

Recovering and Sustaining General Practice

Briefing for Nottingham Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

September 2023

1 Introduction

This briefing provides an update on the plans to recover and sustain General Practice in Nottingham City. Details of the national and local priorities for delivery, which includes a focus on ensuring patients have an assessment of need or are sign-posted to an appropriate service at first contact, are described, along with the actions being taken to retain and recruit to a sustainable General Practice workforce.

2 Background

NHS England (NHSE) published the “Delivery plan for recovering access to primary care”¹ on 9th May 2023, recognising the capacity challenges being experienced by Primary Care, the impact this has on patient experience and recommending measures to address the challenges.

The Delivery Plan summarises recovery of primary care into four areas:

- a. **Empowering patients** to manage their own health including using the NHS App, self-referral pathways and through more services offered from community pharmacy. This will relieve pressure on General Practice.
- b. **Implementing “Modern General Practice Access”** to tackle the 8am rush, provide rapid assessment and response, and avoid asking patients to ring back another day to book an appointment.
- c. **Build capacity** to deliver more appointments from more staff and add flexibility to the types of staff recruited and how they are deployed.
- d. **Cut bureaucracy** and reduce the workload across the interface between primary and secondary care, and the burden of medical evidence requests so practices have more time to meet the clinical needs of their patients.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) has developed a Primary Care Strategy² which has an initial focus on General Practice and will be developed over the next 12-18 months to include community pharmacy, dentistry and optometry.

¹ [Delivery plan for recovering access to primary care \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/primary-care-strategy/)

² [primary-care-strategy.pdf \(healthandcarenotts.co.uk\)](https://www.healthandcarenotts.co.uk/primary-care-strategy.pdf)

The Primary Care Strategy incorporates all the requirements of the Delivery Plan as well as projects that will support longer term sustainability of Primary Care including recruitment and retention of staff and ensuring the estate is available in communities to provide local services.

3 Actions being progressed by General Practice and ICBs to support the Delivery Plan

Primary Care Networks (PCNs) have developed local improvement plans to improve capacity and access. This is supported by local and national support offers for developing integrated primary care, with the ICB providing support as required. PCNs and individual practices are now working to implementing these plans during 2023/24.

Some of the key actions to improve access are described below.

a) Empowering patients

- Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is an early adopter of the NHS App with a high level of uptake by our population. It is recognised that the App will not meet the needs of all our citizens due to access to smartphones and for people who do not speak English.
- Seven self-referral pathways will be in place by December 2023 to enable quick access to the right professional. The pathways are community musculoskeletal (MSK), audiology, weight management, community podiatry, wheelchair services, community equipment and falls services.
- Community Pharmacy services are being developed to provide easy access for citizens to a range of services including contraceptive services, common conditions, and blood pressure testing and monitoring.

b) Implementing “Modern General Practice Access”

- A high number practices have already adopted Cloud Based Telephony systems which can provide live data on the number of calls waiting and offer a call back feature which has been shown to reduce patient complaints relating to waiting times. All practices will move from analogue telephony by the end of 2023/24 with full call functionality rolled out during 2024/25.

c) Building Capacity

- The PCN Additional Roles and Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) has achieved an increase of 178 staff (155 WTE) in the City since the contract commenced. The 17 different roles employed through the PCNs support direct patient care and delivery of extended services as part of the contract e.g. Care Navigators, Primary Care Paramedics, First Contact Physiotherapists, Social Prescribers.
- Integrated Neighbourhood working approaches are being further developed across all areas of the City, building on learning from the Community

Transformation Programme in Bulwell and Top Valley PCN. This has demonstrated the benefit of community engagement in identifying areas that are of importance to the local community.

- Primary Care communications campaigns will be undertaken to ensure patients are aware of the role and value of other members of the Primary Care team who can support their needs.

d) Cut bureaucracy

- A considerable amount of work has been undertaken to improve the primary / secondary care interface with GPs working with clinicians at Nottingham University Hospitals. This includes ensuring that work is undertaken in the correct place for a pathway to ensure no unnecessary transfer of work as well as GPs working alongside Acute Consultants to reduce inappropriate attendances at A&E.

In addition, Nottingham City Place-Based Partnership (PBP) has supported the development of the 'Thriving City General Practice' (TCGP) Programme led by Dr Hugh Porter and Michelle Tilling (PBP Clinical Director and Locality Director respectively). TCGP has successfully brought City practices together to agree a vision and a programme of transformation to support general practice resilience and sustainability in line with the ICB Primary Care Strategy.

4 Actions to support the recruitment, retention and wellbeing of staff

The long term sustainability of General Practice requires a sustainable primary care workforce that enables a focus on prevention and community based care. This will require a complex skill mix with new roles and different ways of working. There are a number of programmes available to support staff:

- Flexible and diverse roles are being created to support individual development, continuous service improvement and strong clinical leadership e.g. workforce fellowships are available to all newly-qualified GPs and nurses working in General Practice with a focus on working within and across a PCN; mid-career and senior career fellowships are offered to more experienced GPs providing opportunities to undertake projects and learn quality improvement skills.
- The ICB was a national pilot site for the NHS staff survey for Primary Care staff. The survey had a 30% response rate from all Primary Care staff groups and highlighted issues around staff feeling safe and healthy and morale. Further work is now being undertaken to develop actions plans to support staff.

5 Developing a Recovery Plan

NHS England requires all ICBs to develop a System Level Access recovery plan which sets out how they will achieve the “Delivery Plan for recovering access to primary care”. This will be presented to the public board meeting of the ICB in November 2023 with an update on progress in March 2024.

This plan will include:

- Actions that PCNs and practices will deliver
- How this aligns to the Fuller Stocktake recommendations
- A focus on immediate needs for digital telephony systems
- Prioritised support for those areas with lowest patient satisfaction scores

This will provide transparency and an on-going focus on Primary Care delivery within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

6 Recommendation

The Nottingham Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- 1 Consider the actions being taken to support the recovery and sustainability of General Practice.
- 2 Note the development of a System Level Access recovery plan for presentation to the public Board meeting of the ICB in November 2023.