

# Driving digital adoption in London's 111 services to improve care using patient insights and behaviour change approaches

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# Background

## Partnership

- For the past 2 years, the Health Innovation Network South London (HIN), in partnership with NHSE London, have delivered a data driven patient insights service.

## The Health Innovation Network, South London

- The Health Innovation Network (HIN) South London is the health innovation network for south London, one of 15 across England. We are the bodies uniquely established to connect NHS and academic organisations, local authorities, the third sector and industry, to increase the spread and adoption of innovation across large populations, at pace and scale.
- At the HIN, we have an Insights team, made up of data analysts, health economists, evaluation managers, and an involvement manager.
- Our work focuses on generating evidence and insights to support local decision-making about the development, adoption and scaling of innovation and approaches to tackling inequalities.

# The HIN supported the implementation and improvement of digital uptake to access care when calling the NHS 111 service

## THE PROBLEM

Demand for 111 calls exceeds capacity, creating pressure on the sustainability and responsiveness of the service.

## AIM

This project aimed to increase uptake of alternative digital channels (e.g., 111 Online) for eligible callers such as those seeking prescriptions or dental advice.

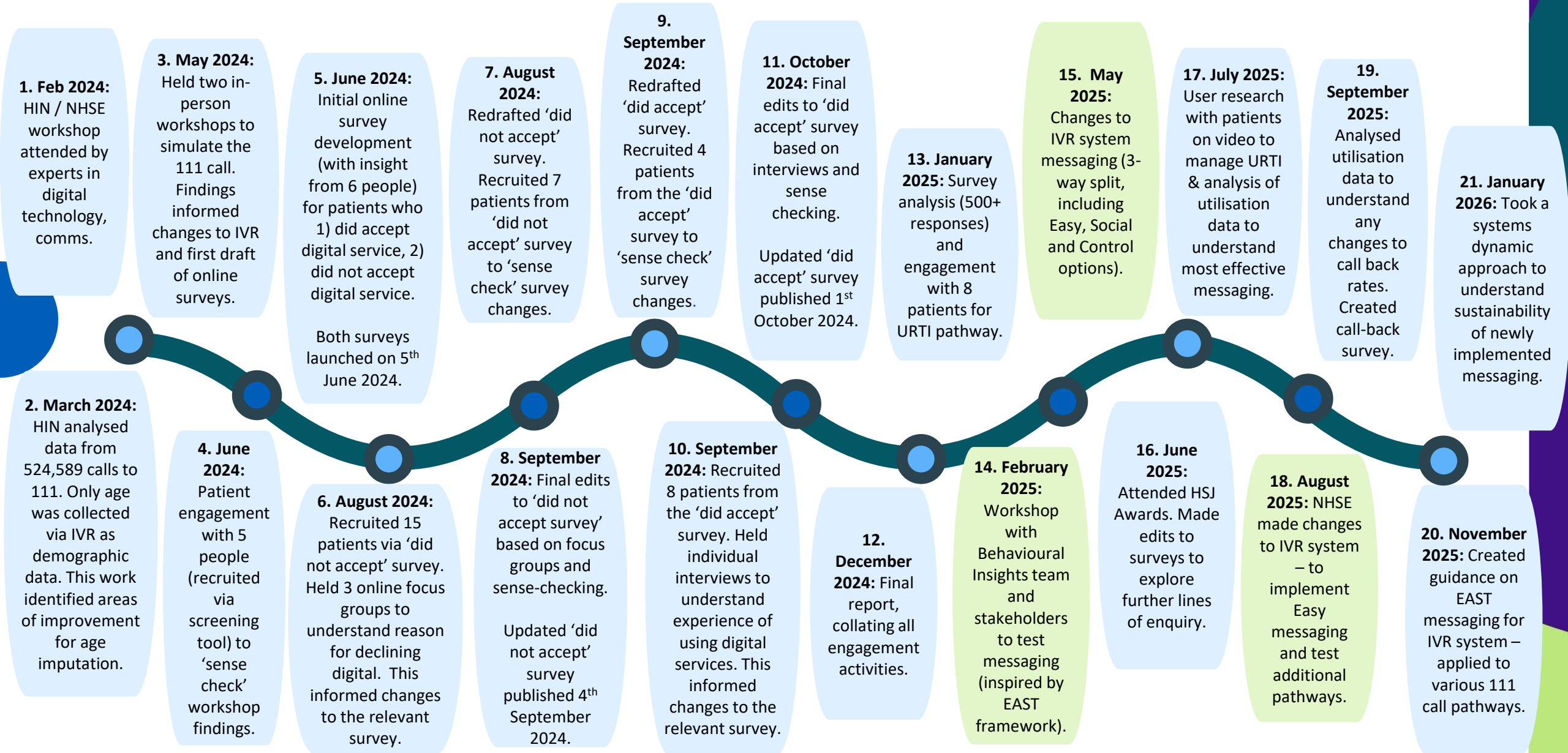
## APPROACH

Iterative: PDSA cycles informed by patient and public engagement (workshops, focus groups, interviews and analysis of >10,000 patient survey responses).

## IMPACT

- Applied learning to inform messaging based on EAST framework (behaviour change approach).
- Tested and analysed impact of different messaging on digital uptake.
- Implemented most successful messaging and achieved significant increase in digital uptake.

# Timeline of patient engagement and insight activities



# The EAST framework provides four simple principles for encouraging behaviour change (Easy, Attractive, Social, Timely)

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## Make it **Easy**:

- Harness the power of defaults
- Reduce the effort required
- Simplify messages

## Make it **Social**:

- Show that most people perform the desired behaviour (social norms)
- Recognise the power of social networks
- Create feelings of reciprocity

## Make it **Attractive**:

- Attract attention and frame the behaviour
- Design incentives for maximum effect

## Make it **Timely**:

- Choose the right moment
- Consider the immediate costs and benefits
- Help people plan their response to events

## We developed new messaging, informed by patient perspectives and EAST principles

IVR Pathway	'Easy' messaging	'Social' messaging	Previous (control) messaging
Dental	The fastest way to get dental help is to use 111 online. This usually takes less than 90 seconds. Can we send you a text with a link to 111 online?	You can reduce the strain on the NHS by using 111 online to get dental help. Can we send you a text with a link to 111 online?	The fastest way to get help for a dental problem is to use 111 online. Would you like a text with a link to 111 online?
Emergency Medication	The fastest way to get urgent prescriptions is by using 111 online. This usually takes less than 90 seconds. Can we send you a text with a link to 111 online?	You can reduce the strain on the NHS by using 111 online to get urgent prescriptions. Can we send you a text with a link to 111 online?	The fastest way to get Emergency Medication is by using 111 online. Would you like a link to 111 online?
Repeat prescription	The fastest way to get repeat prescriptions is by using 111 online. This usually takes less than 90 seconds. Can we send you a text with a link to 111 online?	You can reduce the strain on the NHS by using 111 online to get repeat prescriptions. Can we send you a text with a link to 111 online?	The fastest way to get repeat prescriptions is by using 111 online. Would you like a link to 111 online?

**Table 1:** IVR messaging content by triaged IVR pathway and EAST principle implemented on May 27, 2025

## We randomly trialled the new messaging (vs the old) across London

Eligible patients were randomly assigned to receive 1 of 3 messages:

35 %: "The fastest way to get dental help is to use 111 online. This usually takes less than 90 seconds. Can we send you a text with a link to 111 online?"



35%: "You can reduce the strain on the NHS by using 111 online to get dental help. Can we send you a text with a link to 111 online?"

30%: old messaging (control)

We analysed impact using Statistical Process Control (SPC). SPC uses statistical charts to monitor a trend that reveal if changes are due to normal random variation or specific, actionable causes.

# Analysis found “easy” messaging has the most positive and significant impact on digital uptake

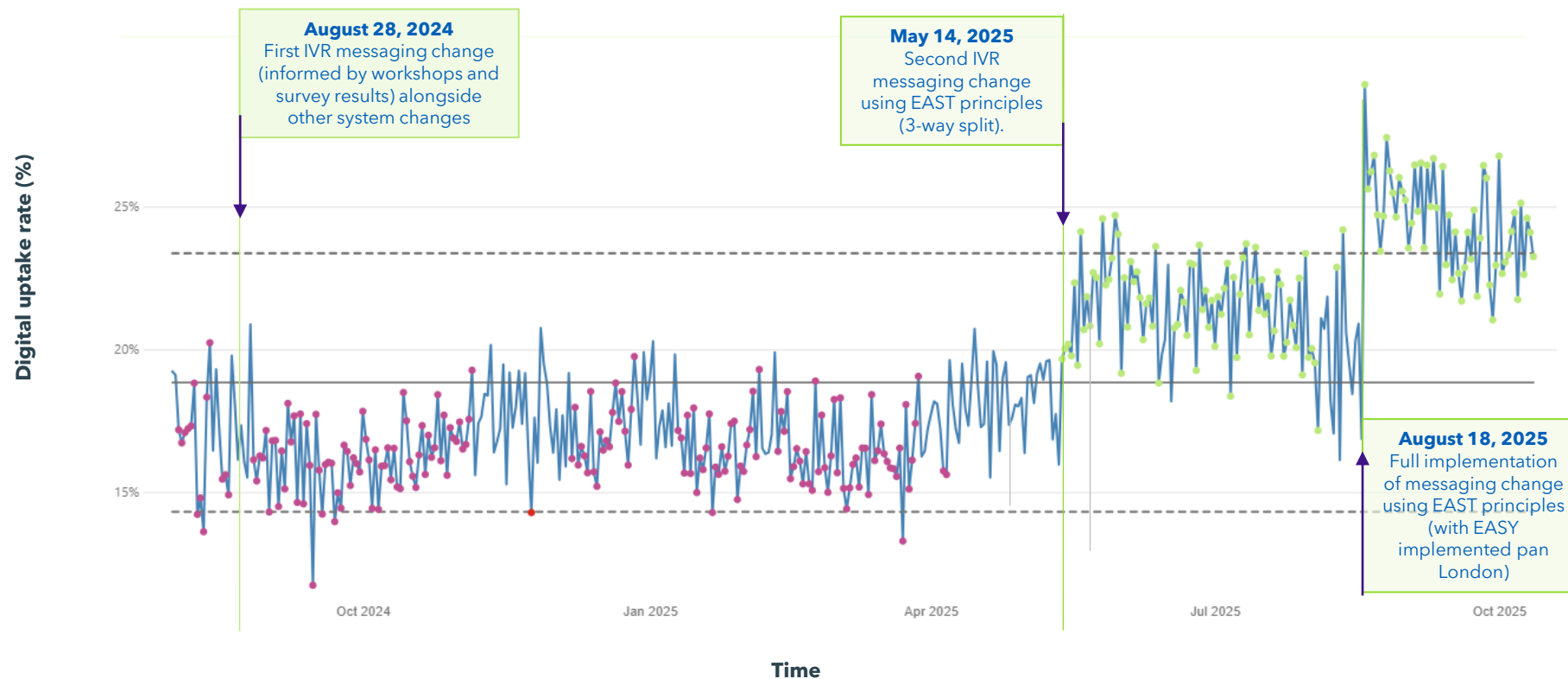


Digital uptake was between **7-12%** higher in callers who received the 'easy' messaging.

**Figure 1:** Digital uptake trends and averages in 29,065 callers for dental, emergency medication and repeat prescriptions by IVR message received over the period (sourced from IVR utilisation data between May 27 and July 13, 2025)

# We found sustained digital uptake with updated messaging

Digital uptake rose in two clear waves: first in May 2025 after updated IVR messaging using EAST principles, and again in August 2025 after 'easy' messaging was implemented across the dental, prescription and eye-care pathways.



**Figure 1:** Digital uptake trends in 346,954 callers triaged to the dental, repeat prescription, emergency medication, and 'other' digital pathways (sourced from IVR utilisation data between August 1, 2024, and October 12, 2025)

**Key.** Red dots indicate downward shift, and green dots indicate upward shifts.

# Impact of EAST informed messaging on digital uptake

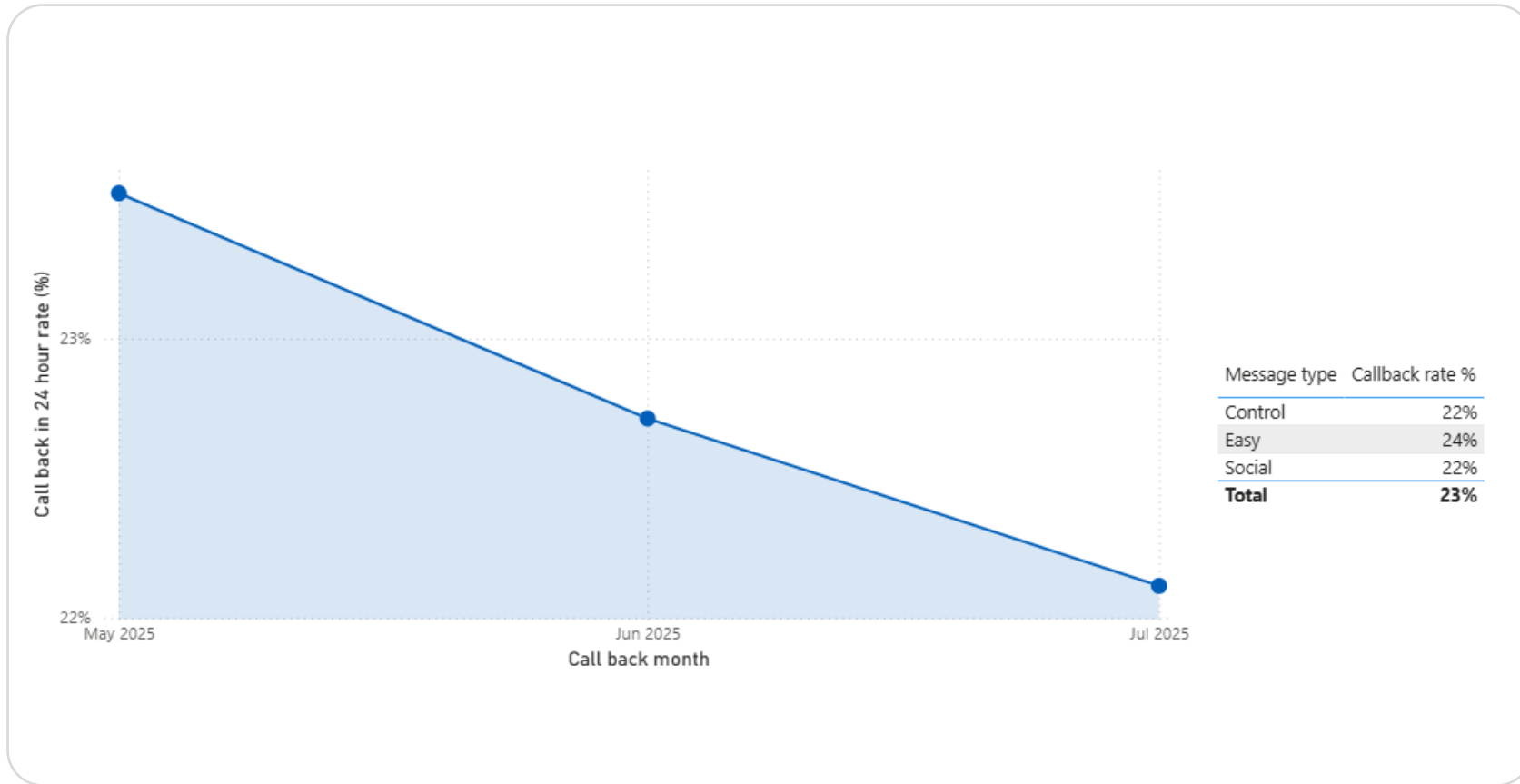
Change	Period	Average digital uptake (%)
Pre-EAST IVR message changes	Aug 1, 2024, to May 13, 2024	17%
Post- EAST IVR message change (experimentation phase)	May 14, 2025, to Aug 17, 2025	21% (+4%)
Post-EAST IVR message change full, cross-pathway implementation	Aug 18, 2025, to Oct 13, 2025	24% (+3%)

## Channel shift impact

The period saw a significant increase in digital uptake representing shift of an additional **20,800 callers** from the telephone line to digital pathways in London callers in this time (14<sup>th</sup> May 2025-13<sup>th</sup> October 2025).

**Table 1:** Average digital uptake percentages in 346,954 callers triaged to the dental, repeat prescription, emergency medication, URTIV, Eye, sexual health and chicken-pox digital pathways by each change implementation period (sourced from IVR utilisation data between August 1, 2024, and October 12, 2025)

# Trend analysis shows that new messaging has not negatively affected 24-hour call back rates



24-hour call back rates have demonstrated an overall **downward trend**.

Callers who received the 'Easy' messaging showed a slightly higher 24-hour call back rate during the period compared to groups receiving other messaging.

**Figure 3:** Month-over-month trends in call-back rates of NHS 111 callers for dental, emergency medication and repeat prescription (Source: IVR utilisation data between May 27 and July 13, 2025)

# System dynamics modelling of IVR and survey data indicates increased uptake associated with EAST informed messaging is sustainable

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- The HIN used System Dynamics Modelling to understand the impact of EAST messaging on digital uptake over time.

## Approach

- System Dynamics Modelling is used to understand complex systems over time, allowing for better policy design by simulating cause and effect relationships.
- It uses simulation software (we used Vensim) to visualise system behaviour over time to understand complex dynamics and test policies and interventions.

## Main findings

1. **Digital uptake will persist because it is driven by the IVR infrastructure, not by social components:** The EAST change alone was 4-times more impactful in uptake change than social factors (e.g., word of mouth).
2. **Use of the EAST messaging closed the age gap in digital uptake:** The intervention was most effective at engaging older users (46+), successfully bridging the digital gap in the short term (5-6 years).

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