



Productive
Primary
Care

Doctor
First

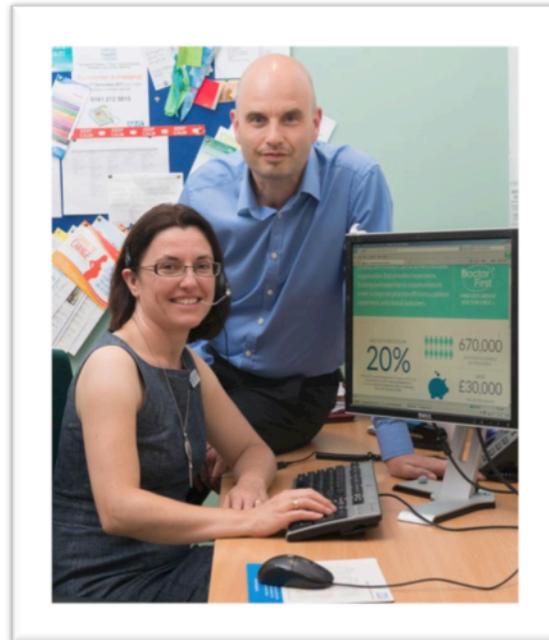
Salford Health Matters

The Practice: Salford Health Matters provides high quality health services at three practices covering more than 14,000 people in some of the city's most deprived areas.

Alongside core GP services, it also runs a homeless drop-in centre, a social prescribing project and specialist children services. As a community interest company all profits are reinvested in primary health for the benefit of local people.

**Our Doctor First story
by GP Clare Gibbons
Chief Executive Neil
Turton:**

Before, we tended to see those people who had phoned first on the day, regardless of clinical need.



Some people who couldn't get through would go elsewhere – to walk-in centres and A&E departments – or were just not seen by anyone.

Patients were booking two weeks in advance, which meant many would be better by then and not need to be seen, or they just didn't turn up – so we had a lot of missed appointments. Nobody was happy with the way things were.

We had tried telephone triage as a half-way solution but that didn't work and realised we needed a more radical change in our management practices.

We wanted a system that could meet increasing demand with increased clinician productivity and was safe. Like all practices we are under pressure to reduce A&E usage.

Doctor First ticked all the boxes and more.

It changes the way everyone in the practice works – a complete re-design of the front end of the business.

It has given us a framework with data collection to assess demand and make capacity fit – which was a big plus when selling the idea to staff.

Doctor First went live in October 2012 following a three-month training and lead-in period in which we cleared our appointment backlog.

It makes everything so much more manageable. Patients are never told a doctor is off so they can't have an appointment.

Instead of patients having to go through the frustrating 'fastest finger first' phone lottery to get an appointment - sometimes days or even weeks ahead - they can now ring up at any time between 8am and 6.30pm and know they will get to speak to a doctor.

If, after a phone consultation, an appointment is needed or requested by the patient they can be seen on the same day or at a time to suit them.

There is about a 40% conversion to appointment rate. Once people realise the phone consultation is not a barrier, or a second-class system, then they really like it.

No one is told no. They know they can speak to a doctor, and if they need to be seen they will be.

We are helping many more people under this system – and more appropriately.

Missed appointments and complaints are right down, and while A&E attendance rates are going up in the Eccles GP cluster ours have come down by nearly eight per cent.

Salford Health Matters figures:

- 13% increase in number of patients helped per month
- Patient satisfaction levels much higher
- Do Not Attends (DNAs) reduced to virtually zero
- Reduction in stress for clinical staff
- Potential savings of £212,000 per year compared to traditional appointment system, which can be re-invested back into local health care services
- Reduction in A&E usage by patients of around 15% compared to same period 12 months ago

Patients are much happier, GPs and practice staff are much less stressed and the system delivers real savings – which can be reinvested back into healthcare here in Salford – because our surgeries are run much more efficiently.

The data we get enables us to very accurately match resources to demand. I just couldn't imagine going back to how it was before.