

PIFU – designing it with patients at the centre

Patient-initiated follow up (PIFU) is an appointment process that helps hospitals manage capacity and puts patients in control of making appointments, when they need them.

Good for patients, good for hospitals



For patients

By empowering patients to make their own appointments, PIFU helps them save time, money and inconvenience caused by travelling to pre-arranged appointments they may not need.



For hospitals

PIFU helps reduce did-not-attends and releases time for other patients to be seen sooner.



For both

PIFU encourages conversation between patients and clinicians, promoting shared decision-making and supporting patient self-management.

Key to success is making PIFU inclusive and accessible to your whole population.

PIFU – the need for inclusive design

NHS Confederation members have informed these important points to consider when designing a PIFU pathway.



1. Assessment

Build the following considerations into your assessment process:

- **Cultural, economic and social differences** that impact perceptions of health and diseases.
- **Safety concerns**, abusive relationships or power imbalances that can make it difficult for some patients to take ownership of their care needs.
- **Vulnerability or anxiety** patients might feel about how they might be treated, or see symptoms as embarrassing.
- **Accessibility**: It might be appropriate to identify a trusted person to support the patient in using PIFU.



2. Consultation

Consult staff and patients from the breadth of your population to make your system as accessible as possible. For example, include the following in your discussions:

- **Access**: Find out from your patients the ways they'd find it easiest to access PIFU and supporting information, for example online, by phone, by dropping in.
- **Accessibility**: PIFU and supporting information should be easy to understand, taking users through recognising symptoms and how to choose a date for an appointment.
- **Evaluation**: Regularly review PIFU and supporting information with your patients, assessing any gaps and areas of improvement.



3. Supporting information

Information should give patients the **confidence** to decide when they need an appointment and **feel assured** they can easily make it:

- **Content**: As well as covering the condition and how to use PIFU, explain that PIFU is optional and patients aren't being taken off their care plan.
- **Style**: It should be in everyday language, avoiding acronyms and technical words.
- **Languages**: It should be available in the languages of your population.
- **Diversity**: It should be in different formats and also meet the needs of those with cognitive, visual or hearing impairments.

For more information, please visit www.nhsconfed.org/PIFU-Insights

Trusts can best achieve **effective communication** by **working in co-production** with patients in **producing and testing** materials, making sure they are **complete and easy to understand**.