



A Review into Patient Perception of Digital Services provided by Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale GP Surgeries

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Disclaimer

The comments outlined in this report should be taken in the context that they are not representative of all residents/clients and care staff in the Rochdale borough, but nevertheless offer a useful insight. They are the genuine thoughts, feelings and issues that residents/clients and staff have conveyed to Healthwatch Rochdale. The data should be used in conjunction with, and to compliment, other sources of data that are available.

About us

Healthwatch Rochdale is an independent voice for the people of the Rochdale borough. We are here to listen to the experiences of Rochdale borough residents and give them a stronger say in influencing how local health and social care services are provided. We listen to what people have to say about their experiences of using health and social care services and feed this information through to those responsible for providing the services. We also ensure services are held to account for how they use this feedback to influence the way services are designed and run.

Healthwatch Rochdale was set up in April 2013 as a result of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and is part of a network of local Healthwatch organisations covering every local authority across England. The Healthwatch network is supported in its work by Healthwatch England who build a national picture of the issues that matter most to health and social care users and will ensure that this evidence is used to influence those who plan and run services at a national level.

Rationale

Healthwatch Rochdale wanted to understand service users' experiences, both positive and negative, and identify common themes or any barriers that people may face in supporting their health digitally in order to inform the commissioning of these services and ensure that patients' preferences are considered.

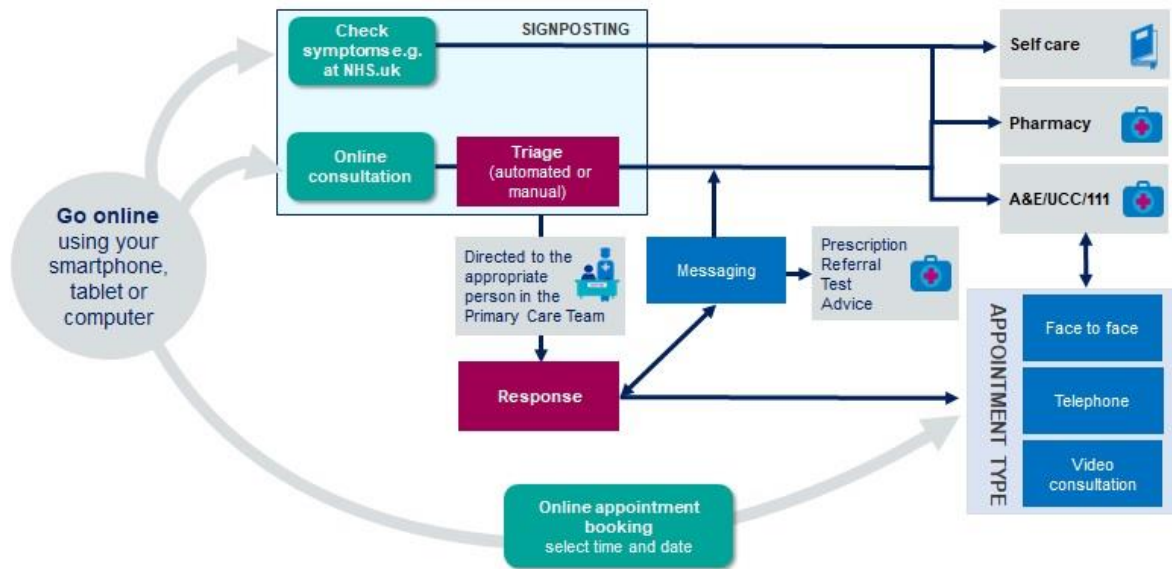
Understanding Digital First Primary Care

Digital technology is transforming how patients and health professionals interact. As a result, NHS England is supporting primary care to move towards a digital first approach, where patients can easily access the advice, support and treatment they need using digital and online tools. These tools need to be integrated to provide a streamlined experience for patients, and quickly and easily direct them to the right digital or in-person service.

In practical terms, this means patients should be able to use online tools to access all primary care services, such as receiving advice, booking and cancelling appointments, having a consultation with a healthcare professional, receiving a referral and obtaining a prescription.

GP practices are increasingly offering more online access to services, including the option to have an online consultation. Online consultation systems allow patients to contact their GP practice without having to wait on the phone or take time out to come into the practice, and they form an important part of Digital First Primary Care. Online consultations enable patients to ask questions, report symptoms and upload photos. The practice then looks at the request and responds within a stated timeframe, connecting the patient to the right person, service or support. Currently, most practices who have implemented online consultations use a questionnaire-based system, with their own staff then looking at requests from patients and delivering the service in response. However, there are also opportunities to manage online consultations at a larger scale, for example across primary care networks or via a hub model. Some practices are also offering patients the option to have an appointment with a clinician via video (a video consultation).

A simplified version:



<https://www.england.nhs.uk/gp/digital-first-primary-care/>

What we did in brief

As quantitative surveys have already been undertaken, engaging large numbers of residents through the National GP Patient Survey published on July 2019 (<https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/surveysandreports>), we focused our work on qualitative engagement with seldom heard groups of people. 63 people accessing GP services completed our online and paper survey. In addition, we collected views via our website, social media and through partner organisations.

NB: All questions were optional so as a result, we did not receive answers from every participant on every question.

Summary of findings

Feedback from people we spoke to and who completed our questionnaire showed that 70% (44) of respondents did not use the online booking service. Almost all of those who did, used the Patient Access app. 52% (9) of people book or cancel appointments online with a GP or nurse and 65% reported they ordered repeat prescriptions online. Only 35% (6) view clinical correspondence such as hospital discharge summaries, outpatient appointment letters and referral letters online. 43% (27) people indicated they would you like to speak with their GP or Consultant online or via skype/video call, with 57% (36) stating no.

From the feedback from respondents as to 'why they did not use online appointment booking' five main themes emerged:

1. The most frequent comments received were about difficulty accessing digital means including having a computer, smart phone, tablet and Wi-Fi or data availability.
2. The second most frequent comments received were that the person needed a lot more help and support to use digital skills and technology and access to online booking services.

3. Equally, comments were received that it would need to be a simpler registration process. Some carers and parents expressed the need to be able to manage dependants' appointments and reordering prescriptions through one account.
4. There needs to be better promotion and information about the online service that is understandable to a wider scope of service users.
5. It should be noted that many people we spoke to said they preferred to call into the doctors or ring up because it was easy and more convenient for them.

Local context:

The GP Patient Survey (GPPS) is an England-wide survey, providing practice-level data about patients' experiences of their GP practices. The national GP Patient Survey 9th July 2019, showed that 14% of patients in the Rochdale borough used an online booking service to book a GP appointment, compared to 15% nationally. Awareness of the service was marginally lower at 42% compared with 44% nationally.

Recommendations

From our findings, we have identified several recommendations and actions going forward:

1. Provision or better accessibility to digital devices, data and reliable Wi-Fi.
2. Increasing confidence in using the online booking apps with more support in doctors' surgeries and wider community for those who would like to register and try it.
3. Simple language supported by visual and audio means in the app and the ability to book translation and BSL services on the app when making online appointments.
4. The booking apps and registration process need to be unified and simplified across GP Practices and enable carers and parents to manage dependants where appropriate.
5. From our conversations with the public, it has been identified that there are a number of different applications for service users to access their online account. It has been identified that different applications have different online services for service user to use. Healthwatch Rochdale recommend that application to access online records should be offering the same level of service and have a uniformed approach to benefit the service user.
6. From our conversations with the public, it was identified that GP practice website and social media channel have a variety of different information and advice. Healthwatch Rochdale recommend that this information should be consistent throughout each GP practice and their online presence in the Rochdale borough.

GP Practice providers have an important role to play in addressing the recommendation, 2 in achieving a successful digital future.

Commissioner response

1. Provision or better accessibility to digital devices, data and reliable Wi-Fi. - We have Wi-Fi in all GP's and RBC have made this available in the city centre, but the findings still show that there are a lot for patients that do not have access to devices and Wi-Fi due to their socio-economic status. RBC are reviewing this in line with digital inclusion work
2. Increasing confidence in using the online booking apps with more support in doctors' surgeries and the wider community for those who would like to register and try it. - We can work with RHA to understand how we can use practice staff to promote digital services and do some basic training on how to use the apps
3. Simple language supported by visual and audio means in the app and the ability to book translation and BSL services on the app when making online appointments. - The patient services app is an EMIS product so we have little influence in changing this but the NHS App is now being pushed which has better accessibility and support built in
4. The booking apps and registration process need to be unified and simplified across GP Practices and enable carers and parents to manage dependants where appropriate. - Delegate access is available through Patient Access to support this. If Healthwatch could provide more info then we can investigate
5. From our conversations with the public, it has been identified that there are a number of different applications for service users to access their online account. It has been identified that different applications have different online services for service users to use. Healthwatch Rochdale recommend that application to access online records should be offering the same level of service and have a uniformed approach to benefit the service user. - To my knowledge only EMIS Patient Access and the NHS App are in use in HMR. Patient Access was promoted until July 2019 when the NHS App was released. Since then, practices have only promoted the NHS App. There are other apps available but these are more focused apps relating to conditions (e.g MyCOPD).
6. From our conversations with the public, it was identified that GP practice websites and social media channels have a variety of different information and advice. Healthwatch Rochdale recommend that this information should be consistent throughout each GP practice and their online presence in the Rochdale borough. - We agree and we have been working with practices and RHA to standardise the messages that are sent out.

Head of IT, NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group

Reference

1. NHS England and NHS Improvement, 2019, *Digital First Primary Care*, NHS England and NHS Improvement, viewed 16 December 2019, < <https://www.england.nhs.uk/gp/digital-first-primary-care/> >
2. GP Patient Survey, 2019, Surveys and Reports, GP Patient Survey, viewed 16 December 2019, < <https://gp-patient.co.uk/surveysandreports#> >

Your Feedback

Healthwatch Rochdale is keen to find out how useful this report has been to you, and/or your organisation, in further developing your service. Please provide feedback as below, or via email.

REPORT: A Review into Patient Perception of Digital Services provided by Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale GP Surgeries

1) I/we found this report to be: Useful / Not Useful

2) Why do you think this?

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3) Since reading this report:

a) We have already made the following changes:

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.....
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b) We will be making the following changes:

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Your name:

Organisation:

Email:

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Please email to: info@healthwatchrochdale.org.uk or post to FREEPOST Healthwatch Rochdale

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