

**L & SC Integrated Care Board
Primary Care Contracts Sub-committee**

Date of meeting	13.11.25
Title of paper	Online Consultations Contractual Requirement
Presented by	Donna Roberts
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Agenda item	7
Confidential	No

Purpose of the paper							
To provide details of the new contractual requirements for online consultations for General Practice and current compliance against that requirement.							
Executive summary							
From 1 October 2025, general practices were required to keep their online consultation tool open for the duration of core hours. This paper provides an overview of support offered by the ICB to manage compliance, returns submitted to NHSE to demonstrate compliance and plans to manage ongoing compliance against the contractual requirement.							
Recommendations							
Primary Care Contracts Sub-Committee is asked to note the new contractual requirement and the current compliance of General Practice in Lancashire and South Cumbria							
Governance and reporting (list other forums that have discussed this paper)							
Meeting	Date	Outcomes					
Conflicts of interest identified							
Not Applicable							
Implications							
(If yes, please provide a brief risk description and reference number)	Yes	No	N/A	Comments			
Quality impact assessment completed			X				
Equality impact assessment completed			X				
Data privacy impact assessment completed			X				
Financial impact assessment completed			X				
Associated risks			X				

Are associated risks detailed on the ICB Risk Register?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
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Report authorised by:	Craig Harris, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Commissioner
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Primary Care Contracts Sub-Committee

Online Consultations Contractual Requirement

1. Introduction

- 1.1 From 1 October 2025, general practices were required to keep their online consultation tool open for the duration of core hours (8:00am to 6:30pm Monday to Friday), for non-urgent appointment requests, medication queries and administrative requests.
- 1.2 The aim is for patients to be able to contact their practice by phone, online or walking in and to have the same experience whatever approach they use to get in touch.

2. Support Offered to Practices

- 2.1 The NHS Confederation presented a number of webinars for practices to attend around the requirements and best practice for online consultations including learning from practices who have already implemented it.
- 2.2 NHS England (NHSE) issued a 'Frequently Asked Questions' and support resources
- 2.3 The ICB developed Top Tips which includes helpful ideas. The LMC has provided support and clarified the requirements within their bulletins.
- 2.4 The ICB is also continuing to support practices with updated guidance.

3. Review and NHS England Returns

- 3.1 Leading up to 1 October 2025 NHSE requested a number of returns about whether practices met the contractual requirements. The responses to these returns were based on previous declarations from the Capacity and Access Impact Payments (CAIP) in 2024/25.
- 3.2 On 15 October 2025 NHSE contacted all ICBs with a request to complete a return on the position of all practices within their ICB. This had a very tight deadline of two days.
- 3.3 Primary Care Place Teams reviewed all practices websites to check their online consultation status. In the majority of cases the websites were easy to navigate and clearly showed the opening and response times for their online consultation tools and that they met the requirements.

- 3.4 Where the opening and response times were not clear the practices were contacted requesting that they confirm these details. Many practices use a system on which the opening and response times can be included. Other practices use systems where the patients must register with that system in order to use it. Therefore, unless you are a patient or it is not possible to check opening times.
- 3.5 Not all Practices responded in the timescale therefore the return was submitted with the caveat that due to the short deadline there was still some information which was outstanding. The Primary Care Place Teams have continued to liaise with the relevant practices.
- 3.6 NHSE requested a further return the subsequent week to ascertain any improvement.
- 3.7 As at 29 October 2025 the ICB position is as below:
 - 196 practices
 - 195 (99%) practices are compliant with the requirements
 - The remaining practice is using online consultations; however, they are not fully compliant as they are closing the tool earlier than 6:30pm due to patient safety concerns (patient requests relating to urgent medical concerns received shortly before closing time). The Primary Care Team is continuing to liaise with this practice to ensure it is contractually compliant
- 3.8 The Primary Care Place Teams will continue to review the AccuRX data and practice websites to ensure that practices remain compliant.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The Primary Care Contracts Sub Committee is asked to note the new online consultations contractual requirement and the current compliance.

Joanne Cooper

29 October 2025