Mental Health Information on Bury GP websites Survey report

2017/18

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1   Context

1.1   Healthwatch Bury (HWB) has identified Mental Health (MH) as one of its priority
          areas of work. As part of this work HWB explored people's experiences of going
          to their GP's to discuss mental health issues. To support this work, we also
          looked at all the Bury GP practice web sites to assess what information and sign
          posting is available for patients.

1.2   All but one GP practice in Bury have their own website. GP practice websites can
          be a useful source of information for finding out about the services provided,
          opening hours, the staff within the practice and relevant forms or online services
          such as booking an appointment. In addition, GP practices in England have a
          profile page on NHS Choices where some of this information can also be found.

1.3   More people than ever are being encouraged to use the internet as a source of
          information and as a means of helping themselves. The Bury Locality Plan,
          'Transforming Health and Social Care in Bury highlights the need for a greater
          proportion of local people to play an active role in managing their own health and
          in supporting those around them and describes 'harnessing the value of existing,
          new and emerging technology' as a key enabler to the work.

1.4   GP websites are a key communication tool between the practice and their
          patients but they can also play a wider role in linking patients to the services and
          support available in their local communities.

2.   Methodology

2.1   During the month of December 2017 we reviewed all Bury GP websites to ascertain what specific mental health information they contained. We also looked at whether the information and signposting is easy to find, how appropriate the language and messages on mental health were.

3.   Limitations

3.1   This was a snapshot of the information held on the sites during a given month it is acknowledged that there may have been changes and updates made to these sites after that time frame.

4.   Findings

4.1   HWB found that 87% (27) had used the same company for their website and as such:

a) 77% (24) of the Bury GP websites are of the same visual and navigation design. Having a consistent design, navigation and language is useful as patients will recognize the site and find it easier to use. Unfortunately this also means that any communication issues or gaps are replicated across the GP practices which have used the same template.

b) Mental health information is included within a section labelled 'long term conditions' and placed low down on the homepage or at the very bottom of the page. Mental Health does not have its own menu option tab.

This labelling for mental health may not be the most appropriate given not all mental health conditions are long term. It may also make it difficult to find if for those who may be looking for advice and information.

c) The same selection of mental health information was held on the sites:
- Alzheimer's Society – diagnosis interview with Terry Prachett
- Mental Health Wellbeing Podcasts on the Mental Health Foundation Website - the site offers information and publications to download on research, good practice in services and on mental health problems and key issues.
- Mental Health - Healthtalkonline - an award-winning charity website, allows patients to share other people's experiences of health and illness.
- Alzheimer's - an information sheet helping to understand more about Alzheimer's Disease
- Depression - an information sheet which helps patients to understand more about the causes, treatment and understanding of depression
- Alzheimer's Society - comprehensive information for people with all forms of dementia.
- Alzheimer Scotland - provides a wide range of specialist services for people with dementia and their carers. It offers personalised support services, community activities, information and advice, at every stage of the dementia journey
- Mental Health Foundation - provides information, research and campaigns
- NHS Choices

d) Only one site signposted people to local information (the Big White Wall).

Our feedback shows that most people suffering from MH conditions want details of local support groups and quick access to advice without having to do detailed searches for the information.

e) Four out of the eight links gave information specifically for Alzheimer. Although the other links did lead to a range of information, including references to other disorders, it did mean going through more searches and links.

f) Additional tabs showing alcohol and depression questionnaires were also available on most of the sites

g) None of the sites provided MH information relating to children and young people or for family members and carers.

h) None of the sites included information about how to access treatment or support from their GP. There were no details about any in-house provision for example to counsellors or details on how referrals work such as which services you can self-refer to or those that require GP referrals only.

i) None provided advice on how to talk to their GP about mental health.

j) There were no details of what to expect from their GP visit or a recommendation to request two slots for anyone wanting an appointment to discuss their mental health.

4.2 Of the four remaining GP Practices, three had websites providing very limited information about mental health and one was the on line NHS UK profile only.

5. Group Feedback

5.1 As part of the process we reviewed the information and accessibility of the sites with the Attic Project who run a group for vulnerable people with various mental health conditions by randomly reviewing a selection of Bury GP web sites.

5.2 During the session it became apparent that a number were not familiar or knew that their GP's had a web site. A small number of the group stated that they would use it, but the majority explained that they don't have the funds to afford internet access or knowledge to use it.

5.3 The main view expressed by the group was that the internet wouldn't be their preferred option to search for advice or support. The main preference would be to turn to local groups and family. Of those who said they were IT literate only one person indicated they access advice and support from the internet.

5.4 One respondent said '*when I hit a low point I know how to look stuff up but I don't do it, I need guidance or someone else to take control. I don't care about anything'.*

5.5 During the session we looked at the two questionnaires on alcohol and depression available on a number of the GP web sites. Both of which required the input of personal data (contact details). Concern was raised about the requirement to input personal data and about who would see the survey responses. The warning on the web page about the security of personal information also put many of the group off from completing the questionnaire. There was some confusion around the requirement of personal information but the overall preference from the group is for them to be anonymous.

6. Recommendations

a) Develop a specific MH tab rather than place it under the long term condition tab.

b) Develop the information provided on the MH web pages to include:
   o A specific link to the NHS Choices and the Health A-Z of Conditions and treatments on the home page and the Health A-Z - Conditions

and treatments by subject - Mental health disorders on the mental health page would be a helpful addition.

- o Specific web based resource information for young people and families provided by the Royal College of General Practioners which can be found via this link:

  http://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/clinical-resources/youth-mental-health/information-for-young-people-and-their-families

- o Provide more detail about support available locally. Healthwatch Bury has produced a booklet with MH advice and details of local support groups which can be hyperlinked to partner web sites and hard copies made available in GP waiting rooms.

c) Although the opening paragraph explains about mental health and the fact one in four experience mental health problems, it would be helpful to include some further encouraging messages for example:

> *Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:*
> - *Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry*
> - *Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse*
> - *Family history of mental health problems*
>
> *Mental health problems are common but help is available. People with mental health problems do improve and many recover completely.*

d) Investigate the potential to enable patients to complete on line questionnaires without having to enter personal data.

e) To apply the checklist attached at appendix 1 (based on one produced Healthwatch Lambeth). Although this is specifically for Mental Health the questions can be applied across other key conditions.

7.   Conclusion

7.1   The ECDC Technical report 'A literature review on health information seeking behaviour on the web', 2011 wrote:

"Interest in the internet as a communication tool for health-related information is growing rapidly. The profile of online health consumers can be broadly defined as patients, patients' friends/relatives, and citizens in general. Health information-seeking behaviour varies depending on type of information sought, reasons for, and experience of, searching. Research shows that women are more likely than men to search for health information and online health consumers tend to be more educated, earn more, and have high-speed internet access at home and at work. Internet-based health information is accessed from a variety of sources, including websites run by organisations, homepages run by individuals, and online support groups where people actively exchange health information and blogs. As more people use the internet as a source of health information the issue of source credibility and trust in websites becomes important."

7.2   Developing the information held on GP web pages can help to support patient, carers and families, develop their knowledge and ability to manage their own mental health and wellbeing. As the population becomes even more IT savvy and more online services are created an informative and user friendly web site will be key.

GP Website Checklist for Mental Health[1]

Theme	Questions to ask	Suggested content
Layout	Is mental health information easily found and appropriately labelled?	Provide mental health information under a tab labelled 'mental health' to make it easily identifiable on the homepage of the website to improve navigation and ease of access. Additionally, incorporate mental health information under topics such as 'useful information'
Language	Is the language used around mental health appropriate and reassuring?	Ensure the language used to communicate mental health information online is reassuring, educational and invites conversations around mental health. This will encourage help-seeking behavior and work toward destigmatizing mental health.
Information/ signposting	Does the website signpost towards sources of information?	Signpost or provide information on self-care, common symptoms such as anxiety or low mood, and strategies to improve mental health before it becomes critical. The information should reflect the largely varying reasons why patients may be concerned about their mental health. Web sites should either include diagnosis specific information or provide web links to other ages or organisations that do.
	Is there adequate explanation as to how patients can get help from a GP?	Include a paragraph which explains what could happen if patients come in for a GP appointment to discuss their MH. This should signpost towards Mind's 'Find the words' material as a useful resource. Advertise a patient's right to request a double appointment if considering

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[1] Healthwatch Lambeth

		discussing their mental health with a GP.

Theme	Questions to ask	Suggested content
	Is signposting towards the most relevant local support services included?	Consistently signpost towards but not exclusively: o Healthwatch Bury Mental Health and Wellbeing in Bury Booklet o BIG o Attic Project o Streetwise 2000 o Creative Living Centre o Bury Big White Wall Websites should make clear what each service provides and if they accept self-referrals to encourage access.
	Does the website reach out to families and carers of people with mental health concerns?	Invite people to speak to their GP if they are worried about a relative or a friend. Provide information and signpost towards local services that support parents, friends, family members and carers of those (un)diagnosed mental health issues such as Bury Carers Centre.
	Do websites fairly reflect the diversity of treatment options?	Common treatment options available from the GP should be outlined and explained (i.e. referral to therapies or a community mental health team, medication etc.) If GP surgeries want to promote private healthcare services such as private therapists, we also recommend that they also advertise low-cost or NHS based services alongside this to ensure that all patients understand the choices of services available.
	Is it easily accessible for all disabilities?	Invite patients with disabilities to test the site for accessibility.

		Consider adding accessibility tools such as Browsaloud to the site.