

## High quality, friendly service

We changed the appointment system in November 2012 in order to help our patients see the GP they prefer at a time that is most convenient to them.

It also helps the practice to make the best use of the doctors', nurses' and other staff time and provide better continuity of care for patients.

## Why do we use this appointment system?

We needed to respond to the increasing demand for appointments from patients with an acute illness and from the increasing numbers of patients who have complex on-going health issues.

Patients told us that they sometimes struggled to get an appointment for the GP they wanted to see, and at time that was best for them.

This led to patients seeing different GPs for the same health problem and this meant they did not always get the best continuity of care.

This also led to a feeling of frustration and patients going to other health services such as the Walk-in Centre or Accident and Emergency. Patients told us that this was an unsatisfactory situation and we much agreed.

Because of this feedback we decided to implement a new system which we believed would provide greater access to the GP of your choice.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. How do I request a home visit?

A request for a home visit will also be dealt with by a telephone consultation. Please make it clear when you're speaking to the receptionist that you may need a home visit so they can alert the GP promptly to the possibility and they can plan when it is best visit. Visit requests should be made before 11:00 hrs (unless your visit request is an emergency).

### 2. What if I find it difficult to accept incoming calls?

The receptionist will make every effort to book the telephone consultation at a time to suit you. The new system allows a lot of flexibility, so a telephone consultation can be booked at any time of the day convenient to you, on any day your GP is working up to two weeks ahead. There is no need to phone on the day you expect to be seen.

If, after the telephone consultation, the plan is that you need to be seen in the surgery, then the GP has a lot more flexibility than the receptionist to find a convenient time for you to come in.

In exceptional circumstances, if you can't arrange to have a telephone consultation at any time, then please explain this to the receptionist when you first contact the practice and they will book the next routine face-to-face surgery appointment with a GP.

### 3. What if I need to see a GP urgently?

If you feel your health concern cannot wait until the next telephone consultation slot, please tell the receptionist and they will arrange for the on-call GP to help you.

### 4. What about other appointments at the surgery, for example, to see the nurse?

All appointments to see other clinicians are booked in the usual way by speaking to the receptionist.

### 5. Is this about making doctor's lives easier?

No. The system is improving patient care. In the past the patients who got the earliest appointments were the ones who phoned first, regardless of who needed them most. Using telephone consultations, doctors can decide which patients need to be seen more quickly.

The system aims to put patients in touch with their doctor at the first possible opportunity in order to deal with their requirements in the most effective way and according to clinical need.

### 6. Is this about diagnosing over the phone?

No. The GP will only offer telephone advice or a prescription over the phone when this is clinically safe, based on your symptoms and your medical history. This system should not put patients at risk in any way.

### 7. Can I request a face to face appointment if I am unhappy at the end of a telephone consultation?

Yes. Just tell your doctor that you have concerns and that you would like to be seen.

### 8. If I don't want to discuss my problem over the phone when the GP calls can I ask for a face to face appointment?

If for whatever reason you are unable to discuss your problem on the phone at the time the GP calls you, and feel the matter can only be discussed face to face in a surgery consultation, then please tell the GP this and they will book an appointment for you without the need for any further explanation.

# GP appointment system



**throckley**  
PRIMARY CARE

high quality, friendly service

## How does the appointment system work?

You contact the surgery as normal – and all requests to see or speak to a GP are booked into a GP telephone consultation slot.

The telephone consultation might involve the GP agreeing a time for you to come into the surgery to be seen either by them or another GP or nurse. It may even be that your health issue can be dealt with over the phone straight away.

The GP might ask you to go directly to another service; it depends very much on agreeing with you how best to deal with your health problem

This telephone system aims to provide you with better access to the GP of your choice.

**It's important to note that although your first consultation is on the telephone, this does not mean you won't see a GP face to face. The GP will discuss and agree this with you during the telephone consultation.**

## Saving Patients' Time

We know that there are many health issues for which patients have usually come into the surgery that could very easily be dealt with over the phone. Changing painkillers, or reviewing the benefit of a new medication, for example. This saves patients travelling to and from work or home.

## More Appointments Available

We also know that telephone consultations tend to be shorter than face to face consultations, which means our GPs can offer more appointments and therefore treat more patients.



## Prioritising Urgent Patients

If you do need an appointment at the surgery then the GP is best placed to work out with you when the two of you can meet, how soon that needs to be, and how long the appointment time should be. In the past it has been very hard for the receptionist to make this judgement, and it is much easier for the GP to decide this.

## Preparing for the Appointment

The GP may even advise that you have some tests done before they see you, saving you coming to the surgery first and being sent away for tests. They might also, for example, advise you bring a urine sample with you - again making sure that the time you spend coming to the appointment is used to the best advantage.

## Prescriptions

Please feel free to call as usual for prescriptions if you take medication on a long term basis. Please note regular medication reviews are necessary to ensure you are receiving optimum treatment, so you may be required to attend a Medication Review appointment prior to a prescription being authorised.

If you would like to request a prescription that is not on a repeat prescription, you will need to discuss this with the GP who usually treats you. Please ensure that you contact the surgery at least 48 hours before you will need the medication to allow a telephone consultation to be booked with the GP who knows you best. Please bear in mind not all GPs are in the surgery every day so we cannot guarantee you will be able to have your request dealt with on the day you ring the surgery.

We do not see these requests as 'urgent' and the on-call GP cannot be expected to issue these on the day you ring to request them.

## Fit-Notes (Sick notes)

If you feel unable to work and need a fit note this can often be discussed with a GP in a telephone consultation. If it is a continuation of a previous note then the GP who wrote that note should write the new one. You will be booked into the next available telephone appointment with this GP, but this may not be on the day you ring, as not all GPs work every day. Fit notes can always be backdated, but try to remember to organise your note in plenty time. Again, we do not see these requests as 'urgent' and the on call GP cannot be expected to issue these on the day you ring to request them.

## Our Aims

- We aim to arrange every routine telephone consultation within 48 hours of you calling the surgery.**
- We aim to arrange every urgent telephone consultation within 4 hours of you calling the surgery.**
- We aim to arrange every immediate telephone consultation within 30 minutes of you calling the surgery.**

## Feedback

We decided to introduce the new appointment system because we believed it would help us provide more accessible and better care for our patients.

Your feedback – both positive and negative in as much detail as possible – is very important to us and is extremely helpful in making this new system work.

Please ask reception staff for a suggestions form, we regularly review all the comments we receive.