

Dear colleagues,

Over the last four years GP Online Services have been implemented by practices across England. Over 14 million patients - 25% of the patient population – now have a GP Online Services account.

One of the ways you can get more benefits from online services is to incorporate them into the busier times, such as during flu season.

This guide provides you with an action plan and ideas on how to do that. It also shows you the advantages of GP Online Services for your practice, including the amount of time you can save if patients book their appointment online.

We hope you find this useful. Should you have any questions please contact us at:

england.primary.care.digital.transformation@nhs.net



Kelly Cullen
Practice Nurse and
Digital Champion

5 step action plan

1 **August** Start to let patients know that they will be able to book flu jab appointments online and encourage them to register



2 **September** Set up appointments for flu clinics

See the guide
sent with this
pack

3 **September /
October** Text or email all patients who are eligible for a flu jab and are signed-up for online services



4 **September /
October** Update call waiting messages – with a ‘book your flu jab online’ message



5 **During
clinics** Encourage nurses to sign-up and vouch for any patients who don't have suitable ID but would like GP Online Services





Stop that phone ringing... *book online*



Let's assume 325 patients need a flu jab.



Also assuming each call takes 2 minutes. This adds up to a minimum of 650 minutes, or nearly 11 hours, of phone calls to book appointments.

If x% of patients booked online	This would be x patients	You would save at least x hours
10%	33	1 hr 6 mins
25%	81	2 hrs 42 mins
50%	163	5 hrs 26 mins
75%	244	8 hrs 8 mins
100%	325	10 hrs 50 mins



Top tips from our GP champion

Dr Paul Atkinson MRCGP, GP and Digital Clinical Champion



Use promotional material to encourage patients to book appointments online well in advance to give patients time to sign-up



Book flu appointments in the usual way. Pre-register all relevant patients for online services. Give log in details to patients on flu clinic day



Use the support of the Patient Participation Group to promote GP Online Services



Brief staff within the practice so they are able to signpost patients to more information



Encourage nursing staff to do the vouching during the flu appointment. Admin staff can then register the patient on the day



Include details in practice letters inviting patients to routine screening, flu jabs and health checks.



Offer flu appointments online as part of the campaign and have enough staff available to proactively register patients as they arrive for the clinic



Encourage patients to book their flu appointment online with information on your website and newsletters



Always collect patient email and mobile numbers and keep them up to date



Send a text message and/or email to patients who are registered for GP Online Services and who need a flu jab – adding a link to the GP Online Services portal



Update call waiting messages to remind people they can book their flu appointments online



Brief all members of staff in your practice

Aim

- Confident, trained staff who can share information with patients through the use of resources and promotional material. Staff are the key to the success of wider patient acceptance of new ways of working.

Outcome

- More knowledgeable staff who have the confidence and skills to promote and register patients for GP Online Services.

- 1 Share the benefits with staff.
- 2 Set aside time for staff to have briefing or training sessions on GP Online Services.
- 3 Use a dummy patient so staff can see how the appointment process will work.
- 4 Support staff to sign-up new patients
- 5 Encourage staff to register for GP Online Services themselves, ensuring they are familiar with the patient's perspective.



Raise awareness of GP Online Services using promotional material

Aim

- Improve awareness of GP Online Services among patients, particularly the ability to book appointments online.

Outcome

- More patients are registered to use online services before the flu clinics start; leading to fewer phone calls to reception to book appointments and improved access for patients.

- 1 Promote online booking in the surgery one to two months before flu clinics are due to start.
- 2 Ask patients if they use the internet and would be interested in online services.
- 3 Display the free promotional material in reception.

[Download our communications guide](#)

[Order your free materials and resources](#)



Signpost patients towards booking their flu appointment online

Aim

- Patients know there is an alternative way to book their flu appointments.
- Reinforce and amplify the GP Online Services message over multiple channels.

Outcome

- Reduces the number of phone calls with requests to book flu appointments.
- Increase awareness of GP Online Services.

1 Advertise flu clinic appointments on your practice website, through your newsletter or on social media.

2 Remind patients of the benefits of using online services.

3 Include a link directly to the patient system.

4 Provide guidance on which appointment to pick and ensure appointments are clearly labelled as flu clinic.

5 Don't exclude patients that haven't registered yet - signpost them to your registration process.



Example: email to send to patients

Dear XXXX,

The flu season is upon us and this year we are trying to make things a little easier for you by offering our flu clinic appointments online. This gives you the opportunity to book at a time that is convenient for you instead of waiting on the phone for an appointment.

To access this service please do one of the following:

- If you already have GP Online Services, simply log in via [insert website] and book a flu appointment that is convenient for you.
- If you don't have GP Online Services but would like make your appointment online this year, reply stating '*I would like to register for GP Online Services*'.
- If you don't wish to book your appointment online please contact the practice as you normally would.



Example: text messages to send to patients

This year flu clinic appointments are available to book online. If you're already registered for GP Online Services visit [insert website] to make your appointment.

Thinking about booking your flu clinic appointment? Book online this year with GP Online Services and save time. For more information visit [insert website].

This year flu clinic appointments are available online – simply register, click and book. To register, reply to this message with your email address.



Example: paragraph to include in letters to patients

The flu season is upon us and this year we are trying to make things a little easier for you by offering our flu clinic appointments online. This is done via GP Online Services where you can book appointments, order repeat prescriptions and even access your GP records online. It's quick, easy and your information is secure.

To access this service please do one of the following:

- If you already have GP Online Services, simply log in via [insert website] and book a flu clinic appointment that is convenient for you.
- If you do not have GP Online Services but would like to make use of online services simply visit the practice with two forms of ID in order to register.

If you do not have access to the internet or do not wish to book your flu appointment online please contact the practice as you normally would.



Example: call waiting message

“Need a flu clinic appointment? We now have a number of these appointments available to book online.

Simply log into your online account and book your **flu clinic appointment**

Not registered for online services? Let reception know **you would like to register**”.



Work with your Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Aim

- Have your PPG register for GP Online Services and share their experience of the service with patients through the use of resources, materials and information stands.

Outcome

- More patients will experience the benefits of using GP Online Services, registration and usage will increase which will save staff time.

- 1** Brief your PPG about GP Online Services.

Download our PPG guide

- 2** Encourage your PPG to register for online services so they have first-hand experience.

- 3** Provide your PPG with resources and materials they can hand out to patients prior to flu clinics – they are a great conversation starter.

- 4** Ask your PPG to support flu clinics by talking to other patients about GP Online Services and helping with the registration process.

- 5** Arrange with your PPG to host a 'get online' table in the waiting room, talking to patients about GP Online Services.



Support nursing staff to undertake vouching during flu clinics

Aim

- To simplify the registration process and encourage patients attending flu clinics to register for GP Online Services while they are already at the practice.

Outcome

- Increase in the number of patients registered for online services who can then experience first-hand the benefits of online services.

1 Nursing and reception staff should agree on the process of vouching for verifying patient's identity.

2 Patients who are not registered for online services are identified and pre-registered before they visit the clinic.

Patients who have access to online services but booked via phone or in person are reminded of online services.

3 Print registration document and store securely.

On the day of the flu clinic

4 If a patient wishes to register for GP Online Services but does not have the relevant ID with them a nurse may vouch for the patient.

If a patient does not wish to register for GP Online Services their pre-registration documents should be destroyed and they should be de-registered

5 If the patient is unknown to staff their identity may be verified by obtaining responses to questions from information held in their medical record.



Pre-register all relevant patients for online services.

Aim

- To simplify the registration process and encourage patients attending flu clinics to register for GP Online Services while they are already at the practice.

Outcome

- Increase the numbers of patients registered for online services and experiencing first-hand the benefits of online usage.

1 Patient books a flu clinic appointment via phone or in person.

2 Identify patients attending flu clinic who are not registered for GP Online Services.

3 Register these patients before the clinic and print registration document and store securely.

On the day of the clinic

4 Identification is confirmed using vouching and patients are given their registration document along with a GP Online Service information leaflet.

5 Should a patient not want access to GP Online Services, shred the login details and de-register the patient.

Help for those who need support going online

There are a lot of places where people can learn how to use the internet. Many are provided by local authorities, colleges and charities. A good place to start is the local library, but there are many other places to learn for free, such as:



UK online centres which help people learn how to use the internet and manage their health online. For more information and to find your nearest local venue, please go to www.learnmyway.com



Age UK helps older people get online. For more information and to find your local Age UK centre please go to www.ageuk.org.uk or call the Age UK advice line on 0800 169 2081.



Good Things Foundation in partnership with NHS Digital is running a programme to ensure people have the skills they need to access relevant health information and services online. For more information please go to www.goodthingsfoundation.org

Flu season

Making the most of online appointments

Date issued | 17 August 2018

Status | Full release

Publication reference | 08358

Version | 1.1

Contact | england.primary.care.digital.transformation@nhs.net

