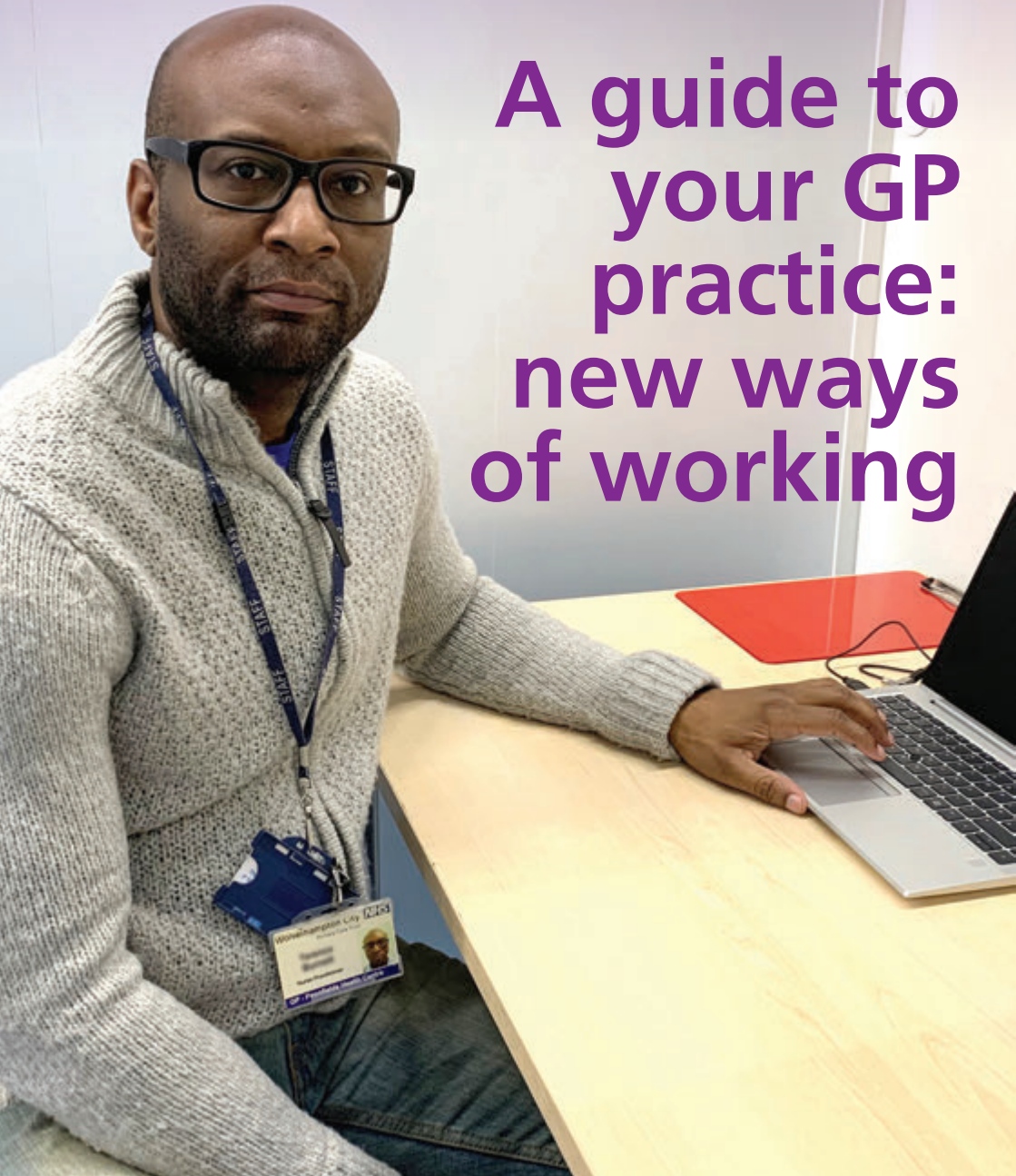


A guide to your GP practice: new ways of working



Your GP Practice is here for you

GP practices across the Black Country and West Birmingham are working differently to offer patient appointments. With demand for primary care services increasing and the need to have increased infection control measures in place, we need to do things in a new way.

This handy guide aims to explain the new way of working which will ensure we can make the best use of the staff we have and provide you with safe care.

GP practices worked hard throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to provide services to patients in a safe way to

control the spread of virus.

To protect everyone, we must maintain safe infection control measures and minimise unnecessary physical contact for both patients and staff.

These new ways of working not only help us to do that, but are also ensuring that we can have contact with more patients with the resources (staff, buildings, money) that we have available.

This new way of working helps us, to help you, get the care you need.

How are GP practices working now?

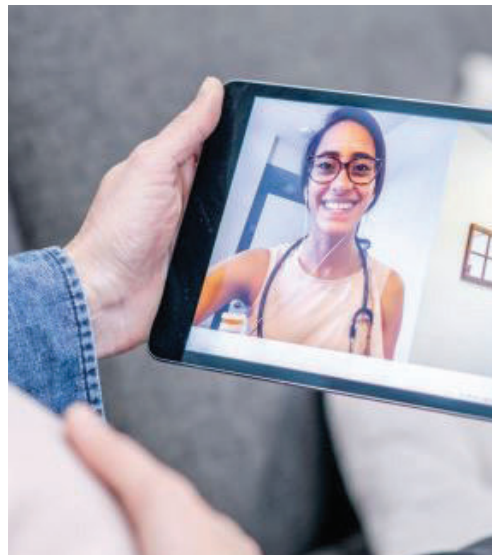
All appointments are being triaged. This gives you the chance to explain what is wrong and we can then ensure you have an appointment with

the most appropriate person and to help those with the greatest need get seen first.

What is triage?

Triage is usually conducted by a trained member of the practice team who will assess you to decide the best type of appointment, this might be:

- to be seen in person (face to face)
- a phone consultation
- a video consultation
- self care or help from a community pharmacy or optician.





What type of appointments are on offer?

Face to face appointments

Face-to-face appointments are available to all patients where there is a clinical need. Practices have extra measures in place to keep you and our staff safe, but it may not be possible for you to see your usual GP.

We are trying to manage the number of people in our practices at any one time, this is so that we can keep a safe distance and keep each other safe from infection.

We ask that you don't go to any practice unless asked to do so by a GP.

Video and telephone consultations

Appointments are also being

delivered by telephone, or by using video calls and messaging to your mobile phone or computer from the comfort of your home, and without any need for you to travel to the practice. Following this type of appointment, if we need to see you in person we will, but it's vital that you call us first so we can arrange a safe appointment.

E-consults

Many of our practice websites have forms for you to complete with your concerns, these are reviewed by a GP before advice is given or a member of the practice team calls you back to discuss the issue further.

Why do receptionists ask personal questions?

GP reception staff are a vital part of the health care team and ask questions to direct you to the best support, this is called Active

Signposting/Care Navigation. They are skilled in assisting with triage and treat all information confidentially.

I wanted to see my GP, so why am I seeing someone else?

Many GP practices now include a range of health professionals (e.g. practice nurses) who can diagnose and treat health conditions. This ensures that you see the right person at the right time more quickly.

If it is most appropriate for you to see a doctor, you will be offered an appointment with a GP. However, the GP isn't always the best person for you to see.

Following your triage, you may be referred to one of the following healthcare professionals or services:

General Practice Nurse (GPNs) and Nurse Practitioners

Practice nurses are qualified nurses who like GPs are involved in almost every aspect of patient care and treatment. They will look after patients with long-term diseases such as asthma and diabetes, offer health screening, and also hold specialised clinics such as travel immunisations, baby immunisations, wound care, and women's health for smear tests and contraception advice.



Health Care Assistants (HCAs)

Health care assistants (HCAs) work alongside the Practice Nurse to assist with blood pressure and new patient checks, health promotion, urinalysis, weight and height recording. You may also see a HCAs for certain vaccines, for example your flu vaccine.

Physician Associates (PAs)

A Physician Associate (PA) is a healthcare professional who, while not a doctor, works under the supervision of a doctor to deliver care and treatment with the general practice team. Physician associates are medically trained generalists capable of working with patients across a wide variety of conditions. This means they can diagnose and treat adults and children with a range of clinical problems.

GP Registrars

A GP Registrar is a fully qualified medical doctor, who is undertaking advanced training under the supervision of a practice GP to specialise in General Practice.

Practice Based Pharmacist

A Practice Based Pharmacist is a clinical pharmacist who provides expert advice around medicines. If a condition needs diagnosing, you will usually see a GP first, who may then refer you onto a practice nurse or a practice pharmacist.

You may see a Practice Based Pharmacist for one of the following reasons:

- If you have a condition such as asthma, type 2 diabetes, arthritis or high blood pressure, a practice pharmacist can discuss the medicines you're taking to make sure they're working for you. They can also help you with lifestyle changes to help you manage your condition better.
- If you are experiencing side effects from your medicines, you can discuss these with a practice pharmacist who will work with you to find a solution, such as changing your medicine or the dosage.
- If you are taking several different medicines, or taking medicines over a long period of time. The practice pharmacist can help make sure they are working well together and will do a regular review to discuss how they are working for you.
- If your medicines have been changed after a stay in hospital, the practice pharmacist can help explain these changes and ensure you get the maximum benefit from these medicines.

You may also see a practice pharmacist instead of a GP if you are suffering from a common illness such as a cold, hay fever, diarrhoea or an eye infection. The pharmacist may be able to prescribe medicines to treat your condition. You will always be referred to a GP, or another health professional if there is a need.

Paramedics

Paramedics are currently working within some GP practices to help ease pressure on GPs and the wider practice team.

Paramedics can assess, examine, treat and manage patients of all age ranges with a variety of acute illnesses – those that come on quickly, from coughs, and injuries such as broken bones, to more serious conditions such as asthma attacks and heart attacks – as well as chronic conditions, which are long-lasting, like arthritis and diabetes.

Physiotherapists

Physiotherapists are experts in muscle and joint conditions, also known as musculoskeletal. You may be referred to a Physiotherapist working in or with your practice to provide you with an expert diagnosis and treatment if you are experiencing these types of conditions.

Health and Wellbeing Coach

Health Coaches work alongside GPs and other health professionals to educate patients on diet and lifestyle. They work with patients to help them change their behaviour, so they can make healthcare choices based on what matters to them and support them to become more active in their health and care.

Social Prescribing Link Workers

Social prescribing involves helping patients to improve their health, wellbeing and welfare by connecting them to community services which might be run by the council or a local charity. For example, signposting people who have been diagnosed with dementia to local dementia support groups.

In general practice, social prescribers can take the time to talk to patients about what matters to them and support them to find suitable activities that are a better alternative to medication. They connect people to community groups and services for practical and emotional support.

Mental Health Practitioner

It is often more appropriate for patients with mental health needs to see a skilled professional, specially trained in mental health rather than a GP, therefore patients may be referred to a Mental Health Practitioner rather than other member of the practice team.



What should I do in an emergency?

Always dial 999 in a life-threatening emergency. If you need help with minor injuries at any time or urgent care when

your GP practice or community pharmacy is closed visit 111.nhs.uk or dial 111 if you do not have internet access.



Where else can I get help?

Visit nhs.uk for advice on common symptoms and a list of local services or speak to your community pharmacist

first for advice on minor illnesses.

Find your nearest: nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-pharmacy

Help us to help you

Our health services are under enormous pressure, but we are open and here if needed. Local GPs are seeing as many patients as before the COVID-19 pandemic but demand for services has increased.

You can help us and help yourself by making sure you get the right care, in the right place, at the right time appropriate for your needs.

- Use your local pharmacy for advice and over the counter treatment

- Try calling the practice later in the day if you don't need an urgent appointment
- Please use online services where possible to keep phone lines clear
- Ensure you attend your appointment or cancel it if no longer required
- Get vaccinated to reduce pressure on services from covid/flu



Please continue to be kind to our staff, socially distance where possible and wear a face mask when asked to do so.

If you require this document in an alternative language or format please contact communications.bcwb@nhs.net