

Dear colleagues,

We are writing to share the August SMS fragment data and update on patient messaging within NWL.

Here's a recap and some important points to note:

Please find attached the SMS fragment allocation for April - August 24/25. This data shows the usage of both Accurx and all messages sent via your clinical system, which includes online consultations suppliers. Please note that there is also information about the number of messages that have been sent via the NHS App.

How will GP Practices know how many messages they've got left in the budget?

SMS Usage Dashboards:

Practices will receive a monthly dashboard after the 26th of each month containing SMS data from various sources including online consultation suppliers, clinical systems and Accurx for the previous month (e.g. 26th August 2024 will show all of April, May, June and July's 2024 data). The cover page explains how to use the dashboard and where you can find your GP practice SMS budget. The graph indicates your current monthly and year to date spend, a comparison to last year's activity, your allocated budget and forecasted spend against the current allocation. Column N will show you the percentage of SMS messages sent against your annual allocation, this is colour coded to show how close the GP practice is to reaching your allocation. Please note that if your GP practice is Purple that you have exceeded your allocation.

Where can I find support and help to manage the SMS messages that the GP practice sends to patients?

Best Practice Guidance: We encourage practices to review their patient messaging strategies encompassing emails, SMS, and NHS App notifications. Additionally, consider digital literacy and health inequalities when determining the appropriateness of SMS. NWL is developing a comprehensive guide on best practice to ensure SMS is used appropriately with confidentiality and safety in mind. This guide will be for both S1 and EMIS practices. We aim to have the new guide/'tips and tricks' documents in the update next months (September data).

How can the NHS App reduce the cost of SMS messaging?

The following messages can be sent to patients via the NHS App:

Batch simple SMS

Batch questionnaire*

Batch Self Book

Appointment reminder – 1 working day

Appointment reminder – 3/7 working days

Appointment reminder – post appointment reminder

* certain batch questionnaires may have a 3hr fall back where appropriate, for example BP questionnaires where daily reading is required.

Encouraging patient to download the NHS App and switching their notifications on will mean that messages listed above will not be charged in the patient reads it in the fall back time. This will be a cost saving to the practice. To review the number of messages that are read via the NHS App you can review your NHS uptake: <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/nhs-app/nhs-app-dashboard> [Register to have access]. You can also find the proportion of

patients who are receiving notifications via the NHS App on the AccuRx "Reporting" section via "My organisation"

What is the cost of a SMS message?

National change in pricing per fragment:

As mentioned last month, from April 2024 all messages sent via the clinical system and online consultation providers have been billed at £0.022 per fragment (160 characters), this is a slight increase from £0.0185. This increase will also be applied to Accurx messages from the 31st August 2024. Messages sent from Accurx will be £0.0225. This increase in price is taking place nationally and is not within the control of the ICB to change. This will not change your GP practice allocation but it may mean that the practices reach their allocation at a slightly quicker rate. We have shown a prediction of GP practice usage on the data dashboard provided.

What does the ICB fund for GP Practices?

North West London ICB has committed to fund SMS costs in Primary Care, for 3 years (from April 2023-March 2026). This funding covers:

- License costs for Accurx for 3 years for all GP practices in NWL.
- 67.5 million SMS fragment costs over the 3 years. The number of fragments that are funded reduces each year.

The total ICB budget for text messaging covers various components, including:

AccurX SMS Fragments
Clinical system messages (TPP and EMIS)
PATCHs generated SMS
eConsult generated SMS (in Ealing only)
Accurx Plus licenses, AccuBook functionality

For any queries, please contact us at nhsnwl.digitalfirst@nhs.net.

Thank you for your continued dedication to safe, efficient, and effective patient messaging.

Kind regards
Digital Transformation and Delivery