# Training needs for staff providing remote services in general practice

Findings from the Remote by Default 2 research study
Sub-study led by Trish Greenhalgh and Rebecca Payne

General practice is now provided via different modalities – phone, text and online. Delivering care in these ways requires new skills from all members of the team. Training needs to be delivered within the context of the routines within individual workplaces, through case-based discussions and whole-team on-the-job training.
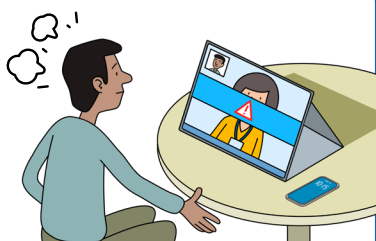
Existing NHS policies emphasise the importance of training staff to provide digital primary care. However, guidance on this topic is still being developed. This has left many practice staff feeling that they lack essential skills, and unclear where to turn for help.
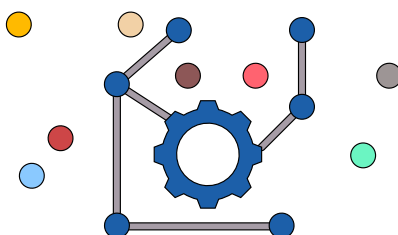
Training for working in practice takes place in a busy and complex environment which is often understaffed. Workflows are complex, making life complicated for staff and patients. Patients often have encounters with many different team members during the course of an illness, sometimes over several years.

We produced this set of competencies and capabilities for staff providing remote general practice services:
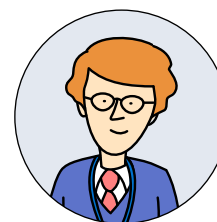
Experienced clinicians felt they needed training in:

- Technical skills to use remote technologies
- Communication and clinical skills to help them work effectively when using remote technologies
- Implementation skills to help them embed remote care within the practice
- Teaching skills so they could train staff and patients in using remote healthcare

New clinicians felt they needed training in:

- Technical skills to use remote technologies
- Correctly triaging patients
- Dealing with privacy, consent and information governance in remote consultations
- Communicating effectively with remote patients
- Assessing and examining a patient

Support staff felt they needed training in:

- Technical skills to use remote technologies within the practice's workflows
- Efficiently and safely assessing whether patients were suitable to use remote technologies
- Triaging and prioritizing patients
- Communicating effectively with patients by phone, text or other remote modalities

Learning summaries

Remote assessment in general practice is remarkably safe. With attention to staffing, training and appropriate channeling of patients to the right pathway, it could be made even safer.

For practice

- Practice staff need to make complex clinical and operational judgements within a stressful and busy environment and require training in more than just the technical elements of the systems used to deliver remote care

- Training needs to incorporate communication, assessment, triage and prioritisation skills

- Training should happen within the work-environment – sitting at a computer to do a mandatory training module isn't enough to prepare team members to deliver remote care within the complex environment of a practice

- Whole team training is highly valued by staff and can be highly effective

For policy

- **More resources** need to be put into training clinical and support staff to communicate and assess patients effectively by phone

- **Training** should be available within real-world situations, and should involve whole team training, case discussions and storytelling

- **The formal assessments** required to become a fully qualified GP don't assess all the competencies and capabilities needed to deliver remote and digital care. Safety-critical skills such as how to correctly prioritise a patient or collaborate with reception staff happen outside the clinical consultation but are vital to the safe delivery of care

- **Best practice examples of training** need to be captured and disseminated – much can be learnt from the out of hours sector which has decades of experience in providing remote care

More information on this paper

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Remote by Default 2

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