

# Access to general practice communications toolkit

September 2020

This toolkit has been developed to support general practice, Primary Care Networks and CCGs to explain to patients how they can safely access general practice.

There are currently several priorities:

- Being clear that practices are open, face-to-face appointments remain available to all patients but they are working differently
- Helping to explain the difference between online/remote triage and online consultations
- Ensuring patients understand face-to-face appointments are available if required without encouraging unnecessary footfall into practices
- Ensuring patients continue to receive the same services they would normally receive from a GP practice and are not directed to other providers.

## Background

COVID-19 has changed how patients access their GP. The pandemic has super charged the use of remote consultations in primary care. These will never replace face-to-face appointments which should be available to all patients where appropriate. However, they can be a convenient way for people to access medical advice and treatment. Video consultations are available in GP practices covering 99% of the population in England. Meanwhile, online consultations, where a patient can contact their GP practice directly via the internet, are now available in 90% of GP practice, almost 6,000 practices, covering 90% of the population. While we don't want to reverse the strides that have been made towards video consultations, we need to make clear to patients that face-face appointments are there for all who need them.

There is also a risk that if patients don't feel they have access to a GP for non-urgent issues, they will seek help at A&E.

## Key patient messaging

- Due to the coronavirus outbreak, how you contact your GP surgery will be different at the moment. This is to limit face-face contact where possible and help stop the spread of coronavirus
- Face-to-face appointments are available to *all* patients, but you may be asked to discuss your conditions over the phone or online first to assess what would be most appropriate for you
- In addition to face-to-face consultations, many GP practices are offering consultations online or over the phone. This can be a convenient and flexible way to receive healthcare but if you would prefer to see a GP or healthcare professional in person then this will be arranged for you.

## Four ways to seek healthcare advice from a GP

- Call your surgery to discuss a face-to-face or virtual (telephone or video) appointment
- Visit your GP surgery website and complete a confidential online form to receive a response before the end of the next working day
- Call NHS 111 or go online to seek advice <https://111.nhs.uk/>
- Download the NHS App to order repeat prescriptions, book appointments and check your symptoms

## Example website and newsletter copy

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, how you contact us will be different at the moment. This is to limit face-to-face contact whenever possible and help stop the spread of coronavirus.

Your GP practice is open and if you need to see your GP, please ring us on xxx or visit our website – our opening hours are xxx

You can also call NHS 111. Please do not come to the surgery unless you have an appointment.

If you are waiting for a check-up, please be assured we will be in touch

Appointments are being delivered face-to-face, online and over the telephone. If you are asked to come into the surgery for a face-to-face appointment, please remember to wear a face covering. Measures are in place to keep you safe from infection during your visit to the surgery.

## Answerphone message

Thank you for calling xxx we are here to help you. Our opening hours are xxx .

Appointments are being delivered face-to-face, online and over the telephone and you will be advised on the best approach for you. If you are asked to come into the surgery for a face-to-face appointment, please remember to wear a face covering. Measures are in place to keep you safe from infection during your visit to the surgery. You can also call NHS 111. Please do not come to the surgery unless you have an appointment. If you are waiting for a check-up, please be assured we will be in touch

## SMS message

Dear patient, Your GP practice is open and if you need to consult your GP, please ring us on xxx or visit our website [www.xxxx.nhh.uk](http://www.xxxx.nhh.uk). If you are asked to come into the surgery for a face-to-face appointment, please remember to wear a face covering. Measures are in place to keep you safe from infection during your visit to the surgery. You can also call NHS 111. Please do not come to the surgery unless you have an appointment. If you are waiting for a check-up, please be assured we will be in touch

## Social media content

Use performance data to reassure patients about the activity that has happened to-date, eg:



## WE'RE WORKING HARD TO LOOK AFTER YOU

Across Hull & York, in the three months  
between May to July, we've taken:

● **83,487**  
Incoming phone calls

We've done:

● **20,684**  
Telephone appointments

● **6,135**  
Face-to-face appointments

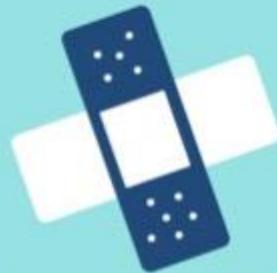
● **4,460**  
Blood tests

● **530**  
Asthma reviews

● **1,777**  
Home visits

We've issued:

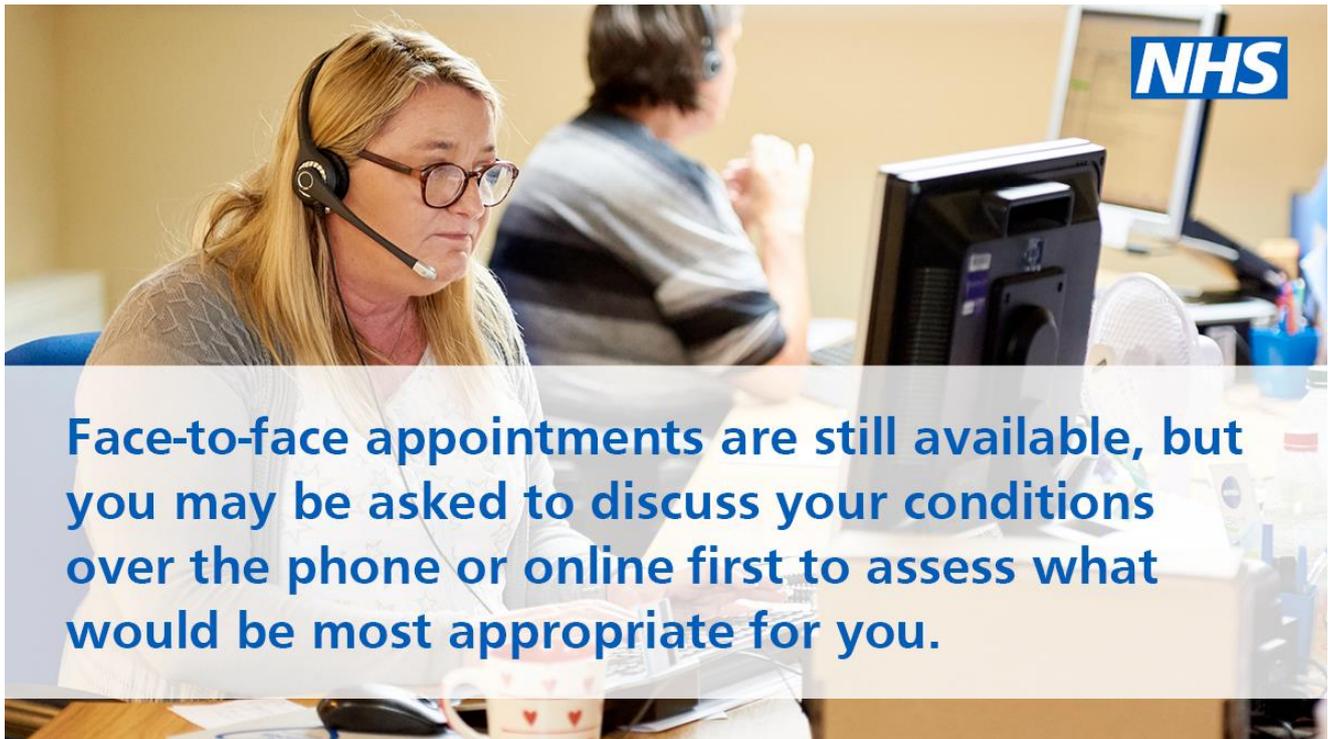
● **29,000**  
Prescriptions



- Produce or reuse vox pop videos encouraging patients to get in touch if they are worried about symptoms

<https://twitter.com/NHSEngland/status/1296714927877611520?s=20>

## Social media graphics



### Four ways to contact your animated graphic [to follow]

<https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/nhs-resources-facilities/resources/nhs-primarycare-social/>



Before turning up to your GP practice contact them online, by an app or by phone to be assessed 📱 🖥️

⚠️ Please follow government safety advice if visiting your local practice for an appointment.

#HelpUsHelpYou



♥ GPs are working hard to provide care safely.

⚠ Please follow your practice's safety advice if visiting for an appointment.

🤒 Do not go to your GP if you have symptoms of coronavirus or are self-isolating.



Contact your GP practice online, by an app or by phone.

📞 🖥 If appropriate, you will receive advice or care via video or over the phone.

#HelpUsHelpYou

## Additional resources

Video explaining how to contact your GP remotely  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FO1LRq5FZpE&t=1s>

Health at Home – how to access NHS services online  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FO1LRq5FZpE&t=1s>

## Supporting patients with specific access needs

[Online consultation](#) software used to allow for type based or interpreter led communication (in additional to video consultation) with patients and/or their carer

[Microsoft Teams](#) is also available for use by NHSmail accounts and can be used for 3-way video calls between clinicians, interpreters and patients

Communicating with people with hearing loss  
<https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/advice-and-information/2020-09-02/how-communicate-better-people-hearing-loss>

Access to British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters  
[BSL Health Access](#) delivers immediate, on demand access to British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters for communication with Deaf people

Support and guidance for homeless patients  
<https://www.healthylondon.org/resource/homeless-health-during-covid-19/#community>