**APPOINTMENT POLICY**

**Reviewed by:** G Thorogood & S Rebel

**Reviewed on:** April 2025

**Appointment Policy**

**1. Introduction**

Kings Medical Centre is committed to providing accessible and timely healthcare to all our registered patients. This policy outlines how appointments are offered and managed to ensure that patients receive the most appropriate care from the most suitable healthcare professional. This policy is in line with NHS England guidelines.

**2. Appointment Request Methods**

Appointments can be requested through the following methods:

* **Online:** Via the NHS App or the practice website.
* **Telephone:** By calling the practice during opening hours.
* **In Person:** At the reception desk during opening hours.

**3. Appointment Types**

The practice offers a variety of appointment types to meet diverse patient needs:

* **Urgent Appointments:** For conditions requiring immediate attention. Patients will be assessed, and if deemed urgent, offered an appointment on the same day or as soon as clinically appropriate.
* **Routine Appointments:** For non-urgent medical issues, follow-up appointments, and ongoing care. These appointments can be booked in advance.
* **Telephone Consultations:** For issues that can be effectively addressed over the phone. A specific time for telephone calls will not be given, we are only able to allocated a morning session call or an afternoon session call.
* **Face-to-Face Appointments:** For examinations, procedures, and situations where a physical consultation is necessary (this includes all HRT and contraception reviews)
* **Extended Hours Appointments:** We offer appointments outside of normal working hours, including evenings and weekends.
* **Specific Clinician Appointments:** Patients may request to see a specific GP or healthcare professional. While we will make every effort to accommodate such requests, this may not always be possible due to clinician availability, staff mix and day to day pressure. For urgent cases the triaging Doctor will allocate based on availability and we cannot guarantee you will see a specific doctor
* **Home Visits:** For patients who are genuinely housebound and unable to attend the surgery. The decision to conduct a home visit is based on clinical need and the GP's discretion. (Requests to be made before 10.30am). If appropriate, home visits may be made by our rapid intervention paramedic service.

**4. Appointment Requests**

* Regardless of initial contact method all requests will go through the Appointment request form.
* To ensure patients are seen by the most appropriate healthcare professional, our trained staff may ask for brief details about the reason for the appointment.
* The practice will ensure that online appointment availability is regularly reviewed and adjusted to meet patient needs.
* Clear information will be provided to patients about how to access the appointment request system

**5. Appointment Allocation and Triage**

* **Triage:** All appointment requests will be triaged by a GP or other qualified healthcare professional. This helps prioritize urgent cases and direct patients to the most suitable service, which may include:
  + A GP
  + A Nurse Practitioner
  + A Paramedic
  + A Clinical Pharmacist
  + First Contact Practitioner (Muscular skeletal specialist)
  + Another member of the practice or Primary care network team
  + A local pharmacy
  + NHS 111
* **Care Navigation:** Our reception staff are trained as care navigators. They will use information provided by the triaging Doctor to allocate you an appropriate appointment. This will be done by phone call or by sending you a booking link to select your own appointment.
* **Appointment Location:** Our appointments are planned at three locations. Kings Medical Centre, The Buckhurst Way Centre and at local pharmacies. Reception we confirm your appointment location when they book your appointment.

**6. Cancellation of Appointments**

* Patients are requested to give as much notice as possible when cancelling an appointment, ideally at least 24 hours in advance.
* Cancellations can be made online, by telephone, or in person.
* Failure to attend appointments without cancellation ("Did Not Attend" - DNA) wastes valuable resources and may delay care for other patients. The practice will monitor DNAs and may take action in accordance with the practice's DNA policy.

**7. Late Arrival for Appointments**

* Patients who arrive more than 10 minutes late for their appointment may not be seen. This is to avoid disruption to other patients and the clinician's schedule.
* The clinician will decide whether a late patient can be seen, taking into account the patient's condition and the time available.
* If a patient is not seen, they will be offered the opportunity to reschedule.

**8. Repeat Appointments**

* Patients requiring regular appointments for ongoing conditions will be supported in booking these in advance where appropriate.

**9. Communication**

* The practice will communicate appointment information clearly and effectively to patients, including:
  + Appointment date and time
  + Name of the healthcare professional
  + Location of the appointment
  + Any necessary preparation
* The practice will use a variety of communication methods, including telephone, SMS text message reminders, and email, where patient consent has been obtained.

**10. Accessibility**

* The practice is committed to ensuring that our appointment system is accessible to all patients.
* We will make reasonable adjustments for patients with disabilities or communication needs.
* Information about the appointment system will be available in accessible formats.

**11. Review of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains compliant with NHS guidelines and meets the needs of our patients and the practice.

**12. Patient Responsibilities**

* To attend appointments on time.
* To be available to attend an on the day request is made
* To provide accurate information when booking an appointment.
* To inform the practice as soon as possible if an appointment needs to be cancelled.
* To treat practice staff with respect.
* To understand that the most appropriate healthcare professional may not always be a GP.