

Yes, we're open! Accessing GP services

All GP practices have been, and continue to be, open – caring for our patients, but in a different way. Read our information about what you need to do if you think you need a GP appointment.

During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, all Liverpool practices have been open but have been caring for patients in a different way, including the use of telephone and video consultations, e-consultation and face-to-face appointments in the practice when the GP has felt this to be clinically necessary.

Why have you been seeing less people face-to-face?

This has been very different and difficult for patients and GP services alike, but was an absolutely necessary measure put in place nationally to limit the spread of Covid to vulnerable, ill people visiting their GP surgeries.

So you have still seen people in person?

During the pandemic, we have continued to see patients face-to-face where clinically necessary i.e. because a physical examination was needed.

We have also provided face-to-face cancer screening services and baby immunisations and of course our staff nurses and doctors have been helping to run the GP-led Covid vaccination service at Park View Medical Centre where we have delivered over 18,500 vaccines to patients, obviously all face-to-face to date.

Are you still doing vaccinations?

We are continuing to vaccinate people aged 50 years and above as well as those under 50 years who have a long term health condition such as Diabetes until July at Park View. After this time we will hand over the programme to the central booking system running the mass vaccination centres. We have already handed over the vaccination programme for people aged under 50 years to our colleagues running the mass vaccination site and to our local pharmacy colleagues in the City who are offering a Covid vaccine service. We are working closely with the mass vaccination site to make sure everyone who is due a vaccine is offered a vaccine, for both first and second jabs.

This is to allow GP practices to focus on getting back to a new normal. Practices are very keen to make sure we see the people with the greatest health and care needs

first. This may mean people with less urgent problems having to wait longer to be assessed.

Our priorities are also to start and catch up on all of our chronic disease reviews, which we have had to put on hold during the pandemic, to ensure patient safety, as instructed by national NHS guidance.

Practices are already getting in contact with patients systematically to arrange chronic disease reviews. If you are contacted by your practice to attend for blood tests and an annual review, please act promptly. Every patient that delays a review triggers a practice based follow up system. If 10% of patients don't response to a recall message, they then push back 10% of the following weeks recalls.

What if I think I need to contact a GP?

We have noticed during the pandemic, that we have been receiving many queries about minor ailments that people would usually manage at home without contacting us at all. The practice website has useful information and advice and signposting, as do your local pharmacists, so if you think it's a minor problem it probably is.

You can always call NHS 111 if you are not sure and need more advice or information. They can advise you the best thing to do or book you an appointment with the most appropriate service for your health need.

What will the 'new normal' look like?

It's only now, as the numbers of people in the community who have had a vaccine increases and the numbers of Covid cases in the community are again very low, that we are advised by the government that it is safe to start and return to a new normal.

In the new normal we absolutely want to see our patients face to face. However, we have learnt during the pandemic that some things don't need to be seen face-to-face and can very well be managed using the new technology of e-consultations, phone calls and video consultations and for many patients this is easier and more convenient all round.

How will I get an appointment now?

If you are unwell, please visit your practice website if you are able to do so and use the E-consult tool to let your GP practice know what the problem is so they can triage you. If you can't access online services, then please ring your GP practice as normal.

The receptionist will take your details and will ask you to give them an idea of the problem. At this point, the practice staff work as a team in consultation with the GP and clinical pathways. Depending on your problem you may be offered a telephone triage appointment with a GP or other well qualified healthcare staff that now work in primary care.

Does this mean you you've been doing less work?

In March this year, primary care managed a third more patient contacts (including phone, online and face to face) than it did in March 2019. Sadly we don't have a third more workforce, but we do very much understand your anxieties and concerns, so please bear with us. The online tools have enabled us to deal with more issues, more quickly and people who have used this way of accessing a GP have told us that they are really pleased with how this works.

What is the benefit of doing things this way?

The online services can be really helpful for busy people who don't want to have to take time off work or children out of school for an appointment, and we can often get back to you far more quickly about your problem than if you had to wait for a traditional face to face appointment. This also means we can send you for any diagnostic tests before a face-to-face appointment which is a better use of everyone's time.

Will you be open evenings and weekends

No. If you need urgent help or advice, particularly during the evenings and weekends when our practice is closed, please contact NHS 111. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 111.nhs.uk or by dialling 111.

NHS 111 is staffed by fully trained advisors and clinicians who can provide over the phone advice and can arrange face to face appointments with an out of hours GP at a local walk-in centre if required.

GPs very much value the doctor patient relationship that we have built up with very many of you over the years. The Covid pandemic has strained that relationship and now we need to work together to get back on track to provide a service that is both safe for you and sustainable for your GP practice teams. It will look different, but together we can make it work.