



Advice and guidance: guide for general practice

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During the NHS response to COVID-19, advice and guidance (A&G) services are central to supporting the management of patients in primary care, as well as the restoration and recovery of elective services.

A&G services improve the interface between primary and secondary care. Through A&G, GPs and other primary care referring clinicians can access specialist advice before or instead of referral. This strengthens shared decision-making, enhances personalised approaches to care and avoids unnecessary outpatient activity.

This guide sets out practical advice for general practice teams to get the most from A&G services.

How can A&G support the safe and effective delivery of care alongside COVID-19 activity?

- A&G is one of the three main [NHS e-Referral Service \(e-RS\)](#) channels through which general practice may obtain a clinical opinion. A&G provides a pre-referral communication channel between clinicians, with expected response times agreed by provider and commissioner teams.
- A&G services help strengthen many existing care pathways, ensuring specialist advice is fed into key decisions with patients about their care from the outset. This enables patients to make informed choices about their care and treatment.
- A&G services may enable patients to receive care in primary or community care settings, avoiding the need to attend hospital (unless a referral is necessary).
- Secondary care providers may also implement streaming of new outpatient referrals using [Referral Assessment Services \(RAS\)](#) to support triage of referrals across complex pathways in place of [directly bookable services](#) where appropriate.

Where can general practice teams learn more about making an A&G request?

The [National Elective Care Transformation Programme's Community of Practice](#) hosts tools and resources to support local health systems implement A&G services. To request access, please email ECDC-manager@future.nhs.uk.

The [A&G toolkit for the NHS e-Referral Service \(e-RS\)](#) contains a range of guidance for clinical teams in primary care, including information on how to make an A&G request through e-RS, case studies and video resources.

For further information on A&G please contact england.AdviceAndGuidance@nhs.net.

How can general practice support system partners in implementing A&G services in their area?

