Help for your symptoms

What we do now and can do in the future

NHS England

Digital Urgent & Emergency Care • Help For Your Symptoms • 111 online

Help for your symptoms

OUR MISSION

We deliver a national digital channel

freely available 24/7 to anyone in England, guiding people to the right help for their symptoms

We connect patients directly to every kind of NHS service in their neighbourhood

whether they need A&E, a GP, a pharmacist or a dentist

We have the stable platform and capabilities to test and evolve with regions and trusts

as it is envisioned in the 10-Year Health Plan for England

WHAT WE ARE KNOWN FOR

We are leaders in offering online symptom assessments

that is clinically safe and easy for users to complete

We are the only digital service in the NHS that enables patients to refer themselves directly to all care settings

including primary, secondary, and urgent care

We are innovators in healthcare technology

- First NHS digital service to meet the GDS live service standard
- First online symptom assessment built to fully user-centred design principles, regularly iterated with usability testing, user interviews and feedback
- First cloud-based NHS service to access Personal Demographics Service (PDS)
- Built a coronavirus assessment service (before lockdowns) in less than four weeks
- Delivered first clinical webchats in the NHS in England
- Early adopter of next-generation NHS Booking and Referrals Standard (BaRS)
- Maintain our own scalable, cloud-based architecture that exceeds 99.9% availability and is independently certified as ecologically sustainable

This is what people think we are doing

Patient health trigger

Digital clinical triage on 111 online

Signpost

Pathways dispositions

- 999
- A&E UTC
- GP
- Self care

This is what we are actually doing

Help for your symptoms

Patient health trigger

24/7 access

Available at 111.nhs.uk

Guided entry

Find a pathway

Digital clinical triage

Integration with other services

Electronic bookings, referrals, and self-referrals

- **Self care**
- **CAS** (clinical assessment service)
- **Primary care**
- **Secondary care**
- **ED / UTC / 999**

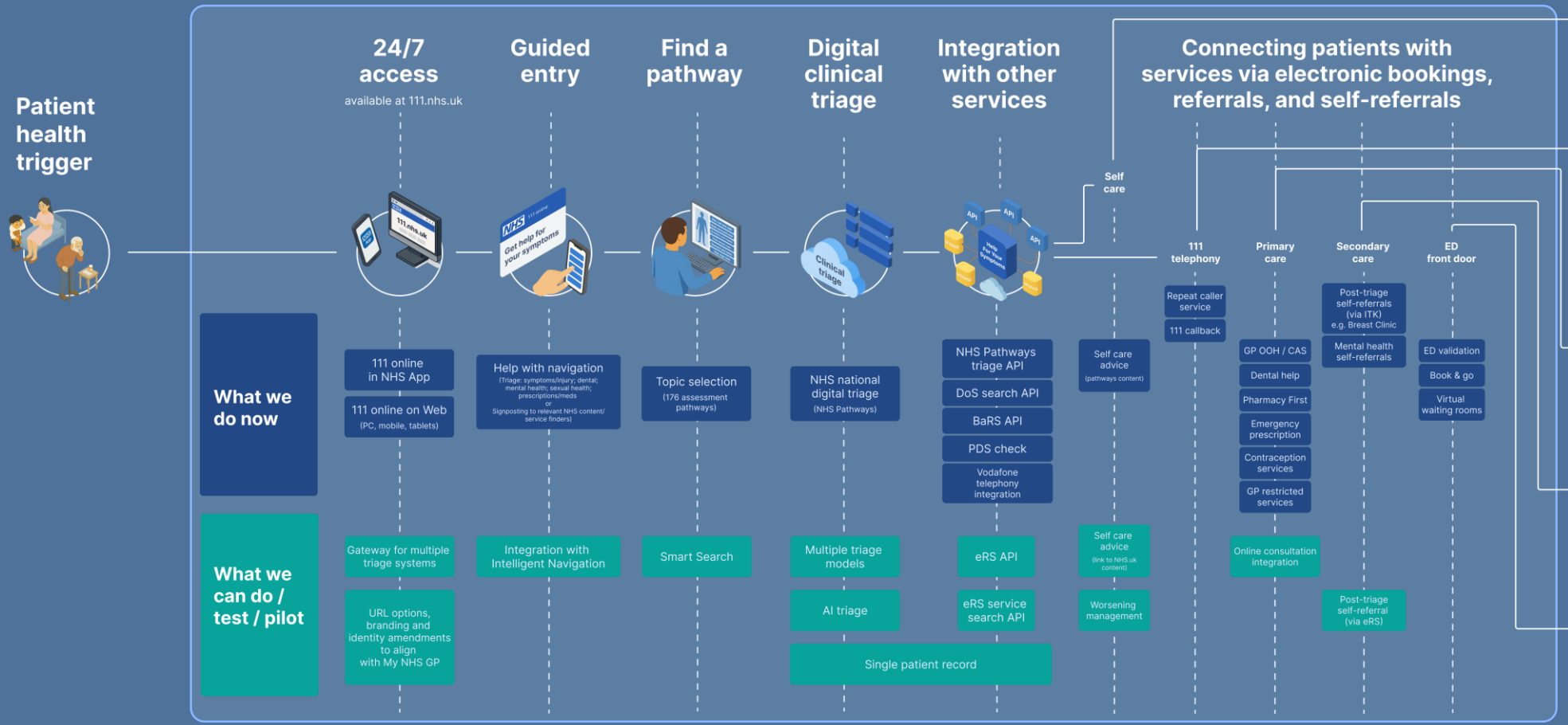
We deliver a national digital channel

We have the stable platform and capabilities to test and evolve with regions and trusts

We connect patients directly to every kind of NHS service in their neighbourhood

Full view of our capabilities

Help for your symptoms



Capabilities deep dive

What we do now | What we can test / pilot

Patient health trigger

24/7 access

Available at 111.nhs.uk

111 online in NHS App

111 online on Web
(PC, mobile, tablets)

URL options, branding and identity amendments to align with My NHS GP

Gateway for multiple triage systems

Guided entry

Find a pathway

Digital clinical triage

Integration with other services

Electronic bookings, referrals, and self-referrals

Self care

CAS
(clinical assessment service)

Primary care

Secondary care

ED / UTC / 999

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Capabilities deep dive

What we do now | What we can test / pilot

Guided entry

Help with navigation

(Triage: symptoms/injury; dental; mental health; sexual health; prescriptions/meds or Signposting to relevant NHS content/service finders)

Integration with Intelligent Navigation

Patient health trigger

24/7 access

Find a pathway

Digital clinical triage

Integration with other services

Electronic bookings, referrals, and self-referrals

Self care

CAS (clinical assessment service)

Primary care

Secondary care

ED / UTC / 999

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NHS

What we do now

What we can test / pilot

Capabilities deep dive

Patient health trigger

24/7 access

Guided entry

Find a pathway

Topic selection

(176 assessment pathways)

Smart Search

Digital clinical triage

Integration with other services

Electronic bookings, referrals, and self-referrals

Self care

CAS
(clinical assessment service)

Primary care

Secondary care

ED / UTC / 999

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What we do now

What we can test / pilot

Capabilities deep dive

Patient health trigger

24/7 access

Guided entry

Find a pathway

Digital clinical triage

- NHS national digital triage (NHS Pathways)
- Multiple triage models
- AI / probabilistic triage
- Integration with single patient record

Integration with other services

Electronic bookings, referrals, and self-referrals

Self care

CAS (clinical assessment service)

Primary care

Secondary care

ED / UTC / 999

What we do now | What we can test / pilot

Capabilities deep dive

Patient health trigger

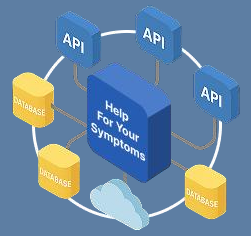
24/7 access

Guided entry

Find a pathway

Digital clinical triage

Integration with other services



- NHS Pathways triage API
- DoS search API
- BaRS API
- PDS check
- Vodafone telephony API
- eRS API
- eRS service search API
- Integration with Single Patient Record

Electronic bookings, referrals, and self-referrals

Self care

CAS (clinical assessment service)

Primary care

Secondary care

ED / UTC / 999

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What we do now | What we can test / pilot

Capabilities deep dive

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Digital clinical triage

Integration with other services

Connecting patients with services via electronic bookings, referrals, and self-referrals

Self care	CAS	Primary care	Secondary care	999 / A&E / UTC
Self care advice (Pathways content)	Repeat caller service	GP OOH / CAS	Post-triage self-referrals (via ITK) e.g. Breast clinic	ED validation
	111 callbacks	Dental help		Book & go
		Pharmacy First	Mental health self-referrals	Virtual waiting room
		Emergency prescription		
		Contraception services		
		GP restricted services		
Self care advice (link to NHS.uk content)		GP online consultation integration	Post-triage self-referrals (via eRS)	
Worsening management				

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CASE STUDY

Breast cancer diagnostic clinic self-referral (Somerset pilot)

SUMMARY

The Somerset breast diagnostic self-referral pilot introduced a new, digital-first pathway allowing eligible patients with breast symptoms to refer themselves directly to the breast clinic via 111 online. By removing the need for a GP appointment, the pilot aimed to speed up access to assessment, reduce pressure on primary care, and improve patient confidence and experience. Working closely with Somerset FT, we co-designed and clinically assured a safe, user-centred triage journey that routes appropriate patients straight to specialist services.

KEYWORDS

111 online • Self-referral • Somerset • Symptomatic triage • Saving GP time • Patient value

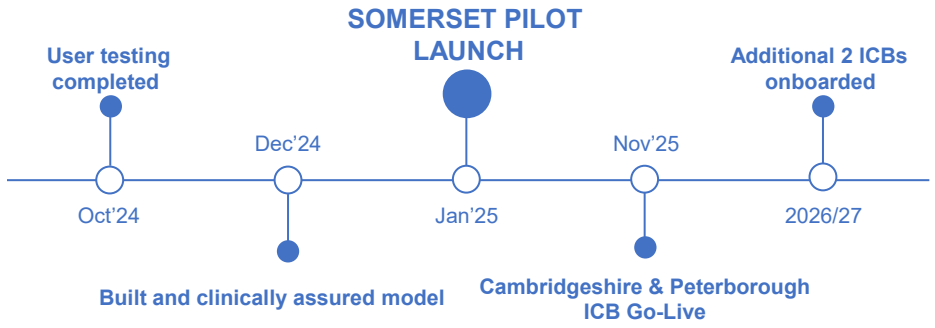
The challenges

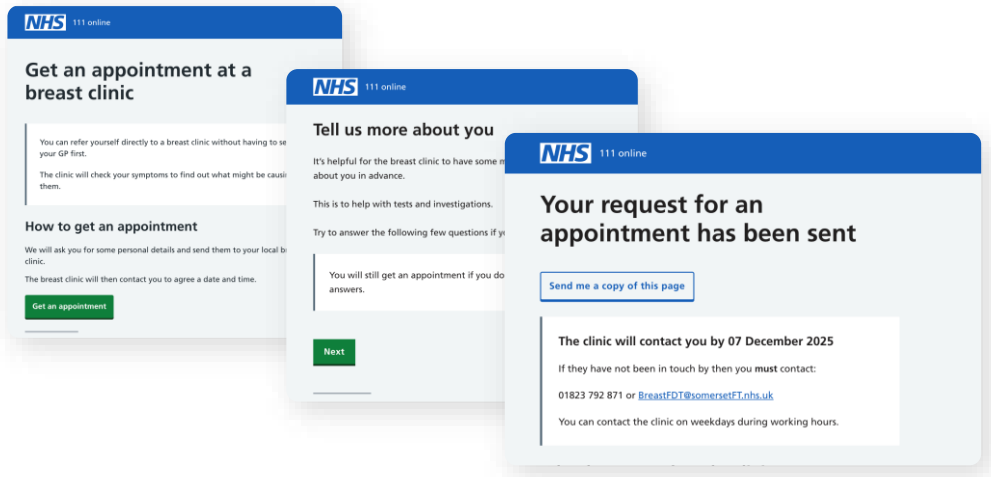
- **GP appointment bottlenecks** can delay access to breast assessment.
- **High demand on GP services** means many patients wait days or weeks before initial review.
- **No alternative access route** for symptomatic patients needing timely reassurance or escalation.

Our methodology

- **User-centred design approach**, co-designed with clinicians, Trust operational teams and patients.
- **Test-and-learn pilot model**, with continuous refinement based on Trust feedback and live data.

Delivering our solution





Our outcomes & impact

658 Self-referrals in 11 months

59% Conversion rate to clinic

22 GP days saved

6.2% Cancer diagnosis rate

77% Uptake rate

3 minutes Average time to complete pathway

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CASE STUDY

Breast cancer diagnostic clinic self-referral (Somerset pilot)

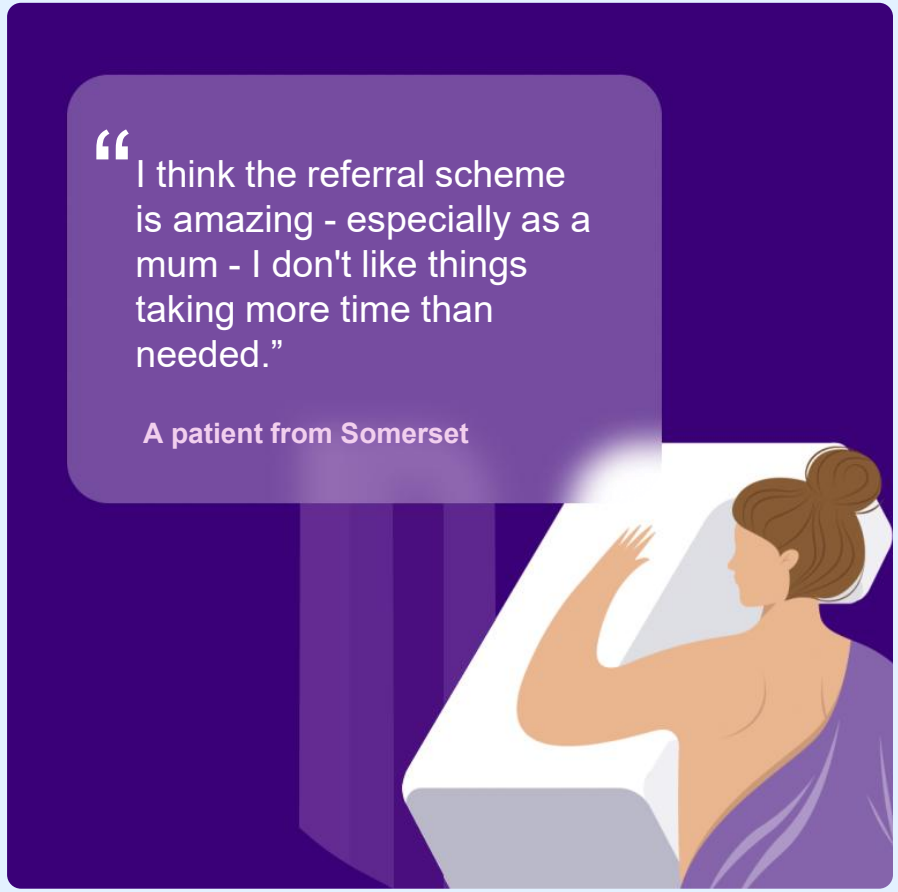
DELIVERING SAFE, EFFECTIVE ACCESS

The pilot has demonstrated that a digital self-referral model can safely and effectively streamline access to breast diagnostic services. Early results show strong patient engagement, faster access to specialist assessment, and meaningful reductions in GP workload.
The pathway has proven operationally feasible, clinically safe and highly scalable , supporting wider ambitions to offer earlier, digital-first access to cancer diagnostics across the NHS.

KEYWORDS

111 online • Self-referral • Somerset • Symptomatic triage • Saving GP time • Patient value

NHS



Putting users at the centre of our service and design

Our self-referral journey was designed with patients and clinicians.

The pathway uses intuitive questions, clear language and clinically safe logic.

Iterative user testing ensured the journey felt simple, reassuring and easy to complete, helping patients access specialist assessment faster and with more confidence.

Engaging locally, rolling out at scale

Building on the success of Somerset, we have now expanded the pathway to Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICB, demonstrating that a digitally enabled self-referral model can be scaled safely and consistently across Trusts.

“This is a very exciting new self-referral pathway for people with concerning breast symptoms that will allow them to be assessed by the specialist team at the earliest opportunity.
For most people referred, we will be able to reassure them that their symptoms are not related to breast cancer.”

Breast Consultant - Somerset Foundation Trust

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CASE STUDY

Improving access to mental health services

SUMMARY

From 2023 Help for your symptoms has continually improved the support for users with a mental health concern. The team increased users' access to more services by allowing them to better report their symptoms. This created mental health journeys that can bypass urgent care and integrate directly with neighbourhood-level help, including links to digital tools and self-referral forms so more people receive support close to home or even online.
We continue to collaborate with policymakers and providers to make sure the best services are offered.

KEYWORDS

Mental health • Self referrals • Patient value

The challenges

- Short assessments meant patients could not fully report their mental health condition
- Therefore, many neighbourhood services could not be offered

Our methodology

- **Research:** Tested fuller assessments with users to prove patients would complete them accurately
- **Design:** Introduced new features to offer even more services based on users' GP registration
- **Collaboration:** Regular contact with local teams to ensure new services are available online

Delivering our solution

Patients can fully describe their needs and get non-urgent support

Introduced fuller mental health assessments

Dec 2023

Apr 2024

GP surgery look-up enabled

Users can access more services, based on their GP practice

New page designs help users who need non-urgent support see more service options

New outcome pages went live

May 2024

Summer 2025

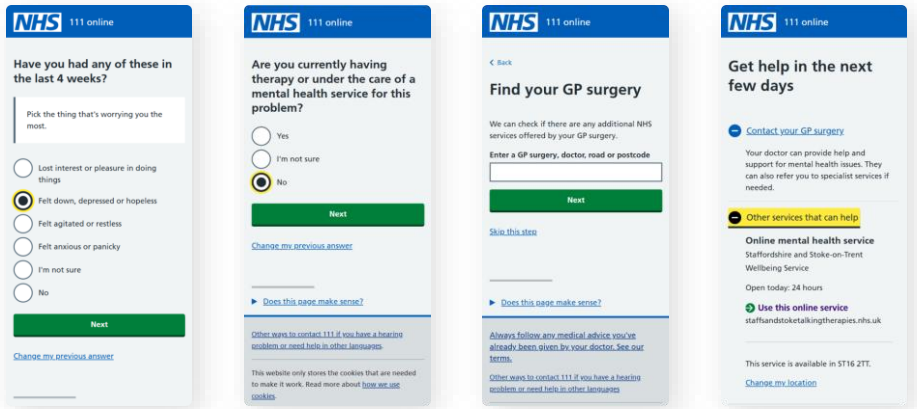
More NHS talking therapies

Outreach to providers and policymakers to offer talking therapies at the point of need

Upcoming workstream will focus on enabling direct access to services like talking therapies

Increase self-referrals

FY 2025/26



Our outcomes & impact

27,700

Urgent calls saved across 2024/25

900+

Services offered every month

198%

Increase in digital services presented to users since 2024

We deliver on prioritised capabilities in the Access • Triage • Navigation Business Case

		Access	Triage	Navigation
1	Self referrals	☑		
2	Probabilistic triage		☑	
3	Service data - sharing & sourcing	☑		☑
4	Improving data & analytics	☑	☑	☑
5	Intelligent Navigation (new triage products)	☑	☑	☑
6	Pre-triage sort & filter (intelligent access model)	☑		☑
7	Implementation of BaRS (UEC use cases)	☑		☑
8	Develop GP online consultation	☑	☑	☑