records up to date. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices	www.clarenceparksurgery.nhs.uk
Clevedon Riverside Group	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.20 - 18.30. Extended hours for pre-booked appts Mon - 7.30 - 8.00, Tues - 7.00 - 8.00, Wed - 7.00 - 8.00 and 18.30 - 19.30	Closed	No	Yes but a bit cluttered and not so easy in places	Online repeat prescriptions, change of details and keeping your records up to date. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices	www.mysurgerywebsite.co.uk
Graham Road Surgery	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30.	Closed	Yes	Basic and less informative than others. Info not always easy to find.	Also prescriptions online. Link to NHS Direct, but goes to page that says NHS Direct is closed.	www.grahamroadsurgery.nhs.uk
The Green Practice	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.30 - 18.30. Extended hours Mon 07.30, Tues 18.30 - 20.00	Closed	Yes	Yes - very friendly & easy to use, has images for different pages, i.e. test tubes for test re-	Has a patient login system and offers online appointment booking, repeat prescription requests, appt cancellations, change of details and update your record surveys, lots of useful advice, news. Map to show location. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices.	www.greenpracticeclevedon.co.uk

						sults. Really liked this one		
Harbour-side Family Practice	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30, closed weekends. Extended hours - 07.00 - 08.00 Wed and 18.30 - 19.30 Mon & Thurs	Closed	Yes	Yes	Patient login system and offers online appointment booking & repeat prescription requests. Didn't have much other healthcare advice and guidance. A huge amount of text on the home page, have to scroll down a long way to get to the end, where the out of hours number is located, but this is not an obvious place and could be easily missed, it should be with the surgery contact number. Also has a link to NHS Direct for out of hours info - but when you follow it you get closed page.	www.harboursidemp.nhs.uk
Heywood Family Practice	Yes	No	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 19.00	Closed	Yes	Yes	Patient login system and offers online appointment booking & repeat prescription requests. Didn't have much other healthcare advice and guidance. Also has a link to NHS Direct for out of hours info - but when you follow it you get closed page.	www.heywoodfamilypractice.nhs.uk
Locality Health Centre	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 8.00 am to 6.30 pm. Extended hours Mon	Second Saturday of each month	No	Yes - one page & info is very limited	Out of hours no is listed as a 0845 number, which is more expensive than local rate and no mention of 111 for out of	Don't actually have their own website - part of the For All Healthy Living Centre, where there is a page http://forallhlc.org/localityhealthcentre.php

			6.30 pm - 8.00 pm.				hours. No online services offered.	
Long Ashton Surgery	Yes	No	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30, no extended hours.	Closed	No	Yes.	Online appointment cancellation, repeat prescriptions and update contact details. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices.	www.longashtonsurgery.co.uk
Longton Grove Surgery	Yes	No	08.00 - 19.30 Mon & Tues, 08.00 - 18.30 Wed - Fri.	Closed	Yes	Yes	Lots of info on the site. Online repeat prescriptions and updating of records and contact info also available. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices.	www.longtongrovesurgery.co.uk
Milton Surgery	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30 (appts from 9am - 5.30)	Closed	No	Yes	Online prescription ordering available. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices	www.themiltontsurgery.co.uk
Nailsea Family Practice	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30. Extended hours - early starts Mon & Fri, later opening Wed & Thurs, no times given	Every 2nd sat of month	Yes	Yes	Lots of info on the site. Online repeat prescriptions, appt cancellation, updating of records and contact info, newsletter & survey available. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices	www.towerhouse.nhs.uk
New Court Surgery	Yes	Yes	Mon & Wed 08.00 - 20.15, Tues & Thurs 07.15 - 18.30, Friday	Closed	Yes	Yes	Prescriptions online, update contact details and practice survey. Lots of info on site. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices	www.newcourtsurgery.nhs.uk

			8.00am - 6.30pm.					
Portishead Medical Group	Yes	Yes	Mon, Thurs, Fri - 08.00 - 18.30, Tues & Wed 08.00 - 20.30.	Closed	Yes	Yes but the menu boxes on the home screen are not named obviously, some info not easy to find, eg opening hours is in practice overview, not very obvious.	Online appointment cancellation, repeat prescriptions and update contact details. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices.	www.pmg.org.uk
Riverbank Medical Centre	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 8.15 - 18.30. Extended hours 18.30 - 20.30 Thurs.	Closed	No	No, info not always laid out clearly or in a logical place.	Online prescriptions, but not obviously advertised on website. Still has old link to NHS Direct for 111 service, when you follow you get closed page.	www.riverbankmedicalcentre.co.uk
Stafford Medical Group (Locking Castle)	Yes	No	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30	Closed	No	Yes	Out of hours number not logically displayed, you have to scroll to bottom of a page for details relevant to both practices section, it would be helpful if the Out of Hours number was also displayed directly below the main number so it can be found easily. Also, bit confusing for patients - 2 practices	www.lockingcastlemedical.co.uk

							come under one name, but group name incorporates name of 1 practice, then the website for both is under name of the other practice. Links to Dept of Health, NHS Choices & 111	
Stafford Medical Group (Weston)	Yes	Yes	Mon & Fri 08.30 - 1800, Tues, Wed, Thurs 08.30 - 13.00	Closed	No	Yes	Online prescriptions. Out of hours number not logically displayed, it would be helpful if the Out of Hours number was also displayed directly below the main number so it can be found easily. Links to Dept of Health, NHS Choices & 111	www.lockingcastlemedical.co.uk
St Georges Medical Practice	Yes	Yes	Mon, Thurs, Fri - 08.00 - 18.30, Tues & Wed 08.00 - 19.30.	Sat 09.00 - 12.00	Yes	Yes	Online prescriptions & registration enquiries. Has a local services page showing pharmacies, dentists & opticians which is useful to patients. Has a map function to show practice, but not working properly, showing Bristol airport! Links to CQC, NHS Eng, Patient.co.uk & NHS Choices	www.mhstgeorges.co.uk
Sunnyside Surgery	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30.	Alt Sat mornings	Yes	Yes	Online prescriptions. Contains lots of info. Has Healthwatch info and a link to our website!	www.sunnysidesurgery.co.uk
Tudor Lodge Surgery	Yes	No	Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri - 08.00 - 18.30, Wed 07.00 - 18.30	Closed	Yes	Yes	Online prescriptions. Lots of info, links to CQC and NHS Constitution.	www.tudorlodesurgery.nhs.uk

The Village Surgery	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30 (reception), extended hours Wed evening appts 18.40 - 19.20	closed	No - but being introduced	Yes	Online appt cancellation, updating personal details & survey. Repeat prescriptions & appointment booking coming soon. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices	www.thevillagesurgeryworle.nhs.uk
Wingscombe & Banwell Family Practice (Wingscombe)	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30, extended hours Tues, Wed, Fri, appt 07.00 - 08.00	Closed	Yes	Yes	Online prescriptions, cancellations & change of details, lots of info. Web address may be confusing though, doesn't seem to relate to the name of the practice group or surgery. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices	www.wavingdownmedicalpractice.nhs.uk
Wingscombe & Banwell Family Practice (Banwell)	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.30 - 13.00 & 15.30 - 17.30	Closed	Yes	Yes	Online prescriptions, cancellations & change of details, lots of info. Web address may be confusing though, doesn't seem to relate to the name of the practice group or surgery. Links to 111 info & NHS Choices	www.wavingdownmedicalpractice.nhs.uk As above
Worle Medical Practice	Yes	Yes	Mon - Fri 08.00 - 18.30	Closed	Yes	Yes	Online prescriptions & registration enquiries. Has a local services page showing pharmacies, dentists & opticians which is useful to patients. Links to CQC, NHS Eng, NHS Choices & Patient.co.uk	www.mhworle.co.uk
Wrighton Vale Medical Practice	Yes	Yes	Mon-Fri 08.00-18.30 extended	Closed	Yes	Yes	Online prescriptions & registration enquiries. Has a local services page showing pharmacies, dentists & opticians	www.wrightonvale.co.uk

			Tuesday 06.30-08.00				which is useful to patients. Links to CQC, NHS Eng, NHS Choices & Patient.co.uk	
Yeo Vale Medical Practice (Congres- bury)	Yes	Yes	Monday to Thursday 08.30 – 18.30, Fri 8.30 – 17.00	Closed	Un- clear	Yes -	Online prescription ordering, but there was a note saying in future repeat prescription or- dering will only be available online - not good for those who don't have access to a com- puter or can't use this method due to disabilities etc. A link to patient access system which at some practices you can book online appts, but not clear if you can at this practice. Opening hours not obviously displayed, located under 'our services' tab.	http://yeovale.co.uk/
Yeo Vale Medical Practice (Yatton)	Yes	Yes	Monday to Friday 08.00 – 18.30	Closed	Un- clear	Yes	Online prescription ordering, but there was a note saying in future repeat prescription or- dering will only be available online - not good for those who don't have access to a com- puter or can't use this method due to disabilities etc. A link to patient access system which at some practices you can book online appts, but not clear if you can at this practice. Opening hours not obviously displayed, located under 'our services' tab.	http://yeovale.co.uk/

