

People at the Centre Update 19



Public and Clinician Views on Video Consulting

The Scottish Government Technology Enabled Care (TEC) team has published its findings following a public engagement exercise on the use of the Near Me video consulting service. 5400 responses were received from the public and health care professionals.

Support

Overwhelming support for the use of video consultations was found amongst both public respondents and health care professionals:

- 87% of all public respondents (and 81% of those who responded by phone or hard copy) thought video consulting should be offered for health and care appointments.
- Respondents aged 35-64 were most likely to be supportive of video consulting (90-92%). There was a drop-off in older age groups 65-74 (82%) which further reduced in the 75+ age band (76%). Support in those under 24 was at 83%, rising slightly for the 25-34 age bracket (87%).
- 94% of health care professionals thought video consulting should be offered for appointments, with 4% unsure and 2% thinking video should not be used.
- Both the public and health professionals identified the lower infection risk as the number one benefit, which reflects the prevalent concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic. In previous engagement, this was only described as a minor benefit (for example, to reduce people coming into GP practices with norovirus).

There was also agreement in terms of the value of face to face consultations, whether that be online or in person:

- Public respondents stated a slight preference for use of video over phone consulting, both during COVID-19 and afterwards. Video was the most preferred option during periods of physical distancing, with face to face the most preferred option once physical distancing is over.
- Health care professionals had a smaller preference for video over phone and scored the acceptability of phone consulting more highly than patients.

Use of Video Consultations

Respondents also discussed the appropriate use of video consultations:

- Video consulting was preferred with regards to the ongoing management of long term conditions (e.g. asthma, mental health conditions, various outpatient follow up appointments), rather than in the presentation of an unknown diagnosis or symptoms.
- 75% of health professionals identified situations where they deemed video consultations not to be appropriate, with the most frequently cited being when a physical examination is required.
- 54% of public respondents described certain scenarios where they thought video consulting would not be appropriate.

Potential Barriers

Potential barriers of video consultations were identified, with both the public and health professionals identifying poor internet connectivity, resultant poor call quality and lack of access to a video calling device as the main issues. One of the most significant findings, compared with previous engagement, has been the public's identification of a lack of private space at home as a key barrier.

For health professionals, in addition to poor quality of calls, the main disadvantages were concerns about missing something on video and a preference to see patients in person. Almost 9 out of 10 health care professionals said that 'patients asking for the service' would make it more likely that they would wish to provide the service.

Recommendations

In light of these findings, the Scottish Government's TEC team has made several recommendations which intend to make Near Me more accessible:

- Maintain choice and appropriate deployment of consultation type including face to face appointments.
- Consider the need for local hubs/clinics to access Near Me.
- Establish processes to enable interpreters to join Near Me appointments where appropriate. This would include both service-provided interpreters and informal interpreters/support for appointments, such as from family members.
- Establish and communicate processes to enable patients to do a test call.
- Raise awareness about consultation options including appointments by video.
- Continue to build links with Connecting Scotland, Public Health Scotland and Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations to understand the scope and impact of digital exclusion on use of Near Me and provide advice to ensure compatibility.
- Develop inclusive communication and guidance materials for using Near Me, including easy read, languages other than English, visual and bespoke to groups as required (for example, young carers).
- Share best practice inclusive guides/resources with health boards across Scotland.