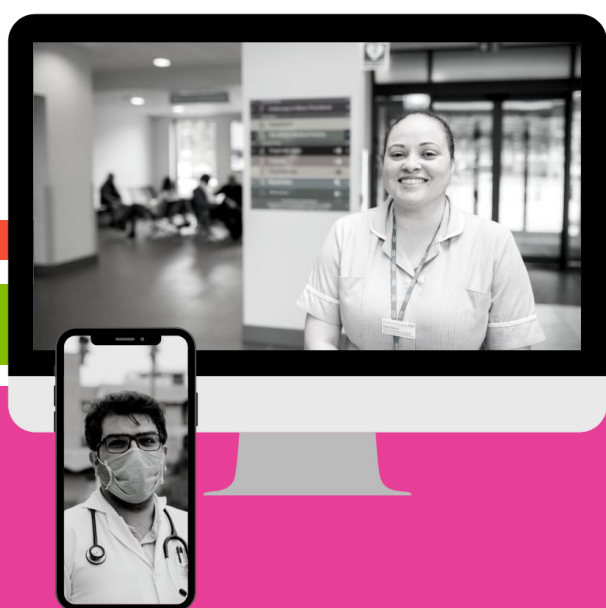


Access to General Practice in Trafford: Website Review



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Introduction to Healthwatch Trafford

This report has been produced by Healthwatch Trafford. The Healthwatch network consists of 152 Healthwatch organisations across each of the local authority areas in England. It also has a national body called Healthwatch England based in London. We are all independent organisations who aim to help people get the best out of their local health and social care services, whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow.

Everything we say and do is informed by our connections to local people and our expertise is grounded in their experience. We are the only body looking solely at people's experience across all health and social care in Trafford. As a statutory watchdog, our role is to ensure that local decision makers put the experiences of people at the heart of their care so that those who buy (commissioners) and provide our services (NHS Trusts, GPs, the voluntary sector and independent providers) can benefit from what Trafford people tell us.

Our reports on various elements of health and social care in Trafford can be found on our website at the following link: healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/our-reports/ or by contacting us directly using the details on the back cover.



Executive summary

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Trafford residents have been encouraged to go online to find information to support their health and care. The pre-existing shift away from visiting their General Practitioners (GPs) in person to register, book appointments and seek help has hastened to ensure everyone's safety by reducing face-to-face contact.

Practices have a requirement as part of the GP contract and Care Quality Commission (CQC) guidance to provide key information and access to certain services online¹. Each practice holds jurisdiction over what else to display and how it should appear to the user, ensuring that the information displayed is both accurate and up to date.

We undertook this project to confirm that the GP practice websites in our borough provide the right information in an accessible way.

Mindful of the pressures facing GP practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, we wanted to ensure we would not interfere with the delivery of their service and so undertook our research online. We are also aware that provision of information to service users is not solely the responsibility of practices, but that providers, commissioners and others including Healthwatch all have a role to play. Patients themselves can also help by ensuring they update their contact details and any access needs as and when necessary. This report intends to highlight areas specifically related to GP practice websites which make a genuine difference to patients, and practice staff alike.

Our review team visited each of the 29 GP practice websites¹ in Trafford to look for clarity, accuracy and ease of use² using a consistent approach. We considered the routes new patients would take to register with each practice as well as the needs of existing patients in managing their own health - especially during the pandemic. We also considered the experiences of people for whom technology is a barrier. Using a five-point scale from Very Poor to Excellent to grade the information we found, we built up a picture for each practice and for Trafford overall.

Key findings

- **The picture is positive.** All GP practices in Trafford have a functioning website. Most websites were viewed favourably overall by our team of reviewers, who were impressed with the variety of online information and tools available to patients.
- **This overall view masks variation between GP practices.** Our reviewers took between 10 and 90 minutes to complete their reviews, illustrating the ease of use of some websites and the complexity/poor arrangement of others.
- **Trafford GPs are using technology to respond well to the current situation,** with 83% of their websites rated Good to Excellent for content regarding 'COVID-19 information including vaccination' and all 29 websites enabling patients to go online to either book a general appointment or request a consultation.

¹ There are 30 GP practices in Trafford but two share a website; see full list at Appendix 1.

² See our Methodology section on page 8 for details

- **Online tools can confuse instead of help if they are not properly explained** - with 59% of Trafford GP websites offering more than one method to patients requiring them to log-in to ask for a consultation / book an appointment / check their records; it was not always clear of the purpose or benefits of each.
- **We could not find a practice website fulfilling every statutory obligation required by the GP contract and CQC inspection regime.**
- **Improvements are required for some GP Trafford practices regarding information on flu vaccinations (66% of GP websites rated Poor to Very Poor) and how to access medical records and self-care advice (24% rated Poor to Very Poor for both).**
- **New patients are served well** with information about the practices and how to register. However, we also found that 38% of Trafford GP websites did not share the boundaries of their practice area, and only 34% published information about the requirement to assign an accountable GP to each of its new and existing registered patients.
- **Patient information on making appointments or seeking help out of hours were rated positively**, but practices should ensure the arrangements described are still accurate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Clear direction is needed for patients who need to cancel appointments - 31% of practices were rated Poor to Very Poor.
- **The offer for patients who can't go online needs to be considered;** GP communications with patients should ensure they describe other methods of contact or access to information in addition to their website. Where not already in place, written forms of communication should be considered for those who are digitally excluded.
- **Repeat prescription information was rated highly** for most Trafford GP websites, with over 80% rated Good to Excellent.

Patient experience

- **Information about complaints procedures requires improvement in over a third of GP websites in Trafford.** Other routes for patients to share feedback were rated highly, but over 75% websites did not publish the results of the Friends and Family Test.
- **Very few Trafford GP practice websites mention how to share compliments or concerns with Healthwatch Trafford** or how to get in touch with us as a source of information or signposting. We also found little mention of advocacy if a patient needed help with making a complaint.
- **Although 27 of the 29 GP practices published information about their Patient Participation Groups, most frequently it was simply a mention,** with no detail about the function, records of minutes or outcomes, or how to join.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are as follows:

1. **GP practices take note of the findings and recommendations in our report.**
Healthwatch Trafford will provide each GP practice in Trafford with a record of our reviewers' experiences of using their website. This will be supplied in a format which enables them to compare with our Trafford scorecard and learn from the good practice found in our results in detail (from pages 12-22) if improvements are needed. Particular care should be paid to flu vaccination information.
2. **Each GP practice should ensure that they display the required statutory requirements compliant with the GP contract and the CQC following an inspection** - for example the practice boundary area (currently only 62% of practices display this).
3. **GP Practices should ensure that online tools for patients are clearly explained and incorporated into existing information** (for example, to include the *Patient Access* tool within the appointment booking page). Practices should check regularly for broken links and out-of-date information. Practices should also ensure everything is still relevant to the current COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.
4. **GP practices can do more to enable patients to manage their own wellbeing by utilising local sources of information and help:**
 - Organisations providing support services should supply clear and up to date information to all GP practices.
 - Practices can link to organisations such as the [Trafford Directory](#) and [Healthwatch Trafford](#), who provide information and signpost to local organisations and support groups. This will help increase patient understanding of services and how to access them.
5. **Practices could do more to ensure their information is accessible in languages other than English.** The NHS recognises 'Although online translators can accurately translate individual words and phrases, they may not always be able to interpret the meaning of larger or more complex pieces of information.'³
6. **GP practices in Trafford can do more to encourage patient participation:**
 - by providing more information about their Patient Participation Group (PPG) meetings and outcomes, showing the impact the PPG has on their practice.
 - by encouraging patient feedback through available routes both internal and external⁴.
 - PPGs can use the results in our report to facilitate conversations with their practice about making positive changes to their website.

³ The NHS provide a resource directory of health information in other languages at: <https://www.nhs.uk/about-us/health-information-in-other-languages/>

⁴ Examples include Healthwatch Trafford (www.healthwatchtrafford.co.uk), Care Opinion (www.careopinion.org.uk) and the NHS GP patient survey (gp-patient.co.uk)

Background

Healthwatch Trafford has long been aware of issues faced by local patients when trying to access their GPs.

In November-December 2019 we looked at residents' experiences of booking appointments⁵ and reported that 'For GP appointments, problems with getting through, very strict rules on when you need to call and high demand proved to be a frustration for many'.

We found:

- 52% of people would prefer to book appointments online either with an app or via a website.
- Most people currently book via telephone.
- The biggest issues were waiting times and availability of appointments.

We recommended that health services including GPs:

- Publicise online booking systems where they exist - either by app or via a website - and explain the process of registration to make it easier.
- Find alternatives to the telephone booking systems that rely on patients to call at a specific time and cause competition for an appointment. This system as it stands particularly disadvantages people who work, have children or other access requirements

Since April 2020, GP practices have had to change the way they operate in response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic to keep patients and staff as safe as possible. NHS advice⁶ says 'If you need to contact a GP, do not go into the surgery in person', meaning patients must use the telephone or websites to seek a consultation.

The experiences shared with Healthwatch Trafford coupled with the change in access due to the COVID-19 pandemic indicated that we needed a fresh look at how Trafford residents access their GPs through their websites including how the online systems available to them. In running the project as a mystery shopper exercise online we aimed to assess GP practices without impeding the delivery of their service; a potential follow-up project may include a mystery shopper telephone exercise, but this would be inappropriate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our methodology section outlines how we designed the project in partnership with our volunteers.

While we were undertaking this exercise, Healthwatch England conducted a review of local Healthwatch evidence across the country looking at GP access during COVID-19. They praise the efforts of GP practices to adapt to the new situation - 'In a world of social distancing and immense pressures on the NHS, the agile way in which GP surgeries have adapted during the pandemic has enabled services to keep running for millions.'

⁵ <https://healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Appointments-Report-FINAL.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/social-distancing/using-the-nhs-and-other-health-services/>

But they also point out that ‘On the other side of the coin, it is clear many people are now struggling to access care from their GP, often simply because they do not know how.’⁷

This report will be published on our website and made publicly available. Though it is aimed mainly at the GP practices in our borough, it could also be used by PPGs to work with their own practice and identify improvements.

The overall results are summarised in our Trafford scorecard at pages 10-11. Each practice will be provided with their own results in a format which enables them to compare to the Trafford picture; examples of good practice can be found in our results in detail (from pages 12-22) if improvements are needed by individual practices.

⁷ <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2021-03-22/gp-access-review-must-be-part-nhs-covid-19-recovery>

Methodology

Our project was co-designed during January 2021 with the 20 reviewers involved in our project, aged from 14 to 76. Working together, we developed a list of information/tasks we believe the public would like to access from their own GP's website. We also researched the statutory requirements of GP websites.

We conducted our website visits (our data collection stages) during February and early March 2021.

Our 20 reviewers comprised 10 adults (seven volunteers and three staff) and 10 young people (Youthwatch volunteers) to give a wide variety of website users, of different ages and backgrounds.

Data collection stage 1: quality and content

For the first stage, each of the 29 practice websites were reviewed three times, by two adults and one young person (aged 14-18).

We used the GP practice website addresses given on the Salford & Trafford Local Medical Committee website⁸ (assembled into a list by one of our volunteers).

Reviewers undertook their tasks from home and captured their experiences in the co-designed form which can be found at Appendix 2.

Reviewers noted their experiences of finding a specific set of information, grading the quality and content of the information and how long it took to find. Reviewers also considered the experiences of people for whom technology is a barrier.

Items were graded on a five-point scale from Very Poor to Excellent, except where we asked for a specific piece of information, e.g. the system the practice uses for virtual appointments.

Data collection stage 2: essential information

The second stage was a supplementary exercise examining the availability of essential information GPs should publish as part of the GP contract and following a CQC inspection (see Appendix 3 for details of our sources). Appointments, repeat prescriptions and medical records were already covered in our stage 1 quality and content review.

For the remaining items, one volunteer visited all 29 websites to confirm if the information was present, recording a Yes/No response. This was then quality controlled using spot checks by a staff member.

Analysis of data

Review forms were submitted on paper and electronically to a staff member who recorded and collated the results in Excel. The summary statistics have been quality controlled by a research volunteer.

The average rating for each practice in turn contributed to an overall grade for our Borough.

⁸ www.salfordandtraffordlmc.org.uk/practices/

Points to note

During the undertaking of the project, it became apparent that not all reviewers held the same perspective of ‘virtual appointments’ - for some it meant being able to book appointments online, for others it meant being able to communicate with their GP without a visit in person. This is not just a lesson for us for planning future exercises but also a lesson for practices in explaining exactly what is available from the online platforms offered through their websites; if our reviewers gave conflicting accounts then it could be assumed the wider public may also misunderstand.

Bias

By asking three reviewers to examine each website, we hope we have mitigated individual bias/experience as far as possible.

Limitation of responses

Our data collections are based on personal perspective, so there are no ‘wrong’ answers in what our reviewers recorded. If a reviewer couldn’t find a piece of information it does not mean it isn’t there, which is a lesson for the practice in how they display information within their website.

Limitations of our review

While comprehensive, our review does not cover every aspect of the services GPs provide to patients via their websites. For instance, it was outside the scope of our exercise to log in to online tools (e.g. Patient Access, AskMyGP) to test their functionality or the information provided within.

Although we looked at the crucial information which practices must provide, we did not conduct a full accessibility check and we are aware that there may be further requirements upon GP practice websites at which we did not look. For instance, as public bodies, according to the accessibility requirements in the international WCAG 2.1 AA standard⁹, GP practices should now provide an accessibility statement on their website.

How long did it take?

Reviewers recorded an average of 36 minutes taken to locate all the items on the form, ranging from individual visits of 10 minutes at the quickest to 90 at the slowest.

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/doing-a-basic-accessibility-check-if-you-cant-do-a-detailed-one/doing-a-basic-accessibility-check-if-you-cant-do-a-detailed-one>

Results

Trafford scorecard stage 1: quality and content of Trafford GP websites

Item to find:		Average Grade*					Percentage of GP websites**		
		Very Poor	Poor	Okay	Good	Excellent	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
1. Current situation:	a. Covid-19 information including vaccination				★		7%	10%	83%
	b. Flu jab information		★				66%	14%	21%
2. New patients:	a. How to register with the practice				★		0%	17%	83%
	b. Practice information including staff				★		0%	14%	86%
3. Appointments:	a. How to make an appointment				★		0%	17%	83%
	b. Virtual appointments available?	Yes: 29					No: 0		
	i. What system do they use?	Patient Access: 18 AskMyGP: 17 Other: 11 (17 websites contained more than one system)							
	ii. Guidance on how to use the system			★			21%	24%	55%
	c. Offer for patients who can't go online			★			14%	55%	31%
	d. How to cancel an appointment			★			31%	24%	45%
	e. Out of hours service			★			10%	38%	52%
4. Enabling patients to manage their own wellbeing:	a. Accessibility – other languages? Browse aloud?				★		10%	34%	55%
	b. Repeat prescriptions				★		0%	17%	83%
	c. How to access your medical records			★			24%	45%	31%
	d. Self-care advice			★			24%	34%	41%
5. Patient experience:	a. How to give feedback			★			17%	24%	59%
	b. Complaints procedure			★			38%	17%	45%
	c. Patient participation group	Yes: 27					No: 2		
	d. Mention of Healthwatch Trafford	Yes: 8					No: 21		

* Overall average (mean) calculated from the mean grade given to each GP practice (from 3 individual reviews).

**Percentage highlighted if more than 25% of practices received this rating.

Trafford scorecard stage 2: essential information available from Trafford GP websites

Item to find:	Trafford GP Websites on which we found the information (29 websites in total)	
	Number of GP practice websites	Percentage of GP websites
Q7: Does the practice website display their most recent CQC ratings on their website?	25	86%
Q8: Does the practice website publish GP net earnings as per the GP contract?	25	86%
Q9: Does the practice website share the results of the Friends and Family Test ?	7	24%
Q10: Does the practice share the boundaries of the practice area (diagram /map or postcode)?	18	62%
Q11: Does the practice publish information about the requirement to assign an accountable GP to each of its new and existing registered patients?	10	34%

The table displays the number of GP practice websites on which we could locate the information. Of the 29 practice websites, only four presented every item of information we sought.

It should be noted that if a practice was recorded as not displaying a particular item, it means it was not obvious to our volunteer reviewer during their visit to the website.

Results in detail

Question 1: Current situation

As the exercise took place in winter (February 2021), during the third COVID-19 lockdown, we felt it appropriate to make the pandemic the focus of the first item to find, followed by flu vaccines.

1.a. COVID-19 information including vaccination

Our reviewers felt GP practices should be a crucial source of information for Trafford patients seeking advice about COVID-19 testing, vaccinations and treatment. We looked for practice websites to provide the latest information and to reflect the changing circumstances surrounding how patients access help and care.

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Good (4)	2 (7%)	3 (10%)	24 (83%)

- Our reviewers gave ‘COVID-19 information including vaccination’ one of the highest average ratings for all items we sought to find on GP websites, with 24 out of 29 websites rated Good to Excellent. Reviewers appreciated information being immediately available on visiting the website - “This was the first thing to come up.” One particularly good example was described: “A pop-up immediately comes up when you open the page, with advice, and a link to the NHS pages on COVID vaccines and list of symptoms. It also says how recently this guidance has been updated - earlier today. There is a section titled ‘Latest News’ on the front page which lets people know how they’ll be contacted for vaccines.”
- Reviewers rated this item poorly if the information merely “directs people to NHS 111 website” with no information specialised for patients of the specific practice.

1.b. Flu jab information

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Poor (2)	19 (66%)	4 (14%)	6 (21%)

- Two thirds of GP websites in Trafford received an average rating of Poor to Very Poor from our reviewers for their information about flu jabs.
- Our reviewers found it very hard to locate information regarding flu vaccination information on the majority of GP websites in Trafford. When it was available, it was often just a sentence stating that they are available with no further information. “No flu jab information on the front page. Found link on the news page. Very small writing hard to read.”
- The websites which did provide information were praised for providing “lists [of] who is prioritised and where to book annual jabs”; the sites described “differences between flu/covid symptoms” and “info on how people will be contacted regarding flu vaccines, and a link to the patient info leaflet”.

Question 2: New patients

We identified the crucial tasks a new patient might need to undertake and the information they might require before deciding to register with a practice. Our reviewers found that most Trafford GP websites offer clear and useful information for new patients.

2.a. How to register with the practice

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Good (4)	0 (0%)	5 (17%)	24 (83%)

- ‘How to register with the practice’ received the highest average grade of all the items our reviewers looked at on Trafford GP websites. Our reviewers found the best examples offered “detailed description on how to register, it even offers advice for temporary patients and what all identification to bring”. Many reviewers noted how helpful it is for patients to be able to download the registration form.
- GP websites were graded less favourably if a downloadable form was lacking, or the process relies entirely on printing it at home and doesn’t mention an alternative. “Print out registration form and health questionnaire and take to practice. Health questionnaire does not work. No mention of any alternative registration process. Not everyone has a printer.”

2.b. Practice information including staff

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Good (4)	0 (0%)	4 (14%)	25 (86%)

- Reviewers gave ‘Practice information including staff’ the second-highest overall average grade; they found the best websites displayed “detailed description of doctors and nursing staff” and “pictures and details of what days the GP’s work”.
- For the few websites rated less than Good, reviewers highlighted “Insufficient info about staff and their roles. Useful to include date when it was last updated.”

Question 3: Appointments

With the current move away from face-to-face contact, our reviewers considered all methods available to make and hold an appointment, including what to do if you needed to cancel a booking or seek help outside normal practice hours.

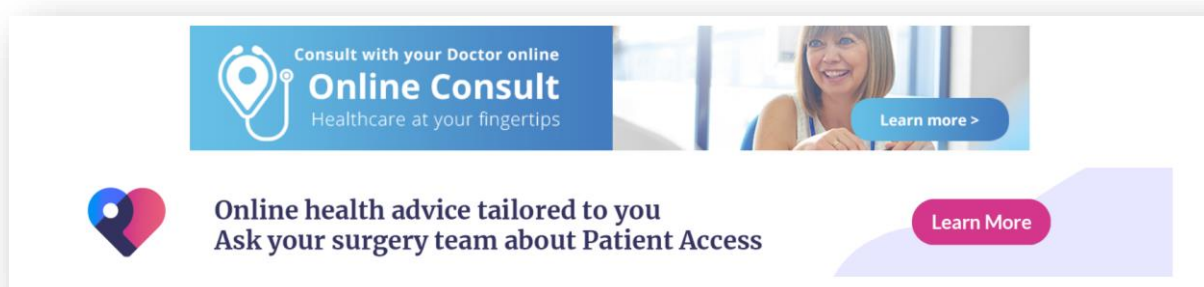
3.a. How to make an appointment

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Good (4)	0 (0%)	5 (17%)	24 (83%)

- With the fifth-highest average rating, ‘How to make an appointment’ was viewed positively by our reviewers for most GP websites in Trafford. Highlighted in particular were websites which contained a “dedicated appointment section on how to make appointments, even if a temporary patient”, and provided different routes to make appointments - online, phone and face to face (when restrictions allow). One practice was highlighted for offering appointments “Via online for routine, telephone for urgent and consultation. Txt reminders sent out if mobile known. Pre-bookable evening appointments twice a week.”
- Negative feedback centred on websites providing confusing, conflicting or outdated advice, for example still stating during the COVID-19 pandemic that patients should visit to book in person - or one particularly poor example with “Conflicting advice, e.g is it phone call or online? Not clear at all, on home page, appointment link sends you to a blank patient info document.”

3.b. Virtual appointments available? And 3.b.i. What system do they use?

Our reviewers found a variety of online systems available through GP websites. It was not always clear what system should be used for what task. Here’s an example from one GP practice website on which two systems appear next to each other on their homepage (Online Consult and Patient Access):



- In the case of our exercise, ‘Virtual appointments available?’ was understood by some reviewers to mean ‘Can I book an appointment online?’ and by others to mean ‘Can I have an appointment in a non-face-to-face way?’, resulting in conflicting categorisations of the same websites by different reviewers. Each GP website was revisited in order to catalogue the exact systems available. We found that all 29 websites enabled patients to either book an appointment or request a consultation through an online system.

Online service for patients:						
	AskMyGP	Econsult	Florey (AccuRX)	Online Consult	Patient Access	Patient Services
No. of GP websites	17	1	1	8	18	1

- While we were pleased to find that all Trafford GP practices make online access available, we have identified there are improvements possible in how they present these tools to their patients. 17 practice websites contained more than one online system.

“With all the GPs it’s a bit confusing for the public the difference between online services, e.g., Patient Access vs AskmyGP and why you need to register for both in a lot of places and the reason for doing this.”

3.b.ii. Guidance on how to use the system

Our reviewers gave a wide spread of ratings to the guidance available for virtual appointments.

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Okay (3)	6 (21%)	7 (24%)	16 (55%)

- It was noted that the better websites displayed “detailed explanation including video on how to use the app”, with a “clear list of instructions on when to ask; when/how a response will be received”.
- The websites rated less well often had “no guidance information on site”.

3.c. Offer for patients who can’t go online

While it may not seem logical to look online at the offer for those patients unable to go online, we felt that relatives/friends of patients may look at the GP website for them. Or, patients may get as far as the homepage but not have the requisite IT skills to be able to use the online systems to contact their GP. Websites should therefore have clear routes for these patients to access help.

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Okay (3)	4 (14%)	16 (55%)	9 (31%)

- The GP practices that were rated positively offered telephone contact in place of online access, e.g. “Can call reception instead of using AskMyGP and could have a telephone consultation.”
- GP websites rated poorly were found to have no mention of what to do if you are unable to go online. “Website assumption that everything is done online. No guidance for patients who don’t want to go online.”

3.d. How to cancel an appointment

Missed appointments are a problem for GP practices - in Trafford over the last 18 months up to February 2021, an average of 3,445 appointments were not attended every month¹⁰ - 5% of all GP appointments in our borough. We hoped to find that GP websites make it clear how important it is to attend your appointment and what to do if you can't.

While the overall average grade for this item was 'Okay', it received a wide variety of responses - with 9 GP websites rated Poor to Very Poor.

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Okay (3)	9 (31%)	7 (24%)	13 (45%)

- The websites that were rated most positively provided clear information about how to cancel appointments: "Cancellation phone number available at the top of every page as well as details within the appointment booking page". They provided a variety of methods of how to inform the practice: "Respond to txt message reminder, online or telephone surgery."
- GP websites rated negatively were found to lack information about how to cancel. "It may be there but I couldn't find it."

3.e. Out of hours service

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Good (4)	3 (10%)	11 (38%)	15 (52%)

- GP websites which mentioned "detailed info on surgery times and the extended out of hours services, incl A&E" were viewed more positively by our reviewers, including those which mentioned the requirement to ring 111 prior to attending A&E hospital services.
- GP websites received more negative ratings where reviewers "can't find mention of what happens when practice closed".

¹⁰ NHS Digital, Appointments in General Practice up to February 2021 (<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/appointments-in-general-practice>)

Question 4: Enabling patients to manage their own wellbeing

Our reviewers were looking for how GP practices could help patients to help themselves, with links to sources of advice/support outside of their remit, and access to information/records in a variety of ways.

4.a. Accessibility – other languages? Browse aloud?

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Good (4)	3 (10%)	10 (34%)	16 (55%)

- The inclusion of the Google Translate widget on many websites provided our reviewers with evidence to give most GP websites high ratings - “Extremely easy to switch languages for the whole website, and wide range of languages available.” However, one young reviewer tested the function using a language spoken by her parent and found the results to be incomprehensible, so we should not assume Google Translate will provide patients with the relevant information in their language.
- One GP practice provided “nice guides to NHS in variety of languages aimed at newly-arrived people seeking asylum”.
- Our reviewers found “not much option for broader accessibility” with no GP websites appearing to offer the Browse Aloud¹¹ function.

4.b. Repeat prescriptions

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Good (4)	0 (0%)	5 (17%)	24 (83%)

- Information regarding repeat prescriptions was rated highly by reviewers for the majority of Trafford GP websites.
- Websites were given the highest ratings where they “give links to how to order online and even urgent orders of medication, with instructions on where and when to collect”, and where they give “detailed information on how to apply and how prescriptions are sent to homes”. Patients can “Register with online services to order electronically. Paper based solution also available.”

4.c. How to access your medical records

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Okay (3)	7 (24%)	13 (45%)	9 (31%)

- Our reviewers gave a wide range of grades to Trafford GP websites for the information available on how to access medical records - 31% of websites were rated Good to Excellent, while 24% were rated Poor to Very Poor.

¹¹ Browsealoud (now known as ReachDeck) is a tool you can use to increase accessibility of a website; it enables a user to read a website out loud, increase magnification of text or apply colour filters to your screen. You can use it on a Smartphone, Tablet, PC or Mac. <https://www.texthelp.com/>

- The highest-rated websites allowed access to medical records through an online system that “clearly explains how to register for online services, which allows you to see your medical records”.
- Our reviewers noted that many websites didn’t explain what the medical records contain, their personal experience being that it isn’t a complete record. “Request Form provided but no details on how to access the record or what is stored in it.” “Difficult to find and limited on what you can access.”

4.d. Self-care advice

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Okay (3)	7 (24%)	10 (34%)	12 (41%)

- Reviewers found a variety of self-help information sources within GP websites. Some practices displayed “lots and lots of help for all types of people”. Some explained “basic remedies for small issues that can be solved at home”, while some included a “comprehensive ‘Your Health’ section along with links to NHS Live-Well”.
- Our reviewers did not find many references to local sources of help and signposting, e.g. Healthwatch Trafford¹², Trafford Council’s Trafford Directory, or key local organisations such as Age UK, Stroke Association, Trafford Carers and so on. We would not expect every GP practice to maintain an online database of local help/care/support groups, but our reviewers felt that websites could link to other key organisations who do. “Good guides on first glance but don’t contain any local information, e.g. Stroke doesn’t mention Stroke Association or their local support groups.”

¹² Healthwatch Trafford has previously provided all GP Practices with a bespoke HW branded widget that can be placed on their website, providing a direct link to our Patient Feedback Centre.

Question 5: Patient experience

This topic is of keen interest to Healthwatch Trafford and our volunteers, given that we are the local watchdog for patient experience in health and care. Our reviewers felt that patients would want to know how they could share their experiences with the practice, that there is a clear complaints procedure, that there is a PPG which meets regularly and shares outcomes, and that GP practices mention Healthwatch Trafford as a source of help and advice.

5.a. How to give feedback

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Okay (3)	5 (17%)	7 (24%)	17 (59%)

- The majority of GP practices were rated positively, with the highest ratings received by practice websites which included a dedicated page explaining how patients can give feedback. Some offered a “survey; Family & Friends Test; and a form on suggestions for improvement”.
- Reviewers noted that some GP websites had a “Link to annual patient survey on homepage but I'd like to know what they do with the results, can they share what was said in previous years?”
- The GP websites receiving the lowest ratings did so because they offered a method “to submit complaints, but not give feedback”.

5.b. Complaints procedure

Average grade	Number and percentage of GP websites		
	Very Poor to Poor	Okay	Good to Excellent
Okay (3)	11 (38%)	5 (17%)	13 (45%)

- Over a third of GP websites in Trafford received an average rating of Poor to Very Poor for the information they provide about their complaints procedure.
- Websites rated Okay explained that complaints should be directed to the practice managers, with contact telephone number. Websites receiving higher ratings offered a copy of the complaints policy, an email address, plus further contacts for if the situation was not resolved to the patients’ expectations - “3 options to contact Trafford CCG [Clinical Commissioning Group], Ombudsman and NHS England.”
- We found little if any mention of the local independent advocacy agency (Advocacy Focus) or Healthwatch Trafford as sources of help and advice in the event of a complaint.

5.c. Patient participation group

- Our reviewers found information about a PPG on 27 of the 29 GP practice websites.
- The best examples showed a “dedicated and detailed section for patient participation groups” and “online interest registration”.
- However, more frequently they found GP websites just explain the existence of a PPG - often it was “mentioned but no minutes from meetings provided nor

anything about its role and function”. Our reviewers did not find a GP website which mentioned the outcomes of their PPG.

5.d. Mention of Healthwatch Trafford

- Very few GP practices mention how to share compliments or concerns with Healthwatch Trafford or our young volunteers’ website [Youthwatch Trafford](#)¹³, or how to seek signposting information from us about local health and care (Healthwatch/Youthwatch Trafford found by reviewers on eight websites).

¹³ www.youthwatchtrafford.co.uk

Question 6: General impression

Reviewers were asked to record their overall impression of each GP practice. The individual practice feedback will be shared with the practices in question.

On the whole, our reviewers' general impressions of Trafford GP websites were mostly positive. Our reviewers praised GP websites where:

- Information is kept up to date and edited to reflect current circumstances.
- Navigation around the website is easy - the links work and there is clarity regarding what will be found on each page.

“The presentation of the website is appealing, with an image of the practice building on the home page, it is also user-friendly, the drop-down contents page allows for patients and viewers to navigate through to the services they wish to access.”

“A well organised site with lots of information for new patients. There were also tutorial videos which appeared useful. Therefore, I believe the website was well made, friendly and informative.”

“Very informative, with a variety of pages giving further material. Useful for the public if any queries about their health and clear evidence of experienced healthcare staff. It took me around 30 minutes to read through most of the pages to find information. Loved the fact that they included a search button at the top of the webpage, made it much easier to find the relevant pages of info I was looking for, making a quicker progress.”

Our reviewers also found that GP websites often offered more than appeared on first glance - sometimes due to the navigation, sometimes because the relevant pages had not been updated to reflect new online services now available.

“First impression is that the Home Screen is lacking in information. However clicking the three bars icon in the top left of the screen reveals a drop down menu with a lot more information. With no headings on the Home Screen then patients may miss this icon.”

“The website does more than you initially think! For instance, patients are able to access their records, book appointments and repeat prescriptions through two different methods (Patient Access and Patient Services - unclear why two systems!) but neither seemed to be mentioned on the homepage.”

GP websites were not viewed so positively if they contained:

- Out of date information, which made reviewers doubt the accuracy of other information on the site. “Is there a pandemic?”
- Difficult to find information.
- Broken links.
- Cluttered homepage.
- Having to use the search box to find everything as it wasn’t obvious from the menu - or there not being a search facility at all.
- Clunky navigation/layout, for example large images which fill too much of the page; menu items taking you to the bottom of a page rather than the top.

“Poor website structure & design with data all over the place. Main screen headings in the wrong order and data within them out of date or in the wrong place. Having to jump between sections to find out what you need. Online help facilities are poor. Very poor information around Covid. Little or no consideration for people for whom technology might be a barrier.”

“The website obviously not been updated for some time so the accuracy of the information provided is questionable. A number of information items roll across the Home screen, all of which are out of date, sometimes years out of date. Everything in the main News section is years out of date.”

Appendix 1: GP Practices in Trafford

At the time we conducted our project, there were 30 GP practices in Trafford - two sharing a website (North Trafford Group Practice: Chester Road and Seymour Grove sites).

Trafford Primary Care Network (PCN)	Practice Name	Website
Central - Sale	Bodmin Road Health Centre	www.bodminroadhealthcentre.co.uk
	Boundary House Medical Centre	www.boundarysurgery.co.uk
	Conway Road Medical Centre	www.conwayroadsurgery.co.uk
	Firsway Health Centre	www.firswayhealthcentre.co.uk
	Washway Road Medical Centre	www.wrmc.org.uk
North Trafford	Delamere Medical Practice	www.delameremedicalpractice.nhs.uk
	Limelight Health and Well-being Hub (Formerly Brooks Bar Medical Centre)	www.limelighthealthhub.nhs.uk
	Lostock Medical Centre	www.lostockmc.co.uk
	North Trafford Group Practice - Chester Road & Seymour Grove sites	www.ntgp.co.uk
	Old Trafford Medical Practice	www.oldtraffordsurgery.co.uk
South - Altrincham Health Alliance	Altrincham Medical Practice	www.altrinchammedicalpractice.co.uk
	Park Medical Practice	www.parkmedicaltimperley.co.uk
	Shay Lane Medical Centre (Drs Kelman, Cranston, Naylor)	www.shaylane.org
	St Johns Medical Centre at Altrincham Health & Wellbeing Centre	www.stjohnsmedicalcentre.co.uk
	West Timperley Medical Centre	www.westtimperleymedicalcentre.co.uk
South Trafford (STPCN)	Barrington Medical Centre at Altrincham Health & Wellbeing Centre	www.barringtonmc.co.uk
	Grove Medical Practice	www.grovemed.co.uk
	Riddings Family Health Centre (Dr Sally Johnson)	www.riddingsfamilyhealthcentre.co.uk
	Shay Lane Medical Centre (Dr M Patel)	www.shaylane.com
	The Family Surgery (Dr A K Sahal)	www.thefamilysurgeryaltrincham.nhs.uk
	Timperley Health Centre (Dr C Westwood)	www.timperleyhealthcentre.co.uk
	Village Surgery	www.thevillagesurgerytimperley.nhs.uk
West Trafford	Davyhulme Medical Centre	www.davyhulmemedicalcentre.co.uk
	Flixton Road Medical Centre	www.flixtonroadmedicalcentre.nhs.uk
	Gloucester House Medical Centre	www.ghmc.co.uk
	Partington Central Surgery	www.partingtoncentralsurgery.co.uk
	Partington Family Practice - Dr De Weever & Partners	www.drdeweeverandpartners.co.uk
	Primrose Surgery	www.primrosesurgery.co.uk
	Urmston Group Practice	www.urmstongrouppractice.co.uk

Appendix 2: Our GP review form - quality and content (Data collection stage 1)

healthwatch
Trafford

GP access & information: Review of Trafford GP websites

GP Practice name: _____ **Volunteer name:** _____

Website address: _____ **Date & time of review:** _____

Action		Grade					Notes
		Very Poor	Poor	Okay	Good	Excellent	
1. Current situation:	a. Covid-19 information including vaccination	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
	b. Flu jab information	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
2. New patients:	a. How to register with the practice	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
	b. Practice information including staff	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
3. Appointments:	a. How to make an appointment	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
	b. Virtual appointments available?	YES			NO		
	i. What system do they use?	AskMyGP			Other:		
	ii. Guidance on how to use the system	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
	c. Offer for patients who can't go online	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
	d. How to cancel an appointment	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
4. Enabling patients to manage their own wellbeing:	e. Out of hours service	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
	a. Accessibility - other languages? Browse aloud?	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
	b. Repeat prescriptions	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
	c. How to access your medical records	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
5. Patient experience:	d. Self-care advice	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
	a. How to give feedback	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
	b. Complaints procedure	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	
	c. Patient participation group	YES			NO		
	d. Mention of Healthwatch Trafford	YES			NO		

General impression:

Appendix 3: Essential information about GP practices (Data collection stage 2)

We used two sources to identify what information GP practices are *required* to make available to their patients: CQC guidance and the GP contract.

We found:

CQC Guidance¹⁴:

- ‘After we have published an inspection report, you must [display your updated ratings](#) in relevant locations and on your website.’

GP Contract¹⁵:

- Requires practices to offer the facility for a patient:
 - (a) to book, view, amend, cancel and print appointments online;
 - (b) to order repeat prescriptions for drugs, medicines or appliances online; and
 - (c) to view and print details of a patients’ repeat prescription.
- Requires practices to promote and offer to its registered patients access online to any summary information derived from the patient’s medical records.
- Requires practices to publish on their website details of the practice area through a sketch diagram, plan or postcode.
- Must publish results of the Friends and Family Test (doesn’t specify if this has to be online or another method).
- Requires practices to publish GP net earnings. This is one overall figure: the mean total (Total relevant income / number of GPs = mean total) plus the numbers of GPs.
- Must publish information about the requirement to assign an accountable GP to each of its new and existing registered patients.

As appointments, repeat prescriptions and medical records were already covered in our main website review, we decided to conduct a supplementary exercise to visit each GP practice website once to find the remaining items (recorded as Yes/No). The question numbering followed on from the form at Appendix 2.

- Q7: Does the practice website display their most recent CQC ratings on their website?
- Q8: Does the practice website publish GP net earnings as per the GP contract?
- Q9: Does the practice website share the results of the Friends and Family Test?
- Q10: Does the practice share the boundaries of the practice area (diagram/map or postcode)?
- Q11: Does the practice publish information about the requirement to assign an accountable GP to each of its new and existing registered patients?

¹⁴ CQC guidance:

www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20191104%20How%20CQC%20regulates%20primary%20medical%20services%20GP%20PRACTICES_MASTER.pdf

¹⁵ GP 2015/16 contract: www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2015/06/gms-2015-16.pdf and BMA guidance on publishing salaries:

www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/communication-with-patients/publishing-gp-net-earnings

If you require this report in an alternative format, please contact us with your requirements.



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