

eHub Brent online consultations case study

Size: 120, 000 (Harness Network)

Region: London

Geography: urban

Supplier: eConsult

Model: eHub

The idea

To enable practices across Brent CCG who were managing their online consultations at an individual practice level to come together and create a centralised model of online consultations.

The problem

Across Brent CCG, there are 20 GP practices serving a population of 120,000 patients. Each practice had been using eConsult to manage online consultations within their own practice for over four years. However, several smaller, single-handed practices had reported difficulties in keeping-up with the uptake on an individual basis due to insufficient resource to meet the high demand.

“In order for this to work the practices need to change their way of working.”

Abeer Itrakjy,
Innovation Delivery Lead.

The solution

Online consultations are managed centrally by a group of clinicians working on behalf of Brent GP practices.

The model: eConsult is an online triage and consultation platform. Patients can receive self-help and advice by exploring a list of common medical problems on the practice’s website. Alternatively, they can complete an online form which is sent to the practice for review and directed to the most appropriate member of staff.

Implementation

To ensure a smooth transition for practices, who already had experience of running online consultations in their own practices, there was a phased rollout of the eHub model between November 2018 and January 2019. Admin staff received access to eHub in-house training and a GP presented on how it would work from a clinical perspective - which was very well received.

Promotion: Patient facing posters, leaflets and banners were also provided to each practice to complement the promotional work already being carried out at a practice level.

Employment: The Brent eHub model was set up as part of the Harness Network of practices, and therefore Harness took responsibility for



all recruitment, day-to-day operational planning and staff training with a train-the-trainer approach. GPs from within the Harness network were recruited to work as part of the eHub.

Post-implementation

System functionality: The first step to access an online consultation is for patients to complete an online form through their own GP practice website. This form will be processed by the admin team who will directly deal with fit note requests, letters and general enquiries. For other issues, including those requiring clinical input, a PDF of the online form is attached to the patient's record along with a generic email and submitted to the eHub to be dealt with by a GP from the hub.

The EMIS community module works well with eConsult, giving the GP access to patients records at different practices as appropriate. This means any GP from any surgery within the hub can respond to the consultation. The GP can communicate with the patient in three different ways - by text, email or phone call. Only one in four of the patients who use the online consultation system need to attend a face-to-face appointment, with the rest being closed remotely.

Impact

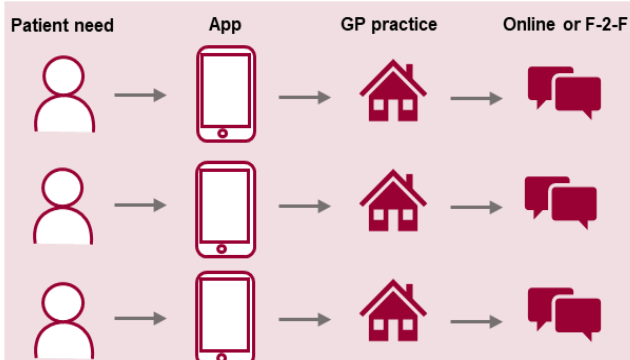
Early findings have shown that the eHub is able to close off around 75% of online consultations remotely, reducing the need for an inappropriate face to face appointment. Initial patient feedback has been positive, with some patients noting that they found the service to be more efficient and easier to access. Work is ongoing with Imperial College Health Partners (ICHP) to understand the full impact and potential benefits of the eHub delivery model.

Future: Brent CCG are considering different options for the future eHub model, including an option to run the eHub as part of their extended access hubs over the next six months.

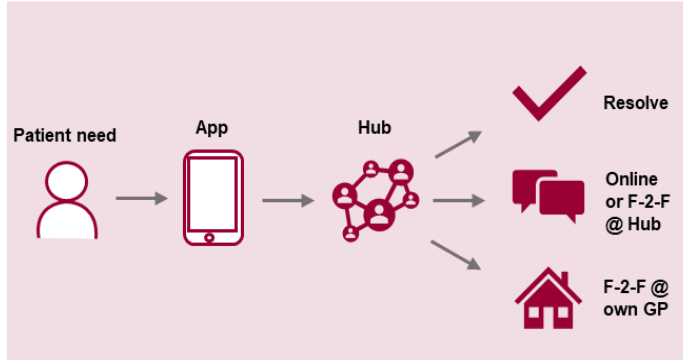
Want to know more?

ICHP are working with north-west London on a eHub blueprint and early findings report which will include more detail around the Brent eHub. This is due to be published by ICHP in October 2019.

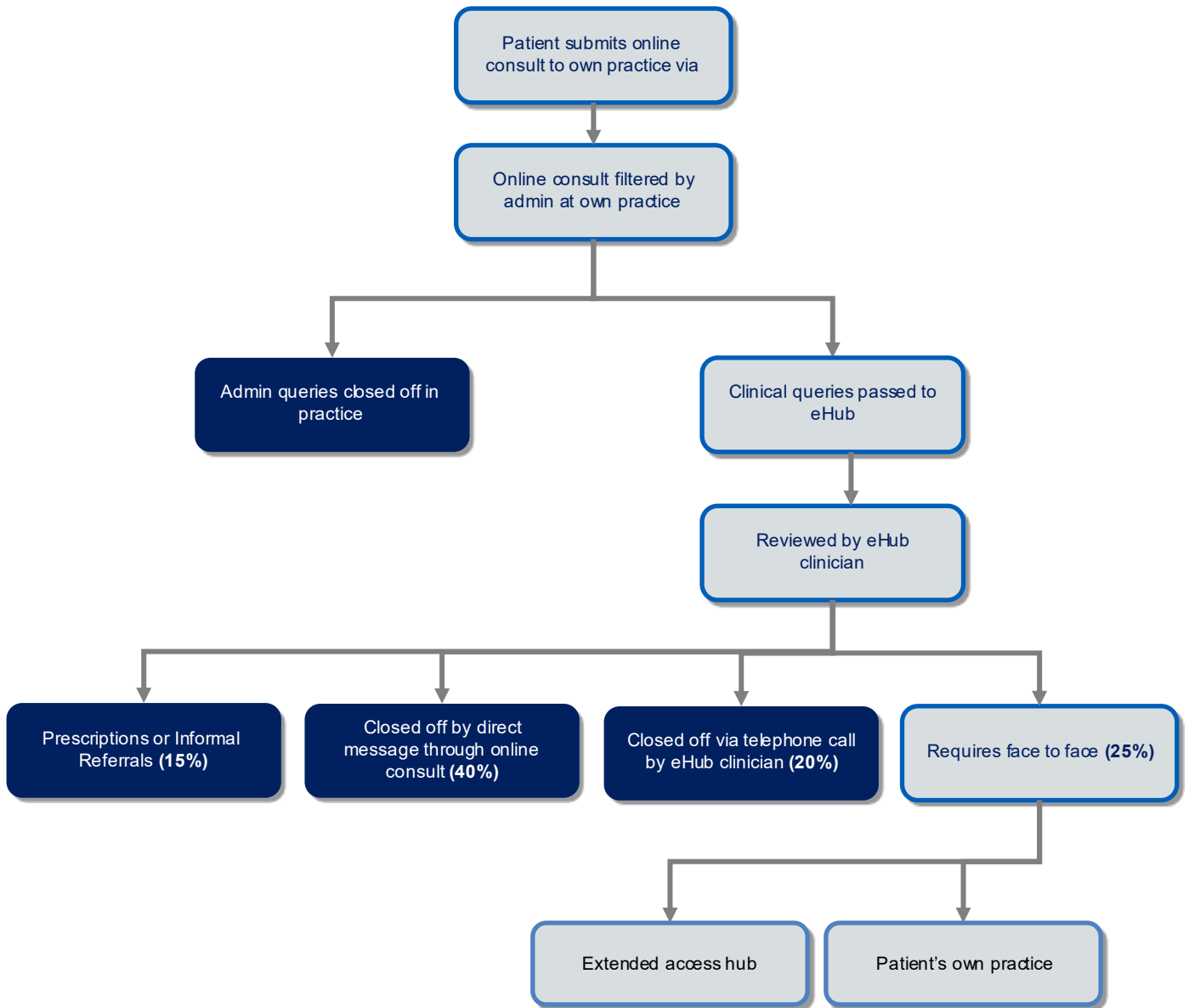
Individual units



Scale model



eHub pathway



Adapted from Imperial College Health Partners,
The North West London Health and Care
Partnership and eConsult April 2019