

INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE ATTENDING PRIVATE HOSPITALS AND CLINICS

Due to long waiting times for investigations, Specialist appointments and operations within the NHS, some people are deciding to attend private hospitals and clinics, locally and abroad.

If you are thinking about using a private health provider, either by self-funding or private health insurance, we strongly advise you to consult one of our doctors beforehand to discuss things such as your expectation of treatment and follow up. Your GP will not usually recommend a specific Specialist. You are advised to do some research when deciding whether a healthcare provider is safe and suitable, and that they will provide a full package of care to you.

Please be aware that the practice is contracted to provide health services, in line with our General Medical Services contract, on behalf of NHS Lanarkshire and is not under any obligation to follow any requests from private health providers.

What happens when you are referred by your GP to see a Consultant/Specialist/Clinician Privately?

This leaflet describes what you can expect to happen if you ask your GP to refer you to see a Specialist privately. This might be a Consultant Doctor, Surgeon, Private GP, Specialist Nurse, or Allied Health professional such as a Physiotherapist. This leaflet uses the terms Clinician and Specialist interchangeably to denote a person or team you are seeing privately.

What happens next?

You should contact the Clinician's team directly to organise an appointment as the practice do not book these for you. That team may request a referral letter (list of medical information about you) from your GP; the practice can provide this, for you to collect or have emailed to you or the Specialist. Our staff will advise how long this is likely to take. Please do not ask for letters on the same day as your private appointment.

If you have private health insurance, your insurer may have a list of approved Specialists. You should check with your insurer before you proceed.

If an insurance company or Specialist wishes a specific form or type of report to be completed, then the GP Practice will charge you for providing this additional work.

Contact the Specialist team or your insurer directly if you have any future appointment issues or questions about your care.

What happens if you need a test or procedure?

If the Specialist thinks that you need any tests (including blood tests), or a surgical procedure, **they** are responsible for:

- **arranging the test and any medications (such as sedation) that might be needed for this.** They should also explain how and when you will receive a date of any procedure and what to do if the date is not suitable for you.
- **giving you the results and explaining what they mean** (this may be done in a separate appointment with them or by letter). You should not contact your GP surgery to discuss the results of tests organised by others, it is the Specialist's responsibility to discuss this with you.
- **follow up care**

This is also true of NHS care; secondary care clinicians should organise tests and have results returned directly to themselves rather than pass tasks to the GP practice to carry out.

The cost of tests and follow up should be paid for within the private sector, which may increase the costs you incur. You may also need to travel to where you saw the Specialist. This should be considered when you are deciding whether to go ahead with a provider and considering the value of their package. You should ask them about what follow up they will provide. We are aware of some clinics stating the NHS can and will provide follow up, with a long list of requirements. This is often incorrect.

GP practices should not be asked to perform blood tests or other private investigations using NHS resources. A private GP or Specialist can refer to NHS secondary care services but should not expect your GP practice to do this for them. If a private Specialist informs you to arrange or to expect to hear from your NHS GP to arrange such tests, then this is incorrect. You should, at the time, remind the Specialist that all tests need to be carried out privately. Avoiding inappropriate requests for your NHS GP to carry out tests will:

- Avoid delay in having your tests
- Ensure that the right person (your Specialist) gets the results directly
- Avoid delays in your Specialist reviewing your results and planning any required follow up

What if my NHS Clinician has referred me for a scan and I want to get it done privately?

Please discuss this directly with the NHS clinician who recommended the test. They are responsible for interpreting and explaining the results to you; do not ask your GP to refer you for the scan. You may need to see a Specialist privately to have them request a scan.

What happens if you need new medicines?

The Consultant might suggest prescribing new medicines for you or might want to make changes to the medicines that you are already taking.

The Specialist is responsible for giving you the first prescription for any new medicine that you need to start taking straightaway.

If the Specialist recommends a new medication, they should write to the GP outlining the reasons for treatment. In some circumstances, the GP may be willing to continue prescribing the medication. It usually takes two weeks for these letters to be received and actioned by practices.

Private Clinicians may suggest medications to patients which would not normally be prescribed by NHS GPs.

This particularly relates to medications which are not included in NHS Lanarkshire's Drug Formulary, medications that require regular monitoring (for example disease modifying anti-rheumatoid drugs, some psychiatric medications, medications for ADHD), medications for sedation before procedures, medications used outside of their license and medications restricted for Specialist or hospital use only.

If either the Specialist, or your GP, informs you that this is the case for your medication then you will need to continue to receive it from the private service. Please contact the private service directly to organise this.

Before deciding to go with a certain clinic, check that they are able to provide prescriptions if these are part of the treatment. There are clinics operating without a prescribing doctor or independent prescriber; these might be providing diagnosis and 'non pharmacological' (not using medication) treatment but they should not make medication recommendations for the GP practice.

What happens if I need to transfer my care back to the NHS?

If after seeing the Specialist privately you want to be back under NHS care, regulations allow for you to transfer back. You should be transferred back into the NHS system where you would have been at the point you left the private sector (e.g., you do not go back to the start of the queue).

This transfer **must be done by the private clinician** who is overseeing your care and you should not be passed back to the GP for this to be done. There are a few reasons why;

- it delays your ongoing care
- your Specialist knows the full details of your condition and what they are referring you for
- it wastes precious NHS appointments with your GP and adds unnecessary administration to the process

The Specialist should arrange your referral to the appropriate NHS clinic by writing a referral letter; there may be a waiting list. It is helpful if they pass on results of tests and data used to reach a diagnosis; NHS teams may not always agree with diagnoses or treatment plans made

elsewhere so your NHS care might be different. Do not contact the practice to check on the progress of your referral, we do not have this information.

[If I pay for private treatment, how will my NHS care be affected? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

What if I need a Fit Note (previously known as Sick Note)?

If you need to be certified as unfit for work following treatment by a clinician:

Fit notes can and should be issued by doctors and nurses working in the private sector-

- the specialist is responsible for issuing you with a Fit Note.
- the Fit Note should cover the period they expect you to be unfit to work, or until your next contact with the Specialist. You should not need to see or contact your GP to get a Fit Note following hospital treatment unless your inability to work is unexpectedly prolonged.
- Fit notes can be issued by Doctors, Nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and some pharmacists (not high street chemists).

[Getting a fit note | NHS inform](https://www.nhs.uk)

What if I need a follow-up appointment?

The private provider will discuss with you whether you should have ongoing follow-up care or whether you should be discharged back to your GP with no follow up required.

If the Specialist thinks you do need to be seen again, they will give you another appointment or tell you when to expect this. If you do not hear anything, please contact the Specialist's office, rather than your GP surgery.

What do I do if I have any questions?

If you have any specific questions related to your care, you should **contact the Specialist's team directly**. It is important that you make sure you know how you can contact your private provider.

This leaflet has been developed using information from the British Medical Association and NHS Information sources, with consideration of the GMC's Good Medical Practice document.