

Publications approval reference: 001559

To:

- GPs
- Clinical Commissioning Groups

NHS England and NHS Improvement
Skipton House
80 London Road
London
SE1 6LH

14 September 2020

Dear GPs and their commissioners,

Many of you will be aware of reports by some patients that they are experiencing difficulty in accessing their GP for needed face-to-face appointments.

We are writing to reiterate the importance of providing face to face appointments for those who need them and to share materials designed to support your clear communication with patients about how they can access the right type of appointment for them.

We know that the vast majority of practices have made significant efforts to remain accessible to patients through the pandemic, and to keep staff and patients safe.

However, it remains critical that information for patients about how they can access services is clear, encourages patients to consult where necessary, and that face to face care always remains available when clinically appropriate, provided in line with these [requirements](#).

With that in mind, we have created the attached communications toolkit. We would be grateful if all practices could review their communications to patients across the board, in line with these recommendations, and you may need to ensure that reception and other staff are aware of the key messages.

It is important that no practice suggests in their communication that the practice is closed or that the practice is not offering the option of face to face appointments.

We will continue to provide public messaging through the media and campaign materials which explain how patients can safely access healthcare services and the importance of coming forward with any health concerns.

As would normally be the case, local commissioners will investigate any complaint from a patient that they are being refused face to face consultations when there is an identified need, or that they are being directed to Emergency Departments inappropriately.

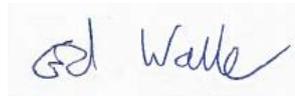
All practices are reminded that adjustments should be in place to ensure that those who find it difficult to engage in virtual consultation are able to access the appropriate care.

As set out in the phase three letter, we are calling on all parts of the NHS to ensure patients know how to access the care they need. Thank you for your continuing efforts to restore GP services while preparing for winter, including delivery of our most ambitious ever flu programme, and providing high quality and safe services to our NHS patients.

Yours sincerely



Dr Nikita Kanani
Medical Director for Primary Care
NHS England and NHS Improvement



Ed Waller
Director, Primary Care Strategy and NHS Contracts
NHS England and NHS Improvement