

Telephone Triage Explained

Telephone Triage is a process by which the patient appointment system is managed in a GP surgery by the duty doctor. It is a method by which a Doctor telephones the patient and assesses through a detailed history whether the patient's medical problem can be managed without the patient having to come in for a face to face appointment. This may be appropriate in cases when patients wish to discuss blood results, hospital letters or X ray/scan results. However if the patient needs to come in then an appointment will be made with the appropriate healthcare professional be it a GP, Nurse Practitioner, Nurse or Healthcare Assistant.

FAQ

Is it to stop me getting an appointment?

No, not at all –It is to ensure that all the patients that need to be seen are seen by an appropriate health care professional. It is also a tool for which a telephone consultation can be used to appropriately manage patient's concerns even if an appointment is not required.

How does it work?

Any patient who requests a Doctor's appointment will receive a phone call usually within 2 hours from the Duty Doctor. The doctor, after speaking to patients decides to either bring them in to an emergency clinic set up precisely for that purpose on the day or book them in to be seen on another day. However the problem may also be dealt with appropriately in another way. (e.g. blood test arranged, referral completed, appointment with Practice Nurse arranged or prescription query discussed) This system has been used successfully for several years now in many GP surgeries.

It has been shown that this process significantly improves access.

Why is the Practice doing it?

To improve access.

There were 37 hours of wasted appointments in November 2013 where patients did not turn up for their appointments.

To optimise GP appointments.

With an ever developing workforce less complicated needs can be dealt with by other members of the health care team.

Reduce waiting times.

Feedback from patients in the past has highlighted that for certain things they do not want to have to attend surgery and feel that a telephone consultation will be far more appropriate (medication queries/requests for blood tests/results etc.)

We will regularly audit this process to ensure that it is achieving the goals and expectations that we set. This process is only one of the processes put in place to help us improve access and reduce risk. We will continue to work with patient groups to identify and improve areas of concern. This Practice is committed to listening to feedback and working with patients to improve and develop our service.