Eastham Group Practice

Patient Access Report

Reporting Period

June 2023-December 2023

Risk Mitigation in Appointment Access

During the reporting period, Eastham Group Practice identified key clinical activity areas requiring attention to maintain safe patient care. These include backlogs in medication monitoring, long-term condition reviews, actioning patient safety alerts, and ensuring that DMARD monitoring, DNACPRs, and EHCP documentation are up to date. These areas represent important safety priorities and will need to be addressed before the practice is in a position to transition to the Modern General Practice Access Model (MGPAM).

In terms of appointment availability, data indicates that more than 60% of GP and Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP) appointments were booked on the same day. This high volume of same-day appointments reduces opportunities for planned or proactive care and limits the practice's ability to deliver structured follow-up for patients with complex or long-term needs.

Efficiency of Appointment Allocation

Eastham Group Practice implemented the Patchs online consultation system in February 2023. Since then, engagement with the platform has steadily increased. Between June and December 2023, the practice handled 4,183 digital consultation requests from 2,229 unique patients. Data analysis shows that demand is growing, with peak usage occurring between 6:00 am and 10:00 am, Monday to Friday.

Despite this digital channel supporting access, overall appointment booking remains heavily weighted towards same-day demand. This limits the practice’s ability to deliver care that is proactive, coordinated, and outcome-focused. While the practice has been conducting monthly reviews of access data since June 2023, there have not been any significant changes in the underlying trends or outcomes to date.

Feedback on Appointment Interactions

Patient feedback during this period reflects challenges in perceived accessibility and the overall experience of care. Only 35% of patients rated their experience of making an appointment as good, and just 27% found it easy to contact the practice by telephone. Both figures are below the ICS and national averages, indicating areas where patient perception and satisfaction require focused improvement.

Furthermore, only 48% of patients reported being offered a choice of appointment type or time when they last attempted to book. This lack of choice may contribute to patients feeling less engaged and valued in their care journey. At present, many patients still do not have clarity on how their request will be managed, which can create frustration and uncertainty.

Handling Demand and Capacity Pressures

Despite having introduced a cloud-based telephony system over two years ago, Eastham Group Practice has not yet realised the full potential of this investment in terms of improved patient access. Data collected monthly since June 2023 shows that the number of incoming calls remains extremely high, with more than 7,200 calls received during the first hour of opening in a typical month. This illustrates the ongoing reliance on the 8:00 am call surge, which disproportionately affects those unable to access the system at this time.

The current appointment model is largely reactive and demand-led, limiting the practice's ability to respond flexibly to patient needs throughout the day. Additionally, the system does not yet offer equitable access for all patient groups, particularly those who may struggle to use the Patchs platform or telephone system during high-demand periods.

Strategic Planning for Future Demand

The leadership team at Eastham Group Practice has clearly identified the need for a transformation in the way access is managed, with the aim of moving toward the Modern General Practice Access Model. Key priorities have been established to support this change, including improving care navigation, strengthening clinical triage, and enhancing both patient communication and access transparency. There is also a strong focus on embedding a learning culture that supports continuous quality improvement across both clinical and non-clinical teams.

The practice is actively using demand and capacity data to inform decisions around appointment availability and service delivery. Future goals include reducing the number of avoidable appointments, distributing clinical capacity according to patient need, and ensuring consistent access to care throughout the working day. Ultimately, the vision is to create a system where patient requests are managed efficiently and where both staff and patients benefit from a more balanced and sustainable access model.

Next Steps

To address the access challenges identified and support sustainable improvements, Eastham Group Practice will join the General Practice Improvement Programme (GPIP). Through this programme, we aim to undertake a comprehensive analysis of our demand and capacity data, using this insight to design a more efficient, equitable, and patient-centred appointment system. Participation in GPIP will enable us to reduce access inequalities, optimise the use of digital tools such as Patchs, and implement more consistent care navigation and triage processes. These efforts are aligned with NHS England's directive to transition to the Modern General Practice Access Model. Our goal is to deliver a service that ensures fair and timely access for all patients, promotes continuity where appropriate, and supports staff to work in a sustainable and responsive environment.