

Non NHS Fees and Charges

Why Fees are charged

The Government's contract with GP's covers medical services to NHS patients however in recent years more and more organisations have been involving doctors in a wide range of non-medical work. Sometimes the only reason that GP's are asked is because they are in a position of trust in the community or because an insurance company, employer or public body wants to ensure that the information provided to them is true and accurate.

The following Questions and Answers are taken from advice by the British Medical Association (BMA) to help patients understand the fees charged by GP's.

1. Do GP's have to do non-NHS work for their patients?

With certain limited exceptions such as a GP confirming that a patient is not fit for jury service GP's DO NOT have to carry out non-NHS work. Many GP's however will always attempt to assist their patients and carry out this work.

2. Why does it sometimes take my GP a long time to complete my form/letter?

Time spent completing forms and preparing reports takes the GP away from the medical care of patients. GP's have an ever increasing workload of forms which must be prioritised against offering appointments.

3. I only need the GP's signature—what's the problem?

When a GP signs a certificate, completes a report or writes a letter it is a condition of remaining on the Medical Register (which allows them to practice as a doctor) that they only sign what they know to be true. In order to complete even the simplest of forms the doctor may have to check a patient's entire medical record. Carelessness or inaccuracy can have serious consequences for the doctor with the General Medical Council (the doctor's regulatory body) or even the Police.

4. Who sets the fees and why do different doctors charge different fees?

The BMA suggest fees that may be charged in certain circumstances
However these are intended for guidance only. Doctors are not obliged to charge the rates suggested by the BMA and the fee levels will generally reflect the amount of work and time involved.

5. Why do GP's charge for the completion of cremation forms?

A deceased person cannot be cremated until the cause of death is definitely known and properly recorded. Before cremation takes place two certificates must be signed, one by the GP and one by another doctor. The completion of these forms is not part of a doctor's NHS duties and the fees are usually charged to the funeral director who generally passes on the cost to the family. These fees are agreed with the National Association of Funeral Directors, the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors and Co-operative Funeral Care. Death Certificates are a separate form and are completed free of charge

6. What notice is needed for completion of reports and letters?

To allow the practice to plan the GP's time 4 weeks' notice is required although many are completed within this time. Where a patient has an urgent request this should be explained to the receptionist who will note the request however it is not always possible for other more clinically urgent work to be delayed.

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