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A&Es across England go digital as Berkshire NHS hospitals become latest to partner with Babylon

- **Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust use Babylon's Ask A&E symptom checker to help patients receive information when worried about whether to visit hospital during the pandemic**
- **8% of the country now covered by Babylon's digital A&E services**
- **Where utilised, numbers show that fewer than 30% of queries to Ask A&E were identified as typically requiring a visit to A&E**
- **Ask A&E is a key part of the Trust's campaign to build confidence in the public to seek medical attention during the pandemic**

Patients in Berkshire can now receive triage information online, to receive information about possible next steps, such as self care at home or attending A&E in person. Accident and Emergency departments have caused concern across the country for a long time, however the situation is now even more complex. Due to COVID-19, hospitals worry that whilst some people go to A&E when they do not need to, others may be avoiding it when they should attend. Babylon has been working with NHS Hospital Trusts across the West Midlands and Berkshire to develop Ask A&E, a 24 hour digital service that helps people receive relevant information about their symptoms, including typical next steps for similar symptoms such as self-care (with links to helpful guidance), and attending A&E.

The new services, which include Ask A&E now covers 8% of the population, with further rollout due in coming weeks. Implemented by both University Hospitals Birmingham and Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trusts, as well as GP at Hand and Bupa patients, Babylon has found that over the last few months fewer than 30% of queries were ones which typically required a visit to A&E. Across Birmingham, 13% of queries typically required use of an ambulance, 14% A&E, whilst 18% would typically be required to speak to a GP, and 55% typically used self-care or, or non-urgent service.

Steve McManus, Chief Executive, The Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust (RBFT), said:

“We originally built an emergency department to cater for 65,000 patients per year. In 2019 we looked after 118,000 patients, averaging 320 per day. Since COVID-19 arrived, attendance has dropped to 190 patients per day. That is partly due to fewer accidents as people are staying at home, and partly because people are self-caring, but it also suggests there is a lost group that are suffering in silence and not seeking support. With NHS 111 being extremely busy at the moment, the Ask A&E service offers a trusted way to get information from the NHS. It will greatly increase the information for our patients, reduce the number who have to come to the hospital and, as a result, maximise the impact our staff can have for the patients who need them. Over the last 3 years we have been working hard at digitising our services and have made some huge steps in our inpatient and outpatient services. The launch of Ask A&E is the beginning of the next phase of our digital journey and that we are pleased to be working with Babylon on.”



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Dr Ali Parsa, CEO & Founder, Babylon, said:

“8% of England’s population are now covered by our digital services, and it has been humbling to see the way every part of our health system has come together to support our communities at this time of national crisis. We are so proud to partner with innovative trusts like the Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust, who are always striving to go the extra mile for their patients. We want to do our bit to support the incredible frontline clinicians who risk their lives for our health, and ease their workload as much as we can.”

ENDS

Notes to Editor

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust is the principle hospital for Reading, Newbury, Wokingham and the surrounding towns and villages of Berkshire West. We provide a full range of district general services. We are also the region's specialist centre for cancer, eye and renal (kidney) care serving over one million people across Berkshire and south Oxfordshire.

Our main site is the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading. We also provide services at West Berkshire Community Hospital near Newbury, the Prince Charles Eye Unit in Windsor and at our Renal Unit based between Slough and Windsor. The Trust also provides outpatient and cancer services at Bracknell Health Space and Townlands Hospital in Henley.

Babylon is a globally-leading technology company with the ambitious mission to put an accessible and affordable health service in the hands of every person on Earth.

We combine technology and medical expertise to bring doctors and people closer together. Through a range of digital services - such as AI-backed digital health tools and video doctor appointments - we give people round-the-clock access to affordable (often free) holistic healthcare services. We work with governments, health providers and insurers across the globe, and support healthcare facilities from small local practices to large hospitals.

Our AI is built around the way a doctor operates and is designed to empower people with knowledge about their health and help relieve pressure on clinicians.

We have over 5 million users and have completed over 1.2 million consultations globally. Some of our partners include the NHS, Mount Sinai Health Partners, Government of Rwanda, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Bupa. For more stats and information see our Press Kit

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