

Changes at your GP surgery

How care improvements will benefit patients



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About this booklet

People across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire shared their experiences of care at their GP surgery and in the community with us.

Following patient feedback, the NHS has committed to making it easier and quicker for you to get the help you need from your GP and the healthcare community around your surgery

This booklet sets out changes you may see at your surgery, outlines the views of local people, and highlights good practice.

About Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire



Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire is your health and social care champion.

If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other support services, we want to hear about your experiences. We have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to your feedback and improve standards and the design of care. We also help people find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

What is the GP Access Recovery Plan?

It's an NHS commitment to tackle the issues you've told us about, and the things that don't work. The plan aims to take the pressure off the '8am rush', and make it easier and quicker for you to get the help you need from primary care*.

The NHS has said it will:

- Empower patients by rolling out tools you can use to manage your own health, e.g booking appointments using the NHS App.
- Ensure patients know on the day how your request will be handled, respecting your preference for a telephone call, face-to-face appointment, or online message.
- Build capacity so practices can offer more appointments.
- Cut bureaucracy to give practice teams more time to focus on patients.

Find out more about the Access Recovery Plan:

www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/delivery-plan-for-recovering-access-to-primary-care-2/



*Primary care services provide the first point of contact in the healthcare system, acting as the 'front door' of the NHS. Primary care includes general practice (GP), community pharmacy, dental, and optometry (eye health) services.

What does this mean for me?

GPs will offer easier ways to book appointments and order prescriptions through the NHS App.

You will be able to refer yourself to a range of health and community services

Changes that will make it easier for you to access care from your GP surgery

New professional roles at GP surgeries will help make sure you receive more specialist and joined-up care. This may include actions such as pointing you to community-based services. You can find a list of these new roles on the following pages.

Pharmacies will be able to offer support with a wider range of health conditions.



Who could you see at your GP surgery?

Your GP surgery will have a number of qualified health professionals who will be able to support you and offer care. We have outlined a variety of their roles below.

Practice Nurse

Practice nurses are involved in many aspects of care – from family planning advice and childhood immunisations, to blood samples and managing your long-term conditions.



Advanced Nurse Practitioner

Advanced nurse practitioners are highly trained professionals who can record a patient's medical history, diagnose issues, prescribe medication and create treatment plans. They can carry out many of the tasks traditionally provided by a GP.



Mental Health Nurse

Mental health nurses support patients with mental health and long-term psychological conditions. They adopt a holistic approach, working with the person and their families and carers. They can advise about therapy options, medication, treatment, activities and support.



Healthcare Assistant

Healthcare assistants deliver treatment, support preventative care, promotion, and education. They are often trained in wound care and managing chronic illnesses.



Nursing Associate

Nursing associates work with healthcare assistants and registered nurses to support the treatment team.



First Contact Physiotherapist

These are clinical practitioners who can assess, diagnose, treat, and manage musculoskeletal problems caused by injury, illness or disability. Patients can now have a direct consultation at the surgery without a GP referral, ensuring a quicker and more efficient service.



Clinical Pharmacist

These professionals can now assess and treat you. They have expert knowledge of medication, and can carry out reviews and manage patients with complex needs and multiple conditions.



Community Paramedic

These can provide urgent assistance to treat wounds, certain infections and other minor injuries and illnesses. They are trained to manage patients whose conditions are rapidly deteriorating. They can also care for those with long-term conditions and administer certain types of medicine directly to patients.



Social Prescriber/Link Worker

Social Prescribers/Link Workers can assist in directing people to local services to help their physical health and mental wellbeing, allowing people to take greater control of their own health.



Your GP surgery may not have each and every one of these roles, or may have employed staff in some additional ones.

Pharmacies are transforming their help and support for a range of health conditions. Your local pharmacy will offer a wide range of services and may save you a visit to your GP.

Changes at your pharmacy

Pharmacies are the most accessible part of primary care, as you can access highly skilled pharmacists without the need for an appointment. There are a number of changes being brought in that will benefit you.

With the **'New Medicine Service'**, the pharmacist will consult with you when you start taking a new medicine, and follow up with you two to four weeks later to ensure you are getting on okay with the medication and understand how best to use it.

The **Community Pharmacist Consultation Service** now allows GPs and NHS 111 to refer patients to a pharmacist for a consultation. This speeds up the process for the patient as they are seen by a clinician within hours.

The **Discharge Medicines Service** means that on discharge from hospital, details can be shared with the pharmacy. The pharmacy can then follow up to ensure everything is going well regarding your medication.

With **Hypertension Case-Finding**, the pharmacy can check a patient's blood pressure and carry out additional checks. These results can then be fed back to the GP.

The **Contraception Supply Service** is for women on the contraceptive pill. This allows you to go directly to your pharmacy to pick up repeat supplies.

Pharmacy First increases the range of conditions that pharmacists can now support you with. Pharmacists can prescribe medication previously only available through a GP, such as antibiotics and treatment for conditions like urinary tract infections and shingles.

Survey results

We asked people across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire what they thought was good about their GP surgery and what could be improved.

325 people responded and the results are outlined on the following pages. These are a snapshot from a four month period over summer/autumn 2023.

If you'd like to tell us how things are now, get in touch using the details on the back page of this booklet.

What you told us about the range of services available

48 survey comments mentioned the variety of services available at their GP surgery. 39 of these thought the range could be improved:

- 'I would like age-related health checks to be available which aren't at the moment.'
- 'Variety of services needs massive improvement. They cannot cope with the number of patients they have.'
- 'Not being able to access all services at my local GP and needing to travel a long distance to linked up practice in the group.'
- 'Would like to see other facilities in-house e.g. chiropodist.'

The other 9 responses were happy with the range of services available:

- 'Loads of different services available. I was pleased that I was able to see a physio to resolve an issue that I had got good advice from my GP on. I was impressed how quickly I could access the physio support.'

What you told us about booking appointments

61 responses included comments about booking appointments at their GP surgery. Of these, 81% wanted the process of booking an appointment at their surgery to be improved:

- 'My husband needs regular 4-monthly blood checks due to the medication he is on. He is unable to book this from appointment to appointment - frustrating.'
- 'It is frustrating trying to make a non-urgent appointment [...] I often end up not making an appointment, and this worries me as I put off getting advice about something that is probably minor but could be the early stages of something bad.'
- 'Obtaining timely appointments is very difficult and time consuming. When calling by phone one is met with a long-drawn-out message that [...] is inefficient and often incorrect. While listening to this message phone costs are escalating.'
- 'You basically need to set aside a full day to have an appointment during the working day - phoning first thing can take a while to get through, then you have to wait sometimes several hours for them to call back, then you have to be available at whatever time you are given an appointment for. It puts me off contacting them for anything which isn't urgent.'

19% were happy with the booking system at their surgery:

- 'I find the online app form easy to use - first attempt took longer but after that I found it self-explanatory, and it makes it easy for me to put literally everything into the form so that when I get a call back they've already had time to read it all before responding.'
- 'Straightforward to get an appointment, by phone or online.'

What you told us about referrals

8 people who responded to our survey thought that the referral process was important to mention. 6 of the responses gave details of negative experiences they had with the process:

- 'Patients are not referred on to hospitals, clinics or treatment centres fast enough, they have to suffer long and hard, then practically demand further action before anything is done.'
- 'Having to fight for referrals or anything that I was entitled to.'
- 'Need to join up the services between hospital, social and GP care.'

The other 2 responses were complimentary about the referral processes that they had been through:

- 'I had some complications in early pregnancy and the doctor was excellent, making contact with the correct people at the hospital and getting me seen.'
- 'Great at referring on to specialists if needed.'



What you told us about telephone systems

62 people commented on the telephone system at their GP practice. 85% of these comments were about difficulties using the telephone system:

- 'Phone line constantly engaged. Appointments usually gone within 30 mins and a lottery as to whether you will get through, even if you call as soon as the phone lines open.'
- 'Improvement in the telephone service needed to cut waiting times.'
- 'You are asked to call at 8am at which time the phone line becomes engaged, and it stays that way for most of the day, you just give up.'
- 'There is always a long wait for the phone to be answered, you listen to a very long message until you get the chance to choose your option.'

Only 15% of those who responded to our survey were happy with the current telephone system at their GP surgery:

- 'An excellent phone contact system which enables face to face and phone consultations. Easy to access.'
- 'Telephone triage service works well.'



What you told us about prescriptions

Of the 39 responses that included comments about prescriptions and repeat prescriptions, 54% included positive comments about this process:

- 'Prescriptions processed quite quickly and submitting them is very easy on the App.'
- 'Patient Access for repeat prescriptions useful.'
- 'An excellent on-line facility for ordering repeat prescriptions which are then delivered to our village shop.'
- 'The on-line system for ordering repeat prescriptions is good.'
- 'Prompt renewal of repeat prescriptions and knowledgeable staff at chemist.'

The other 46% thought that this process could be improved at their GP surgery:

- 'Take a shorter time to process prescription requests. It can take up to 10 working days at times.'
- 'Improve communication if prescribed medication is not available and/or offer alternatives.'



What you told us about appointment availability

48% of all the responses to our survey included reference to the availability of appointments at GP surgeries. Of these, 71% were not happy with the availability:

- 'Waiting times for appointments. Having to have monthly blood tests but finding they don't book a month ahead and when you do eventually get an appointment it is then at least 2 months since my last blood test.'
- 'Waiting times for appointments is 2 weeks for a telephone appointment and staff do not always take note when a double appointment is needed so the GP has no idea.'
- 'The GP appointments are hard to get, they are often running over and sometimes the appointment seems rushed. I have a child with disabilities and had to leave the other day because the appointments were running over by 40 minutes.'
- 'We need a new health centre [...my area] is expected to have a 44% population rise in the next few years.'
- '...the population [in my area] has expanded beyond the capability of our two practices to cope - so getting an appointment is too difficult (especially for those unable to use technology).'

29% were happy with the availability of appointments:

- 'You can usually get an appointment to see someone on the day you phone - it may not be your usual GP - but invariably someone will see you.'
- 'Appointment waiting time: Since the surgery started providing integrated medical services, surgery time can usually be booked faster, and long waiting times can be avoided.'

What you told us about medical records and messages from your GP surgery

We received 25 comments regarding access to medical records, and messages from GP surgeries about treatment and care. 80% thought that access to medical records or messages from their GP surgery about test results could be improved:

- 'I'd like to have a link to my medical records not just my inoculations.'
- 'I have the NHS app; however we cannot use it to book appointments. [...] I also want to be able to request repeat prescriptions on the app, and find my GP records (so I can see what illnesses I have/had, vaccinations etc).'
- 'Following up on records I requested for my health assessment took 4 months. 2 of those months I had to chase on behalf of the surgery, due to repeated failures to tell me anything.'
- 'I get results and messages by text but no follow up or proper explanation of what they are testing for.'

The other 20% of respondents who highlighted medical records and messages from their GP surgery about treatment and care were happy with how this is done:

- 'Regular reminders are sent re: repeat blood tests.'
- 'They also send you a text when they are doing the flu jabs or COVID booster jabs.'

What you told us about ‘Single Point of Contact’

33 responses included comments about having the same point of contact at their GP surgery. 22 of these were about how this could be improved and how this affected their continuity of care:

- ‘There needs to be better communication and contact with GP’s when patients are diagnosed with long-term illnesses such as dementia, cancer etc and not just a yearly review of medication. A consultation with a nurse practitioner would help to show patients they are looked after or a dedicated nurse to contact when concerned.’
- ‘There is no continuity, you see a different person every time.’
- ‘When my previous GP left the practice (she had been a consistent caring presence through a period of extremely severe depression) I was not notified of my new named GP, and I am still not sure who they might be. I do not know whether I can or how to opt for a particular one.’

The other 11 comments gave feedback on how they find seeing the same point of contact to be beneficial to their care:

- ‘I find being able to see the Nurse Clinician/Practitioner very helpful and saves using up GP time.’
- ‘[...] I always get the same GP which allows us to work together whenever I need help. The GP respects my opinions and allows me input.’
- ‘Staff are excellent and try very hard to maintain consistency with seeing your own GP whenever possible.’

What's happening in our local area?

People told us about healthcare initiatives that have benefited them across the local area.

The following pages highlight the variety of work that is happening across GP surgeries, pharmacies, and community groups – all of which are starting to make a real difference to people's health and wellness.

From Nailsea to Weston and Easton to Emersons Green, we collected stories of positivity and support. The examples range from helping people with long term conditions and treating leg ulcers, to improving access to GP surgeries and championing community clinics.



Greenway Practice - North & West Bristol

Greenway Practice have made sure that patients get the right care quickly through their use of first contact physiotherapists. These physiotherapists can help patients with issues such as back and neck pain, without having to be referred by a GP.

After suffering from mild arthritis and a painful knee and hip, Norma decided to phone Greenway. She was able to see a first contact physiotherapist the next morning. After examining and diagnosing Norma, the physiotherapist advised that pain should clear up in 6-12 weeks.



'I felt reassured, and I knew what I could do myself to aid my own recovery. I am now much better' - Norma

Milton Road Surgery - North Somerset



To improve patient access, Milton Road Surgery has upgraded its telephone system to 'Surgery Connect', managed by 'X-on'.

Surgery Connect is more responsive to patient needs than the previous telephone system. Individuals are now able to find out where they are in the appointment queue. The system also provides a call back function when you have been waiting over a certain amount of time.



'I'm really impressed with the new phone system, it's quick and effective. Phone calls are now clear and easy to follow.' - Patient



'We have had a positive response to the call system and we have hardly any missed calls now. Recorded calls are also good for training purposes.' - Faye, Receptionist

One You – South Gloucestershire

'One You' is a friendly service supporting people in South Gloucestershire with building a healthier future. They can help you with managing your weight, stop smoking, getting more active, drinking less alcohol and improving your mental wellbeing.



One You is now working more closely with GPs to connect people with the professionals they need. Their bespoke wellbeing service aims to help you to:

- Feel less isolated and anxious
- Feel able to make changes in other areas of your life
- Feel more confident about managing your emotional and mental wellbeing
- Feel more able to get involved in your local communities

Website: www.oneyou.southglos.gov.uk

Telephone: 01454 865337

East Trees Open Health Days – Inner City & East Bristol



Open days are run regularly at the East Trees Health Centre. They are a fun but informative way to learn more about specific health problems and the support available.

Each open day focuses on a different topic or range of topics, and provides information about a wide range of health issues and concerns. Information is also available about translation services.



'I've made a better connection with my health centre through open days. In these events I learn more, and get health advice rather than having to book an appointment.' – Anton

Nailsea Leg Club - North Somerset



Nailsea Leg Club supports people with any problem involving their legs, from varicose veins, skin tears and eczema, to leg ulcers or difficulty walking.

The club is hosted in the town's Tithe Barn rather than a traditional medical setting, giving it a real sense of community. Former patients volunteer there, The club serves patients registered with Tyntesfield Medical Group and other associated GP practices.

Medical care is provided by Practice Nurses from Tyntesfield Medical Group, and a nurse from Sirona care & health attends monthly. Refreshments are provided, paid for through donations and fundraising. There's no need to make an appointment, and transport to and from the club can be arranged. To contact the Leg Club, call 07954 302498.

Howard and Joyce have benefited not only from the medical care offered, but also from the social aspect of the club.



'I first came to leg ulcer club to get my leg dressed and now I'm a volunteer driver.' - Howard



'I come to the leg ulcer club to get my legs dressed. Now I'm a member for life. I've made new friends and I feel less alone.' - Joyce



Sirona Active Ageing – South Gloucestershire



The Active Ageing team is made up of health visitors and support workers who help people aged over 70 access medical, social, home environment and financial services. You can ask for a referral from your GP to gain support on a number of different things including:

- Falls and accident prevention
- Advice on memory loss and dementia
- Health education
- Connecting to peer support for those who have been recently bereaved
- Advice on managing long-term health conditions
- Signposting to local and national support services
- Financial services and support for carers

Speak to your GP or visit this website: www.sirona-cic.org.uk/nhsservices/services/active-ageing/

The Lennard Surgery – South Bristol

HRTea and Biscuits at the Lennard Surgery offers its patients menopause education and myth-busting sessions, so its patients can come to their doctor armed with knowledge and patients can make informed choices about their menopause care.

If you're registered with Lennard Surgery and are interested in attending an HRTea and Biscuits session, contact the surgery and they will be able to provide you with the group's contact details.



'HRTea and Biscuits offers an opportunity to ask questions about the menopause and not feel silly for doing so. It is also an opportunity to meet other women, and know where to go for further help.' – Jenny

MaxWELL Project – North Somerset

The MaxWELL (Maximising Wellbeing in Everyday Life with Long-term conditions) Project is a way for surgeries to provide personalised care and support planning for people living with several co-existing long-term conditions.

Patients taking part in the initiative receive a yearly review to discuss their health with an appropriate professional, and create a care and support plan based on their needs and clinical recommendations. It aims to avoid multiple, unnecessary appointments by bring the care together.

The original pilot study was trialed at those practices most in need where traditionally people have had less support. Three practices volunteered to be part of the study in order to improve care for their patients with multiple long-term conditions.

The study highlights the potential for improving efficiency by reviewing an individual's long-term conditions all together and look at how they impact on each other in a review annually.



Sirona Health Links Team – Bristol wide / Inner City and East

The Sirona Health Links Team provide advocacy, signposting, translation and support in GP surgeries. They also do home visits, and aim to help patients open up about taboo topics.

The team organise health awareness days. These days offer information and advice in a culturally sensitive way, and connect people with other voluntary and community sector (VCSE) organisations that may be able to support them with their health and wellbeing.



Although the Health Links team are based in the Inner City and East area of Bristol, if you live elsewhere in the city and need their services, you can contact them using the details below.

Website: www.sirona-cic.org.uk/nhsservices/services/health-links/

Telephone number: 0117 902 7115

Mobile number: 07768 773 751



'I feel I can say what is on my mind. I am comfortable talking to my health link worker, Shahnaz, because I trust her. I know the Health Links team will keep my information confidential, so I can open up easier to the GP. I can really say all the problems I am facing in my life.' – Mrs. Begum



Westbourne Pharmacy – South Gloucestershire



Batch prescribing is a way for patients who are on regular medication to get it without contacting their GP first.

The surgery issues a large batch of prescriptions to the pharmacy. When a patient's prescription is due, the pharmacy then dispenses the medication without needing to contact the GP or surgery unless the medication needs to be reviewed.

This lessens the demand on GPs and practice management, and makes the process easier for people who rely on regular medication.



'This system is easy to use and saves both patients and GPs chasing repeat prescriptions and frees up our time. We have found processing, ordering and claiming all of these repeats very easy and efficient' - Jess and Manish from the pharmacy



'It's easy, fast and efficient' - patient feedback



Caafi Health – Bristol

Caafi Health was created to bridge gaps between GPs and communities by providing health clinics, translation services, helping people navigate the healthcare system, and supporting people to learn more about their health. They can also refer people who attend their community clinics to other services for further support.

Caafi Health is based in the Inner City and East area of Bristol, at surgeries such as Broadmead Medical Centre, Charlotte Keel Medical Practice, Lawrence Hill Health Centre, Montpelier Health Centre, The Homeless Health Centre, and Wellspring Surgery.

People across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire can make use of their services and they host community clinics across the city.

Contact Caafi Health

Website: www.caafihealth.org.uk

Telephone: 0117 924 7442

Email: info@caafihealth.com



‘Coming to the community clinic made me more confident managing my long-term conditions, such as blood pressure and diabetes, by giving me practical tips around my lifestyle. The clinician also spoke the same language as me and gave me medical advice.’ – Hamila

Merrywood Practice – South Bristol

Hari works as a Community Innovation Lead in South Bristol. He bridges gaps between health services, and voluntary and community groups by creating lists and directories for professionals to refer to, and create links between local communities & health services with the public.



His role brings together GP practices with the voluntary and community sector (VCSE), and communities in the area.

Hari works with a range of health professionals, including Mark, a pharmacist at Merrywood Practice.

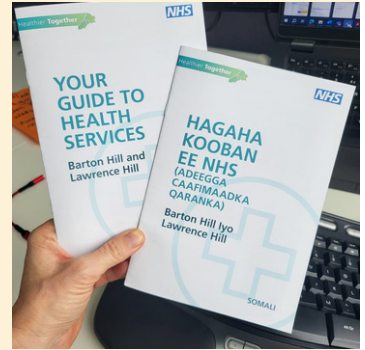


'I've met with Hari and discussed support with healthy eating with some of our patients. Hari emailed the relevant information and politely came to the practice to meet me and discuss further how he could help. I'm looking forward to working with Hari in the future for the benefits of our patients and the community.' – Mark



Better understanding the NHS in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire

By actively listening, collaborating, and being led by communities, the local NHS Covid-19 vaccination team began to understand some of the barriers related to trust in government services. It understood the challenges in navigating the health system for some Black and minoritised ethnic groups in the Barton Hill and Lawrence Hill areas of Bristol. These barriers were directly contributing to a lower vaccine uptake.



In partnership with local communities, the NHS team rolled out a cultural awareness video for healthcare staff.

The NHS have produced a printed guide in Somali explaining when and how to contact a GP surgery or a more appropriate healthcare service, dependent on need. This guide is helping communities to better navigate the healthcare system correctly.



‘Different communities have different expectations from the healthcare system’ – Marta



If you'd like to tell us about any changes in local healthcare services or share your experiences, you can get in touch with us at Healthwatch. Here's how:

Bristol

www.healthwatchbristol.co.uk/share-your-views

0117 2033594

contact@healthwatchbristol.co.uk

North Somerset

www.healthwatchnorthsomerset.co.uk/share-your-views

01275 244238

contact@northsomerset.co.uk

South Gloucestershire

www.healthwatchsouthglos.co.uk/share-your-views

01454 506176

contact@healthwatchsouthglos.co.uk

