

**Know how we're working,
know who can help**

Website copy

Primary Care Access campaign

2022

Know how we're working

Your GP surgery offers different appointment types for your healthcare needs. Your appointment may be triaged, which means the **receptionists/ care navigators will assess your health care need, based on the instructions of the GP partners at the surgery. Care navigators are trained to find you the appointment type which is best for you.**

A healthcare professional may call you initially to speak about your healthcare need. This can help them to decide if it can be managed without having to come in for a face-to-face appointment. **Many healthcare needs can be dealt with or resolved initially through a phone or video consultation, where you are able to access this.**

You may receive:

- a face-to-face appointment
- a phone consultation
- a video consultation
- signposting to other help and support e.g. community pharmacy.

The reason for our triage service is due to the high level of appointment requests we receive every day. As every individual and every healthcare need is unique, we schedule each appointment on a case-by-case basis. We are doing our best to assist everyone as quickly as possible with the resources we have available. This is a different way to how GP surgeries were working previously, but it does provide you with more appointment options.

Some patients prefer remote consultations such as video or phone calls, as they can be more convenient and fit around other commitments. They can save you time, travelling, work absence and childcare arrangements. However, we understand that many people prefer to see a healthcare professional in person.

Remote consultations are being offered to make appointments more convenient for patients who can access them and to also ensure there are more face-to-face appointments available for those who really need them. **It is important to note that everyone who needs to be seen in person will be offered a face-to-face appointment. This may be for:**

- those who have a clinical need
- those who struggle to access telephone or video appointments.

Please be respectful towards all staff at your GP surgery who are doing their best to help you.

Our case studies show some different situations and the types of appointment you may be offered:

Case study –GP Phone Consultation, Phlebotomist, Advanced Nurse Practitioner

A patient noticed they often felt fatigued (tired) and was unsure of the cause. They called their GP surgery and the care navigator asked them questions to understand which appointment type would be best for the patient's needs.

The care navigator arranged a phone appointment with the GP to understand the full symptoms and issues. The GP recommended blood tests were to be carried out to further test for a health condition. The patient was then invited for a face-to-face appointment with the phlebotomist (a healthcare professional who takes blood samples for testing).

The GP analysed the results of the blood test, and the receptionist called the patient to advise that they would be invited for a face-to-face appointment with an advanced nurse practitioner. The advanced nurse practitioner was able to treat the patient and advise on their condition.

Case study – GP Phone Consultation, Pharmacist

A patient was experiencing symptoms of a urinary tract infection (UTI). They called their GP surgery and the care navigator asked them questions to understand which appointment type would be best for the patient's needs.

The care navigator arranged a phone consultation with the GP to understand the full symptoms and issues. The GP was able to prescribe the medication over the phone without the patient coming into the surgery. The patient was referred to their local pharmacist for support and advice on medications.

The GP advised that the patient that they could try visiting their local pharmacy first next time, as pharmacists are trained and many can now prescribe. The patient was happy, as this would mean they may not have to try to call the GP surgery in future and the issue may be resolved quicker, as they wouldn't need to wait for a call back,

Case study – Health Care Assistant

A patient had recently undergone surgery in hospital and needed a follow-up appointment to change their wound dressing. They called their GP surgery and the care navigator asked them questions to understand which appointment type would be best for the patient's needs.

The patient asked to see a GP. However, the care navigator explained to the patient that it would be best to see a health care assistant to change the dressing and that a GP appointment was not needed.

The care navigator arranged a face-to-face appointment with the health care assistant who was able to check for any abnormalities and redress the wound post-surgery. This also meant that the patient was seen quicker than if they had waited for a GP appointment that they did not need.

Case study – GP Phone Consultation and in-person examination

A patient had symptoms of abdominal pain that had been present for several weeks. They called their GP surgery and the care navigator asked them questions to understand which appointment type would be best for the patient's needs.

The care navigator arranged a phone consultation with the GP who, after hearing the symptoms, advised that a further examination needed to be carried out. A face-to-face appointment was offered to the patient to find out what the problem was.

Case study –First Contact Physiotherapist

A patient had symptoms of back pain that had not gone away for several weeks. They called their GP surgery and the care navigator asked them questions to understand what appointment type would be best for the patient's needs.

After hearing about the patient's issue, the care navigator arranged an appointment with the first contact physiotherapist. This meant that the patient was seen by the correct clinician the first time, and could start treatment sooner than if they had seen a GP and then had to wait for a referral to a physiotherapist.

If you would like to give feedback on how you receive appointments at your GP surgery, we invite you to answer our survey that will help improve the way that we are working.

<https://nhs.researchfeedback.net/s.asp?k=166236631140>

Know why we ask

GP reception staff, or 'care navigators' are a vital part of the practice and ask questions to direct you to the best professional support. They have been trained to ask you the right questions and are bound by the same confidentiality laws as your GP.

Your appointment may be triaged by a trained care navigator, meaning we'll assess the urgency of your healthcare need. We can then establish the most suitable appointment type for your care need, as well as which specialist professional within the practice team is best suited to care for you. This may not always be a GP. Click here [\[insert link when live\]](#) to visit our extended workforce page for more information on the other professionals that you might see within your GP Surgery. Sometimes, you might also be signposted for other types of support. Everyone who needs to be seen in person will be offered a face-to-face appointment.

Here is where we will tell you about some of the work being done to help get patients the help they need at the right time by the right people.

<https://youtu.be/oBZFWUp6rs>

Know who can help

Your GP surgery is aware of the high volumes of capacity and healthcare needs, and we are doing our best to assist everyone. There is a national reduction in the number of GPs available. However, your GP is supported by a range of other qualified healthcare staff at your GP Surgery who are trained to diagnose, advise and treat your healthcare needs.

We understand that many people prefer to see their GP initially, but GPs may not always be the best healthcare professional for your healthcare need. Often, you can be seen and treated more quickly if you are referred by the receptionist staff, or 'care navigators', to a specialist healthcare professional who is trained in a specific area relating to your need.

All healthcare professionals are qualified and are specialists in their fields, working closely in partnership with your GP. This is to find you the best overall healthcare and ensures that you see the right person, at the right time. It can also often mean fewer appointments and quicker overall treatment.

Please be respectful towards all staff at your GP surgery who are doing their best to help you.

You can get to know the extended workforce roles at your GP surgery here:

- Clinical pharmacists – the role combines that of a traditional pharmacist who has specialist knowledge about medication, as well as training to examine, diagnose and treat patients. They are qualified to prescribe within their area of expertise. They also proactively review patients' medications for enhanced safety and effective treatment of ongoing conditions. Clinical pharmacists support the other practitioners in the practice with specialist information about medications and alternatives. They are also able to help with lifestyle changes to tackle long-term conditions, order blood tests where necessary, and often advise patients who have just come out of hospital and need help with their new medication.
- Pharmacy technicians – working closely with the clinical pharmacists, pharmacy technicians support with prescription management. They are trained to help patients with understanding and getting the most from their medication, as well as lifestyle advice.
- General practice nurses – An integral role within GP surgeries, practice nurses have a wide range of skills. They care and advise patients with long-term conditions, such as diabetes and asthma. Practice nurses are able to undertake blood tests, conduct breast examinations and cervical screening (smear tests). They can even advise on contraception. Practice nurses also oversee baby immunisations and will provide families with advice.
- Healthcare assistants – working closely with the practice nurses, they assist with medical procedures. Healthcare assistants are trained to give flu jabs and take blood samples. They are also able to carry out patient health checks, which monitor blood pressure, height, weight, and give lifestyle advice.
- Social prescribers – the role supports patients to improve their health, wellbeing and welfare by connecting them to community services, which might be run by the council or a local charity. They are able to take the time to talk about what matters to patients and support them to find suitable activities or services for practical and emotional support.
- Care coordinators – with a focus on providing a coordinated care journey for patients, care coordinators act as a single point of contact for patients to navigate the health and care system. This could mean, supporting people living with frailty or people with multiple long-term physical and mental health conditions. A care coordinator builds trusting relationships and listen closely to what matters to them. They will work with them to develop a personalised care and support plan.
- First contact physiotherapists – have enhanced skills to help with muscle or joint problems. This includes people recovering from serious injuries or illness, and those with new injuries. They are trained to undertake assessments of patients with muscle or joint problems to develop a diagnosis or recommend a treatment plan. First contact physiotherapists are trained to give the best expert advice on how best to manage conditions and refer patients onto specialist services if necessary.
- Mental health practitioners – support patients who may be experiencing difficulties with their mental health. They work with patients to make the best possible decision to manage their care and help them access treatment. Mental health practitioners are a bridge between primary care and specialist mental health providers, providing care to patients with a range of needs and can then go on to access a range of mental health services.

- Physician associates – medically-trained professionals and work alongside the GP. They are qualified to diagnose and treat a wide range of health conditions. They can order tests and interpret the results, perform physical examinations and then make referrals. A Physician Associate is a valuable role and provides patients with the continuity of care they need, especially those with long-term conditions.
- Paramedics – a new role within the extended workforce in GP surgeries. They are trained to deal with a wide range of illnesses and injuries by running clinics and providing continuity for patients with complex health needs. They will be able to carry out assessments and manage requests for same-day urgent appointments and home visits.

Know your words, know your actions

The NHS is working hard to give people the care and treatment that they need. We know it is frustrating when people are worried for their health and they want help now.

However, staff in settings throughout the NHS say they are facing a wave of anger and abuse when they go to work. There is evidence of increased abuse happening in hospitals, clinics, in community settings and in general practice. And it is often the people that patients first come into contact with in primary care settings that bear the brunt of this. This can include foul language, shouting, intimidation and threats. Increasingly it also involves targeting on social media.

Patients and staff across the NHS are standing together to ask people to be respectful to workers who are doing their best to help all our patients.

Abuse, bullying and harassment is never justified.

Care about us, caring for you. Our staff are human too.

Support your NHS staff and stand with us against abuse.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9Ufs1_0h6I

Know your NHS app

The NHS App is a simple and secure way to access a range of NHS services on your smartphone or tablet, at a time convenient to you.

The app has been developed by the NHS to help people easily access information about their health and care, and to provide more control over how they access NHS services.

The NHS App enables you to:

- access your NHS COVID Pass in a secure way
- check your symptoms using the health A-Z on the NHS website
- find out what to do when you need help urgently, using NHS 111 online.

You may find additional services available to use, depending on what your GP Surgery can offer.

- book and cancel your appointments
- order repeat prescriptions to your local pharmacy
- access your GP medical record
- speak to your GP Surgery through the NHS app messaging service

You can download and register the NHS App today on the App Store or on Google Play, to help you access your care, anytime, anywhere.