



Case study title: Emails at Pentelow Practice

BEFORE

Due to pressure on administrative staff, correspondence for a practice in the Brentworth PCN was accumulating. The consequences of this were stress for the administrative team when they could see a backlog developing and the potential clinical risks in having patient information not uploaded to a clinical records system in a timely manner. Before our intervention there was a backlog of approximately 600 unprocessed items of clinical correspondence in the practice.

SOLUTION

The PCN GPSS (GP Support Service) staff member was trained by a member of reception staff to manage the emails in November/December 2022. After a period of shadowing the GPSS staff member was able to work independently. She clears the prescription requests, printing off and giving to reception staff to action. The more challenging aspect of the work is to understand whom in the practice to allocate the hospital letters received by email to, and this is work in progress. The care coordinator dedicates half to one day a week to supporting this task.

OUTCOME

The backlog is reduced, and the 24 hours target is being hit more reliably, as well as reducing stress on reception staff who are appreciative of the support being offered although they would like more.

'Ben has been helping with the Pentelow emails from November 2022. I have not got specific numbers of the numbers of emails, but she was working on emails one day a week. Prior to Ben helping with emails there was a great backlog in emails being dealt with as this was done by reception who did not have sufficient time to process. We aim to deal with emails within 24 hours but previously we were unable to hit this target. With Ben's assistance we have been able to better hit the time frame for dealing with emails.' Orika Riley, Practice Manager. Without the care coordinator's continued support there is every reason to think that the considerable backlog would quickly recur.

The clinical risk of having hospital letters sitting in a backlog unanswered is reduced through the prompt management of the inbox.

The reputational risk of having complaints sitting in an email backlog unaddressed is reduced for the Practice.

What is the PCN GP Support Service?

The GPSS covers all five Hounslow PCNs. A team of 42 staff mainly Care Co-ordinators are funded both by the PCNs and North West London. They provide support for Practices and PCNs with

1. Case Finding
2. Call and recall
3. Multi disciplinary meetings
4. PATCHs online consultation support
5. Patient co-ordination
6. SystmOne task management
7. Patient emails and correspondence

WHAT DO THE PATIENTS THINK

Although this is not immediately visible to the patients in terms of being a back-office system, the patients are getting their prescriptions and other queries processed more promptly. GPSS always issue an email back telling the patient what they have done, so for example your prescription has been sent to Lloyd Pharmacy, thus ensuring a high level of customer service.

POTENTIAL FOR EXPANSION

This is an offer that could be widened to reduce pressure on reception staff in other Practices within the PCN. Even a day a week or less is making a difference to this Practice. This is work that is best done on a daily basis and needs to be done in practice which is a challenge when it is being done by GPSS staff.

It is a learning from this that adequate training and a really good SOP is needed to define as far as is possible how to process, read code, delete adverts, assign to staff where needed because a wide variety of emails come into a Practice at a high rate every day.

“The provision of email support across the PCN has the potential to release the capacity of practice staff and support the timely processing of digital correspondence”

Dr Mark Remedios, Primary Care Network Clinical Director for Feltham and Bedfont Primary Care Network



Hounslow Consortium provides professional support to the PCNs and their member practices. It works across the full portfolio of General Practice services, with a primary focus on supporting the delivery of the PCN contract and achieving the best outcome for practices, patients and the workforce.

For further information about this case study please contact hrch.hounslowconsortium@nhs.net.



HRCH provides community health services for around 523,000 people registered with GPs in the London boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond, but also serves a wider population across south west London for a range of more specialist services.

HRCH has hosted Hounslow Consortium and its five PCNs, forming its Primary Care Directorate, since October 2021.