

# Patient Online

## Communications pack

### Context

Since 1 April 2015, GP practices have been required to offer and promote online services to patients, including online appointment booking, ordering of repeat prescriptions and access to summary information in GP records.

By the end of March 2016 GP practices will also be required to offer online access to more detailed information in medical records. Please see the NHS England [website](#) for further information.

### Aims and objectives

The aim of this communications pack is to provide GP practices with advice to help:

- Support practices to promote Patient Online effectively to their patients
- Increase patient awareness so that they are able to book their GP appointments online
- Increase patient awareness that they can order their repeat prescriptions online

Practices should be able to use this pack and tailor the information so that it is relevant to their practice.

### Benefits of promoting Patient Online

We have found that the practices which promote online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering to their patients, using a range of promotional tools, have had a very positive response, particularly from patients with long-term conditions who are in frequent contact with the practice

Promotion of online services to your patients is a contractual requirement. As well as this toolkit, a range of options are available to help you do this, including:

- The [Patient Online promotional materials](#): posters, a patient leaflet, appointment cards and video and static content for screens in waiting rooms.
- Most system suppliers provide a range of promotional materials; get in touch with them to see what is available.

- Your local communications team will be able to support and advise you on the best way to promote Patient Online.

## **Communications activity**

The table below covers some suggested activities that GP practices can consider to promote Patient Online services. It covers a range of ideas, which practice staff will be able to develop themselves. You may want to do one, some or all of them, depending on the resources you have available. The table below includes columns so that you can assign tasks and deadlines. Space has been left for you to add your own ideas and activities.

It may be useful for you to work together with your patient participation group (PPG) members and other local volunteers. You may also want to consider working with other local GP practices and your local clinical commissioning group (CCG). This will mean that you can share resources, as well as some of the workload.

## Communications Plan

<b>Communications tactics</b> Suggested promotional activities described below	<b>Specific tasks</b> Use this column to list specific tasks	<b>Who by</b> Who will be responsible for this task?	<b>When by</b> What is the deadline?
<b>Day to day activity</b>			
Information in your GP practice. There are a number of resources available for you to use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content that you can use on digital screens  <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/po-practice-screens.pdf">https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/po-practice-screens.pdf</a></li> <li>• Put a link to the Youtube video on your website  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xliKbVq4hYQ&amp;feature=youtu.be">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xliKbVq4hYQ&amp;feature=youtu.be</a></li> <li>• Display the posters available – there are three versions:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/po-poster-renew-prescription.pdf">https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/po-poster-renew-prescription.pdf</a></li> <li>2. <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/po-poster-gp-records.pdf">https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/po-poster-gp-records.pdf</a></li> <li>3. <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/po-poster-gp-app.pdf">https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/po-poster-gp-app.pdf</a></li> </ol> </li> <li>• Display the leaflets available  <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/po-patient-leaflet.pdf">https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/po-patient-leaflet.pdf</a></li> </ul>			
Ask community nurses, midwives, district nurses and others to give out leaflets and explain about the			

service to their patients			
Ask your local pharmacies and libraries to display posters and information leaflets (links above)			
Include a message about Patient Online on your telephone management/answering system.			
Put information on your website about how to register for the online services. This will encourage patients to use other ways to access the practice.			
Use the appointment cards that promote the Patient Online services <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ph6061-patient-online-app-card.pdf">https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ph6061-patient-online-app-card.pdf</a>			
Update your new patient registration form to give patients an option to sign up for online services.			
Include details on the counterfoil on prescriptions			
Other local activity:			

<b>Promotional events</b>			
<p>Enlist the support of your PPG members or other local community group to organise promotional sessions. You could work with other GP practices and health centres in your area to agree to work together, sharing resources and an action plan.</p> <p>This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A promotional day in a local shopping centre or supermarket, or local fete/event. Volunteers</li> </ul>			

<p>could hand out information leaflets and talk to local people. If a number of practices and health centres are involved, you could jointly get some banner stands and other materials produced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw up a list of key patient groups and get volunteers to visit them to give talks and give a demonstration (using a dummy patient) of the service</li> <li>• Ask volunteers to set up a table in your reception area for a day, to get people signed up to use the online services and give them a demonstration on how to use it</li> </ul>			
<p>Your other local ideas:</p>			

<p><b>Media activity</b></p>			
<p>News release (Appendix A) to help promote new system so more patients register and know what is available for them – to be sent out week commencing (TBC – in agreement with local CCG).</p>			
<p>Identify on-going media opportunities e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• send out a news release (Appendix B) when you have your 500<sup>th</sup>, 1,000<sup>th</sup> patient signed up to use the service</li> <li>• a photo-opportunity with some mums at a baby clinic who are signed up to use the service</li> <li>• a case-study of a patient who uses the service</li> </ul>			

regularly			
Syndicated articles (Appendix C) for practices to use in newsletters, waiting rooms and on practice websites.			
<p>Talk to your local radio station – would they be interested in someone from the practice giving an interview or doing a Q&amp;A session about Patient Online?</p> <p>If you would like input from your local NHS England medical director to support any local radio interviews, contact the NHS England media team on 0113 825 3231.</p>			
Other local activity:			

<b>Social media</b>			
<p>Does your GP practice, any of your practice staff or members of your PPG have a Twitter account or Facebook page? Ask them to support a social media campaign. Develop some social media posts that can be used on Twitter or Facebook and ask people to re-post and follow.</p> <p>Some examples of possible Twitter posts are below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a doctor's appointment? You can now do</li> </ul>			

<p>this online on your own GP practice website #patientonline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a repeat prescription? You can now do this online on your own GP practice website #patientonline</li> <li>• If you need to book an appointment with your GP you can do this online on your practice website #patientonline</li> <li>• If you need a repeat prescription, you can do this on your GP practice website #patientonline</li> <li>• You can book GP appointments and order repeat prescriptions online on your GP practice website #patientonline</li> <li>• Winter is on its way, remember you can order your repeat prescriptions online on your GP practice website #patientonline</li> <li>• Snow on the ground? Don't worry! Order your repeat prescription online on your practice website #patientonline</li> <li>• Too cold to go outside? Book your GP appointment online on your practice website #patientonline</li> <li>• For your convenience you can book your GP appointments online #patientonline</li> </ul> <p>You could also contact your local council, your local Mayor, MP and hospital trust and ask them to follow your campaign.</p>			
<p>Other local activity:</p>			

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## Useful information and resources:

- NHS England [support and resources guide](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)
- Patient Online – [for GP practices](#)
- Patient Online – for patients ([NHS Choices](#))
- Case studies (to follow)
- [Making Time in General Practice report](#) (Appendix 8)
- Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) – [Patient Online guidance and documents](#)

## Evaluation

Data showing the number of patients enabled to use Patient Online services as well as the number of times they have used it is collected nationally and can be found on the [HSCIC website](#) under Patient Online services, POMI (Patient Online Management Information).

The data has been published monthly from April 2015 and replaced the PHF10 data which was previously reported on a quarterly basis up to the end of March 2015.

It is hoped that all practices will find the resources in this pack useful and will be able to use them in order to increase the number of patients registered for online services and to raise awareness and encourage others to use it.





## Appendix A

Date

### NEWS RELEASE

#### DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN BOOK YOUR GP APPOINTMENT AND REQUEST REPEAT PRESCRIPTIONS ONLINE?

Patient Online, a healthcare initiative which allows patients to book GP appointments and request repeat prescriptions online is being offered by **name of GP practice**.

Patients can access this service from their computer, smartphone or tablet, meaning they no longer have to call or visit their GP practice to carry out routine tasks such as booking appointments or requesting repeat prescriptions.

The service complements the traditional methods of accessing services, it does not replace them. This means that those without a computer, or who do not want to join up to online services, can still call or visit the surgery to book appointments and request repeat prescriptions.

Since this has been introduced staff have reported a 'freeing up' of phone lines as more patients make use of these online services. This gives staff more time to deal with other important issues and queries.

**(Name and title of spokesperson here)** said: "Patient Online enables patients to take greater control of their health and wellbeing by allowing them to book appointments or request repeat prescriptions online. Allowing patients to access such services online will prove more convenient and remove the need to call or visit the surgery in person".

**(Quote from patient)** said: "This is a fantastic new service, it makes total sense to be able to book appointments online and order repeat prescriptions. Nowadays everything is ordered online so why not GP appointments? Previously I always had to try and get through to the practice by telephone on a lunch break but now it is much more convenient as I can do it at a time that suits me. It was quick and easy to use, and there was plenty of choice of appointment times, I will definitely be using this service in the future".

NHS England is working closely with the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), patients, carers, practice managers and GP leaders to raise awareness of and support for Patient Online.

For more information visit NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/patientonline](http://www.nhs.uk/patientonline)

**[ ADD IN LOCAL CONTACT DETAILS AS APPROPRIATE ]**

## Appendix B

Date

### NEWS RELEASE

#### ONLINE GP SERVICE REACHES HISTORIC 500 MARK!

GPs in [name of area or name of GP practice – amend as appropriate] are celebrating a landmark – with 500 patients now registered for Patient Online.

These services enable patients to book GP appointments and request repeat prescriptions via their computer, smartphone or tablet at a time that suits them rather than calling or visiting the surgery.

The service complements the traditional methods of accessing services, it does not replace them. This means that those without a computer, or who do not want to join up to use online services, can still call or visit the surgery to book appointments and request repeat prescriptions.

[Add in name of spokesperson here] said: “The response from our patients, of all ages to Patient Online has been great. From talking to our patients I know they appreciate the convenience of the service. It’s easy to use and secure, and all our patients aged 18 (confirm age) and above are eligible to use it.

“Our practice staff has also commented that there are less phone calls coming in, which means they have more time to talk to those patients who do call who may have complex problems.”

[Add in name of spokesperson here] said: “Registering for Patient Online is quick and easy. There are forms on our website and you can pick up a form from our surgery. We can even arrange for someone to give you a demonstration of how it works.”

[Add in quote from a suitable service user here about the online service]

Staff are continuing to promote the service to all patients and if you would like more information visit NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/patientonline](http://www.nhs.uk/patientonline) or ask at your GP surgery.

[ADD IN LOCAL CONTACT DETAILS AS APPROPRIATE]

## Appendix C

### Articles

The following articles have been written to appeal to a variety of audiences. They can be adapted to suit your particular audience as they all promote this initiative.

They can be used in practice newsletters or websites depending on what you think is most appropriate.

#### For mother and baby groups

Busy mums registered with [add in name of GP practice, health centre or area] can now book appointments and request repeat prescriptions at a time convenient to them thanks to online services being offered by GP practices.

These services enable patients to book GP appointments and request repeat prescriptions via their computer, smartphone or tablet at a time that suits them rather than calling or visiting the surgery.

This service complements the traditional methods of accessing services, it does not replace them.

For more information about these online services visit NHS Choices:

[www.nhs.uk/patientonline](http://www.nhs.uk/patientonline) or ask at your GP surgery.

#### For diabetic groups

Patients living with [diabetes or other long term health conditions – delete as appropriate] who are registered with [add in name of GP practice, health centre or area] can now have greater involvement in their healthcare thanks to online services being offered by GP practices.

These services enable patients to book GP appointments and request repeat prescriptions via their computer, smartphone or tablet at a time that suits them rather than calling or visiting the surgery.

When people are busy, patients increasingly want to be involved in decisions about their treatment and have more options when it comes to accessing GP services.

This service enables diabetic patients to view their health records online and keep track of their treatment. They will also be able to book appointments and ask for repeat prescriptions at the touch of a button, removing the need to call or visit the surgery which will be much more convenient for them.

This service complements the traditional methods of accessing services, it does not replace them.

For more information about these online services visit NHS Choices:

[www.nhs.uk/patientonline](http://www.nhs.uk/patientonline) or ask at your GP surgery.

## **Winter messages for patients, including 'at risk' patients**

Winter can increase the risk of ill-health, especially in children, the elderly and those with long term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart conditions, but online services are available to help patients better manage their health this winter.

These services enable patients to book GP appointments and request repeat prescriptions via their computer, smartphone or tablet at a time that suits them rather than calling or visiting the surgery.

This service complements traditional methods of accessing services, it does not replace them.

Patients who require repeat prescriptions ahead of the seasonal holidays will be able to make their requests ahead of schedule and keep track of their health over the winter months.

For more information about these online services visit NHS Choices:  
[www.nhs.uk/patientonline](http://www.nhs.uk/patientonline) or ask at your GP surgery.