

Near Me: summary of the 12-week scale up for COVID-19



Introduction

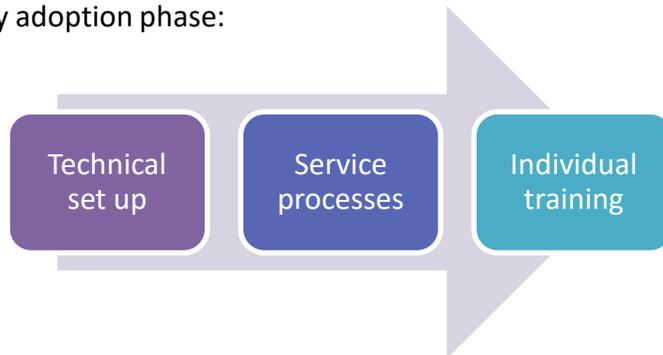
Near Me video consulting is transforming the way people are accessing health and care services. In response to COVID-19, a 12-week scale up plan was launched on 9 March 2020. In February, there were around 300 Near Me consultations a week: by June, it was over 16,000 a week, with more than 150,000 in total.

29 June 2020

www.tec.scot
www.nearme.scot

Three-step process underpinning scale up

The national Near Me team developed a three-step approach for rapid scale up, based on learning from and evaluation of the early adoption phase:



Technical set up: equipment required for video consulting (eg, webcams, internet) and creating Near Me waiting areas.

Service processes: embedding Near Me into a clinical service's existing ways of working through national resources (available at www.tec.scot), and 1:1 support for individual teams including coaching, making test calls and process mapping.

Training: training resources developed and hosted on NHS Education for Scotland (NES) Turas [platform](#) covering technical use of Near Me, video consulting skills and processes for using video consulting. Sharing learning and training webinars hosted by NES, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the National VC Team, which reached over 5,000 participants.

Near Me Consultations by Week from March 1st

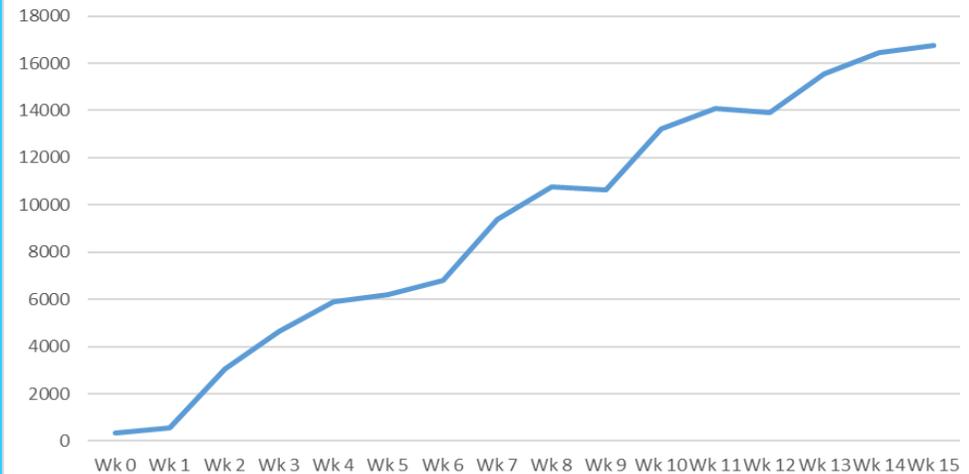


Figure 1: Near Me expansion: progress achieved in the 12-week scale up

Strategic direction: March 2020

- NHS Scotland Chief Executive wrote to all NHS boards to highlight the use of digital technologies in response to COVID-19.
- Director of Digital Reform & Service Engagement asked NHS boards to form a Near Me implementation team.
- Scottish Government Primary Care division wrote to boards about establishing Near Me within GP practices.

Platform licence

Near Me is powered by the Attend Anywhere platform. The licence for the platform was extended to March 2022 to cover unlimited use in health and care.

Priorities for 12-week scale up: health care and care homes

Primary care scale up

In response to COVID-19, most GP practices moved to first-line telephone triage before consultations, with a reduction in routine long-term condition reviews. Structured support to enable Near Me to be used in GP practices was provided by Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) to 10 NHS boards covering 652 practices. The remaining boards chose to use local board teams. Every GP practice was contacted by telephone to introduce Near Me, and then a follow up call was arranged to discuss the processes for implementing Near Me.

Call volumes in general practice have increased from 20 calls per week in February 2020 to around 3,500 per week at the end of the 12 week scale up, spread over approximately 600 practices in each week. Barriers to further increase include a lack of equipment, current models of care, and patient and clinician confidence about using new technology.

Secondary care scale up

Many outpatient services were suspended during lockdown but Near Me enabled some essential appointments to continue. Structured support to enable Near Me was provided to mental health, maternity and paediatric services by Healthcare Improvement Scotland; and to oncology, haematology and respiratory services by the Scottish Access Collaborative. The support included webinars, coaching of individual teams, written resources and troubleshooting problems. In addition to the targeted specialties, expansion of Near Me across all of secondary care occurred, with the support of local Near Me teams in boards. A high level of use was seen among Allied Health Professionals.

Care homes scale up

In collaboration with the Care Inspectorate, guidance on the use of Near Me in care homes was developed. Each of the 813 older people's care homes was contacted and support provided on use of Near Me (including private, charity and authority-run homes). This has included discussion on the availability of WiFi and equipment, training on the use of Near Me and signposting to support materials.

Communication and engagement activities

- Public information website developed www.nearme.scot
- Scale up programme launched by the First Minister
- Locally tailored press releases issued to over 120 news outlets
- Social media activity undertaken, including over 600k impressions via @NHSNearMe Twitter account
- Briefing of Ministers, MSPs, Medical Directors and Senior Scottish Government, NHS and Local Authority Leaders
- Engaging with professional bodies and third sector organisations
- Library of case studies, quotes and film of clinicians and patients

Evaluation of the 12 weeks: recommendations

1. Create a vision for Near Me, and encourage NHS boards to prioritise it.
2. Develop a clear plan for provision of national Near Me support, ensuring it is co-ordinated with NHS boards.
3. Use short, regular, scheduled meetings, with a clear purpose and anticipated outcomes.
4. Develop a national data and reporting system.
5. Develop a learning system or national network to share learning and best practice, both technical and clinical.
6. Establish a dedicated Near Me website to house resources. Continue to develop national guidance, training resources, case studies and best practice.

These recommendations have informed the Near Me work plan for 2020/21. Actions already taken are:

- A Vision for Near Me was produced in May 2020, endorsed by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, and available [here](#). It is reflected in Boards' mobilisation plans.
- A Near Me Network has been created including an initial deep dive improvement project and sharing webinars.
- A Near Me dashboard was been developed with NSS and is being tested with Near Me leads in boards in June.

See the Near Me forward-look work plan for more information