

askmyGP at New Court Surgery

Practice profile

- Location: Weston-super-Mare, Somerset
- List size: 12,000
- No of GPs: 5 partners (30 sessions a week) 3 salaried (14 sessions a week)
- Demographic: typical English seaside town, many care homes, moderate deprivation, slightly more people of retirement age

Background

In September 2018 a year-long project was initiated by the local CCG to support recruitment and retention in Weston-super-Mare, which has the highest proportion of GPs and nurses in the CCG area nearing retirement.¹

With significant demographic pressures from a population that is both ageing and growing, practices in the town and surrounding villages were under severe pressure with an unsustainable workload. Many practices were relying on locum doctors to fill sessions.

The Weston project focused on reducing workload for GPs by improving the way that patients are managed when requesting appointments. It also looked at how to reduce back office workload and improve both patient outcomes and staff wellbeing.

Online consultation solutions were considered and as part of the project several Weston practices implemented askmyGP, including New Court Surgery.

Life at the practice

Patients complained about a lack of appointments and the time it took the practice to answer the telephone. While the staff believed that patients thought highly of the practice, they were frustrated that they couldn't provide a consistent level of service.

For the clinicians, trying to manage patient care was difficult in a 10-minute appointment slot, given the complex needs and age of many of the patients.

Dr John Heather, senior partner at the practice, says:

"Our aim as clinicians is to see people when they need to be seen and have the right amount of time with each one. Making more time available for the patients who need it is simply not possible within the conventional 10-minute appointment framework."

While the team recognised that changes need to be made, there were concerns that a 'digital first' solution may mean loss of continuity of care with patients and that workload could increase.

¹ https://bnssgccg-media.ams3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/attachments/PCCC_24Sep19_item6.pdf

What happened next?

The askmyGP team visited the practice to meet the doctors and staff to discuss their vision for the practice. After analysing anonymised data from the clinical system, askmyGP presented an overview of operations to the partners, together with the feedback they had gathered during their visit.

With an understanding of demand and capacity at the practice, a consensus was reached on how things could change for the better using the askmyGP online workflow system.

An askmyGP training partner worked with the practice to implement the system which involved:

- analysing two years of clinical system data using the askmyGP online planning system to identify staffing levels required to meet demand
- providing training for doctors and staff on how to sort and manage patient requests coming through the system – both online and by telephone
- preparing everyone for launch, including running a whole team simulation to understand workflow
- producing a range of patient communications, including leaflets, posters and messages for the practice website and phone to encourage patients to use the new system

What happened after launch?

With askmyGP fully implemented at New Court Surgery life for the practice team has been transformed. Patients contact the practice by phone or via the practice website (Fig 1), with all requests processed through askmyGP (Fig 2). Doctors review all requests and allocate them to the most appropriate team member to deal with.

Fig 1. Sources of requests made by patients or their proxies

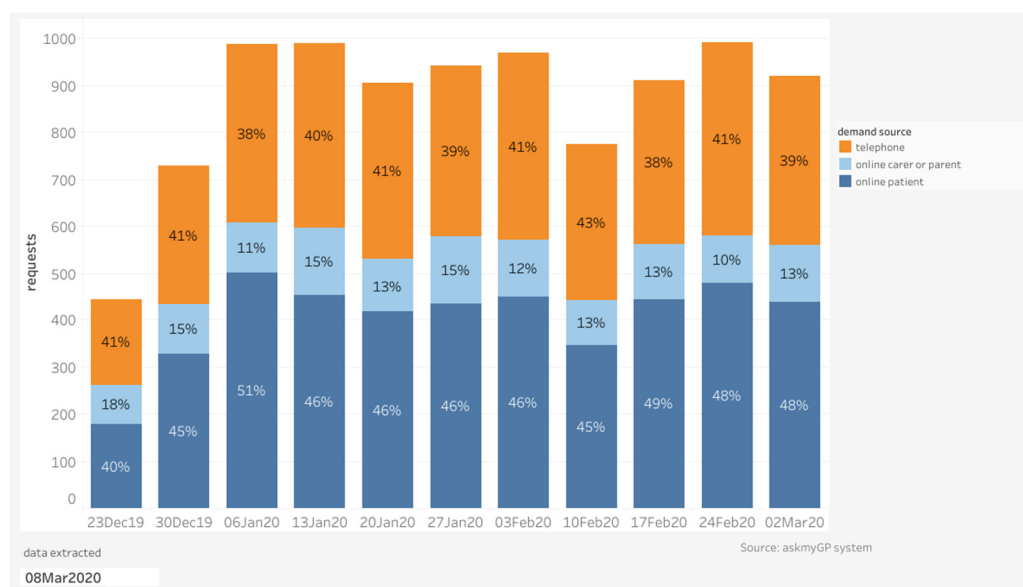
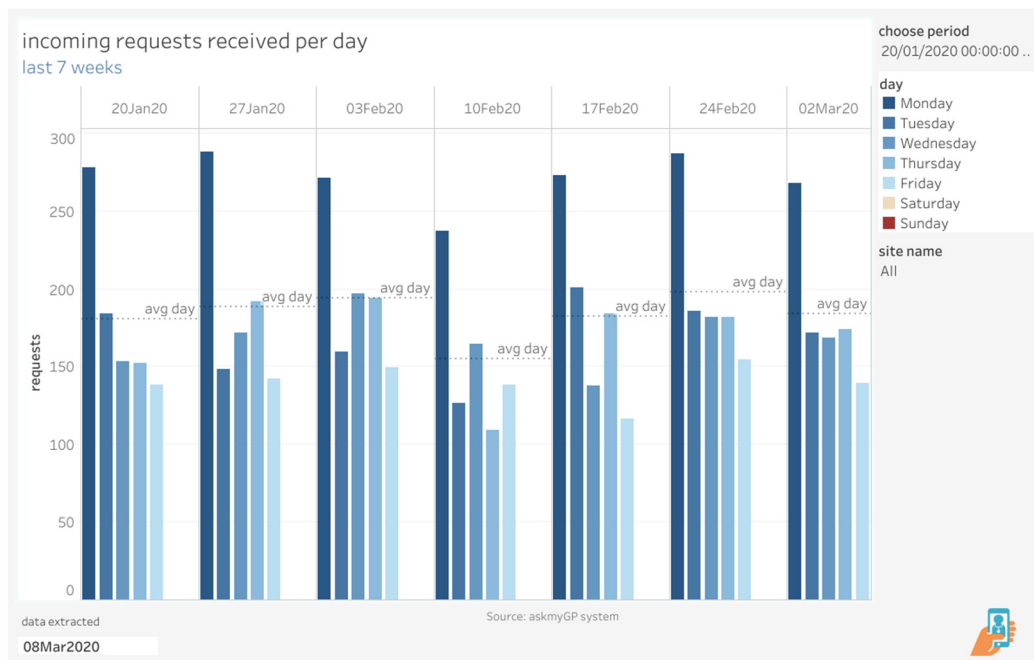


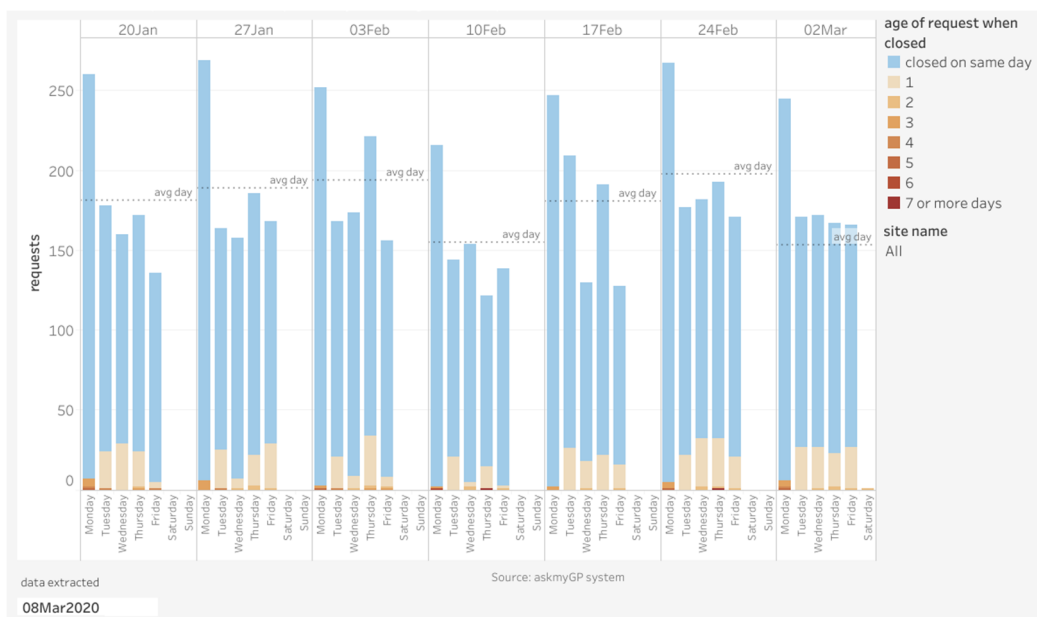
Fig 2. Patient requests made per day at New Court Surgery



Practice staff feel they are offering a much better and helpful service which has improved staff morale. As one member of the team said: “If I’m helping and satisfying patients and they are happy then I am happy.”

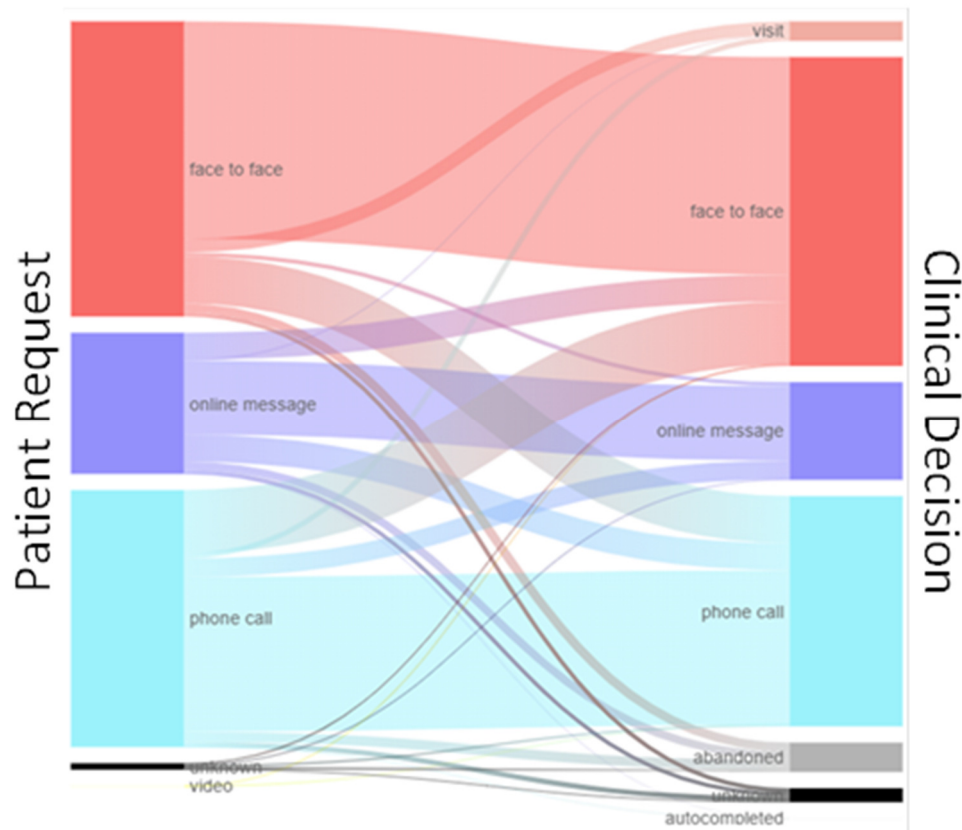
Dr Heather says: “There has been a massive improvement in the flow of patients through the surgery (Fig 3) and patient satisfaction is generally very high. The clinicians are more in control and we are able to deliver good access alongside great care.

Fig 3. Requests closed by the practice team per day at New Court Surgery



“Our face-to-face contact with patients is almost always appropriate and we can give patients the time we need (Fig 4). It’s a completely different way of working. With askmyGP we really are doing today’s work today.”

Fig 4. Mode of consultation requested by patients and delivered by clinicians



What the patients said:

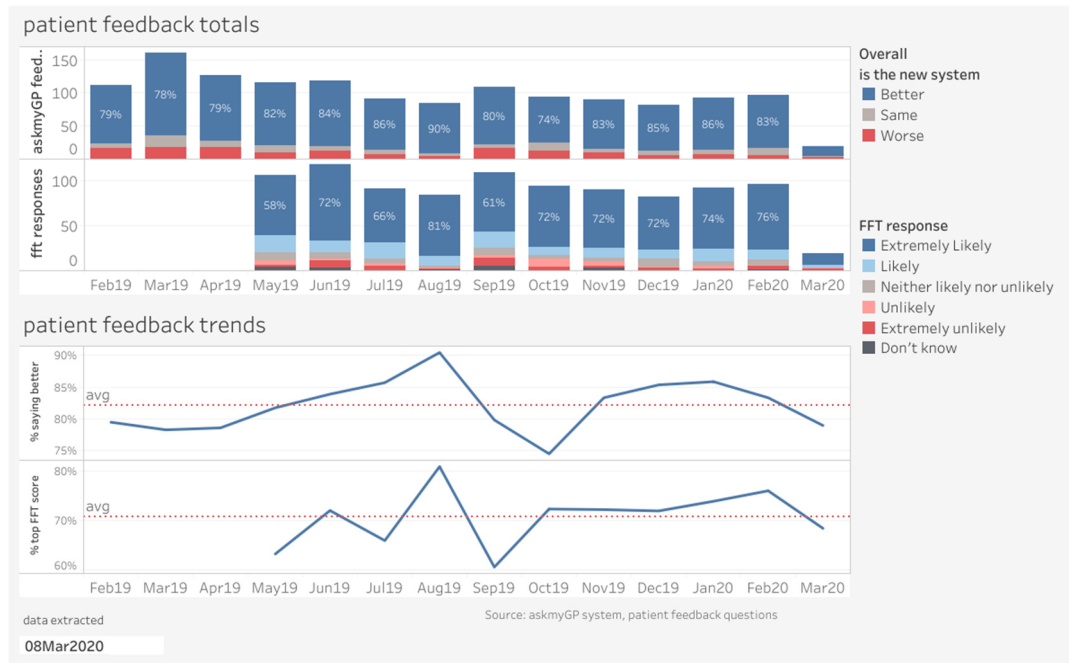
Across the Weston practices using askmyGP over 80% of patients believe that the new system is better (Fig 5), with hundreds of positive comments. Here is what some of New Court Surgery’s patients had to say:

“Super convenient to fill in the form and have a call with the doctor later that morning. Great that my issue was dealt with and prescription provided all over the phone.”

“Perfect for answering a brief question without taking up an appointment slot.”

“Having recently been unable to get an appointment for days to see a doctor this system seems very efficient and effective. Saves hours on the phone trying to get through to the surgery.”

Fig 5. Trends in patient feedback via 'Friends and Family' and system-based feedback.



New Court's tips for practices considering askmyGP

- Practices with a mix of clinicians such as physiotherapists, mental health nurses, social prescribers, pharmacists and physician associates are more likely to benefit from askmyGP.
- Allow sufficient time to train everyone at the practice on how to use the system.
- Implementation will require a complete system change in the practice. Expect some resistance from the team and offer support throughout the process.