

# THE CRANBORNE PRACTICE

## PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)

### ONLINE GP SERVICES SURVEY 2021



## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Cranborne Practice is keen to promote the use of online GP services. However, PPG Members have agreed that while we want to encourage people who can go online to start using these services, the surgery will still need to provide a paper-based service for those who do not have access to the internet. Or even if they do, some patients may not wish or feel confident enough to use online services. Nevertheless, the PPG note that there are benefits both to patients and the Practice if patients use online services.
- 1.2 In April, the Practice has asked the Patient Participation Group (PPG) to help them determine whether patients are aware of the GP services available to them online, find out if people are using them, and identify any potential barriers to accessing them. As a result, PPG members developed a short survey to capture patients' views about using the Practice's Online GP Services and to identify and better understand any potential barriers to accessing them.
- 1.3 This document summarises the results, insights, and opportunities to help the Practice plan and improve accessibility to their services. This report will be presented for consideration by the Practice and PPG members at their August meeting.

## 2. Summary of opportunities

More detail on results and insights are contained in the body of this report, along with the opportunities to improve uptake and accessibility to online services. In summary, the options for action include to:

- 2.1 Actively promote the available online GP services and the benefits for the patients and the Practice if patients use them.
- 2.2 Promote these through a variety of digital and non-digital channels to reach as many patients as possible.
- 2.2 Consider developing an eForm to enable patients to book popular Nurse/HCA appointments, such as blood tests and cervical smears.
- 2.3 Re-instate in-surgery Digital Champion learning sessions when it is safe to do so.
- 2.4 Feature user guides on registering, accessing, and using online services more prominently on the Practice website.
- 2.5 Encourage more patients who can use online services to do so; this will free up Practice staff to manage the needs of patients who don't have the technology or ability to develop the digital skills to access online services.
- 2.6 Ensure campaigns to encourage a shift to use online services and raise awareness of online options include promoting the benefits for the wider community and the individual patient and the Practice.
- 2.7 Educate Practice staff (GPs, the Nursing / HCA teams, Receptionists and Admin staff) about the range of online services available to patients and how these can be set up and used.

### 3. The Approach and Responses

3.1 PPG Members Alan Prangley and Julie Saunders jointly developed a survey that could be completed online or on paper. The online survey was created through Microsoft Forms and was publicised on the Practice website, on social media, in Practice and by word of mouth through PPG membership. It ran for just over four weeks, closing at the end of May and yielded 131 responses, 3 of which were on the paper printed form. There were 17 survey questions and the average completion time per survey was just over 4 minutes.

3.2 To better understand responses, respondents were asked to indicate their age group. The respondent demographic tends to reflect the makeup of the PPG, with most respondents aged over 45:



3.3 Responses indicated that many patients are unaware of the range of online services available; some did not have the confidence in their digital skills, while others chose not to use them, given a preference for face-to-face services. An extract of questions and responses are attached in Appendix A = Online Service Survey 2021 Results.

3.4 All respondents use the internet to some degree across a range of devices:

1. Do you use the internet (for example, for email or to browse websites)?



2. If yes, what device do you use to access the internet? (Please tick all that apply)

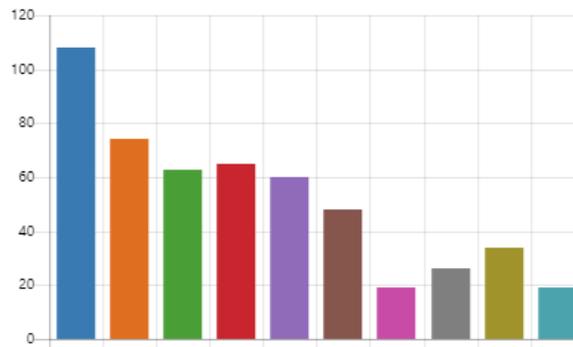


3.5 Many respondents were aware of being able to order repeat prescriptions online, but not the other online services offered. Even less took up the opportunity to use those provided:

3. Are you aware of any of these online services offered by The Cranborne Practice? (Please tick all that apply)

[More Details](#)

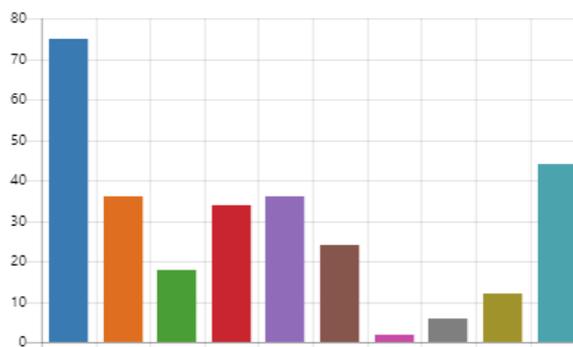
● Ordering repeat prescriptions	108
● Booking routine GP appointm...	74
● Cancelling routine GP appoint...	63
● Viewing your medical records	65
● Viewing your test results	60
● Sending secure messages to t...	48
● Requesting a sick note	19
● Requesting a medication review	26
● Advice or self-help	34
● I am not aware of any of these...	19



4. Do you actively use any of these online services offered by The Cranborne Practice? (Please tick all that apply)

[More Details](#)

● Ordering repeat prescriptions	75
● Booking routine GP appointm...	36
● Cancelling routine GP appoint...	18
● Viewing your medical records	34
● Viewing your test results	36
● Sending secure messages to t...	24
● Requesting a sick note	2
● Requesting a medication review	6
● Advice or self-help	12
● I do not use any of these onlin...	44



3.6 Perhaps because of the higher awareness/use of online repeat prescription ordering, 72.5% of respondents do not use a Pharmacy Repeat Prescription Service:

5. Do you use a Pharmacy Repeat Prescription service (e.g. through Boots, Lloyds, Pharmacy2U or similar)?

Insights

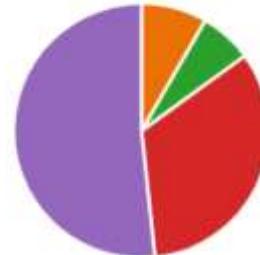
● Yes	36
● No	95



3.7 About 15% of respondents who say they don't use online services indicate that this is because they prefer to contact the Practice. All appear to have access to the technology but choose not to use online GP services for various reasons (see the summary of the comments throughout this report and in the attached Appendix).

6. If you don't use any of the online services, which of the following reasons apply?

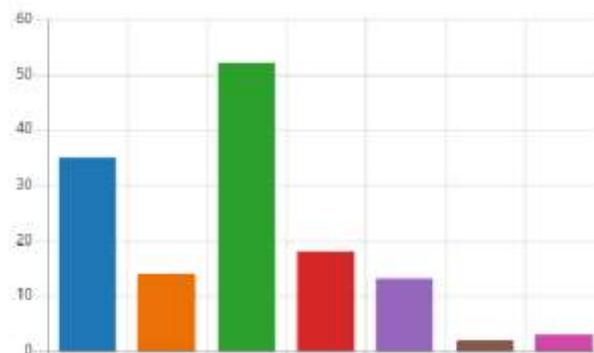
- I don't have access to the tech... 0
- I have access to the technolog... 5
- The online services are not sui... 4
- I prefer to contact the Practice... 20
- Other - you can comment furt... 31



3.8 The vast majority of respondents who use online services access them through Systmonline, either directly or via a link on the Practice website. In addition, about 58% of these patients use more than one application to access services.

7. If you do use online services, which application/resource do you use to access them? (Please tick all that apply)

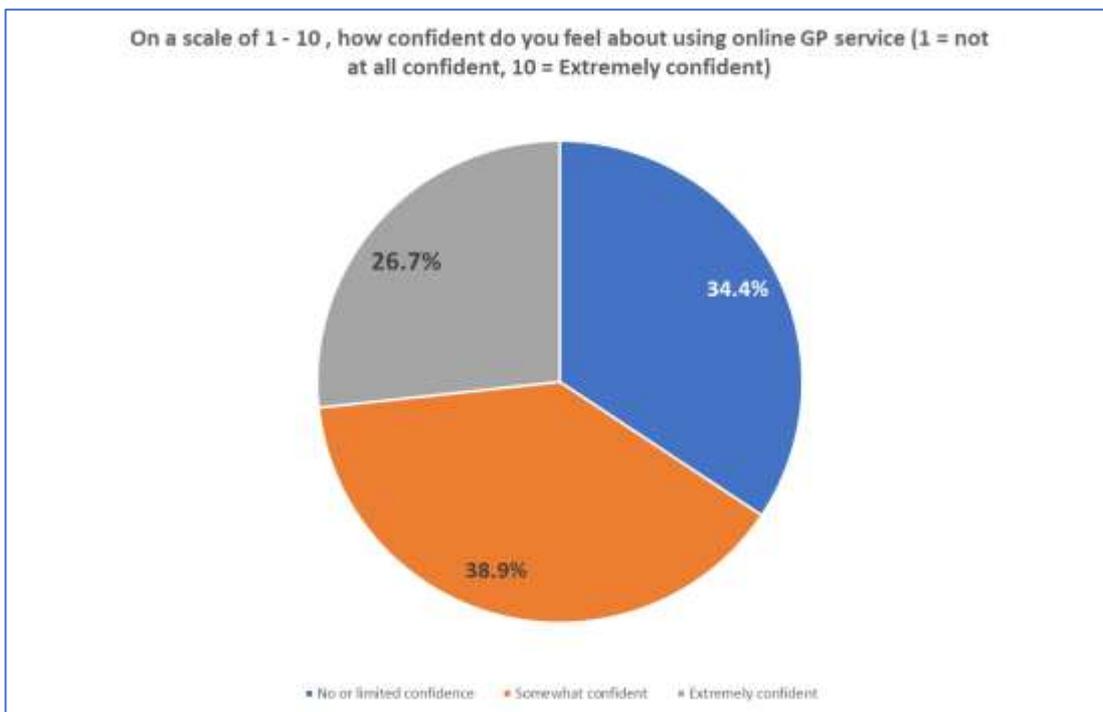
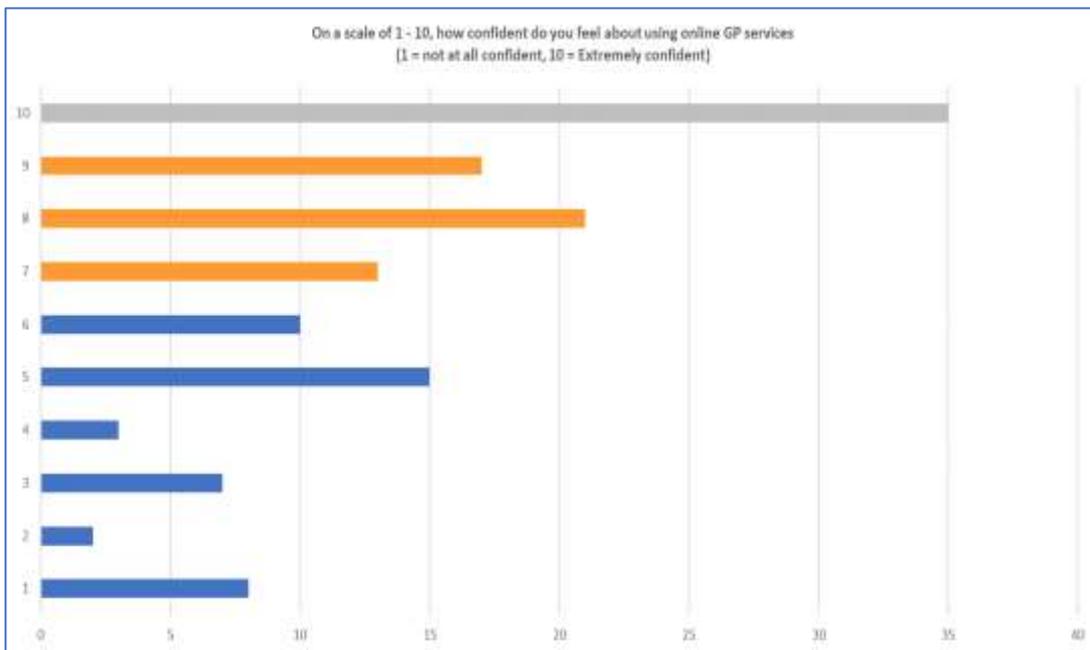
- From the link on the Practice ... 35
- Using the eConsult link on the... 14
- Logging into the SystemOnline ... 52
- Using the NHS App 18
- Using the Airmid App 13
- From the NHS website (www.n... 2
- From the NHS 111 online web... 3



3.9 When asked to rate these options, there didn't appear to be much variance in user experience, which would indicate a strong preference. Ratings averaged between 3.68 (for the NHS app) and 4.37 (direct login to SystmOnline):

<u>Application or Resource used</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Average * Rating</u>
The Cranborne Practice Website	77	3.96
SystmOnline Patient Access	57	4.37
eConsult	39	3.75
The NHS App	28	3.68
NHS Website	18	3.89
The Airmid App	17	4.12
NHS 111 online	13	3.77

3.10 Finally, in terms of user confidence about using online GP services (1 – not at all confident, 10 = extremely confident), just over 26% felt extremely confident, roughly 39% somewhat confident and just over 34% of respondents with no or limited confidence:



## 4. The Patient Voice and Opportunities for the PPG Action Plan

4.1 Many respondents were aware of being able to order repeat prescriptions online, but not the other online services offered. Even less took up the opportunity to use those offered.



The Practice website has recently been re-designed to make it easier for patients to find the information or services they need to access. As a result, there is an opportunity **to actively promote the available online GP services and the benefits** for the patients and the Practice if patients use them. Some patients have suggested further promotion opportunities in their survey comments:



Awareness of the benefits of online services could be **promoted through a variety of channels (the website, social media, traditional media, newsletters, leaflets, and word of mouth)** to reach as many patients as possible.

4.2 There are two online appointment booking options currently provided through SystemOnline: 1) telephone consultations with a GP and 2) Drive-Through Flu Clinic appointments for over 65s. The new website has also enabled the Practice to offer patients in an eligible "At Risk" Group the opportunity to book a Drive-Through Flu Clinic appointment using an online form. Some patients would like to be able to book appointments online to see clinicians other than a GP.

"It would be useful to book appts online with nurses, i.e. blood tests and smears."

"I Would like to be able to make blood test appointment on line."

"I saw options re booking online- but couldn't book the specific appt I needed (for a cervical smear)."

Like many GP surgeries, The Cranborne Practice does not offer the ability to book appointments with Nurses or Health Care Assistants (HCAs) through SystemOnline. This is because there are many types of appointments that nurses and HCAs handle, each requiring different skills and equipment and varying durations. However, the new website now offers the ability to create bespoke electronic forms which are quick and easy for patients to complete online rather than telephoning the surgery. The Practice may want to **consider developing an eForm to enable patients to book popular Nurse/HCA appointments** – for example, blood tests or cytology (smear tests).

4.3 Patients stated that they could not use online services because they struggled to use them effectively to address their needs. Although aware of the online services on offer, some respondents said that they couldn't do what they needed to do quickly and easily, so they resorted to phoning the surgery or their pharmacy for their request. This may be due to a lack of patient understanding of how to use the available online services.

"Couldn't get my blood test results from online. The repeat prescription did not get through to pharmacy resulting in no antihypertensives for a week Resort back to ringing the pharmacy. I consider myself quite IT literate so was willing to try it. Happy to learn."

"I would like to learn more about how to use them."

"Just lots of issues in the past with passwords timeouts etc so stopped using them."

"I have found no way of contacting Practice direct. There is no facility at present of booking a Doctor's appointment direct only telephone appointment. I don't use sick note facility. I also don't know where the medication review is, not that I would use it."

"I have not been able to make an appointment over internet. Always phoned."

"Would use once I have confidence. When time permits maybe some practice sessions would give people the confidence. Maybe set up some group sessions as a training exercise."

"I would happily use the online services but I don't want to have to call the surgery to set up an online account. The receptionists are swamped anyway and I don't have time at work to be on hold for long periods of time."

4.4 Many patients commented positively about online GP services and want to learn more.

"I just have not got round to using online services. I often feel I spend too much time on screen so its nit top of my list. Now vaccine records will be available that has motivated me and I plan to. I think people will either just get on with it, or need help or an incentive!"

"Found out about other services available after loading NHS app for COVID record ,now require info from surgery to be able to use other facilities."

"I was extremely nervous to start with but I must admit online is so efficient. Thank you."

"I've never needed to use any GP online service yet!! That's why I've not completed all the questions. I'm sure it's the way to go though."

"This is great. Especially the appointment booking and prescriptions. The reception team are always under so much pressure, and this makes more business sense than paying more employees. I hope that no jobs will be lost in due course though. Nothing bears the personal touch, especially when you are ill or vulnerable."

"Unless it's an emergency, I would wish an e. or online consultation with my named GP if it cannot be face to face."

4.5 However, as discussed in PPG meetings, members have had a mixed experience of using eConsult to access GP consultations. Several negative comments were made by respondents about eConsult, although the application received an average rating of 3.75, slightly higher than the NHS App at 3.68.

"Not confident using e-consult for a new condition. How I describe pain or symptoms may be different to how others do for example. I can see possibilities for mis diagnosis."

"I don't need use the services very often as my health is generally good. But I have found e-Consult to be awkward, not user friendly, cumbersome with too many choices. I have phoned the surgery in frustration!"

"Still don't see how e-consult can work accurately. Everyone describes pain differently and we all have different pain thresholds. A doctor can't feel muscles (for example) using e-consult."

In designing the new website, eConsult was not given a prominent place on the Home Page. However, following patient feedback after its launch, the Practice website has been updated to make it easier for patients to access eConsult to request general advice or health reviews.

4.6 In some cases, people found the mobile apps were not easy to access. Some respondents did not understand the difference between the different applications available to access online health services.

"I have downloaded the Airmid app but couldn't complete identification - wasn't sure how to use my passport/driving licence and it wanted a photo. I hope this is helpful to your survey!"

"Can't amend or cancel blood test appointments on the NHS app. I can't find anywhere on how to request a medical review. To view medical records first you have to speak in depth with reception just to gain access. you cannot book a blood test online even if you are supposed to have them monthly. I'm not aware there is access to see test results."

"I think that the procedure for registering for the NHS app is unnecessarily complicated."

Some users find the process for registering to use online services is unduly complicated. However, in the case of some respondents concerns, it is possible to do some things they think they can't (for example, you can cancel a blood test appointment via the NHS App). These comments suggest that educating patients further on how to use online and digital apps to manage appointments, request medication reviews and see test results would be welcomed by them.

In February 2020, the Practice offered surgery-based learning sessions with local Digital Champions to help patients register for and learn how to use online services. There was not a huge take-up, and then the COVID pandemic meant that face to face sessions were not possible. Feedback from respondents to the survey indicates that if **Digital Champion learning sessions are re-instated when deemed safe to do so**, there will be a demand for people to attend.

A series of How-To user guides have been developed by PPG members and published on the Practice's Getting Online web page. There is an opportunity to **feature these more prominently on the website**.

Some Practice staff may not know themselves about the digital tools that are available to their patients. There is also an opportunity to **raise awareness about these amongst all**

"I can not see my previous history on the nhs app. I have spoken to the lake road surgery and they don't seem to sure how it works."

**staff and train specific individuals in the Practice Admin team** to help patients set up and start to use online services.

4.7 One respondent commented about the number of online resources they use to manage their health. The ability to see all health records in one place is expected to be addressed later this year by the launch of myDCR, the new Citizen's Portal through which patients will be able to access their health and social care information online in one place.

"I have an app for each NHS service I use - hospitals, dietician and doctors. Would be beneficial if they could take to each other. Would be useful to be able to see my gp notes as I can see my hospital records on the other apps."

4.8 Survey responses indicate that some patients simply do not want to use online services or are actively opposed to any consultation other than face to face.



Comments suggesting that doctors are not seeing patients, that it is impossible to contact a GP or that doctors have "shielded" themselves from patients will be disappointing to the Practice. Face to face GP consultations have been offered in the surgery at Lake Road when it is necessary to do so. Many remarks suggest that it is not that respondents cannot take up online options but that they "prefer" or "want" access to a GP.

Of course, patients' preferences and expectations will need to be considered in how patients can access the Practice's services. However, **any campaigns to encourage a shift to use online services and raise awareness of online options should promote the wider community benefits.** There is a "greater good" benefit: if more patients use online services rather than contacting the Practice through the Reception team, it will free up Practice staff to manage the needs of patients who do not have the technology or the ability to develop the digital skills to access online services.

4.9 Finally, some respondents took the opportunity to provide positive feedback about the Practice:



## 5. Next steps

This Report and its Appendix will be shared with Practice Management and PPG members through the email distribution list and on the PPG Facebook page. Their feedback and comments on these documents will be noted and discussed at the next planned PPG meeting, scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> August. Following this meeting, it is anticipated that any agreed objectives and actions will be added to the PPG Action Plan for ongoing progress monitoring.

Update – This report was shared and approved by members on 18th August; agreed objectives and actions have added to the PPG Action Plan

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Date: 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021