

Dear Patients

Following recent information in the national press and a statement from the director of Primary Care at NHS England, The Partners of Riverside Health Centre would like to advise our patients that, contrary to national media and opinion, we have continued to offer patients face to face appointments with GPs, nurses, health care assistants and phlebotomists, throughout the entire pandemic, and we will continue to do so in the future.

In order to protect the safety and welfare of both our patients and the practice staff and in line with guidance from NHS England we adopted a “telephone triage” model of assessing patients who have requested GP appointments. Many of these consultations were satisfactorily undertaken using telephone or live online consulting, or by the use of electronic transfer of photographic information. However if, after telephone assessment, a face to face assessment has been required, an appointment is normally offered within the following 24 to 48 hours.

With the progressive easing of pandemic restrictions in England we are planning to continue to manage our appointments and consultations in a similar manner; offering telephone triage to those who request it – normally within 24 hours of that request. People requiring face to face assessment after this will continue to be offered to attend the surgery at safe and suitable intervals to allow us to continue to maintain the hygiene and safety that we have done thus far.

In the near future we will in addition also be opening some pre-bookable face to face appointments for those patients who wish to take advantage of these; they will be available to book using the online booking services available to all our patients. We will consequently have to reduce the number of available telephone appointments to manage re-starting these appointments.

Whilst we understand that many patients like to see their doctor, we have found that by adopting a telephone triage service we are able to manage to provide a service to our population that has achieved a prompt and satisfactory outcome in the majority of cases, with more patients being contacted in a timely manner, and progressed to the appropriate investigations or treatment sooner.

We hope that by offering some pre-bookable face to face appointments in addition that our patients will use these in a sensible and thoughtful manner so that the majority will continue to benefit from prompt and safe access to primary care appointments in the future.

Finally please note that we have been experiencing exceptional demand for primary care. Please remember our reception team are answering calls as fast as they can and are doing their utmost with available resources. We acknowledge that these changes can be frustrating but please do not take it out on our team who are acting on guidance and instruction. Please note telephone calls to the practice are routinely recorded for quality and training purposes.

The partners at Riverside Health Centre

27.5.2021