

# Brief Insights

Graeme Medical Centre worked with Healthcare Improvement Scotland over seven weeks using quality improvement methods to improve access to general practice.

## The challenge

The practice wanted to reduce the number of phone calls coming into the practice to give staff more time to respond appropriately to all phone requests.

## Understanding

To get a clearer picture of the number and types of phone calls coming in, the administrative staff spent three days collecting data. Each phone call they received was sorted into one of 10 categories, depending on what the patient called to request:

- A same day appointment
- A future appointment
- To speak to a GP
- An appointment with a nurse
- Continuation of a fit note
- Prescription request
- Results
- An appointment with the mental health nurse
- Miscellaneous
- Request handled by the administrative team

They also recorded whether each request was received in the morning or afternoon.

# What they found

5%

of all phone calls were requests for continuation of a fit note

75%

of these fit note requests occurred in the morning, when reception staff are especially busy with calls for urgent appointments

Fit note calls were a small percentage of total calls, but the team mapped out the fit note process and discovered that these requests were time-consuming for both reception and clinical staff. Patients did not always have all the required information to hand, resulting in several tasks being sent back and forth between reception and clinical staff.

## Making a change

The practice mapped out the steps of a new process for patients to request fit note continuation by email. This process is simpler and requires less of the staff's time to complete.

## Impact



demand

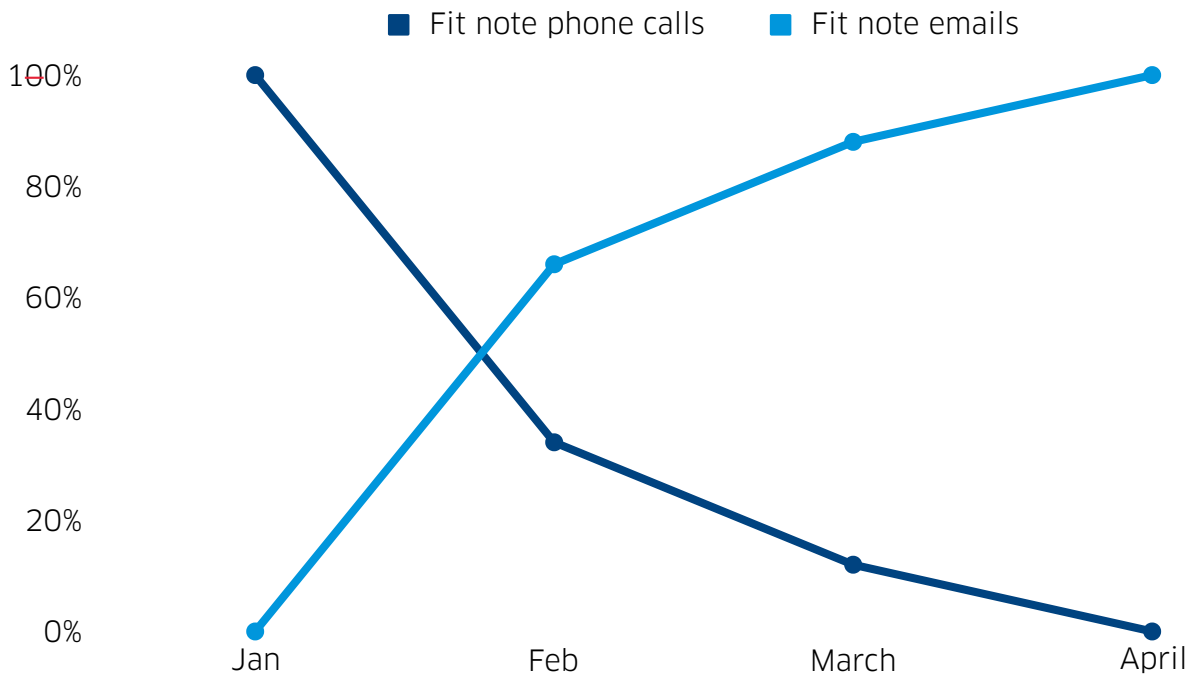
The number of phone calls about fit note continuation received over a three-day period decreased from 20 in January to 0 in April.



capacity

The GPs report that the number of tasks sent to them has decreased. The email process is easier and less time-consuming for administrative and clinical staff.

# Percentage of fit note requests received by phone and email



## What people said

"The tools that [our coach] showed us are fantastic and the GPs love them."

Practice Manager

"Starting small was definitely the right approach."

Senior Administrator

"[Our coach] has been really, really helpful. If we were stuck we could ask her."

Practice Manager

# Next steps

- The practice will consider putting a link to the fit note form on their website
- Using the phone call data they collected at the beginning of the sprint, the team have decided to ask patients to call before 10:30am for urgent same-day appointments, and after 11am for anything else. They hope this will reduce the total number of phone calls in the morning, allow patients with urgent requests to reach the practice more easily, and help the staff plan their urgent tasks earlier in the day.

To start your own access improvement journey, you can join our [Primary Care Access Programme](#), download our [GP access tools](#), or email us for more information at [his.pcpteam@nhs.scot](mailto:his.pcpteam@nhs.scot).

*Thanks to Graeme Medical Centre for working with us to share this learning.*

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