Choose and Book information for referrers

What is Choose and Book

Choose and Book is a national service that combines electronic booking and a choice of place, date and time for first hospital or clinic appointments.

Using Choose and Book brings a number of benefits to GPs and Hillingdon Community Health. The system provides a full directory of all the secondary care services available under Free Choice via the Directory of Services as well as those services locally commissioned by Primary Care Trusts.

GPs and practice staff can direct the patient to use the Choose and Book appointments line or the internet where they are unable to complete the booking themselves. Flexibility in the Choose and Book service means the referral process can be adapted to suit different working conditions and you can identify services with shortest waiting times.

You can access service-specific guidance to help shortlist the most appropriate services and highlight any helpful preliminary investigations. Advice and guidance from specialists can be sought prior to referral, supporting the development of better referral pathways and closer collaboration with secondary and community care colleagues.

GPs and practice staff can track the progress of a patient’s referral through Choose and Book and you have much greater access to patient care management plans, ensuring that the correct appointments are made. The system also reduces the amount of time spent on paperwork and bureaucracy.

Reduction in DNAs

Case studies show that when patients are given a choice of date and time for their appointments they are more likely to attend. This leads to fewer wasted appointments and helps to improve the overall efficiency of clinics.

Reduction in non-clinical primary care consultations

The amount of time spent by administrative support staff in responding to patients' enquiries about the progress of referrals is huge. In some cases a patient will book an appointment with their GP specifically to enquire about their referral. This reduces the amount of clinical time available in a practice. Choose and Book eliminates this administrative burden brings an immediate benefit in primary care for patients, GPs and practice staff with the availability of a National appointments line and web site.

Reliable and comprehensive clinical information

Referral information from primary care systems is made available to clinicians in a legible and consistent format and can be put to use in many areas including QIPP.

What is the Directory of Services (DoS)?

The DoS is the core of the Choose and Book application:
• It holds information that describes the services that organisations offer.
• It enables referring clinicians to search for appropriate services to which they can refer patients.
• It provides a window through which providers can display their services.

Service providers publish their services on the DoS in Choose and Book. This enables referrers to see a list of appropriate services when referring their patients. In the case of local services, commissioners need to specifically identify (commission) which services they wish to appear on the ‘primary care’ (available locally to GPs) menu, and which will appear on the ‘search all’ (national) menu.

Service descriptions for publishing on Choose and Book are written by service definers, using the service definition tool. This should be the clinician working with the Choose and Book lead in their organisation. The
services are categorised by specialty and then broken down into clinic types. A spreadsheet containing all current specialties and their associated clinic types is maintained on the Choose and Book website at the following link: http://www.chooseandbook.nhs.uk/staff/gettingmore/dosoptimize/sct.xls

Can Choose and Book manage referrals for the same or next day?

Local processes do not usually allow for referrals to happen this quickly. Three days is the usual minimum turnaround time that providers use. A telephone contact can be provided to enable the referrer to action a referral more quickly.

Can services be offered through Choose and Book if appointments are not managed through a compatible Patient Administration System (PAS)?

These services are listed in the Directory of Services so they are visible to referrers, but appointments would need to be booked through the Indirectly Booking Service (IBS) route. This means that the patient will be provided with information about the service and how they can contact the service provider directly to organise their appointment by the referrer.

What happens if there is no appointment available?

All service providers are responsible for ensuring that they have enough capacity to meet demand, and this includes having sufficient appointments available.

For Directly Bookable Services (DBS) – if a referrer or TAL tries to book an appointment with a specific provider, but no appointments are available, they are able to use the ‘defer to provider’ function to inform the relevant provider. The provider then has a responsibility to ensure that the patient is contacted, kept informed and given an appropriate appointment. Patients are also able to forward their details to their chosen provider via the patient web application.

For Indirectly Bookable Services (IBS), - which is when service provider does not have a compatible scheduling system - the service provider should always be able to book an appointment with the patient.

What is The Appointments Line (TAL)?

The Appointment Line provides a telephone booking service for patients to book, amend and re-book first outpatient appointments via Choose and Book. The Appointments Line is open to all patients seven days a week.

What is a Clinical Assessment Service (CAS)?

A Clinical Assessment Service provides the functionality to clinically triage a referral before deciding on an appropriate service to refer the patient on to. This can be a paper based triage or a face-to-face assessment. Patients can be treated at this assessment or, where a more appropriate service is identified, the patient can be referred on within Choose and Book, without a need to raise a new referral.

If a service is run from multiple locations does it have to be loaded into the Directory of Services as a clinic for each location?

The service information should be loaded as a clinic for each location. This ensures all the information about the clinic is correct and up-to-date. The location of a service is a key element in the choice discussion with the patient.
How are services provided by social services, integrated social care and health trusts accessible through Choose and Book?

NHS commissioned social services, integrated social care and health trusts services can be listed in the Directory of Services within a provider organisation. If the provider does not have an integrated Patient Administration System (PAS) they can set up an Indirectly Bookable Service (IBS).

Is there a minimum lead time for appointments to be made available on the Choose and Book system?

The minimum lead time for appointments (the time to the first available appointment) is specified by each service provider. To allow for administrative processing time, this is set locally and does vary between service providers, specialty and clinics.

Is there an expiry date for a referral if it is not actioned?

There is no expiry date on a referral, however, it is expected that referrers should monitor their worklists to follow up any patient who has not booked their appointment in a reasonable time. Every patient will get up to two reminder letters for an unbooked appointment.

How much time does it take to redirect or reject inappropriate referrals once they have been received?

If the Directory of Services is set up correctly, inappropriate referrals should not happen. Provider clinicians checking their worklists can review incoming referrals and immediately reject or redirect referrals onward to a more appropriate clinician or service if necessary.

Does using Choose and Book reduce ‘Did Not Attends’ (DNAs)?

There is evidence of a reduction of 30-70% in DNAs when patients have been able to choose their own date and time.

There is however some evidence of increased DNAs when local areas do not enable patients to participate in choosing their date and time.

How does the Choose and Book service work for patients with additional needs such as language support or advocacy?

Choose and Book does not offer a substitute for the relationship between the GP and patient. The responsibility remains with the GP to ensure each patient is able to be referred, and to highlight on the referral letter and within Choose and Book if there are additional needs such as language support, advocacy or other requirements.

There is formal guidance for clinicians supporting all patients on the Choose and Book website at: www.chooseandbook.nhs.uk/staff/communications/fact/access.pdf

How can the referrer find appropriate services for children or older people?

When a referrer searches for a service they can:

- Use the appropriate specialty name (i.e. paediatrics or geriatrics), which will direct them to children or older people clinics and services.
- Use the ‘age filter’ option. This searches for and only shows, services that accept patients under, or over, a certain age. This is easily set up by each provider at clinic level in their Directory of Services.
- Use SNOMED clinical terms searching for a relevant term as this will only show appropriate child or older people’s services.
- Additionally, a referrer can click on any service name they see on screen to see the information window displaying any age exclusions/restrictions or other special conditions that apply.
Is there a facility to seek advice on how appropriate a referral is before the booking is made?

Yes. The ‘Advice and Guidance’ function for referrers can be used to check whether a referral is appropriate and which service would be the right option. Additionally it can be used to seek advice on medication or other non-referral options.

How can information about a service in NHS Choices support patient choice in Choose and Book?

A patient can compare specific options on NHS Choices if they have been given a letter from their GP with a booking number and a password. The patient is then able to book their appointment online using Choose and Book.

Are there any language options for the referral information provided to the patient?

The responsibility remains with the GP to ensure each patient is able to be referred, and to highlight on the referral letter and within Choose and Book if there are additional needs such as language support or other requirements. There is formal guidance for clinicians supporting all patients on the Choose and Book website at: www.choosemandbook.nhs.uk/staff/communications/fact/access.pdf

The appointment reminder letters are available in a number of languages and also large print and braille are available if the referrer has identified this need.

What are Directly Bookable Services?

This is where a service provider’s appointment system is directly linked to Choose and Book so that appointments can be booked at the GP practice, online by the patient, or by The Appointments Line (TAL). The GP or practice support staff should discuss the options with the patient. Hillingdon Community Health Choose and Book services are all directly bookable.

What are Indirectly Bookable Services?

This is where a service provider’s appointment system is not directly linked to Choose and Book. Patients are required to contact their chosen hospital or service directly to arrange their appointment but do not have the other options of The Appointment Line or the internet to arrange their appointment.

If the appointment is for an IBS service, this is clearly highlighted on the ‘appointment request letter’ and should be explained by the GP to the patient.

Is Direct Booking the best model?

In most cases yes, but sometimes Indirectly Bookable Services (IBS) offer the opportunity for the provider to assess a patient’s clinical needs and arrange additional tests prior to the appointment (e.g. scans).

What does the ‘Indicative Waiting Time’ (IWT) mean?

This is an indication of how long the patient may have to wait before being seen. The information is valid at the time the referral is made.

For Indirectly Bookable Services (IBS) the value is the average wait of the last 20 appointments. For Directly Bookable Services (DBS) this will be the time to the third available appointment.
**Can a patient cancel their original appointment and book in with another provider through Choose and Book?**

The patient can cancel and rebook an alternative date and/or time with the same provider using the Patient Web Application (PWA) at home, or by calling The Appointments Line.

If the patient wants to use another provider and the options are on their shortlist, then they need to contact The Appointments Line.

**How can we learn more about the Choose and Book system and processes?**

Every provider has a Choose and Book lead and a local Choose and Book trainer who are experts on the system use, training, delivery and implementation. These leads can raise queries at national forums and disseminate information to users.

The Choose and Book lead for Hillingdon Community Health is Simon Wheat who can be contacted on email: swheat@nhs.net Tel: 01895488251

**Benefits for patients**

**Increased provision of services which are convenient to patients**

The journey through the NHS is increasingly patient focused. Appointments and admissions are made in discussion with the patient to get a mutually suitable date and time.

**Reduced anxiety**

Waiting to hear about appointments is a key concern for all patients. The electronic booking of appointments provides patients with more certainty. This helps them make arrangements and plan for the appointment. They will know straight away when their appointment will be, so they don’t have to wait for a confirmation letter to arrive.

**Increased referral security**

The system gives patients confidence that the referral information reaches the service provider. The information is protected by a series of stringent access controls and information governance. The system can also update referrals with up-to-date clinical developments.

**Help and guidance**

Ease to find the service you are looking for. Clinicians in all specialties have been involved to ensure that our information accurately reflects the services that we offer.

For more information go to: [www.chooseandbook.nhs.uk/staff](http://www.chooseandbook.nhs.uk/staff)