



Making Engage Consult Total Triage Work For You



Introduction

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, NHS England is advising all GP practices in England to rapidly implement a 'Total Triage' model of care using online consultation tools.

Total Digital Triage will support practices to manage patients remotely using online consultation, video or telephone. Data shows that two-thirds of demand can be managed remotely and during a period of pandemic this proportion increases to over 90%.

Total Triage Online consultation through Engage Consult captures a patient's history and symptoms asynchronously, allows patients to send in pictures and documents and signposts them to self-help advice. Giving both patients and practice staff greater control of their time and increases access for people with specific information and communication or disability needs.



What is Total Digital Triage?

Total Digital Triage uses an online consultation system to triage all patient contacts. For patients who cannot access digital consultation administration staff within the practice can take them through the same process over the telephone or in person.

Engage Consult supports practices to manage their demand online. All admin and clinical requests can be directed through Engage Consult ensuring that the practice receives consistent information, a comprehensive medical history, and any red flag alerts are identified for prompt escalation.

Patients using Engage Consult are automatically warned not to use the service for urgent or emergency conditions and signposted to NHS111 or 999 emergency services where applicable..

Using Engage Consult Total Triage gives practices control over their appointment systems improving efficiency, patient access and patient satisfaction.

What about patients that don't have internet access?

For patients that have no internet access or for those that Engage Consult may not be suitable, practices can still implement a Total Digital Triage model.

Administration staff can complete an online consultation form on behalf of the patient over the telephone or if the patient has attended the practice in person provided they are in an area where the conversation cannot be overheard by others.

The message will then be processed in exactly the same way as those received directly from patients.



How do we manage the workflow efficiently?

- Understand your capacity & demand before you implement Engage Consult & post implementation
- Predict the level of online activity you can expect. Remember no two practices are the same, consider your patient demographic and be realistic. Research shows that $\frac{2}{3}$ of your demand can be dealt with via a total triage model of care.
- Review your current patient pathways and workflow with your practice team.
- Take time to rationalise and 'lean' your processes to incorporate online triage if you have not done this pre-implementation. Remove any processes that do not add value.

How do we manage workflow efficiently continued.....?

- Change your appointment rosters to include less face to face consultations, and increase online and telephone triage capacity using realistic time slots if you have not already done so. Remember research shows that on average 3 online consultations can be dealt with in a 10 minute appointment.
- Create capacity for patients that are not able to or unsuitable for Online Consultation
- Agree your response times for online consultations & review these monthly - wherever possible aim to clear today's work today to avoid patients contacting the practice by phone to chase a response.
- If a patient needs to be seen today appoint them today to maintain continuity of care

What are the benefits of using Engage Consult for Total Triage?

1. Engage Consult Total Triage is quick & easy to implement
2. Full technical and implementation support is available from our dedicated Engage Consult Implementation Team
3. COVID-19 alerts direct patients with symptoms away from the practice
4. Increases your practice resilience by enabling more flexible working patterns within clinical system rosters
5. Increases staff satisfaction & retention with more control over workload
6. Can be used by staff remotely to manage messages

What are the benefits of using Engage Consult for Total Triage continued.....

7. Reduces your DNA's
8. Messages can be assigned to the most appropriate person within the practice to handle utilising the whole practice team
9. Average time to complete a clinical message 3 minutes
10. 70-90% of demand can be dealt with remotely
11. Reduces inbound & outbound telephone calls - saving cost
12. The flexibility of using Engage Consult Total Triage means that patients can be allocated the correct amount of time for an appointment based on need

How do we promote Engage Consult with our patients?

Informing patients of the change to an Online Total Triage is the most important thing that you can do to ensure Engage Consult is successful. We recommend that you start your promotion campaign 3 weeks prior to implementation. However it is never too late to promote your new system! Remember promotion needs to be done regularly and can also be targeted for different audiences, events and seasonal campaigns.

The more patients you encourage to use Engage Consult the more benefits you will reap. A simple Marketing Plan can help you to manage your promotion and communication strategy.

[Engage Consults Communication & Engagement plan is available here.](#)

Think about your target audience, who will need support to use the system? Engage Consult Practice Guides are available for uploading to Practice Websites or for giving to patients attending appointments.

Make the most of your Patient Participation Group to help design and test out your marketing.

Use your Clinical Lead and Change Champions to record video clips for your website or short messages for your telephone system promoting the service.

Promote the benefits of online consultation for patients based upon patient pain points

1. Improved Access – timely advice, reduced waiting times, convenience, available for patients to send in messages 24/7/365, avoids unnecessary visits to the practice for routine care and advice.
2. Patient Satisfaction – higher level of satisfaction, feel more at ease, continuity of care, avoiding the waiting room, saves patients time and cost in travel to the practice. Gives patients time to explain their problem without feeling rushed.
3. Quality of Care – Engage Consult picks up conditions that may require an alternative emergency treatment pathway, empowers patients to self-care with links to self-help advice, comprehensive instant medical history triage
4. Efficient – right patient, right time, right place, right professional. Optimises practice skill mix, clinicians have access to the triage and medical history before consultation. Improved data capture and 2-way messaging saves clinician time

More marketing advice & guidance can be found on our [Educational Hub](#)

How do we know if Engage Consult Total Triage has been successful?

Monitoring the impact of any change to a process or system is important. Consider what success looks like for you and your patients.

When measuring the improvement you need to consider 3 questions:

1. What are we trying to accomplish?
2. How will we know that the change has led to an improvement?
3. What changes can we make that will result in improvement?

Make your objectives into SMART measures for success

Gather information on key matrix before making the change so that you can do easy comparisons e.g. capacity v demand audits.

Engage Consult has a suite of reports available to support practices to evaluate service use: Guest Report, Usage Report, Trend Report, Complaint Report, Feedback & Transaction Report

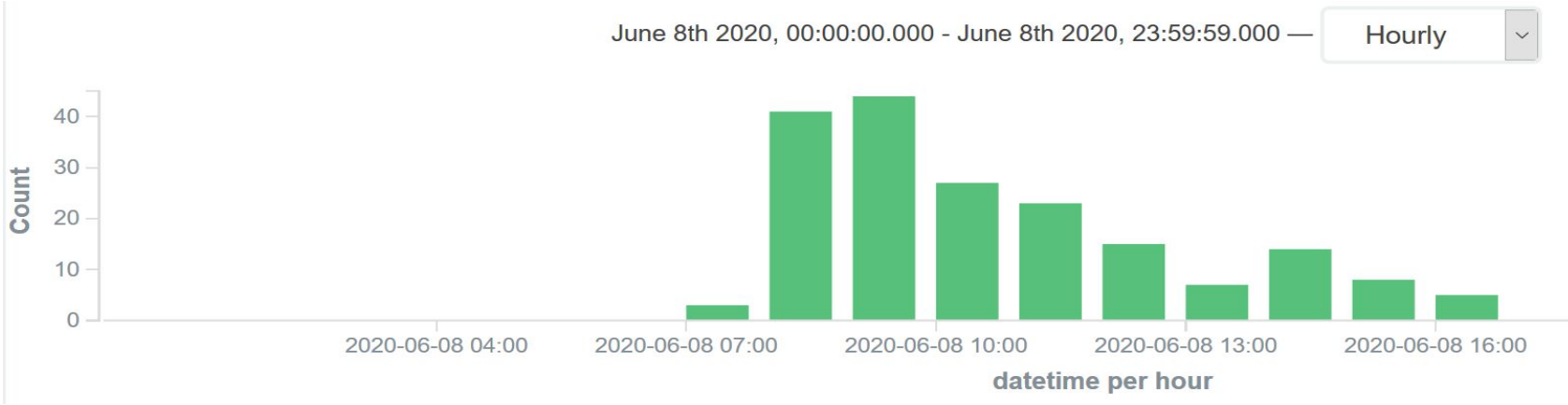
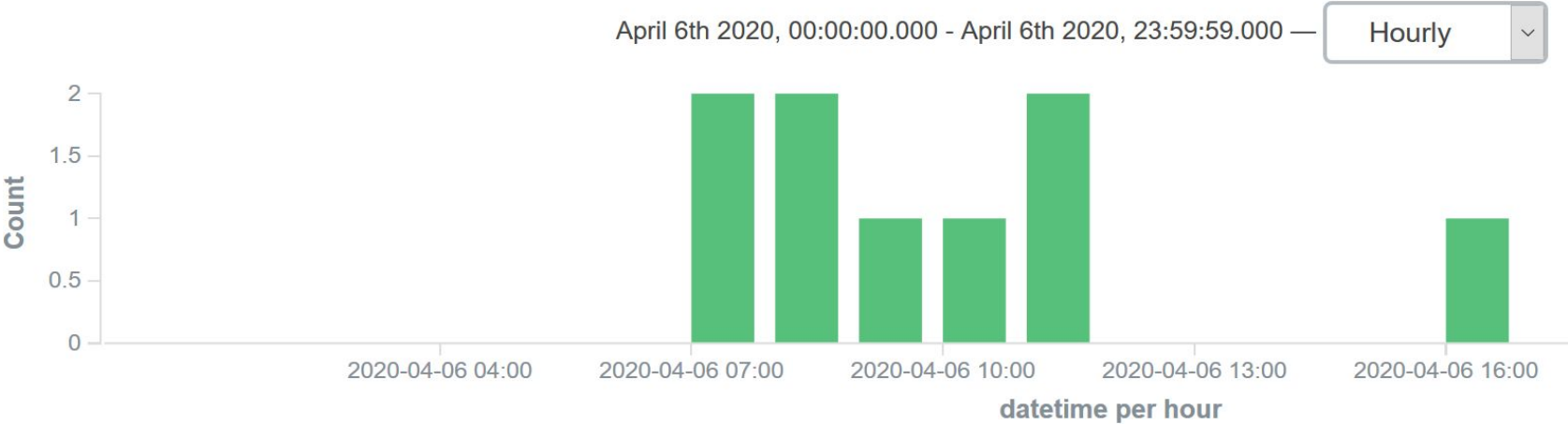
Consider;

- What the impact on workload has been, by type of consultation compared to before implementation, is it better, no change or worse?
- Has there been a reduction in the number of incoming calls?
- Has there been a reduction in DNA's?
- What percentage of people attended A&E unnecessarily since implementation compared to after?
- Has there been an increase in patient satisfaction?
- Does Engage Consult Total Triage change the appointment waiting times?
- How many face to face consultations have been converted to and resolved by online or video consultation?
- Has implementing the system resulted in redistributing workflow away from GPs to be dealt with by the wider practice workforce e.g. ANPs, Pharmacists, First Contact Practitioners, Practice Nurses, Community Nursing Teams, Care Navigators

Make changes to your processes and policies as required to improve performance and correct any unintended consequences.

Share your findings with your Patients, staff, PCN and CCG.

An example of how a practice has increased online Total Triage for medical requests with Engage Consult from 2 encounters to over 40



Top Tips For conducting an Online Consultation

1. Respond to messages promptly & within your advertised response times ensuring that your expectations are reasonable & safe.
2. Avoid repeating data collection when the patient has already had a system triage.
3. Ask patients to use Engage Consult for follow-up or get back in touch consultations
4. Arrange next steps using two-way messaging e.g. for booking appointments, making referrals, offering symptom control advice
5. Use video consultation for face to face consultations unless a physical examination is necessary
6. Avoid jargon & acronyms, keep sentences short and allow patients to respond to advice given, checking the patient's understanding of the management plan
7. Use pre-set messages & responses for regular activity
8. When patients contact the practice by phone or in person use reception staff to encourage patients to use Engage Consult online. Helping to set up accounts if required.
9. Promote the service to carers, care & residential homes

Top Tips continued.....

10. Schedule medication and long term condition reviews on days when more clinical cover is available
11. Direct patients to submit admin enquiries only through Engage Consult Admin function
12. Dedicate staff to triage online consultations at times of peak demand
13. Use Engage Consult to send documents to patients e.g. attach completed Fit Notes, or completed electronic documents - insurance claim forms
14. Assign messages to the most appropriate member of the team to handle
15. Where family members, carers or relatives use online consultations on behalf of the patient, practice staff must ensure consent has been obtained
16. Capacity is decision specific and can change, consider any concerns flagged in the patient's medical record, consultations or through practice knowledge and experience
17. Take the opportunity to promote any new health campaigns e.g. flu and gather outstanding QOF data

What our customers tell us about using Engage Consult

“Engage Consult is user friendly with a clearly set out system to walk you through the ID and verification process”

“Patients really love the system, they find it easy to use and can submit queries through the night if they wish and know they will get a response in a timely manner.”

“Access has definitely improved, patients don't need to come in or be seen for their query to be addressed”

“Invaluable, saves lots of clinical time and allows the patient to explain themselves and their symptoms in depth and in the comfort of their own home”

“Our clinicians feel that EC does make for a better consultation.....they have a better understanding of what is happening and feel they are in a better position to resolve patients concerns.”



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