

Brief Insights

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

The challenge

To receive a face to face appointment, all patients had to first have a triage phone call. Many patient requests were therefore handled twice if they required both a phone call and a face to face appointment after. This meant a long triage list and larger workloads for the practice team. The practice wanted to know if some of these patient requests could be safely managed with only one encounter.

Understanding

The Practice Manager and a GP Partner reviewed the triage list over five days and divided the patient requests into categories. They saw that a large number of requests were related to prescriptions, but they felt this was too complex to address initially.

The Practice Manager and a GP Partner met with their improvement coach to discuss groups of patients who were very likely to need a face to face appointment and could potentially skip the triage phone call. This would free up space on the triage list and reduce the team's overall workload.

Making a change

They decided to introduce same-day face to face GP appointments for children under eight, without an initial triage phone call. This group is harder to assess over the phone and usually needs to be seen in person anyway. This would free up space on the triage list and give parents and carers peace of mind to know their child could be seen in person.

After each appointment, the GP noted whether or not they would have given the patient a face to face appointment if they had done a triage call first. This would help confirm whether or not this patient group did in fact need to be seen face to face.

Impact



capacity

Over three weeks, a total of 63 children who previously would have been on the triage list received a same-day face to face appointment instead. Those 63 spaces on the triage list could then be used for patients who were more appropriate for the triage list.

The GPs reported that if those 63 patients had had a triage phone call, they would have wanted to see 61 of them face to face after. Those 61 patients would have been handled twice, but only had one encounter instead.

What people said

"[Healthcare Improvement Scotland] gave us some really useful tools to audit, capture, and look at data. We will absolutely continue to use those."

Practice Manager

"[Our coach] was there for us at any point we needed him. We certainly didn't feel that we were on our own at any point."

Practice Manager

Next steps

- The practice will look for other groups of patients who can be given an immediate face to face appointment without an initial triage phone call
- They will track the number of calls received when the GP is not available for triage, and may limit future triage calls to times when the GP is available

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.

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

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