

Working together to create a sustainable Dermatology service in an island setting



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CONTEXT

The provision of dermatology services in Orkney has historically been challenging with a reliance on visiting secondary care consultants and no on island support. This has meant long waiting times and patients often having to travel on to the Scottish mainland for routine treatments such as phototherapy due to no local availability. The aim of this project was to enable local access to a sustainable model of Dermatology provision allowing care to be provided closer to home.

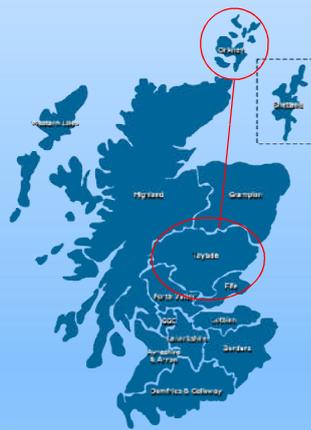
METHODOLOGY

The North of Scotland Regional Delivery Plan outlined a commitment to supporting rural and island hospitals to ensure that they can provide high quality, safe and sustainable services with support from more specialist healthcare services.

In 2017 NHS Orkney had reached crisis point with its dermatology provision, with mounting waiting lists and no guaranteed visiting service or timely off island provision. Patients accessing phototherapy were travelling to the Scottish mainland several times in a week or facing long periods away from their friends, family and work.

A review of historical patterns of population demand for the service was undertaken and benchmarked with levels of need seen in other healthcare systems. From this it was clear that demand was under that what would have been expected for the population size however there was a feeling that this was linked to a lack of provision over time.

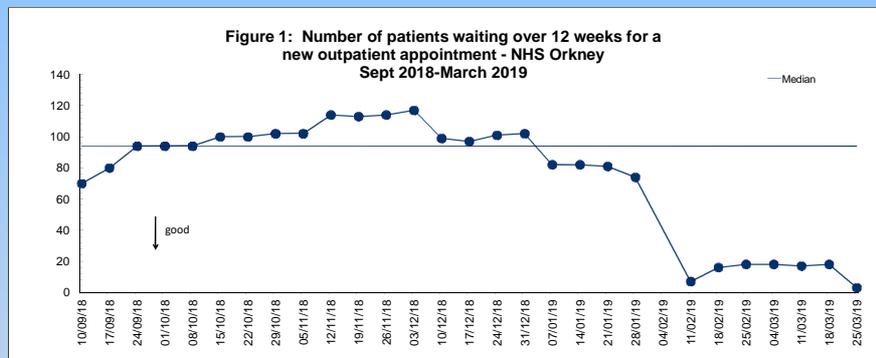
Projected demand was used to define the capacity required to ensure the new service could meet access standards and to provide a starting point for initial discussions with a local GP Practice and the NHS Tayside Dermatology Team about the development of a Dermatology model for Orkney which would meet population need and provide care as close to home as possible.



RESULTS

This project has successfully realised patient benefits through collaboration.

Since commencement of the new service no patients being treated within the Dermatology service have had to travel out with Orkney for care and there has been a significant reduction in waiting times as shown in Figure 1 below. This is a vast improvement in access for new patients and has been coupled with clearing a backlog of unseen reviews. This has made a real difference to patients and the feedback received from those using the service has been very positive.



In addition to the above, introduction of a GPsWI role is supporting a reduction in unnecessary secondary care referrals and facilitating more effective management of patients in primary care². It has also enabled on island provision of a Phototherapy service which has avoided 28 patients having to travel off island for treatment which lasts only minutes at a time. This has generated a cost saving in the region of £50k which has been reinvested in providing this service model.

The learning from this project has been shared across the North region as a sustainable model of remote and rural service provision which has the potential to be expanded into other areas and specialities. The next stage in ensuring sustainability is greater utilisation of technology through means such as NHS Near Me¹ for virtual clinics.

A similar model is now being developed for the provision of the Rheumatology service in Orkney, in partnership with NHS Grampian.

As a result of these discussions the model outlined was agreed and a project implemented to bring the model to fruition in August 2018.

CONCLUSION

Through partnership working this project sought to improve the quality of care for people accessing dermatology services and increase value and sustainability through minimising the need for patients to travel off of Orkney. This strongly supports the 2020 vision and in particular the drive to provide care closer to home. Recognising the importance of equity of access across boundaries and the unique contributions of each element of the model was critical to success as was taking time to develop interpersonal relationships, trust and honesty.

References:

- NHS Scotland, 2018. National Video Conferencing Service website. Available at: <https://www.vc.scot.nhs.uk/attend-anywhere/> [Accessed on 31/01/19]
- British Association of Dermatologists website. Available at: <http://www.bad.org.uk/healthcare-professionals/education/gps/gp-with-a-special-interest-gpwi/gpwr-dermatology-and-skin-surgery> [Accessed on 16/04/19]