



Department
of Health &
Social Care



Training pack for practices

Making it work - learning from experience

Learning from the prototypes – improving efficiency

- Practices have improved the efficiency of operating the pathway through
 - Patient communication
 - Skill mix
 - Maximising opportunities to provide care
 - Leadership in practice – clinical and practice management
- One size does not fit all, assess what works for you and your patients

Effective communication and leadership are common to all practices that are making the pathway work, but it is important to stress the last point – each practice must assess what works for them and be open to try new ideas. Some prototypes have gone through a significant change of approach and attitude and would now never return to 'old' ways.

Patient communication

- Self-check in screens, web based access
- Using a variety of ways to contact with patients, using mobile telephone, text messages and email communication including messages about appointment times, educational leaflets and instructions
- Reception staff being able to talk about why it is different
- Podcasts and waiting room video
- Written contract:
 - “what you can expect from us” (including understanding roles of dental team skill mix)
 - “what we expect from you”

Some practices recognised that patient communication of the new way of working was key to delivery of the care pathway from the first contact of the patient with the practice. This included the above bullet points including self appointments, educational tools and clear expectations of what the patient could expect from the practice and the care pathway.

Dental team skill mix

Examples used in practice

- Extended duty dental nurses (EDDN) and receptionists who had been suitably trained, recording background information about the patient before the patient presented to the dentist
- Information collected prior to surgery pre-populated before the patient enters and is presented by the EDDN and checked by the dentist with the patient
- OHI and preventive advice is delivered by the EDDN as part of the OHA (or treatment appointment) including how the RAG score relates to the self-care plan

Some practices recognised that Oral Health Assessments were taking more time and sometimes involved the patient returning unnecessarily for routine preventive advice and delivery of topical fluoride applications, the further visits resulted in longer numbers of days for completion of a Band 1 course of treatment. The use of suitably trained Extended Dental Duties Nurses at the OHA visit allowed more flexibility to provide this routine care at the OHA visit reducing the overall number of days for completion of a Band 1 course of treatment.

Dental team skill mix

- EDDNs, hygienists and therapists have been used to provide IC appointments, as no examination is required and clinical treatment can be provided directly by the wider clinical team. These appointments can have their own clinical slots and appointment time
- Therapists complete background information for urgent appointments, the dentist is then brought into the surgery to complete the clinical assessment and treatment plan and/or provide treatment
- Extra EDDN sessions when surgeries are not fully utilised – examples are school holiday IC clinics
- Short notice list of patients for EDDN sessions when a surgery became available at short notice e.g through illness

Flexible working relationships between the dental teams duties, breaking down the barriers to care, allowed a holistic approach to patient care.

Surgery downtime because of planned annual leave or unplanned sickness was reviewed by a number of practices as an under use of available surgery time. Solutions included Extended Dental Duty Nurses timetabling and booking their own prevention patient advice clinic during planned annual leave and using a 'short notice' list to contact patients to fill a surgery session when there was unplanned annual leave.

A 'Hints and tips' on skill mix document is available on the programme website

Maximising opportunities to provide care

- Some practices offer different hours to accommodate patients and reduce waiting times
- This does not necessarily mean opening for more hours, but being innovative and 'working smarter' with the dental team to make more time available during the working day

Some practices started to work different hours to accommodate patients and reduce waiting times and 'worked smarter' with the dental team to make more time available during the normal working day. ie start late finish late, clinics with nurse led sessions

Leadership in practice

Effective leadership ensures:

- All staff on the same page
- Common clinical and practice ethos
- Clear understanding across all staff on the benefits of the pathway approach
- Clear understanding amongst staff on their roles and responsibilities

Patients are more likely to comply with the advice and instruction given in surgery if the whole team give out one message and support each others efforts when communicating with patients.

Leadership in practice

Management information:

Essential to understand and monitor the contract

- Modelling tool – provides clear position
- Monthly use of Compass reports, in particular:
 - Capitation remuneration report
 - Capitation and activity report (performer level)
 - Imminent lapsers (details)
- Practice creating their own contract management system eg producing a ‘two year’ lapse report

Key to ensure not last minute surprises and allow actions to be taken at the earliest opportunity – ie increase the availability of treatment slots or new patient drives

Leadership in practice

Appointment book management

- Minimising “downtime”
 - Late cancellation lists
 - Utilising surgery space wherever or whenever free
 - Flexing appointments to reflect individual patient needs
- New patient packs including social and medical history forms
- Tailoring approach to the circumstances of practice and patient population

A ‘Hints and tips’ document on appointment book management is available online. Good appointment book management helps drive efficiencies in prototypes just as it does in high street practices.