

Whatever happened to all those attempts to change access to General Practice?



Access to General Practice:
Innovation, impact and
sustainable change

GP-SUS Telephones and ladders game debrief.

The game

The board game is modelled on the popular children's game 'Snakes and Ladders'. Players take turns rolling a die and moving their counter along the numbered board. Landing on a ladder advances a player to a square further up the board, while landing on a telephone sends them back to a previous square. The goal is to reach the final square, and the first player to do so wins.

The examples on the 'action' squares are taken from the case study data, abbreviated as necessary to fit the square. These data come from observations, conversations and interviews with staff and patients in our eight English general practices. In designing the game, we were also informed by our secondary analysis of data from archived interviews with patients about their experiences of health conditions and health services (see GP-SUS Briefing sheet 3).

Our analyses provide rich detail about getting a GP appointment. We were struck by examples that patients and staff gave of obstacles that prevented patients from gaining timely access to their GP, but we also saw examples of when and how access 'works'. Using ladders to indicate how staff and systems can support patients to obtain appointments also links to the OATH project (<https://www.oath-access.com/about>) helping us to think about ways of improving access.

We are very grateful to our Patient and Public representatives' group who tested the game and helped us improve it.

Examples from our data

Ladders

[The receptionist] was just looking to see if I could get in, and then she said, "Well, I shouldn't really do this but I can push you in, because it only takes two minutes." Patient Interview

Receptionist: "Ok. I can get a clinician to give you a call-back. If I send you a link to your phone, would you be able to send a picture in? Yes...and then they will call you". Receptionist interview

Phones

"If you don't ring at eight o'clock, the line is permanently engaged, and they'll tell you where you are in the queue, like you could be number 17 in the queue, so you're hanging on all that time..." Patient interview

"I haven't been to see the doctor about it 'cos when you ring up you have to tell the reception, and it's embarrassing and I don't wanna tell no one about it." Patient interview

Take away message

Solutions to the problem of getting an appointment work for some patients but not all, and we should pay attention to unintended consequences of appointment systems and ways that these can create barriers to access.

