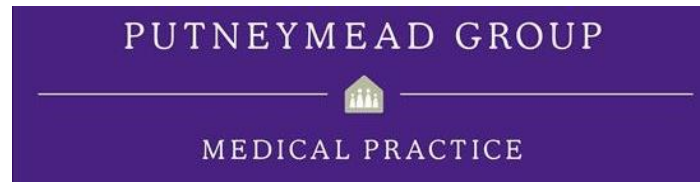


# Online Consultations

## Case Study



Putney Mead Group Medical Practice serves a population of approx. 25,000 patients based in Wandsworth, South West London. They have been using Accurx to manage online consultations for the last 2 years.



Average of **800** online consultations **per week**



Response within **1 working day**



**97%** of submissions resolved within **48 hours**

Patients can submit an online consultation **Monday-Friday** during business hours. The service is closed on evenings and weekends to keep the backlog to a minimum.

Practice staff are well trained to make confident decisions about onward triage, making effective use of ARRS roles to help the patient be managed by the right clinician first time.



To find out more information, please contact [devingray@nhs.net](mailto:devingray@nhs.net)

### Workflow

- Receptionists do the initial review and re-assign if clinical or urgent input is required. GPs are available if a quick decision is needed.
- Online consultations are actioned depending on their context. This can be reception staff, an ARRS role, or one of the GPs. There are two GPs, a physio and a physician associate in the OC room.
- Receptionists assign to a duty doctor to check the to-do list of selected doctors, and will enlist an on-call GP to address urgent requests if demand is high

### Key Figures

- Average resolution time within **2.7 hours**
- **63%** of OCs received via mobile, **37%** via computer
- **83%** of OCs submitted by the patient, **17%** via proxy
- Cut calls by **over 400/week** – and better quality calls, e.g. urgent matters or those with limited digital skills
- Switching off OC on evenings and weekends reduced demand by **38%**

### Change Management

- Training was initially remote during the pandemic via MS Teams
- Developed training packs and a script to support decision making
- Created and shared a patient navigation document which has been printed and posted in the calls room for easy reference
- Staff were able to learn on the job when to triage out to other roles
- Induction training now includes OC training as a standard
- Some GPs put their decisions in their notes so those triaging are constantly learning

### Benefits

- Better oversight of all requests coming in and better prioritisation
- Better use of MDT – ARRS roles
- Better use of community services
- More closed consultations
- Allows remaining capacity to be reserved for high clinical need
- If training staff, able to pick relevant OC for staff member to deal with and enhance their experience
- Patient synopsis box can help manage a patient's expectations

### Patient Engagement

- Patients were informed 1 week prior to the launch of the tool via bulk SMS, phone messages, website and newsletter
- Staff encourage patients to use the OC tool when they call in or have a F2F appt
- Posters are on the notice boards
- NHS App is promoted on website and posters in practice
- Google Translate to translate/respond in other languages
- Collect feedback via AccuRx and Friends & Family Survey

### Top Tips

1. Create lots of templates
2. Recruit more reception staff to manage workload/capacity
3. Have named receptionist(s) on the inbox full-time and with fewer interruptions
4. Ensure clinical team are available to step in when required
5. Set aside non-clinical time for planning, implementation, launch and review
6. Have a lead clinician throughout launch and for next 6 months minimum
7. Seek and respond to feedback from reception, patients and staff
8. Weekly updates to all staff on demand stats, new templates and changes
9. Monitor when most requests come in and manage demand accordingly

# Online Consultations

## Case Study



**Holmwood Corner Surgery** serves a population of approx. 13,500 patients based in Kingston, South West London. They have been operating a total triage model using eConsult since May 2022.



Average of **250-280** online consultations **per day**



Response within **1 working day**



More recently dealt with **200** clinical requests in **under 6 hours**

Patients can submit an online consultation **Monday-Friday** between 7:30am and 5:30pm, and phonelines are open until 6:30pm. The service is closed on weekends.

Working in partnership with the eConsult Clinical Lead, it took 6-8 months to fully embed the solution. Feedback has been positive, with patients now benefitting from a more efficient, fit-for-purpose service.



To find out more information, please contact [nacimaabdi@nhs.net](mailto:nacimaabdi@nhs.net)

### Workflow

- Dedicated care navigator room where all incoming queries are triaged by a team of 2 reception staff (1 admin and 1 'clinical') and 1 GP
- Care navigators will either book an appointment if needed, deal with the request (e.g. signpost to pharmacy) or pass to a GP to review
- Patients are signposted to the most appropriate service and can be booked straight in with ARRS roles, such as a pharmacist, physio or mental health practitioner
- Receptionists can complete an 'eConsult lite' on behalf of the patient and are trained to spot urgent cases that can be flagged on system

### Change Management

- Worked with eConsult Clinical Lead prior to launching
- There were webinars and resources to share care navigation hints, proformas and protocols
- Produced screenshots, reference guides and a pathway navigation document to support care navigators with triage
- Forms part of induction training for new staff
- Guidance and referral sheets for reception on signposting
- Continuously update template answers for responding to queries

### Patient Engagement

- Sent information about OC tool via SMS and invited patients to a patient engagement event prior to launch
- Leaflets to explain how to use eConsult (translated in other languages)
- PPG members volunteered to show patients how to use the system
- Encouraged patients to speak with the management team
- Published information and videos on their Facebook page
- Plans for iPad in reception to limit queues and demo how to use OC

### Key Figures

- Can get through **80-100** "quick wins" a day, e.g. issuing sick notes and medication requests
- **70-80%** of patients now access services online, 20-30% via telephone. This compares to 30% F2F and 70% via phone before/during the pandemic.
- On average it takes 7-8mins for patients to fill in an eConsult form, but this **saves 3-4mins** of history taking in an appointment

### Benefits

- Highlights red flags to identify urgent queries
- Free-text style of form allows better information gathering beforehand, maximising the time available during the consultation
- Reduced the number of tasks sent to GPs
- Better patient and staff satisfaction
- Workload is more visible, helping staff to plan accordingly
- Triage shifts break up the day for GPs
- More efficient and saves time

### Top Tips

1. A total triage model would better suit a medium-large sized practice as it requires more staff members
2. Produce how-to guides and screenshots for staff
3. Recruitment should focus on more reception staff to manage the system as the emphasis is really on maximising the use of ARRS staff, and ensuring the patient is directed to the right service
4. Shadow practices and learn from their experience

# Online Consultations

## Case Study

# Southall Medical Centre

*A forward thinking practice, proudly serving the local community.*

digital first 

**Southall Medical Centre** serves a population of approx. 9,000 patients based in Ealing, North West London. They have been operating a total triage model using eConsult since June 2020.

Patient feedback highlighted the need for improved access pre-pandemic, citing long waiting times as the biggest complaint. Since the introduction of the tool, feedback has been positive with patients now able to bypass the telephone queues and relieve pressure on reception staff (especially in the mornings).



Average of **60-80** online consultations **per day**



Response within **1 working day**

Patients can submit an online consultation **Monday-Friday** between 8am and 5pm. The service is closed on evenings and weekends to keep the backlog to a minimum.



To find out more information, please contact [i.sanghera@nhs.net](mailto:i.sanghera@nhs.net)

## Workflow

- Reception staff review submissions periodically and assign to the appropriate practice staff
- There are 2 GP partners and 2 GPs across 2 branch sites who manage clinical requests. Admin requests are actioned by reception.
- On a typical day, there is 1 duty doctor, along with administrative staff
- Patients are booked onto a triage rota (10min eConsult slot)
- Staff will redirect to other services such as CPCS
- Staff are able to assign to ARRS roles where appropriate, e.g. social prescriber, paramedic, 2 x clinical pharmacists
- Patients booked to see a GP will receive an SMS to let them know a rough time they will be contacted

## Change Management

- Received remote training resources from the OC supplier and videos from one of the Clinical Leads at eConsult
- Received training from the ICB and videos on how to use eConsult with SystemOne
- Training provided to care navigators and reception staff
- Initially a lot of learning was acquired through using the tool/experience
- Developed local standard operating procedures

## Patient Engagement

- Signage at the practice
- Online consultation tool promoted clearly on the website
- Word of mouth from reception staff, e.g. guide patients on how to use the tool or recommend a family member completes on their behalf
- Promotion of online consultation tool on telephone lines

## Key Figures

- 90% of requests were closed face-to-face pre-pandemic - this has now reduced to **25-30%**
- The practice phonenumber encourages patients to order repeat prescriptions via NHS app – approx. **50%** of patients now order prescriptions online

## Benefits

- Improved patient satisfaction
- Improved staff satisfaction
- Saves time for patients and staff
- Improves access and choice for patients
- Ability to redirect patients to the most suitable service, which isn't always the GP
- Can refer minor ailments to the pharmacy via CPCS
- Patients like the flexibility to resolve issues remotely, e.g. video consultation and uploading photos

## Top Tips

1. Consider and investigate the reasons why your patients are not using the OC tool, e.g. are patients already satisfied with existing routes to access?
2. Improve promotion of the OC tools on offer, e.g. benefits of using OC
3. Gather feedback from patients
4. Speak to other practices that have implemented a similar tool and learn from their experience

# Online Consultations

## Case Study

**Elmbank Surgery** serves a population of approx. 5,700 patients based in Ealing, North West London. They have been operating a total triage model using eConsult since June 2020.

Since using the online consultation tool, the practice has embraced a new way of working which has enabled staff to manage their time and workload more efficiently. Patients have reported high levels of satisfaction as they can now receive the help they need without having to wait on the phone or take time out to visit the practice.



Average of **10-15** online consultations **per day**



Response by the **end of the next working day**

Patients can submit an online consultation **Monday-Friday** between 8am and 6:30pm. The service is closed on evenings and weekends to keep the backlog to a minimum.



To find out more information, please contact [kalpa.pandey@nhs.net](mailto:kalpa.pandey@nhs.net)

## Workflow

- Reception staff have been trained to review incoming requests and identify by urgency
- Once a form is submitted, reception staff receive a notification on the system
- eConsult forms are reviewed and saved to the patient record, after which the relevant staff member will be notified to deal with the request
- Online consultations are assigned to the appropriate team, e.g. administrative queries are actioned by admin team, prescriptions sent to prescription department etc
- Reception team will telephone patients initially and schedule an appointment, if necessary, within 48 hours

## Change Management

- All staff received training from the ICB, which was initially virtual during the pandemic
- Produced screenshots for receptionists to guide them on patient pathways and the triage process
- Can rely on prompt support from eConsult team
- Attend local webinars held by the ICB to learn about new features of the online consultation tool

## Patient Engagement

- Promotion of online consultation tool on the screen at the practice entrance
- Online consultation tool promoted clearly on the website
- Promotion of online consultation tool on telephone lines
- Promotion of NHS App and its features (e.g. repeat prescription ordering) via SMS, website and within the practice
- Collectively discuss and action patient feedback received via eConsult
- Exploring the use of social media in the future

## Key Figures

- Patients will receive a phone call within **48 hours** – often on the same day
- Administrative queries are resolved within **3-5 working days**
- Workforce consists of 3 healthcare assistants, 3 nurses, 2 advanced nurse practitioners and 3 GPs

## Benefits

- The system is easy to use and workload is more manageable
- Saves time for both staff and patients, e.g. avoids long waiting times in telephone queue, especially in the mornings
- Captures patient history and useful information, such as smoking status, alcohol consumption, changes in patient contact details etc
- Free text options on the form allows patients to specify any additional details that would be useful for the GP to know
- Parents/carers can complete the form on behalf of the patient
- Administrative queries (e.g. sick notes) can quickly be resolved with minimal involvement from the GP

## Top Tips

1. Ask receptionists and practice staff to encourage patients to use the online consultation tool
2. Promote the online consultation tool clearly on the practice website
3. Clearly communicate the benefits to both patients and staff
4. Consider switching off the tool during evenings and weekends if experiencing a high demand
5. Dedicate enough time for staff training, making use of all available resources

# Online Consultations

## Case Study



## BARKING MEDICAL GROUP PRACTICE



Barking Medical Group serves a population of approx. 11,000 patients based in Barking, North East London.

They have had a total triage approach in place for the last 3 years for patients calling via phone and online to identify the most appropriate clinician or administrator to support their request.



Average of **25-45** online consultations **per day**



Response within **48 hours** with majority triaged within 12 hours and next steps arranged

ARRS roles have been embraced within the practice, including a Pharmacist, Physio, ANP and Mental Health Practitioner Nurse.

Reception and clinical staff have been trained to triage calls and online referrals, with ongoing supportive reflection training in place with peer reviews of calls.

Patients can submit an online consultation **Monday-Friday** between 7.30am and 6:30pm, although this is turned off when over 35 requests are received with plans to increase numbers with more training.



To find out more information, please contact [niroshan.gobalan@nhs.net](mailto:niroshan.gobalan@nhs.net)

### Workflow

- Reception staff have been trained to review incoming calls and online requests to identify admin requests, repeat prescriptions, physio etc that can be managed by the front of house team and also identify any cases that can be streamed to other clinical roles
- Dedicated administration staff for the day to focus on managing all online requests.
- All other requests are placed into an appointment list triaged by partner or salaried GP and reviewed in a dedicated EMIS session each morning.
- Admin team will make any appointments mainly using SMS
- Plans to enable the administration team to make more decisions on next steps with further triage training planned

### Change Management

- Staff (Clinical and Administration) are supported with reflective 1:1s, group training, peer to peer reviews including review of telephone calls and audit of outcomes of pathways and triage process
- Produce simple guides and how-to guides and screenshots for receptionists and care navigators on patient pathways and the triage process
- Monthly discussion in the staff meeting
- Video demonstrations and virtual training from eConsult

### Patient Engagement

- Initially some resistance to accommodating new e-platform utilisation among staff and patients. However, they have overcome this by training reception and admin staff to encourage patients to complete an eConsult form.
- Staff gave instructions on how to use eConsult over the phone and in person
- Send Accurx messages to patients with eConsult instructions and platform links for easy logins/submissions
- Online consultation tool promoted clearly on the website

### Key Figures

- Over **800** referrals have been triaged directly to community pharmacists
- **Less than 20%** of online consultations are needed to be seen by a GP and managed by the wider team
- **60-70%** of all requests come through online and the remaining via phone

### Benefits

- New process has reduced the need for one locum a day
- Patients will receive a response by the end of the next working day, with the majority of patients responded to with next steps within 24 hours
- Workload is more visible, and the system shows what the demand and need is on the day and helps them to plan accordingly

### Top Tips

1. Training of both clinical and administration staff to triage referrals both on phone and online supported by regular reviews and peer to peer support
2. Regular review/audit of the outcomes of the triage process and clinical decisions for both clinical and administration teams to identify opportunities to improve
3. Ask receptionists and practice staff to encourage patients to use the online consultation tool
4. Send SMS message to patients with eConsult instructions and platform links for easy login