# Evaluation of Remote Monitoring of COVID-19 in South East London

This evaluation was commissioned by SEL ICS and delivered by the [Health Innovation Network](), the Academic Health Science network for South London.

**The evaluation focused on the implementation and delivery of the Doctaly Assist platform, used to remotely monitor COVID-19 patients in Lewisham, in South East London, between April 2020 and September 2022.**

The [Doctaly Assist]() platform, created by the health tech company Doctaly, uses WhatsApp to monitor and manage patients with COVID-19 in the community, by facilitating the collection of patient information through the completion of daily assessments. Clinicians can assess patient information, and if required, interact with patients remotely.

## Overview of Doctaly Assist data for COVID-19 patients between January 2021 and September 2022

- **30,490 Lewisham patients** were invited to use Doctaly Assist
- **27.6%** of those invited **completed the registration** process
- **62.3%** of all patients registering were **female**
- The **average age** of those registering was **42.3**
- **8.1%** of registered patients were categorised as clinically **'Extremely Vulnerable'**
- **87.4 %** of patients **recovered** or **self-discharged**

Out of the patients who completed the registration process, more than 69% were categorised as medical emergency, high risk or medium risk, suggesting **the service achieved what it originally was set up to do: to provide medical help and advice to patients likely to develop serious illness from COVID-19.**

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## Patient insights

**Patients felt generally comfortable monitoring their COVID-19 symptoms through the Doctaly Assist platform**.

Patients agreed the platform:
- Acted as a welcome safety net.
- Was easy to use due to their familiarity with WhatsApp.

However, they noted:
- Assessments could be time consuming and feel fragmented.
- There was a lack of clarity on whether they had any interaction with a live clinician, or whether their data was being actively reviewed outside automatic triage.

## Staff insights

**Despite challenging circumstances, there was a shared feeling that Doctaly Assist had achieved positive outcomes both for clinical staff and patients with COVID-19 in South East London.**

Clinical staff reported positive experiences of:
- Using the platform,
- Being able to work remotely, and
- Monitoring patients with COVID-19 remotely.

However, they noted some challenges to delivering care remotely to patients with COVID-19 including having to rely on sometimes inaccurate pulse oximeter readings being taken and submitted by patients.

# Recommendations

While the service was stopped due to the falling number of COVID-19 cases, the evaluation insights provide **helpful learning points** for those considering implementing remote monitoring services. Recommendations emerging from the findings include:

**Improving patient experience and understanding of remote monitoring services**, through consistent and targeted communication at every stage of the patient journey.

**Having clear distribution processes in place and tracking the distribution and return of devices**. This is especially critical when devices can be picked up from various locations.

**Considering interoperability between remote monitoring solutions and patient administration systems when procuring solutions.** This is key to delivering efficiencies and reducing the burden on staff switching and/or transferring information between systems.

**Prioritising data collection and monitoring.** Feedback mechanisms should be designed to encourage ongoing engagement from both patients and staff. In addition, there should be mechanisms in place to collect feedback from non-users.