

HOVETON AND WROXHAM MEDICAL CENTRE

WHY CAN'T I GET AN APPOINTMENT WITH MY GP?



20 February 2019

The partners and staff of Hoveton & Wroxham Medical Centre are aware of increasing patient frustration with not being able to book a routine appointment with their GP. This is prevalent across our neighbouring practices and beyond. This note explains the current situation and outlines plans to address the situation in the future. Its purpose is to support routine communication by staff and the PPG.

Telephone Booking. Most patients telephone the Medical Centre to book an appointment. Our Medical Receptionists are trained to 'sign-post' a patient towards the most suitable clinician. Depending on the symptoms presented and the patient's medical history, a wide range of options are available ranging from a recommended trip to the pharmacy through to immediate consultation with our duty team for urgent clinical action. Our GPs and highly qualified Nurse Practitioners have a mix of urgent on-the-day appointments and routine appointments and we do our very best to meet our patients' needs.

In-Person Booking. We welcome patients coming into the Centre to book their appointments.

Online Booking. Only a small proportion (<10%) of our routine appointments are available online. However, within the 2019 NHS GP contract, the proportion of online appointments is to increase. This offers some convenience for patients but there is a risk that patients' needs and the limited resources of the Medical Centre will not be matched and also, booking online loses the opportunity for our Receptionists to catch the warning signs for immediate escalation.

Nevertheless, we are a practice that embraces innovation and we will continue to examine closely the pros and cons of such technologies that include the NHS App, to be seen this summer, and online consultation; always making sure that none of our patients are in anyway excluded.

Named GP. The NHS Constitution states "You have the right to express a preference for using a particular doctor within your GP practice, and for the practice to try to comply." The priority within Hoveton & Wroxham Medical Centre is for consistency to be offered to patients with long term and complex chronic conditions and to those with mental health needs where it is clinically important for patients to be offered continuity. It is

important for the GPs too. For other patients we try to comply with preferences but on many occasions this simply isn't possible due to the fact most of our clinicians have a wide range of other responsibilities.

Improved Access. Through North Norfolk Primary Care, a system of Improved Access is being rolled out where evening and weekend appointments are available to you at 'Hubs'. Currently these hubs are at Cromer, North Walsham (Birchwood) and Fakenham. Hoveton & Wroxham Medical Centre becomes a Hub on 4 March 2019 (bookable from 27 February). Through this system we have additional nurse practitioners available in the Medical Centre, additional nurse practitioner telephone consultations and through an Enhanced Care Home Team.

Improved Capacity. Hoveton & Wroxham Medical Centre has recently increased the number of GP sessions available to patients. Last year we employed an additional nurse practitioner and we have just recruited two additional practice nurses to sustain our services into the future. Moreover, our status as a renowned teaching practice means we have increasing numbers of registrar (qualified) doctors practicing.

As house-building accelerates to the north of Norwich in our area, we have plans in place to extend Hoveton & Wroxham Medical Centre in 2019 and to subsequently build a medical centre in Rackheath. Premises expansion and corresponding careful analysis of patient numbers will inform additional recruitment of GPs and nurses so that the Practice meets patient demand in the medium to long term.

Did Not Attend? We lose several appointments each day because patients do not attend. In January we lost 157 appointments this way, approaching 1 in 20 of total appointments. Sometimes there is a good reason; often not.

The Future. The new GP contract agreed with the NHS in February highlights new measures to alleviate current resource pressures. We will be working even closer with our neighbouring practices and community support health care providers to increase integration of services within newly formed Primary Care Networks. There are additional resources within these PCNs for clinical pharmacists, physiotherapists, paramedics and mental health care professionals. The details of these will be worked out over the coming months.

Going forward, Hoveton & Wroxham Medical Centre staff will be working with the GP partners, the Patient Participation Group and external NHS organisations to address the perennial issue of primary care appointments in order to put in place measures to meet the growing demand.

Chris Stace - Practice Manager