



# CommUNITY Barnet Primary Care Group Barnet GP Website Audit and Report

## A report on the quality of GP websites



### Executive Summary

We are moving to a new Primary Care paradigm. Entry to NHS treatment is generally via your GP, and initial access to the GP is via digital means - therefore the GP website is an important part of this. It is ever more important that patients and carers are driven to an accessible, easy to navigate, practical, informative web site. Nationally in England, the NHS has outlined the push towards a digital 'front door' for the NHS, with patients using their practice website and the key NHS websites and apps to begin their patient journey before being triaged and signposted to the appropriate response. There have also been changes to what GP websites are required to have as part of the new General Medical Services (GMS) contract including wider accessibility requirements. Following earlier Primary Care Group (PCG) reports and feedback from Barnet patients and residents, it was decided by CommUNITY Barnet Primary Care Volunteers to audit the quality and accessibility of key information for patients on Barnet GP websites.

Four key areas were reviewed:

- **Patient Information**
- **Online Services**
- **Accessibility and Ease of Use**
- **Complaints, Patient Involvement and Engagement**

We were pleased to see many improvements and easy to find, quality information on many websites. However, we did identify the following areas for improvement:

- Information for patients about how to register with the practice, whatever a patient's living situation
- Information about online services for patients, the benefits for patients and how to sign up
- The accessibility of GP practice websites in a number of aspects
- Information about all aspects of *Complaints, Patient Involvement and Engagement*

We have made the following recommendations for GP practices in Barnet and for NCL CCG:

- 1 For each GP practice to review and improve their website by April 2021
- 2 For all GP practices to remove or update old or out-of-date resources/links and articles and to update their websites on a monthly basis
- 3 To ensure there is sufficient information for all patients about how to register with a practice
- 4 To improve information and access to online services and clarify a clear digital pathway for patients
- 5 For practices to fundamentally improve the information on Complaints, Patient Involvement and Engagement
- 6 For practices to improve the accessibility and functionality of their websites using the guidance provided by NHS Digital
- 7 For the CCG to support practices with this work and identify wider strategy for GP websites and digital NHS pathways
- 8 CCG to commission the Primary Care Networks or Barnet Federated GPs to help support these important further changes

- 9 If there are wider plans to implement or support practices to further change or improve websites, patients and engagement groups should be part of the conversation

## Introduction

As part of our wider engagement and research over the last two years, we found that the quality of the information and user experience of many general practice websites in Barnet was severely lacking and that data was out of date and inconsistent. In 2018 and 2019, the Primary Care Group looked at the availability and quality of the information available to patients on GP websites in Barnet regarding Extended Access appointments in Barnet.<sup>1</sup> You can find the most recent report amid other recent Primary Care Group work on their webpage.<sup>2</sup> The Primary Care Group has previously worked with residents to identify the public's priorities regarding practice websites as part of a Healthwatch Barnet report in 2015. In the last 18 months, we have received feedback from residents having difficulty accessing information from their GP surgeries online. Many people tell us they cannot get same-week appointments, and they have not been told about the different ways of getting appointments at different times and places. Residents told us GP practices don't ask them for feedback on services received, and they're not told how to get more involved by joining Patient Participation Groups or by contacting Healthwatch or other patient groups. We also know it is difficult to make a complaint because information on the process is not made easily available.

The NHS is increasing the range of digital health tools and services. People can seek health information and support online using digital technology. GP websites must make it easier to access relevant information and encourage greater self-help. Our review investigates the breadth and quality of information available to patients on GP websites and how easy it is to navigate websites to find information on key areas. A recent audit commissioned by North London Partners looked at the take up and adoption of appropriate levels of Coronavirus information for websites in North Central London (NCL) during the initial stages of the pandemic and reflected more widely on the quality of GP websites and made similar comments. Many other patient engagement and representative groups have been concerned about and looked at this; several Healthwatch have produced reports on this.<sup>3</sup> The coronavirus pandemic has pushed up traffic to GP websites and made them even more important information gateways to accessing primary care and other NHS services.

From April 2020, as part of the current GP contract, all practices must have a website or alternative online presence;<sup>4</sup> and to maintain the NHS website' (NHS.UK) practice profile page. This information must be maintained and kept up-to-date at all times and cover the following:

- Practice premises' addresses/ telephone numbers/ email addresses/ other methods for the patients to access services such as to the practice's online services.

The minimum that a GP website must have is the same information that is required of a practice leaflet:

- How to register as a patient/ the services available including by the PCN/ how to obtain home visits/ dispensing information; complaints procedure/ responsibilities of the patients/ GP earnings/ PPG info/ how patients can get a named accountable GP/ online services available and means for patients to book, view, amend and cancel appointments.

Practices need to meet both requirements and must have an online presence. The NHS.uk practice profile is not sufficient as it does not contain all of the practice's services and information.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://barnetfederatedgps.org.uk/extended-access-service/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.communitybarnet.org.uk/portfolio/community-barnet-primary-care-group>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/reports-library>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/226/made>

## Methodology

Throughout August and September 2020, our Primary Care Group volunteers looked at the 51 live GP websites.

We were able to audit 51 practice websites of the GP websites in Barnet. These are outlined in the appendices at the end of this report. One practice did not have a website; the Cricklewood Health Centre. We rang the surgery to ask them about this and they told us that they did not need to provide a website. The practice has had a website previously - the PCG has used it in the past but currently the website is still not functional as of November 2020.<sup>5</sup> They do have practice information online via the NHS.uk website.

Our role as the Primary Care Group is to offer a service user perspective. Our assessment of GP websites is guided by the information patients tell us they want to find. We have shared the latest contractual obligations of GP practices (above) and these have formed part of our thinking but we have also looked more widely to assess the quality and content of information that service users tell us they want, and expect, to find on GP websites rather than just what GP websites are contractually obliged to provide.

We looked at and rated 17 areas under four main categories:

- **Patient Information**
- **Online Services**
- **Accessibility and Ease of Use**
- **Complaints, Patient Involvement and Engagement.**

### Rating methodology

**A is clear, comprehensive, easy to understand, easy to find**

**B is less clear, comprehensive, easy to understand or find**

C is very little or no information on this to be found and/ or very confusing and unhelpful or out of date

**D none of this information can be found anywhere on the website**

The above categories break down how the ratings are applied quite clearly. Many websites do have information about a particular subject, but the longer it took and the less clear and up-to-date the information was, reflected itself in a B or C rating as appropriate.

Each Primary Care Group volunteer adhered to certain guidelines about what we were looking for to keep the process as simple and as fair as possible for each website, in what could occasionally be a subjective process as so many websites operate differently and present information in different formats. We are presenting this information as a borough-wide picture to help look at the quality of information at a Barnet level.

Clearly, each practice website has an individual rating overall and for each category as part of this process, but it would be unwieldy and unhelpful to go into detail and pick out practices that have done particularly well or badly in this analysis. We are seeking to present general good and bad practice in Barnet and recommend certain key areas for improvement more widely.

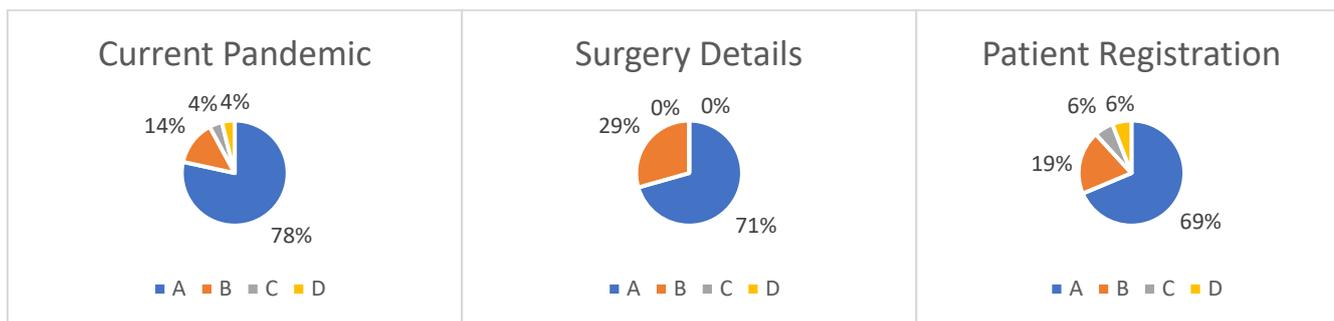
We are happy to share our results with practices if they would like to see them.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://http://www.cricklewoodgphealthcentre.nhs.uk/>

## Findings

### Patient information:

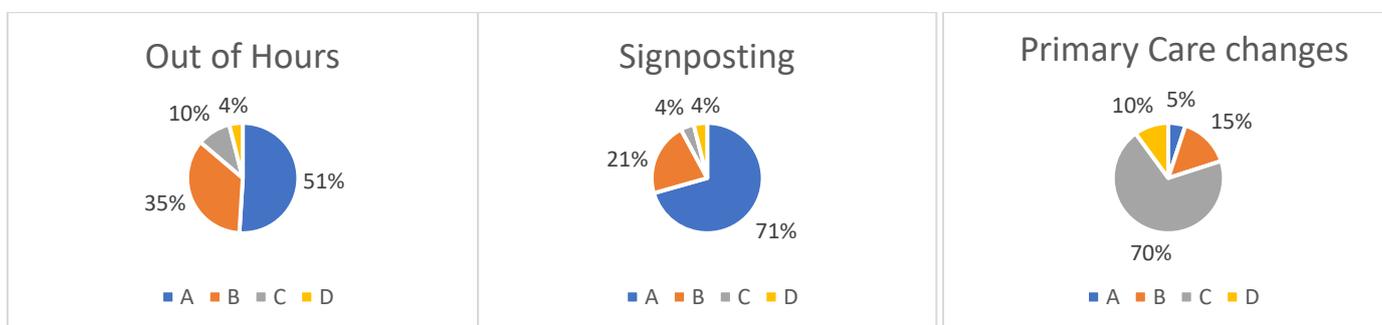


We were very pleased to see that most practice websites did very well in terms of basic and fundamental practice and patient information. Nearly every website (92%) had the standard NCL-wide information about current changes/ restrictions due to Covid. Nearly all websites adopted a standard banner that appears when users first arrive at the website with standard information that has clearly been recommended at NCL level. Some practices have adapted this information or added further updates onto their basic website information, but importantly it appears that nearly every practice has this information front and centre.

100% of websites had basic information about the practice which is very encouraging as it is an improvement. Previously we have seen websites that have neglected some key parts of practice information.

There are a significant proportion of websites that only have the necessary basic information about how to register with the practice (88%). Many practices have the bare minimum information available and do not make it clear that patients do not ultimately require an address to register with a practice. Most practices make it seem that this is essential when it is not. Patients are presented with a number of criteria and barriers to registration rather than a clear path or set of options. Patients who might not have an address include those who are homeless or do not have a current address, as well as patients who are in the country temporarily, who serve in the armed forces, and many others. It is understandable that practices do not go into great detail on the main patient registration page but very few of them link to, signpost or refer to these circumstances which are clearly available on the NHS website.<sup>6</sup> Some websites simply suggest that patients come in and take it from there while others do offer various types of application form. We would suggest that practices should have much more useful and detailed registration information on their websites and/or signpost and link to further relevant information on established NHS sites to make this a quicker and easier process for all potential patients.

### Out of Hours information and Signposting



**Out of Hours:** This is the information that we have looked at before (see previous Out of Hours report: link to Primary Care Pages: <https://www.communitybarnet.org.uk/portfolio/community-barnet-primary-care-group>).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-practice/>

In that report we found that:

*'The 2019 review of EAS information on GP practice websites has revealed that some small improvements have been made since Healthwatch Barnet's 2018 report. While there are more practices promoting the Enhanced Access Service, some practices have yet to provide this information to their patients. It is encouraging that those websites...However, it is essential that all Barnet patients are provided with clear and consistent information about EAS to avoid confusion and to provide equal access across the borough.'*

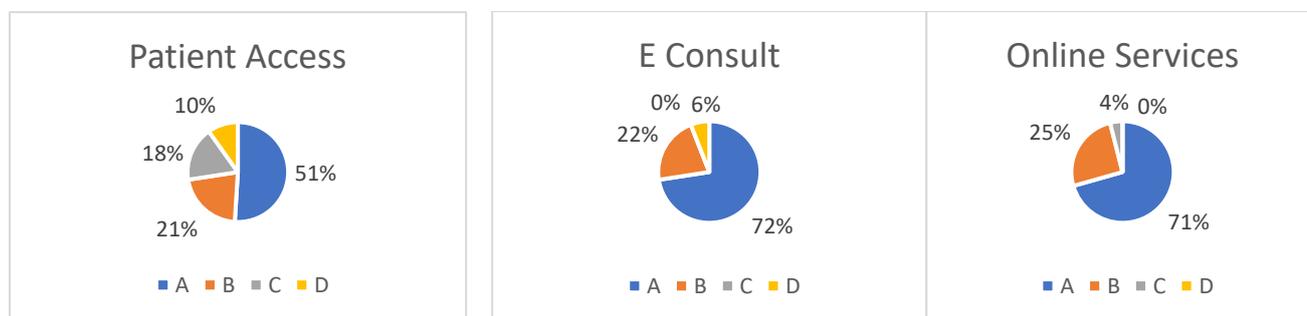
In the 2019 report, we found that 86% percent of websites provided some form of sufficient information about Out of Hours services in Barnet and this has remained steady at the same rate in 2020 - although only 51% of practices were marked A (clear, comprehensive, easy to understand, easy to find).

There are a significant number of practices which continue to offer a muddled and unhelpful breakdown of GP appointments that patients can access outside of normal practice hours locally, and what to do when patients want to speak to someone outside of normal hours or if patients need more urgent help. Our recommendations in our previous reports were to keep it as simple as possible and signpost patients to the Extended Access Service operated by Barnet Federated GPs<sup>7</sup> and to contact 111 and to local pharmacy services. Extended Access appointments have been affected by Covid but this is further reason to have clear up-to-date information on options for patients.

**Signposting:** We were pleasantly surprised to see that most practices (92%) have some pages/ sections of the website dedicated to other services and organisations that can offer support in the community with patient health and wellbeing. Many of these pages/ sections were very different in style, theme and content and whilst some had a few links to other NHS services, some practices had a great selection of services from charities and statutory services in Barnet and beyond that patients might want to look at. It is a mixed bag and we would recommend that most websites have more signposting information that is kept up-to-date but this is a solid place to start from. Liaising with the CCG and LBB and with larger health and social care charities such as CommUNITY Barnet and Healthwatch Barnet would help practices make sure they have a wide and effective set of resources. There are also a large range of widgets and tools<sup>8</sup> available through the NHS website that practice websites could make use of to support patients find services and learn more about conditions and Self Care without having to review and refresh their own resources.

**Primary Care changes:** Very few practices had any information at all about new and upcoming roles, developments and structures within Primary Care. While we feel this is an important and useful thing for practices to keep patients updated on, this cannot be regarded as a priority among patients and as such the low scores are not significant.

#### Online Services:



We looked at whether patients could easily book appointments online; whether patients were able to find out more about or register for online services at the practice; whether there was information available on ordering repeat prescriptions online and generally look at digital and online provision for patients at each practice.

<sup>7</sup> <https://barnetfederatedgps.org.uk/extended-access-service/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://developer.api.nhs.uk/widgets>

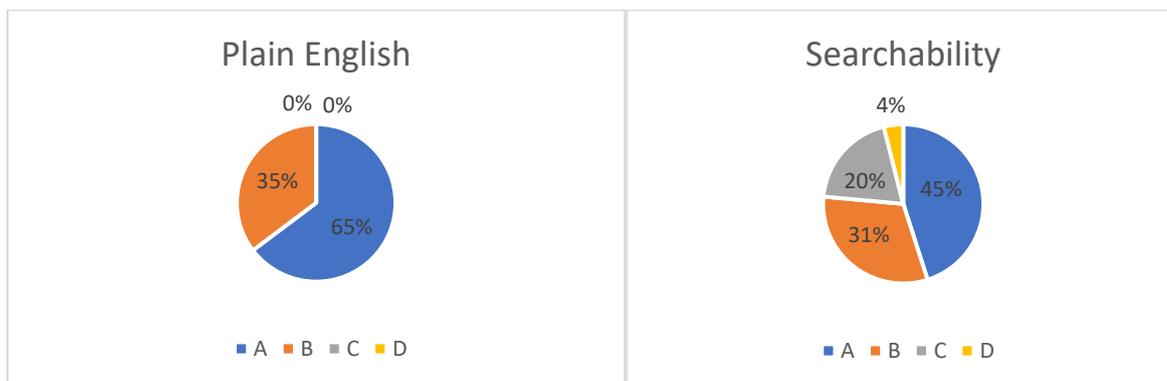
**Patient Access** refers in particular to promoting and explaining the process of allowing patients to register for and use online GP services that will allow patients to book appointments, request prescriptions and gain access to other resources online such as <https://www.patientaccess.com> and <https://www.patient-services.co.uk>. Nearly a third (28%) of websites have poor or no quality of information about these useful services and this is certainly something that practices should look at improving. The Patient Access category asked our volunteers to look for some of these well-known and well-used systems while online services (next) looks at a wider range of online services that might be less comprehensive.

**Online Services:** We looked at whether practices talked about, explained and clearly offered the ability for patients to book appointments online or manage their prescriptions; this might include how to contact or speak to their GP practice online; order repeat prescriptions; see parts of their health record, including information about medicines, vaccinations and test results. This might be using some of the services mentioned previously or might be via the practice website or through other apps such as the NHS app, or the many other apps or systems that patients can use to liaise with their practices and the NHS.<sup>9</sup> We are delighted that 96% of practices were rated A or B for this type of information but this was very often quite sparse or unhelpful for the uninitiated. There is also further confusion for patients in terms of where E-Consult now sits within these options.

**E-Consult:** As this research was done in the summer of 2020, nearly every practice had, and was pushing patients towards, E-Consult. All practice websites had some information about E-Consult and most had this front and centre where relevant. We know that most practices were still using E-Consult as the main way for patients to initially access contact and an appointment with their practice, so in this respect most practices were offering online services and consultations. The quality of the E-Consult information was mixed; some website had links to extensive videos and resources explaining how and why E-Consult was being used, while others simply had a link or small box to click on this. During the summer of 2020, we know that most practices were offering E-Consult and that this has reduced slightly as restrictions have changed this autumn. This might explain the close correlation with the quality of information on E-Consult and Online Services. In the early stages of the pandemic, many patients reported feeling that E-Consult was the only way they could contact their practice and found this alarming. There has been much debate and conversation about the benefits and drawbacks of E-Consult this year and practice staff and patient groups have clearly identified some of these. There continue to be real concerns that the drive towards online triage and remote consultation will isolate and leave behind vulnerable patients. We have already seen practices adopting a more mixed system and make it clearer for patients that E-Consult is one of a number of ways to access their GP practice. It will be worth further exploring this topic with our Primary Care engagement partners in the future.

With the sudden arrival of E-Consult this year and pushing patients towards NHS 111, the NHS App and other digital ‘doors’ into the NHS, it would be worth reviewing and reflecting on how primary care talks about online services; there are now even more ways of accessing appointments and this is confusing for patients.

### Accessibility and Ease of Use:



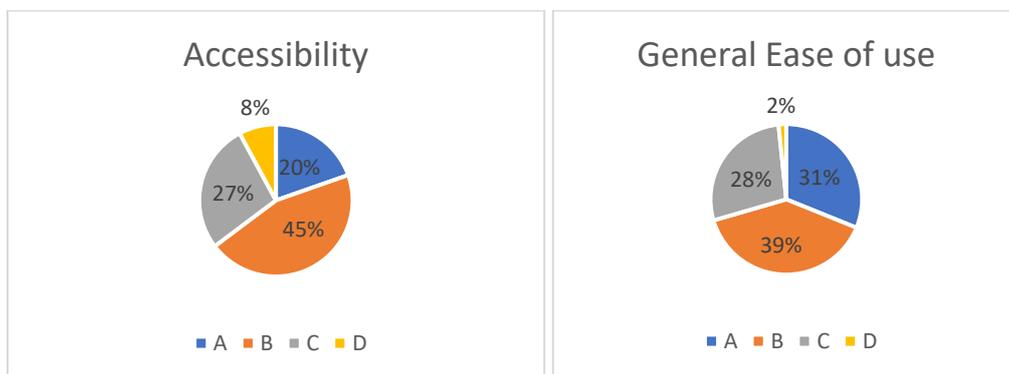
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/gps/gp-online-services/>

**Plain English:** In this section, our volunteers looked at the readability and use of plain English compared to needless jargon and system acronyms - generally it was felt that most practices did not use too much medical jargon and most websites did not use overly-clinical phrases or have any meaningless acronyms.<sup>10</sup> NHS websites are expected to be able to cater for a reading age of around 12 years old, and language should be as clear, simple and short as possible.<sup>11</sup>

We also looked for a glossary or page or other resource that explained some medical terms and services for patients, or even links to services that could provide this. This type of resource is not commonly used by most practices but there are examples from around the UK and there could be a glossary on each website or there should a link to one of the various patient glossaries and acronym busters that help patients.<sup>12</sup> This would really help patients understand and navigate their health.

**Searchability:** The way our volunteers looked at this topic was based on a few key criteria: does the website have search functions or not? If not, does it have a site map or site menu that easily shows you how the website is laid out. How easy is it to find a particular section? How many clicks does it take to move from one section of the website to the next one? There were mixed results and nearly a quarter (24%) have very limited searchability. However, 74% of practices were rated A or B which suggests that most practices had a search function or a clear menu or site map that got them to the information they were looking for. We think it is useful for websites to have a search function, considering how much information they are increasingly expected to have on the website. This is functionality that most patients understand and use, and can help them get straight to what they are looking for. Many GP websites, even the newer ones, do not have a search function. This does not necessarily mean it is difficult to find things - some of the newer website templates rely on a clear set of menus and have clearly been designed to avoid the need for a search function, but we don't see the harm is having it as an option for patients.

**Accessibility:**



In the UK, almost 1 in 5 people have a disability of some kind.<sup>13</sup> Many more have temporary or situational disabilities, like an illness or injury. Recent regulations<sup>14</sup> mean that, from next year, every new public sector website and app will need to meet specific accessibility standards. Existing websites had until September 2020 to comply, and apps until June 2021. As of the 23 September 2020, GP websites are expected to meet new accessibility criteria and should make it clear any gaps and development they have identified, and should share a workplan that explains how and when their website will be fully compliant. Good practice methods when it comes to GP websites includes: adding accessibility tools for patients such as screen readers, language translation and zoom features and creating websites which are easy to navigate.

We found a significant proportion of practice websites that were rated badly for accessibility function (35% were rated with C or D). We are compelled to mention one practice which excelled in this category:

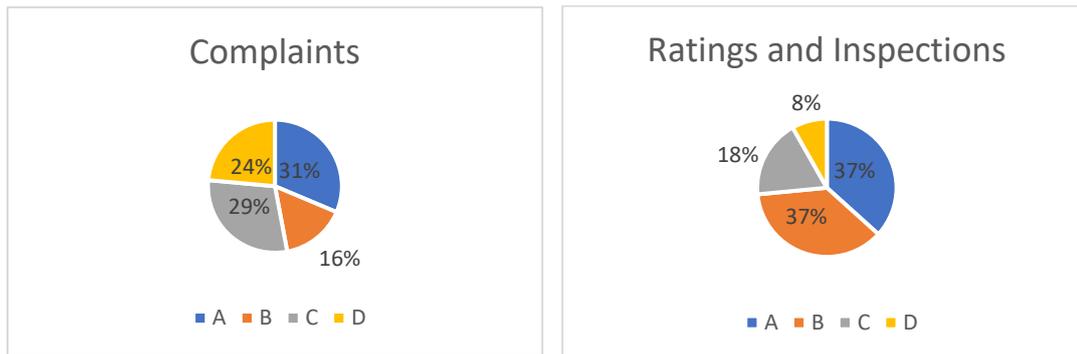
<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nhsconfed.org/acronym-buster>  
<sup>11</sup> <https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/accessibility>  
<sup>12</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/participation/resources/involvejargon/>  
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.scope.org.uk/media/disability-facts-figures/>  
<sup>14</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2018/952/introduction/made>

Addington Medical Centre’s accessibility widget is a clear example of what can be added to websites<sup>15</sup> This ‘accessibility widget is provided by a company called User Way and was a very impressive example of how to make a website readable and usable for a variety of different patient groups. <sup>16</sup> A number of the newer website templates have some of this functionality embedded.

Most websites are not mobile-friendly for form completion. Websites offering complaint/ feedback forms require service users to download the form to complete it. Introducing a further stage creates a barrier, making it harder for service users to share feedback or complaints.

**General Ease of Use** provided an opportunity for each volunteer to rate their overall experience of using the website, and how easy or enjoyable they found the process. Over two thirds of practices (70%) were given A or B ratings to the generally positive impression that the Primary Care Group found of GP websites.

### Complaints, Patient Involvement and Engagement:



We looked at number of key criteria for this section. First and foremost: **complaints**. Is the complaints policy and process on the website? How easy is it for patients to make complaints? How easy and transparent are practices in making this a clear option? We found this a particularly concerning and unhelpful area that we very much recommend practices making changes towards. Too many practices did not have any information on this at all (24%). As well as the complaints procedure being information that practices are contractually obliged to have on their websites, it is disappointing to see how many practices put as little information as possible on the website - with this approach standing in stark contrast to those practices which do give a full and comprehensive approach. 29% of practices were rated C and this sort of rating was applied to those practices who simply said: ‘*Complaints should be made in writing to the practice manager*’ or ‘*Please ring the practice if you would like to make a complaint*’. Not only is this unhelpful, it is not in the spirit of open and transparent service and feels incompatible with the guidelines and constitution of the NHS. A practice that is not forthcoming with this information is showing a worrying lack of confidence in the quality of its services. Complaints allow an organisation to identify gaps in its service and provision, and secondly to measure how well an organisation deals with constructive criticism from patients.

According to the NHS Constitution, services should encourage and welcome feedback on the service they provide. Everyone who uses the NHS has the right to make a complaint if they are unhappy with a service. All complaints should be acknowledged within three working days and must be properly investigated. There is a fuller breakdown of all complaints guidance on the Department of Health website <sup>17</sup>

Patients who use GP websites should be able to access complaints information and documents needed to file a complaint. Patients should not have to contact the surgery directly to get information about how to make a complaint. It is certainly the case that a great deal of issues, concerns and complaints can and

<sup>15</sup> <https://addingtonmedicalcentre.co.uk/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england/how-do-i-give-feedback-or-make-a-complaint-about-an-nhs-service>

should be resolved between patients and practices in person or over the phone in particular. In many instances, we know that if patients are able to speak to a practice manager or senior staff member, patients can get the information or resolution they are looking for before opting to lodge a formal complaint. This should be encouraged and made clear on the website but not at the expense of the fuller process information.

Only 31% of practices have been rated with an A rating and practices should ensure at the very least that they comply with their basic obligations, if not offering a much fuller, open and detailed breakdown for patients to give them all of the information they need.

The following breaks down the type of information we would expect any NHS service to be able to provide for patients:

- How to complain/ Complaining on behalf of someone else/ Complaints form/ Acknowledgement
- Complaints and response time frame/ What will happen after the complaint
- Practice Manager name and contact details including: phone, email and address
- Information on how to escalate the complaints including Ombudsman details
- NHS England complaints department details/ NHS Complaints Advocacy Service details
- Independent Feedback - Healthwatch Barnet and other useful local services

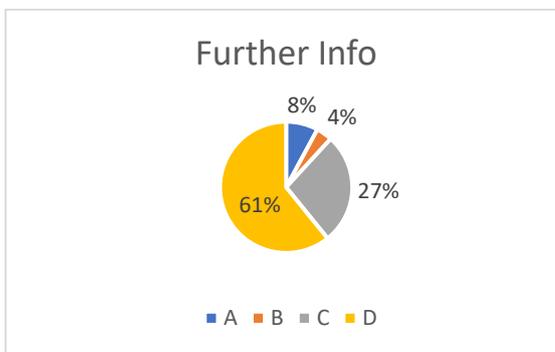
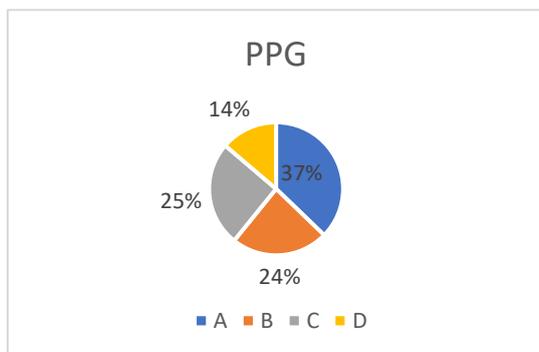
### Ratings and Inspections

This section looked at how forthcoming and transparent the practice was about the various public forms of evaluation and ratings that they shared and made available to the public. This includes:

- The most recent CQC rating and inspection details
- Friends and Family results
- GP Patient Survey information

We found that 74% of practices had shared some information about external or public ratings of their service, although only half of these (37%) were rated A. In most cases, this was the overall rating and a link to further information about the practice’s most recent CQC inspection. The second most common example was the practice’s Friends and Family rating and still fewer used the national GP Patient Survey data. Those practices who had at least 2 of these examples on their website will have been given the highest A rating.

There is something very reassuring and confidence-inducing about a practice that is as open and transparent about these publicly available forms of inspection, regardless of how high they have scored. Even a practice that is sharing relatively poor public inspection and rating numbers is giving the impression of a service open to criticism and working to improve on these scores.



### Patient Participation Groups

Practices are contractually obliged to have and support an active Patient Participation Group (PPG) and share information about the group on the website. Only 61% of practice website were rated A or B for

information about their PPG. While it is true that a significant proportion of practices do not have an active PPG, practices are obliged to help set up and develop a PPG and should use the website to share and promote information to help develop one.

Those practices that were rated more highly (37% rated A) will have given their PPG a page or section of the website, advertised the work of their PPG, how to join, what the PPG does and shared recent newsletters/ meeting minutes on it.

We found that 39% of practice website had little or no information about a PPG on their website. Regardless of how active a practice's PPG is, the practice has a responsibility to share and promote either the existing work of any PPG or the concept and information about the benefits and opportunities for patients to get involved with the PPG. Not only do we support and endorse the benefits to practices who work towards developing better patient participation groups, this information is part of the minimum requirements for GP practices online and as such this should be seen as a priority for practices to address.

### Further Info

We asked volunteers to look for what other information practice websites had on further ways of engaging with, working with and complaining about health and social care services.

This information could include information about the following: Local Healthwatch and other patient engagement groups, the local commissioning groups<sup>18</sup> (North Central London/ Barnet directorate), NHS England, Healthwatch Barnet<sup>19</sup>, more information about CQC or the Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman. Other useful organisations that patients could be directed towards include Patient Advocacy groups<sup>20</sup> such as Pohwer<sup>21</sup> or other advocacy groups such as Mind in Barnet, Barnet Carers, Citizens Advice Barnet or similar. We were disappointed that only a fraction of practices (12%) provided any links to information about any of these organisations or services with 61% having nothing at all. While some of this information can easily be seen as useful but not essential information, information about statutory bodies that form part of the wider issue raising or complaint process is helpful and important information for practices to include for their patients.

### Highest rated GP website templates

Many GP practices have used new specialist website providers to update and improve their websites, and this approach has certainly led to a clear improvement for many practice websites. We looked at the final scores for each practice, ranked them and set these against the different templates that each practice was using. Not all practices were using a practice template, some had one-off bespoke sites (many of which performed impressively), but increasingly we can see that practice websites have been using GP website providers such as 'My Surgery', Treeview Designs, Neighbourhood Direct, GP Surgery.net and My Health Specialist.

Looking at the top 25 rated practice websites, we can confirm that the most solidly performing was **MySurgery** with ten. Beyond that, the next two stand out template providers were **Treeview** and **Neighbourhood Direct** with three websites in the top 25 each.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://northcentrallondonccg.nhs.uk/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.healthwatchbarnet.co.uk/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.pohwer.net/barnet>

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions:**

The first thing to be clear about is that the Primary Care Group were pleased at the positive changes, and that the quality of GP websites was rated so highly in many key areas. We have seen a huge improvement in the quality and standard of GP websites in Barnet over the last two years. Many practices have taken up the use of specialist GP website providers to bring themselves up to speed, and this has made a considerable improvement to the quality and readability of many of them. It is clear to us that there has been a lot of work going on by many practices throughout the borough to address previously identified issues and to comply with the new requirements this year. The breakdown of areas we have identified for improvement should be seen with those positive ratings in mind, but there is still work to be done in certain key areas. As with all our work and reports, our recommendations also come with the clear understanding of the many pressures, priorities and hard work that practices always share, especially during the pandemic; our recommendations aim to support the experience of both patient and practice.

The issues that we have identified and which we have given further information on in the appropriate section are as follows:

#### **Patient Information**

While most practices had some information about how to register with the practice, many should endeavour to have more information, options and links about how to register with the practice particularly for those patients who traditionally struggle to get support to access GP services. There can still be further clarity for patients about what services are available to them out of hours within the Primary Care system through Extended Hours, as well as digitally. There is often no clear message or pathway for patients.

#### **Online Services**

There are still improvements to be made with regard to explaining online services to patients and giving them clear guidance as to how to register for these services and what the benefits are for them. This is particularly true following the recent changes to and additions to digital access to the NHS core offer with the push towards E-Consult, NHS 111 and the NHS app.

#### **Accessibility and Ease of Use**

A significant proportion of practices need to improve the accessibility of their websites for patients in order to better support the needs of patients with a variety of different access needs, and to comply with new accessibility requirements. There are tools, software and organisational support and training available for this in England.

Many GP websites could still see improved searchability either through the use of a search function and/ or through clearer, simpler menus, bars or sitemaps.

#### **Complaints, Patient Involvement and Engagement**

The most significant and poorly performing area of Barnet GP websites was in the information provided to patients about making a complaint - both to the practice itself, and to the relevant organisations beyond. We were also disappointed to see how few practice websites had the necessary information about PPGs and wider patient engagement and support organisations available to patients.

#### **Wider support for practices**

Our evidence shows that the adoption by many practices of specific GP website software and templates, has given them the framework and capacity to bring practice websites towards the required level of information and accessibility. It might be worth exploring whether there are one or two templates that could be agreed upon and recommended to practices at borough level.

We are acutely aware of the challenges in time, resource and expertise that many practices have when it comes to providing high quality up-to-date websites. Many well-functioning practices might not have the resources to review and change their websites regularly. We are also aware, of course, of the extra pressure that the Covid pandemic has subjected primary care to this year and that both Flu and Covid-19 vaccinations will continue to dominate the workload of many practices well into 2021 on top of everything else. Nevertheless, many of the changes and recommendations we have made are simple enough and not time-consuming exercises. We further recognise that much of the information discussed will be the same at PCN, borough or NCL level. As health and social care draws together more and more closely with the development of commissioning at a North Central London level and as Primary Care Networks continue to grow in importance and staff roles, it could be argued that much of the information that patients use a GP website for could be provided at PCN or borough level with some support in terms of funding. Could there be a website or webpages run at this level to allow Barnet GP websites to link confidently to them for much wider information and support without duplicating effort 50 times on signposting and wider support for patients?

With GP websites having become even more important and well-used over the last year and with many patients still relying on them, we would recommend that some funding is found locally or through national schemes to help support all GP practices meet their contractual requirements and to further meet the wider needs of patients as identified in this report. This might also be a good opportunity for Barnet/ NCL to reflect on the longer-term digital strategy for patient information and triage. Our recommendations therefore come with the understanding that practices should have wider support from the relevant statutory and membership organisations in Barnet and beyond to help make these changes happen.

## Recommendations:

- 1 For each GP practice to review and improve their website by April 2021
- 2 For all GP practices to remove or update old or out-of-date resources/links and articles and to update their websites on a monthly basis
- 3 To ensure there is sufficient information for all patients about how to register with a practice
- 4 To improve information and access to online services and clarify a clear digital pathway for patients
- 5 For practices to fundamentally improve the information on Complaints, Patient Involvement and Engagement
- 6 For practices to improve the accessibility and functionality of their websites using the guidance provided by NHS Digital
- 7 For the CCG to support practices with this work and identify wider strategy for GP websites and digital NHS pathways
- 8 CCG to commission the Primary Care Networks or Barnet Federated GPs to help support these important further changes
- 9 If there are wider plans to implement or support practices to further change or improve websites, patients and engagement groups should be part of the conversation

## About Primary Care Group

The Primary Care Group (PCG) consists of volunteers working to assist Barnet Primary Care service providers to improve their services to patients and is managed by CommUNITY Barnet. The PCG co-chaired by Sue Blain and Stewart Block, has led dozens of projects with a constant emphasis on patient perspective, understanding and the communications that patients receive. Throughout the last year, the group have worked productively with teams at Barnet CCG and Barnet Federated GPs as well as working directly with a dozen different practices and Practice Managers, to analyse and improve patient access and experience. The Primary Care Group has also led the way in helping offer simple, practical solutions as well as recommendations for commissioners and service providers.

**Appendix one: List of GP practice websites reviewed.**

Addington Medical Centre	<a href="http://www.addingtonmedicalcentre.co.uk">www.addingtonmedicalcentre.co.uk</a>
Adler & Rosenberg	<a href="http://www.drsadlerandrosenberg.gpsurgery.net">www.drsadlerandrosenberg.gpsurgery.net</a>
Brunswick Park Medical Practice	<a href="http://www.brunswickparkmedicalpractice.nhs.uk">www.brunswickparkmedicalpractice.nhs.uk</a>
Cornwall House Surgery	<a href="http://www.cornwallhousesurgery.nhs.uk">www.cornwallhousesurgery.nhs.uk</a>
Deans Lane Medical Centre	<a href="http://www.deanslanemedicalcentre.co.uk">www.deanslanemedicalcentre.co.uk</a>
Derwent Medical Centre	<a href="http://www.derwentmedical.co.uk">www.derwentmedical.co.uk</a>
Dr Azim & Partners	<a href="http://www.drazimandpartners.nhs.uk">www.drazimandpartners.nhs.uk</a>
Dr Lamba (Colindeep Lane)	<a href="http://www.colindalemedicalcentre.nhs.uk">www.colindalemedicalcentre.nhs.uk</a>
East Barnet HEALTH Centres	<a href="http://www.eastbarnetgpsurgeries.co.uk">www.eastbarnetgpsurgeries.co.uk</a>
East Finchley Medical Practice	<a href="http://www.eastfinchleymedicalpractice.nhs.uk">www.eastfinchleymedicalpractice.nhs.uk</a>
Friern Barnet Medical Centre	<a href="http://www.friernbarnetmedicalcentre.nhs.uk">www.friernbarnetmedicalcentre.nhs.uk</a>
Gloucester Road Surgery	<a href="http://www.gloucesterroadsurgery.com">www.gloucesterroadsurgery.com</a>
Greenfield Medical Centre	<a href="http://www.greenfieldmc.co.uk">www.greenfieldmc.co.uk</a>
Heathfielde	<a href="http://www.heathfieldmedicalcentre.nhs.uk">www.heathfieldmedicalcentre.nhs.uk</a>
Hendon Way Surgery	<a href="http://www.hendonwaysurgery.nhs.uk">www.hendonwaysurgery.nhs.uk</a>
Hillview Surgery	<a href="http://www.thehillviewsurgery.co.uk">www.thehillviewsurgery.co.uk</a>
Hodford Road Surgery	<a href="http://www.hrs.website.co.uk">www.hrs.website.co.uk</a>
Jai Medical Centre	<a href="http://www.jaimedical.nhs.uk">www.jaimedical.nhs.uk</a>
Lane End Medical Group	<a href="http://www.laneendmedicalgroup.co.uk">www.laneendmedicalgroup.co.uk</a>
Langstone Way Surgery	<a href="http://www.langstonewaysurgery.nhs.uk">www.langstonewaysurgery.nhs.uk</a>
Lichfield Grove Surgery	<a href="http://www.lichfieldgrovesurgery.nhs.uk">www.lichfieldgrovesurgery.nhs.uk</a>
Longrove Surgery	<a href="http://www.longrovesurgery.co.uk">www.longrovesurgery.co.uk</a>
Millway Medical Practice	<a href="http://www.millwaymedical.com">www.millwaymedical.com</a>
Mountfield Surgery	<a href="http://www.mountfield.gpsurgery.net">www.mountfield.gpsurgery.net</a>
Mulberry Medical Practice	<a href="http://www.mulberrymedical.nhs.uk">www.mulberrymedical.nhs.uk</a>
Oak Lodge Medical Centre	<a href="http://www.oaklodgemedicalcentre.co.uk">www.oaklodgemedicalcentre.co.uk</a>
Parkview Surgery	<a href="http://www.parkviewsurgeryedgware.co.uk">www.parkviewsurgeryedgware.co.uk</a>
Pennine Drive Surgery	<a href="http://www.penninedrivesurgery.co.uk">www.penninedrivesurgery.co.uk</a>
Penshurst Gardens	<a href="http://www.penshurstsurgery.co.uk">www.penshurstsurgery.co.uk</a>
PHGH Doctors	<a href="http://www.phgh.co.uk">www.phgh.co.uk</a>
Ravenscroft Medical Centre	<a href="http://www.ravenscroftmedicalcentre.nhs.uk">www.ravenscroftmedicalcentre.nhs.uk</a>
Rosemary Surgery	<a href="http://www.rosemarymedicalcentre.nhs.uk">www.rosemarymedicalcentre.nhs.uk</a>
Squires Lane Medical Practice	<a href="http://www.squireslanemedicalpractice.co.uk">www.squireslanemedicalpractice.co.uk</a>
St Andrews Medical Practice	<a href="http://www.standrewsmedicalpractice.nhs.uk">www.standrewsmedicalpractice.nhs.uk</a>
St George's Medical Centre	<a href="http://www.stgeorgesmc.co.uk">www.stgeorgesmc.co.uk</a>
Supreme Medical Centre	<a href="http://www.suprememedicalcentre.nhs.uk">www.suprememedicalcentre.nhs.uk</a>
Temple Fortune Health Centre	<a href="http://www.tfhc.co.uk">www.tfhc.co.uk</a>
The Clinic (Oakleigh Rd North)	<a href="http://www.oakleighroadclinic.nhs.uk">www.oakleighroadclinic.nhs.uk</a>
The Everglade Medical Practice	<a href="http://www.everglademedicalpractice.nhs.uk">www.everglademedicalpractice.nhs.uk</a>
The Old Courthouse Surgery	<a href="http://www.theoldcourhousesurgery.co.uk">www.theoldcourhousesurgery.co.uk</a>
The Phoenix Practice	<a href="http://www.phoenixpractice.co.uk">www.phoenixpractice.co.uk</a>
The Practice @ 188	<a href="http://www.thepracticeat188.nhs.uk">www.thepracticeat188.nhs.uk</a>
The Speedwell Practice	<a href="http://www.thespeedwellpractice.nhs.uk">www.thespeedwellpractice.nhs.uk</a>
The Village Surgery	<a href="http://www.thevillagesurgerynewbarnet.nhs.uk">www.thevillagesurgerynewbarnet.nhs.uk</a>

<b>Torrington Park Group Practice</b>	<a href="http://www.torringtonparkgrouppractice.com">www.torringtonparkgrouppractice.com</a>
<b>Vale Drive Medical Practice</b>	<a href="http://www.valedrivemedical.nhs.uk">www.valedrivemedical.nhs.uk</a>
<b>Wakeman's Hill Surgery</b>	<a href="http://www.Wakemanshillsurgery.com">www.Wakemanshillsurgery.com</a>
<b>Watling Medical Centre</b>	<a href="http://www.watlingmedicalcentre.co.uk">www.watlingmedicalcentre.co.uk</a>
<b>Wentworth Medical Practice</b>	<a href="http://www.wentworthmedical.nhs.uk">www.wentworthmedical.nhs.uk</a>
<b>Woodlands Medical Practice</b>	<a href="http://www.woodlandsmedicalpractice.org">www.woodlandsmedicalpractice.org</a>
<b>Colney Hatch</b>	<a href="http://www.colneyhatchsurgery.co.uk">www.colneyhatchsurgery.co.uk</a>

**Appendix 2: Question Sheet used by PCG volunteers.**

GP Website Audit form.	PCG member:
Practice website visited:	
Date of visit/s:	

For each question, please categorise your assessment as A, B, C or D

**A is clear, comprehensive, easy to understand, easy to find**

**B is less clear, comprehensive, easy to understand or find**

C is very little or no information on this to be found and/ or very confusing and unhelpful or out of date

**D none of this information can be found anywhere on the website**

<b>Information</b>
Current pandemic: Covid-19 information: A- D
Surgery details: Name/ Address/ Contact Details/ Opening hours/ Staff names, roles: A-D
Patient Registration : Enough information? : A-D
Out of Hours information /Extended Hours/Urgent and emergency information: A-D
Signposting and other services/ Self Care/ Patient Information. Information on Health issues and where to go: A-D
Changes to Primary Care: Primary Care Networks/ New Primary Care Roles, Pharmacists: A-D
Overall comments please:

<b>Online Services</b>
Online Services/ Appointments/ Repeat prescriptions: A-D
Consultations (e-Consult) - phone or video: with enough information to understand? A-D
Patient Access to own medical notes - with information of how to register: A-D
Overall comments please:

<b>Accessibility and Ease of use</b>
Plain English/ few acronyms/ acronym glossary? A-D
Search function/ clear menu of options/ easy to find what you are looking for? : A-D

Accessibility: Any Access Adaptations Language interpretation? Zoom function? Voice activator/ Audio description? A-D
General Ease of use: A-D
Overall comments please:

<b>Complaints, Patient Involvement and Engagement</b>
Rating and inspections: CQC rating/ Friends and Family/ GP Patient Survey information? A-D
Complaints: How to complain to the surgery? How to take the complaint further? Complaint policy? A-D
Further Information about NCL/ Barnet CCG, NHS England, Healthwatch Barnet, Pohwer? A-D
Patient Participation: PPGs - Access and information about PPGs etc: A-D
Overall comments:

<b>Other information</b>
Website Provider? (This information is usually right at the bottom of the front page/ most pages on the website. It would be helpful to identify 'good/better' website providers/ templates)
When was the website last updated? Anything really out of date?
Any other final comments on this website?