



Autumn Newsletter 2021

Thank you to patients who have supported us at what is proving to be a tough time in the NHS, in particular Primary Care.

Our team are working nonstop and as efficiently as possible to provide the best care to all our patients. Your kindness and respect is greatly valued – it helps us do our jobs well.

We realise there is currently not a perfect system in place and would like to acknowledge some feedback we have received and share with you the actions we are taking.

We have had some feedback regarding care navigation that is used to triage and provide the best possible pathway for patients to be treated.

What is care navigating?

Our Receptionists have been trained in care navigation to ensure that patients get to the right place and see the right person in the most appropriate time frame relating to the information the patients give them. They are part of a Care Navigation team

They have undergone additional training in information gathering from patients and in prioritising how and by whom you need to be reviewed by or given advice. They can seek help from the Navigation Doctor for that day. They will help you see the best person who can help you. They will direct you to other resources such as pharmacy, A&E or minor injuries units if more appropriate. They can also support you how to self-refer to talking therapies or physiotherapy if that is what you need.

Who else works alongside the Care Navigation Team?

We have a Navigation Doctor working alongside the Reception team.

What does the Care Navigation team do?

To ensure a smooth patient journey we try and ensure you see the right clinician first time. This helps to minimise wasted appointments. We also have to work with limited resources against high levels of demand. This means that patients with routine problems will need to wait for an appointment. In contrast if you are very unwell, you will be seen more quickly. We also need to

ensure that patients with potentially infective symptoms are seen in our Hot Hub away from vulnerable patients and staff.

You might only see a couple of staff members on reception but behind the scenes the practice has a complete 'army' of Receptionists who work throughout the opening hours to provide this service.

Waiting times on the phone:

We realise the wait time can be prolonged and that you feel frustrated when you are, for example, number 31 in the queue. We have around 14 members of staff answering the phone so this number should drop quickly.

We continue to work to reduce the time people wait on the phone. We have recruited new members of the Reception team. We still have some vacancies and are working hard to recruit more members for the team. New Receptionists do take time to train and require mentoring and support from existing staff.

If you are able to complete an eConsult for non-urgent issues this really helps to reduce waiting times and frees up the phone lines for vulnerable patients or those who cannot access support digitally.

https://aspenmedicalpractice.webgp.com/react-consult-general-advice?codeName=GEC_GEN

Not being able to book a face to face appointment directly:

We are still operating a split site model to ensure potentially infectious patients are kept away from other patients and staff, especially those who are more vulnerable to infectious diseases due to medication or medical problems.

We are actively recruiting more doctors to provide additional appointments. With limited resources we have to manage patients where it is safe and appropriate to do so on the phone.

We have Doctors every day seeing patients face to face who do need an examination, and this has been the case throughout the pandemic. GPs have never been 'shut' or 'hiding'.

We do need time to train and upskill our Receptionists to know which patients need a face to face review and who can be managed on the phone and what a safe time frame for that patient contact is.

We have a Navigation Doctor working within the Care Navigation Team supporting Receptionists to book a patient directly for a face to face appointment where it is clearly indicated.

It really helps us and the Receptionists if you can give them as much information as possible. Completing an eConsult also gives additional information which helps us navigate the patient to the correct place.



Not being able to book a nurse appointment for chronic disease review:

We have now recruited three Health Care Associates and two new Nurses. This will create more capacity in the treatment room team for chronic disease management. Our current nurses are also undergoing additional qualifications in diabetes, asthma and COPD.

Reception appears undermanned:

We generally have only one Receptionist working the front desk. This is to ensure patient confidentiality. We now have digital check in screens to save patients waiting in the queue.

We also aim to have the upstairs reception desk manned and once we have a full complement of staff we will be able to do this more.

We have check in desks to the right of the reception desk ready for your use.

Lack of privacy at reception:

We understand that patients will not always feel comfortable speaking at the front desk. If you need more privacy, please let our team know and you can be seen in the patient room next to the reception desk.

Confusion over the different sites and signage:

We have now updated our signage across all three sites for continuity. These have been repositioned to be more visible and clearly direct patients to the site.

Our 'Hot Hub', for potentially infectious patients, will be relocating back to Saintbridge from the 8th November due to rising covid number.

We hope in due course all three sites will open back up as normal. We will continue to keep you updated

Flu and Covid Boosters

We will be inviting Patients who are eligible for a flu jab to sessions mainly in the afternoon and early evening at the Aspen Centre.

We will be inviting eligible patients for their covid boosters. These will mainly be done on Saturdays at the Aspen Centre.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-booster-vaccine/>

Covid Vaccine exemption certificates

We have been receiving queries from patients who feel they are unable to be vaccinated and/or tested for Covid-19 due to medical reasons and would like evidence of this.

You are now able to apply for proof that you have a medical reason why you should be exempted. However, this application is not done through the practice and we are unable to initiate or issue letters or statements regarding exemption outside of this new national process.

Please visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-medical-exemptions-proving-you-are-unable-to-get-vaccinated> to view the national guidance around reasons why medical exemption may be appropriate and information about the process for applying for a medical exemption if you feel this applies to you. An application for evidence of medical exemption can be started by telephoning 119 to speak to the NHS Covid Pass Service.

How you can help us

Please cancel an appointment you are unable to attend by texting back 'cancel' to your appointment reminder.

Please arrive on time for your appointment.

When you book an appointment, please check which of our three sites the appointment will be held at, to ensure you don't have a wasted journey.

If you have a Chronic disease review for Diabetes or Kidney disease, please bring a sample of your first urine of the day in a white topped bottle.

Please use the automatic check in screens where possible and if you can submit an eConsult for non urgent problems.

https://aspenmedicalpractice.webgp.com/react-consult-general-advice?codeName=GEC_GEN

Please register for online access for easy ordering of medication and ability to see test results online. <https://www.aspenmedicalpractice.nhs.uk/navigator/register-for-online-services/>

Please be supportive to our staff who are doing their very best.