**Patient Triage**

**From Monday 2nd September 2024 we are introducing a new appointment system for GP and Advanced Practitioner appointments and queries.**

**Patient Triage** 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.

This will be a significant change for Gateway Primary Care and our patients, but we believe this will improve communication, access to the right clinician at the right time, and reduce waiting times for appointments.

All appointment requests from patients to see a GP or Advanced Practitioner, will now be made via completing a patient triage form, this form will be available for patient to complete themselves via our website/NHS app or from our telephone options. If patients are unable to complete the form themselves, this can be completed by the reception staff if patients choose to contact the surgery via telephone or by attending the surgery in person.

All completed patient triage forms will be reviewed by our clinical team. The team will determine:

* The right person / service is to deal with your concerns
* The right timescales in which you need to be seen
* The right mode in which you need to be seen i.e. telephone / face to face

**What happens after my form is submitted?**

Completed admin request forms will be actioned by our admin team where applicable. Any requiring clinical input will be passed through to the clinical team. All medical requests will be screened by the clinical team and categorised according to urgency of need. It may be possible to deal with your problem directly without the need to be seen. Alternatively, you may receive advice about self-care, services you can refer yourself to or you may be signposted to another suitable local service where it is clinically appropriate and safe to do so. Depending on the nature of the request and your preferred method of contact, we may call you to arrange an appointment or alternatively send you a self-booking link to allow you to book an appointment at a time convenient to you.

For patients who require an appointment within practice, we will have appointments available within different time frames, including same day for matters of urgent clinical need. As well as offering GP/Advanced Practitioner appointments, some patients will also be offered directed appointment to other clinicians in the practice such as our clinical pharmacy team, practice nurses, physiotherapist or mental health practitioners. 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.

**What does the form look like?**

The form is brief, and completely confidential. It will ask you the following questions:

• What your query is about

• What action you would like

• Your preference for who or when you would like to deal with your problem.

• Option to submit photos if relevant (e.g. for a rash)

You can watch a video about how to submit your form here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EDwg-feeUI&t=0s>

You will be able to submit forms for medical queries between 8 am- 12 pm, Monday to Friday. You will be able to submit administrative queries (such as doctor's letters, sick note requests, referral follow-ups, blood test outcomes) at any time during core hrs of 8am till 6:30 pm.

**What if I deem my problem as urgent? (a problem that can be seen within primary care and does not require urgent hospital attention)**

You should still submit a triage form. Please do so as early as possible on the day to ensure your problem can be dealt with by our clinical team as early as possible. If our clinical staff assesses your request as urgent, you may be offered a same day appointment. Please be advised that same day appointments are limited to one problem per consultation in order to address medically urgent concerns only. You will be booked with the most appropriate healthcare professional to address your clinical need.

**Will I still be able to have a face-to-face appointment?**

We understand the importance of face-to-face appointments for many patients. patient triage ensures that the practice makes the best use of these, with GPs and other clinicians. Often telephone consultations are convenient and 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 where appropriate, however we will continue to offer face-to-face appointments when required and for patients who prefer to see us in person.

**Can I still request to see my usual GP?**

We recognise that continuity of care is important. All patients have the right to express a preference of doctor and we will always take this into consideration when reviewing requests. Please note that for urgent (same day appointments) we are unable to accommodate requests for specific clinicians as this will depend on who is on-call on the day.

**What if I am not able to use online systems?**

We acknowledge not all patients have the option to access online service. Please rest assured our phone lines will still be open and you can still attend our surgeries in person, where our reception team will be at hand to either assist you to complete the form or complete it on your behalf should you need.

**Why the change?**

The demand for appointments has increased hugely in recent years and primary care has faced an unprecedented level of patient need in the context of a national recruitment crisis for both clinical and non-clinical staff. Whilst we continue working very hard to maintain service provision, it is more important than ever that the right problem is dealt with by the right person to ensure we can provide our patients with the safest and most efficient service.

**How does this benefit patients?**

We understand that change can sometimes be difficult, but we are confident that patient triage will bring many benefits to our patients. For example:

• **Improved access to care:** Patient triage has been shown to reduce waiting times and it enables us to attend to your medical needs more promptly, whilst ensuring your safety at all times. By using remote consultations, where appropriate, we can free up face to face appointments for those patients that need them.

• **Convenience:** Avoids the 8am rush, 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.

• **Enhanced patient experience:** We are committed to providing you with the best possible care at Gateway Primary Care. Patient 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. We hope that by making better use of appointments we will be able to increase capacity and reduce waiting times. We also hope that by reducing waiting times on the phone, it will be easier for vulnerable patients who really need to get through on the phone. Experience from other practices already using a total triage system has shown that overall patient satisfaction is improved.