

Yvonne Bennett

Tameside and Glossop Acute Services NHS Trust

By June 2007, over 3.5 million patient referrals had been made using Choose and Book. These are patients who have not had to put their life on hold while they wait to hear from a hospital when their appointment will be, and who have been able to book their appointment at a time that suits them; be it at the surgery, or later at home via the telephone or internet.

One patient to benefit from the service is Yvonne Bennett, from Cheshire, who has been referred to a specialist by her GP using Choose and Book on two separate occasions.

Yvonne is a patient of Dr Amir Hannan's at Thornley House Medical Centre in Hyde, Cheshire and she works part-time as an accountant for her husband's local garage business.

"I've been a patient at the surgery for over eight years. I'm very happy with the practice and have recently got involved with their NHS Care Records Service patient group where I have access to my patient records. This is where I first heard of Choose and Book and I was interested to see how it worked".

Early this year, Yvonne suffered a number of falls, resulting in a broken wrist, hand and shoulder - all on different occasions. Dr Hannan was concerned that she always seemed to fall onto one side and referred her to the local triage team so she could be seen by a specialist.

Booking an appointment over the phone

"Dr Hannan first referred me to the triage clinic for a more detailed assessment of my condition. He used Choose and Book to make my referral and I left the surgery with a reference number and a password so that when I called the assessment centre they would be able to pull up my notes and confirm who I was.

"Dr Hannan was happy to make the appointment for me there and then at the surgery, but I thought I'd like to go home and check the dates first. Later that night, I telephoned the number given to me by Dr Hannan and made my first appointment.

"Following my initial appointment, the triage team decided I should be seen by a neurology consultant. The triage team used Choose and Book to make my referral and talked me through the choices available to me. They pointed out that the same neurologist worked at each of the three different sites so I just picked the local hospital, Tameside General, because that is closer to home."

Booking an appointment online

"I left the triage clinic with my Appointment Request printout with details of my reference number and password; and when I got home, I decided to book my appointment on the internet as I wear two hearing aids so I thought using the internet would be easier for me.

"I found using Choose and Book online great! I really liked being able to see all the dates and times listed on screen in front of me. Dates always ring a bell, and seeing them listed on the screen made such an impact. I was able to have a look and work out which one was most convenient for me. Making my appointment online at home meant that I could take my time, think about what else I was doing that week and work out what the traffic would be like getting to the hospital."

A new way of doing things which takes away the anxiety

"Before Choose and Book, the only time I recall having a choice was when I made a request to be referred to a particular consultant. The old way meant that I would be forever waiting to hear back from the hospital. I remember wondering 'should I ring up and make sure they have received my referral letter?'

"With Choose and Book, that's no longer the case. There's no worry that your referral letter has ended up at the bottom of the pile and the anxiety of waiting for an appointment is gone - you can book your appointment there and then."

"The benefits of Choose and Book are obvious to me. It is so much easier being able to just phone up or use the internet and pick a date that is convenient to me. Choose and Book gave me the freedom and time to get it right first time, and I could print off the details of my appointment afterwards. It's fantastic!"