

Transforming Physiotherapy: Improved patient access through online booking

Innovation

Efficient Scheduling

Technology

Author: Martin Cragg

November 2023

In response to patient frustrations with accessing the service to book an appointment, we've developed a new online booking facility for them to be able to book an appointment at a time convenient to them. This tool reduces current volumes of phone activity, thereby improving access for patients that do need to call in and aims to improve utilisation of available slots. Patients can still call in to book if preferred, but the new option allows patients to choose how to access the service, improving their overall experience.

The problem...

Currently the only way of booking an appointment is by calling our phone system. Friends and Family Feedback has identified difficulties getting through and holding for a prolonged periods of time. It also means that patients can only contact us during opening hours, which may not fit with their working patterns or personal commitments. Once through, our admin teams then spend time with the patient identifying a suitable appointment and confirming it in our clinical systems.

Our Think QI approach...

1

Deep Dive

Understanding the problem – it is the only way to access the service, however phone lines are only open for set hours and often very busy, with long waiting times. Admin teams must answer and process every appointment booking, which can delay other callers or queries being answered.

Patient Experience – can be very frustrating, with long wait times, especially at “peak” times in the day when others are trying to access the service (pre-school drop off, lunch time etc.)

2

Design

- A link to the SystemOne clinical system, using existing functionality that is not currently utilised.
- Involvement of Admin leads to drive forward and troubleshoot
- Trial started in 1 initial locality for Band 6 physio appointments on 9th October.
- Planned roll out plan for other locations/bands based on call rates and digital capabilities.

3

Deliver

- The tool launched in Hinchingsbrooke in October 2023.
- Booking rates were closely monitored to ensure existing utilisation was not compromised.
- Clinical systems teams created the link and assured the online functionality
- Live demonstrations of the tool were given to admin teams
- Patients were made aware of the opportunity through existing contact communication (SMS)

The goal...

- ✓ Improve patient access into the service by offering an online booking process.
- ✓ Free up admin capacity by not having to answer as many telephone calls.
- ✓ Increase utilisation of appointment slots.



“24/7” access into the service through an online booking process

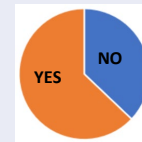


Better choice for patients of contact into the service – online, or existing phone line.



Increased patient experience due to less disruption and inconvenience

Results:



- **65%** of patients booked their appointment online (October and November)
- **~20hrs** phone activity saved over first 6 weeks (2.5mins per call, 477 appts)
- **Initial positive response from patients** – working with Co-Production to capture a range of feedback including perception of accessing the service
- **Positive staff feedback** - reduced call volumes, less rushed on other calls, improved capacity to focus on other admin routines



Age demographic – no statistical variance or change in ages of patients accessing an online booking versus phone call (disproving a hypothesis that more elderly patients wouldn't engage online)



Evolve – Ongoing use of the tool, widening across the service and all locations. Review remaining phone line activity (volume and length). Consider roll out across other service pathways, and other SystemOne based services.