Healthwatch Islington

GP Access

Health and Care Scrutiny, September 2023

GP web content

- A volunteer researcher looked at all practice websites in 2020 and again in 2022.
- C1 Primary Care Network commissioned Healthwatch Islington to run workshops for some of our digital learners to test web accessibility.
- We've liaised with Healthwatch England on accessibility best practice.
- ICB colleagues have taken our findings and developed some guidance for practices. Practices have all been offered external support to develop their sites. And Primary Care Networks are now employing Digital Transformation leads to work on phone and web access amongst other things.

https://www.healthwatchislington.co.uk/news/2023-07-01/improving-messaging-gp-phone-lines-and-websites

GP web content

Some key findings

- Avoid 'pop ups'
- Use the language that the patient will use (online booking rather than e-consult) or explain the terms (triage, meaning we'll need to ask you some questions to help understand who at the practice is best suited to help you and how urgently)
- Keep sites up to date
- Promote the fact that you'll be seen even if you can't prove your address 'safe surgeries'
- Be explicit about all appointment types available including the option for face to face, and how to book appointments for others
- Promote 'what to do when the practice is closed' and the role of pharmacy, repeat prescriptions and accessing medical records, self-referral
- Make search/ interpreting and disability access functions clear (icons don't always mean anything to the patient). And be clear about adjustments available for consultations.

GP phones lines

- Volunteers called practices to listen to the voice messages, they timed the call and noted the content. Messages varied from 20 seconds to 3 minutes.

Key suggestions
- Keep messages concise and up-to-date with the most important information first
- Ideally there'd be some standardisation across practices
- Is Covid messaging/ Covid vaccination messaging still needed?
- Limit the key messages before the patient joins the the queue to speak to someone. Once they join the queue, then more messages can be relayed to the patient.
- Patients should be told whether they are in the queue to speak to a member of staff or not and their number in the queue, so that they don't' stay on the phone unnecessarily.
- Information should not be delivered too quickly so that patients can easily take in key information.
- Self-referral -callers should be informed of the possibility of self-referring to services such as physiotherapy, podiatry and ICOPE without having to wait for a GP appointment.