

Dear Patient

Total Triage

We wish to share some very exciting news about a significant change to our appointment system that will improve the way our surgery delivers care to all our patients.

GP practices across UK are moving to a 'Modern General Practice' model to make access to care and treatment easier for patients and help improve patient satisfaction. This is a national NHS project, and all general practices must adopt the system by 1st October 2025.

From Monday the 1st September 2025, we are going Live with the Total Triage model. This is complying with NHS regulations.

Please note this does not affect any nurse, pharmacist, or other supporting service appointment onsite. They all can be accessed as usual.

What is Total Triage?

Total triage is a General Practice workflow where every patient contacting a practice first provides some information on the reasons for contact and is triaged before making an appointment.

All patient requests will be triaged by one of an experienced member of staff who will decide what the best course of action is. Where necessary, we might ask you to answer a few additional questions to help our doctor prioritise those patients who need more urgent care.

You could be given a face-to-face or telephone appointment; you could have a reply from the GP with self-care advice or you could be signposted to a more appropriate service.

Please note Nurse/HCA Appointments are not affected and remain the same as before if you need it for cervical screening, wound management, bloods etc.

The main purpose of the Total Triage model is to:

- Enhance the quality of care our patients receive.
- Ensure they are given the most appropriate appointment or advice to meet their needs.
- Communicate with patients in a timely way.
- Move away from first come first served approach to one based on patient needs.

How does this benefit you?

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

- Total Triage has been shown to reduce waiting times and it enables us to attend to your medical needs more promptly.
- Using digital communication will mean that you can engage with us from the comfort of your home or workplace.
- Triage ensures that limited healthcare resources are allocated to patients who need them most urgently.
- Total Triage will address the increasing demand for appointments and reduce the frustration of having to call and be in a long queue at 8am.

If you have any questions or concerns our team is here to guide and support, you can contact the practice.

Why is the practice changing its appointment system?

The staff at Maypole Health Centre, along with NHS England (NHSE), have acknowledged the increasing demand for appointments and our capacity being unable to meet this demand. NHSE has recently published a paper (Delivery plan for recovering access to primary care) outlining their similar concerns.

There are not enough GP appointments nationally to meet increased patient demand so there is a need to ensure only those who need to see a GP will get an appointment. What a patient may 'want' is not the same as what they 'need'. Many conditions can be managed by non-GP clinicians – this includes physiotherapists, pharmacists, mental health workers, social prescribers, and other members of the team.

The NHS system is complex to navigate, and we recognise patients need help with this. Total Triage has been designed to ensure that patients who most need an appointment are able to get one, and to facilitate equity of access to care.

We understand how frustrating it can be for patients to wait in phone queues to get an appointment. We have also noticed that many patients are booking appointments that do not necessarily require one, and we are concerned that those who need to be seen are not being seen at the right time.

NHSE has stated that there is good evidence that clinical triage and modern online tools make it easier to manage patient requests and involve the wider team, with higher patient satisfaction rates than with the more traditional model.

To address this issue, we are introducing a Total Triage Model of care. This means that anyone requesting an appointment or advice will have their request triaged. Our online consultation forms provide us with key information about your problem, so

that we can arrange an appointment at the right time with the right person – if needed.

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. If you do not have on-line access, or experience other difficulties using digital technology, please speak to our patient services team about how we can help you in your usual way.

Do I have to share personal information with a receptionist if I ring/walk-in?

It is important you give us as much relevant information as possible so we can ensure your request is triaged properly. We understand some issues can be sensitive and we can use a private room if needed.

Our Patient services team are trained in asking difficult questions, they have signed confidentiality documents and part of our team. Their role is paramount to provide health services to our patients.

Can I walk into the surgery to make an appointment?

No, we strongly discourage patients from walking in to make an appointment. Primary care has never been an emergency service – if a patient needs immediate medical attention, you should ring 111 or go direct to A+E.

If a patient walks in, they will be treated the same as anyone sending an online consult and will be added to the Triaging GP list to be assessed.

Our reception team will not be able to book any GP appointments. It does NOT speed up your enquiry – we manage the requests based on a safety system.

Do all appointments have to be booked this way?

No, appointments for our nursing/HCA team are mainly managed over the phone. This will be particularly relevant for annual reviews, blood tests, wound management etc.

Why can't I just book an appointment as I used to?

Nationally, GP capacity can no longer meet the demand and so we must put systems in place to ensure our patient gets the most appropriate safe care. Health care is evolving, and we need to embrace this.

Isn't this ageist?

No – the majority of our more senior patients have access to the internet or smart phones and are quite capable of using the simple online system.

We are planning to use digital support staff at the practice for anyone who needs a bit of extra help in the early days.

What about vulnerable patients or those with special needs?

We work hard to identify our patients who may need extra help and can flag this on medical records ensuring the team are aware of any additional requirements. If someone is struggling to navigate the system, we will support in any way we can. A carer, relative or friend can submit requests on behalf of a patient.

How do I submit A Triage Request?

Our go live date is **Monday 1st September 2025**

Total Triage requests can be submitted via:

1. The **NHS APP** – Submitting requests via the NHS APP is quicker than using the website.
2. Our website – www.drmaichaelandpartners-maypole.co.uk by clicking the **Appointments Tab** or the **click here to make a request link** both of which are on the main page.
3. Or using this Direct Link – <https://accurx.nhs.uk/patient-initiated/M85179>

Regardless of whether your Total Triage request is an administration or medical issue you will be asked some initial safeguarding questions to ensure that the situation is not a medical emergency requiring NHS 111, 999 or urgent attendance at Accident & Emergency (A&E).

Submissions of Medical Total Triage requests can be submitted 24/7; however, submissions received over the weekend, on Bank Holidays or daily after 6pm will not be triaged until the next working day.

The surgery communication can be Text (SMS) so please ensure you check your phone for replies regarding your request. In addition, you must keep your contact details up to date.

What types of GP appointments are there?

We have several different sorts of appointments, which we can triage patients into. These include:

- **Urgent** – these tend to be ‘on the day’ telephone or face to face. These are shorter appointments to manage only 1 acute problem. Booking Link or direct contact.
- **Less Urgent** – to be seen within 48 hours telephone or face-to-face. You will receive a booking link.
- **Routine** – these are for non-urgent problems, within two weeks. You will receive a booking link.
- **Patient follow-ups** – the GPs will send you a booking link, for telephone or face-to-face follow-ups if a GP feels the needs for a follow up after your initial appointment. The link will encourage patients to attend or use the appointments if they still require. This should reduce the number of missed appointments.
- **Telephone slots** – many things can be managed conveniently and safely over the phone. We will usually give a morning or afternoon window for this call.

Who else might I be asked to see?

Not every health problem needs a GP – over the last 5 years, we have significantly expanded our team.

- **Pharmacists** – We have our own highly trained clinical pharmacists at the practice.
- **Nurses** – our experienced nurse practitioner manages many chronic and acute conditions.
- **Community Pharmacies** – a new program called ‘Pharmacy First’ has been set up to treat several minor conditions and they can prescribe antibiotics where appropriate.
- **Self-referral** - to MSK, Podiatry, Community Mental Health, Smoking Cessation etc.
- **Physiotherapist** – We have our own Physiotherapist on site who can see a range of musculoskeletal conditions.
- **Mental Health Workers** – see patients to assess and help manage most mental health conditions.
- **Social Prescribers** – our team help patient where they may have a social problem or health problems linked with social situations.

Can I choose what time I come for an appointment?

- For routine planned appointments, we will give as much flexibility as possible (subject to availability).
- For urgent appointments, we expect patients to be flexible and will likely be asked to attend at any time between 8am and 6pm subject to what we can offer. **We do NOT have flexibility on these.**
- For urgent health problems, employers are legally expected to allow employees to attend these (including at short notice).

What happens if you are full?

We have carried out a lot of work looking at demand management and try to respond to predicted fluctuations in workflow. We have to remain safe – there has been a lot of concern about clinicians being overwhelmed by work stress and demand. This leads to sickness and reductions in service. There will be times when the work demand will exceed capacity, in this situation, you will need to contact 111 directly or contact us the next working day.

Can I choose which GP I want to manage my problem?

One of the questions you will be asked is if you have a preference of clinician to see to manage your condition. *This will depend on who is working that clinical day doing the triage and subject to appointment availability.*

Will this help the telephone system?

We hope if more patients use the online system; it will significantly reduce waiting times on the phone for those who need to call for other reasons.