

Patient Access Policy

Patient Access Policy

1. Aim

This document sets out how Norton Medical Centre aims to ensure that all patients are able to fairly access timely and appropriate clinical care.

2. Objectives

- To facilitate patient access information, care or treatment by a GP or appropriate member of the practice team in line with their clinical needs.
- The ability of patients to access the above does not vary on account of characteristics such as age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, geography, or socio-economic status.
- To enable Clinicians and staff to manage available resources to manage demand safely and effectively so that the best possible levels of service and access are always provided.
- To make Patients and carers aware of how to get the best from their practice and involve them in the monitoring and developing systems designed to meet their needs where appropriate.
- To triage patients to appropriate services where appropriate

Rights and responsibilities for the patient

3.1 Patients' Rights

- register with the practice of your choice in the area where you live in accordance with NHS England's '**Patient Registration**' standard operating procedure
- have, via the practice leaflet and website, easily-accessible information about your care
- receive appropriate routine and urgent care where available, or be triaged appropriately if the Practice is fully booked to safe capacity.
- receive clear information about your treatment in a suitable format and language so that you and the clinician may make an informed decision about the best course of action.
- privacy and confidentiality
- be treated with dignity and respect at all times (including access to a chaperone if required)
- comment or complain if you are not satisfied with the service provide.

3.2 Patients' Responsibilities

- treat all practice staff with respect
- ensure you attend any appointment made at the surgery and arrive on time
- cancel an unwanted appointment as soon as possible so it can be offered to someone else
- inform the practice if you change your address or telephone number so the practice can contact you urgently if needed
- inform the practice if you have any special needs, including communication needs, so the practice can make any necessary arrangements

- let a member of the practice staff know if you are unsure about or dissatisfied with your care so that it can be explained or put right
- do your best to look after your own health
- use the services of the practice appropriately

4. Surgery opening hours and appointment times

Norton Medical Centre is open at 8:00 to 18.00 Monday to Friday with a brief period of closure on a Thursday from 12:00 – 14:00 with telephone access open for urgent calls only between 12:00 and 15:00. Other than for the purpose of out of hour's enhanced access care provided by Hartlepool and Stockton Health Ltd, the Medical Centre is **not** open on Saturday and Sunday with the exception of pre-booked seasonal vaccination clinics for a limited time (normally October to November).

Advice, guidance and/or appointments can be arranged via telephone or face to face using an eConsult lite form or via the eConsult link on the practice website. Requests will be clinically triaged by a dedicated Triage GP, or once fully booked to safe capacity, care navigated by the Reception Team with the support of the Triage GP for queries.

Appointments with the Practice Nursing and HCA teams, which do not require clinical triage, can be arranged via telephone, face to face, or online booking where appropriate, including use of AccuRx.

Appointments can be cancelled or amended face to face, by phone or via an online system called 'SystmOnline' or the NHS app. To use SystmOnline the patient must first register with reception to gain log on details. SMS appointment reminders and AccuRx booking links also provide a facility to cancel an appointment by text.

Norton Medical Centre is part of the Billingham and Norton Primary Care Network (B&NPCN), which is a group of 7 Practices working together to deliver services for our patients. Norton Medical Centre is open for pre-bookable appointments on a Saturday from 9:00 until 17:30 and on an evening patients can access late appointments at Abbey Health Centre from 18:30 until 21:30.

All GP surgeries in our area close for a minimum of 6 half days per annum to provide protected time for essential Protected Learning Time (PLT) and/or local and regional Practice healthcare training and planning events. Dates are set by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for our area and details are displayed clearly on the practice website, Facebook page and in the practice at least one week in advance.

The practice provides standard appointment length of 10 minutes for GPs and 15 minutes for Advanced Nurse Practitioners per clinical issue. Longer appointments are available for patients if the Triage GP determines this is clinically necessary.

Our clinicians offer a variety of appointments to include a number of acute and pre-bookable for the Triage GP to utilise. Pre-bookable includes one day, three day, five day, seven day and 14 day embargo appointment to meet the varying needs of patients and to ensure ongoing capacity; the ratio of these appointments are regularly reviewed and amended based on appointment demand.

In addition to an allocated Triage GP, there is an allocated Admin GP each day in the surgery who is responsible for completion of absent clinician's clinical admin and hosts the nine appointments which are made available to NEAS via 111.

Norton Medical Centre has an agreement with Hartlepool and Stockton Health Ltd to handle calls from patients on our behalf from 18:00 to 18.30. Patients who call the Practice between these hours will be provided with a mobile number to access the support they need.

5. Treatment outside of Surgery opening hours.

Outside of these times patients are directed to contact alternative services for support, including NHS 111, Pharmacy First, Crisis Team, urgent care, or any other appropriate services.

6. Repeat prescriptions standard

The practice will provide all **repeat** prescriptions within three working days of receiving a request to do so, except where:

- the practice has tried and failed to contact the patient where this is needed before the prescription can be issued safely,
- or where a medication review is pending and must be undertaken before the prescription can be issued safely. The request for a medication review will be highlighted on the patient's most recent prescription.

Timely ordering of prescriptions is the responsibility of the patient and urgent prescriptions will not be generated for any medication that is not included in the list of medications deemed as essential by the doctors. This does not negate the responsibility of patients on essential medications to order their prescriptions in a timely way.

7. Patient choice of clinician

Patients can request to see a particular clinician but will be advised that they must wait for an available appointment with said clinician if one is not available.

8. Improving access for patients

The practice is continually reviewing patient access to try to identify improvements including use of PPG, Friends & Family surveys and eConsult feedback.

9. Accessible Information Standard

Norton Medical Centre has implemented the Accessible Information Standard and wherever possible we aim to provide information for patients in formats that they can understand and offer appropriate support to help facilitate communication with us.

10. Digital exclusion – At-risk groups

[NHS England](#) advises that some particular groups face a higher risk of being digitally excluded. These groups also face a higher risk of health inequalities and include:

- Older adults, especially people over 75 years old
- Socio-economically disadvantaged groups
- Socially excluded groups
- Disabled people and people with life-impacting conditions
- People living in areas with inadequate broadband and mobile data coverage

- People less fluent in understanding the English language

Digital exclusion can compound health inequalities by exacerbating challenges with access to healthcare, skills and capability to navigate and use services and the resources needed to lead a healthy life.

Should a staff member at this organisation recognise that a patient may be experiencing digital exclusion, they are to liaise with the Digital Inclusion Champion in the first instance who will be able to provide the appropriate advice.

Patients can contact our Reception Team both in person and via the telephone should they have no access to the internet, or have difficulty in navigating the internet, to obtain assistance in completing an eConsultation. The surgery have a limited supply of handheld devices that patients can utilise in the Reception area should they not wish to divulge their problem to the Receptionist.

11. Practice website accessibility

Accessibility Statement

This accessibility statement applies to the Norton Medical Centre website, which is run by Norton Medical Centre. We want as many people as possible to be able to use the website, meaning that patients should be able to:

- change colours, contrast levels and fonts
- zoom in up to 300% without the text spilling off the screen
- navigate most of the website using just a keyboard
- navigate most of the website using speech recognition software
- listen to most of the website using a screen reader

We've also made the website text as simple as possible to understand. A link to [AbilityNet](#), which has advice on making devices easier to use if patients have a disability is posted.

We know some parts of the website are not fully accessible:

- you cannot modify the line height or spacing of text
- some older PDF documents are not fully accessible to screen reader software
- there's a limit to how far you can magnify the map on our 'contact us' page

This website has been manually tested in the following browsers:

- Internet Explorer: Version 11 - this browser has been ended since 2018 [Accessibility Widget not compatible, keyboard navigation functional](#)
- Microsoft Edge: Version 112
- Google Chrome: Version 113
- FireFox: Version 79

If patients require information on the website in a different format such as accessible PDF, large print, easy read, audio recording or braille, they can contact the Reception team by email, telephone or in writing.

We provide a text relay service for people who are D/deaf, hearing impaired or have a speech impediment.

Our offices have audio induction loops, or if you contact us before your visit we can arrange a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter.