

# Building better participation

A guide to help Patient Participation Groups and their GP practice work well



## Making online GP services work well for patients



Registered Charity 292157 [www.napp.org.uk](http://www.napp.org.uk)  
The national voice for patient participation in primary care  
This guide is supported by NHS England

# Making online GP services work well for patients

Good GP practices tend to have good patient participation groups (PPGs). Together, they have a shared understanding of the role of the PPG, how it works, and how patient participation supports practice development and can improve patient care.



*Building better participation* is a resource developed by the National Association for Patient Participation (N.A.P.P.), with support from NHS England. It aims to help PPGs and their GP practice reflect on what they do. There is a link to *Building better participation* in the resources section of this guide on page 6.

*Building better participation* gives guidance in four areas:

- area 1: Getting PPGs in place
- area 2: Helping PPGs work well
- area 3: Knowing and working with patients
- area 4: Influencing beyond the GP practice

*Making online GP services work well for patients* is a short additional guide designed to help PPGs and their practice apply some of the resources found in *Building better participation*, focusing on a specific subject: online GP services.

*Making online GP services work well for patients* sets out:

- information about online GP services
- key questions a PPG can discuss with its GP practice
- actions a PPG might take
- supporting resources available to help

The GP contract in England now requires practices to put in place and expand online GP services.

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Well-established online GP services can be very beneficial to patients. They:

- are quick to access, at a time convenient to the patient
- can prevent a visit or phone call to the practice, saving the patient time and releasing practice time for other patients
- can provide an aide memoire of a patient's medical history
- can help patients work in partnership with healthcare professionals, increasing their control in their healthcare

*Making online GP services work well for patients* will help PPGs and practices introduce and embed online services in ways that are right for patients. It will help PPGs ensure that patient views and concerns are listened to, considered and dealt with, meaning more patients can make safe, convenient use of digital technology in their interactions with their practice.



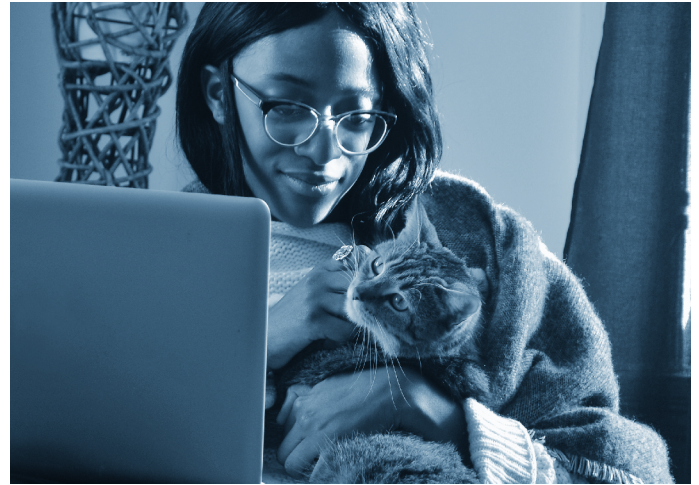
## What are online GP services?

Patients want to take more control of their own health and wellbeing. Digital technology has the power to change the relationship between patients and their GP practice, just as it has changed our relationships in other walks of life, such as managing our finances or shopping. It can make services more convenient, personal and efficient.

The NHS is keen to use technology as part of making its services convenient and responsive to patients, their families and carers. GP practices are leading the way in this.

Patient Online is an NHS England programme to help practices offer and promote online GP services to patients. The online services patients could use include:

- booking appointments
- ordering repeat prescriptions
- being able to see some information held in their patient record, such as information on medication, allergies, illnesses, immunisations and test results



Patients and practices may know these services by another name, as they access them through the IT system used by their practice. Ideally practices will use the simple name *online GP services* to avoid confusion.

The majority of practices already offer some online services.

Online services are offered *in addition* to more traditional face-to-face and telephone ways in which patients interact with their GP practice.

Patient Online is supported by a range of resources and practical guidance. A list of some of these is given in the resources section of this guide on page 6.

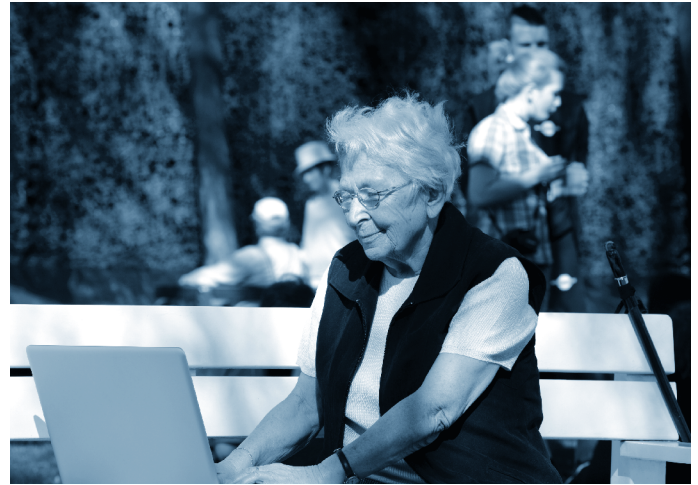


## Some key questions a PPG can discuss with its GP practice

While some GP practices have well established online services, many others are in the process of introducing them. The GP contract in England commits practices to increase the number of patients making use of their online services, and to increase the range of online services they offer.

There are some key questions a PPG can usefully ask of its practice, depending on how established its online services are:

1. Does our practice offer any online services? If not, when will online services be introduced?
2. How do patients find out about online services, register for them, and get told about safeguards such as consent and confidentiality?
3. Has the PPG been involved in, or commented on, the design of the practice's online services policy?
4. What promotional materials (e.g. leaflets, posters, appointment cards and other signage) about online services are used by the practice?
5. What safeguards are in place to ensure that those who do not want to, or cannot, use online services are not disadvantaged in getting services from the practice?
6. What information on the benefits of online GP services should the PPG be aware of?



7. Are there people in the local community who will particularly benefit from online GP services?
8. How can our PPG work as a critical friend to the practice to make the best use of online GP services?

*Building better participation* contains guidance that will help PPGs have these kinds of conversations and discussions. You may find the following parts particularly helpful:

- *Getting PPGs in place* Goals 1, 2 and 3
- *Helping PPGs work well* Goals 1 and 5
- *Knowing and working with patients* Goal 2





## Actions a PPG might take

Successful PPGs are able to work effectively with their GP practice – as a critical friend, and as a voice of, and for, patients. They help their practice develop the ways in which it provides services. They carry out some activities to help local people understand both the PPG and the practice.

Some PPGs will have already worked with their practice on the introduction of online services, and some have worked with NHS England, helping it develop resources for use by practices. Other PPGs may not, so far, have been involved with online services at all.

It will be for each PPG itself to decide if and how it wants to work with its practice on online services.

The following list of possible actions has proved helpful for some PPGs and practices and is recommended for consideration by each PPG:

- Hold a special PPG meeting for members to learn about online GP services, the practice's approach to online services, and the possible contribution the PPG might make
- Test online services as PPG members and give feedback to the practice
- Develop an online GP services "patient champion" who is a named individual who can offer practical help to other patients
- Publicise and promote online services through other PPG activity such as public events, stalls, and work with local community groups



- Hold demonstration sessions to let other patients see how online services might help them, and to share accurate information about online services, including on confidentiality safeguards
- Promote the benefits to patients (e.g. convenience, saving time, and having more control of healthcare by working in partnership with the GP and others)
- Feed back to the practice patient experience of online services, when patients are reporting good experiences, and when they have concerns and less positive experiences
- Help the practice develop appropriate publicity about online services that will meet the needs of the local population
- Include questions about online services in a PPG patient survey
- Guide patients to local computer courses that will help them develop confidence in using online GP services



## Supporting resources available to help

The following resources are available for all PPGs to make use of.

### GUIDANCE

- Building better participation guide <http://www.napp.org.uk/bbp.html>
- NHS England's Patient Online website (for practices and healthcare professionals) <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/pe/patient-online/>
- NHS Choices website on accessing GP services online (for the public) [www.nhs.uk/patientonline](http://www.nhs.uk/patientonline)
- Patient Online Support and Resources Guide <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/po-support-resources-guide.pdf>  
(This guide includes many links to additional resources, including information on the benefits of online services)
- Promotional materials <https://www.england.nhs.uk/materialsforpatient/>, on this page you will find

#### Patient leaflets

- Getting started with GP online services
- What you need to know about your GP online records
- Protecting your GP online records

#### Posters

- Renew prescriptions online
- Book appointments online
- View GP records online

#### Content for digital signage boards and check-in screens

#### Appointment cards

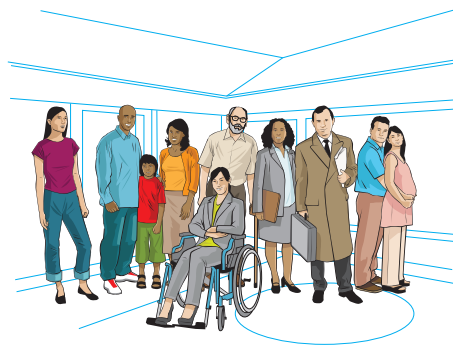
#### Patients' Frequently Asked Questions about online GP services

- Case studies on the introduction of online GP services in some practices <https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-online/case-studies>
- Patient experiences of online services and reports on N.A.P.P. Patient Online engagement workshops <http://www.napp.org.uk/patientonline.html>
- Research on improving digital health skills in communities <http://www.tinderfoundation.org/our-thinking/research-publications/improving-digital-health-skills-communities>
- Tinder Foundation NHS Widening Digital Participation programme <http://nhs.tinderfoundation.org/#home>



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**National Association for Patient Participation**

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