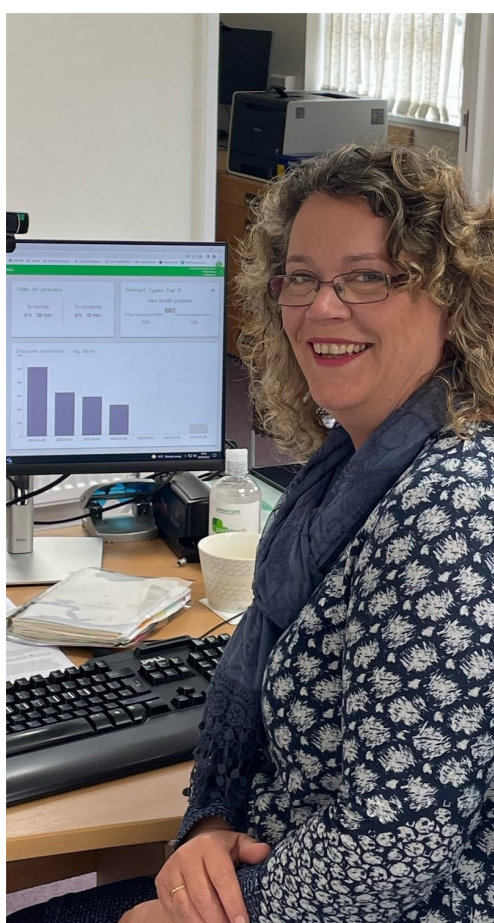


# Turning the tide for demand management at Carn to Coast

Carn to Coast case study: Spring 2022



Carn to Coast  
HEALTH CENTRES

## Summary

Faced with recruitment challenges and increasing workload, Carn to Coast Health Centres saw how neighbouring surgeries were using Klinik to help provide a more efficient service. Now with the online triage solution in place, the Cornish four-site practice explains how it has implemented Klinik to safely prioritise the needs of patients.

## Facing a familiar challenge

Carn to Coast Health Centres is a large general practice, serving the needs of 31,000 people across four sites in Cornwall. It covers a rural area that contains some of the most deprived areas of the county. In some places, the average reading age is just seven years old. Given its rural nature, physical access to healthcare can be a huge challenge. The practice also struggles with recruitment, which places increasing pressure on existing staff.

Together with its smaller neighbour, the Praze-an-Beeble surgery, it forms the North Kerrier West primary care network (PCN). Both are committed to developing an integrated care team approach as part of the PCN. They also share the same online consultation provider - Klinik.

Wendy George, who supported Carn to Coast's implementation in her role as Strategic Manager for the PCN, explains why.

## Wanting more than just online consultation

"We have always been heavily interested in digital innovation at the practice, and we knew that IT could help us meet the needs of our demanding population," says Wendy. "When we saw how Praze was using Klinik successfully, we decided to follow suit."

**"Klinik is more than just an online consultation tool; it has become an excellent demand management tool."**

**Dr Matt Whiteley**  
GP at Carn to Coast



Carn to Coast saw the potential benefits of Klinik to its practice. Partners could see how it could give doctors more control over incoming cases, and provide a much more positive experience for patients and staff.

Its previous online consultation system felt clunky. Doctors had to dig deep into the record to understand the level of urgency for each case. This made prioritisation difficult, and added to an already-burdensome clinical workload.

From observing Praze, the practice saw that the software could help it deliver three things:

- **Online consultation:** With Klinik in place, it could use a consistent tool that would help achieve practice targets for online consultations, and support the practice to process phone and online enquiries more efficiently.
- **Automated online triage:** Klinik uses AI to indicate the urgency of need and to recommend appropriate responses. This helps doctors to prioritise cases and redirect patients to the best point of care quickly and safely.
- **Information on patient demand:** Klinik could help the practice better understand the nature and patterns of demand, which would inform how it organises its resources.

Carn to Coast partners were so confident in the software's potential that they self-funded the initial implementation. Funding support is now provided by the local clinical commissioning group.

## Taking a phased approach to implementation

Carn to Coast uses Klinik Access for online consultation and Klinik Connect for phone enquiries. Both systems use the same approach to triage that captures consistent information from the patient. This gives the details required to direct patients to the right professional first time.

The practice knew that implementing both Access and Connect would represent a significant change, so it decided to take a phased approach to deployment.

"Some practices do everything all at once. We felt we wanted to get it working in a way that was right for us, so we decided to focus on our on-the-day capacity," says Wendy.

Carn to Coast applied Klinik to new health problems that came into its duty team. As part of a well-organised project, the practice mapped out and refined its processes to identify exactly how Klinik could meet its needs.



Staff were trained on a test system, which empowered them to explore how the software would work for their individual circumstances. The admin team also recorded training sessions on MS Teams so their colleagues would understand how the system worked.

“The Klinik team were also very helpful throughout implementation, helping onboard staff members and responding quickly to our requests,” says Wendy.

The duty team began to use Klinik in November 2021. This saw a senior GP act as a desktop reviewer for all new cases that come in from both Access and Connect systems.

With Klinik, the triaging GP can easily see which cases are most urgent, which is indicated by the software’s AI engine. They can then use the information captured from the patient to decide whether they need a phone call or face to face appointment.

The clinician can also filter them to the right member of Carn to Coast’s broad multidisciplinary team, which includes mental health practitioners, advanced nurse practitioners, paramedics, acute illness nurses, pharmacists, physios, practice nurses, and GP trainees.

To aid the process, the practice has also created a duty admin support role to be able to book appointments for anything urgent.

“Our approach works well. The GP has the skills and experience to be able to assign the right case to the right professional quickly and efficiently,” says Wendy. “The duty admin support team member also loves being able to support the clinician in this way.”

After eight weeks in use, the practice was confident enough to expand the role of Klinik. Now it is being used to support all other types of enquiries, such as follow-up appointment requests and referral enquiries.

**“The Klinik team were very helpful throughout implementation, helping onboard staff members and responding quickly to our requests.”**

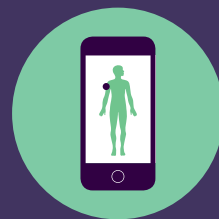
**Wendy George**  
Strategic Manager  
North Kerrier West PCN





6000

patient cases processed  
through Klinik per month



79%

of patients are using Klinik  
online (71 % via mobile)



78%

of patients say Klinik  
is good or excellent



50%

of cases are new  
health problems

## Delivering positive impact for patients and staff

Now in place for close to six months, feedback from staff and patients has been good. “Doctors have much more control now,” says Wendy. “They were concerned that any number of patients could dial in, which could increase the workload. Now, they can see who are most likely to be the most urgent patients. They can defer those cases that can be dealt with later, and they don’t have to respond immediately to every single query that comes in.”

Even care navigation staff, who have had some of their work replaced by Klinik, can see the benefit of being able to put patients through to the right professional.

Patients have also given positive feedback, with 78% of them saying the system is good or excellent. “People are quick to complain if things go wrong here,” says Wendy. “That hasn’t happened with Klinik.”

Indeed, many patients continue to use the online service, even after coronavirus restrictions have been lifted. Almost eight out of ten queries are made using Klinik online, with the remainder answered by staff on the phone.

The system has also provided rich data on when calls come in, enabling the practice to predict demand at particular times and dates. This gives the whole practice deep insight to inform how it can organise its services.

“Klinik is more than just an online consultation tool; it has become an excellent demand management tool,” says Dr Matt Whiteley, GP at Carn to Coast and clinical director at the local PCN. “You can see instantly what the demand is on the day, what for, and where patients are going.

“In addition, the quality of the information captured by Klinik and its automated triage functionality enable us to have much more control of how we deliver care for a diverse population. We can see exactly what the issue is for each patient and direct patients straight to the right professional the first time.”

## How others might approach the change

Wendy acknowledges that implementing the technology was a big piece of work. “Klinik changes how you operate as a practice. It is not the same as implementing a new standalone online consultation provider. This is a sea change in how you manage demand.”

Her advice for other GPs considering using the system was to see how others are using Klinik, and then look at how you could adapt this flexible system to meet your own particular needs.

“Spend time researching your plans. It is a big change, and you need to be sure that it works well for you.

“We are happy we made the change,” she adds, “but we were certainly nervous at first! But now it is in place, doctors say that it has given them much more control, and patients are happy to use Klinik.”

## Next steps will see wider use of Klinik

Carn to Coast is committed to ongoing use of the system across the practice, and working with Klinik to help make the system even more powerful.

“We will keep considering further options we can add to the system for patients, and we are working with the Klinik team to aid its integration with our clinical system,” says Wendy. “We will also spend time looking at the data that we get. We can use this to inform future staffing needs, so we can match our capacity to demand.”

With so much pressure on GP surgeries, Carn to Coast shows how careful planning can introduce change that benefits doctors and patients alike. Get in touch to see how it could work for you.

“We are happy we made the change - now Klinik is in place, doctors say that it has given them much more control, and patients are happy to use it.”

Wendy George

Strategic Manager, North Kerrier West PCN



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Any questions? Contact us!



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