

This paper looks at the communication challenges within a primary healthcare setting and offers practical solutions through the application of technology.

1 2 3 Primary Healthcare

How can we improve communication?

Many aspects of modern life are being reshaped by technology. Advances in communications and computing are driving choice and expectation across all industry sectors including healthcare.

Medical advances, together with population growth, are placing additional strain on our healthcare system. In response, the NHS Long Term Plan outlines how our service will move forward so that the service is fit for the future. Technology is key to enabling patients to take a more active role in their healthcare and assisting staff to do their jobs better. Practical priorities include the introduction of intuitive tools to capture data as a by-product of care, empowering clinicians and reducing the administrative burden.



ideas that change everything

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One click ... automatically opens the patient record, saving time and avoiding errors.

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Making life easier

Today, many healthcare professionals struggle with clunky technology and poor user interfaces that cause inefficiencies, especially when managing repetitive tasks.

On-line services are helping to reduce routine appointment booking over the phone. However, with less than 20% of appointments being booked on-line, most continue to be made over the phone, especially where patients have questions associated with an appointment booking.

Streamline call handling

ContactAssist is a clever application that integrates telephony with patient records to speed up call handling and capture new contact information. On answering a call, a dashboard is presented to structure patient identification and verification.

- Presentation of selected demographic information, for example, date of birth, assists with adherence to policy and simplifies patient verification.
- Where more than one patient is registered against a telephone number, all patient names are presented. This is particularly useful where a family member is calling on behalf of another.
- Special instructions can be added to assist with call handling. This may include phonetic pronunciation in a multi-cultural area, a note to inform that a patient is hard of hearing or ad-hoc information about a previous conversation.
- Where a patient calls from a new number, ContactAssist helps to identify and capture contact information in a few clicks. Complete and accurate contact information is key to telephone triage, appointment reminders and outbound campaign management.
- A business directory allows others, for example, suppliers and members of staff to be identified before answering a call.

When patient verification is complete one click automatically opens the patient record to save time and avoid errors.

Simplify outbound communication

ContactAssist supports 'Click to Dial' and 'Click to Message'*. No more frustration or dialling errors when contacting patients. Simply search by name and click to dial, for example, in support of telephone triage.

Click to message* helps staff to keep patients informed and is a useful alternative when an individual isn't available to answer a call.

Why Oak Innovation?

With a longstanding commitment to the healthcare sector, Oak Innovation is helping over 2000 GP Practices to improve communications. Our range of recording, reporting and integration products are supported by a U.K helpdesk.



2 Protecting Reputation

Nine out of ten patients have confidence and trust in their family doctor as well as other general practice staff such as nurses and pharmacists, according to research published by NHS England in July 2019. Patients rate their overall experience highly, with four out of five saying their GP treats them with 'care and concern' and provides them with enough time to listen to their needs.

Primary healthcare organisations are on the front line of healthcare service delivery, often managing heated or critical conversations. When a dispute occurs, a professional and speedy resolution is key to avoiding time consuming escalations and damage to reputation.

Call recording is a critical business tool that enables primary healthcare providers to check on the detail and prove who said what. This could form a vital piece of evidence, for example, where a patient requested an emergency appointment but was advised to call an ambulance.

Clarify call recording

Clarify delivers easy to use, cost effective call recording that can be deployed alongside on-site or hosted telephony.

- ✔ Dual channel recording – Listen to each side of a conversation in turn for complete clarity
- ✔ Share recordings with selected staff for a time limited period. Recordings remain securely stored within Clarify
- ✔ Choose call and screen recording for a complete view of interaction

Speedy resolution is key to avoiding time consuming escalations and damage to reputation.

Improving patient experience

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Evolve call analytics

Real time call information can be presented on wallboards alongside data feeds from other sources to enable staff to manage their time more effectively and get calls answered. Longer term reporting informs management about service levels, resource needs and trends.

A growing and aging population has resulted in more people living with long term conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and mental health issues. To meet these needs, practices have begun working together and with community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital and voluntary services. Primary Care Networks build on existing care services to enable more effective care through co-ordination and integration. Typically, one or more hubs are created to manage delivery of extended services in the local area.

Centralised call handling

ContactAssist's ability to integrate with multiple telephony and clinical record systems enable distributed healthcare services to be managed from a centralised location without replacing infrastructure or undermining the autonomy of individual Practices. ContactAssist uses the dialled number to associate a patient with their Practice and access the correct records.

Quantity vs Quality

Quantitative call metrics are relatively straight forward and useful when looking to manage service levels and schedule resource. However, when used in isolation, they can result in a lower level of engagement and poor patient service. Increasingly, qualitative metrics are being used to improve the quality of conversation, manage adherence to policy and support a culture of continuous improvement.

Clarify quality management

- Support the development of criteria and the evaluation of calls
- Create playlists for routine and excepted calls to get new starters up to speed faster
- Share best practice examples across a team to improve the quality of conversations
- Identify and address problem areas to deliver a consistent patient experience

Managing consistency

An inconsistent level of service can be a real problem for healthcare providers. Patients expect the same level of service whenever they interact. Problems can occur when there are weaker or less experienced team members, or when using alternative resources, for example, out of hours. Quality Management enables managers to develop and evaluate conversations to improve patient service.

In conclusion

Patient expectation is changing in an increasingly digital world, especially amongst the younger generations. Telephony continues to be a key communication channel for primary healthcare providers and their patients. A few simple business tools can help to speed up call handling, reduce frustration and improve patient experience. This is especially important when migrating to centralized call handling as part of a federation or Primary Care Network.

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