

Patient Letter

Dear Patient,

You will be aware of the current stresses on the NHS, through media coverage and likely through personal experience. These stresses are being strongly felt in primary care, in hospitals and within the social care setting. This is impacting on appointment availability, hospital waiting lists and A+E wait times.

In primary care, despite government promises, we have seen a reduction in numbers of fully qualified GP's per 100,000 patients across the country. This is despite a growing number of total patients, a growing number of elderly patients, and a growing number of patients with multiple medical conditions who are taking multiple medications. We therefore have a reduced workforce trying to manage an ever-growing workload.

To best manage the demand for GP appointments, the government and NHS managers are encouraging us to offer patients appointments with a range of skilled healthcare professionals. Alongside appointments with a GP, we are therefore offering appointments with Advanced Nurse Practitioner's, Paramedics, Pharmacists, Practice Nurses, Health Care Assistants, GP Assistants, First Contact Physios, Mental Health Practitioners, Social Prescribers and Wellbeing Coaches. Community pharmacies are offering appointments for a range of minor ailments and extended services such as antibiotic prescriptions for urinary tract infections. The idea being that these highly skilled professionals can support you and fully manage your problems without direct input from a GP.

This is very much a shift from "Traditional General Practice" and very much the direction that NHS primary care is heading. We are fully aware that some of the job roles mentioned above will be new to you, which is why we wanted to communicate with you to explain the new appointment system change and make you fully aware of what these professionals can offer. You will also appreciate that to allocate your request to the appropriate professional, our reception staff will need to ask for some information when you are booking an appointment. This allows for streamlined care navigation.

Advanced Nurse Practitioner's (ANP's)

They will predominantly see acute on-the-day problems. They can assess and diagnose a wide range of ailments, request investigations, prescribe medications and refer to hospital clinics. Supported daily by the Duty Doctor.

Practice Pharmacists

They will conduct medication reviews, discuss medication side effects, offer alternative medications and advise on medication monitoring. They are in close contact with community pharmacists and are at the forefront of medication updates and changes to NHS medication guidelines.

Practice Nurses

They will offer health promotion, long-term disease management, immunisations, travel vaccinations, family planning and cervical cytology amongst other roles.

Health Care Assistants

They will offer a range of services including health promotion, NHS Health Checks, long term disease management, immunisations, phlebotomy, dressings and ECG scanning.

GP Assistants

They will offer a range of services including health promotion, NHS Health Checks, long term disease management, phlebotomy, ECG scanning, medication optimisation and access to healthcare technology.

First Contact Physio (Musculoskeletal Practitioner)

They are specialists in diagnosing and treating patients with acute muscular and bone pains. They can offer tailored physical therapy / exercise support, request investigations, administer steroid injections and refer onwards to hospital clinics.

Mental Health Practitioner

Experts in treating mental health problems through evidence-based psychological or pharmacological approaches. They aim to improve quality of life and maximise continuity of care to ensure you feel well supported.

Social Prescribers

Specialists in offering a personalised community support approach for a range of non-medical issues, including accessing social care support, financial support and adjusting to life events.

Health and Wellbeing Coaches

They will meet with you to discuss what lifestyle changes you want to make and support you to create a plan to achieve this. This could include weight loss, dietary changes and becoming more physically active.

First Contact Dietitian

Diet and lifestyle is key to many conditions including diabetes, high cholesterol, obesity, malnutrition, irritable bowel syndrome and heart disease. Our Primary Care Dietitian can diagnose and treat nutritional conditions, translate nutritional science into practical guidance and support patients in the prevention and management of long term conditions

Community Pharmacists

They offer a growing range of services including UTI antibiotic prescriptions, minor ailment assessment and treatment, emergency contraception prescriptions and blood pressure checks.

GP's (Doctors)

Without doubt, there will be complex medical issues that will require an appointment with a GP, and in fact all on-the-day acute appointments are overseen by a Duty GP. The Duty GP is therefore available daily to support acute and urgent appointments.

Routine GP appointments for more complex and chronic medical circumstances are available to prebook.

We hope this information has been helpful.
Dale Medical Surgery Team