

NW London online consultations

The patient's perspective and response from the North West London Collaboration of Clinical Commissioning Groups

'You said, we did'

This document reviews feedback provided by members of the public collected through seven workshops in February 2018.

The focus groups were set up to gauge an understanding from the public about how online technology (website and app based technology) can be used to improve access for patients to see their GP or nurse (also called primary care).

The focus groups were held with different groups of patients to find out how they felt about the use of technology to improve their access to primary care.

A paper called 'Use of online in primary care: the patients perspective', details the full feedback from the workshops. This paper provides details of how the NHS in NW London have used the public's feedback to develop three pilots, to test online technology to support online consultations.

You said:

Online technology should not replace existing ways of contacting primary care, patients should still be able to phone and see a doctor or nurse face-to-face.

Expressing your medical problem in writing on an online form, can be hard and would like to option to still be able to call and speak to someone.

Our response:

These pilots will test online technology alongside existing ways of contacting the GP practice and seeing clinicians face-to-face. The pilots will test different types of technology to see what could compliment the ways patients currently contact their GP surgery. Online technology will need to provide an effective way of providing the right help and care to patients that is convenient for GP surgery staff and patients. A full evaluation will follow the pilots to review how effective each online approach is. This full evaluation will be conducted and communicated before any online solutions are permanently put in place in GP practices.

You said:

For some, video consultations were very appealing, not having to travel to the practice to speak to a doctor or nurse. This was important for those generally in good health, in employment and good access to mobile technology.

Our response:

There will be three pilots in 2018 to test different online technology. One pilot will test video consultations.

You said:

Booking appointments online would be really valuable, but the reality for those that can do this already, is that there are few or no, same day/next day appointments available.

Patients also said they would want a response quickly if they used online technology to contact the practice. Some patients said they may also call the practice to speed things up.

Our response

The first two pilots will test a survey that will take a few minutes to fill in. It will be reviewed by a doctor and patients will be contacted the next working day with a response. If patients need an appointment, this will be arranged.

You said

Different age groups showed different preferences to either using a website to contact the surgery or an app, younger participants favoured apps over website based links. Comments were also made about the quality of GP websites not always being good or easy to navigate.

Our response

Throughout these pilots we are trialling different approaches to online consultations to see what works best for different audiences and age groups.

In addition to the online consultations, GP practice websites are also being reviewed and upgraded in 2018.

You said *Symptom checkers are not an appropriate way to triage patients.*

Our response

Symptom checkers can already be found on GP websites. The online technology pilots are not looking at developing symptom checkers. Two of the pilots will look at an online survey for patients to fill in; this will then be triaged by a doctor. The surveys will go through the questions a doctor would ask during a consultation, you have the opportunity to write and add all the details about your symptoms and how you feel. In doing this at home patients will also have time to think about these questions and fill them in in their own time. The third pilot will look at video online consultations.

You said

Communication about using online services should be carefully promoted to patients. Some patient groups may feel they are being isolated, if they are not familiar or regular users of the internet.

Our response

Our communication of these pilots will make it clear that the new online consultations are in addition to the current ways patients can contact their practice. They will not replace existing ways and priority to see a doctor will, as it is now be provided based on clinical need.

You said

Your data needs to be secure.

Our response

The NHS works with in strict data protection laws. In April 2018 these laws were updated. Any online technology used for these pilots will need to adhere to data protection laws to ensure security of patient information.

You said

New online technology should be tested before it is rolled out on a large scale.

Our response

In 2018 we will pilot three different online technologies. Following the pilots an evaluation will be conducted to review how effective each of the three pieces of technology were

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