

Introduction

Healthwatch Lancashire is committed to listening to patients and members of the public in Lancashire and making sure their views and experiences are heard by those who run, plan and regulate health and social care services.

This report summarises the experiences of Healthwatch Lancashire's staff and volunteers in a study into access to medical records and online services at GP surgeries. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the difference in access to medical records and availability of online services at GP surgeries across Lancashire.

This report will be published, available online and shared with health and social care providers and commissioners in Lancashire.

The NHS Choices website states that:

"The NHS is committed to modernising its services so that they are as efficient and effective as possible and put patients in the driving seat of their care. The ambition is that by 2018 every citizen will be able to access their full health records at the click of a button, detailing every visit to the GP and hospital, every prescription, test results, and adverse reactions and allergies.

Offering people, the chance to book appointments, order repeat prescriptions and access summary information held in their GP records online is a key milestone on the road towards becoming a truly modern and dynamic healthcare system which is responsive to what patients want."

NHS Choices website:

http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/thenhs/records/healthrecords/Pages/what_to_do.aspx

Methodology

It is often those closest to the process who are best placed to give useful feedback on the way services work and how they can be improved. As patients and relatives are the ones who experience the process or service first hand, they have a unique, highly relevant perspective.

Patient and relatives input into designing services can be invaluable as sometimes seeing services from their point of view opens up real opportunities for improvement that may not have been considered before.

Healthwatch Lancashire undertook a small study which involved seventeen members of staff and volunteers who requested access to their medical records from their own GPs. They were not directed to do this in any particular method. Those who took part gave us

information on their experiences of obtaining access to their medical records and use of online facilities for primary healthcare services. This includes access to medical records, access to an online system to book appointments with a GP and ordering online repeat prescriptions.

The following GP surgeries were contacted by Healthwatch representatives:

1. Mount View Practice, Fleetwood
2. Park View Surgery, Preston
3. Reedyford Health Care, Nelson
4. The Surgery Chorley, Chorley
5. Ash Tree House, Preston
6. Ash Trees Surgery, Carnforth
7. St Fillan's Medical Centre, Preston
8. Barnoldswick Medical Centre, Barnoldswick
9. Little Harwood Health Centre, Blackburn
10. Whalley medical centre, Clitheroe
11. Doclands Medical Centre, Preston
12. Granville House Medical Centre, Adlington
13. Sandy Lane Surgery, Leyland
14. Great Eccleston Health Centre, Great Eccleston
15. Meadowside Medical Practice, Lancaster
16. Reedyford Healthcare, Nelson
17. Darwen Health Centre, Darwen

The feedback included in the report has been reported as it was shared with Healthwatch Lancashire.

The following seventeen case studies relate to the experiences of our staff and volunteers in using online services:

Case Study A

“I tried to register online for access to my patients records and was directed to another site. This informed me that I need to speak to a receptionist at my GP practice.

The next day, I visited the surgery and requested access to my online records. The receptionist did not understand what I was asking for and directed me to speak to a pharmacy about ordering prescriptions online. When I said that it was my patient records I wanted access to she acted surprised which made me feel uncomfortable.

She handed me a form from a filing cabinet and asked me to take it away with me and fill it in, as it was quite a long form with a couple of pages of terms and conditions. I decided not to complete the form on the basic principle that it asked for me to write down my password on to this form to be used for online access which surely is not secure and I am concerned about the confidentiality of this process.”

Mount View Practice, Fleetwood

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study B

“I have registered with my GP to view my medical records etc. I requested this a few weeks ago when I went for a health check. They gave me a printout which enabled me to register for Patient Access. Having registered and been online, there is no information on my medical records section (probably because I do not suffer from an underlying medical condition and I am not on any regular medication).”

Park View Surgery, Preston

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study C

"I have just tried to access my health records at my GP. They have a very clear guidance sheet available online at their website and the form is available to request access at reception. The GP then will review the request. I personally do not feel I need full access so will not be taking this further. I already use online prescription ordering and appointment booking."

Reedyford Health Care, Yarnspencers

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study D

"I am trying to access my medical records from my GP. To register they ask for various pins and security numbers etc. which I cannot find as information is sent to me in small print, as well as the fact that the questions are not clear explaining what they want me to write in the boxes. I do not find this process easy, in fact I cannot progress with the registration. I am registered blind so how do I do this?"

The Surgery Chorley, Chorley

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study E

"As requested I attempted to access my own records on-line. I was unable to proceed as I do not have an ID and password, I had to visit my surgery and get an application form which tells me; "To register for online services you will need to complete a written form (supplied) and present in person to the surgery with a photo ID" (March 2016).

I am assured that having declined to share medical records in the past, will not affect this provision. I was informed by the receptionist that the content of my information would be very limited. I seldom see a GP at my surgery, I would not allow my records to be shared and have no interest in accessing things on-line."

Ash Tree House, Preston

Access to Summary Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study F

“My surgery has been using Patient Access for a long time (years) now. I use it monthly for repeat prescriptions and I have found it brilliant. It was easy to set up initially and easy to sort out if I had forgotten my user name / password. Booking prescriptions and ordering medication is so easy and efficient – I can also choose which pharmacy (the practice is linked with three) to collect the drugs from.

It is such a good system, so easy to use, saves me so much time – and I have just discovered my immunisation record there, not that I need it!”

Ash Trees Surgery, Carnforth

Access to Immunisation Record

Online Services

Case Study G

“When I looked into booking appointments online: There are a limited number of appointments available. I tried to book one with my usual doctor. There was nothing available even when I looked up to 3 weeks ahead. Within an hour I attended at the surgery and was able to book one for 10 days ahead. This has been an issue on previous occasions.

I have no problems with ordering repeat prescriptions online. I am able to order and collect after 48 hours. I can elect to have prescriptions sent to a nominated pharmacy but I collect instead as it is just as convenient for me, a pharmacy is within the doctor's surgery.

When I try to access my medical records, the only records available are a list of repeat prescription details, list of immunisations and a list of allergies. Also a statement which reads ‘If you have any concerns about the content of your medical records please contact your practice.’

When I attended my practice I asked the receptionist whether I could access any other of my medical records on line, she said I would have to discuss that with my GP. I have declined to do so.”

St Fillan's Medical Centre, Preston

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study H

“The following happened when I tried to access my medical records: I had misplaced my username ID so I requested it to be sent to me by email. To do this I filled in some questions on Patient Access – this was very quick and felt secure. Once logged in, the services section said that booking appointments and repeat prescriptions was enabled. The medical records section said that the feature was disabled by the practice – it did not say how I could get access to it. I phoned the practice and my call was answered very quickly – the receptionist was very helpful and caring and explained that I would need to come to the surgery with photo ID to have access to this feature.”

Barnoldswick Medical Centre, Barnoldswick

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study I

“I have been registered with Patient Access for a while to book appointments and order repeat prescriptions, however I am unable to view my medical records online. It is restricted and says I must contact my practice for access.”

Little Harwood Health Centre, Blackburn

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study J

“We have had online access since 2014. We registered to order scripts and book appointments in January 2014. I have never actually used this since 2014 as in the beginning it had a lot of problems and when you went to collect scripts they were not done and they had no record that you had ordered them so I am afraid I gave up.

I have been online this weekend to carry out this request and have found it easy to access and I can get into my information to order repeat scripts. However, the other aspects of the system it states "disabled by the practice". If you want to access your medical records you have to "contact the surgery". I have not proceeded with this at this stage.

My husband is unable to access his records with the registration information we have. So we re-registered him and he is still unable to access his records. I will contact the surgery about this and also hopefully find out how I can access my records.

Follow up:

I have now been to our GP surgery and have been given new information for registering, we can now access our records online as well as order scripts and make appointments.

They have just set up a new system. Pity they did not inform the patients they appear to be waiting till you contact them!!!”

Whalley medical centre, Clitheroe

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study K

“I was not registered for access, so I tried online and was referred to my practice reception, I phoned, spoke to a delightful lady named Sally who confirmed that I was eligible to register and that I should pop in and collect a letter authorizing me to register. I have since been to the surgery and collected my letter, followed the instructions, successfully registered and have perused the site, there is NO information regarding my health or treatment, only data I can see is my medications, repeat script date and my next appointment date with the practice nurse. Disappointingly there is no information on my actual physical state or treatment.”

Doclands Medical Centre, Preston

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study L

“I have been on my GP practice Patient Access site and I can easily make appointments, order repeat prescriptions and email my practice and have done several times in the past.

On the home page there wasn't an option to view my medical records so I assume the practice has not sanctioned this as yet.”

Granville House Medical Centre, Adlington

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study M

"I already have access to my medical records and use patient access on my phone to book appointments. The appointments available online are limited, so I usually have to ring up for an appointment which is more suitable for me. It is useful for ordering repeat prescriptions and quick/easy to use. The process of applying for patient access is straight forward, but you do have to go into the surgery to register."

Sandy Lane Surgery, Leyland

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study N

"I use online services to order prescriptions and book appointments at my GP. I had to ask at the surgery and they gave me a code and then I could go online to use these features. I have not got access to my medical records and my GP says there is very little information you can see anyway."

Great Eccleston Health Centre

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study O

"I went online to see if I could register to access my medical records and I could 'Request an Online User Account' which enables you to book appointments and request repeat prescriptions. I tried to follow this process and I was given the message: 'Sorry. Unfortunately, Dr ... does not offer online registration at the moment. However, you will be able to register in person at your practice, just ask at reception.'"

I called the surgery as I was unable to drop in and the receptionist told me that I must bring two forms of identification, one picture and the other proof of address. Once I had got these and called in to my GP I was able to book online appointments and request repeat prescriptions, however I was unable to see any of my medical records."

Meadowside Medical Practice, Lancaster

Access to Medical Records

Online Services

Case Study P

“I followed my practices instructions and handed in my request on 25th April. I was meant to get a response in three weeks. I still have nothing. I have rung twice and I was told I need to speak to a particular person who has not been available. I will keep trying.”

Reedyford Healthcare Nelson

✘ Access to Medical Records

✘ Online Services

Case Study Q

“I was issued with personalised registration information to register for online access in a paper format from my GP.

I followed the instructions and found the whole process really straight forward.

I then reviewed the information which I found to be correct. I attempted to book an appointment online, though this proved problematic as the only day I could view was the following Tuesday some 6 days later and there were no other options available. I emailed my GP through their website to ascertain the situation with online booking of appointments, but even after 7 days have not received a response to my query. On day 8 I spoke with the practice directly who said they would investigate my issue, note I am a member of my GP's PPG. I have tried again to book an appointment and am now able to view a variety of appointments. I am able to order repeat prescriptions and view my medical records.”

Darwen Health Centre, Darwen

✔ Access to Medical Records

✔ Online Services

Summary of Experiences

This report describes experiences from members of the public trying to access their medical records and online services at a range of GP surgeries in Lancashire. From the seventeen responses:

- Three respondents were able to successfully see their medical records
- One respondent was able to see a summary of their medical records
- One respondent was able to see their immunisation records but no further medical information
- Thirteen respondents were able to use online features to book appointments and order repeat prescriptions
- Three respondents had not been able to register to use online services at all
- Two respondents were not happy to follow out the registration process due to lack of trust in the confidentiality procedures
- One respondent had difficulties accessing online services because they are registered blind