

## **Reviewing Patient And Carer Access To And Experiences Of GP Surgeries**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In December 2014, the newly formed Healthwatch Swindon board decided that they wanted to conduct a survey to identify the top 3 priorities in health and social care of the local people of Swindon. From the start of the survey, it was clear that access to primary care would feature in the top 3.

This supported ongoing evidence that we received from local people regarding:

- Delay in getting non emergency appointments;
- Accessibility issues like getting through on the telephone or making online appointments;
- Comments about the attitude and practice of GP staff including clinicians and reception/admin staff; and
- The current capacity of surgeries within Swindon.

Between January and March 2015, Healthwatch Swindon provided work experience for 4 New College students over a ten-week period. As part of the work experience programme the students reviewed websites for all 27 GP practices, which resulted in a report (Appendix 1) that raised the following considerations:

- Awareness and completion of the Friends and Family Test.
- Confirmation of GP practices accepting new patients.
- Awareness of Healthwatch Swindon role to support the practice and patients through the complaint process.
- Support practices and patients to develop and maintain effective PPGs as required by the NHS contract.
- Provision of accessibility and services for those with a disability or requiring interpretation services.

This project going to take a close look at patient/carers access to and experience of GP surgeries and focuses on patient experience rather than clinical performance.

## **WHO WE ARE:**

Healthwatch gives people a powerful voice locally and nationally. At a local level, Healthwatch Swindon works to help local people get the best out of local health and social care services. Whether it is improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow. Healthwatch Swindon is about local voices being able to influence the delivery and design of local services. Not just people who use them, but anyone who might need to in future.

Jo Osorio, Community and Engagement Officer, Healthwatch Swindon will undertake project management.

## **PROJECT AIM:**

Through this project we will also use evidence-based insight to:

- Address key findings of the snapshot report (Appendix 1) as identified previously;
- Work with practices and their patient participation groups (PPGs) and the Clinical Commissioning Group/NHS England and contribute to making improvements to the experience people have; and
- Report to practices and to commissioners (NHS England and NHS Swindon CCG) about what we find and make recommendations.

We recognised that there are issues, both locally and nationally, which the project will not resolve – like increasing the number of GPs. But we do have significant statutory powers to ensure the voice of the consumer is strengthened and heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and care services.

Therefore recording what we find out and reporting and making recommendations means that we can monitor and report on changes in the future.

## **TARGET GROUP:**

Local residents (both patients and carers) who access a GP surgery within Swindon including Wanborough; and Shrivenham because it is included in the NHS Swindon Clinical Commissioning Group ambit. In order to maximise the potential of this work we will also involve:

- a. People from PPGs where they are willing and available to help; and/or

- b. Any of our own volunteers or participants interested in taking a closer look at their own GP practice.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

We will undertake (desk and actual) research into:

1. Access including physical access in the building and provision of e.g. induction loops
2. Websites including ease of navigation, accuracy, information about making complaints, information about the Friends and Family Test and repeat prescriptions; out of hours arrangements and NHS 111
3. Appointment arrangements including access to online booking and evening appointments
4. CQC reports – in particular those published following inspection in October/November 2014
5. NHS complaints advocacy undertaken by Healthwatch Swindon
6. Positive and adverse comments received by Healthwatch Swindon
7. Facebook and Twitter comments and NHS Choices
8. We will arrange work with PPGs to undertake some secret shopper visits and telephone calls to surgeries
9. We will make calls out of hours to listen to answerphone messages
10. We will review whether the information displayed in surgeries includes
  - a. CQC inspection reports where published
  - b. Healthwatch posters
  - c. Friends and Family Test boxes
  - d. Complaints procedures
11. And information from our patient participation group forums in September and October 2015 and including their use of the new PPG framework.

Healthwatch Swindon will also invite participation and feedback via the people registered on its database, community engagement activities as and when appropriate and through social media channels.

The project will also be supported through a press release to local media.

**Key Considerations:**

What we find out will be a snapshot in time. Things change (get better and worse) and our report will acknowledge that.

As necessary and where relevant to the project, we will confirm and note practice contractual obligations to differentiate between what we/patients may view as desirable or necessary and what practices are actually required to do.

We will also note that practices are independent entities owned by their partners; and that they include Carfax Health Enterprise community interest company.

**Timescale:**

This brief was prepared in September 2015 but some preliminary work has already been undertaken by students on placement with us. We will undertake the project during October, November and December 2015.

**Reporting and reviewing outcomes:**

We will complete the work with a report and recommendations, which will be available through our website at [www.healthwatchswindon.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchswindon.org.uk).

We will review the outcome of the work and any recommendations in May 2016.

**REFERENCES:**

Appendix 1: GP Practice Website Review.

**Date Prepared:**

September 2015



APPENDIX 1:

## GP Practices Website Review

Snapshot Report March 2015

May 2015

### **Foreword:**

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tomorrow. Healthwatch is about voices being able to influence the delivery and design of local services.

### **Introduction:**

Between January and March 2015, Healthwatch Swindon provided work experience for 4 New College students over a ten-week period.

At this time, the newly formed Healthwatch Swindon board decided that they wanted to conduct a survey to identify the top 3 priorities in health and social care of the local people of Swindon.

From the start of the survey, it was clear that access to primary care would feature in the top 3. This supported evidence that we received from local people including access to information.

It was therefore decided to use the work experience opportunity to review the websites of all 27 GP surgeries.

### **Methodology:**

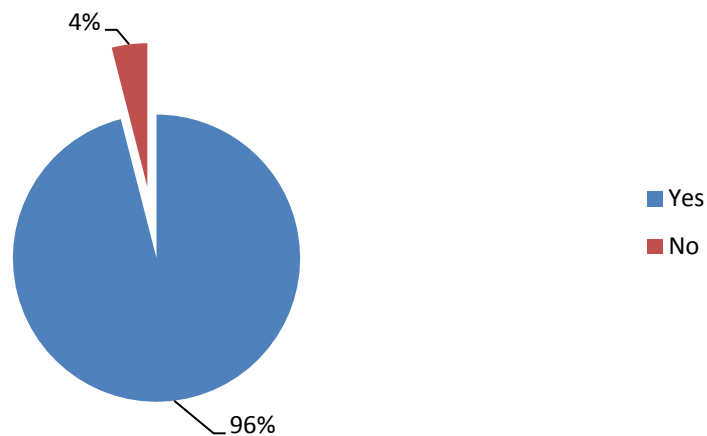
Between January and March 2015, the New College students conducted a review of all websites using a questionnaire (Appendix 1).

All 27 GP surgeries were reviewed.

This report evaluates the website and the information contained within it.

**96% of GP websites are user-friendly.**

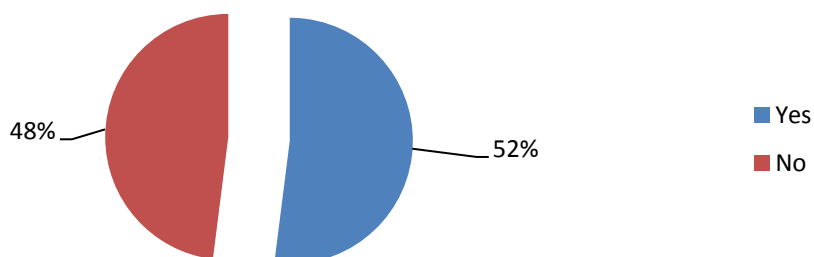
### Is the website user-friendly?



The majority of websites were classed as being user-friendly and informative. Out of date information, lack of details regarding Patient Participation Groups and accessibility for those with a disability were areas to be improved.

**Just over half of the websites survey provided accessible information on the Friends and Family Tests.**

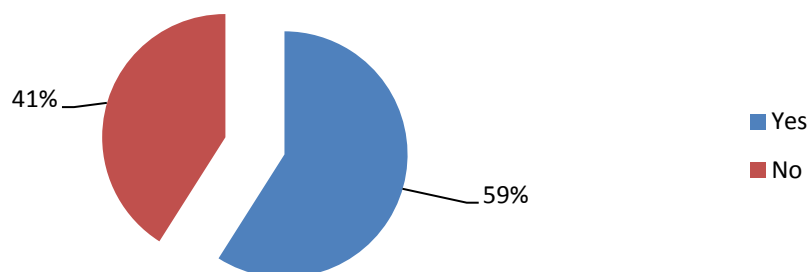
### Does the website provide information about the Friends and Family Test?



The Friends and Family Test (FFT) is a single question survey, which asks patients whether they would recommend the NHS service they have received to friends and family who need similar treatment or care. Since January 2015, the FFT was extended to capture feedback from GPs and so it is a critical tool to review patient feedback. Therefore, it was disappointing that the percentage was not higher.

**Nearly two thirds of GP surgeries offer an online appointment system.**

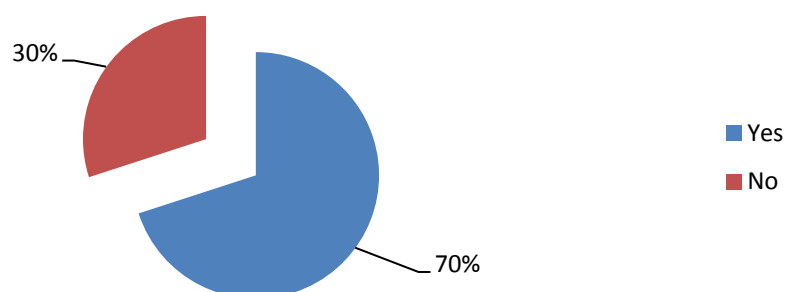
### Is there an Online appointment booking system?



In today's environment of digital technology and busy schedules, it is encouraging to see the amount of surgeries offering an online appointment system.

**Over two thirds of GP surgeries are accepting new patients.**

### Is the Practice/Surgery accepting new patients?

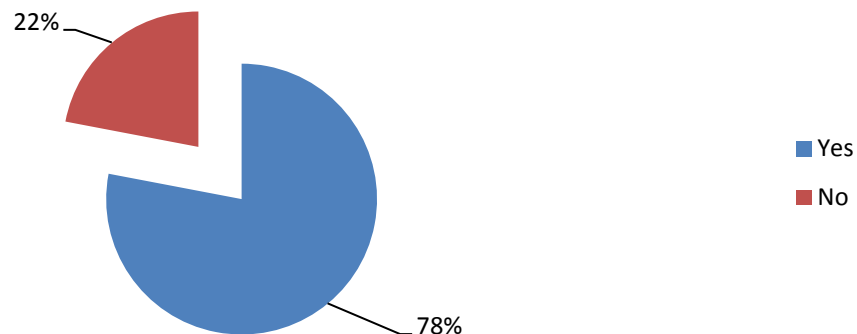


It is reported, both locally and nationally, that there are a shortage of GPs and applications received by NHS to reduce surgery hours. Considering this and evidence that Swindon is growing and the population is living longer, it is encouraging to see this as high as it is but inevitably the concern is keeping up with the natural increase in demand based on the above factors. It would be worth reviewing this question in person as opposed to relying on information provided by the website.



**Nearly 4 in 5 GP practices provide clear guidance on how to provide feedback on its services or how to complain.**

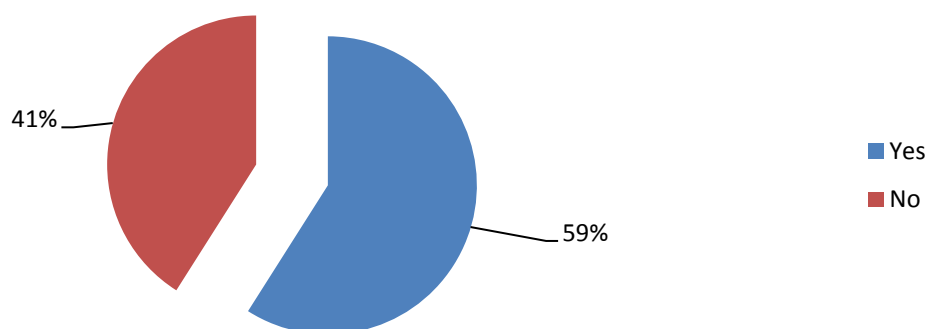
**Does the website give the user an opportunity to provide feedback on its services or how to make a complaint?**



Research conducted by Healthwatch England in 2014 highlighted that, generally, the complaint process regarding an NHS funded service is both confusing and complex – with an estimated 250,000 incidences being unreported each year. Through our independent NHS advocacy service, we encourage local resolution first so it is great to see that, for the majority, this information is readily accessible.

**Nearly 2 in 3 GP practices promote their Patient Participation Group.**

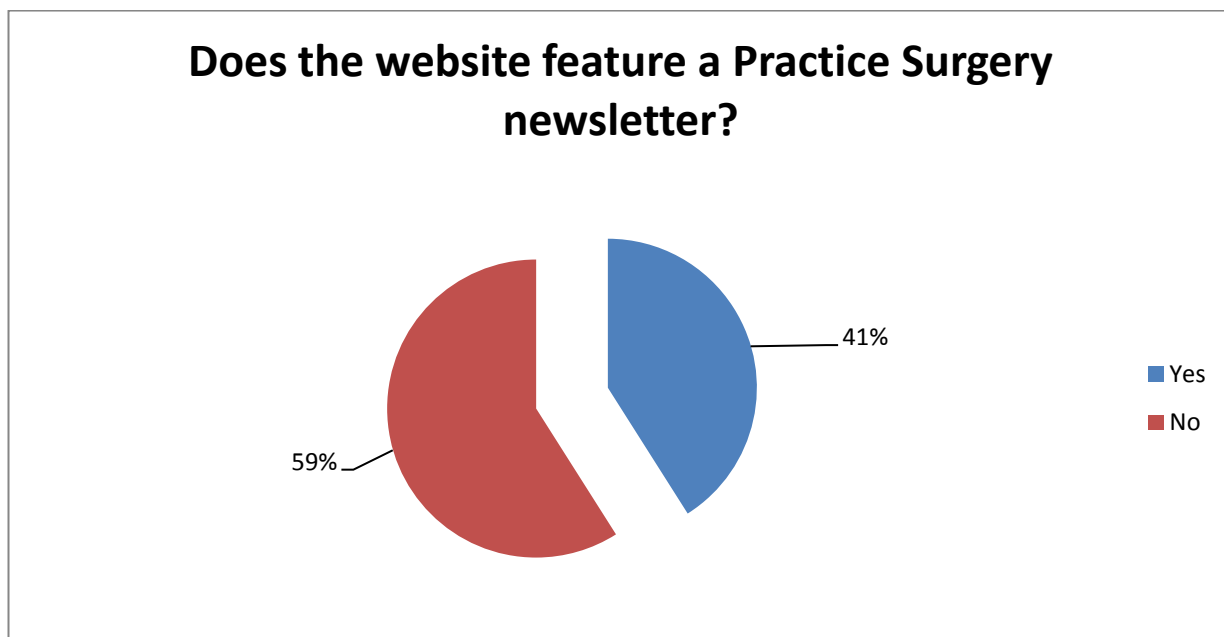
**Does the Practice/Surgery have a Patient Participation Group (PPG)?**



From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015, it is within the NHS contract that all GP practices will have a Patient Participation Group (PPG). Through our PPG Forum, we know that at least 50% of the GP practices within Swindon currently have a PPG, some being more involved than others. This is also evidenced by the varying levels of information on the websites regarding what a PPG is, how it works and how to get involved.

It is also worth noting that members of the public also contact us when they are trying to establish a PPG within their practice.

**Less than half of GP practices feature a practice newsletter on their website.**

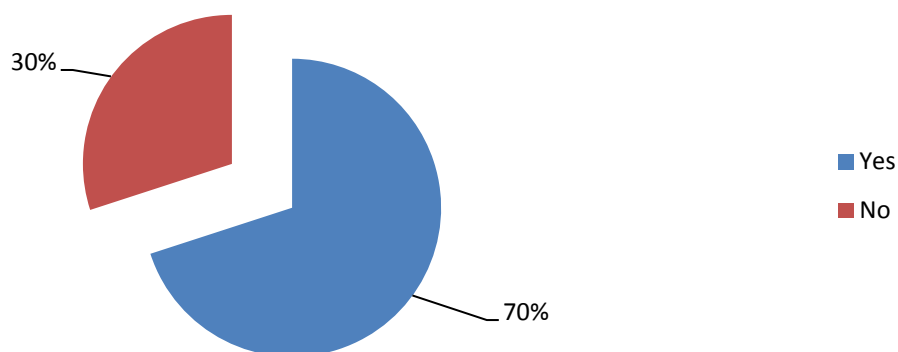


Communication is key between surgeries and its patients and so it was disappointing to see that less than 50% use this as an opportunity to regularly update and communicate.

It should be considered, that although a practice does not feature a newsletter online, it could be available in the practice itself.

**70% Of GP practices provide clear advice of who to contact out of hours.**

**Does the website have information on what a patient can do if they need care out of hours?**



The review of websites showed that the majority of websites provide clear guidance on details of contact out of hours. However, it is concerning that 8 practices' websites did not provide clear information regarding this. Considering the impact on A&E and the ongoing work to promote other alternatives for non life-threatening emergencies within Swindon, communication to patients here is essential – even if directing to NHS 111.

**The final questions specifically related to GP practice provisions and additional services available for those with a disability – hearing, visual or physical.**

For the majority there seemed no additional provision to support those with a disability or though it was not the case for all. A few practices offered home visits and highlighted measures in place to access the surgery and book appointments.

## **In Summary**

Generally, it is encouraging to see that the team reviewing the GP practices website found them user-friendly and accessible in terms of information. It should be noted that where information was not found, it is possible that it did feature on the website, but was not clearly visible or accessible.

From a Healthwatch Swindon perspective, there are key findings that need further consideration, being:

- Awareness and completion of the Friends and Family Test.
- Confirmation of GP practices accepting new patients.
- Awareness of Healthwatch Swindon role to support the practice and patients through the complaint process.
- Support practices and patients to develop and maintain effective PPGs as required by the NHS contract.
- Provision of accessibility and services for those with a disability.

We are now developing a plan to review the above key findings and to ensure the accuracy of this report.

- Develop a project to review access to and experiences of GP practices;
- Conduct a replica exercise in January 2016 to measure change and include visits to GP practices.

It is also recognised that, at the time of this review the Friends and Family Test had just been introduced within GP practices (Jan 2015) and PPGs were not a mandatory requirement of the NHS Contract.

As we finalise details, the information will be available through our website ([www.healthwatchswindon.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchswindon.org.uk)) and our monthly e-bulletin, which you can register for by emailing us at [info@healthwatchswindon.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchswindon.org.uk).

**Thank you to everyone who helped contribute to this report.**

**Pete Rowe**  
**Manager**