



Above: Royston Group Practice

Innovative e-consultation project showing early promise

Two Practices in Barnsley have been working together to develop and implement an e-consultation scheme. Royston Group Practice and The Kakoty Practice have developed a method for diabetes patients to converse with a health professional via email, freeing up capacity and empowering patients to manage their health more effectively.

The system works very efficiently; all e-consultation requests are sent to a 'task box', which is picked up by a health professional at the practice. The GP or Nurse can then respond with general advice or signposting to other services. The patient's e-consultation form has a text box with a set number of characters keep requests concise; they can then be notified by a text message when they receive a response from the health professional.

Angela Adams, Practice manager at Royston Group Practice said:

"The service is showing real promise in these early stages. The solution we have found offers great potential to be a real hit with patients and helping to reduce the number of non-urgent appointments, providing reassurance and freeing up clinic time for those who need it most.

We've use the established SystemOne 'task box' so that request from patients cannot be missed or overlooked and these are actioned to the patient record for full audit trail. We respond to patients as quickly as we can. We have begun with diabetes patients to test the system, who send queries and from which we form the most appropriate ways to advise. We use the query request template to signpost them towards self-supporting tools, Sound Doctor.

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Watch this space! The project has started with a focus on diabetes patients, with a view to expanding to all types of long term conditions if the project continues to improve the timeliness of available appointments for those who need it most. ■