GP Website Health Check

Neston Surgery, Neston

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 Neston Surgery in Neston. Their website can be accessed at:

www.nestonsurgery.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 Neston Surgery.

Website Health Check

What is the name of the GP Practice?

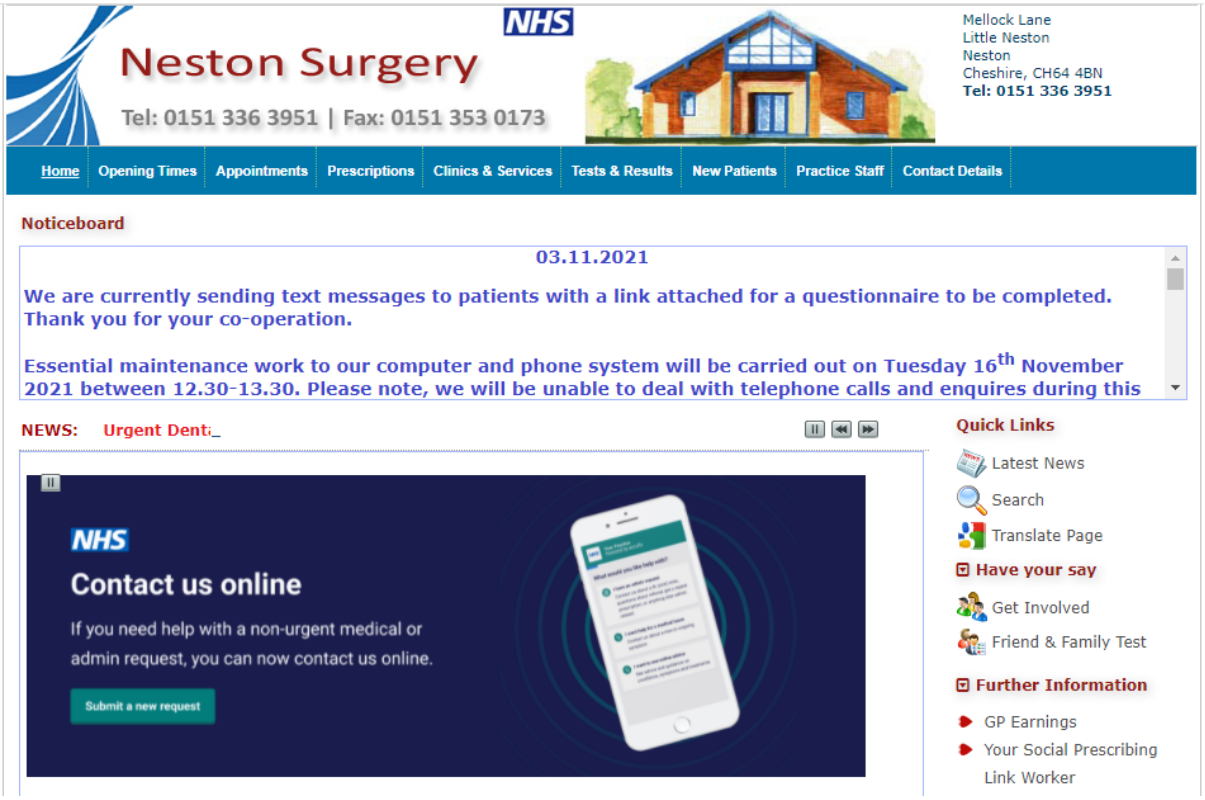
Neston Surgery

Where is the GP Practice located?

Cheshire West

Which care community is the GP Practice located in?

Neston and Willaston



Does the website have a search bar?

Yes, there is a search facility and many window tabs.

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

The website uses a variety of different fonts, sizes and colours on the same page which can make it difficult to navigate a particular page. Finding information is easy with the use of the tabs and the search facility and the language used is easy to understand.

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

Yes, there is a translation tab and also a link which allows you to change the page to whatever language you require. However, there seems to be no way for partially sighted people to change the size of the fonts.

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

Yes, the site mentions a few directly and provides a link to the Care Hub.

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 information on NHS111 and on what the link worker does including a name. We were unable to find any evidence of Live Well.

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

Yes, it is very clearly set out and detailed including times doctors are working

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

Yes, directs you to NHS111 or 999 if urgent care is required.

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

You can log in to patient access by clicking the book an appointment. There is no evidence of a link to the NHS app but there is a link to the NHS website if you know to click the image at the bottom of the page.

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

Yes, on the home page there is information on COVID-19, you can also click on the NHS logo to go the COVID-19 advice site.

Does the website contain COVID updates and news?

Yes, the information is clear and precise.

Is there information about or links to the local Healthwatch?

We could not find any evidence of this.

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

Yes, there is some information under practice policies.

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

We could not find any evidence of this.

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

Yes, the staff members are listed including qualifications and pictures, including what their role is.

Does the website have a patient feedback facility?

Yes, you can register on their website to be on the PPG, this enables patient feedback

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

The information could be found under practice policies and the information about what you need to do is very clear.

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

Yes, under the heading get involved.

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

We could not find any evidence of this.

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

Yes, the appointment times are easily found and understood. The address and location map are easily found.

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

Yes, there is the option of in-person and phone appointments. There is not mention of video appointments.

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

Yes, the information is found easily and is clear and concise. It is overall a user-friendly website.

Feedback from GP Practice

Good Afternoon

Thank you for the report and it's positive comments and for suggestions on how to possibly improve the contents and presentation. I will contact the Website provider to see if there is a facility to change the font size for visually impaired as I feel this is a very important observation.

The last two years particularly we have received patient information that has been updated on almost a daily basis and it has been very difficult to keep the website clearly presented. We were using different colours and fonts to try and distinguish different articles but it will be reviewed with your comments in mind.

The CQC report and link can be found under the latest news tab.

I wish to thank you for taking time to review the website and value your feedback.

Kind Regards

Heather Elkin

Practice Manager

Heather Elkin - Practice 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.