

306 MEDICAL CENTRE

ACCESS - A Brief Patient Guide

Our approach to patient access

We aim to provide a **flexible, dynamic and efficient appointment system**, enabling patients to access the most appropriate clinician and service for their needs.

General practice is experiencing high levels of demand, and we recognise that accessing an appointment can sometimes be challenging. We continually review our appointment system to ensure that available appointments are used effectively and that patients are directed to the **right clinician, at the right time and in the most appropriate setting**.

Our clinical team includes **GPs, Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs), Practice Nurses, Clinical Pharmacists and other members of our wider healthcare team**.

Not every health problem requires a GP appointment. Our aim is to ensure that you are offered an appointment with a clinician who has the appropriate skills and expertise to deal with your particular need.

Booking an appointment

There are several ways to request an appointment:

- **Online** using the practice's available online services, including myGP and Patient Access.
- **Online consultation/triage** using e-Consult through our practice website.
- **By telephone** by contacting the practice.
- **In person** by speaking to our reception team.

We provide a large proportion of our routine appointments for advance booking, usually **at least one month ahead**.

We aim to provide routine planned appointments **usually within 10 working days**, although this may not always be possible, particularly during periods of high demand, annual leave or staff sickness.

Our dynamic appointment system

Our appointment system is designed to be **flexible and responsive to patient demand**.

However, different clinicians provide different types of consultations. To avoid patients inadvertently booking an appointment that is unsuitable for their needs, **online appointment options are deliberately configured according to the clinician and service**.

GP appointments

GP appointments are available as **telephone and face-to-face consultations**, depending on clinical need and availability.

To make online booking straightforward and to reduce the risk of inappropriate appointments being booked, **online GP appointments are currently offered as telephone consultations**.

Following a telephone consultation, the GP can arrange or facilitate a face-to-face appointment if this is clinically required.

Where appropriate, the practice may also arrange a face-to-face appointment directly.

Practice Nurse appointments

Practice Nurse appointments are generally **face-to-face appointments** and are therefore offered online as face-to-face appointments.

This ensures that patients are booked into the appropriate type of appointment for the service being provided.

ANP and Clinical Pharmacist appointments

Our **Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs)** and **Clinical Pharmacists** are an important part of our multidisciplinary team.

Depending on your symptoms, condition or healthcare need, you may be offered an appointment with an ANP or Clinical Pharmacist rather than a GP.

The appointment type will depend on the service being provided and the clinical requirements.

If you are unsure which clinician you need, our reception team can help direct you to the most appropriate service.

Routine appointments

Approximately **85% or more of our weekly appointments are available for online booking**, with appointments also available by telephone or in person.

Routine GP consultations are usually **10 minutes**, although some appointments may be longer where clinically appropriate.

Practice Nurse appointments are usually **15 minutes**.

If you have a significant or complicated problem and think you may need more time, please tell us when booking. A **double appointment** may be appropriate, although these are subject to availability and may not be possible during particularly busy periods.

Please remember that an appointment is generally intended to deal with **one main problem**. If you have several unrelated concerns, please tell us when booking so that we can advise you appropriately.

Same-day appointments

We provide a small number of GP appointments each day for patients whose needs **cannot reasonably wait until the next available routine appointment but are not necessarily an emergency**.

These appointments become available from **8:00am** and are limited.

You may be asked some questions about your symptoms so that we can determine whether a same-day appointment is appropriate and ensure that requests are prioritised safely.

Urgent appointments

We reserve a small proportion of our appointments for **urgent clinical problems that need attention on the same day**.

If you believe your problem is urgent, please contact us **as early in the day as possible**.

Our reception team may ask you for some information about your symptoms. This is not intended to make a diagnosis but helps us ensure that your request is directed appropriately.

Depending on your circumstances, urgent care may involve:

- a telephone consultation;
- a face-to-face appointment;
- a clinical assessment; or
- a home visit where clinically appropriate.

For urgent problems, it may not be possible to offer a choice of GP or appointment time.

Children under 10 are generally prioritised for same-day clinical assessment or telephone management where appropriate.

We do not routinely operate a walk-in service. However, if you attend the practice with an urgent concern, our reception team will ensure that your request is managed appropriately.

Telephone consultations

Telephone consultations can be a convenient and efficient way of accessing medical advice where a physical examination is not required.

They can be particularly useful for:

- discussing symptoms;
- reviewing medication;
- discussing test results;
- follow-up consultations; and

- other matters that can safely be managed without a physical examination.

Our clinicians will assess your problem and, if a face-to-face assessment is required, arrange or facilitate this where appropriate.

Face-to-face appointments

Face-to-face appointments remain an important part of our service and will be provided where they are **clinically appropriate or required**.

A face-to-face appointment may be arranged following a telephone consultation where the clinician considers that an examination or in-person assessment is necessary.

We aim to avoid unnecessary travel for patients while ensuring that those who require face-to-face care can access it.

Extended Primary Care Service (EPCS)

We work with other local GP practices through our local GP Federation to provide additional appointments through the **Extended Primary Care Service (EPCS)**.

The service operates **8:00am to 8:00pm, seven days a week**, subject to availability.

These appointments must be booked in advance.

Where appropriate, we may arrange an EPCS appointment, for example:

- following a telephone consultation where a face-to-face assessment is required;
 - where there is limited capacity at the practice; or
 - where an alternative appointment time is more suitable.
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Online consultations and e-Consult

Our practice website provides access to **e-Consult**, an online consultation and triage service.

You can use this to provide information about your symptoms or healthcare request.

The information you provide helps the practice understand your problem and determine the most appropriate way of managing it.

You may be asked to provide:

- details of your symptoms;

- when they started;
- how they have changed;
- relevant medical conditions;
- current medication;
- photographs where appropriate; and
- your preferred contact details.

Your request will be reviewed and you will be advised of the appropriate next step.

Choosing the right clinician

Not every problem requires an appointment with a GP.

Our multidisciplinary team includes:

- **GPs**
- **Advanced Nurse Practitioners**
- **Practice Nurses**
- **Clinical Pharmacists**
- and other healthcare professionals and services.

You may therefore be offered an appointment with a clinician other than a GP where that clinician is appropriately qualified and experienced to manage your particular problem.

This approach helps us provide timely access while ensuring that patients are seen by the **most appropriate healthcare professional**.

If you specifically request a GP, we will consider this alongside the nature and urgency of your problem and the appointments available.

Home visits

Home visits are intended for patients who are **clinically unable to attend the practice**.

They are not generally provided simply because attending the practice is inconvenient.

All requests for home visits are clinically assessed by a GP.

The GP may telephone you first to assess your condition and determine the most appropriate form of care.

A home visit may not always be the safest or most appropriate option. In some circumstances, attending the practice allows access to better facilities, equipment and a wider range of healthcare professionals.

If you think you require a home visit, please contact the practice **as early as possible**.

Cancelling an appointment

If you cannot attend your appointment, please let us know **as soon as possible** so that the appointment can be offered to another patient.

You can usually cancel by replying “**CANCEL**” to your appointment reminder text message.

Even if you are cancelling at short notice, please let us know. We may still be able to offer the appointment to another patient.

Making the most of your appointment

You can help us make the best use of your appointment by:

- thinking about what you want to discuss beforehand;
- concentrating on your main concern;
- having a list of your current medication available;
- making a note of when your symptoms started;
- explaining how your symptoms have changed;
- providing relevant information about previous treatment or investigations;
- being open and honest with your clinician; and
- asking questions if you do not understand something.

If you have several concerns, please mention this when booking.

Before the consultation ends, make sure you understand **what happens next**, including any medication, investigations, referrals or follow-up arrangements.

Chaperones

You can request a **formal chaperone** for an intimate examination or procedure.

A trained member of the healthcare team will normally act as a formal chaperone.

You may also ask to have a friend or family member present for support, subject to the circumstances and the clinician's assessment.

If a formal chaperone is required but is not immediately available, the examination or procedure may need to be rearranged.

Medical students and trainees

As a teaching practice, there may occasionally be **medical students, nursing students or doctors in training** involved in consultations.

You will always be asked for your consent before a student or trainee is present.

You are free to decline, and this will not affect your care.

If you need further help

If your symptoms have not improved, your treatment is not working as expected, or you remain concerned following your consultation, please contact the practice again.

It is appropriate to seek further advice if your condition changes or your concerns remain.

Second opinions

If you remain concerned about your diagnosis or treatment, you can discuss the possibility of a second opinion with your GP.

A second opinion is not an automatic entitlement to see a particular doctor or specialist. Your GP will consider whether a second opinion or referral is clinically appropriate.

When the practice is closed

Our normal telephone opening hours are:

Monday to Friday: 8:00am–6:30pm

excluding public holidays.

The practice premises are open until **7:00pm on Mondays and Tuesdays** as part of our extended access arrangements, although telephone services remain until 6:30pm.

Outside normal practice hours, you can contact **NHS 111** for urgent medical advice and assessment.

Our local out-of-hours provider is **SELDO C**.

If you have a **life-threatening emergency**, call **999**.

Protected Learning Time

The practice participates in **Protected Learning Time (PLT)**.

The practice may occasionally close between **1:00pm and 4:30pm**, usually on the third Thursday of the month, for staff training and development.

We will provide information in advance about alternative arrangements for obtaining medical advice and treatment during these periods.

Our commitment to you

We understand that accessing general practice can sometimes be frustrating, particularly when demand is high.

Our aim is to ensure that **every request is considered according to clinical need and directed to the most appropriate clinician or service**.

Our dynamic appointment system is designed to provide flexibility while reducing inappropriate bookings and ensuring that available clinical capacity is used effectively.

We will continue to review our access arrangements to improve **timeliness, patient choice, continuity and quality of care**.

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Brief Guide to Access – Updated August 2026
To be read alongside the Practice Access Policy