The 'frontline team', AT Medics practices, London

Patients requesting a same day consultation, who do not require continuity of care, are booked a phone consultation with a GP working in a central call centre run by the group of practices.

The idea
The 24 practices in the AT Medics group in London operate a shared access hub system for patients. Patients contacting their practice for same day help booked to receive a phone consultation, usually within one hour or less.

Consultations are provided across all practices by the “frontline team”. GPs from practices in the group are scheduled to do frontline sessions on a regular basis. A small number of hub consulting rooms are used specially for these frontline phone consultation sessions. The GP is located alongside a administrative buddy who frees the GPs time by undertaking a number of administrative functions before and after the consultation. Patients from all practices in the group receive the same service from the hub, while still attending their own practice for face-to-face appointments with their own GP.

Impact
Using virtual hubs which serve several practices has released valuable clinical consultation room space in a number of the practices where services were constrained and there was no room for expansion. It has also made it easier to introduce a more multidisciplinary way of working for GPs, locating them alongside clerical buddies, healthcare assistants, care navigators and others. This provides more value for the patient, and frees up the GPs time to do the things only they can do.

Implementation tips
Careful consideration is needed for planning of the IT requirements of a hub arrangement. Staff consulting in a physical or virtual hub require access to the patients record. In addition to the patient needing to give consent for this, the member of staff must be able to access the appropriate clinical system with the minimum of work. So-called interoperability gateways or modules in clinical systems are often used. Care is needed to ensure these meet your requirements, particularly with respect to writing into the record, as many do not provide this functionality.
Alternatively, the clinician may be provided with a login for each practice (supported by a contract where appropriate), although this adds time to the consultation. The most seamless approach is where practices merge, making them sites on a single clinical system.

Link(s)
atmedics.com/