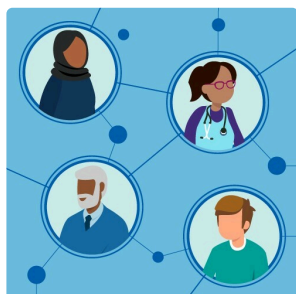


Case Study

Developing care navigation skills across a reception team

The Limes Medical Practice in Margate wanted to improve the care navigations skills of its reception team to help maximise the use of other local services and reduce the pressure on its GPs. By participating in the Accelerate programme the practice designed a new protocol and tool that has reduced staff interruptions, freed up time across the reception team and helped navigate patients to the right services quicker.



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Impact

“Before we made the changes, I used to get a lot of interruptions with basic questions, now I hardly get any.”

“Encourage staff to get engaged early on, they have a lot of the answers already so will help find the solutions quicker.”

Errol White, Assistant Practice Manager, The Limes Medical Practice

- A new care navigation protocol and tool has helped free up 16 hours per week across the reception team. This freed up time is being used by staff to get up-to-date with their other tasks.
- Reception staff feel better equipped and confident in navigating patients appropriately to other local services. Being able to offer multiple options for care to patients has improved morale across the team.
- Patient satisfaction has increased as they are getting a better service and quicker access to

the right person when a GP appointment is not necessary.

- Pressure on GPs has reduced and they are seeing more patients that need their care.
- Interruptions and queries around appointment allocation has reduced, giving staff time to focus on their own work.

Improving care navigation knowledge and skills

The practice wanted to maximise the use of other local services to help improve patient access and reduce the pressure on its GPs, who were seeing some patients that could have been dealt with more effectively by another service/healthcare professional. Some of the 10 strong reception team were leaving and being replaced by new staff. There was no formal induction or passing on of skills and knowledge around care navigation. This was causing issues.

- Patients were being allocated to wrong appointment slots e.g. childhood immunisations being put through to slots for smears.
- The practice's acute team was navigating patients to the GP when other services such as the dentist, eye care or Community Pharmacist Consultation Service would have been more appropriate.
- GPs were spending time referring inappropriate appointments back to reception to navigate correctly and in turn, reception were having to move patients around or make a new appointment. This was wasting patient time, especially if they had to attend an additional appointment.
- The Assistant Practice Manager was constantly being interrupted with questions about where patients should be referred, making it difficult for him to complete his own tasks.

Reception staff were largely unaware of other services they could navigate patients to. This made their highly pressured and challenging days even more difficult.

Building the knowledge and confidence of staff

To help reception staff navigate confidently and effectively, the practice worked on centralising care navigation information. This made it quick and easy to access and could also be used to help induct new staff.

- An example clinical care navigation protocol used by another practice, was tailored and adapted for use by the team.
- A list of local services patients can be navigated to, or self-refer, was mapped out, along with when it would be appropriate.
- The list was transferred into excel and broken down into separate spreadsheets for different services e.g., mental health, nursing, clinicians etc., with weblinks and information

leaflets embedded into it. This became the main navigation tool staff would use and was put onto all the receptionists' computers for quick and easy use.

Staff now use both the new protocol and navigation tool. They are encouraged to ask questions if they have any queries about care navigation to make it more effective. The spreadsheet is updated on an ongoing basis when information changes or new services need adding. Having the information easily accessible has helped reduce staff interruptions and made the care navigation process more efficient across the practice.

Background

The Limes Medical Practice is made of 3 whole time equivalent GPs and has a patient population is 17.5k. The practice participated in the Accelerate Programme delivered by the Primary Care Transformation team at NHS England.



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