

# Enhanced Access to General Practice

Communications guide  
and resource pack



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## 1. Introduction

This updated communications guide and resource pack has been designed and produced by NHS England to support commissioners and general practice providers to inform and signpost patients to new Enhanced Access services.

The guide includes practical advice on how to develop a range of communications activities, in addition to information on developing a communications plan, identifying local target audiences and other stakeholders and a range of materials.

Commissioners and providers may wish to develop more wide-ranging marketing activities for their area or consider focusing on particular options, such as digital communications, based on the needs of the local population. Further details on these options are included later in this guide.

NHS England welcomes comments or suggestions to contribute to future versions of the guide. Please contact [england.enhancedaccess@nhs.net](mailto:england.enhancedaccess@nhs.net).

## 2. Background

[Investment and Evolution](#) (2019), confirmed the intention to bring together current extended access services and extended hours funding stream in order to support delivery of a new model of Enhanced Access. In this new model, a single funding stream under the Network Contract DES combines funding from the old Network Extended Hours Access under the Contract DES and CCG-commissioned extended access services.

The change was originally intended to start in April 2021, but it was agreed that it would be delayed until April 2022 due to the pandemic and then further delayed until October 2022 to avoid disruption over winter and to support core general practice capacity.

[Plans for PCNs for 2021/22 and 2022/23](#) confirmed that commissioners should ensure that PCNs are preparing for this transition, and that they have undertaken good engagement with existing providers to enable the service to start on 1 October 2022.

PCNs are now working with their local commissioners to develop Enhanced Access services that meet the needs of their local population with the intention that these will be up and running from 1 October 2022.

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NHS England has produced this updated communications guide and accompanying materials to support PCNs to communicate about the new services to their patients.

For questions or further information, please email [england.enhancedaccess@nhs.net](mailto:england.enhancedaccess@nhs.net).



## 3. Communications plan

**PCNs should be clear about how they intend to advertise and signpost patients to Enhanced Access services and should produce a communications plan setting out how they will achieve this.**

The plan should identify key target audiences, an outline of planned communications activities and timescales. Integrated Care Board (ICB) communications teams may be able to offer general practice providers advice or assistance with this, if required.

A communications plan should demonstrate how services will be promoted to local patients and other audiences. Some of the key elements to include are outlined below:

### Communications aims and objectives

- What are the aims and objectives of the communications and what do they need to achieve?

### What are the key messages?

- What does your audience need to know about access to evening and weekend appointments, considering that these messages may need to be tailored for different audiences.
- What's the offer, where and how do patients and others access the services? Some suggested messages for patients are included in the following pages.

### Who is the audience?

- Which audiences will want to know more about enhanced access?
- What do you know about the audiences and how they might like to receive information?
- Ensure any potential inequalities are noted and addressed. For example, consider any requirement to produce communications in other languages or formats dependent on the needs of the local population.

### How will the messages reach the target audience?

- Are there any existing communications channels to reach the identified audiences. For example, practice or ICB websites, posters displayed in practices or other local areas, patient newsletters or other communications.
- You may want to consider other channels such as podcasts, webinars, desk drops or postcards.
- Ensure communications are shared through a range of channels, rather than relying on one, as this will reach a much wider audience.

### What activities will be delivered?

- What will be the most effective ways of communicating with the audience, given the communications channels available?
- What is the most appropriate format for the audience to ensure they receive and understand the messages?
- Suggestions regarding a range of activities, such as advertising, digital communications and media engagement are included later in this guide.

### Are there any communications risks or issues?

- Are there any risks to be aware of that might have an impact on the communications?

### What are the timescales?

- What are the timescales for launching the new Enhanced Access to general practice services? What is the launch date? How will communications support that?
- Ensure there is sufficient time: better to be ready early than deliver communications too late.

### How will communications activity be evaluated?

- Consider how you will assess whether you achieved the aims and objectives you originally set out.
- Think about any information or data you might need to collect to evaluate communications more effectively, e.g. will you conduct a survey of patients who have used the service in the evenings and weekends to gauge their understanding? Will you monitor hits to your practice website?
- As a minimum, monitor utilisation of services to give an indication of whether messages about improved access are being received and understood.

Further details about specific communications activities are included in the following pages of this guide.

### Further resources:

See the resources section for links to further information.



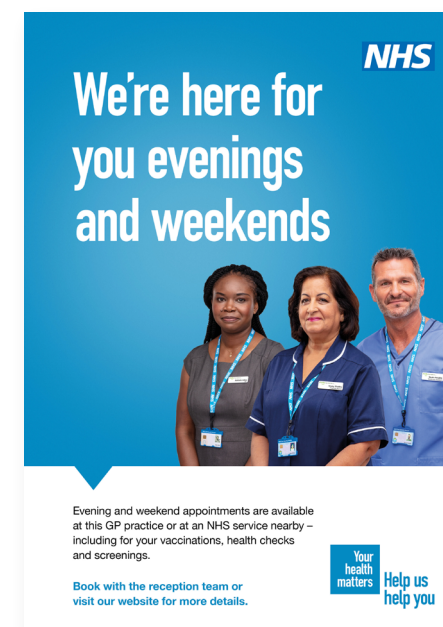
## 4. Key messages for patients

**The following are examples of key messages for patients which could be used and/or adapted for use in local areas.**

Consider the timing of messages to raise awareness before launching a new service whilst also being clear about when the service will be available from.

- Local GP practices are working together to offer patients evening and weekend appointments in [insert location] – that means you will be able to see a GP, nurse or other health professional at a time which is most convenient for you;
- We're here for you evenings and weekends: evening and weekend appointments are available at this GP practice, or at an NHS service nearby, including for your vaccinations, health checks and screenings;
- As well as phoning us or visiting to arrange an appointment, you can now use an online form on the practice website to get in touch. One of our team of doctors, nurses or other healthcare professionals will respond with the help you need. Speak to our reception team for more information.

Commissioners should also consider explaining how any new general practice services fit with existing NHS services in the local area, for example, out of hours or emergency care, to ensure that patients know which services to use and when.



## 5. Printed materials and advertising

**NHS England has produced a range of templates for display in practices and/or around the local area which can be used to promote enhanced access to general practice.**

Printed materials are a useful way to promote new services but consideration should be given to how and where to display them to achieve the greatest impact.

A series of downloadable assets for printing have been developed to promote Enhanced Access to general practice services.

Please contact your commissioner for access to these templates or visit the [Campaign Resource Centre](#).

Assets for download include:

- Posters (A3, A4 including version with space for local information)
- Freestanding desktop display (tent card)
- A4 table top display (strut card)
- Pull up banner

There are a number of options to consider when thinking about advertising enhanced access in the local area. Depending on the budget available, places to consider include:

- In a practice, using the patient noticeboard or digital patient information screens
- Local community newsletters, magazines or other publications
- In local areas such as community spaces
- Family centres or libraries
- In local newspapers.

It will also be important to ensure local services are advertised in other health settings. As a minimum, information about access to general practice services should be advertised in local A&E departments as well as other relevant areas in hospital or NHS buildings.

A local print or design company will be able to help produce these promotional items or providers could seek advice from their local ICB communications teams.

## 6. Digital communications

Digital communications are a useful way to reach a wide range of local audiences and can often be low cost/no cost to produce, offering excellent value for money.

Commissioners and providers should consider using some or all of the following to advertise improved access to general practice:

### Electronic display screens in practice

- Generic display screen assets are available to download from the [Campaign Resource Centre](#).

### Videos

- Video a GP, member of the practice team or patient representative talking about the new services for display on practice information screens or websites. Videos should ideally be produced in a high definition resolution and no longer than three minutes in length, with subtitles to ensure they are as accessible as possible. Local commissioners may be able to offer support or advice on video production.

### Text messages

- Use the practice's SMS texting service to inform patients about Enhanced Access services.

### Phone messages

- Record a message on the practice phone line which patients can access before selecting the service they require.

### Websites

- Place a promotional banner on the practice website linking to your web pages with information on any new or extended services and the times they are available. A series of generic web banners are available to download from the [Campaign Resource Centre](#). **As a minimum, ensure that information regarding Enhanced Access to general practice services is placed on each practice's website, and that this information can be easily accessed on the website's homepage.**

### Emails

- Place a promotional banner at the bottom of practice emails, embedding a clickable link to information on website about new or extended services and times they are available. A generic email signature is available to download from the [Campaign Resource Centre](#).

## Social media

Assets to promote enhanced access services on your social media channels are available via the [Campaign Resource Centre](#).

Use these assets along with accompanying post copy to promote services in your area. We have included some suggested copy that can be used on your Twitter, Facebook or Instagram pages if you have them.

Keep copy as concise as possible (note character lengths for each platform). Be sure to include information about the services, availability and how people should access them - do include links to your website for more information or to book.

### Some suggested posts to accompany the assets:

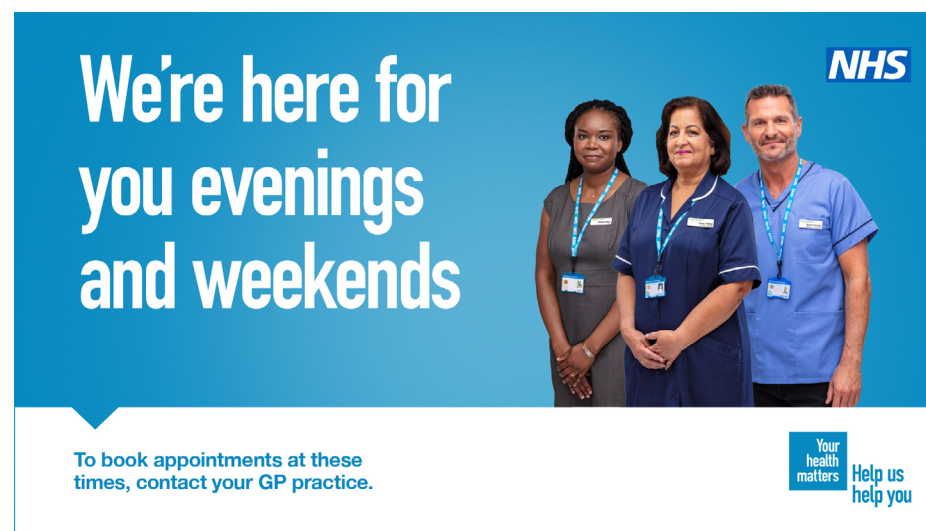
#### From a GP practice

- Evening and weekend appointments are available at [insert where available i.e. our/your GP practice or at an NHS service nearby] – including for vaccinations, health checks and screenings. Book with the reception team or visit [insert your website link] for details.
- Evening and weekend appointments are available at [insert where available i.e. our/your GP practice or at an NHS service nearby]. Contact your GP practice or visit [insert your website link] for details.

#### From ICB/Commissioners

- Your local GP practice is offering evening and weekend appointments at the surgery or at an NHS service nearby. Speak to the reception team when you book, or visit your GP practice website for more details.

These are suggestions for copy, but should be edited to reflect local services.



## 7. Press and media

Regional or local press, TV and/or radio may be interested in information about enhanced general practice services and ways that these are improving access for patients.

If budget is available then commissioners or providers may wish to consider purchasing media space to run messages about enhanced access.

Commissioners and providers could consider developing:

- a press notice to demonstrate the positive ways that practices are changing ways of working, for example detailing the evening and weekend appointments that are available locally or offering consultations in different ways such as by telephone, video call, by text or online message.
- a case study with a GP, the practice team or patient representative to help promote the positive impact of the new or improved services.
- an advertisement for the local newspaper setting out services available, opening hours, where to go and contact details.

### Further resources:

See the resources section for further information on working with partner organisations.

## 8. Working with local partners

To increase the reach of messages about Enhanced Access services, commissioners and providers should consider working with relevant partners in their area, including local authorities, voluntary and community sector organisations or other groups that support patients and the public who are likely to have a need for general practice services, to communicate these messages through their channels, for example:

### Partner social media channels

- Provide content and graphics to partners to post via their social media accounts.

### Partner websites

- Provide information to partners to publish on their public facing websites.

### Partner events or meetings

- Where further information could be shared.

### Further resources:

See the resources section for further information on working with partner organisations.



## 9. Evaluation

Commissioners and providers should evaluate all their communications activity to gain a better understanding of what are the most effective ways to reach and communicate with their local patients and the public. This will also demonstrate the value for money that their communications activity has achieved.

Understanding which communications activities work best when signposting patients and the public to improved access services will enable commissioners and providers to plan and use their communications budget and other resources as effectively as possible in the future.

Consider surveys, which gauge patients' level of understanding or add a link to the practice's website to gather feedback from patients and other audiences.

### Further resources:

See 'Guide to campaign planning' in the resources section for more information.



## 10. Resources

The following resources may be useful when developing and delivering communications campaigns:

### [Guide to campaign planning](#)

Provides useful information on structuring communications campaign planning.

### [NHS Identity Guidelines](#)

Produced by NHS England, offers guidelines explaining who can use the NHS Identity and NHS logo and how it should be applied.

### [Accessible Information Standard](#)

Information on meeting the Accessible Information Standard to ensure people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss are provided with information that they can easily read or understand.

### [Government Communications Service](#)

Guidance on a broad range of current communications topics.

### [Network Contract Directed Enhanced Service Contract specification 2022/23 – PCN](#)

Find out more about the Enhanced Access service specification.

# For further information

[www.england.nhs.uk](http://www.england.nhs.uk)

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