

NEW WAYS TO WORK IN GENERAL PRACTICE

New types of consultation

askmyGP is an online consultation tool for general practice. Patients can use it to detail their medical problem, which is then sent directly to their practice, or to access self-help or medical information. Golden Brook Practice, serving the market town of Long Eaton, uses askmyGP because they believe patients should be able to contact their practice at any time.

The doctors at Golden Brook believe that General Practice should be patient-focused. Instead of a system which was doctor-centred, they wanted to make sure their practice, serving 10,000 patients, was inclusive and accessible to anyone.

The GPs were under increasing pressure with appointments. "We

were heading for burnout," says Dr Duncan Gooch, GP Partner at Golden Brook.

The desire to be protective of their patients and give them the best possible care was also increasing stress. They recognised that there was a cohort of people they weren't serving well – such as the working population, for whom waiting on

"We were heading for burnout"

Dr Duncan Gooch, GP Partner at Golden Brook

the phone during working hours to book an appointment could be inconvenient.

The Partners knew they needed to look at alternatives to how they organised their appointments system. Liking the idea of a triage access system and feeling that healthcare was behind the times when it comes to use of technology, they bought askmyGP.



A comprehensive system of care

Because Golden Brook believes patients should be able to choose the medium through which they contact their GP, they offer a comprehensive mixed system – of which online consulting is the component that allows patients to request appointments at any time. "For us, askmyGP is another route of access for patients to get support," explains Dr Gooch. "It offers a good service for patients

who want to access the GP at times they wouldn't previously have been able to." Being able to respond to patients in a medium of their choice, it's much more responsive to their needs.

"The biggest benefit of askmyGP is that it can save patients time," Dr Gooch says.

Another key benefit of online consultations is a reduction in the need for face-to-face appointments. It works well with follow-up. For example, if

a patient has a long-term, but stable, condition, they can simply use the online service to inform their GP that they are fine and to request a repeat prescription instead of having to wait for an appointment. Alternatively, if a patient has a visible problem, they are able to fill in an online consultation, attach a photo of the problem, and submit it for the GP to review. In this circumstance, patients do not need a face-to-face appointment and GPs know that the patient has been dealt with appropriately and safely.

The practice is happy with the safety of using online consultations. "It makes us confident we're providing the best standard of care. We haven't had any clinical incidents," reports Dr Gooch.

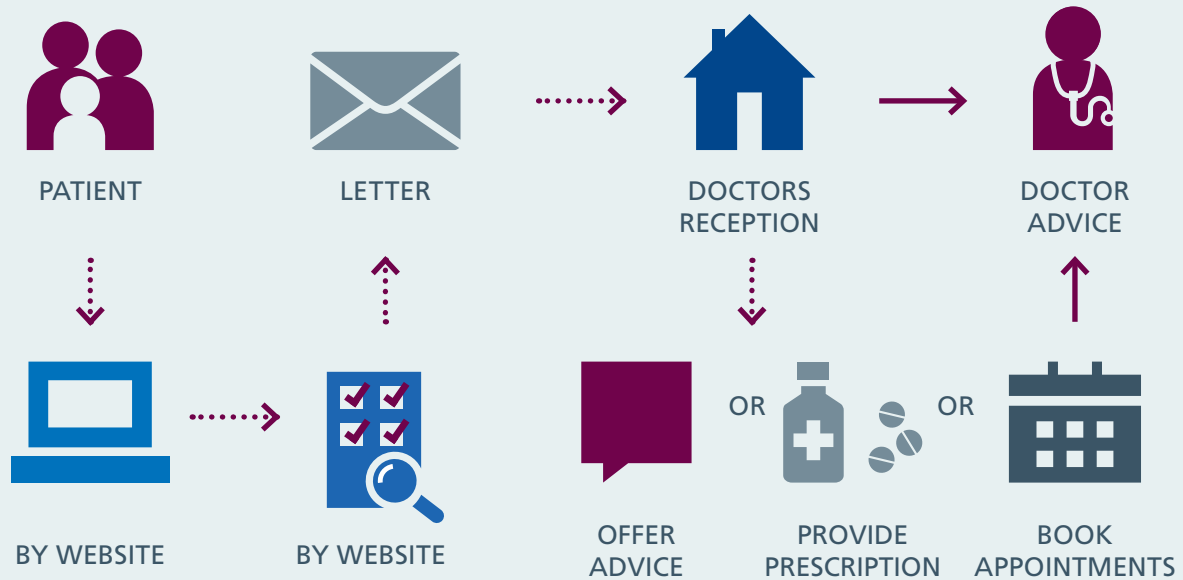
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ASKMYGP SERVICE

How it works

The practice purchases a licence for the askmyGP service. From 2017, practices will be able to use the new three year fund created by the General Practice Forward View. A link to the platform is embedded into the practice’s website.



- 1 Patient fills in their details.
- 2 Patient sums up their problem.
- 3 A series of questions can then be answered, or skipped, which give more detail and are tailored to the patient’s problem.
- 4 When the consultation is submitted by the patient, an email will be sent to the practice and dealt with as the individual practice chooses.
- 5 If passed onto the clinician, they can either resolve the problem remotely – for example, by writing a prescription or giving advice – or contact the patient for further information or a follow-up consultation.

askmyGP can be used by and on behalf of patients below the age of 18.

ASKMYGP SERVICE

Step-by-step

1 When you've decided you want to use online consultations, you need to bring the rest of the team on board.

Clinicians need to understand and trust the process, and the evidence from other practices about its effectiveness and safety.

2 Work out who will be processing the requests.

- A GP?
- A NURSE?
- ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF?
- RECEPTIONISTS?
- ONE OR TWO PEOPLE, OR A GROUP?

3 If receptionists and/or admin staff, they may need to be trained. TRAINING

4 Buy a licence. From 2017, practices have access to funding issued to CCGs as part of the General Practice Forward View.

5 Promoting the new system.



- LEAFLETS/FLYERS/POSTERS
- WORD-OF-MOUTH
- STAFF (RECEPTIONISTS TO GPs) TALK ABOUT THE PLATFORM
- RECORDED MESSAGE ON THE PRACTICE TELEPHONE

6 Ensure information is provided to all patients, without making assumptions about age – a significant number of users are older patients, and online consultations are often very attractive to carers.



HOW IT WORKS AT GOLDEN BROOK

After the patient has submitted the consultation, it comes through as an email to Golden Brook. Administrative staff place it in the patient's notes, and deal with whatever they can before passing them on to the GP.

Golden Brook allocates time for one GP to deal with online consultations each day. They average ten a day, although it can be more on a Monday or before public holidays. The GP will then respond to patients within one day.

10 ONLINE CONSULTATIONS

1 DAY RESPONSE TIME