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30th June 2025

Dear Patient,

Upcoming Changes to Improve Access to GP Services

Many of our patients will have heard on the news recently about plans to improve access to general practice. At Wellington Road Family Practice we regularly offer approximately 1400 appointments a month. In April 2025, we saw our list size reach 6000 patients, which is a 47% increase on the previous year.

As you may be aware, Wellington Road has historically offered same-day access to patients requiring a GP appointment, with patients needing to telephone the surgery at certain times of the morning or afternoon, to secure one of a newly released set of appointments that day. Patients can also use the e-consult service on our website for more routine problems or administrative queries. Thirdly, patients are able to request an appointment in-person at the practice.

Our recent patient survey highlighted a need for change. Whilst around 50% of respondents were satisfied with the current methods of booking appointments, 46% said they were often not able to get an appointment at a date and time that suited them, 29% found booking via telephone to be difficult, and 33% would prefer to have an online system available. Many respondents also indicated that they would like more options to book GP appointments in advance.

As a practice, we regularly get feedback that having to call at 8.30am/3pm for a same day appointment just doesn't work for them. Patients were concerned they were unable to arrange care for themselves or others, and as a practice we are concerned we may be missing patients with more urgent needs because they cannot get through on the telephone. The telephone simply does not allow us to triage the request and prioritise accordingly.

Although we are not always able to increase the capacity of our clinical team any further, we do recognise that we need to make better use of the available team that we have, as we have a variety of clinicians and services who can help with many different health problems. Here is a list of our different clinical staff and services that we can refer to, other than GPs, and what they can help patients with:

Role	Clinical Areas
Paramedics	Acute minor illnesses such as viruses, chest infections, tonsillitis, earache, etc. Recent onset of pain. Skin conditions such as rashes. Bites, burns, scalds.
First Contact Physiotherapist	New musculoskeletal problems (i.e. joint pain/stiffness, back pain etc.) Recent worsening of an existing musculoskeletal problem not current undergoing treatment
Clinical Pharmacist	Medication queries, concerns about side-effects or usage, medication reviews, advice regarding alternative medications, reviews of particular health conditions
Physician's Associate	Patients over 16 years only. Taking medical histories, conducting physical examinations, managing patients with undifferentiated diagnoses, and providing health promotion and disease prevention advice. They can also formulate differential diagnoses and management plans, carry out diagnostic procedures, and develop and deliver treatment plans.
Nursing Team	Wound care, blood tests, health checks, vaccinations and immunisations, blood pressure checks, ECGs, smear tests, contraception reviews, reviews of Long Term Conditions
Mental Health Nurse	Support for patients experiencing poor mental health
Social Prescriber	Social support for patients struggling with low mood and isolation
Community Pharmacies	The surgery can refer patients to local pharmacies for help with particular health conditions, some of which can be diagnosed and treated with prescription medication by the chemist.

What are we doing to Improve Access?

From Monday 21st July, we are implementing a new system of access, which should help us address all the concerns previously raised.

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From this date, we will be asking all patients who have the ability, to request their appointment or query online using the E-Consult system – found on our practice website www.wellingtonroadfamilypractice.co.uk

The benefit of this is we can capture more information about the health problem, enabling our staff to triage effectively, and give the patient the right appointment or service for their need.

What if I don't have internet access, or am unable to use an online system?

You can still telephone the surgery with your request and the reception team will input your request into E-Consult, where it will then be passed to the triage team. Patients will be asked a short series of questions about their health problem or query, to ensure we capture the right information.

Patients who do not have internet access but have a wi-fi enabled device, can use the free wi-fi in the waiting room if needed.

What then happens to my request?

All requests will be processed by a triage team, in line with GP-approved protocols and pathways. If an appointment is required, you will be contacted by a member of the team to arrange it, or will be sent a link via SMS to book an appointment online.

What if I want to make a request in person?

Please note, we will no longer be taking requests for appointments at the front desk due to confidentiality implications. We would prefer patients to either use the online E-Consult system, or to call reception. However, for the first few weeks of the new system, staff will be on hand with paper forms for you to complete. The reception team will then input your form into the E-consult system, to be sent for triaging.

Does this mean I'll be able to book an appointment in advance?

Yes. The results from the patient survey showed there was a desire to book appointments in advance. Therefore, we will be increasing our routine appointment availability off the back of this feedback.

Please note, in order to maximise appointment availability before the 21st July, the week prior to the launch we will be running a same-day appointment only service. Please bear this in mind if you are looking to make an appointment.

We appreciate that this is a major change for some of our patients, but we are confident these measures will help to improve access and maximise the multi-skilled team we have here at the practice. We thank you in advance for your co-operation.

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How to Contact us and Request an Appointment

We want to ensure a safe and fair access to our appointments for all patients registered with us. Whether you use the online tool, or contact us by phone, your request for an appointment will be processed in the same way.

Online

Requests can be submitted online using the E-Consult tool via our website between 8am and 6.30pm Monday to Friday. It is the quickest way to let us know about new or ongoing symptoms, request a fit note, update your contact details and much more. Do spend some time familiarising yourself with the different options if you can.

Depending on the option you select, you'll be taken through a series of questions about your symptoms. This helps us to navigate your problem and determine the urgency so it can be directed to the most appropriate appointment or service.

By Phone

Call 01454 323366 8.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday. If you are requesting an appointment, our Reception team will go through a short series of questions with you, similar to that of the online system. Calls may last around 5 minutes to obtain all the required information.

How long will it take to get an appointment?

We aim to respond to urgent clinical requests the same working day, unless received after 4pm when you may receive a response the next working day.

You may receive a call or a text message from our team to either book an appointment, receive information on a more appropriate service that you can be referred to, or be called directly by a clinician. If we need more information, we will contact you to obtain this.

Some appointments can be booked online via a link that we will text you. If you are happy to use this service please ensure we have consent to send you text messages.

If an appointment is needed, it may be for the same day or to be booked in advance, depending on the urgency of your health problem.

What if I am housebound?

Requests for home visits for housebound patients should still be made by telephone by 10.30am if needed for the same day. Our Reception team will take details over the phone about the patient's symptoms to pass onto the clinical team.

You can also use the new system to request other things such as insurance reports, medicals, access to your online record, enquire about existing referrals and update your contact details. These requests are passed straight through to the relevant team at the practice.

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Supporting Our Staff

Our staff will be working very hard to support patients through these new changes, so we ask that you please be patient with them and cooperate as much as possible with these new systems. The Partners and Management will be regularly reviewing the impact of the new systems and seeking feedback from patients on their experience.

Thank you all for your continued support for the surgery over these past few, difficult years. We really appreciate it.

The Partners and Staff at Wellington Road Family Practice

*NB If you need this newsletter in another format, please email
bnssg.wellingtonroad@nhs.net*