



## **FACT SHEET**

In response to the COVID19 pandemic a number of GP practices across Wigan Borough have started to use Ask My GP to help them deliver their services. This fact sheet aims to help patients and carers understand what Ask My GP is all about and how it works.

### **What is Ask My GP?**

Ask My GP is an online system used by GP Practices to help give patients quicker access to their services and to cut down on unnecessary appointments.

Where a patient would normally phone the practice for an appointment, they can submit their request via Ask My GP and this will be reviewed by the practice.

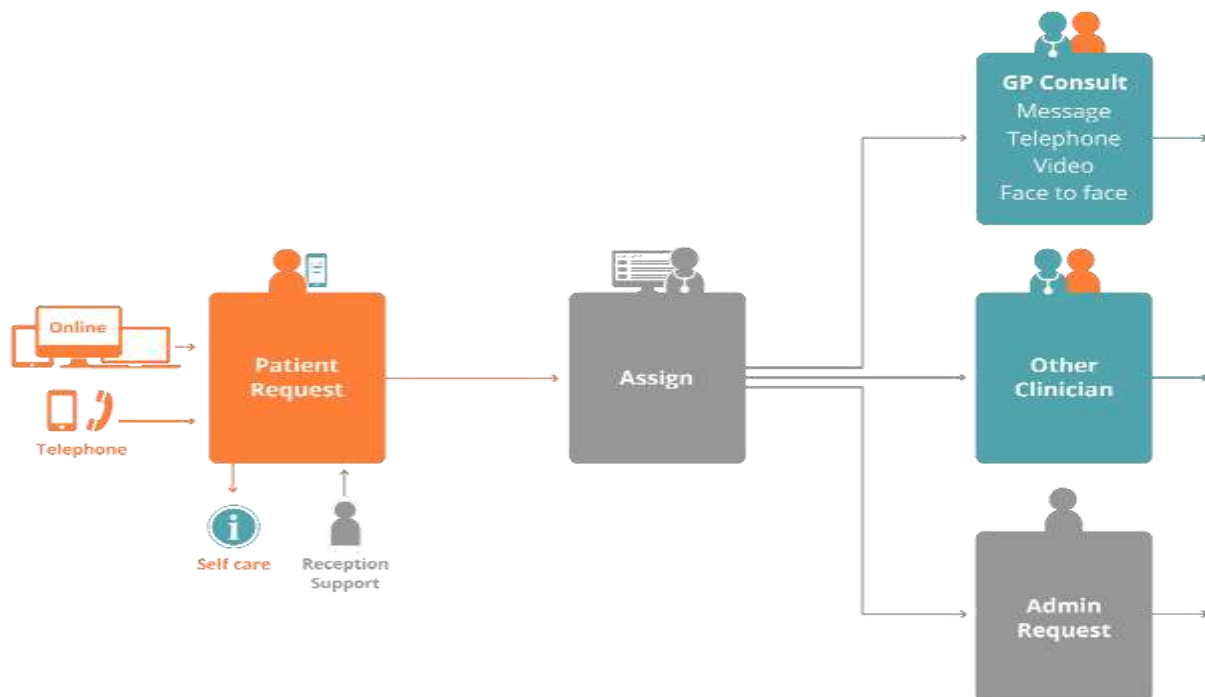
Patients can download the Ask My GP app or access it via the website. It's easy to sign up with no paperwork. Visit your practice website for more details.

The clinicians at the practice use Ask My GP to prioritise patients by how urgent their request is. They can respond to the patient by secure message, telephone or video. The contact is much quicker than it usually would be to phone up and wait for a face-to-face appointment – the average response time in April 2020 was 65 minutes! If a patient does need to be seen in person the practice will still arrange this.

Patients can also use Ask My GP to book appointments, download registration forms, cancel existing appointments, and amend personal details.

## How does it work?

If the practice is using Ask My GP, patients can use a link from their practice website or download the app. Once registered on the system, the patient can explain their symptoms in their own words and say how they'd prefer to be contacted back. Patients can also name a preferred GP if they want to (although this will depend if that doctor is working when the request goes in).



Once submitted, the practice will review the request on the Ask My GP system and get back to the patient. The GP will ultimately decide the best way to consult with the patient based on the request. If they don't get back to a patient via their preferred method of contact, or if a different doctor responds, this could be for any safety, clinical, continuity or care, training, capacity or operational reasons.

[Watch 'How ask my GP works'](#)

Once a patient has sent a request then they should look out for a response directly from the doctor. The process is much quicker than it would be to phone up and wait for a face-to-face appointment which is one of the main benefits of the system.

## How secure is patient data?

All data is stored securely within the NHS's computer network. If a patient wants data to be deleted, they can ask their practice about this. The "any other question" option on the system can be used or just phone up.

Correspondence via "Secure Message" is not a text message. It is held securely online and patients need to log in to access their personal messages. They will receive an email to notify them there is a new message from the practice.

The Ask My GP service operates 24/7, but patient requests will only be reviewed and prioritised during their practice opening hours. Any queries raised out of hours will be dealt with in priority order when the practice is next open.

## How is it currently operating in Wigan Borough?

There are 59 GP practices in Wigan Borough. At the end of the month (May 2020) there will be 43 practices on Ask My GP. Please visit your practice website for further details.

## What are the benefits to patients?

*"Ask my GP was easy to use, easy to follow and made life a lot easier. I requested an email back which I got within 15 minutes and my prescription was sent to the chemist."*

Christine, Beech Hill Medical Practice

*"It was a breeze. Easy to set up on the phone and very easy to use, so much better than hanging on the phone waiting for them to answer. Got to speak to the preferred GP and got some sound advice without needing to visit the surgery. Definitely the way forward."*

Steve, Sullivan Way Surgery

## Who can use Ask My GP?

The patient will need to check if their GP practice is using Ask My GP. If they are, any patients registered at the practice will be able to use it, including parents and carers. Carers will need to register as a user at the practice where the patient is registered to get access.

People without online access will not be able to use Ask My GP and should continue to contact their GP practices as they normally would, i.e. via telephone at the moment. If a patient rings the practice may still process their request via Ask My GP but the practice will do this on behalf of the patient.

## Advantages for GP practices

Ask My GP saves GP practices time as they don't need to take everyone's details over the phone, input on the system and manage appointment slots. It makes it easier and quicker for patients to get help from a doctor and for the doctor to give the right help. It also prevents the need for unnecessary face-to-face appointments which is a better use of everyone's time. Ask My GP helps practices manage their workload on a day-to-day basis.