

From Loxwood Medical Practice

An important message to our patients

Safe Working Practice

The way we work at Loxwood Medical Practice is underpinned by two core values: the wish to deliver the best care we can to our patients, and the need to look after the wellbeing of our staff. These two values are mutually dependent on each other - staff need to feel safe and secure at work to deliver the best care.

With the increasing national pressures on General Practice, it has become increasingly difficult to maintain these two values at all times, and we have had to do some hard thinking about how to keep both our patients and our staff safe in the current environment. The demands on primary care have increased year on year, with more and more work being passed from hospitals to GPs, more emphasis on preventative medicine, which requires extensive monitoring, and increased medical complexity as the population in the UK ages. These pressures have not been matched by the funding required to meet these extra demands, and it has become increasingly common that the volume of patient-need on a particular day threatens to overwhelm our staff, potentially putting patients at risk if the clinicians are overworked.

Until now we have always accepted all patient requests that have come to us during our working hours, but, like most GPs, we have had to accept that this is not sustainable. "Guidance on safe working practice for GPs" now recommends that GPs should limit the number of patient contacts they attend to each day, so that they are able to see their patients safely, and without feeling overwhelmed or exhausted. Once a safe limit has been reached, the practice should signpost any urgent care needs to other providers of care. Sometimes this will be because another service is the most appropriate, such as the Pharmacy First scheme or the Minor Injuries Unit, or patients should be advised to call 111 if they need urgent advice.

What does this mean in practice?

We will continue to work hard to provide as much capacity as possible to care for our patients each day, but on days when all the clinicians have reached their safe working level, we will take the following actions:

- Any eConsult forms received requesting an appointment will be added to a list for triage the next working day.
- Where patients telephone the practice and request help the same day, or are felt to need help the same day, they will be signposted to another service as appropriate. This may be to call 111, or a service such as Pharmacy First or the Minor Injuries Unit.

We appreciate that this is a big change for us and will sometimes bring challenges for our patients, but we have reached something of a tipping point and feel that these changes are vital to ensure both patient and staff safety. We are very grateful for your understanding and support.



LOXWOOD
—MEDICAL PRACTICE—

Our Patient Charter

Our commitment to you:

- Our aim is to provide a personal, friendly, professional and confidential service.
- We will treat all patients equally with dignity and respect.
- We aim to support patients in leading a healthier lifestyle and provide information so that an informed choice can be made.
- We like to offer you your named GP, or GP of choice, where possible, for continuity of care.
- We will listen to you and involve you in decision making regarding your treatment options.
- We will monitor and improve our systems to ensure we operate as efficiently as possible within the resources available to us.
- We operate a practice complaints procedure which may be used in confidence.
- We welcome and consider all feedback from patients and make best use of our patient surveys when making decisions that affect our patients.

Please help us to help you:

- Please make a request for medical help using our eConsult forms. The eConsult form is an NHS backed platform that helps us allocate appointments and services appropriately to meet the high demand. Please provide as much information as possible to help the clinician provide you with the most appropriate advice and appointment. If you are unable to use our online consultation forms then please call our reception team who will be happy to assist you.
- Please keep to appointments made and arrive on time. If there is a need to cancel please do so in plenty of time so another patient may benefit from the appointment.
- Only request a home visit if you are housebound.
- Follow up on your test results a week after your test: should there be any serious abnormality you will be contacted by us promptly.
- Follow up on a referral made if you have not heard back within the timescale advised. You can also view referrals on your NHS app to find out the status.
- Report to the receptionist or use the automated patient check-in on the wall facing the front entrance, on arrival for your appointment.
- Bear with us if there is a delay – this is likely to be due to another patient needing additional time or an emergency: we will try to keep you informed of anticipated delays.
- Use our service responsibly and do not expect immediate treatment for non-urgent/routine conditions.
- Please consider whether you need to see a GP: often an administrator, practice nurse, pharmacist or other member of our team is able to address your problem. By seeing them instead you ensure availability of GP appointments for you and your family when they are really needed.
- We are aware access to other parts of the health service is currently challenging but if your problem is more suitable for a pharmacy, optician, dentist or minor injuries unit please contact these services first. We are not a substitute for emergency services and we are not a walk-in centre.
- Allow 3 working days for processing repeat prescription requests and do not pressure staff to process unauthorised medication requests. Any private prescriptions or hospital prescription requests will also require the same timeframe, and dependent on the medication type may or may not be able to be issued by us.
- Keep us informed of any name, address and telephone number changes.
- Treat us with respect, we will not tolerate verbal or physical abuse.



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