GP Website Health Check

Boughton Health Centre, Chester

This short report looks at the user experience of GP websites and gives insight to both GP Practices and the public into how easy they are to use to find information, book appointments, and manage medication. This report focuses on Boughton Health Centre in Chester. Their website can be accessed at:

www.boughtonhealthcentre.co.uk.

The desk research upon which this report is based was completed on 6 September 2021.

What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch Cheshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and care services, forming part of the national network of local Healthwatch across England. As part of our core activity we seek the views and experiences of residents of Cheshire East, and Cheshire West and Chester to help inform how health, care and wellbeing services are planned and delivered. The information we gather is then analysed so that we can identify and act upon trends and common themes by presenting our findings to decision makers in order to improve the services people use. We also share people's local views with Healthwatch England who strive to ensure that the government put people at the heart of care nationally.

More about our work can be found at www.healthwatchcwac.org.uk and www.healthwatchcheshireeast.org.uk.

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for everyone working in the health and social care system. GP Practices have, like others, had to respond to new demands which have caused changes in the way they operate. During this time, feedback received from people across Cheshire illustrates the challenges they have when contacting their GP Practice for advice, information or to make appointments. There is a heightened reliance on digital platforms for the sharing of information between service providers and the public. Websites are for many people their first point of access to information, and it is therefore vital that GP websites are providing accurate and up to date information for their patients. In the context of significant pressures and demands, it is hoped that this piece of work provides useful insight to assist GP Practices.

We carried out a 'health check' of GP websites in Cheshire to assess how easy the websites are to use, how easy it is to book an appointment and order repeat medication, and what signposting information and advice is available. In addition, we wanted to find examples of best practice to be able to share more widely across the primary care sector.

Similar projects have already been carried out by other Healthwatch organisations nationally including North Yorkshire and the East of England.

Methodology

Over a number of weeks between September and December 2021, a team of 16 Healthwatch Cheshire volunteers undertook a 'health check' of all websites of GP Practices in the 17 Care Communities across Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester — a total of 85 GP Practices. The volunteers acted as 'mystery shoppers', in the role of members of the public. To avoid preconceptions, volunteers did not evaluate their own GP's website.

The health checks involved asking 24 questions and providing answers to these questions to reflect positives and areas for improvement on websites.

Volunteers were asked to answer the questions as if they themselves were a patient who wanted to find the information on each website. It was recognised that one volunteer might answer differently to another: this represents the variation that members of the public might demonstrate when visiting their own GP website.

Similarly, if a volunteer was unable to find information on a Practice website — this represents a member of the public not being able to find the information they need. Such instances highlight a need for website improvement in terms of accessibility or clarity of navigation.

We adapted questions developed by Healthwatch colleagues in the East of England to reflect current national circumstances and issues raised by our ongoing work in Cheshire. We asked the following questions:

- What is the name of the GP Practice?
- Where is the GP Practice located?
- Which care community is the GP Practice located in?[1]
- Does the website have a search bar?
- Is the website accessible (simple and easy to use, with clear fonts and language)?
- Is there the facility to change to a language other than English or support for the partially sighted?
- Does the website have links to self-care and support organisations for health and wellbeing?
- Was it easy to find the information you needed? This will include at least: 1) Link to NHS 111 First. 2) Social Prescribers linked to GP Practice. 3) Local Authority Live Well website.
- Is it easy to access information on services and make an appointment?
- Does the GP Practice detail out of hours advice for use of NHS services?
- Is there a link for patient log-in and for downloading the NHS app?
- Is there a link to the NHS COVID-19 advice site?
- Does the website contain COVID updates and news?
- Is there information about or links to the local Healthwatch?
- Are the GP Practice's values and aims clearly outlined?
- Is the GP Practice's latest CQC rating and report detailed and linked?
- Does the website contain key contact information for staff, (incl. staff profiles)?
- Does the website have a patient feedback facility?
- Is it easy to find out how to make a complaint?
- Does the website contain current Patient Participation Group (PPG) information?

[1] Care Communities aim to bring together people living, working or involved in an area to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents.

- Are there social media links (e.g. for patients/users to share useful information from the GP website on their social media platforms)?
- Does the website detail Practice opening times, location map and address?
- Are there options of in-person, phone, or video appointments?
- Your overall opinion of the website, how logical is it, is it easy to navigate, is it user-friendly?

Our volunteers found many great examples of GP websites providing crucial information and support for members of the public in Cheshire, but also examples of areas in need of improvement. Reports will be published on our websites, and shared with GP Practices and our wider range of health and care partners.

The following pages provide our 'health check' on the website of Boughton Health Centre.

Website Health Check

What is the name of the GP Practice?

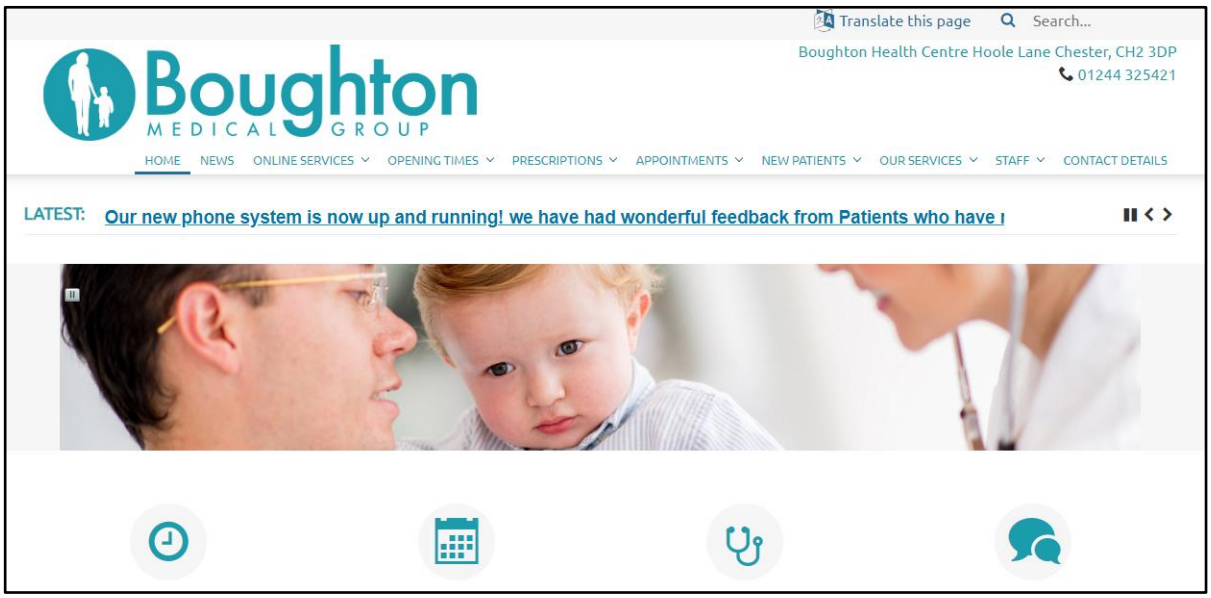
Boughton Health Centre

Where is the GP Practice located?

Cheshire West and Chester

Which care community is the GP Practice located in?

Chester East (Christleton, Littleton, Huntington, Boughton, Upton, Hoole, Mollington, Mickle Trafford)



Does the website have a search bar?

Yes. Search bar with range of main topics that patients would wish to access - opening times, appts, prescriptions. Also search button for other items.

Is the website accessible (simple and easy to use, with clear fonts and language)?

Yes. Large Buttons on home page for the main items which a patient may want to access with a further series of smaller buttons for other services. Lots of information on the webpages - font is quite small and may be an issue for some who have problems with eyesight. straightforward language. key Covid information highlighted in red.

Is there the facility to change to a language other than English or support for the partially sighted?

Yes. Link to google translate which seems to work well. Some of the home page text is in larger font and statements about arrangements for appts during pandemic are in larger font (and red text) which should be readable by those who are partially sighted.

Does the website have links to self-care and support organisations for health and wellbeing?

Yes. There is a link to the care hub which includes a range of services and support organisations for all age groups. This is via the online services page on the website and there are clear instructions.

Was it easy to find the information you needed? This will include at least: 1) Link to NHS 111 First. 2) Social Prescribers linked to GP Practice. 3) Local Authority Live Well website.

Yes. The link to extended hours services is on the same page as access to opening times under the heading 'when we are closed'. This includes a link to NHS111. Link to social prescriber at bottom of the webpage - could be missed. There are links to the Live well website and many other sources of information and organisations, via the care hub link accessed via the online services button.

Is it easy to access information on services and make an appointment?

Yes. Both the online services button and appointments button link to comprehensive and useful information about making appointments. This includes information about triage arrangements and telephone consultations. There is also a link to a 'patient access' page through which patients can make appointments and order repeat prescriptions.

Does the GP Practice detail out of hours advice for use of NHS services?

Yes. Information about extended hours services is linked to via the appointments button and the opening times button. There is also information about NHS 111, when to use 999 and information about pharmacy services.

Is there a link for patient log-in and for downloading the NHS app?

No login required on the main practice website - but links through to the 'patient access' site requires registration and log in. there is a link to updating your clinical record on the website front page - no log in is required to access this form and potentially this could be completed/amended by someone other than the patient (or their representative).

Is there a link to the NHS COVID-19 advice site?

Yes. Clearly visible on the home page.

Does the website contain COVID updates and news?

Yes. Links to relevant practice information and government webpage on the home page plus some relevant updates in the news page.

Is there information about or links to the local Healthwatch?

We could find no evidence of this.

Are the GP Practice's values and aims clearly outlined?

Yes. Core values and aims stated on the home page of the website along with general background to the practice. Also states link to Chester East PCN and their aims.

Is the GP Practice's latest CQC rating and report detailed and linked?

Yes. The CQC report is linked via a link at the bottom of the webpage.

Does the website contain key contact information for staff, (incl. staff profiles)?

Yes. Names, titles and qualifications are given. No profiles including information about experience or special interests or photos are provided.

Does the website have a patient feedback facility?

Yes. Link to friends and family test on home page. There is also information about the PPG and how to join. There is a contact us button alongside this information and on the menu bar at the top of the home page.

Is it easy to find out how to make a complaint?

Yes. Alongside the 'contact us' form there is advice to contact the practice manager in the event of a complaint (though no direct phone number or email address is given).

Does the website contain current Patient Participation Group (PPG) information?

Yes. Information on the homepage, and how to join the group are linked to via the home page. Last meeting minutes were July 2019. Also, the website has links to 'you say we did' reports but the most recent was October 18-March 19.

Are there social media links (e.g. for patients/users to share useful information from the GP website on their social media platforms)?

No social media links were found on the website - though some of the services linked to via the care hub and their 'silver cloud' self-referral service have a social media presence.

Does the website detail Practice opening times, location map and address?

Yes. Map and address on the home page of the website. Opening times on the 'opening times' page. (As well as out of hours numbers).

Are there options of in-person, phone, or video appointments?

Yes. There is a link to online consult service (24 hr) and information about accessing online consultations via patient access. Patients need to register for this service. range of telephone and in person appointments also seem to be available.

Your overall opinion of the website, how logical is it, is it easy to navigate, is it user-friendly?

The website is easy to navigate and some key information - such as the extended hours service are linked to via several pages (opening times and appointments) which makes navigation easier. the care hub link provides lots of useful information. The main functions that patients would want to access - appointments and prescriptions are easy to find and navigate. We am concerned about the ability to change contact information or clinical records information without a secure log in to the practice website.

Feedback from GP Practice

It is very positive to read that on the whole our website is easy to navigate and provides patients with key information, however, there are areas for us to work on to improve the patients experience when using the website. We have recently been in touch with a company who will support the practice in completely reviewing and updating the website, so the feedback provided by Healthwatch has been very informative and will factor in this website project. Whilst we are waiting for this project to begin, we will begin action the following points –

- Review all the font to ensure the size is large enough for patients who have problems with eyesight to be able to read.

- Access to update your clinical record – currently no login is required for this. A review will take place to identify what information patients can provide via this method and will review the security in place and put measures in place to enhance this security if required.

Healthwatch – A section will be added to the website and also to our Summer newsletter to provide information about Healthwatch. Links to your website will also be provided.

- PPG – We have been working closely with our PPG over the last couple of months especially as General Practice moves back to 'business as usual', engagement with our patients is very important. We will be resuming full PPG meetings and reinvigorating our approaches to increasing our PPG membership over the coming months. Further updates on progress will be added to the website in due course.

- Social Media – Link to relevant social media platforms will be reviewed and actioned as part of our website project.

- Key Contact Information for Staff – We are aware that many practices do know include photographs of the clinical and management teams as well as a short profile on each person. This is something we will review and take into consideration as part of our website project.

I hope that the above provides reassurance that as a practice the website, PPG and our links to Healthwatch and other third party/voluntary sector organisations are high on our priorities and positive updates to our website will be taking place over the coming year. We are aware that the website and our social media platforms play a key role in connecting and engaging with our patients.

Clare Sampson - Operations Manager

Next Steps

The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences have seen enormous pressure placed on GP Practices across the UK. They have been required to significantly adapt ways of working within very short time scales. Times like these present challenges but also opportunities. GP Practices have had to work much harder with often reduced workforces, delivering online and phone consultations in place of face-to-face appointments.

It is in this context that we have undertaken this work, to highlight a simple, yet very important, area for improving patient experiences. Our volunteers found many great examples of GP websites providing crucial information and support for members of the public in Cheshire, but also examples of areas in need of improvement. Later this year, we will revisit this work to report on any changes that have been made as a result of our findings.

Healthwatch Cheshire will disseminate our reports to all GP Practices involved in this study, NHS Cheshire CCG, and partners throughout the Cheshire Care Communities. We will continue to gather feedback from the public regarding their experiences of GP Practices more widely, and use this to identify areas of good practice and of concern.