



17 March 2023

Our appointment system

In January we moved from pre-bookable doctor appointments to more 'on the day'. This is because we are experiencing an ever-increasing demand for 'on the day' appointments, which we cannot meet and it was previously the case that at least a third of the appointments were already pre-booked for follow ups or routine matters.

The appointments up to 11.00am are 'on the day', and they can only be booked with your own GP. When they are gone – they are gone, but there will be some the next day, unlike the old system where you may have had to wait up to 3 weeks for the next routine appointment.

After 11.00am appointments will remain as 'clinically urgent only' and you will be offered an appointment with whatever doctor is available

A similar schedule will run for the afternoon.

This also means that more appointments are available to book online through your NHS APP or SystmOnline, thereby avoiding the 8.30 am telephone scramble.

We know it is difficult getting through on the phone, but demand is so high at the moment, just as it is for every other surgery.

Example of how this works

1. Please only call on the day you need to be seen.
2. Often when we are unwell, we get better in a day or two, so we don't always need to see a doctor, especially the first day we are ill. A prime example is adults with a cough or chest infection for a few days – this is a matter your local pharmacist can help with
3. When you call and ask for an appointment you will be offered one that day (see 1 above) if there are some available with your doctor – if not you will be asked to call back when your doctor is next in

4. If all the 'on the day' appointments have gone and you have a '**clinically urgent matter**', that is, an illness that cannot wait until the following day, you will be offered an urgent appointment.
5. If all the 'on the day' appointments have gone, and you call back another day, only to find that they have gone again, we request that you ask yourself.
 - a. can I reasonably wait another day? or
 - b. has my condition got worse?
 - c. do I need an urgent appointment?
6. If the answer is c., ask for an urgent appointment.

Is the system perfect? No

Overall, this system has proved very successful as more patients are able to get an appointment on the day when they are unwell, which appears to be the preferred option for most patients.

However, we know that this does not suit everyone – NO system does. So, what can we do?

The government is suggesting that from 1st April, we move to a system whereby we must allow patients to book up to two-weeks in advance.

If we move to this system, it is likely that all the future appointments will be booked, and this will mean that you may not be able to get an appointment for at least two-weeks.

The governments suggestion is that we must refer you to another service, for example, a pharmacist or 111 or A&E. – this is madness!

This is something we have always tried to avoid and wherever possible we have endeavored to offer same day appointments where there is a **clinical need**, and not turn patients away or send them to A&E inappropriately.

What are your thoughts? Do you have any suggestions?

- Please email watermeadow@nhs.net
- Subject: Appointment System

Please note that we will not be able to respond to all of your comments or suggestions.