

New Appointment System – Frequently Asked Questions.

1. Why are you changing your appointment system?
Mainly it's a question of patient safety. Currently we can receive up to 200 requests for consultations per day and this remains the same whether we have three clinicians in work or six. This has led to concerns being raised by our clinical staff regarding the safety of patients due to an overwhelming workload. Therefore, we have to have some means of limiting the amount of requests we can deal with each day so that we do not compromise patient safety.
2. Does that mean you have been compromising patient safety up until now?
No. Not at all, patient safety is always our primary concern above all else. Up until now we have dealt with the numbers of request coming through but recently we are noticing an increase in numbers as we come out of lockdown and people feel more comfortable with contacting their GP.
3. Is this just a method of reducing your own workload?
No, our new system actually increases the number of appointment when compared to what we were able to offer before the pandemic. Over the past 15 months we have become more accessible than we have ever been, which is great, however, we have to be realistic and recognize that we cannot keep providing more and more appointments when we neither have the clinicians or the physical space and infrastructure to keep expanding. This decision has not been taken lightly and we have reviewed our workload and caseload over a number of months before settling on a number of clinical appointment which we feel is safe and that will satisfy most of our genuine demand.
4. Why don't you go back to your old system? That seemed to work.
As with all GP practices during the beginning of the pandemic we were forced to adopt a telephone triage system as the first lockdown began and social distancing became the norm. Over the past 15 months it has been proven that the process of receiving telephone advice can be very effective and that many patients appreciate the benefit of not having to come down to the surgery in person. So whilst we know problems can't always be solved without a face to face assessment, our experience shows us that many queries can be dealt with safely in this way. Therefore, since our new system offers an increase in appointments, there is no benefit or requirement for us to reinstate our old system.
5. I see you are changing the telephone system as well. Can you explain why?
Certainly. Every GP practice in the UK will always have issues with their telephone system, especially first thing in the morning. This is when the majority of our phone calls occur. As noted we have up to 200 requests for appointments each day and that does not include other queries such as medication reviews, medical reports, referral letters etc. So quite simply we do not have enough phone lines or staff to deal with the number of phone calls in a normal morning. Therefore we are suggesting to patients that they call at specific times for specific queries.

Daily appointments between	0830 -1000
Results, medication requests	1000 -1400
Nurse and pre-bookable appointments	1400 -1600

We hope that this will spread the bulk of the phone calls throughout the day rather than concentrating them into a couple of hours in the morning which is very frustrating for patients and very stressful for our staff.

6. What happens if I ring and all the appointments are gone?

Unfortunately as much as we would like to be able to promise you that this will not be the case we all know that on occasion this will happen. In a bid to counter this we are starting to open up some pre-bookable appointments, both first thing in the morning and during the afternoon. These should be utilised by people who don't urgently need to be seen on the day but who do need an appointment for whatever reason in the next few weeks. The majority of these appointments will be available through My Health On-Line so if you have not done so already please register for this service through our website.

Additionally if you feel your issue requires urgent care then you may ask the receptionist to put you on the urgent daily assessment list which is dealt with by the on-call doctor. The on-call doctor will make a decision as to the whether your issue is urgent and will either call you or ask the receptionist to inform you to call back the following day or book a pre-bookable appointment. Any abuse of this system by a patient will lead to the Practice issuing a behavioural contract and should the contract not be adhered to you will be removed from our practice list.

Furthermore we will not tolerate any verbal or physical abuse directed towards our members of staff. Any incidents of abuse will lead to an immediate removal from our list and a possible police referral.

7. What if I don't like the new system? May I provide some feedback?

If you feel that you could provide some ideas about how we could improve our new system we would love to hear from you. Whilst we have discussed our new system within the Practice and with the Health Board and Community Health Council; We appreciate that due to social distancing and national Covid restrictions we haven't been able to converse with patients as we would normally. Therefore please provide us with any feedback or suggestions you may have either through our website at this [link](#) or send us a letter at:

Ringland Medical Practice
Ringland Circle
Newport
NP19 9PS

Please don't telephone the practice as not only does this limit our capacity to take calls from patients requiring medical assistance but also the receptionist who you speak to may not have the time to discuss all your questions/suggestions with you. If you would like to speak to us please leave your number in your message and one of our administrative staff will contact you.

Finally, as you are probably aware, there are several other practices in close proximity to our surgeries and, whilst we hope you would offer us the chance to discuss any issues with you first, you do have the right to register with a neighbouring practice whose appointment system may better fit your personal situation.