

NHS Trusts go live with NHS111 First Direct Access Booking Solution

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A number of NHS Trusts including Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells, Kent Community and South Tyneside & Sunderland have gone live with WASP Software's NHS111 First Direct Appointment Booking solution.

Part of the Government's strategy to manage long waits in Emergency Departments (ED) this winter, with the added escalation of the Covid-19 pandemic, is for patients who require urgent, unscheduled care to call NHS111 in order to be directed to the most appropriate service for treatment. This may include an appointment in Primary Care, Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC), Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) or, in extreme cases, the Emergency Department at the local Acute Trust.

Michael Brett, Managing Director, WASP Software comments: "The work we have been doing across Kent and Medway has been driven by the need to provide Direct Appointment Booking (DAB) into Emergency Services which have historically been unscheduled. Urgent and Emergency Care by their very nature are unscheduled incidents and so the challenge has been how best to manage the demand on ED during these extraordinary times."

In Kent & Medway, the Care Commissioning Group (CCG) and local providers have worked with the areas NHS111 Provider, South-East Coastal Ambulance Service (SECamb) and WASP Software to deliver Direct Appointment Booking in Medway, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells and Kent Community NHS Trusts.

WASP has worked with Cleric (the IT System supplier for SECamb) and implemented a DAB service built around NHS Digital's Care Connect facility that brokers messaging services at a National level between NHS111 and Scheduling services in Provider sites. This development was completed in September last year and Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells were one of the first ED and UTC to offer directly bookable appointments via NHS111 nationally.

"The main issue facing the Project Team was the variety of differing systems prevalent in the local Provider community, some of which were due to be replaced or upgraded over the next 6 months," comments Michael.

Rather than try to implement and/or upgrade each provider system, the Kent and Medway region chose to work with WASP Software who provide a "System-Agnostic Scheduler" that is able to sit in front of each site's IT service and manage the DAB scheduling activity. The WASP scheduler then publishes the appointment, patient details and referral information needed by the administration and clinical teams in the relevant provider departments.

Since then, the service has developed significantly to integrate the appointment and associated referral information directly into the hospital's ED systems, so busy staff do not need to check multiple systems just to establish who is due to arrive. Working with Meditech and Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool, a seamless integrated approach is linking patients directly to the most appropriate emergency service. Nurses and clinical staff are aware of the visit and can review the case prior to the patient's arrival within their usual clinical system.

Michael Brett continues: “The NHS is under huge pressure and the way urgent and emergency care is delivered has had to change. Even before the Covid pandemic, simply presenting at ED and waiting for 4 hours in a crowded waiting room was considered unnecessarily stressful, but today this is simply not an option.

Patients need to take responsibility, check to see if the condition is really an emergency or can be treated through some other service. If there is doubt, ring NHS111 first and if a patient does need to be seen they will be given an appointment and treated in the most appropriate service in the local area.

It is anticipated that the pressure on EDs can be reduced by sending patients elsewhere to receive an improved service without the long waits. This then leaves the Emergency Department to focus on the more serious medical emergencies, safe in the knowledge the waiting room is not full of patients with minor injuries.”

For further information on WASP Software Limited visit www.waspsoftware.co.uk or telephone: 01335 369000

ENDS

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Notes to the editor:

- NHS111 patient appointments. On calling NHS111 in the Kent and Medway region, patients will be provided with a date and time slot for their appointment within a local service and the receiving department will be sent an electronic referral outlining the details of the appointment and the patient’s condition so that they may be ready for the patient to arrive.
- About WASP Software. WASP has a strong IT heritage in the healthcare market with over 25 years’ experience of working with the NHS. Historically, the management team has developed and supported web-based services to improve the flow of information between Primary and Secondary Care including e-referrals, discharge notes and clinical correspondence – an activity in which WASP is still actively engaged. In addition to the NHS111 First scheduler deployment, WASP has also developed a Referral Management Service to allow Provider Trusts to manage their Outpatient referrals. As the country recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, new ways of managing the demands on OP services will be essential to prioritise treatment.