

ashtons 

One  Devon

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CASE STUDY

**Enhancing Patient Care  
and Efficiency:  
West Devon PCN**

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# Background

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## West Devon PCN

West Devon Primary Care Network (PCN) serves 36,500 patients, facing challenges from increased workload and post-COVID changes in patient behaviour.



Darren Newland, Operations Lead, notes, "Workload is our biggest issue, with primary care facing significant pressures compared to other parts of the NHS. Post-COVID, we have noted changes in patient behaviour, which has increased the demand for appointments and, in turn, poses serious challenges in the delivery of care."

The demand for GP appointments has surged, with an 11% increase compared to pre-COVID levels, indicating a heightened expectation for immediate access to healthcare services. On Monday, 29th January 2024, Abbey Surgery itself faced 569 appointments, reflecting the immense demand for their services.

Before working with Ashtons, the PCN faced overwhelming workload issues, limited GP availability and inefficient task allocation. Sustainability and efficiency were critical requirements to alleviate these challenges, while also enhancing patient care and experience.

# Overview of Ashtons Virtual Hub

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## Initial Scope

West Devon PCN aimed to alleviate the strain on GP resources, improve patient care, and optimise operational efficiency. To deliver against challenges related to sustainability and efficiency sourcing a tailored solution from a partner who can address their unique challenges was a key component of the initial scope.

## Overview

Ashtons is an innovative provider of bespoke digital-first medicines management solutions, with the visionary goal of revolutionising healthcare delivery.

Ashtons supports primary care through the Ashtons Virtual Hub, with the continuously evolving challenges associated with capacity and access, backlog, new models of care, and workforce expansion.

The Virtual Hub support primary care with access to a widerange of services, based on agreed transformation outcomes, including: clinical reviews, prescription management, document processing, long-term condition management, clinical audits, medicines management reporting, appointment booking, prescribing clinics, and support achieving local and national contract indicators.

As noted by Stephen Tuddenham, CEO of Ashtons, “The services delivered as part of our Virtual Hub have been meticulously crafted to cater to the specific needs of practices and PCNs. The result is a truly unique offering within the primary care sector. Whether it's adapting to evolving challenges or enhancing overall operational effectiveness, we are committed to delivering high-quality services that drive success and transformation.”

# What We've Achieved

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## Our Achievements at West Devon

Ashtons' Virtual Hub provides an enhanced range of services that have helped deliver substantial benefits to West Devon PCN and its patients. The ability for West Devon PCN to collaborate with organisations such as Ashtons and realise these benefits, is made possible by the Additional Role Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) funding.

## Supporting GP Workload

The tailored services Ashtons provides have been crucial to alleviating GP workload and the reallocation of essential tasks. The Virtual Hub has been pivotal in streamlining communication and collaboration, leading to improved efficiency, smoother workflow processes across the PCN, and securing increased funding.

## A patient-focused approach, enhancing care delivery and outcomes

Under the leadership of Irfan Mirza (MRPharmS, IPresc), Ashtons increased compliance with lipid-lowering therapies from 0% to 95%, achieving the target with one month to go. Patients undertaking cholesterol tests also surpassed the target of 35% for the year, achieving a Non-HDL < 2.5mmol/L or LDL < 1.8mmol/L to 31st March 2024, with two months remaining. These successes have not only ensured compliance with regulatory requirements but also contributed to enhanced patient care and safety.

# A View from the Frontline

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## Challenges for the year ahead

To support the everchanging landscape of Primary Care, Ashtons has always put customers at the forefront of innovation. We were keen to hear about the challenges for West Devon PCN for the year ahead.

1.

### Many areas face a lack of GPs

West Devon PCN anticipates increased pressure on primary care, necessitating flexibility to meet rising demands. Integrated care models and collaborations with local services address evolving needs. Darren Newland, notes: "We're lucky to have quite a few doctors in our area, but other areas have a serious lack of GPs. Without ARRS money, the level of service available to patients overall would be significantly reduced. Thankfully it has recently been confirmed that the ARRS money is continuing indefinitely."

2.

### Collaboration to help foster community partnerships

Integrated care models are increasingly being discussed. West Devon PCN has collaborated with local companies to provide additional services for child and adult mental health appointments, including helping with mental health issues in schools. They also have a frailty team, long-term condition community matrons, and nurses who specialise in dementia. None of that would be possible without funding to facilitate collaborations with companies like Ashtons.

# What makes Ashtons different?

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## How Ashtons is different?

A genuine commitment to innovation, flexibility and a patient-focused approach distinguish Ashtons from other service providers. By focusing on delivering tailored solutions and fostering genuinely collaborative relationships, Ashtons ensures high-quality care and positive outcomes.

Darren Newland notes: "I would not hesitate in recommending Ashtons to other organisations facing similar challenges. The value lies in Ashtons' ability to tailor services, promote teamwork, and bring efficiency to primary care. Ashtons' flexibility and patient-focused approach make it a trusted partner in navigating the complexities of modern healthcare delivery."

West Devon PCN praises Ashtons for promoting flexibility, seamless collaboration, and excellence in patient care. The partnership has alleviated immediate challenges and positioned the PCN for continued success in healthcare's changing landscape.

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Thank you  
for reading