

**NHS England and NHS Improvement
East of England**

Victoria House
Capital Park
Fulbourn
CB21 5XB

CCG Clinical Chairs

CCG Accountable Officers

CCG and STP Chief Information Officers

By email

15 April 2020

Dear colleagues,

Re: Rapid roll-out of digital first primary care as part of COVID-19 response

We are writing to you following the rapid roll-out of Video Consultation across acute, community, mental health and ambulance NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts in the East of England as part of the COVID-19 response. Over the last three weeks 17 trusts have started providing care using video consultations across a total of more than 80 services, including Paediatrics, Neuro, Dermatology, Diabetes, Antenatal Services, Breast Services, Speech and Language Therapy, IAPT and Palliative care. More trusts are expected to go live within the next two weeks and more services are going live with video consults each day.

GP leaders have fed back to the Out of Hospital Care Cell in the East of England that there is an urgent need to be able to undertake video consultations in primary care as part of the response to COVID-19 to help keep our staff and patients safe. We know that a lot of work has already been done on this across the region and that many practices are already up and running with video consultations while others are in the process of implementing solutions locally. We would like to work collaboratively with GP practices, PCNs, CCGs and STPs/ICSs to rapidly expand the use of video consults in primary care and other digital solutions such as online or e-consultations where this will enable services to be delivered more effectively in response to COVID-19.

Dr Nikki Kanani and Ed Waller have provided national guidance in their letters to primary care providers that emphasises the use of digital tools in general practice in the context of COVID-19. This includes the following key elements:

- Online Consultation, such as e-consultation/e-triage, image sharing and messaging, which supports asynchronous management of patients
- Video Consultation to support real-time remote management of patients
- Remote-working: virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) and equipment
- Electronic Prescribing Service, including electronic repeat dispensing



These tools support the model described in standard operating procedure [Managing coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in general practice \(SOP\)](#), as well as meeting requirements of the GP Contract for 2020/21. There is evidence that online and video consultations and online triage can support increased capacity and resilience in primary care.

In their [letter](#) of 27 March, Dr Nikki Kanani and Ed Waller confirmed that video consultation systems and online triage and consultation systems will be centrally funded if they are purchased via the Digital Care Services Framework (DCSF) or Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).

We are aware that the implementation of the Electronic Prescription Service is a key aspect of remote consultations in primary care and want to confirm that this will continue to be supported by NHS Digital with further information available through the NHS Digital Electronic Prescriptions website. We will ensure our teams work in partnership to support practices in a coordinated way.

A regional project team including GPs from the East of England has been established working across NHS England and NHS Improvement and NHS Digital to support the implementation of online triage and video consultation, and where required to enable this, electronic prescribing and remote working. We recognise that practices and PCNs will have different starting points, and that you are already working with your practices to implement these tools at pace. We would therefore like to work collaboratively and supportively with STP/ICS, CCG, PCN and practice teams already involved with the roll out of digital technology to support the COVID-19 response. We will work with you to understand the current position of each practice.

Our support offer will include:

- Working with CCGs and PCNs to agree the support that would be most useful locally
- A named implementation partner who will support CCGs and PCNs and act as the single point of contact, helping to co-ordinating support offers from NHS England and NHS Improvement, NHS Digital and NHS X
- Step-by-step fast track implementation plans for online consultations by a practice or PCN
- 'How to' / quick learning guides for rapidly expanding use of video consultations, including tips for clinicians and patient guides on how to use video and online consultations
- Assured model documentation to support local governance, e.g. DPIA, standard operating procedures, patient letters/messaging, available via a shared NHS Futures site
- Sharing best practice for commonly used apps/systems e.g. across PCNs, CCGs, and STPs/ICs through training and webinars as needed, including links to national training and webinars
- Support where needed to implement remote working and electronic prescribing (including electronic prescription without a nominated pharmacy)

Following Ann Radmore's request on 8 April, we have received contact details for a named SRO and project manager for each CCG in the region. It is important that these teams have capacity to support the project and sufficient delegated authority to make

day-to-day implementation decisions. We ask that CCG teams consider the support that would be most helpful for your local practices and PCNs and work with the regional team to agree the baseline for this work and priorities for support.

We will run a launch webinar with more details of the regional support offer on this work at 4pm on Tuesday, 21 April, which will be sent to the named SROs and project managers.

We look forward to working with your teams on this important part of the COVID-19 response over the next few weeks. If you have any questions about this work please contact our project team at england.eoe-digitalpmo-covid19@nhs.net.

Yours sincerely,



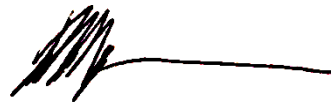
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