

Patient Documentation

Whitcombe Dental Practice

Introduction

The Sustainability matrix is a Self-Evaluation Tool to allow the team to focus on improving sustainability in the practice. Using the matrix enables everyone in the practice to think about sustainability in the 7 areas or dimensions. These are laid out on a grid and will cover the following topics:

- Waste management
- Energy
- Travel
- Procurement
- Biodiversity
- Prevention & promotion
- Education & training

The dimensions are designed to raise awareness about sustainability in dental practice and the contribution the profession can make to achieving net zero.

During the Sustainability Engagement Matrix session, the dental team appointed a Sustainability Champion, Kath and identified that there are still a significant number of paper forms completed at the practice attending for an examination appointment. The introduction of the online SOE portal allows patient to complete the paperwork electronically at home, before attending the examination appointment in the practice but many patients don't utilise the online SOE portal so need to complete paper forms on arrival at the practice.

Paper production and disposal can also negatively impact the environment through deforestation, water and energy consumption, and pollution. The carbon footprint of an office paper from cradle-to-costumer is approx. 5g of CO₂. It is important to note that it would take more than seven hours of notetaking on an iPad to produce more greenhouse gas emissions than a single sheet of paper. Even using recycled paper only reduces the impact by just under half, meaning you could still use your iPad for 4 hours for each sheet of paper!

Problem statement

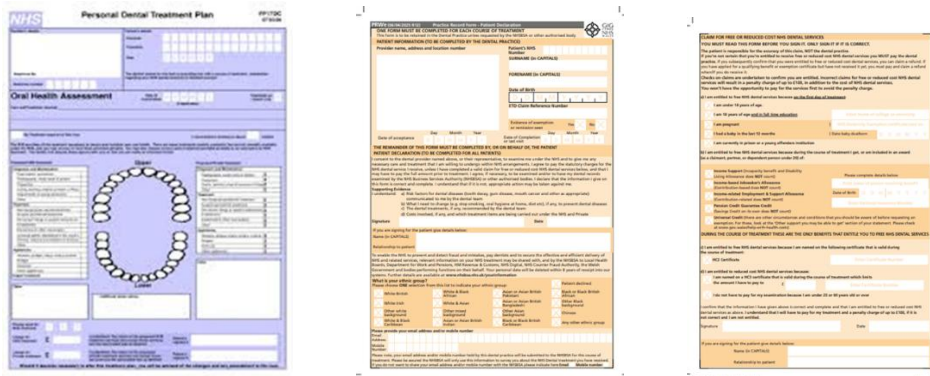
- Many patients in the practice don't complete the pre-appointment documentation on the online SOE portal at home. Instead, they fill out the paper versions of the forms which creates delays on the day of the appointment and lots of paper waste.

Aims statement

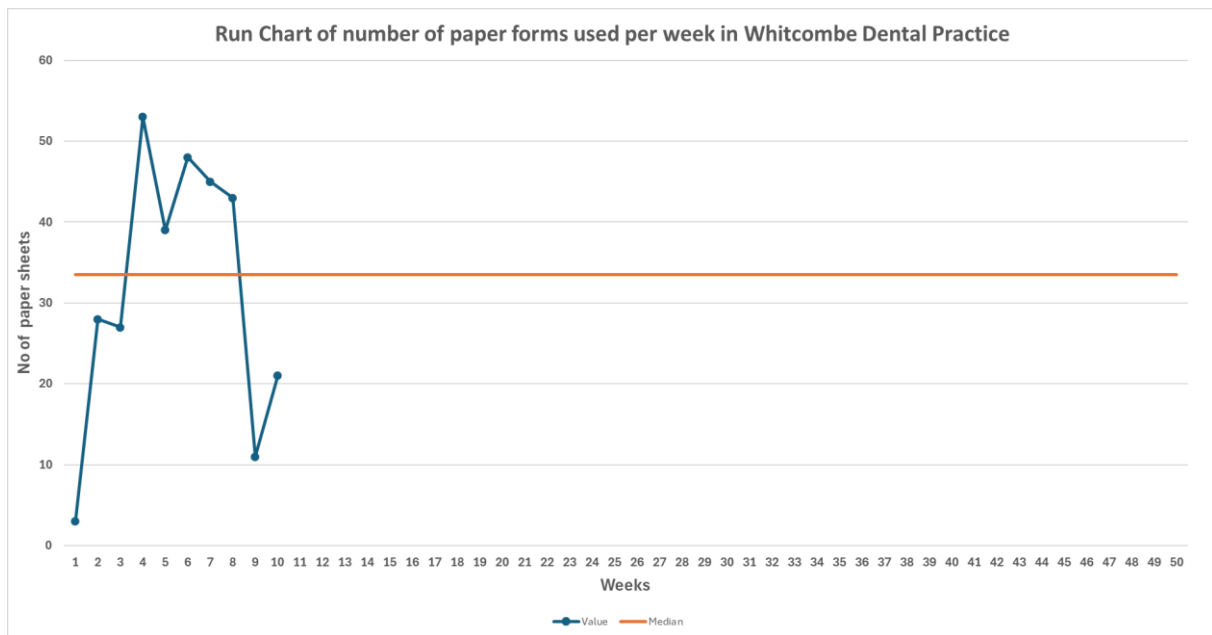
- The number of paper forms completed per week for patients attending for a recall or new patient appointment in Whitcombe dental practice from 37 to 20 by 31st May 2025.

Outcome measure

- The number of paper forms completed per week for patients attending for a recall or new patient appointment in Whitcombe dental practice.



Run chart of the baseline data



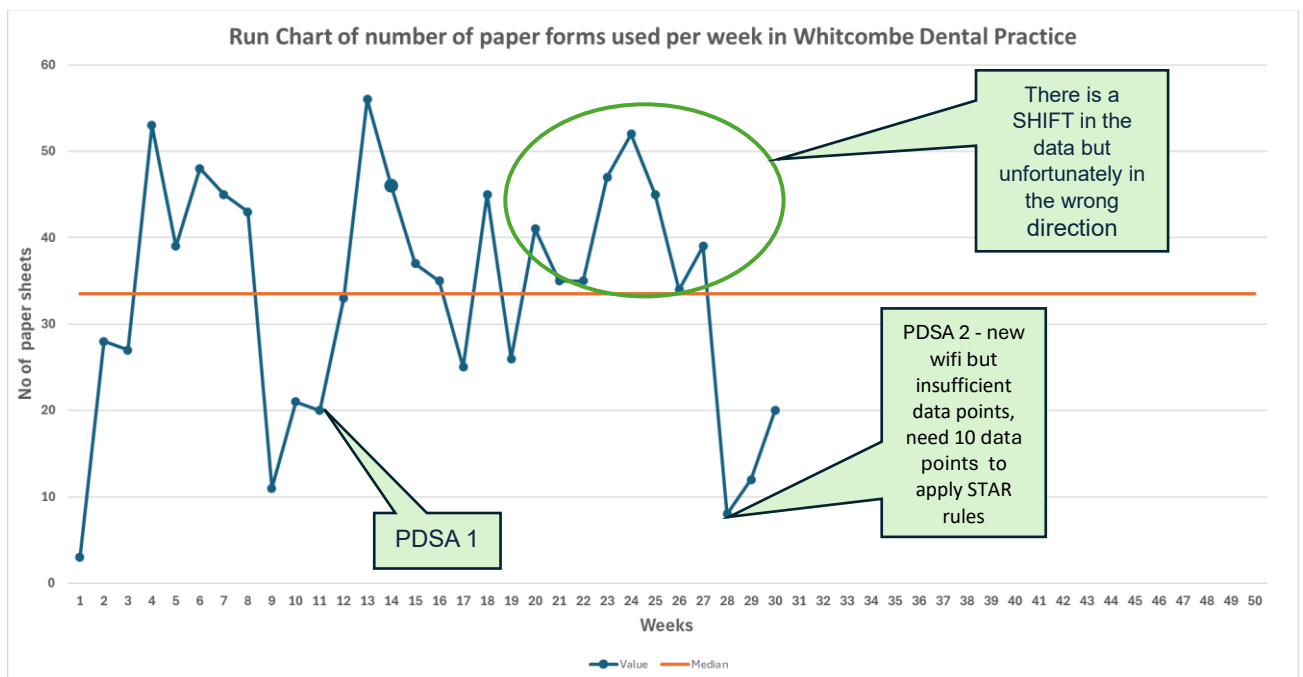
The median is 33.5.

PDSA cycle 1

- To support and help the patients complete the online paperwork when they arrive at the practice.



Run chart following PDSA 1



Conclusion

- Despite not achieving the aim to reduce the number of paper forms completed per week for patients attending for a recall or new patient appointment in Whitcombe dental practice from 37 to 20 by 31st May 2025.
- The team are continuing the project and planning PDSA 3 – the use of Clinipads to complete the pre-appointment documentation in the practice. Currently waiting the Clinipads to arrive.

Reflections from the Sustainability Champion, Kath

If my memory serves me correctly, Sue Stokes first came to our practice early last year. The aim of this visit was to talk about how much single use plastic and paper were used in this field and how we could reduce this in any way possible. The additional aim of this visit was to find a Sustainability Champion in as many Welsh practices as possible, with the aim of making as much of an impact on this area as possible.

The role of the Sustainability Champion was to pick one area of our day-to-day role and try our best to reduce paper or plastic use in an attempt to make each practice as green and planet friendly as possible. In this meeting I was chosen for this role.

The next steps were to choose an area in my practice to help reduce the amount of paper being used on a daily basis. With the help of my manager Claire Mitchell, we chose to try and get as many patients as possible to use an online portal link to fill out their medical histories and PRW'S, this portal link was sent to patients via a text message. Many patients were confident enough to use the portal, and it has been very successful. A relatively small number of patients for varying reasons were unable to use the portal, whether this being down to WIFI issues, confidence online or an incompatible device.

On the 25/11/2024 all participating parties were added to a WhatsApp group. The Cwm Taf Sustainability Group. This was started by Rachel Thomas, my colleague who has been very helpful and involved from the very beginning. This group chat turned out to be a very useful toolkit, being used to organise and plan group video link meetings and for when we met in person to discuss how the plans were going, how everyone was getting on and to give help and ideas between all parties involved. A great support network for all.

The team in my practice were all very helpful and supported my idea straight away, prompting patients to try use the portal on their phones, even when they did not feel confident to do so. Whilst for the majority this was a success, for some only the paper versions were available.

Going forward, patients will be provided with CliniPads in a bid to further reduce the use of paper in our practice. The aim of this is to try and illuminate some of the issues that cropped up on the first trial. This provides a compatible device for those who do not have access to one at home or otherwise, with staff always being on hand to guide certain patients through the process, even when they are not confident or literate with online processes.

To conclude, this has been a very successful venture, resulting in less paper being used in practice. This has also led to less orders of paper versions needing to be ordered, resulting in less deliveries being needed, reducing the carbon footprint for Whitcombe Dental Practice. Even a small win such as this is still a win for the environment. This can only be a good thing.

In addition to all this the recycling in the practice has got much better, with labeled bins now available in all staffrooms. surgeries, decon and communal areas. With these now provided patients and staff alike now recycle all recyclable items daily. It's wonderful to see everyone making such an effort for the planet and the future generations of this world. It has turned out to be a very rewarding and educational experience which I greatly enjoyed.

I'd like to give special thanks to my manager Claire Mitchell for being a constant support on the journey, providing myself with company and transport for meetings and the recent conference we attended. Also, thanks to Rachel Thomas and Sue Stokes for always being on hand to help and support me. It has meant a great deal to me so thank you all it has been very much appreciated.