GP Website Health Check

Drs Adey & Dancy, Tarporley

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 Drs Adey & Dancy in Tarporley. Their website can be accessed at:

www.tarporleydoctors.gpsurgery.net.

The desk research upon which this report is based was completed on 7th 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 Drs Adey & Dancy.

Website Health Check

What is the name of the GP Practice?

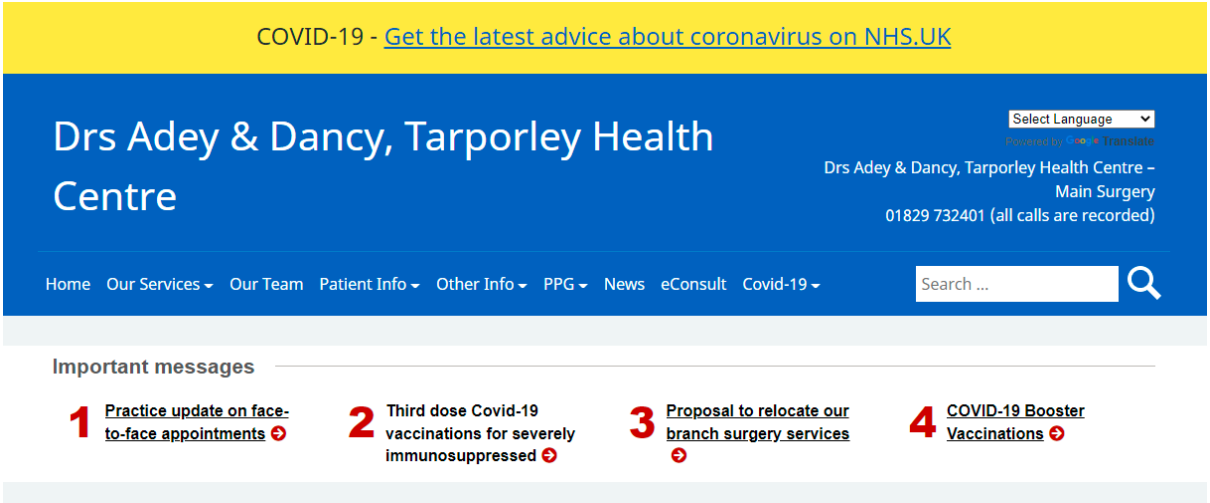
Drs Adey & Dancy

Where is the GP Practice located?

Cheshire West

Which care community is the GP Practice located in?

Rural (Tarporley, Malpas, Ashton, Farndon, Tattenhall, Kelsall, and Tarvin)



Does the website have a search bar?

Yes, there is a search facility in addition to a number of tabs. It is a very comprehensive home page.

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

Yes. Overall, it is easy to use but with multiple routes to find the same information. The font size is good and information is formatted to allow different sections to be distinguished or to highlight important messages.

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

Yes. However, there is nothing for partially sighted. There are ways to change the language.

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

Yes. There is a section on self-help found in patients information tab with links to other organisations. There is a separate graphic called self-care which provides different information specific to alternatives to seeing a doctor.

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.

It is easy to find information about NHS 111 and Social Prescribers from the home page by using the tab 'Our Services' or by using the search facility. The information provided is very thorough, making it a great resource. We could not find Live Well.

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

Yes. There is very clear information about how to do this and the variety of services the practice can offer.

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

Yes, this information is easy to find and comprehensive.

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

Under 'Our services' there is a page called 'Patient Access On-Line Services' this provides the relevant information on how to register and log in. There is no obvious information about the NHS App which would be really useful.

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

Yes, there is lots of information and links under the COVID-19 section.

Does the website contain COVID updates and news?

Yes, under the COVID-19 section and with updates in red font on the home page.

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?

Yes, there is a very clear vision statement which is under the patient information section

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

Yes. This is clear in the footer.

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

Yes, the staff are listed with qualifications. There are no profiles even though all names are created as links. It would be good if there were photos of the staff and information on their areas of interest and any specialist qualifications,

Does the website have a patient feedback facility?

Yes. Under the tab 'Other Info' there is the page 'Complaints, Compliments & Suggestions' which explains how to feedback to the practice.

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

Yes. Under the tab 'Other Info' there is the page 'Complaints, Compliments & Suggestions' which explains how to make a complaint to the practice and also a link on how to make complaints externally.

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

Yes. There is a section for the PPG which contains good clear information and a link to the PPGs own website.

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

Yes, there is a link to their Facebook feed on their home page.

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

Yes, maps and opening times for all locations.

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

Yes, in person and telephone appointments are specified. It is clear that video consultations were used during lockdown but it is not clear if they are still available.

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

The website has some really good features and lots of really useful information and resources. Although it is relatively easy to navigate improvements could be ensuring information is in the most logical place and ensuring there is no duplicate or conflicting information and check links lead to additional and up to date information.

Feedback with GP Practice

Dear Healthwatch,

Thank you very much for this interesting and useful feedback on the user experience of navigating around our practice website. We are very pleased to see that overall our website has some really good features, lots of really useful information and is relatively easy to navigate. We have worked hard over the pandemic in particular to keep the website as up to date as possible so that we can direct patients to it for updates rather than them having to make direct contact with the practice.

We take on board the points that have been highlighted in the report as area's for possible improvement in our website all of which are very helpful. We will seek to make the suggested changes and additions as soon as possible as a result of receiving this report. We will share the Healthwatch report with our PPG and ask that they review the changes made once we have had the opportunity to update the website.

Thank you very much for undertaking this exercise and sharing your findings with the practice.

Further to my email below last week we have sought feedback from our website supplier on its user friendliness for visually impaired patients and we have received the following feedback from them;

Our website if fully optimised and tested for accessibility.

Most people with a visual impairment already have tools enabled on their devices specific to their needs.

For example:

Our websites can be zoomed to over 300% without distorting or losing any text. Anyone can do this using the built in zoom available in all modern website browsers. Use Ctrl and the + key on a PC or Cmd and the + key on a Mac. Or Ctrl and the mouse wheel to zoom on a PC.

Our websites work with all common screen reading software so visitors who use this technology can have the site read out to them.

We ensure the colour contrast is correct so text remain legible and the text size is set to the recommended minimum or larger.

You can navigate the website without a mouse by using the Tab key on a Mac or PC (some computers vary slightly) and you'll find our websites light up in yellow to show which link of button is active.

We don't therefore need to make any specific changes regarding this but it is helpful to be aware of these potentially hidden features to those that aren't visually impaired.

Samantha Jeffery - 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.