

Why GPs sometimes charge fees

What is covered by the NHS and what is not?

The Government's contract with the GPs covers medical services to NHS patients, including the provision of ongoing medical treatment.

In recent years, however, more and more organisations have been involving doctors in a whole range of non-medical work.

Sometimes the only reason that GPs are asked is because they are in a position of trust in the community, or because an insurance company or employer wants to ensure that information provided to them is true and accurate.

Do GPs have to do non-NHS work for their patients?

With certain limited exceptions, for example a GP confirming that one of their patients is fit for jury service, GPs do not have to carry out non-NHS work on behalf of their patients.

Whilst GPs will always attempt to assist their patients with the completion of forms, for example for insurance purposes, they are not required to do such non-NHS work.

Why does it sometimes take my GP a long time to complete my form?

Time spent completing forms and preparing reports takes the GP away from the medical care of his or her patients.

Most GPs have a very heavy workload and paperwork takes up an increasing amount of their time, so many GPs find they have to take some paperwork home at night and weekends.

I only need the doctor's signature – what is the problem?

When a doctor signs a certificate or completes a report, it is a condition of remaining on the Medical Register that they only sign what they know to be true.

In order to complete even the simplest of forms, therefore, the doctor might have to check the patient's entire medical record. Carelessness or an inaccurate report can have serious consequences for the doctor with the General Medical Council (the doctors' regulatory body) or the Police.

What can I do to help?

Do not expect your GP to process forms or supply reports or letters overnight. You should allow up to 2 weeks for the doctor to complete the work

The receptionist will ask you for payment when you hand in your request. For current charges, please refer to the 'Fees for non-NHS Services' form displayed in reception.