

Locality Commissioning Meeting South West

Date of Meeting: 16.7.19		Paper No: 5			
Title of Paper: NHS App					
Is this paper for	Discussion		Decision		Information ✓
Purpose of Paper: Helpful information for practices on the NHS App, as requested by some Localities at their June meetings. Note the use of the term 'we' is used generically as the information was garnered from NHSe, NHS digital etc.					
Action Required: Practices to note and act as they feel is appropriate for their practice.					
Author: Dr Merlin Dunlop			Clinical Lead: Dr Jonathan Crawshaw		

NHS App – briefing for Oxford City Locality meeting July 2019

Features of the NHS App

The NHS App enables people to:

- check their symptoms using the [health A-Z on the NHS website](#)
- find out what to do when they need help urgently using [NHS 111 online](#)

If their GP practice is connected to the app, they can register and verify their identity so they can:

- book and manage appointments at their GP practice
- order their repeat prescriptions
- securely view their GP medical record
- [register as an organ donor](#)
- [choose whether the NHS uses their data for research and planning](#)

[Find out more about the future developments planned for the NHS App.](#)

When the NHS App will be available

The NHS App is now available to the public on [Google Play](#) and [Apple app](#) stores. GP practices are being connected to the app gradually. People will only be able to use all features when their GP practice is connected to the app. Patients can check if their GP practice is connected when they open the app for the first time. If the practice is not connected, patients can leave an email address and will be notified when it is.

Connecting GP practices to the NHS App

NHS England and NHS Digital are working closely with CCGs to schedule in connection dates for GP practices. All practices using TPP or EMIS systems will be connected by 1 July 2019. This means that 96% of patients in England will be able to use all the features of the NHS App by this date.

GP practices using Vision or Microtest systems will be connected later. This is because user testing has shown that if we connect them now, patients would not have the same high quality experience as users in other practices. We are working with these suppliers to help them make the changes that are needed.

What should practices do to prepare for the app?

To help ensure that patients have a positive experience of the NHS App we are asking practices to prepare before they promote the app to patients. All practices should do this, whatever clinical system they use, to make sure they are ready for connection. Practices should brief staff so they are able to support patients, and check their systems to make sure that appointments are available to book and are named so patients understand what they are. Further information is available in our [guidance for GP practices](#) and [guidance for CCGs](#).

Future developments

More features will be added to the NHS App over time, including the below:

Making NHS App content local

We're developing ways to vary the digital services and tools that users can get to through the NHS App, so that users can see services available in their local area or that have been locally commissioned. (Users won't see changes initially, but this is important for future plans.)

Planned release: July 2019

Choosing a pharmacy (nomination)

Patients will soon be able to set or change their choice of pharmacy, where their repeat prescriptions are sent, from within the NHS App.

Planned release: June 2019

Web browser access

We're developing a web interface for the NHS App, so users will be able to access its services through a web browser. This will improve access for users who prefer a larger screen, or who do not have smartphone access.

Planned release: July 2019

Electronic Referral Services (ERS) integration

We're working to integrate the NHS booking system for hospital appointments, [ERS](#), into the NHS App. This will enable patients to book their appointments quickly and conveniently, when their GP refers them to a specialist.

Planned release: September 2019

Health checks and assessments access

We're investigating how we can best give users access to the NHS Health Assessment tool, currently being designed by [Public Health England](#) for patients to check aspects of their own health, through the NHS App.

Planned release: November 2019

Push notification service

We're investigating which reminders and notifications would improve user experience, and how best to build them into the NHS App. This will allow users to set their contact preferences and get notifications such as appointment reminders.

Planned release: November 2019

Delegated proxy access – giving other people secure access to an NHS App account

We're working on a set of features that will enable NHS App accounts to be accessed securely by named users in addition to the patient, where appropriate consent is in place.

Examples could include:

- parents accessing a child's account
- carers booking an appointment for a patient
- patients setting delegate access for someone to act on their behalf

Planned release: January 2020

Clinical trials and research registration

We're working with the [National Institute for Health Research](#) to make their new website available from within the NHS App. The 'NHS: Be part of research' website will enable users to register their interest in clinical trials.

Planned release: December 2019

Online consultations integration

We're designing a set of standards so that suppliers who provide systems for video consultations can integrate their systems with the NHS App. We've started this work, which will involve consultation with providers, and plan to publish standards by September. This will then enable suppliers to design their integrated solutions, making video consultations available through the App.

Planned release: The first suppliers could start to become available through the NHS App from October 2019.

Questions from the locality (NB some answers from NHS App website and some from Merlin Dunlop):

What did it mean for practices?

Benefits to practices

Practices like the NHS App because:

- staff spend less time dealing with requests to book appointments and order repeat prescriptions
- errors are less likely to occur when appointments and prescriptions are managed through the app
- patients can cancel appointments more easily, so DNAs (did not attend – where a patient does not turn up to a booked appointment) are reduced
- in most cases patients can verify their identity themselves, through NHS login, saving practice staff time
- safeguards and controls are in place to make sure people cannot abuse the system, triage can still occur, and vulnerable patients are protected

Why facial recognition as this was poorly proven technology?

Facial recognition is only one element of the initial setup for iPhone users; the setup uses multi-factor authentication, much like accessing your bank account. One benefit is that most patients will be able to get access without having to visit their surgery. Most of us trust access to our iPhone with fingerprint or facial recognition; why not our records, especially when strengthened with multi-factor authentication?

For those interested, there is a geeky article about the security set-up here:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/blog/transformation-blog/2019/passwordless-login-the-search-for-speed-with-security>

Were patients part of the project set up etc?

The NHS App was successfully tested by more than 3,000 patients from 34 GP practices between September and December 2018.

During the pilot, we collected feedback from GP practice staff and patients and we have used this to improve the app and the go-live process for practices.

Benefits to patients

Patients like the NHS App because:

- they get 24-hour access from anywhere
- they don't waste time trying to get through on the phone
- they have more control over when they book appointments
- they can cancel more easily if they need to
- they can order their repeat prescriptions easily
- NHS login means in most cases they don't have to come into the practice to get access
- when they do still call rather than using the app, phone lines and reception staff are more likely to be free
- they have access to information about their medications, conditions and treatments wherever they are

HSJ article out on it seems to have 'rowed back' on using it – is this true?

On 31/5/19 Matthew Gould, head of NHSX, indicated in an HSJ article that there would not be a lot more features being added to the NHS app.

In a blog, published on Friday afternoon, Mr Gould said: "I don't want us to make the NHS App all-singing and all-dancing. In fact, I'm not sure I want to add many more features than it already has."

He praised the "good work" on the NHS App to date but said it needed to remain "thin" rather than being the one place for NHS digital patient services.

"This means a clear approach – creating the platform for digital innovation and creating the standards that will allow that innovation to plug in safely. It means not competing against the market and resisting the urge to build or commission everything ourselves."

Instead, some of the features of the app, such as NHS log-in, would be available for other app developers to plug into and use in their products, he said.

Confusion over other apps which are also used – so why this one? Ok to still use the others?

Other apps, such as EMIS Access, will still work and can still be used, but only time will tell if the suppliers of such apps will want to continue to develop them, if they see the NHS app as 'anti-competitive'. Matthew Gould's words in the HSJ may go some way to reassuring them that NHSX wants to work with them and not against them, though.

Merlin Dunlop, July 2019

(Much of the content downloaded from the NHS App website, accessed 2/7/19)