

GP online:

**understanding and increasing the use of
online GP services in Surrey**



Benefits of GP online services

People who are already using GP online services have told Healthwatch Surrey that having online access saves them time and helps them to easily manage their medication and appointments.

Why people don't use GP online services

Not everyone who Healthwatch Surrey spoke to was interested in using GP online services. Some people say they prefer to speak to someone in person, while others say they do not use the internet regularly or at all.

Some people who were retired or lived close by said it is convenient for them to attend their surgery and speak to someone face to face. Other people said they don't use their GP services very often so there was no need to sign up for online services.

"I can use the internet but I prefer to come in and speak to someone face to face who knows me...I don't like not knowing who is behind the screen. I'm retired and live nearby so it's easy to come in."

A patient's story

A Woking patient, Helen, signed up to her GP's online services a few years ago after seeing a poster in the waiting room. She uses other online services for everything from shopping to paying bills and felt GP online services would give her easier access than having to call in to the surgery.

"The receptionist gave me a form to fill in and I had to show photo ID - it was easy and took about five minutes. It then took a few days to process."

Helen now uses GP online services for booking appointments, ordering prescriptions and viewing test results and health records, and says the main benefit for her is being able to log in to access her health information out of hours.

"As a type 2 diabetic I have regular blood tests, so being able to look at my results online helps me to monitor my sugar levels and spot any problems early...I would encourage everyone to use it!"

Local health and care watchdog helping more patients 'Get Online'

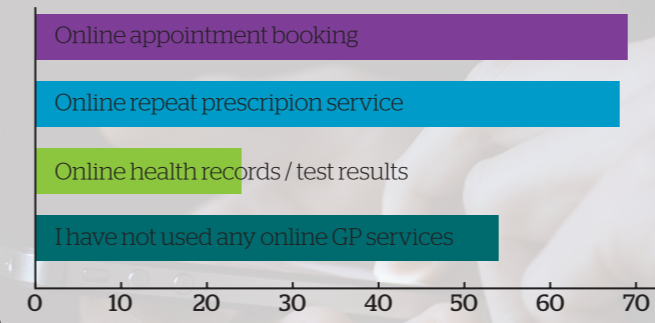
Healthwatch Surrey teamed up with eight GP practices across Surrey to help raise awareness of online GP services as part of a national campaign to help more people make the most of the internet.

During Get Online Week (2nd-8th October), volunteers from the local health and care watchdog visited eight GP surgeries to raise awareness of online GP services and gather views on how the current system is working. The watchdog spoke to almost 300 people during the week, including views gathered from over 150 people through an online and freepost survey.

Lisa Sian, Operations Manager at Healthwatch Surrey said: "We hope that raising awareness of online GP services will help people to have more flexible access to appointments, prescriptions and test results, particularly for those who may find it difficult to communicate over the phone or in a busy surgery."

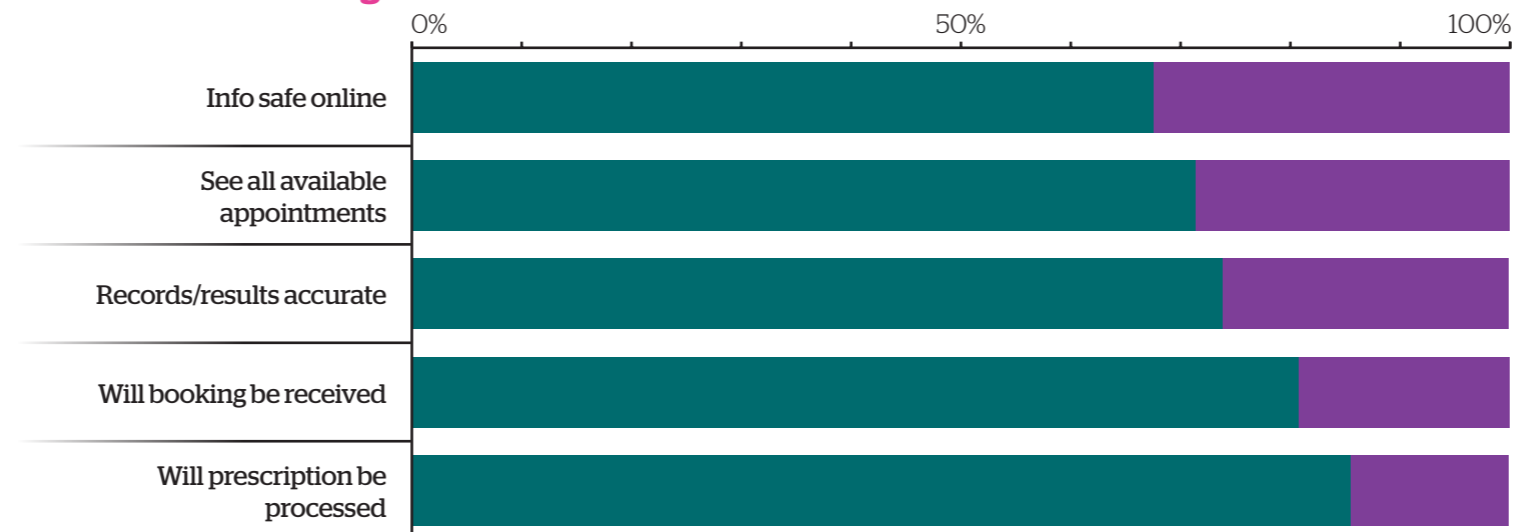
GP online services people use

Healthwatch Surrey surveyed over 150 people to find out which of their GP's online services they use.



A recent national report highlighted low awareness of online GP services such as appointment booking, repeat prescriptions and patient access to parts of their GP record.

Concerns about using GP online services



Not concerned/a little concerned

Quite concerned/extremely concerned

"We do not like to use online services which require release of personal data"

Improvements needed to increase use of online GP services

Nearly 300 people gave their views and experiences of using online GP services during Get Online Week. They highlighted some key areas that could be improved including:

Awareness and information - many people were unaware of the services their GP surgery offered online. "I didn't know about online services but I will ask my GP and join ASAP!"

Sign up process - many of the people who use GP online services commented about the difficulty of signing-up, complexity of usernames and how difficult it is to reset their account if they forget their details. "I find the password protocols too demanding so have to visit the surgery periodically to start over."

Appointment availability - people commented that the appointments available are often too far in the future. Some practices release appointments in the early morning, resulting in a rush to login and book at that time. "Future appointments only seem to be available at 3 weeks plus." "Not all my GPs are shown on online booking sheets."

Type of service - people suggested additional services that could be available online including booking appointments to see a nurse or have a flu jab. "It would be nice to be able to book online appointments with a nurse when necessary." "It would be good to be able to book flu jabs online."

How to get online with your GP practice

To protect your personal and medical information, you will need to register to use the online services available from your GP practice. This may include getting a code or link from the receptionists at your practice and showing them some photo identification.

Once you've signed up, you will be able to access the online services your GP practice offers.

My GP journey: hearing from seldom heard and vulnerable communities

Healthwatch Surrey has documented the views and experiences about GP services of 120 individuals from seldom heard and vulnerable communities. A copy of the report 'My GP journey', together with a summary of the responses received from GP Practices, NHS England and local commissioners is available at:

www.healthwatchesurrey.co.uk



Improving use of online services

Healthwatch Surrey has made suggestions to all GP practices in Surrey about how the practices can increase the number of people benefiting from online services. This includes:

- more promotion to raise awareness
- providing support to encourage people to register, particularly those who are in regular contact with services (such as those with long-term conditions)
- increasing the range (both the timeframe and type) of appointments made available to patients online
- liaise with IT providers to improve the help with sign-up and password reset process
- investigate opportunities for additional online services (eg automatic notifications when prescriptions or test results are available).

The full report 'GP online: Even better if...Local people's experiences of GP online services', can be accessed via the Healthwatch Surrey website

www.healthwatchesurrey.co.uk

Your views and experiences

Anyone who has a comment or experience about GP practices, social care or other NHS service can contact Healthwatch Surrey.

Telephone:
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Text Relay:
18001 0303 303 0023

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 Pop into any of the Citizens Advice in Surrey

Website:
www.healthwatchesurrey.co.uk

Find us on Twitter:

 **@HW_Surrey**

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