

Ask My GP At Millview Medical Centre

The story so far.....

Ask My GP was introduced in practice during the COVID pandemic. An online consultation tool was always going to be introduced, however, COVID did speed up this process for all practices in the area.

All of the practices in Sleaford and Grantham work very closely together as we are all part of the same locality, and so it was decided that we would all use the same system to support continuity and offer the opportunity to support each and the shared staff and services we have.

Ask My GP (AMGP) has been working well, however, in a limited way for some years now and so the decision was made that on April 8th we would extend patients access to this service on a trial basis. This was in the hope to make access easier for patients whilst also freeing up our phones lines so those that need to get through can.

So, on April 8th Ask My GP opened from 06:00 until 14:00.

With a lot of positive feedback, it became apparent that extended opening helped a lot of our patients and also did positively impact our reception team as slowly the telephone calls did reduce somewhat during peak times such as 08:00.

After a couple of weeks, the hours were slightly changed from 14:00 to 12:00. This was due to the high volume of requests we were receiving and there was an unrealistic expectation on the capacity of support we could safely achieve. We were also finding that later on in the day the requests received were not urgent for that day and were more related to administrative items such as sick notes, requesting information from our secretaries, prescription queries. None of which require the GP to assess.

Any urgent queries from patients remain available after AMGP closes and these are dealt with by the same clinical triager, however, if they do not deem it as urgent patients are asked to place an AMGP request the following day. As always patients with no internet access are supported with this and our Care Navigators will do this for them, however, the only request process we have is AMGP and all requests regardless of how they are made will go through that triage process.

What we are finding now.....

Ask My GP is still a very good online consultation and assessment tool. It works well in practice and patients like having extended time to place requests, especially early morning. Many prefer this to using the telephone.

SELF-CARE

There is, however, a growing trend of requests coming through which are not relevant for GP appointments. There are many scenarios which can be managed by self-care. With over 12,000 patients it is becoming increasingly difficult to accommodate some requests which do not need to have an appointment in practice.

This is the main reason that the Community Pharmacy Lincolnshire services were awarded a contract to support patients who need advice but not necessarily need to see a GP. Thus, alleviating space for those with Long Term Conditions (LTC's), complex health needs or acute concerns.

Pharmacies have for a long time been able to deal with many requests as shown below:

CONDITIONS	What conditions are SUITABLE for referral to pharmacists?			Do NOT refer in these circumstances	
BITES / STINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bee sting Wasp sting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stings with minor redness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stings with minor swelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drowsy / fever Fast heart rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe swellings or cramps
COLDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold sores Coughs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flu-like symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sore throat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lasted +3 weeks Shortness of breath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chest pain Unable to swallow
CONGESTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blocked or runny nose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant need to clear their throat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excess mucus Hay fever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lasted +3 weeks Shortness of breath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 side obstruction Facial swelling
EAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earache 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ear wax Blocked ear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hearing problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Something may be in the ear canal Discharge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe pain. Deafness Vertigo
EYE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conjunctivitis Dry/sore tired eyes Eye, red or Irritable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eye, sticky Eyelid problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watery / runny eyes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe pain Pain 1 side only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light sensitivity Reduced vision
GASTRIC / BOWEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constipation Diarrhoea Infant colic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heartburn Indigestion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haemorrhoids Rectal pain, Vomiting or nausea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe / on-going Lasted +6 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patient +55 years Blood / Weight loss
GENERAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hay fever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sleep difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tiredness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe / on-going 	
GYNAE / THRUSH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cystitis Vaginal discharge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vaginal itch or soreness 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diabetic / Pregnant Under 16 / over 60 Unexplained bleeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pharmacy treatment not worked Had thrush 2x in last 6 months
PAIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acute pain Ankle or foot pain Headache Hip pain or swelling Knee or leg pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower back pain Lower limb pain Migraine Shoulder pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sprains and strains Thigh or buttock pain Wrist, hand or finger pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition described as severe or urgent Conditions have been on-going for +3 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chest pain / pain radiating into the shoulder Pharmacy treatment not worked Sudden onset
SKIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acne, spots and pimples Athlete's foot Blisters on foot Dermatitis / dry skin Hair loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hay fever Nappy rash Oral thrush Rash - allergy Ringworm/threadworm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scabies Skin dressings Skin rash Warts/verrucae Wound problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition described as severe or urgent Conditions have been on-going for +3 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pharmacy treatment not worked Skin lesions / blisters with discharge Diabetes related?
MOUTH/ THROAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold sore blisters Flu-like symptoms Hoarseness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mouth ulcers Sore mouth Sore throat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral thrush Teething Toothache 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lasted +10 days Swollen painful gums Sores inside mouth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to swallow Patient has poor immune system Voice change
SWELLING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ankle or foot swelling Lower limb swelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thigh or buttock swelling Toe pain or swelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrist, hand or finger swelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition described as severe or urgent Condition ongoing for +3 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discolouration to skin Pharmacy treatment not worked Recent travel abroad

In addition, a new service was contracted to the local pharmacies called 'Pharmacy First' which itemised 7 local pathways where support can also be offered to patients, as below:

Urinary tract infection	Shingles*	Impetigo	Infected insect bites	Acute sore throat	Acute sinusitis	Acute otitis media
A UTI is an infection in any part of the urinary system.	Shingles is an infection that causes a painful rash	Impetigo is a common infection of the skin. It is contagious, which means it can be passed on by touching.	Insect bites and stings can become infected or cause a reaction.	Sore throat is a symptom resulting from inflammation of the upper respiratory tract	Sinusitis is swelling of the sinuses, usually caused by an infection. The sinuses are small, empty spaces behind your cheekbones and forehead that connect to the inside of the nose.	An infection of the middle ear.
Inclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female Aged between 16 - 64 Suspected lower UTI 	Inclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18 years and over Suspected case of shingles. Rash appeared within the last 72 hours - 7 days 	Inclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 year and over Signs and symptoms of impetigo Localised (4 or fewer lesions/clusters present) 	Inclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 year and over Infection that is present or worsening at least 48 hours after the initial bite(s) or sting(s) 	Inclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 years and over Suspected sore throat 	Inclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 years and over Suspected signs and symptoms of sinusitis Symptom duration of 10 days or more 	Inclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aged between 1 – 17 Suspected signs and symptoms of acute otitis media
Exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male <16 or >64 Pregnant Breastfeeding Recurrent UTI (2 in last 6 months or 3 in last 12 months) Catheter 	Exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> < under age of 18 Pregnant or suspected pregnancy Breastfeeding with shingle sores on the breasts Shingles rash onset over 7 days ago 	Exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> < under 1 year of age Pregnancy or suspected pregnancy in individuals under 16 years of age Breastfeeding with impetigo lesion(s) present on the breast Recurrent impetigo (2 or more episodes in the same year) Widespread lesions/ clusters present Systemically unwell 	Exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> < under 1 year of age Pregnancy or suspected pregnancy in individuals under 16 years of age Systemically unwell Bite or sting occurred while travelling outside the UK 	Exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals under 5 years of age Pregnancy or suspected pregnancy in individuals under 16 years of age age Recurrent sore throat/tonsillitis (7 or more significant episodes in the preceding 12 months or 5+ in each of the preceding 2 years, or 3+ in the preceding three years) Previous tonsillectomy 	Exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals under 12 years of age Pregnancy or suspected pregnancy in individuals under 16 years of age Symptom duration of less than 10 days Recurrent sinusitis ((4 or more annual episodes of sinusitis) 	Exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals under 1 year of age or over 18 years of age Pregnancy or suspected pregnancy in individuals under 16 Recurrent infection (3+ episodes in preceding 6 months, or 4+ episodes in the preceding 12 months with at least one episode in the past 6 months.)

MULTIPLE REQUESTS

We are finding it confusing to complete multiple requests from patients in some scenarios.

For example:

- a) More than one request on the same day for the same thing.
If you have placed a request, it will be managed. Making multiple requests throughout the morning only clogs up the system and slows down management of that request.
Remember if you have placed a request and are waiting for a response and you think you have forgotten some information you can open that request already placed and send a message to us and it will be included in that one request, so all information is in the same place.
- b) Multiple requests on consecutive days.
If you have placed a request and an appointment has been booked in the future that request will be closed so that the clinician you go to see will have all of the information from your AMGP request in your medical records and can see that information. Once your appointment is booked and another AMGP is made for the same thing the next day this again clogs up the system when an appointment has already been made.

USING THE INCORRECT FORM

Some patients are using the incorrect forms, a lot of the time in the hope that it will be dealt with faster. In reality this slows the management of that request as it is moved to the appropriate folder for management which could add time onto how it is managed.

For example:

- a) Placing sick note requests on the urgent form
- b) Placing medication requests on the urgent form
- c) Placing appointment requests on the admin form

Prescriptions are on a 3 day turn around. All repeat prescriptions should be requests 1 week before they are due.

Sick notes are on a 3 day turn around. We cannot future date these and legally your employer can accept a sick note with a historical start date. This is NOT a same day service.

EXPECTATIONS FROM STIPULATED REQUESTS

The forms on AMGP were not made by us, they are static forms we chose from a list, the content of them we cannot change.

If a patient requests a certain clinician at a certain time, we will do this where we possibly can, however, this is not always possible so if your preferences are not met there will be a reason for this. Our doctors do not work 5 days a week, they are on a rota system, the days they work at each practice can vary from week to week.

Clinicians also have annual leave and sometimes are sick themselves and so simply are not available.

Most importantly what we need patients to remember is that if a doctor has triaged your request and it has stated that you want to see a specific doctor only and they are not in practice you will be placed with an alternate clinician to ensure you are seen. The doctor triaging may feel it is too important to wait.

You may want a telephone call or text message to manage your request, this might not be possible, some things require a face-to-face assessment. This happens a lot with antibiotics. We will not give these without an appointment in most cases.

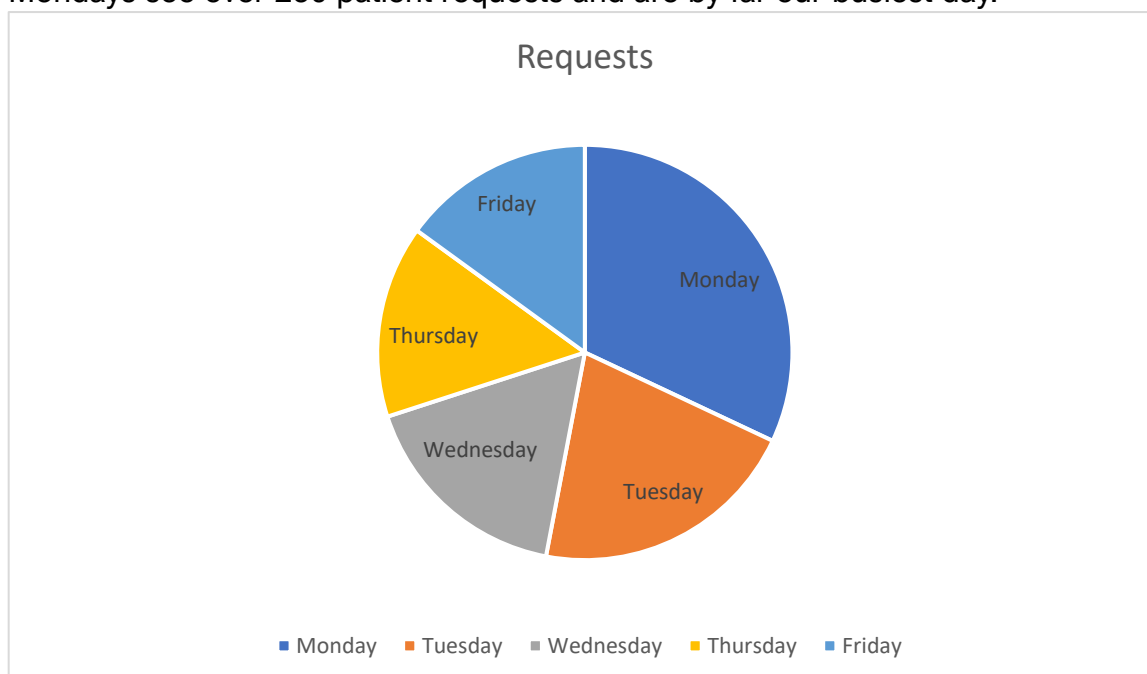
What you have said.....

Feedback on the service has been very positive and below are some of the popular items we are hearing:

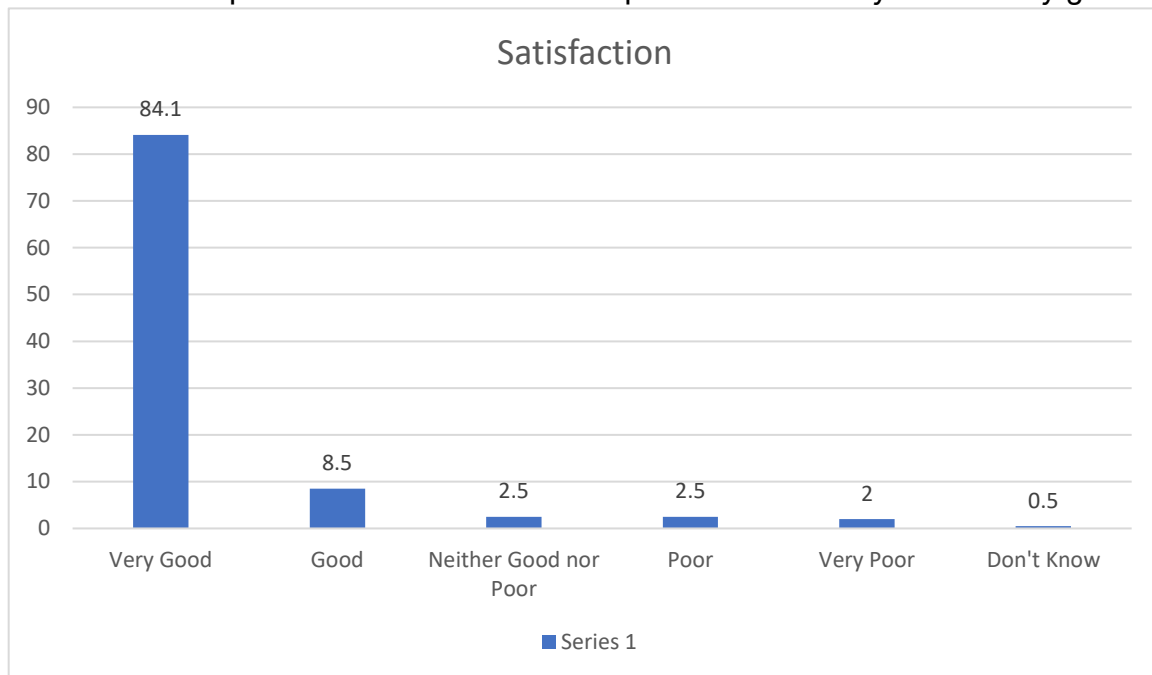
- Early morning opening of AMGP is beneficial, especially for those who are either going to work early or coming home after a night shift so they can place the request at a time better suited to them.
- Separation of requests help many patients as sometimes a phone call is saved by placing an admin query, or it is now possible to book advance nurse appointments online.
- Identifying a preferred clinician is popular supporting continued care and patient preference especially for intimate reasons.
Please note – we do this as much as possible – but that is not 100% of the time.
- Being able to ask an Admin query. We have been told that it is nice to be able to ask our secretaries a question or ask eligibility queries for things such as shingles vaccines, all of which many people find easier online than via the telephone.
- A lot of people are finding the system as a whole so much faster than calling in.
- Some patients still do not want to use Ask My GP or state that they do not have the facilities to access this, that is ok, our reception team are here to help, however, please note that if you call into the surgery they cannot book you into a GP appointment, all they will do is type out the AMGP request for you and it will go in the queue with all of the other requests and will be managed by the clinician triaging that day.

What the Data shows.....

- ❖ Highest use of AMGP is 06:00 – 09:00
- ❖ Mondays see over 250 patient requests and are by far our busiest day.



- ❖ Feedback from patients shows over 80% of patients feel the system is very good



- ❖ Over 20% of patients do not use AMGP and call to ask us to place requests for them.

Moving Forward.....

We will continue to monitor AMGP ensuring that it continues to be fit for purpose and that it is managing both patient expectations and also supporting capacity management.

We will be opening from 05:00am in the morning on days the practice is open (we are not open weekends or on Bank Holidays) and the service will close at 11:00.

This is because we found that there was a risk of unmet need. This is because a request that comes later in the day has more possibility to rollover until the next day. Sometimes general symptoms may be described which a clinician may feel shows some 'red flags' and they feel the patient needs to be seen more urgently.

Some patients still found that 06:00 did not quite meet their needs in terms of work, family routine, other commitments. This way there is still 6 hours that AMGP is open for requests.

We will be asking our care navigators to support patients to use the service correctly to ensure that there are as few delays as possible. This will include:

- ❖ Using the correct forms
- ❖ Ensuring there are not multiple repeated queries on the system for the same person at the same time.
- ❖ Requests on the wrong forms will be closed asking the patient to resubmit their request on the correct forms.
- ❖ Urgent symptoms are highlighted to the clinician who is triaging that day to ensure they are assessed swiftly.

We will continue to monitor this process as we need to ensure that we are providing a service to meet the needs of our patients in a way that is clinically sound and accessible.