

The NHS App has been available for all patients to download with the basic symptom checker function for a number of months. However, it was only from February 2019 that it began being connected to GP practice clinical systems in order to enable the key functionality of appointment booking, repeat prescription ordering and viewing medical records. This process has been phased; City and Hackney practices were connected to the App simultaneously with other INEL CCGs on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

The roll out of the App has been principally led by NHS Digital (D) and digital leads at NHS England (E). They have made a [toolkit](#) available to practices which sets out the recommended steps to be undertaken by practices in preparation for connection. It should be noted that the key functionality of the App, previously collectively referred to as Patient Online services, have been available to all registered patients in City and Hackney since 2014/15 via EMIS Patient Access website or a variety of other apps such as Evergreen-Life. The NHS App simply provides a new common user interface for these existing services, adds the new symptom checker, and enables patients to register preferences around organ donation and personal data.

The main drive of the toolkit prepared by NHSD has been to encourage practices to address known issues with Patient Online services; for example, reviewing the naming of online appointment slots available to ensure that they are booked appropriately or ensuring that their staff are familiar with IG issues around granting more convenient online access to the medical records. Although the toolkit does encourage practices to promote the App, NHSE are planning a significant public facing marketing campaign for Q3 19/20 by which time they expect any teething problems from the launch to be resolved. The CCG will expect local practices to take part in this campaign, as appropriate.

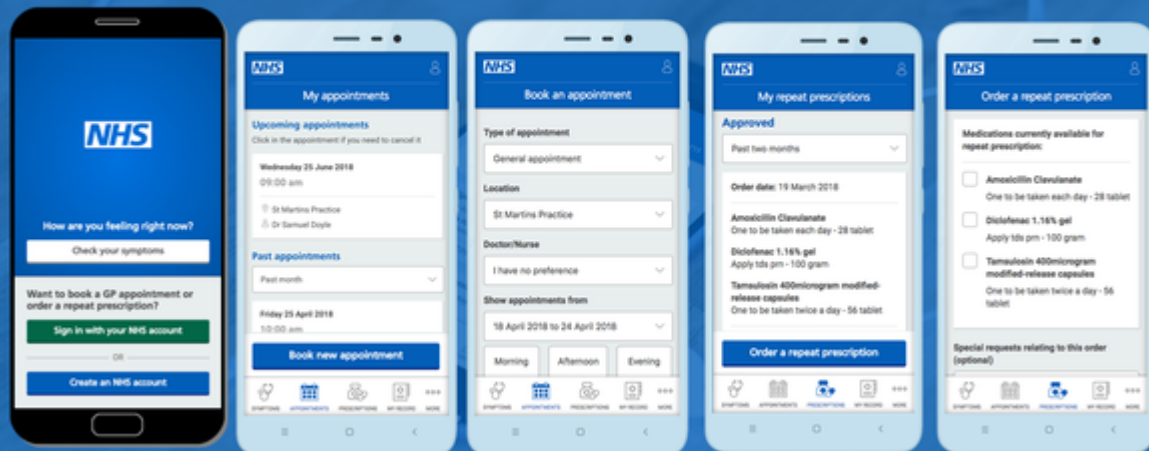
Locally, the CCG has liaised with colleagues from NHSE and neighbouring CCGs on communications to practices commencing six weeks prior to connection on 13<sup>th</sup> May to ensure that they were taking the necessary steps to prepare. This was supplemented by the creation and promotion of a page on the CCG GP website linking to a number of resources on the App, but also technical information on how to effectively configure EMIS for Patient Online services.

Through the CCG's monthly GPIT Steering Group and May's Clinical Commissioning Forum we have been engaging with practice managers and GPs to raise awareness and report practice level statistics for utilisation of online services. A practice facilitator working under the CCG commissioned GP IT support service also works closely with the local Practice Managers Forum to run training sessions on the App and online services. One of the key issues raised by practices has been how to facilitate patient access to medical records online, as under the GDPR this sometime requires redaction of third party references or sensitive conditions. The CCG is working with a local practice manager to produce some guidance.

Patient Online services more generally are promoted by practices through their websites and internally in practice waiting rooms and at reception desks as these have been in place for several years. Some practices are known to engage more readily with these services as a method of managing administrative demand for appointment booking and repeat prescriptions which ordinarily would have resulted in walk-ins and telephone calls. For example, several local practices have adopted an appointment model which actively directs patients to book an initial telephone consultation on line.

City and Hackney currently has approximately 28% of registered patient enabled to use Patient Online services. Enablement is a pre-requisite to accessing these services via the NHS App.

# NHS App selected screenshots



# Patient Access

by Patient.co.uk

