

Total Triage Model at The Links Medical Practice

Dear patients,

We are writing to share some exciting news about a significant change to our appointment system that will improve how The Links Medical Practice delivers healthcare services to you from 30th September – we are moving to a **Total Triage model**.

Total Triage (see below) is a new approach recommended by NHS England, to improve accessibility to Primary Care services. The main objectives are to enhance the quality of care our patients receive, to ensure that they are given the most appropriate appointment or advice to meet their needs and that this is done in a timely way.

What is Total Triage?

Traditionally, patients would book appointments to visit the practice in person. More recently, we have been offering telephone appointments too. However, the demand for appointments has increased hugely in recent years, and General Practice must address the issue of capacity, to maintain patient safety and satisfaction.

Total Triage introduces three essential components:

- **Care Navigation:** We request that most patients begin to contact us via our [website](#) where they will be asked to complete our [eConsult](#) when making a request. If you contact the practice with a concern, or to request an appointment, our trained receptionists will conduct an initial assessment by exploring what you have already requested via the online questionnaire and/or help you to complete this (if you are unable to). This process will allow us to assess your needs and ensure that you are directed to the most suitable person to care for you. This has been shown to utilise skills and resources across the whole practice team more appropriately. Some patients will be signposted to a suitable local service by our reception team, but most patients will have their questionnaire reviewed by a GP.
- **Total Triage:** from the 30th of September 2024 one of our experienced GPs will review each patient request to decide which member of our healthcare team is best placed to help, the most suitable time frame for the appointment and whether this is best suited to be via telephone or in person at the practice. Where necessary, we might ask you to answer a few additional online questions to help our clinicians prioritise those patients who need more urgent care. As well as offering GP appointments, following GP assessment, some patients will also be directed to other clinicians in the practice such as one of our clinical pharmacy team, our practice nurse, our physician associates, our mental health practitioner or our first contact physiotherapist. By ensuring that patients reach the right person in a timely way, our clinicians will be available to answer your questions, provide clinical advice, and offer prescription renewals much more efficiently than before.
- **Face-to-face Appointments:** We understand the importance of face-to-face appointments for many patients. Total Triage ensures that the practice makes the best use of these, with GPs and other clinicians. Often telephone consultations work well both for patients and clinicians, and we now have excellent facilities to view photographs sent from your mobile phone which are extremely helpful to support best care.

How Does This Benefit You?

We understand that change can sometimes be difficult, but we are confident that Total Triage will bring many benefits to you, our patients – for example:

- **Improved Access to Care:** Total Triage has been shown to reduce waiting times and it enables us to attend to your medical needs more promptly. By using remote consultations, where appropriate, we can free up face to face appointments for those patients that need them.
- **Convenience:** Using digital communication will mean that you can engage with us from the comfort of your home or workplace. No more having to travel to the practice and possible long waits for simple enquiries or prescription renewals. If you haven't already, please download the [NHS App](#) or make your requests online by filling in an [eConsult](#).
- **Enhanced Patient Experience:** We are committed to providing you with the best possible care at The Links Medical Practice. Total Triage improves communication and ensures that you see the person best able to help you, in a timely way.
- **Embracing Innovation:** As healthcare technology advances, we are committed to staying at the forefront of these innovations. Total Triage will enable us to adapt and evolve with the changing healthcare landscape and ensure that you benefit from the latest advances in medical care.

What if I have trouble using the new system?

- We hope to support patients and their families/carers to get used to the new way of contacting the practice and to become comfortable with this over time
- We will, of course, provide additional support to those patients who are unable to use online resources.

We will be rolling out these changes gradually, and our team is here to guide and support you every step of the way. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us. If you would like to be more involved in discussing change at the Links Medical Practice you can join our Patient Participation Group, please visit the PPG page on our [website](#).

Thank you for working together with us on this new project to improve our patient access. We welcome your feedback and ideas moving forward.

The Links Medical Practice Team