

**Cafodd yr ymateb hwn ei gyflwyno i'r ymgynghoriad ar y cyd a gynhelir gan [y Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) a'r [Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus a Gweinyddiaeth Gyhoeddus](#) fel sail i'w [gwaith craffu ar Iechyd a Gofal Digidol Cymru](#)**

**This response was submitted to the joint consultation held by the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) and the [Public Accounts and Public Administration Committees](#) to inform their [scrutiny of Digital Health and Care Wales](#)**

**SDHCW 08**

**Ymateb gan: | Response from: Coleg Brenhinol Meddygon Teulu | Royal College of General Practitioners**

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## Scrutiny of Digital Health and Care Wales: RCGP Cymru Wales Response

1. Digital Health and Care Wales (DCHW) was incepted in 2021 to replace what was deemed by the Public Accounts Committee in November 2018 as the outdated NHS Wales Informatics service. DCHW was tasked with delivery new digital solutions, supporting staff in the use of systems, and improving how data is shared and stored across NHS Wales.<sup>1</sup>
2. RCGP appreciates that DCHW has been in operation only since 2021, however incorporating digital technology into healthcare has long been an issue in Wales. The aforementioned. Public Accounts Committee's report referenced a dated system that did not reflect the advances in technology used by a wider society. It cited that the Iphone had been released 15 years prior to the report to illustrate the disparity in technology available in the wider world and what is being in used within our health services.
3. RCGP Cymru Wales has consulted with its members regarding the use of digital technology to reduce workload pressures and to improve communication in primary care. The results of our questions to members and of our quantitative survey on working practices suggest that the NHS in general and primary care still has a rapid incline ahead both in the uptake of digital services and the level of technology being offered if it is to reflect society at large.
4. Our members have expressed some frustration with the difficulty in sharing information between secondary and primary care. Particularly, the system of letter writing during referrals between services. RCGP Cymru Wales believes that DCHW should implement a streamlined system to be rolled out across health boards showing the 'journey' of a patient referral between GP and specialist services. RCGP Cymru Wales believes that this should be accessible by the patient so they can be aware of the stage of the referral, any action required and any updates.
5. Further discussions with members have noted the confusion between using different system to access different records or talk to different circumstances. One member noted that general practices needing to have their own relationship with the information commissioner's office causes nervousness in sharing data, which would be negated if one central system used across the NHS could be adopted.
6. We would also like to highlight the current situation regarding the general use of digital in primary care. While it is often stated COVID-19 has resulted in a greater use of

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<sup>1</sup> Public Account Committee, Informatics Systems in the NHS 2018

digital services across primary care, it is worth noting that many remote consultations were undertaken by telephone rather than video meeting.

7. The College's 2022 tracker survey highlights how some digital services are used in primary care. While 80% of GPs are now using remote consultations only 58% of survey respondents were using video as part these appointments.

8. The survey noted that other digital tools are underused in primary care with only 18% using Patient Online, 18% using a practice app. and 9% offering an online triage. Less than half (43%) of GP respondents work in practices offering online appointment booking or online prescriptions. We have called for both of these services to be rolled more readily in our 8-point plan.<sup>2</sup>

9. In addition to these relatively low numbers of GPs using up to date technology 16% report using electronic patient monitoring devices or wearables.

10. These statistics suggest that there are some practices leading in the way in terms of digital while the majority are not using it to its full potential with some outliers barely using digital at all.

11. While 86% of GP respondents work in a practice where a text message service is offered in 2022 this should be much closer to 100%. When corresponding with hospitals and other service providers 64% of survey respondents work in a practice which still uses a fax machine.

12. RCGP suggest that DCHW focus its efforts in some part on encouraging consistency across health boards and across primary care providers, to promote universal and streamlined approaches that can be easily accessed by all services and to widely promote digital technology as a way of reducing workload, admin and improving patient interactions. Many primary care patients are not receiving the benefit of DCHW after its first year in operation.

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<sup>2</sup> RCGP 8-point plan, October 2021