

# Millway Medical Practice Fair Use Policy for Online Consultations and Appointments

## Introduction

We have introduced this Fair Use Policy to ensure all patients can access our GP services - whether via our online consultation, telephone, or in-person – in an equitable way. By using our services responsibly, you help us deliver the best possible care for everyone.

**Inconsiderate or excessive use of our limited appointments and online consultations can mean other patients might not get the help they need in time.**

Examples of unfair use of our service include (but are not limited to):

- **Excessive or inappropriate requests:** Submitting an unusually high number of online consultations (e.g. more than two eConsult requests per week without medical necessity). We kindly ask you to avoid flooding the system with frequent or duplicate requests, as this can disproportionately consume resources and delay care for others
- **Abusive or harassing behaviour:** Any form of abuse, rudeness, or harassment towards our doctors, clinicians, reception, or admin staff is unacceptable. This includes aggressive language or behaviour in messages or calls. We operate under the NHS Zero Tolerance Policy - patients who threaten or abuse our team may lose access to certain services, and in extreme cases may even be removed from the practice list.

If a patient's use of our services significantly impairs our ability to care for others, we will reach out to discuss the issue and may review or limit that individual's access as appropriate. This step is only taken to ensure we can operate safely and fairly for all patients.

## Our Commitment to You

- **Equitable, respectful care:** We will treat all patients with dignity, respect, and without discrimination. Every patient's needs will be considered fairly.
- **Quality service:** Our team strives to provide a friendly, professional and confidential service. We continuously monitor and improve our systems to run as efficiently as possible within our resources.
- **Timely response:** We will review your online consultation and inform you within one working day what will happen next with your request (for example, whether you

October 2025  
Version 1.0



need an appointment, a phone call, prescription, or other follow-up). Urgent issues will be prioritised based on clinical need, just as they are for phone calls and walk-ins. Routine requests will be addressed in a timely manner appropriate to their urgency.

- **Needs-based access:** We will offer appointments or advice based on the clinical urgency and nature of your problem. This might involve a face-to-face visit, telephone call, or written advice from a GP or another appropriate health professional.
- **Transparency and feedback:** We keep patients informed about our services, their rights, and any changes that affect your care. We have a practice complaints procedure (available on request or on our website) and welcome feedback from patients to help us improve.

## Help Us to Help You

To make the most of our services and ensure fairness for everyone, please keep in mind the following guidelines:

- **One problem = one request:** Use a single eConsult submission for each medical issue you need help with and include all relevant details in that one request. Please **do not send the same query multiple times or chase for an immediate reply**, as duplicate submissions will not result in a faster response. Our team reviews all requests as soon as possible - sending another request too soon only creates additional workload.
- **Use online consultations for routine issues:** The online eConsult system is intended for non-urgent problems - issues that can safely wait a short while for attention. **Do not expect an instant diagnosis or same-day treatment for routine matters** through eConsult. We will handle your request in a timely manner, but it may take a day or more to fully resolve non-urgent queries.
- **Do not use eConsult for urgent needs:** If you feel your medical problem might be **urgent** or an **emergency**, **do not submit an online form** - instead, **call the practice by phone or come to the surgery in person** so that we can address it promptly (for life-threatening emergencies, always dial 999.) Our online platform cannot provide immediate emergency response and using it for urgent issues could lead to dangerous delays.

- **Attend or cancel appointments:** If you have an appointment with us, please attend on time or cancel it well in advance if you no longer need it. This allows us to offer that slot to another patient in need. Repeatedly missing appointments or last-minute cancellations waste valuable clinician time.
- **Be patient if there are delays:** Occasionally, our clinics run behind schedule, or it may take longer to respond to an eConsult. In these cases, please bear with us – we will inform you of any significant delays and do our best to get back on track.
- **Use services responsibly:** We kindly ask that you use our GP services responsibly and appropriately for your level of need. Routine or minor conditions may not require a GP appointment at all - consider other resources first when suitable. For example:
  - For **common minor ailments** (coughs, colds, mild aches, etc.), you can seek advice from your pharmacist or trusted NHS online resources. Self-care at home is often effective for these short-lived issues.
  - For non-urgent medical advice when we are closed, you can call **NHS 111** or use the NHS 111 online service.
  - Remember that we have a team of other professionals (nurses, physician assistants, pharmacists, etc.) at the practice. The **GP is not always the most appropriate person** for every problem - our reception team may direct you to another team member who can help you more quickly (for example, our practice nurse for immunisations or our clinical pharmacist for medication reviews).
- **Home visits are limited:** Home visits by a GP are only for patients who are medically housebound or too ill to come to the surgery. If you think you need a home visit, please call us as early in the day as possible. A doctor will usually phone you first to assess the situation, and if a home visit is not deemed medically necessary, we will arrange appropriate alternative care.
- **Prescription requests:** If you are requesting a repeat prescription, please allow at least **72 working hours** (3 business days) for us to process it. Plan ahead so you do not run out of your medication. **Do not pressure staff to expedite prescriptions** faster than the standard processing time - all requests are dealt with as efficiently as possible in the order received.
- **Keep your details up to date:** Inform us if you change your name, address, phone number or email. Accurate contact information helps us communicate with you quickly (for example, to book you in from an eConsult query) and ensures you receive important correspondence.

- **Respect our staff:** Our doctors, nurses, and administrative staff are here to help you. **Please treat them with courtesy and respect** at all times. We understand that patients may feel unwell or anxious, but aggressive or abusive language and behaviour are not acceptable (in person, on the phone, or online). We will **not tolerate verbal or physical abuse** - such behaviour may result in a warning or further action under our zero tolerance policy.

Thank you for your cooperation. Following this Fair Use Policy will help us continue to provide **safe, timely, and fair access** to all our patients.

We will regularly monitor the usage of our online consultation system and appointment requests to ensure we can meet demand safely. *In the rare event that demand becomes overwhelming (exceeding our capacity to respond safely), we may need to temporarily restrict online request availability to protect patient safety. If the eConsult service is ever unavailable for this reason, you will still be able to contact us by phone or by coming into the surgery as normal.*

Our goal is to maintain a sustainable service that prioritises those with the greatest medical need while still offering convenient access for routine matters. **By using our services considerately, you are helping us help you and the whole community.**