

Audrey Bowmaker

Patient, Ryhope Health Centre, Sunderland

Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust (STPCT) now has 52 out of 54 GP practices using Choose and Book.

Nationally, Sunderland continues to rank amongst the top twenty PCTs for Choose and Book usage, and as at October 2008 Sunderland PCT also ranks first across the North East Strategic Health Authority.

This record truly shows the success this local area are enjoying, through using Choose and Book to refer patients for their specialist appointments.

With booking percentages continually increasing, it is evident that more and more patients in Sunderland are choosing, with their GP, to book their appointments through the Choose and Book system – appreciating all the benefits that the electronic system can bring.

Audrey Bowmaker is a retired nurse from Ryhope in Sunderland. She has been a patient at Ryhope Health Centre for some 50 years.



When her GP, Dr. Gupta, discussed with Audrey the need for her to be referred for an ENT appointment, Audrey was more than happy to use the Choose and Book system.

“The first question I was asked was where and which hospital I would like to go to? I chose to go to Sunderland Royal Hospital,” remembers Audrey.

“By the time I came out of my GP’s surgery I knew what day I was going to see the consultant and where I had to go for my appointment. I received a confirmation letter within two weeks” Audrey was seen by her consultant within four weeks.

Audrey has been referred to hospital through Choose and Book on a number

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of occasions and speaks very positively about her experience of being referred electronically.

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Audrey finds Choose and Book quicker and less frustrating than the traditional paper referral process. After consultation with her GP and discussions surrounding choice on where she could be treated, and an appointment date and time, Audrey was directed to the practice medical secretary to make her appointment. In nearly all cases the patients would leave at this point with an appointment date and time, in Audrey's case the medical secretary rang Audrey at home after lunch that day

and her appointment was discussed and booked.

"In the past, the 'old way' made you feel as if you weren't getting anywhere," says Audrey. "You had to wait for an appointment letter coming through the appointment system, which could take maybe a fortnight or three weeks. It was a slow process".

"I think Choose and Book is much quicker. When you come out of the doctor's surgery you know exactly what has been done. You know you've been referred and what day you have to go ...it's [Choose and Book] much quicker really".

Audrey believes that leaving the surgery with the referral information and knowing her appointment date and time the same day made her less anxious. Audrey felt more in control of her own healthcare at this concerning time, she states that although being referred "is still a bit stressful, your eyes are now opened into what is going to happen". She also feels that you "can put your own ideas forward and have a little bit more of a say"

"You're not anxious about the time you're waiting. You go in, you know what's

going to happen and that's it. I'm delighted with it".

If Audrey was impressed by the speed of her appointment, she was impressed further by the quality and efficiency of service at City Hospitals Sunderland. "I was taken in on my appointed date and time and everything happened in the one day, which I didn't expect because usually you have to go back. I had all the tests and everything done while I was there."

With the introduction of Free Choice and Choose and Book patients can now choose, at the point of referral, where they would like to be treated. Audrey believes this to be a further positive step.

"I think it's particularly useful for people who have families that live away. They can choose to go to a hospital near their family. I chose to stay at Sunderland to be near my friends and family."

NHS Connecting for Health is supporting the NHS to introduce new computer systems and services such as Choose and Book. These will help the NHS to deliver better, safer care for patients. For more information about this, visit our website www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk