

Improving the digital journey for patients in general practice

@PrimaryCareNHS



Minal Bakhai

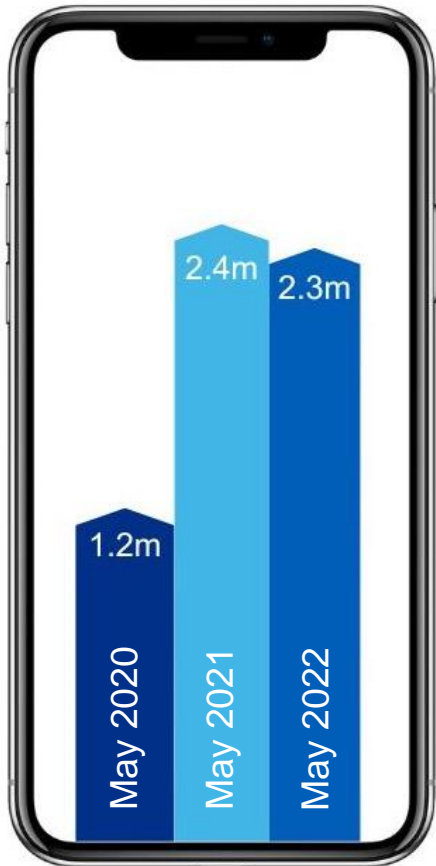
Director for Primary Care
Transformation and GP,
NHS England



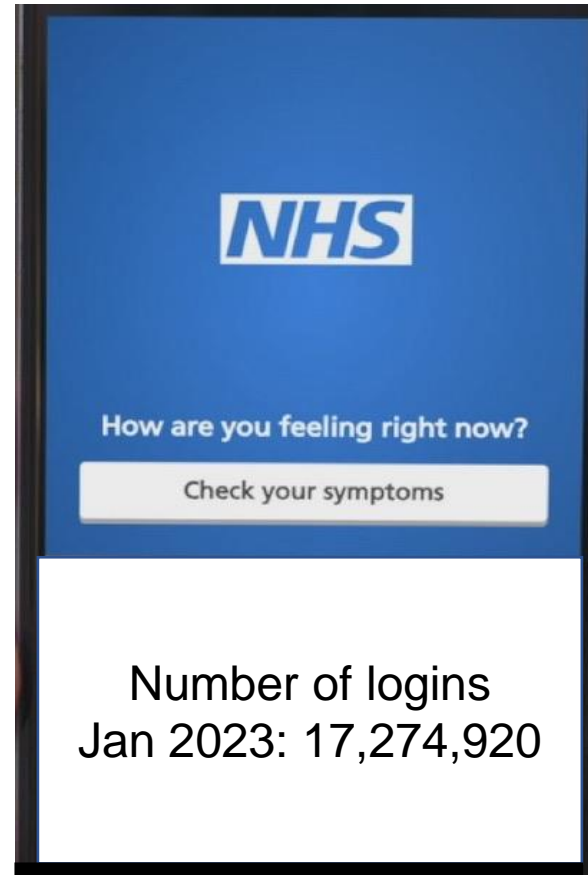
Dominic Vallely

User Experience Lead,
Primary Care Transformation,
NHS England

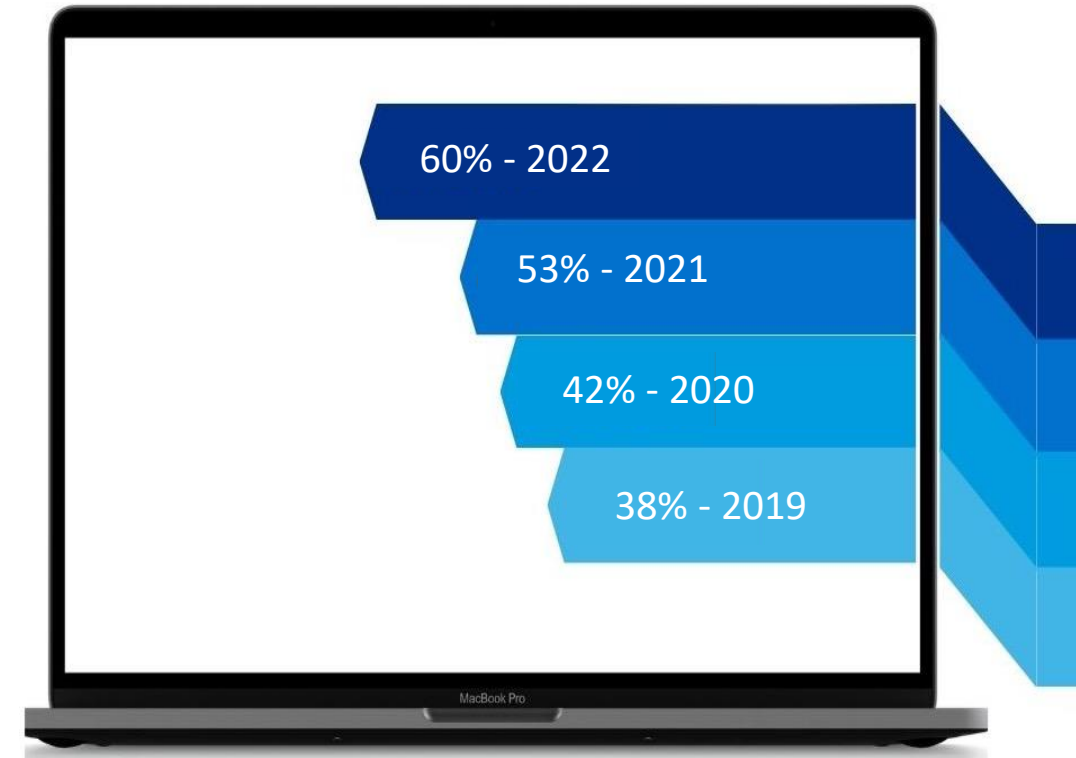
Patients increasingly use digital access routes



Online consultation submission rates



Usage of the NHS App



The national GP Patient Survey shows increasing numbers of patients using their GP surgery website



Amazing user experiences are expected and patients require a consistent experience as they navigate all NHS services through all stages of their life

Well designed and tested digital experiences make the complex simple, making them useable and accessible for the majority of the population

We need your help

GP websites, online consultation tools, apps and other digital tools are now critical enablers of general practice access and service delivery

To create a great experience of digital access to general practice we need to:

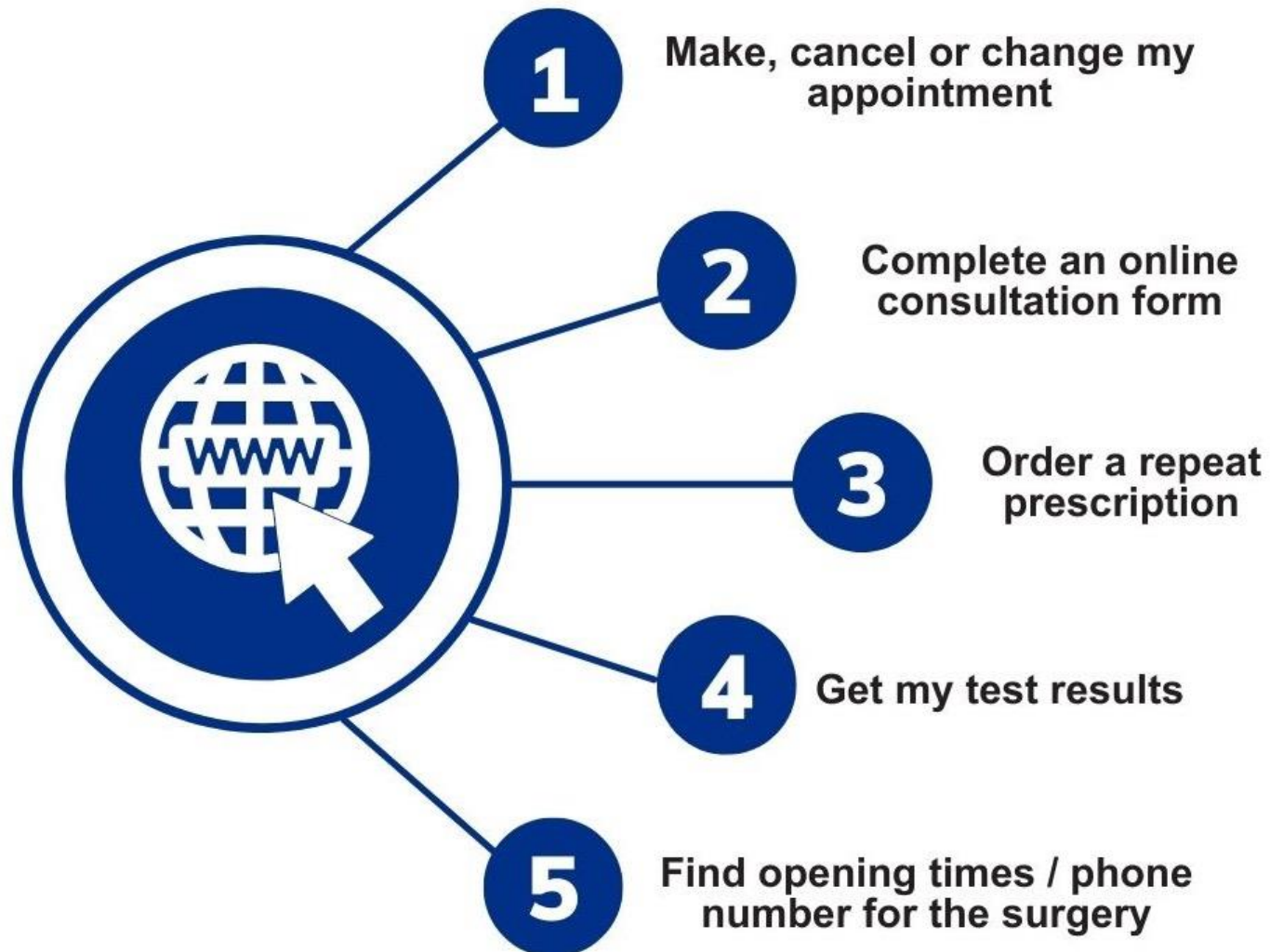
- Reduce complexity
- Improve integration
- Provide support to patients and staff
- Deliver a consistent experience
- User test to ensure digital journeys and tools are highly usable and accessible

Making GP websites highly usable and accessible for patients

Why do patients visit GP surgery websites?

**Visits are task
focused.**

**A small number of
tasks dominate
visits.**



We asked 102 patients to start those five key tasks on 10 GP website templates

102 participants

- 102 participants
- With low to moderate digital confidence from across England
- 46% of patient-users had previously visited their surgery website

Five tasks

- Make, change or cancel my appointment
- Complete an online consultation form
- Order a repeat prescription
- Get my test results
- Find opening times / phone number for the surgery

Ten GP Templates

- Representing 90% of market usage

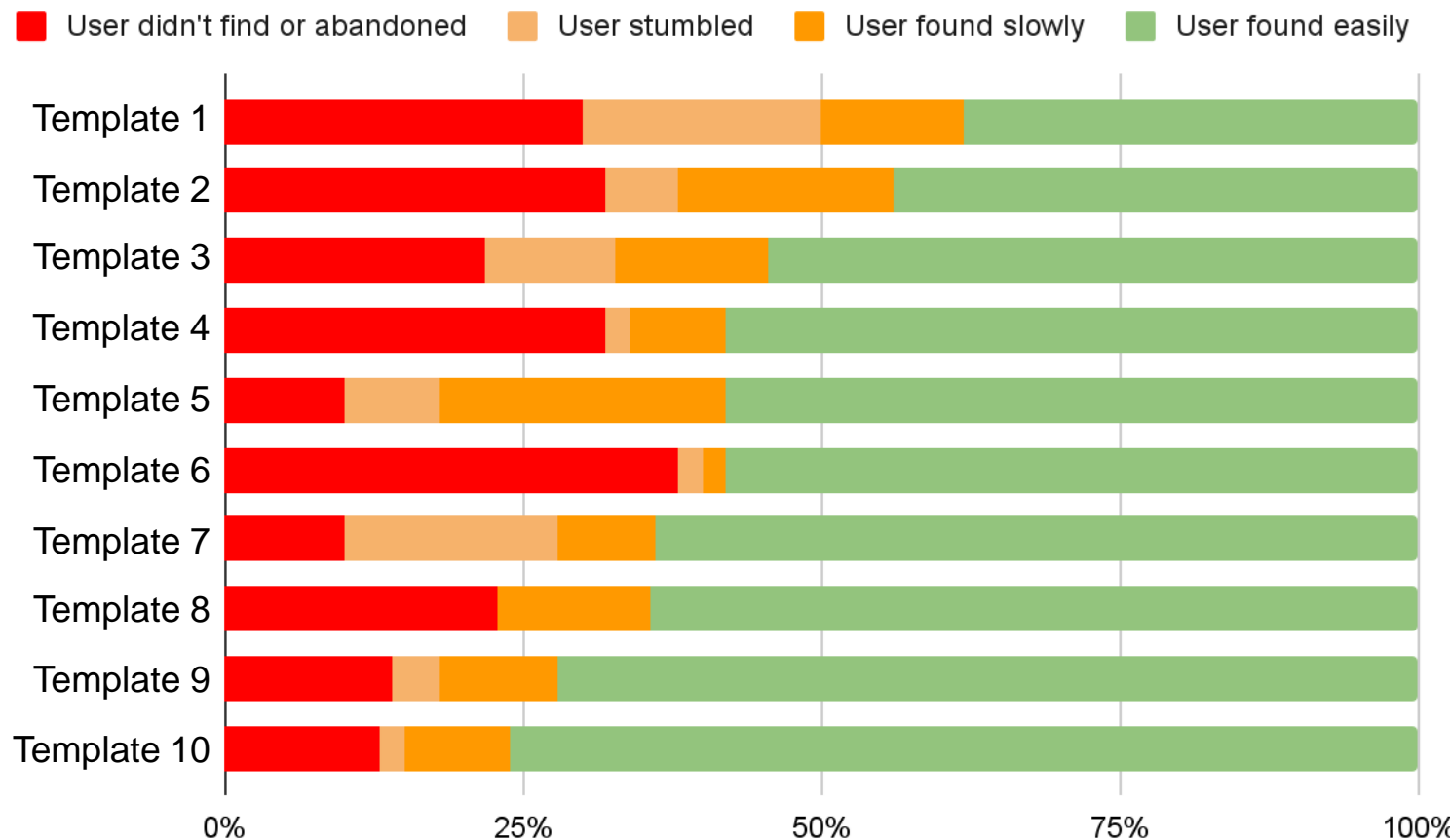
Read our patient-user research on our Digital Primary Care FutureNHS workspace
(log in required)



Many participants struggle to find and start key tasks

Participants failed to or struggled to find the starting point for 25-60% of key tasks on the GP surgery templates tested

- **Uncompleted tasks (red):** 36% of tasks were abandoned or uncompleted on the poorest performing templates compared to 10% on best performing.
- **Easy completion (green):** 76% of tasks were completed easily on the best performing template vs 38% on the poorest.

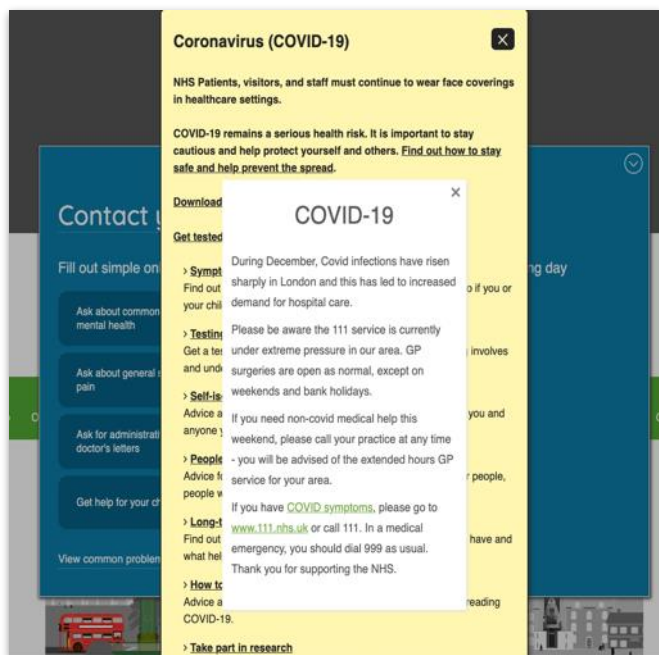


Overlays/pop-up screens were a major obstacle

27% of participants struggled to get to the homepage

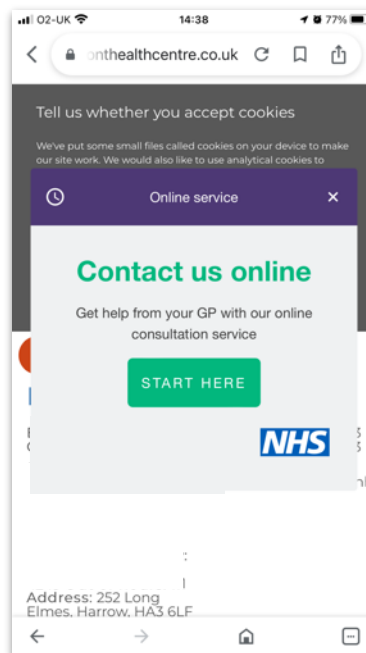
Overlays blocking the homepage

In this example multiple overlays are piled on top of each other, obscuring the homepage and causing confusion for participant.



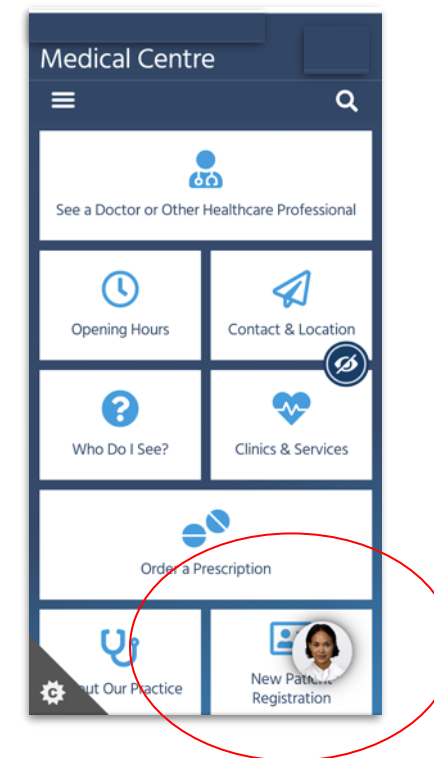
Site-wide overlays

Blocking access to underlying content, in this case about repeat prescriptions.



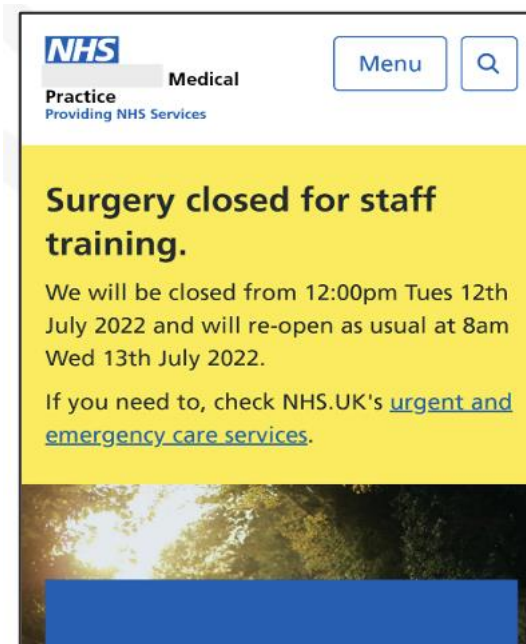
Function overlays

Functions (like the 'live chat' head icon) obscure important functions underneath.



Good practice:

Urgent information embedded in the page



Participants use their mental model and keywords to scan and explore a GP website

Mental model: All of these (routine) tasks were well understood by participant and many had experienced them before.

Keywords: Users bring this 'mental model' and associated keywords with them when they approach a website.

These keywords are critical. These are the key words patient-users scan the page for, look for in navigation or enter into search boxes.

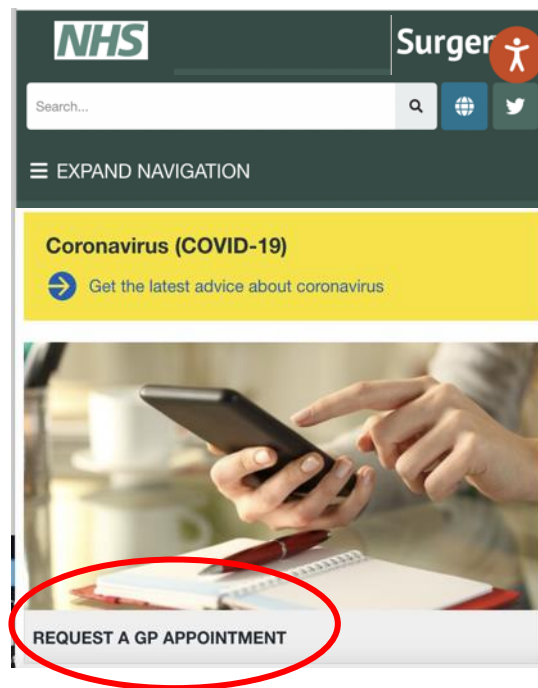
Task	Users scanned pages and searched for:
Make, change or cancel an appointment	Appointments
Get a repeat prescription online	Prescriptions
Get a sick note for work	Sick note
Get test results	Test results
Complete a form to join the surgery	Participants varied between register or join the practice.

"Register" was often confused with other items you can register for, eg. register for patient access.

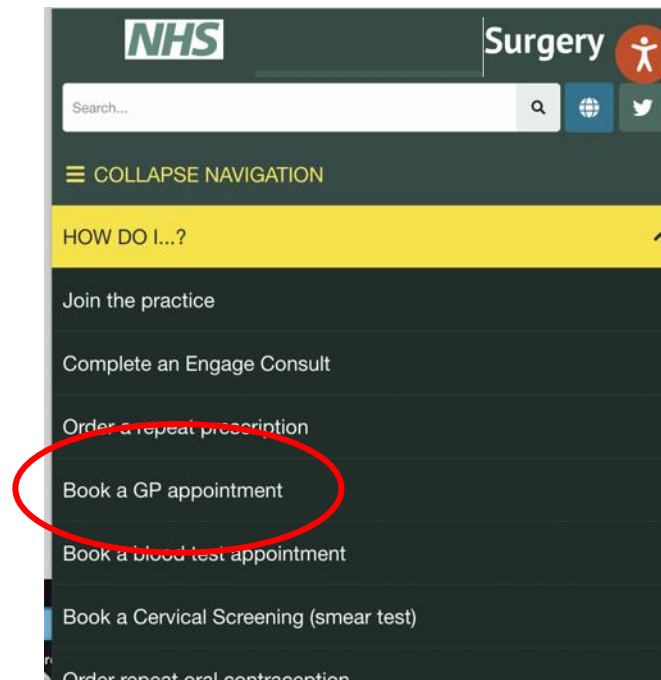
Participants use their keywords in three ways to find the starting point for key tasks

This template supports users needs and search strategies

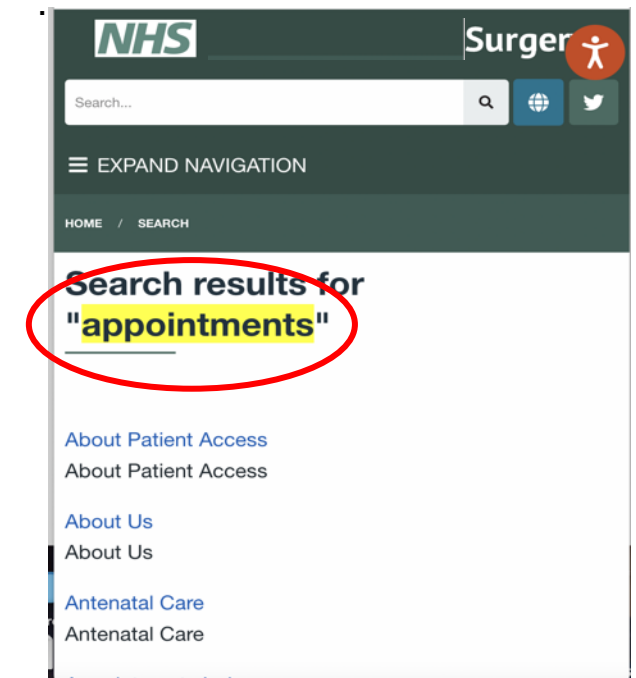
Scanning the homepage



Scanning primary navigation



Using keywords in search



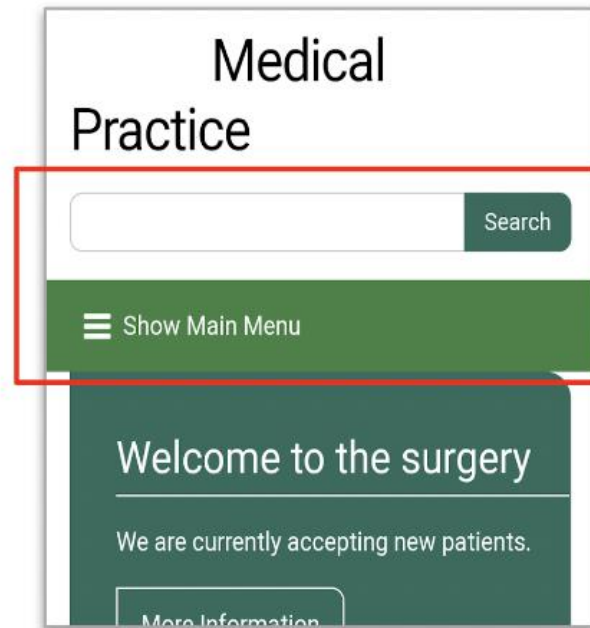
Participants use the menu and search less when they aren't visible or open

Unlabelled menu and search icons are not noticed by users

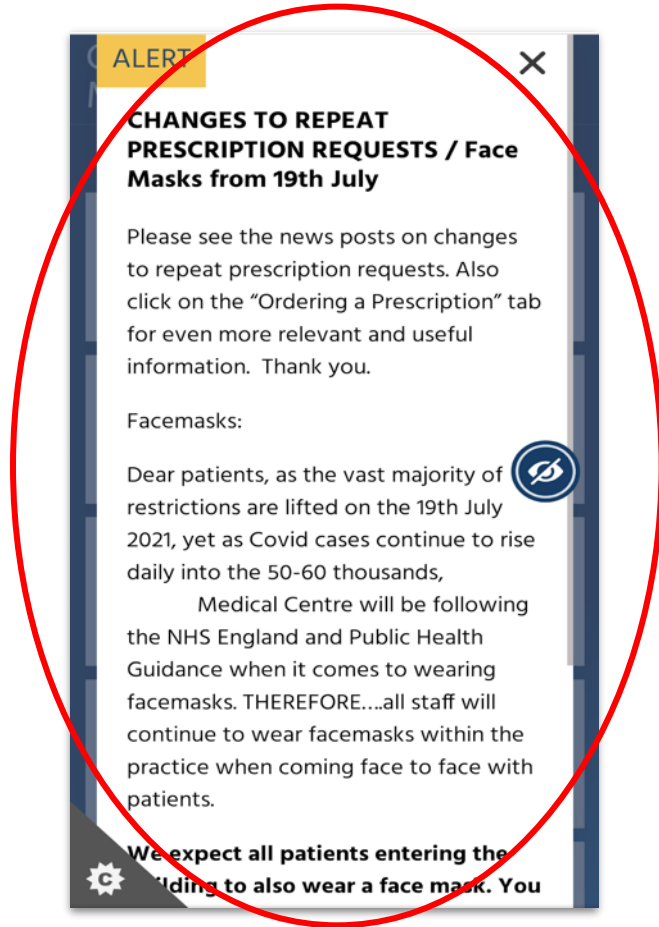


Labelled menu and search icons are noticed and used

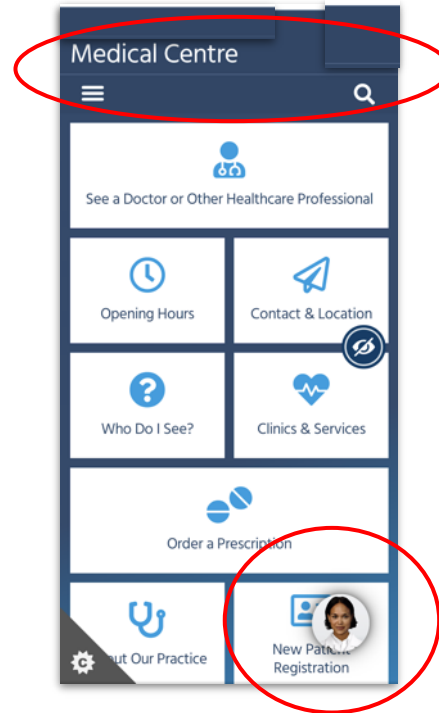
We'd recommend using the word 'search' in the search box and using the word 'menu' not navigation



This template doesn't support users search strategies

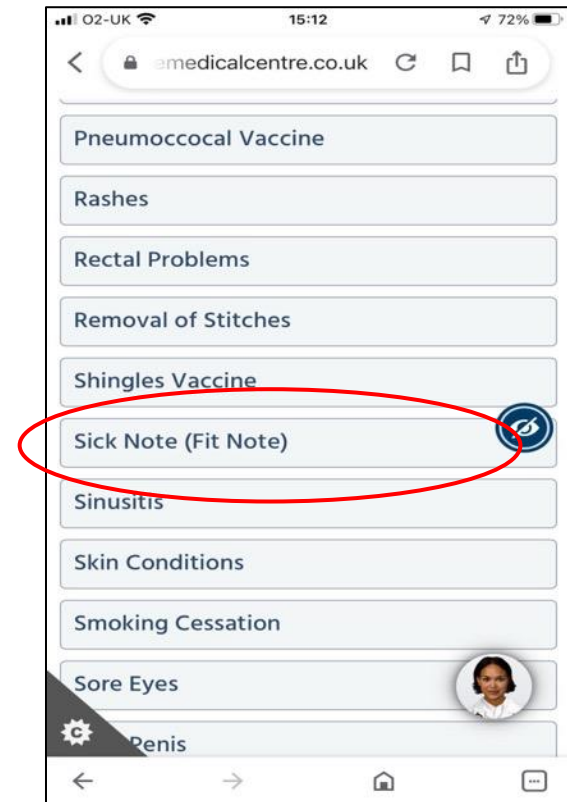


Overlays roadblock users from the homepage



Navigation and search not open (and persistent on mobile)

Icon overlay blocks functions below



Key task link is buried in a list of symptoms in a section headed 'who do I see?'

Large amounts of text and long lists of options are a huge barriers for users. NHS recommended reading age is 9-11

11
million

UK adults lack the skills to use digital effectively

7
million

Adults in England have very poor literacy skills

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/articles/exploringtheuksdigitaldivide/2019-03-04>

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/parents-and-families/adult-literacy/>

A 1000 word appointment page creates a huge barrier for many users.

93 symptoms to choose from to start this online consultation prevents users from finding a symptom relevant to them.

Appointments

[Pre-Bookable GP Appointment](#)
[Same Day GP Appointment](#)
[Early Morning GP and Nurse Appointments](#)
[Telephone GP Appointment](#)
[Practice Nurse Appointments](#)
[Health Care Assistant Appointment](#)

Please note that due to the current pandemic our appointments are operating slightly differently to below. We are working on early telephone triage appointments released twice daily at both 8am and 11am. Please be assured that if you need to be seen face to face then the Doctor will arrange this after speaking to you.

We have a range of appointments that can be prebooked for the Doctors up to 2 weeks in advance. These include both telephone Appointments and also some Face to Face appointments. Face to Face appointments will only be booked if there is a clinical need to be seen.

Appointments with the Doctors are available from 07:15-07:55 (Tuesday-Thursday), 08:30-11:00 (Monday-Friday), 12:30-12:30 (Friday only), 13:30-16:00 and 16:30-17:30 (Monday-Friday). Appointments with the GPs are 10 minutes long. The practice does not book double appointments unless the GP requests this through reception and must be booked using the prebookable service, not the same day system. We had to introduce this policy due to the high number of patients booking double appointments when they were not needed which unfairly blocked off appointments which could have been used for other patients.

Appointments with the Nurses are available from 07:20-08:00 (Tuesday-Thursday), 08:00-12:30 and 13:00-16:30 (Monday to Friday). The nurse appointments vary in length depending on the procedure being booked in. Reception staff will always ask what you are coming to see the nurse about to enable us to allocate the correct length of time for your procedure.

We operate as a group and you can make an appointment to see any doctor or nurse, however, it is beneficial to you that you try to see the same GP or nurse where possible to build up some continuity. If this GP or nurse is on annual leave or fully booked then you can see any other GP or nurse in that case. If your medical need is urgent then you may not be able to see the doctor of your choice. Our aim is to provide more "same day" appointments and less "pre-bookable".

However, to achieve this we need your help. Please try not to book appointments in advance "just in case" you need seen as our aim is to provide an appointment on the day you feel you need one. There will of course be occasions when this will not be possible due to excessive demand, but we will try our best to minimise this situation. Please remember to let us know if you cannot attend your appointment by either phoning reception, popping into the surgery, replying to your reminder text (if you have signed up for this service) or using our cancellation form on the main menu on this website.

Pre-Bookable GP Appointment

30% of our appointments can be booked up to 12 weeks in advance and the earliest to pre-book is normally about 4 working days away but depending on demand and cancellations they can often be sooner or further away. The pre-bookable appointments are mainly early in the morning (07:15-07:55 and 08:30-09:30) or late in the afternoon (17:00-17:30) with a few scattered mid afternoon. Patients fail to attend in about 1 in 6 pre-booked appointments. Please remember to let us know if you cannot attend your appointment.

Same Day GP Appointment

20% of our appointments are this type. Morning appointments for the same day are released at 08:00. Afternoon appointments for same day are released at 11:00. We offer approximately 160 same day appointments per day. This figure can vary depending on annual leave and ability to get locum cover (a locum is a GP that is not attached to the practice but helps us out with holiday cover). Please note that both release times can be very busy so we ask all patients to be patient with us and we will do our best to accommodate you.

Please call at the release times stated above. If left later than 08:00 or 11:00 it can sometimes be difficult to get an appointment. Phone lines can be very busy due to our patient list size. Please be patient as all members of admin staff answer calls at the busy period.

Please note, we will not give any afternoon appointments out until 11:00 precisely so if you call before 11:00 you will be asked to call back a few minutes later.

Early Morning GP and Nurse Appointments

On a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday we operate "early surgeries" between 07:15 and 07:55 and are intended to benefit people who find it difficult to see the doctor during normal opening hours due to work commitments. These appointments are pre-booked appointments and can be booked up to 2 weeks in advance.

Please note, this is strictly a pre-booked appointment service only so no other service is available at this time.

Telephone GP Appointment

We offer between 12 and 20 pre-bookable telephone consultations each morning. These are suitable for follow up appointments, medication queries (not re-ordering repeat medication), discussing results/hospital visits etc. They are not suitable if the doctor will need to examine you. These appointments are booked no further away than the next day. When asking for one of these appointments the receptionist will ask for your best contact number and a brief description of what it is concerning. This is to make sure this appointment type is appropriate and to make sure any urgent problems are dealt with without delay. There is no allocated time for this appointment and we would normally tell you the doctor will call you "any time between 08:00 and 13:00 depending on when they get a break in surgery". Please remember that the GP clinics (Asthma, COPD, Diabetes, Cardiovascular) etc. Because the Nurses are trained in more skilled areas we ask that you do not book an appointment with the Practice Nurse for a blood test or blood pressure review. Our Physiotherapist and Health Care Assistant take all kinds and blood pressures.

Please note, that all tests which need sent off to the lab need to be done by 15:40 as our van collection is at 16:00 precisely.

Health Care Assistant Appointment

Anne Frater runs our Health Care clinics (08:00-12:00 and 13:00-15:00 Wednesday to Friday). These appointments are for blood tests, eczema/itch removal, GTT (Glucose Tolerance Test), Height/Weight/BMI, urinalysis etc. All of these appointments are pre-bookable, we have no same day Health Care Assistant Appointments.

Please note, that all tests which need sent off to the lab need to be done by 15:40 as our van collection is at 16:00 precisely.

Notice

Please note, if you wish to speak with a GP you must telephone as early as possible in the morning, and all requests must be made before 11:00. Only "Medical Emergency" calls will be made after 11:00 by the Duty Doctor.

Practice Nurse Appointments

We offer these appointments between 07:10 and 15:50 (please see the break down of appointments on the "Surgery Times" tab on this page). All Nurse appointments are pre-bookable. Our practice nurses deal with a wide range of procedures including, dressing, ear syringes, injections, vaccinations, specialist

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Immersive Reader

Health Information

Primary Care Services
Repeat Medication
New NHS Services
NHS Library Health and Care Videos
Health A-Z
Medicines A-Z
Test Results
Care Information
Find a Local Service

Appointments

Surgery Times
Practice Opening Times
Surgery Closures
Cancel Your Appointments
Out of Hours
Home Visits
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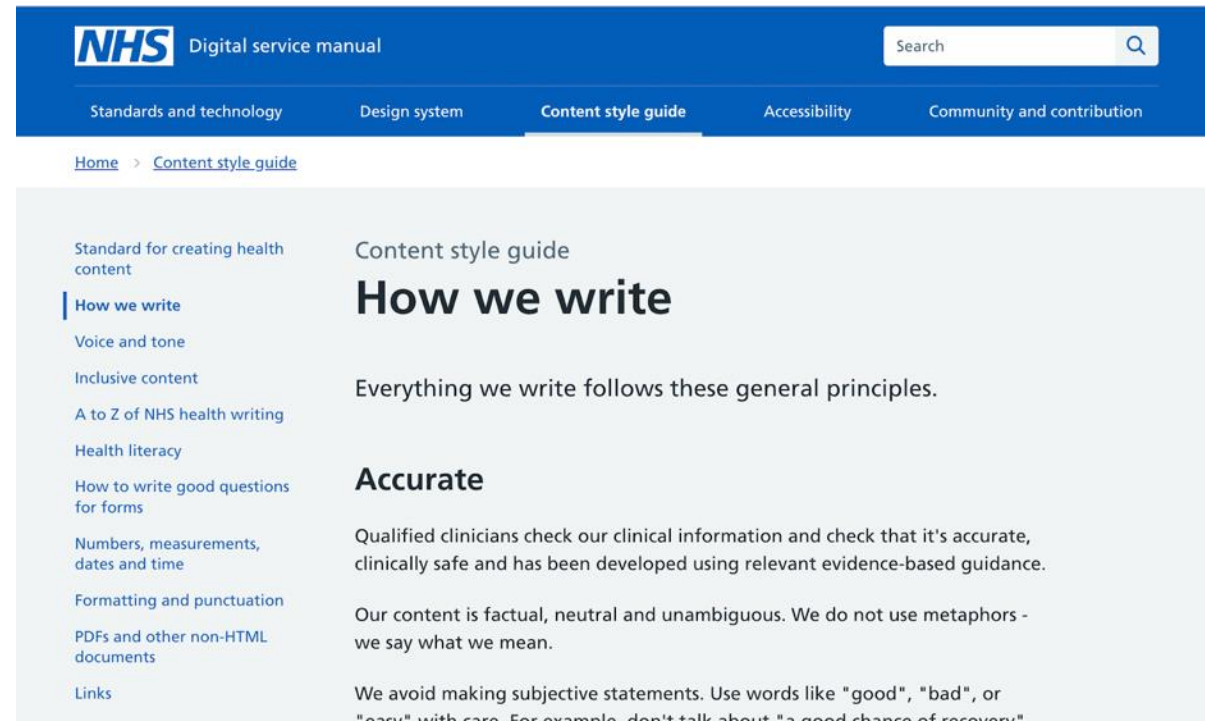
Appointments

Surgery Times
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Out of Hours
Home Visits
Travel Vaccinations

The NHS content style guide is a key standard for accurate, clear and concise content

NHS target reading age is 9-11.

It provides well tested guidance on writing well structured, accurate, clear and concise content.



The screenshot shows the NHS Digital service manual website. The header is blue with the NHS logo and the text 'Digital service manual'. A search bar is on the right. Below the header is a navigation bar with links: 'Standards and technology', 'Design system', 'Content style guide' (which is highlighted), 'Accessibility', and 'Community and contribution'. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > Content style guide'. The main content area has a light blue background. On the left is a sidebar with a list of links: 'Standard for creating health content', 'How we write' (which is highlighted with a blue bar), 'Voice and tone', 'Inclusive content', 'A to Z of NHS health writing', 'Health literacy', 'How to write good questions for forms', 'Numbers, measurements, dates and time', 'Formatting and punctuation', 'PDFs and other non-HTML documents', and 'Links'. The main content area has the title 'Content style guide' and a sub-header 'How we write'. Below this is the text 'Everything we write follows these general principles.' followed by a section titled 'Accurate' which contains the text: 'Qualified clinicians check our clinical information and check that it's accurate, clinically safe and has been developed using relevant evidence-based guidance. Our content is factual, neutral and unambiguous. We do not use metaphors - we say what we mean. We avoid making subjective statements. Use words like "good", "bad", or "easy" with care. For example, don't talk about "a good chance of recovery".'

Finding online consultation forms

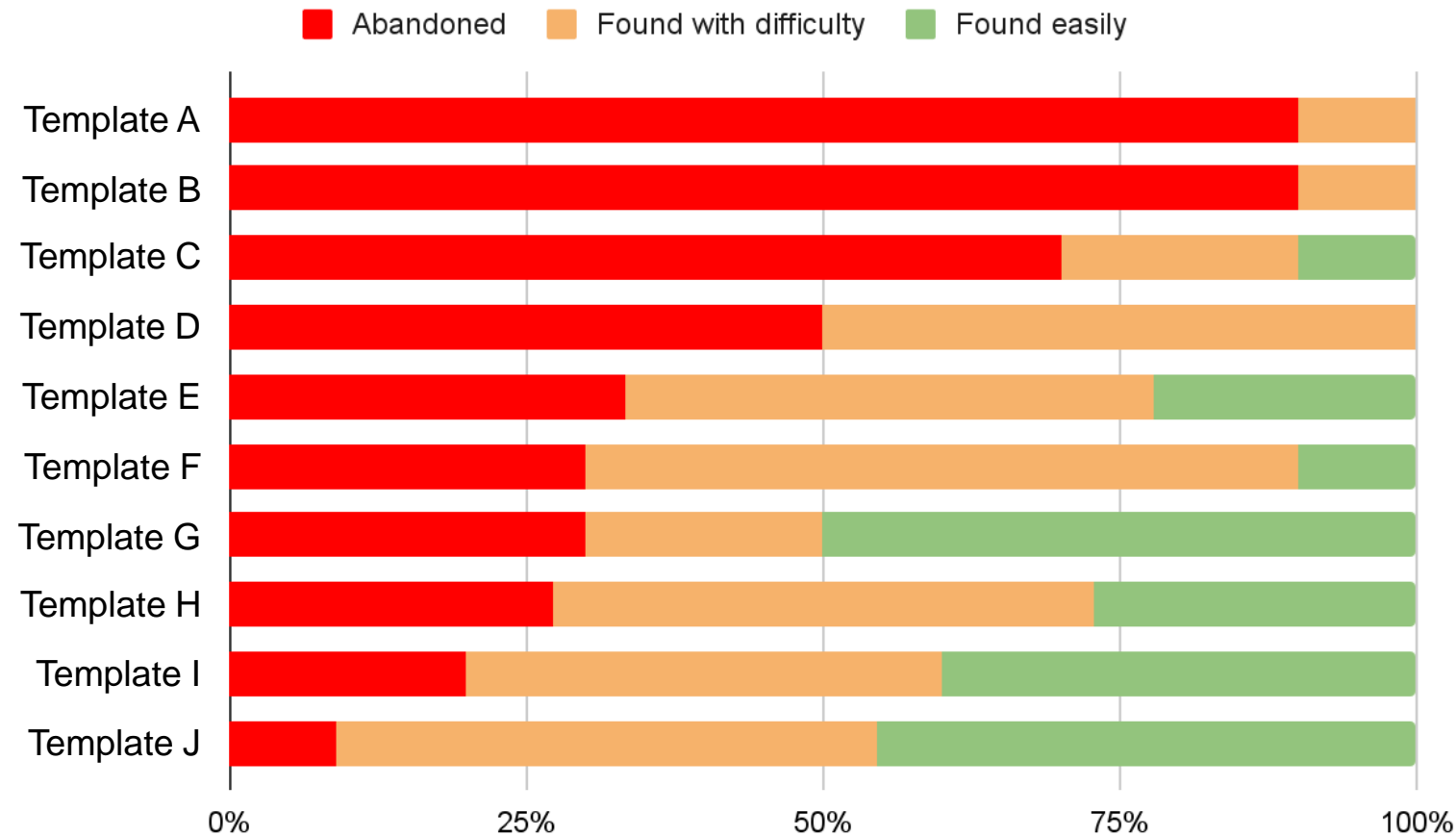
Online consultation forms: 81% of participants did not find an Online Consultation form easily

81% of participants did not find an online consultation form easily or abandoned the task

Ideally users should be able to find this critical form in a minute or less

For most users this was not possible

- 49% abandoned the task
- 32% found the form with difficulty
- 19% found the OC form easily



The term “online consultation” and when to use online consultation forms is unclear to many patients

Patient understanding

The access model for patients is changing and we're using new terms like OC and triage.

- The term “online consultation” is unclear to many patients.
- How and when they should use “online consultations” is unclear to many patients.
- Patients are unsure what key words to scan for on a GP website.

Patient behaviour

Patients fall back on existing knowledge and behaviours

- Patients search for “appointments”
- When patients look in appointments sections OC is often not listed
- Patients see a range of terms for OC which is confusing.
- Use of brand names for OC also confuses patients.

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Recommendations

Use “request an appointment online” to describe online consultation forms.

Integrate OC options alongside other ways of contacting the practice (eg. Phone and walk-in).

Support patients ways of searching: make sure “request an appointment online” is a quick link on the homepage, in search results and on your appointments page.

Our recommended (and tested) copy for the appointments page integrates OC alongside other options

To request an urgent appointment for today

- [Use an online form](#) 24/7 to request a consultation
- Phone us Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm
- Visit the surgery during opening hours and speak with a receptionist

When you get in touch we'll ask what you need help with. This means we can understand how urgent your problem is and identify the most suitable doctor, nurse or health professional to help you.

If you contacted us online we will be in touch within a few hours, during working hours (9-5pm).

To request a routine appointment in the next 7 days:

- [Use an online form](#) 24/7 to request a consultation
- Phone us Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm
- Visit the surgery during opening hours and speak with a receptionist
- [Sign in to Patient Access](#) to book a screening test or vaccination

Your appointment

However you choose to contact us we may offer you:

- a face-to-face appointment
- a phone call or video consultation
- a text message or email, for example inviting you to visit the surgery for a blood test

Appointments by phone, video call or by text or email can be more flexible and often mean the doctor or nurse can consult sooner.

Cancelling or changing an appointment

[Provide information about different options for cancelling, including phone numbers and links if necessary]

If you need help when we are closed

[Include information about 111, urgent treatment centres, extended access and late night pharmacies.]

Our tested and recommended copy is in our guidance on nhs.uk



3/10 participants found the OC form on this template

No OC link in 'appointments':

9 of 10 participants look for the OC form in 'Appointments'. *There is no link to OC forms here.*

Not understanding 'econsultations':

3 of 10 participants spontaneously say they don't know what 'eConsultations' means. *This is the only link on the site to OC.*

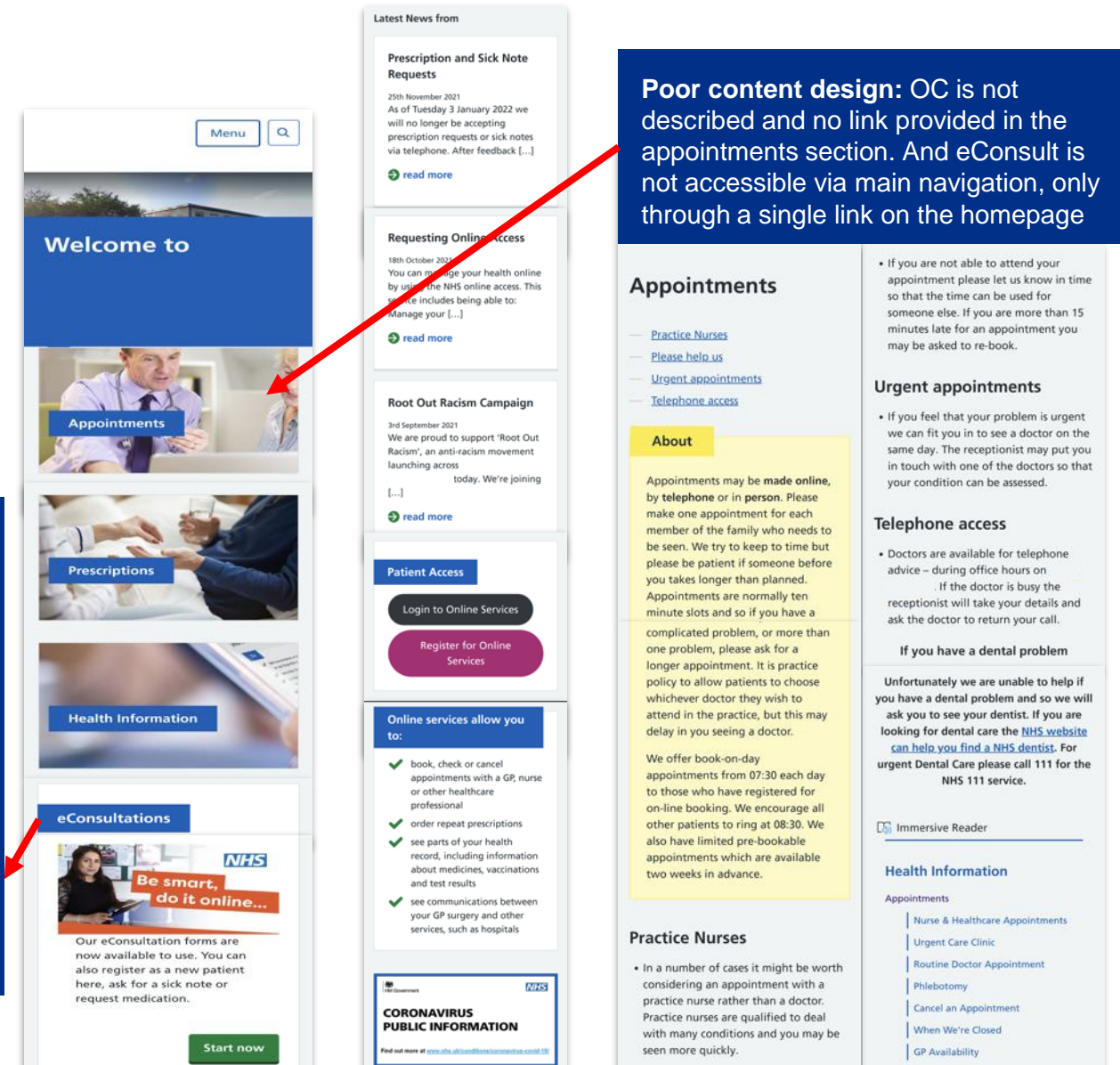
Tap zone:

Of the participants who find the eConsultation box, some struggle to see the 'start now' button and try to click the 'eConsultations' heading or the image.

Poor content design:

eConsultations is not understood and this is the only link to the online consultation form.

There is no path via primary navigation and no link on any other content page.

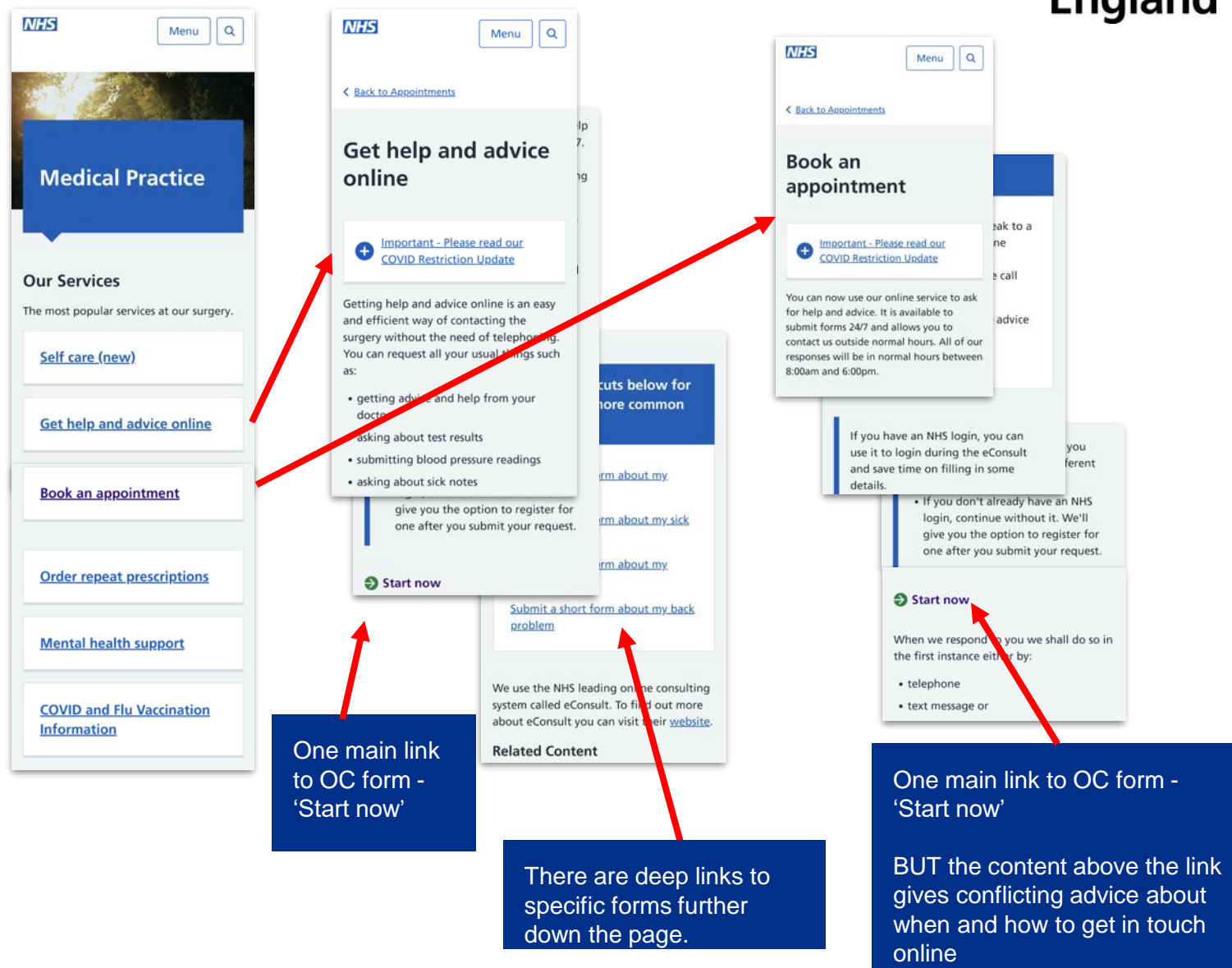


9/10 participants found the OC form on this template

Homepage: Participants were torn between 'Get help and advice online' and 'Book an appointment'. The decision to choose one over the other was evenly split between participants. *Both pages link to the OC form.*

Sub-pages: The 'Start now' links to the OC form in the sub-pages were missed by 2 of 11 participants.

Visibility of 'start now': Overall 5 of 11 participants had difficulty finding the links to the OC form. There's a lot of information to read and understand. The link is hidden in a lot of content.



We tested 10 web journeys/templates for accessibility. 9/10 were not fully compliant.

	Template 1	Template 2	Template 3	Template 4	Template 5	Template 6	Template 7	Template 8	Template 9	Template 10
Fail: high priority	-	-	-	1	2	3	4	4	5	6
Fail: medium priority	-	2	3	4	-	3	1	9	2	1

Fail (H) High priority

The website or journey fails to meet the requirements against A criteria measured against WCAG 2.1 and more severe accessibility issues were identified

Fail (M) Medium priority

The website or journey fails to meet the requirements against AA criteria measured against WCAG 2.1

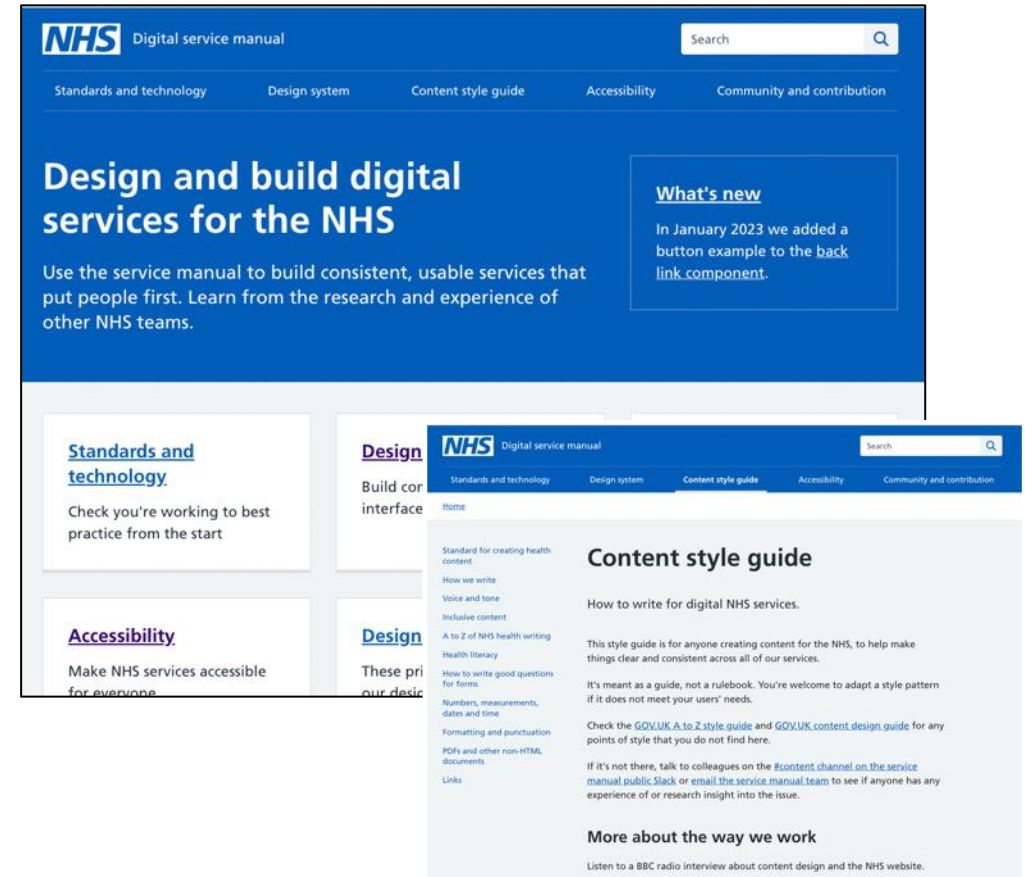
All suppliers are required to be compliant with WCAG AA standards.

The patient-user journey from the homepage to the online consultation form was tested by a specialist accessibility agency against these standards

Making GP websites highly usable and accessible for patients

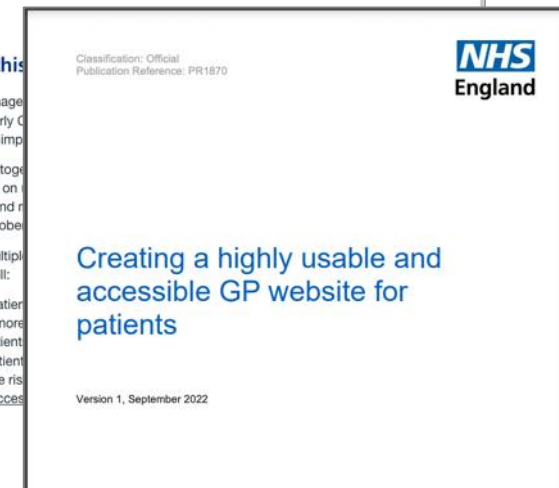
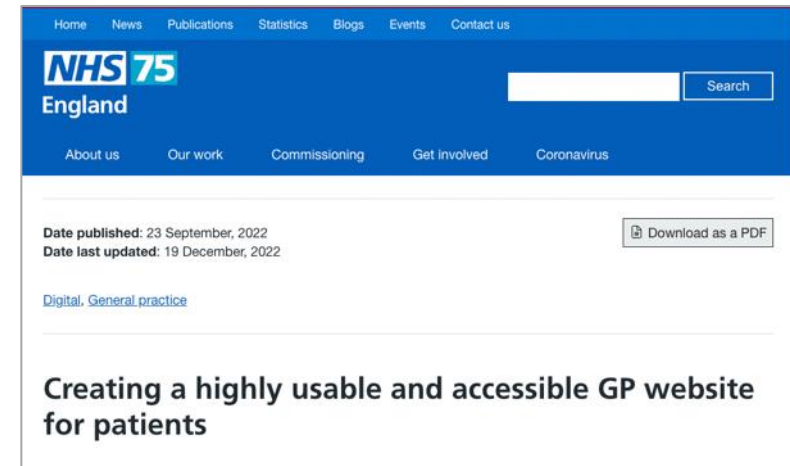
Supporting improvement - foundations

- We have great foundations / design standards in the NHS Digital Service Manual and Content Style Guide.



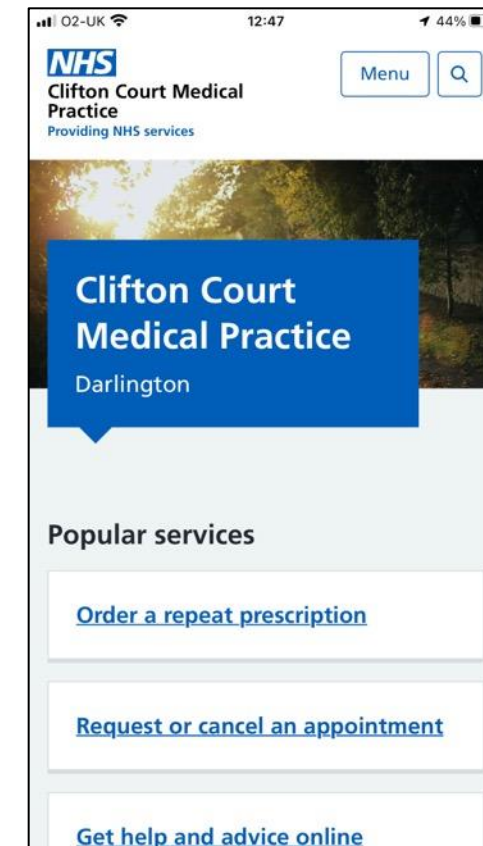
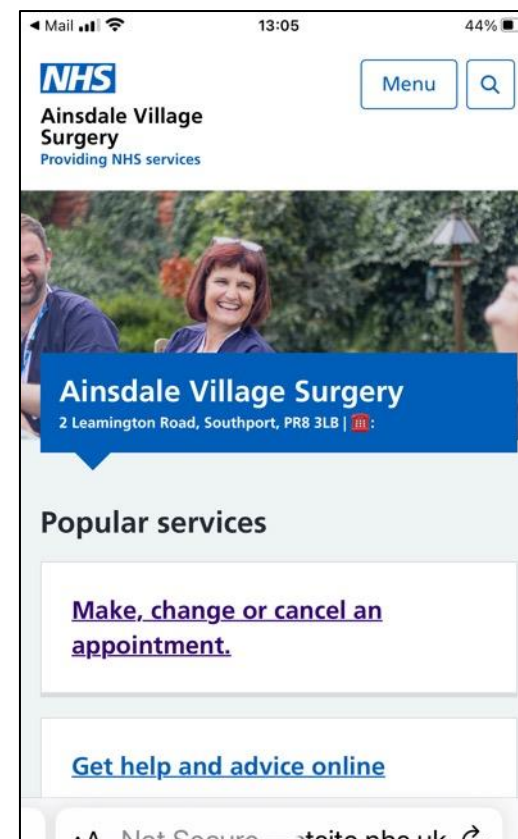
Supporting improvement - guidance

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- We have codified good practice around GP websites into national guidance, based on user research.



Supporting improvement - product

- We have great foundations / design standards in the NHS Digital Service Manual and Content Style Guide.
- We have codified good practice around GP websites into national guidance, based on user research.
- Suppliers have adopted the guidance and their latest GP website templates incorporate recommendations from guidance and are converging on NHS design standards.



NHS
England

- | Patient Priorities | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Stakeholder | Tasks and priorities | Requirement | Info | Well | | | | | |
| SECTION 1: PATIENT PRIORITIES: Criteria are based on patient research: identifying key patient tasks and design and interaction | | | | | | | | | |
| Patient priorities | 1 | Overlays and pop ups | <p>CHECK ON DESKTOP AND MOBILE</p> <p>Our research has indicated that overlays/pop up banners are creating huge issues for patients. We found that 27% of participants who visited a site with an overlay as the first thing they saw struggled to get past the overlay, especially on mobile.</p> | <p>No pop-ups or overlays before landing on the homepage.</p> <p>Cookies are integrated in the page - NOT an overlay.</p> <p>No pop-ups or overlays when clicking to any other pages on the website.</p> | | | | | |
| | 2 | Task 1: Booking, changing or cancelling appointments (inc OC tools) | Finding the appointments page | <p>Appointments' Immediately visible in the main menu</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Link to appointments in the top third of the homepage.</p> | | | | | |
| | 3 | Task 1: Booking, changing or cancelling appointments (inc OC tools) | Appointments page | <p>There is one appointments page, using the word 'appointment' in its heading.</p> <p>Clear, concise information with links about what to do in what circumstances.</p> | | | | | |

Supporting improvement – people

- We have great foundations / design standards in the NHS Digital Service Manual and Content Style Guide.
- We have codified good practice around GP websites into national guidance, based on user research.
- Suppliers have adopted the guidance and their latest GP website templates incorporate recommendations from guidance and are converging on NHS design standards.
- We're beta testing a web audit tool to help practices, PCN's, Federations, ICS's identify specific issues and fix them – and to compare sites and track improvement
- Working with ICB's to enhance capability and skills in audit, strategy, delivery and measurement.
- Creating Digital and Transformation Leads within additional roles scheme for PCNs and supporting with mentoring and training.
- We're embedding a systematic approach to continuous improvement in general practice.



How can we help?

Read



Scan the QR code or visit the NHS England website for guidance on 'creating a highly usable and accessible GP website for patients'

Review



Guidance on copy writing, web design and free web components:
<https://service-manual.nhs.uk>

Contact us



If you are planning to improve the user experience of GP websites we would be happy to talk through our research and offer advice and support