

Southend Health and Wellbeing Board – 10th December 2024

Public Questions

1. Question from Ms Cowdrey

Question

As a member of a local PPG and Residents Association, I have received many complaints and concerns about the move by many surgeries to the Anima system. Anima is the NHS approved software provider allegedly used by over 1 million patients across the UK. This system is supposed to enable patients to seek care from their GP quickly, with no need to wait in queues.

For many, this system replaces those already working effectively, including the NHS app, System online or other online services. I hear that patients have struggled so much with the system that they are looking to transfer to surgeries where Anima is not in place, although I understand that there is pressure on all GP surgeries to move to this system.

Getting a GP appointment is never easy, but it seems that this system simply exacerbates these difficulties and further digitally excludes many who struggle with IT or do not have access to internet or a connected device.

What is the rationale for the adoption of the Anima system across the MSE footprint and how are GP and other services being supported to ensure that patients are not discouraged from maintaining their health and well-being and are not digitally excluded, exacerbating health inequalities for many?

Answer

Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) is supporting practices to move to NHS England's Modern General Practice Model, part of which requires practices to utilise a single workflow method to collate relevant information at the point of initial patient contact. There are a number of digital tools available to practices to help with this, some of which are commissioned by the ICB. The ICB however does not commission Anima, practices using this tool are self-funding the software.

The Anima system is not intended to replace any existing access routes such as SystmOne or the NHS App. Anima integrates with the patients' medical records and can be accessed by patients through their existing NHS App log ins. Practices are supported in their use of it through training programmes and guidance documents provided directly by Anima. The same can be said for practices using other systems.

Regardless of which tool is used, all South East Essex practices have been encouraged to pass on their expert knowledge of the tools through the provision of tailored support to patients who are less digitally confident and/or vulnerable. This includes provision of user guides and offering in person support. Some practices also chose to hold awareness events with support of their patient participation groups. All care navigators/receptionists are available to provide ad hoc support as and when requested by practices.

Practices have also been encouraged to support patients who do not have online access. All care navigators/receptionists when speaking with a patient who walks in or telephones the practices will complete the digital forms for the patient. In addition to this, some practices have chosen to purchase tablets which are available in the practice for patient use.