

# **West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership**

## **GP Online Consultation Summary of engagement activities**

**April 2021**

# GP Online Consultation: summary of engagement activities 2020 / 2021

## 1. Introduction

In this report we summarise the findings of our GP Online Consultation engagement and audience insight activities carried out over the last year and before the lockdown period.

## 2. Overview

[GP Online Consultation](#) is a way for patients to contact their GP practice without having to phone or go to their practice. Patients use an online form, available on the GP website to contact their practice about a new problem or an ongoing issue. They can ask questions or tell their GP about their symptoms.

The practice makes sure the query is dealt with by the right person in the team as quickly and appropriately as possible. Every day the practice sets aside time to make sure queries are dealt with by the right person in the team, helping make sure everyone is served as quickly and in the best way possible.

Using technology, like GP Online Consultation, is an important part of the care we provide. It complements face-to-face and telephone advice and provides secure online access to clinicians, personalised health information and advice.

## 3. Uptake

- Across West Yorkshire and Harrogate 99% of GP practices are offering more than 2.5 million people access to GP Online Consultation
- From 1 April 2020 to 28 February 2021, patients submitted 381,479 GP Online Consultation forms

## 4. Digital inclusion / digital first

- A report by [Healthwatch Leeds](#) highlighted that digital and telephone appointments don't work for everyone. Sometimes personal circumstances make people more vulnerable to digital exclusion; sometimes digital appointments are suitable at one stage in a person's care but not another
- The report identified eight factors which make people particularly likely to experience digital exclusion. They are:
  1. Poverty
  2. Age
  3. Literacy and communication preferences
  4. Skills and motivation
  5. Precarious lifestyles
  6. Privacy
  7. Disability and specific conditions
  8. Trust in IT
- A lack of digital skills and access can have a huge negative impact on a person's life. [The Good Things Foundation](#) (a social change charity) believes this can lead to poorer health outcomes and a lower life expectancy and increased loneliness and social isolation

- Those already at a disadvantage (for example, through age, education, income, disability, or unemployment) are most likely to be missing out, further widening the social inequality gap. Digital capability for all can mean that everyone can enjoy a greater quality of life and wellbeing through digital

## 5. Summary of insights from the healthwatch report

- People with reduced mobility can access care and information more conveniently using GP Online Consultation
- Digital and telephone access can be helpful when it offers people a quicker, more convenient experience
- Some people would be excluded from health and care if they were no longer able to access it face-to-face, and there are junctures in the patient or service user experience where personal contact is felt to be more appropriate

## 6. Feedback from floor walking exercise

Brooke Thawley and Ruth Ali, Digital Programme Support Officers, spoke to around 30 to 50 people at each of the practices listed below, including flu clinics. These informal floor walking exercises were carried out before the main lockdown period and involved conversations with GP practice staff and patients to consider what was working well and what needed to improve.

Name of surgery	Dates
Dyneley House Surgery	09/10/19 and 25/10/19
Grange Park Surgery	11/11/19
IG Medical	11/11/19
Ling House Medical	15/11/19
North Street Surgery	25/10/19
Townhead Surgery	15/11/19

Results from those exercises showed that:

### ***What's working well***

- Efficient and easy system to use
- Reduced telephone call demand
- Links to the clinical system
- Multiple issues can be raised within one consultation
- Two-way messaging function (Engage Consult)
- Saving time is
- System works well for admin requests, for example, fit notes
- Demand through the system is manageable
- Usage reports from suppliers provide useful data

### ***Room for improvement***

- Slow uptake
- Not linking to clinical system
- System not able to translate in other languages
- Clunky integration with clinical system
- Oversensitive system

## 7. Product consultation

### 7.1 Purpose

The use of online consultation products saw a significant increase in use from April 2020 onwards – driven by the COVID-19 lockdown and the subsequent push to remote consultation delivery by GPs. To help provide a balanced and informed view of the GP Online Consultation tools that are in use across the area we carried out product evaluation with GP practices. The aim was to help support CCGs in understanding the value of each product. We circulated the findings in November 2020 to internal colleagues and summarise those here.

There are seven different GP Online Consultation products used by GP practices across West Yorkshire and Harrogate. The two main products in West Yorkshire are eConsult and Engage Consult which account for 84% of West Yorkshire patients between them and are spread across 3 CCGs.

The products are:

Product	Practice #s	Total list size
eConsult	161	1,367,053
Engage	86	803,935
AireLogic	23	235,123
eReception	14	122,097
Silicon	1	17,095
AccuRx	1	15,350
AskMyGP	1	13,501

Due to the lack of data for some products, we can only make direct comparisons for the two main products in the area, eConsult and Engage Consult.

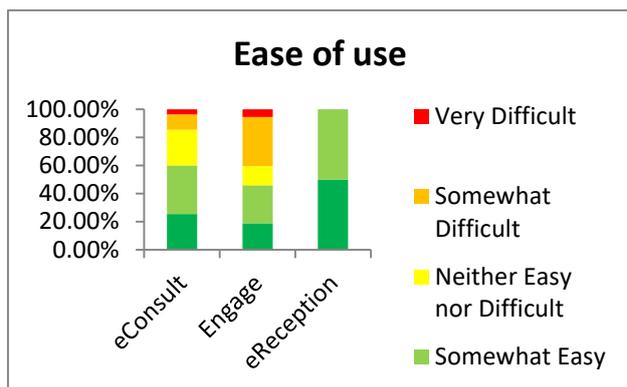
### 7.2 Practice feedback

During September and October 2020 we asked practices, across each of the CCGs within West Yorkshire (with the exception of Wakefield) to feedback on their experience of using the main online consultation products. While we received responses from all areas, we did not receive any responses from practices using Aire Logic.

Product	No. practices
eConsult	55
Engage Consult	37
eReception	2

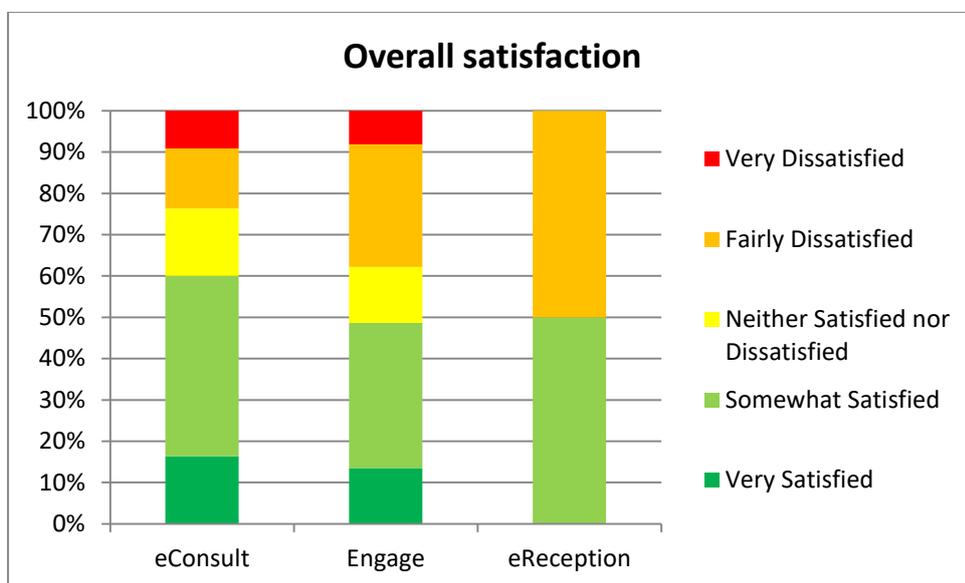
#### Ease of use

We asked practices to consider how easy it was to use their online consultation product. While the responses do not indicate any serious difficulties, one product did not score as highly as the other products. Improving practice efficiency when dealing with routine requests is a key benefit to online consultations. Practices also said that they still expect more integration with the clinical records.



### Overall satisfaction

Overall satisfaction with the products again follows a similar breakdown to ease of use and efficiencies seen with eConsult scoring slightly higher than the other products.



### Patient feedback

Patient feedback is only available for the eConsult and Engage Consult products as they use automated feedback forms that go to patients – other products in West Yorkshire do not offer this.

#### **eConsult:**

We surveyed an average of 733 patients a month who had used the eConsult system during April to August 2020. Of those 84.4% said they were satisfied overall and 87.4% said they would recommend using GP Online to friends and family. The table below gives more information.

eConsult metrics	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	AVG.
Feedback forms completed	620	822	781	832	610	-	<b>733</b>
% overall satisfaction	85.5%	88.3%	84.5%	83.7%	79.3%	-	<b>84.4%</b>

% recommend to friends and family	91.6%	90.8%	88.1%	84.0%	82.0%	-	<b>87.4%</b>
% needing further contact	15.6%	18.6%	20.5%	21.3%	23.8%	-	<b>20.0%</b>

### Engage Consult

We surveyed an average of 275 patients a month who had used the Engage Consult system during April to August 2020. Of those 71% said they would recommend the product to friends and family. The table below provides more information.

Engage Consult Metrics	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	AVG.
Feedback forms completed	75	98	135	175	504	663	<b>275</b>
% Recommend to Friends & Family	85.3%	88.8%	83.0%	78.3%	68.7%	64.1%	<b>71.0%</b>

### 8. Reducing health inequalities

- COVID-19 has further exposed some of the health and wider inequalities that persist in our society
- Working collaboratively with local communities and partners to take action to reduce health inequalities was set out in the NHS planning phase three letter. This states that Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) should work with GP practices to expand the range of services to which patients can self-refer, freeing-up clinical time. All GP practices must offer face-to-face appointments at their surgeries as well as continuing to use remote triage and video, online and telephone consultation wherever appropriate – whilst also considering those who are unable to access or engage with digital services
- Healthwatch Leeds has further highlighted the digital divide through the implementation of video appointments, online consultations and the greater need for patients in the shielded cohort to self-manage health conditions. However direct action and working alongside communities to enable more people and organisations to get online, Digital Health Champion training and equipment lending schemes and shared tools can make a difference. Resources to enable health professionals and staff in health and care settings to embed digital inclusion in their approach and target those in priority wards and areas with the highest health inequalities also matter

### 9. Language barriers

- Some people may need translators or family members to be allowed onto digital appointments to offer support. It is vital that practice staff have the technical knowledge to facilitate this and that it is as well communicated as possible
- Currently there is no mechanism for the service to be able to offer translation into other languages. This would have to be prearranged to meet individual needs

### 10. Conclusion

While the acceleration of digital technologies like this comes at a crucial stage for care, we must continue to meet the needs of all those who need help. We know that digital technology is not for us

all. But if every patient who can use online consultation does so we can free up busy telephone lines for people who can't or don't want to use online facilities.

We use the audience insight to plan our communications and make sure we address the problems highlighted to help continually improve our digital offer – for example, we have arranged to have an animated video translated into Urdu, Punjabi and Polish. To increase take up and awareness of GP Online Consultation, we will continue our promotional campaign in 2021. As part of this campaign, we are planning further engagement activities to make sure products like our [animated video](#) hit the mark and meet patient needs and expectations.