



Report to Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Abigail Tebbs,
Deputy Director of Delivery Primary Care
Contracting Digital and Estates

Tel:

Report of: *NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board*

Report to: *Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee*

Date: *23 November 2022*

Subject: *Update on Primary Medical Services*

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of Primary Medical Services in Sheffield. The report highlights the current priorities, challenges, and opportunities for Primary Care.

This report is presented for information and update.

Recommendations:

The Sub-Committee is asked to consider the update report provided.

Background Papers:

Not applicable

Update on Primary Medical Services

Introduction

General practice has been, and continues to go, through a period of unprecedented pressure. Like the rest of our NHS services practices had to adapt rapidly to the changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to deal with the results of the pandemic now. In Sheffield, as nationally, practices have seen a rise in demand for primary care services while infection prevention and control requirements constrained capacity.

Practices in Sheffield remained open throughout the period and continue to work hard to meet their patient's needs and this paper presents an update to the Sub-Committee on primary medical services in Sheffield.

Background

There are 74 general practices in Sheffield, 73 of these practices are members of one of 15 Primary Care Networks (PCN). PCNs are groups geographically contiguous practices working together to serve registered populations of between 30,000 to 50,000. The purpose of PCNs is to enable more integrated working at a scale that supports the delivery of services using a wider workforce in primary care.

Legislative Changes

The Health and Care Act (2022) abolished Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and established Integrated Care Boards (ICB) from 1 July 2022. Under these arrangements delegated responsibility for primary medical services was delegated by NHS England to NHS South Yorkshire (NHSSY). Most functions and decisions continue to be exercised at place level in line with the intention of the new legislative framework to enable decisions to be taken as close as possible to their local populations.

The Health and Care Act (2022) also directed that Pharmacy, Optometry and Dentistry should be delegated to ICBs from 1st April 2023. Work is underway to determine how and what functions be delegated from NHS England to NHSSY.

Access

Since the end of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in England, general practice has seen a significant increase in demand. In *'Our Plan for Patients'* the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care identified access to general practice as a key priority.

Appointment data for general practice is published monthly by NHS Digital at sub-ICB level. Charts 1 and 2 below provide a summary of key data and trends. At September 2022, the latest reporting period, 291,328 appointments were booked with practices in Sheffield. The majority of these 201,510 (69.1%) were delivered face to face, a slightly higher proportion than the national mean.

The pandemic accelerated changes in how appointments could be offered and there continues to be a focus, nationally, on increasing awareness of alternative modalities for consultation and this includes not only telephone but online and video consultation where clinically appropriate and preferred by the patient.

Chart 2 demonstrates the upward trend in total appointments offered by practices and also illustrates that the majority of patients booking an appointment with their practice are seen on the same day.

Chart 1 General Practice Appointments in Sheffield in September 2022 by mode

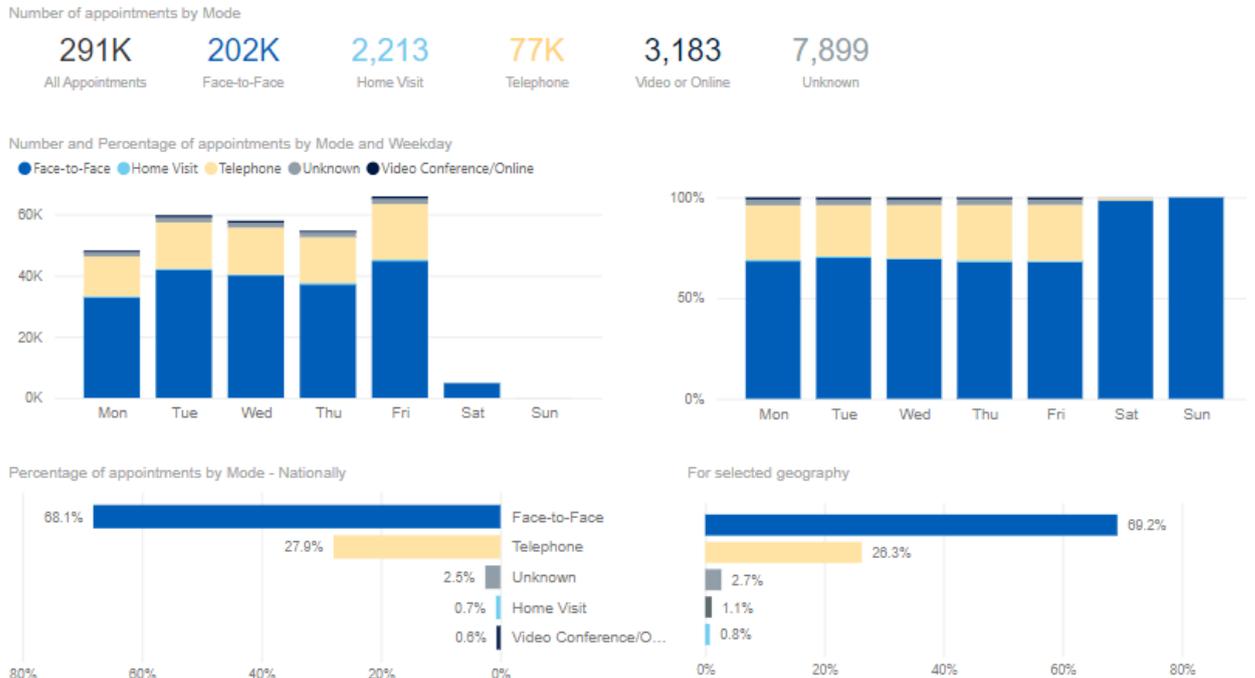
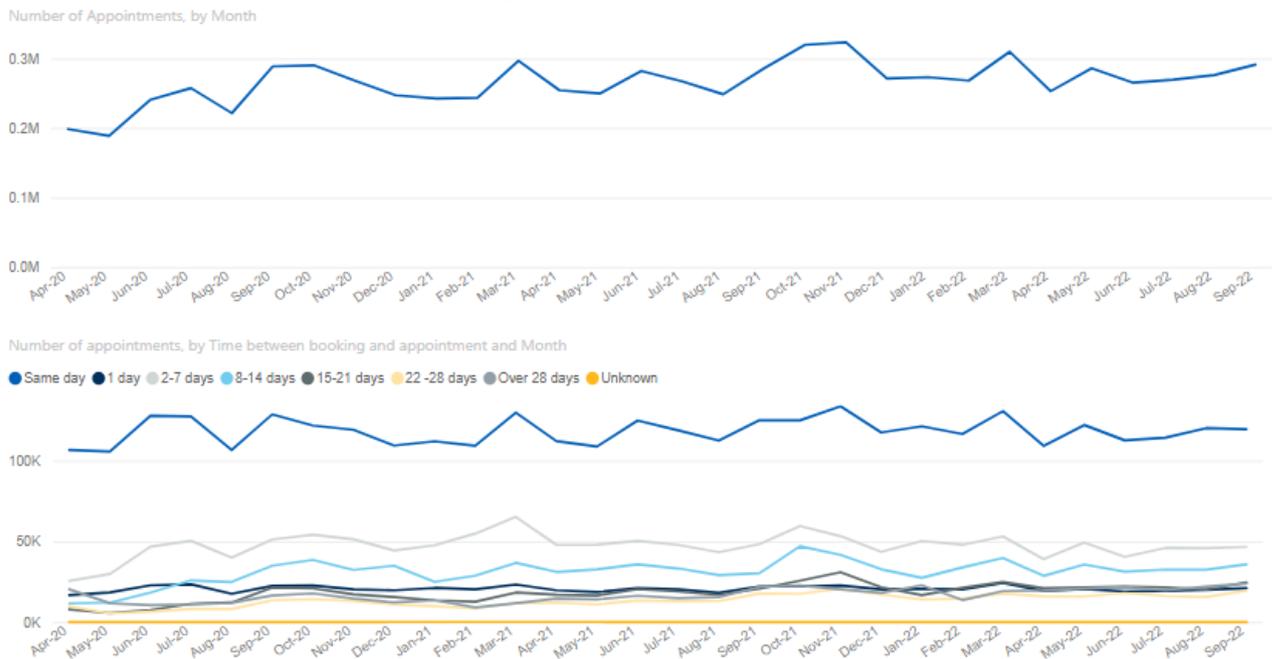


Chart 2 Total General Practice Appointments in Sheffield - timeline for all appointments and time from booking to appointment



The national appointment data collection, the source of these data, are experimental statistics and it is known that there are data quality issues with the collection however, in line with the commitment of the Secretary of State in '*Our Plan for Patients*' NHS Digital will publish appointment statistics at practice level for the first time at the end of November. NHS South Yorkshire has plans in place to work with practices to understand and improve data quality and identify opportunities to improve access.

Winter Resilience

Resilient general practice is an essential cornerstone of healthcare and, key to the urgent care response while staffing, demand, capacity and economic factors place additional pressure on practices. As demand for services continues to increase plans for our urgent care response in primary care continue to be implemented. NHS South Yorkshire is working with practices in Sheffield to provide additional support during the winter period.

Plans already implemented include re-commissioning an Same Day Advanced Nurse Practitioner Service to provide up to 200 hours of urgent, in-hours, capacity for primary care per week from two sites in the north of the city. RE-commissioning a paramedic home visiting service to free up GP time for other tasks. Funding additional late blood collections from practices to increase efficiency. Supporting practices to transition to new, cloud-based telephone systems to improve flexibility, access and interoperability. Supporting practices to create capacity by the off-site storage of paper records. Practices have also been offered grant funding to improve access over the winter period by increasing in-hours capacity, providing further support to care homes, or working with high intensity users of their services.

Further plans are in development including the implementation of operational pressures reporting that will help us offer timely support to practices in times of exceptional pressure and a primary care communications plan to be rolled out that uses proven communication techniques to support people to be prepared and to make the best choices when seeking primary care assistance.

We continue to offer bespoke support and assistance to practices who request this including help and facilitation to improve processes, address pressure points and undertake organisational development.

The Time for Care Accelerate Programme is a recent initiative being offered to practices nationally, aimed at supporting practices to improve all aspects of access, from how they manage/smooth demand and realise/optimize capacity, increase appointments, reduce waiting times, improving signposting. Several Sheffield practices have taken up to offer to participate and overall feedback has been positive. We continue to discuss opportunities to use the experience of the Team more widely to develop communities of good practice in Sheffield and to share learning.

Workforce

Primary Care general practice workforce recruitment and retention continue to be a significant challenge with national staff shortages in many clinical professions.

The implementation and rollout of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme for PCNs has led to increased workforce in new roles including pharmacists, Social Prescribing Link Workers, Physicians Associates, paramedics and occupational therapists working as part of a wider primary care team.

While a number of our PCNs have been able to make full use of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme to recruit to new roles some PCNs have struggled to make full use of this opportunity and NHS South Yorkshire is working with Primary Care Sheffield and our PCNs to explore opportunities to improve recruitment.

Sheffield continues to perform better than many areas in recruitment and retention of GPs and other staff, however, workload, social and economic factors together make primary care recruitment and retention across all staff groups challenging and developing plans to support primary care workforce is a priority.

Steps taken so far include, a GP mentoring scheme run by the Local Medical Committee, a mid-career GP fellowship scheme run by the South Yorkshire Primary Care Workforce Hub. Continued funding of a nurse vocational training scheme, the development of an administrative and clerical staff vocational training scheme and the development of support and training packages for administrative staff.

Primary Care Workforce Health and Wellbeing

The effects of COVID-19 and resulting pressures continue to be felt in general practice. Staff absences due to COVID-19 and sickness as well as stress affect the health and wellbeing of staff and the ability of practices to function.

As pressure on services has grown locally and nationally incidents of abuse and violence against staff by patient have increased. NHS Sheffield CCG conducted a survey last year that found that 95.5% of practice staff who responded had experienced verbal abuse from patients in the workplace in the preceding 9 months and 52% had experienced intimidation and 47% of respondents said they experienced verbal abuse on a weekly basis.

NHS Yorkshire developed a targeted campaign to support a zero tolerance message and is currently running a campaign linked to World Kindness Day with media releases and materials for practices to use. Training on dealing with difficult situations and complaints handling support has also been provided.

NHS South Yorkshire has developed a range of wellbeing offers for practice staff to complement the support available nationally. Nationally the number of referrals to the "Health Practitioner Programme" that offers support to GPs who are struggling to continue to practice has increased by a third over the last 16 months. We are consistently working with our practices and the Sheffield Local Medical Committee (LMC) to look at ways we can protect and support our staff.

Enhanced Access

In March 2022 NHS England published contractual changes to the arrangements providing access to primary medical services outside core hours (8:00am to 6:30pm) to take effect from 1 October 2022.

The previous arrangements for appointments outside of core hours were:

- CCG Commissioned Extended Access Service - 7 days a week between 6.30pm to 10pm Monday to Friday and 9 to 5 at the weekend
- PCN Extended Hours – offered before 8.00am and between 6.30pm to 8.00pm

The new national requirements formally merge these arrangements into the single Enhanced Access service to be delivered by PCN's in Network Standard Hours i.e., 6.30 to 8pm Mondays to Fridays and 9am to 5pm on Saturdays, from the 1st October 2022 offering a minimum of 60 minutes of appointments per 1,000 PCN adjusted populations per week with GP cover available.

In addition to hours of provision the significant changes brought by the new service are that appointments must be bookable in advance and same day., delivered in a mixture of in person face to face and remote access and greater focus on general practice services, including appointments for planned care like screening, vaccinations (including COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters) and immunisations, health checks and PCN services with any unused appointments are made available to NHS 111 on the day.

PCNs undertook engagement with their patients earlier this year to help them plan the new services and have reflected patient preferences in hours, services offered and locations. 12 of the 15 PCNs in Sheffield have chosen to subcontract a service from Primary Care Sheffield with three providing the service themselves. As services must be provided at locations convenient to patients the number of sites across Sheffield has increased but patients may now only be referred to their PCN site.

A service for patients of the one practice not within a PCN has been commissioned from Primary Care Sheffield and is provided at a nearby site.

These effect of these changes, in particular the impact on access to urgent primary care on Sundays and Bank Holidays that no longer form part of the PCN Network Standard Hours is under review and PCNs continue to obtain feedback from patients on the new services.

Conclusion

There continue to be significant challenges for primary care nationally and locally that have been exacerbated by the pandemic and subsequent economic pressures in the UK. However, we continue to work together with our practices, our patients and other partners to maximise opportunities and address variation and inequity.