



Advice and guidance: guide for secondary care

7 September 2020 Version 1

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.

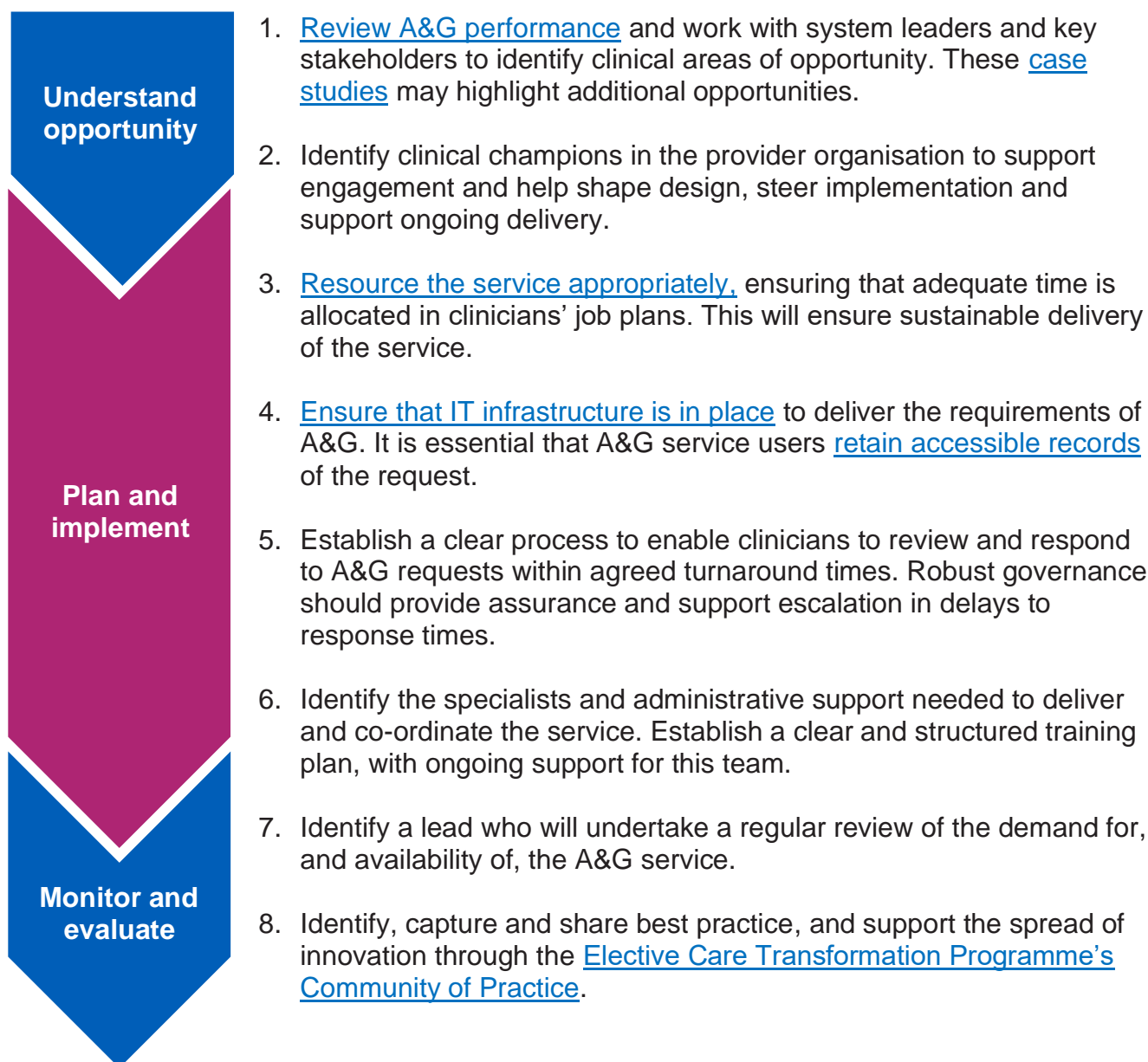
A&G services improve the interface between primary and secondary care. Through A&G, specialist advice may be shared with primary care before or instead of referral. This enables a patient's care to be managed in the most appropriate setting, avoiding unnecessary outpatient activity and supporting effective patient care away from hospital.

This guide sets out practical advice for providers to support the mobilisation of A&G, and to increase the scale and offer of services at a local level.

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 a GP may obtain a clinical opinion. A&G provides a pre-referral communication channel between clinicians.
- Secondary care providers may also implement streaming of new outpatient referrals using the [Referral Assessment Service \(RAS\)](#). This can help support triage of referrals across complex pathways in place of [directly bookable services](#) where appropriate.
- Increased access to e-RS during COVID-19 has allowed providers to carry out A&G, RAS triage and review of directly booked referrals digitally (via remote access if required), with reduced conversion to paper in provider organisations.
- A&G services should 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). This ensures available outpatient activity is directed to patients who most need it.

Key actions recommended for mobilising A&G services



Resources and further information

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 to this, please email ECDC-manager@future.nhs.uk.

Support for e-RS A&G can be found on the [A&G toolkit for the NHS e-Referral Service \(e-RS\)](#), including case studies and national e-RS A&G request figures.

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