

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**GP online consultations launched across Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby**

A new online consultation service could revolutionise the way patients across Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby areas receive medical advice from their GP.

NHS Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is using digital technology to bring choice to patients who want to consult online, in many cases avoiding the need to make a visit to the practice altogether.

Eight practices across the area have expressed an interest in trialling the service for 12 months and three practices (with a combined patient population of almost 27,500) have already “gone live”. This initiative is being funded by NHS England.

Patients who submit their symptoms online will get a quick response (typically the same day) which could be advice, directing to other support such as the pharmacy or a booking for an appointment if necessary. The service also offers around the clock NHS self-help information, signposting to services, and a symptom checker.

Patients can also request prescriptions and test results, referral letters and medical reports.

Dr Charles Parker, CCG Clinical Chair said “This is good news for patients who can choose to use the service and get quicker access to health advice. GPs see the people who need their help most which could lead to shorter waiting times and reduced travel for some patients – particularly in our most rural areas. It’s early days yet but so far results are encouraging and we’re hoping to see more people using the online service in the future.”

Dr Julia Brown, Senior Partner at Leyburn Medical Practice and Harewood Medical Practice said: “We know that online consultation won’t be for everyone and it’s a cultural shift in how we access health services, but it offers a convenient choice for people saving time off work and a journey into the practice. Patients can now get advice and help much more quickly than they would if they waited for an appointment, which may not have been necessary in the first place.

“So far all of the patients who have used it have been very positive and the GPs are finding it very helpful in terms of the richness of the information that they have to enable decision making.”

Feedback from a patient who recently used the service said that it is “quick and easy and good for people who are anxious about ringing up the practice”.

To use online consultations patients simply visit their own GP practice website for more information.

**ENDS**

**For further information contact HRW CCG Communications and Engagement on 01609 767621**

Notes

Picture caption: Leyburn Medical Practice

 Dr Charles Parker