GP Website Health Check

City Walls Medical 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 City Walls Medical Centre in Chester. Their website can be accessed at:

www.citywallsmedicalcentre.co.uk.

The desk research upon which this report is based was completed on 7 December 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?

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

- Does the website contain current Patient Participation Group (PPG) information?
- 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 City Walls Medical Centre.

Website Health Check

What is the name of the GP Practice?

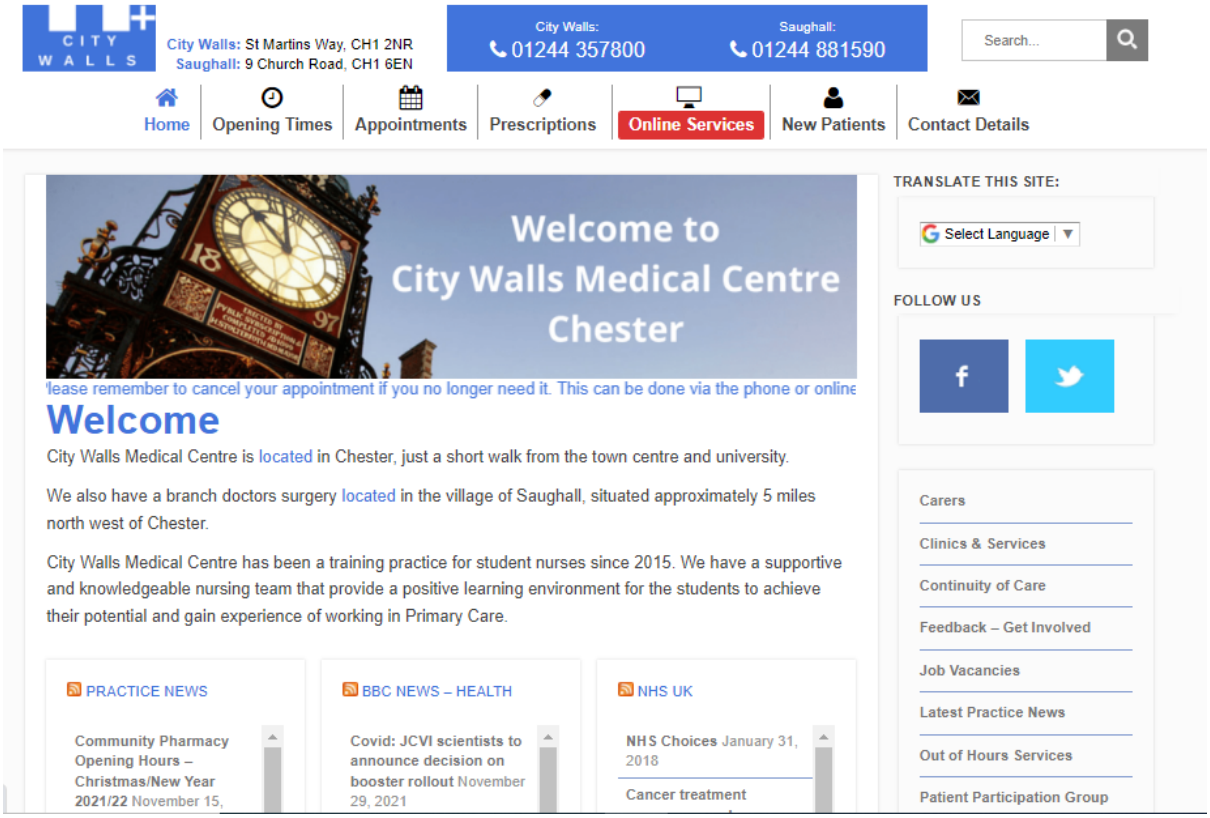
City Walls Medical Centre

Where is the GP Practice located?

Cheshire West

Which care community is the GP Practice located in?

Chester Central (City Centre)



Does the website have a search bar?

Yes, this is at the top of the page.

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

Yes, the website is easy to navigate and simple to use. The font is clear and red is used well to highlight key points. There is a formatting issue with the menu along the left hand side and the home page is very full which is quite overwhelming and may mean information gets missed.

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

There are lots of languages to choose from but no support for the partially sighted could be found.

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

Yes, there is a 'Self Care' page full of useful information and links. There is also a 'Carers' page which has information on what support is available. Under the 'Useful links' tab you can find a real mixture of links including 'City Walls Privacy Notices' and 'Domestic Abuse: How to get help' this is a great resource but not in an easy or obvious place to find.

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, there is lots of information about NHS 111 with links to the website. The link to the Live Well page is amongst other links to 'helpful Self Care information' it would be good if there was some information on the website about what the Live Well resource is. The only information that could be found about Social Prescribers is a News article 'Social Prescribers Day – 18th March 2021' this post introduces the practices Wellbeing Coordinator and explains you can book an appointment with her through the surgery. This information needs to have its own page on the website for people to refer to.

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

Yes, there is lots of information that is easy to find about what services the practice offers. The booking process is explained thoroughly and clearly.

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

Yes, there is an 'Out of Hours Services' page which explains what options are available to you and when they should be used. It is great that there is such a lot of information about the 111 service.

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

Under the tab 'Online Services' there is the option to sign in to Patient Access. There is lots of information on this page on how to use and register for Patient Access. No information could be found about the NHS App when using the search bar.

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

Unsure. There is a lot of information and links relating to COVID-19 on the homepage but it is an overwhelming about of information and slightly confusing. This could be laid out better to make it easier to read.

Does the website contain COVID updates and news?

Yes, on the homepage there are three regular news updates from the practice, NHS UK and the BBC News – Health.

Is there information about or links to the local Healthwatch?

We could not find evidence of this.

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

There is a singular statement on the homepage that says 'Our Vision: To make a positive difference in our patients' lives through expert advice and personal empowerment.' This is not easy to find and there could be more information.

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

Yes, however this is very small in the footer and there seems to be a formatting issue as text is overlapping. It would be better if the CQC box that is attached to the link was on the homepage.

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

Yes, there are details on where staff studied and what their interests are. It could be improved by adding staff photographs.

Does the website have a patient feedback facility?

Yes, there is a 'Feedback – Get involved' page which explains concisely how to provide feedback.

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

There is an 'In-house complaints procedure' which is explained well and is a simple process. However, no information could be found on how to make a complaint externally.

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

Yes, there is a PPG page with lots of information and resources.

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

There is a Follow Us section on the homepage with the Facebook and Twitter logo but the links would not work.

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

Yes, the information is clear and easy to find. There is an excellent map showing the one-way systems and details on disabled parking.

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

There is lots of information about how the appointment system works. They are triaging over the phone and then offering in person appointments but there is no mention of video appointments.

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

The website is very user-friendly. There is lots of really useful information on the website. The only negatives are that there is a formatting issue with the menu along the left-hand

side and the home page is full of useful information but it is not laid out in an accessible way meaning the information could be missed.

Feedback from GP Practice

No feedback was received at the time of publication.

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.