

Message from your local NHS about help and support available from GP practices

- All the healthcare staff working in general practice are facing a big increase in demand for their services, so your patience is really appreciated.
- This message helps to explain to you the reasons for some of the recent changes you may have experienced at your local GP practice.

GP services are busier than ever before, delivering more appointments but in a different way.

We are sorry to hear the experiences of people who are finding it difficult to get through on the telephone or who are unhappy with the types of appointment offered. If you need to see someone in person, you still can. We appreciate your patience during this difficult period.

Why are things different from before the pandemic?

Official data suggest that up to 1 in 50 people in England have COVID-19, so infection control remains a high priority especially in healthcare settings where there are sick and vulnerable people. To keep patients and staff safe we need to avoid crowded waiting rooms as well as to carry out cleaning between patient consultations and so it isn't feasible for practices to see as many people in person as before the pandemic. If we can meet your needs by a telephone or video call this could be safer for you and others and can often be quicker and more convenient.

Currently around half of appointments are in person. Your GP team will make sure they arrange these types of appointments when needed. Your GP practice team is working hard to make sure that you get the same high standard of care whether you receive help on the phone, by a video call or in person.

With practices now doing more work over the phone, and due to the increase in the number of patients seeking help from their GP, including for vaccination queries (flu and covid), unfortunately some patients are finding it harder to get through and are facing long waits. We know this is frustrating and can be disruptive for you. We are really sorry for this and are working hard to improve your experience when contacting your GP practice.

Please do continue trying to get through to the practice on the phone when you need to and continue to use alternative ways of contacting your practice, such as filling out a secure web form (e-consult) from the 'GP Online' tab on your GP website:

<https://www.hamiltonpractice.nhs.uk/>

Helping you get the right appointment for your needs

The reception staff are trained to support you to get the right appointment for your needs and sometimes you might be asked to give information that you would prefer not to share

with someone other than a doctor or health professional. It really does help to have this information in order to arrange the right appointment for you.

You may be offered an appointment with a different trained professional who works at the practice rather than a GP if this is the best person to help you. This might be a nurse, a paramedic, a pharmacist, a healthcare assistant, or a physiotherapist.

We know that most of you will continue to treat your practice staff with courtesy and kindness. This is really important for all the staff at your practice, and they appreciate it.

Thank you for your patience and support during these difficult times for everyone.