



Case Study

► Library House Surgery

Our Digital Journey

A large GP practice located in Chorley, Lancashire supporting a practice population of around 16,500 patients. The practice is managed by eight partner GPs, four advanced nurse practitioners plus reception and administrative staff.

Library house surgery has been one of the pioneers of the Digital Exemplar Programme and has been working on developing the use of digital technologies since 2018

Why did you engage with the Digital Exemplar Programme?

The practice recognised that there was a very structured, traditional way of working that was seen as restrictive to patients, who were increasingly accessing health care advice online and were often struggling to book and attend face to face appointments. Additionally, the practice recognised that partners and staff had competing work and family commitments and they had GP's and other clinicians who were considering having a family or cutting down their hours to allow for a better work-life balance. As a result, the practice was increasingly reliant on the use of locums to fill temporary gaps and create flexibility in working hours.

There was a clear recognition that the practice was not maximising the use of digital across the workflows as a result of a lack of knowledge on available systems and a lack in confidence of changing the way they delivered services. This was compounded by variable IT skills across the practice workforce and a feeling that they were working in isolation in terms of digital transformation.



"We had a lot of systems that created a lot of headaches for people because although they were supposed to work together, they didn't really work together."



About the Digital Exemplar Programme

The Community

Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS) and NHS England Primary Care Transformation Team developed the concept of a 'Digital Exemplar Programme' to support a primary care approach to enhance digital capabilities across primary care.

The Problem

Increasing demand pressures placed on general practice are leaving many with unmanageable workloads. Successive health policies have tried to address this through a focus on digital transformation. However, the reality of implementing a digital-first service is challenging and progress has been patchy and often not properly integrated, significantly limiting the benefits.

The Solution

The ICS and partners recognised that digital healthcare is not simply about making new and emerging technologies available to healthcare teams. It requires consistent quality upskilling and support for front line and administrative staff and support from senior management across the system. It therefore developed a network of practices to work together, with external support, to consult, test and pilot new technologies in practice and assess the impact and share learning.

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Implementing Digital Solutions

Inspired by the Digital Exemplar programme the surgery has implemented a range of digital solutions to improve the service it offers patients and to improve the flexibility of its workforce:

- **iPlato on-line consultation system:** This system includes the myGP app, mass text messaging, appointment booking and cancellations
- **Enhanced social media** presence through a practice Facebook page
- **Live streaming patient participation group** meetings through Facebook Live
- **Care Home Video consultations** between the practice and care homes
- **Patient video consultations** using Visconn and Accurx

The practice embraced the range of support offered through programmes including the Digital Exemplar Programme, the Digital Pioneers Programme and the GP Retention Programme. These programmes enabled the practice to purchase or access digital equipment including laptops, iPads, dual screens and digital stethoscopes.

After the initial troubleshooting of technical problems, for example at the outset the practice had issues with network connectivity for different devices which required support, the practice have greatly benefited from working with providers to ensure that the products are compatible with the practice needs.



“We had a direct line through to Redmoor and the techies, so you could talk stuff through and get stuff resolved quickly.”



At the outset, the practice consulted with patients to understand the most acceptable platforms for delivering video consultations. Initially patients were offered an option of video-consultation through platforms such as Skype, Facetime and WhatsApp. The patients unanimously opted for the WhatsApp platform as it was seen as the simplest solution.

Working In Partnership

“The Digital Exemplar Programme really was a changing point. Being connected to like-minded people, getting a lot of people together who had similar ideas and encouraging them to get out there and do it really helped us”

Simon Elcock. IT and Operations Manager. Library House Surgery

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Digital Solutions

Hardware

- Laptops and iPads
- Dual Screens
- Mevo Plus Livestream Camera
- PA system with wireless microphones

Software

- iPlato products
- Facebook Live
- Xuper, Visconn, Accurx
- Webhosting for the livestream toolkit

Support

- Digital Exemplar Programme
- GP Retention Programme
- Digital Pioneers Programme
- NHS England, CCG, ICS
- Redmoor Health



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The support received through the collaboration has provided a platform for the practice to share its learning across the network to support the wider ICS system.



“The great thing about beefing up these policies is that when other practices start using Visconn Clinic and other bits of the Xuper systems, there’s going to be a signed-off, prewritten data privacy assessment that other practices and organisations could use”



Impact of Digital Solutions

The use of digital products has empowered GPs and other clinicians to work more flexibly, enabling a better work-life balance. In turn, this has enabled the practice to provide additional GP sessions and appointments. This wouldn’t have happened without employing the digital solutions to free up travel time.



“A good example was, before the pandemic, there was a very structured way of working, which was morning sessions, home visits, admin work, afternoon sessions. But what we’re finding now is clinicians can set their own way of working. I think we’ve got happier clinicians. We’ve got clinicians who are empowered to take control of when and how they do things”



The benefits were highlighted moving into the Covid-19 lockdown. Involvement in the exemplar programme allowed the practice to rapidly move, at scale, to video consultations since the required protocols were already in place and the practice was familiar with the equipment requirements.

From a patient’s perspective, the practice is achieving their targets for the adoption of the myGP app leading to a steady increase in patients booking appointments online, saving both on GP and patient time and reducing footfall into the practice.

This process was further enhanced by the use of live streaming for the Patient Participation Group and Management of Long-Term Conditions, allowing patients to become more involved in shaping services and empowered to self-care.

Transforming the Way We Work

Being part of the Digital Exemplar programme has been great for Library House Surgery. We have been supported by the scheme on a number of projects including piloting video consultations to enable greater flexibility for GP’s and improve GP retention. Piloting video consultations and remote working enabled us to respond quickly to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic by implementing technologies and ways of working we were already comfortable and familiar with.”

Dr Joanne Colvin

– GP Partner Library House



“It’s going to be hard to get these doctors back in the surgery after Covid. The predominant way they work will be remotely. The work-life balance, the provision of additional sessions. It’s not unusual now for one of our GPs to do a locum session from home”

Simon Elcock.

IT & Ops Manager. Library House



Additional GP Sessions

- ▲ Regular locum sessions being filled by GP partners working remotely from home
- ▲ 200+ video consultations between GP and patients



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We did a live stream cytology event, on a Wednesday evening, and then telling patients during that event 'If you want to book your smear appointment, go online and book it now using the myGP app'. That evening, loads of appointments were booked online, more appointments than have been booked in a week."



For GP retention and practice staff, patients booking appointments online frees up phone lines for patients who can't book online. In turn, this frees up the reception team to be able to chase up reviews or do other things that improve services for patients.

The use of digital has transformed the way that GP's work, with part-time GPs doing additional sessions from home rather than getting locums in.



"That's good for our patients because it's a familiar face or voice, you've got that kind of continuity of care, albeit maybe with a different GP, but it's a GP they've probably seen."



Since January 2020, the practice has sent out 59,000 SMS text messages encouraging the take up of immunisations and vaccinations and promoting participation in the patient survey utilising SurveyMonkey, identifying carers and to invite chronic disease annual review patients

myGP APP Users

- ▲ 4,000 myGP app registered patients
- ▲ 5,500 patients are live with online access (MyGP users + EMIS Patient access users)

Live Streaming

"By live streaming our patient participation group meeting we were able to increase attendance from what would have been 12 physical patients to 58 participating online during the live broadcast with an additional 2,000 patients viewing our live stream video within 3 days of the event to which they were able to provide post event feedback"

Simon Elcock. IT & Ops Manager.

- ▲ 1,100 practice Facebook followers
- ▲ 15,000+ views of live streaming events
- ▲ 3,000 views on Facebook Live PPG
- ▲ 60 online patients attending a PPG

Impact Of SMS Messaging

- ▲ 26% increase in uptake of cervical smears
- ▲ Significant increase in uptake of Flu vaccine
- ▲ Increased carer register by 50% in just three days
- ▲ 700+ responses to annual patient survey

Patient Feedback

"Can you thank whoever organised this [video consultation], because it's life changing for me and my wife".

Patient

- ▲ 78% of surveyed patients said they would find Facebook Live a useful way of allowing them to participate in discussions or events about healthcare

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Key Messages

Use the network: The Exemplar Programme has been critical in opening up the network of practitioners. There is no need to start from scratch and so much experience exists within the system that can be utilised.

Be Brave: You need to understand what you want to achieve with digital, understand what is possible and risk the investment of time and resource. The move towards digital has really gathered momentum during Covid-19 and practices need to be brave and embrace this direction of travel

Open up online appointments: The more appointment types that are available online, the more patients will start to use the system. For example, alongside the standard appointment bookings, the practice has made online bookings available for a wide range of reviews including diabetics, hypertensives, Healthwise, podiatrists, midwife smears and phlebotomists.

Use the technology: Our primary aim is to allow patients to participate and engage in their healthcare. Systems exist that are familiar to the patient, for example, Facebook Live can be utilised for no or little cost. Library House have delivered a comprehensive toolkit www.healthstreamtoolkit.org/ that illustrates how organisations can use Facebook Live to help patients engage and participate.

Don't Underestimate the patient: You will always hear that video consultation will not work for certain population groups. This practice has found this is not the case. Older people, for example, are more digitally savvy than we credit. Once they have used video consultation for the first time, the practice has shown that there is no going back.



“Our Experience shows that with the support of Redmoor and the Exemplar Programme you can achieve things, for example over the last 5 years cervical screening uptake has decreased, so with the use of social media we managed to turn the trend around – if the series of events that led to this didn't happen (Digital Exemplar launch – support through Exemplar to do first patient group meeting livestream – moving to Digital Pioneer programme) then we could be looking at continuing decreasing cervical screening uptake”



Practice Feedback

“I don't think we would have got the pilot off the ground without the support of the Exemplar Programme. I don't think we would have done all that groundwork prior to Covid and I don't think we'd be in the same position.”

“You go to an Exemplar workshop, you see something that could benefit your practice, you think, I could do that, you get the support from Redmoor and you kind of evolve from being helped to be able to do it yourself, to being able to share with other people how to do it.”

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Acknowledgment

This case study was developed through interviews with Simon Elcock, IT and Operations Manager at Library House Surgery. Simon also supplied significant additional data to inform this study.

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Redmoor Health

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