



Willington Surgery Partnership  
Kingfisher Lane  
Willington  
Derby  
DE65 6QT  
Tel: 01283 703318

Dear Patient

An open letter to patient from the GP partners and practice manager at Willington Surgery

We understand that getting an appointment remains challenging. The Health and Social Care system is in crisis, and this includes primary care and pharmacy. We are always looking at smarter and better ways to work to benefit patient needs but find ourselves working at the detriment of team wellbeing and potentially patient safety. Government and media pressures to prioritise access above everything else (without offering solutions to workforce shortage) risks compromising quality of care and safe working.

The current demand far outstrips capacity (in all sectors of health and social care). There isn't the capacity or resource to meet the increased demands on our service. Despite pledges from government on increased funding, you can't pay someone who isn't there and our funding has increased by 2.1% to support wage rises. Many clinical and non-clinical team members have left or are reducing hours due to increased abuse, stress, and burnout.

Negative media of the roles within surgery impacts on recruitment of new staff, which has been a challenge over the past year.

The ever-growing backlog of hospital appointments and waiting lists has resulted in primary care being left to manage patients with an average of 35% of all our GP appointments being with patients who have already been referred. An aging population with complex needs, increased mental health problems and social care gaps are only some of the other factors that drive up demand and pressure on our appointment capacity.

We are averaging 17% more appointments than we did in 2020 and our doctors are on average doing 52 patient contacts per day when the "safe level" from the BMA is 28.

### **Our commitment to you:**

- We remain committed to delivering quality care but cannot compromise on clinical safety and team wellbeing in favour of unlimited access.
- We will continue to review practices and processes around the appointment system and engage with other services to offer alternative appointment which are safe and appropriate. This will include more pre-bookable appointments and bringing in a locum GP when we can.

Dr RJ Farrow • Dr LM Saunders • Dr VC Makava • Dr C Cowley • Dr I Maronge

- Patients may be signposted to more appropriate team members or services, rather than a GP. This may include a first contact physio, clinical pharmacist for medication, social prescriber, health and wellbeing coach for lifestyle support.
- Our telephone system has more lines added, this is based on feedback from our PPG and other patients who said they prefer to know where they are in the queue rather than getting an engaged tone. This does mean you could be 30<sup>th</sup> in the queue at our very busy times, with most calls taking an average of 4.5 minutes – this could mean a wait time of approx. 30 mins as we do always aim to have at least 4 people answering the phone between 8am and 9am Monday to Friday.

### **We need your help:**

- Please be respectful to all staff; no one deserves abuse in the workplace. All the team are trying their best to help you. Instead of taking your frustrations of the system out on the team here you could contact your local MP and ask why the increase in GPs hasn't happened and the funding into primary care isn't there.
- By preparing for your appointment, you will get the most out of your consultation. It sometimes helps to write down what you want to ask the clinician. Please try to prioritise major problems as it can sometimes not be safe to rush through multiple problems in a single consultation.
- Duration of appointments; a single appointment is 10 minutes with a GP, if your illness is complex, please consider asking for a double appointment as this will save you potentially having to come back. If you have more than one ailment the GP will always try and review as many as they can within the 10-minute appointment but do not want to keep the next person waiting.
- We are not able to impact or know hospital waiting times, we can only expediate a referral if you have had a specific change in your condition (and even then, the hospital will not always change timeframes). Once you have been referred, please contact the hospital to chase up appointments. You can contact the hospital PALS department directly if you do not have a contact number for the hospital (01332) 785156 or [uhdb.contactpalsderby@nhs.net](mailto:uhdb.contactpalsderby@nhs.net)
- Take responsibility for your own medication, please order any medication in plenty of time, ideally 5 working days in advance. If you require a medication review, please contact us to book this in within plenty of time for your next prescription.
- Take responsibility for your own health. We are here to help and advise and can refer you to one of our health and wellbeing coaches if you would like to start exercising with the support of a team connected to the surgery and this service is free of charge including classes.



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- See your local pharmacy for minor ailments and try a self-care / over the counter option first. Most minor ailments are self-limiting and do not require medical input or intervention.
- If a hospital team gives you a prescription to be dispensed from the hospital pharmacy, please do not expect us to issue this prescription simply because it's a long wait at the hospital pharmacy. This is unnecessary transfer of workload and adds to capacity problems.
- Download the NHS App – you can order your medication and it has other useful tools, and ways to contact the surgery.
- If you can't call the surgery, you can use our e-consult facility which is on the website <https://www.online-consult.co.uk/org/willington-surgery>
- Please avoid requesting prescriptions for treatment that are available over the counter even if you are prescription payment exempt.
- Keep your patient details up to date.
- We understand plans change, and if you need to cancel your appointment you can do this by text back on the appointment confirmation text the word CANCEL. This helps us offer that appointment to someone else. We on average lose 6 hours 42 minutes of clinical time per month through patients not attending.
- Be prepared to answer some basic questions from our reception team who are trained to signpost you to the quickest and most appropriate service or team member.
- We are all living in challenging times with increased living costs, and we have social prescribers that can help with social, housing and financial problems – please ask to be referred to them rather than a GP appointment or self-refer via our website <https://www.willingtonsurgery.co.uk/social-prescriber-self-referral>
- Join our PPG (Patient Participation group) to help understand the challenge we face and help with disseminating information to fellow patients – details are on our website or on the PPG notice board in surgery.
- We are not an emergency service, if you feel that your problem is urgent please call 111 or attend the Urgent Care Center <https://www.nhs.uk/services/gp-surgery/derby-urgent-treatment-centre/Y01994>  
Entrance C, Derby Urgent Treatment Centre  
Osmaston Road  
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We thank you for your continued help and support

Dr RJ Farrow • Dr LM Saunders • Dr VC Makava • Dr C Cowley • Dr I Maronge