NEWSLETTER

9 FEBRUARY 2025

IMPROVING ACCESS

Introduction

- Appointments at Old Coulsdon Medical Practice have traditionally been booked on a first-come first-served basis. There is a need to move to a system that ensures patients are seen in a timely manner. Providing continuity of care where appropriate, based on their clinical need.
- We would like to reduce the '8am rush' and offer a needs-based booking system that provides the same service regardless of how patients contact the practice. These changes will allow the practice to meet our NHS England contractual requirements.
- Demand for GP services is increasing, but with little additional GP resource coming into practices. To match resources to demand a change in the way patients and appointments are managed is required.
- Nationally one in four GP appointments could be seen by another healthcare professional.

We want to provide a system where there is a safe and fair way for patients to access our services. This system should ensure patients receive an appointment based on their clinical need, at the right time, whilst maintaining continuity of care with the most appropriate clinician, irrespective of how you choose to contact the practice.

The opportunity that technology presents can deliver significant improvements in patient access, appropriate allocation of appointments, reduction in phone calls, increased on the day appointments and better use of non-urgent appointments. There are an increasing number of examples across the country where an integrated Triage, Web and Phone Access system has led to significant improvements.

On the **5th of March 2025**, we will be changing how we book our appointments, the following section describes how the system will work.

HOW IT WORKS

At the heart of the new system is AccuRx software. AccuRx is one of the many systems approved by the NHS Digital for use by GP Practices, so patients can be assured that it has gone through a rigorous testing and assessment process, is clinically safe to use and meets all national requirements including GDPR and Data Protection.

From a patient perspective, AccuRx is primarily a tool for entering information about your need for an appointment or other help. We have been using AccuRx for non-urgent medical and administrative enquiries for some time and we will now be using the AccuRx for all patient requests. This will help us to manage demand and ensure that we can triage more effectively.

Therefore, all patient requests will now be entered in the AccuRx system, or for those who are unable to use the online system our staff will enter details into AccuRx via telephone or in person.

The system asks questions about your request, this information is vitally important, as it is used by our Triage Team to assess the urgency of your request. Without accurate information, we cannot assess your need. If necessary, we will contact you for more information.

The Triage Team is there to ensure you are offered an appointment in an appropriate timescale and with the most appropriate clinician available. The Reception Team will then contact you to book the appointment or if appropriate you will be sent a self-booking link.

Primary Care is changing and in addition to GP's and Nurses there are many more highly skilled individuals who work in our Practice. The Triage Team may recommend that you see another Healthcare Professional as the most appropriate Clinician for your care, for example, Pharmacists, Physiotherapists, Advanced Clinical Practitioners, Paramedics and Social Prescribers. We may also direct you to outside services such as Pharmacy First.

Rest assured that where the Triage Team agree that it is clinically appropriate for you to see your chosen GP, this will be arranged.

We would very much like to be able to offer every patient exactly what they have asked for, but the reality is that we do not have the staff or resources to be able to do this. As a result, we must assess your needs according to clinical risk and find the best possible option under the circumstances.