

CASE STUDY

“ This easy to-use technology is tried and tested, so we know that it helps organisations in achieving cost improvement programmes. We have already sent 500 million messages on behalf of NHS customers across the UK.”

Mike Cunningham, Managing Director at Healthcare Communications

A Yorkshire hospital trust has launched a new digital portal that could save hundreds of thousands of pounds by allowing patients to receive and respond to appointment letters digitally.

Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has reduced by 51% the number of outpatient letters it sends, from 200,000 to 120,000 – using a new Patient Portal from pioneering firm Healthcare Communications. Barnsley was the first to introduce the technology, and following a six-month pilot it has signed a contract to roll it out across the trust – including a new initiative to get patients into hospital more quickly for vital cancer checks.

Healthcare Communications has worked with the NHS for 17 years and supports 100 trusts with multi-channel patient communication technology, such as Appointment Management and Patient Experience surveys.

Three other NHS trusts are also rolling out the Patient Portal.

TRUST BENEFITS

Simon Ainsworth, Barnsley's Associate Director of Operations for Women's, Children's, Outpatients & Support Services said: "One of the huge benefits of the portal is having the confidence and assurance that patients have received the invitation, as we get a digital receipt when it is opened. More than 90% of patients who accept the invitation access it within 24 hours. Like the rest of the NHS, we are working towards a challenging 28-day cancer appointment diagnosis target, and we see this is part of the solution to that.

"The potential for the portal is huge. We have already recommended it to several other trusts, and we are going to roll it out everywhere that we can, including pre-assessment and surgery appointments. As patient uptake continues to grow, so too will cost savings. It is also freeing up staff for more real-time contact with patients. They are more available to deal with phone queries, for example."

PATIENT UPTAKE

Barnsley began piloting the new technology in June 2017. Within three days of its launch, 46% of patients who were offered it had chosen digital letters over traditional post. Among the 30-69 age group, 'open' rates are high, at around 60%. If the digital letter is not accessed within 48 hours a postal letter is automatically sent to patients.

Patient Martin Ball, who also works at the trust said: "The application is really simple and intuitive. All the information that I need is on my phone – I don't have to remember to carry a letter with me to the appointment and it even puts the date straight into my calendar. It's great."

DNA REDUCTION

The portal along with new multi-channel appointment reminders has also reduced DNAs ('did not attend') for appointments by around five per cent. "There was an instant reduction in DNAs in week one," said Ainsworth. "Before, it was running at between 12-14% a week. Now it's between eight and nine per cent. It means we are minimising the waste of valuable appointments, and patients are being seen more quickly."

Barnsley Hospital reduce letter costs by over 40% with digital letters

PATIENT PORTAL FEATURES

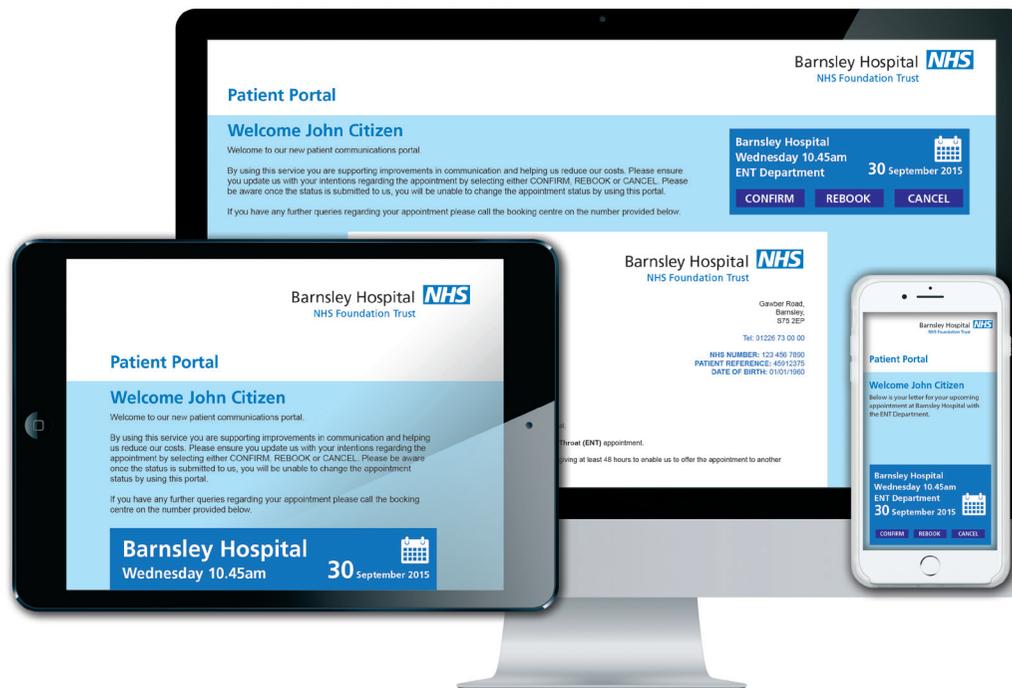
- Provides all hospital appointment details including date, time and location
- Accessible from multiple devices including smartphone, tablet and desktop
- Get an instant confirm, rebook or cancel via a single click from the patient
- Put the appointment directly into patient's digital calendar as a further reminder prompt
- Interactive home to hospital Google map with live travel info to reduce on the day delays
- Attach clinic specific instructions, essential reading and hospital information
- Translation functionality in 99 languages or read out aloud in a choice of 40 languages

NHS TRUSTS DELIVERING DIGITAL LETTERS

- East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust
- Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust
- Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust
- Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- East Cheshire NHS Trust
- Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
- Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

BENEFITS FOR TRUSTS AND PATIENTS

- Trackable communications: the Trust obtain a digital receipt that the patient has opened the letter
- Fully automated: the intelligence recognises who to send a digital letter to and automatically follows up with a postal letter if it is not accessed within 48 hours
- Staff love it: their time is no longer wasted on postage admin. Processes are much more streamlined with the ability to standardise and decrease letter templates
- Improved patient experience: patients receive hospital communications by their preferred channel. Multi language audio and text options also reduces accessibility barriers and Trust translation costs
- Digital letter delivery is instant: in some instances patients receive postal letters with little notice until the scheduled appointment and are unable to arrange time off without significant disruption e.g. work, child minding



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TRUST OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

Barnsley was shortlisted in the 'Trust of the year' category in the EHI award and the Yorkshire & Humber ASHN awards in 2018 which recognise digital innovation.

WORKING TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP

Our digital platform is designed exclusively for the NHS with direct input from frontline staff using it!

To find out how we can support with your Appointment Management and Patient Experience solutions, get in touch on **0845 9000 890** or email enquiries@healthcommuk

Calls to this number cost 7p per minute plus your phone company's access charge.

