

Dear Patients,

We are changing the way we work. This is in response to the feedback we have been receiving from you, of late. We appreciate you have found it difficult to get through our phone lines, and to get appointments that you need to have your health issues addressed, timely.

The demand on our services has grown exponentially in the past few years. The list size is growing. At the same time, general practice has changed in the last few years, especially during and after the pandemic. Earlier, it was only GPs and nurses seeing patients. Now, we have a multi-disciplinary team, comprising GPs, physician associates, nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physiotherapists, paramedics, GP assistants, social prescribing link workers, mental health nurses, and many more, to offer you services. We are also a training practice so you may be booked with one of our training doctors as well. Also, the traditional way of seeing patients face-to-face is no longer the only way, with most patients preferring online, telephone, and video consultations. For most problems, these new ways of consulting are more effective and satisfying.

With the above changes, the old system of patients calling reception to book a 'face-to-face appointment with a GP', and getting appointments on a first come first served basis is no longer fit for purpose. Also, it has become very difficult for the receptionists to make a clinical judgement on which member of the clinical team to book you with when you call.

We want to work with you to improve capacity and access. We want everyone of you, who tries to contact us, to get through to us, and to get an outcome from us, on the same day for any urgent problem, and within 72 hours for routine problems. To achieve this, we are moving to a total triage system, from the 3rd of June 2024. This means, you will get the opportunity to let us know what is wrong with you, and a GP will decide how to best serve you. You could be dealt with remotely, via a telephone or video consultation, be booked with a pharmacist in a pharmacy near you using the new "Pharmacy First" scheme, booked an appointment in an urgent care centre, or be seen by the most appropriate clinician, face-to-face, in the surgery.

When you call the surgery, you will be given the option to complete a short form. If you chose this option, you would immediately receive a link in your mobile phone, which will come to us, once submitted. The duty doctor will deal with the request in a timely manner. In fact, this online consultation tool, called AccuRx, is also available on our website, as well as in the NHS App, so you do not even have to call the surgery to get access to it. It should not take more than five minutes to complete. It would help us a lot if you complete the form as accurately as possible and not simply state that you wish to see or speak to one particular doctor.

This change does not mean you cannot speak with the reception team. If you feel the online triage will not serve your purpose, then you can opt to speak with a receptionist. The hope is that only the vulnerable and very unwell patients, who need prioritising, and the patients who are not good with technology, will opt to talk with a receptionist.

We want to reassure you; this new way of working is not going to disadvantage you in any way. Change is always difficult but, once you get used to this new system, we expect it be more satisfying for you. Your feedback to this new system, on our website, will help us refine the service, as we go.

Best wishes!

The Melrose Team