

# **HADDENHAM MEDICAL CENTRE NEW APPOINTMENT SYSTEM FROM MONDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2014**

**Patients can continue to pre-book appointments. These are particularly useful for patients with long term conditions who know they need to have periodic reviews with the GP.**

**All other requests for appointments (previously the 'day only' appointments) will be booked for a GP telephone consultation. Reception will take the request and pass to a GP who will call the patient and discuss. This discussion will lead the patient and the GP together making a decision on what is required. This may be:**

- A face to face appointment with the GP who made the call – this may be the same day or a date in the future, as required
- A face to face appointment with another GP within the practice who is better able to deal with the problem being discussed
- A face to face appointment with a member of the nursing team
- The issue can be dealt with over the telephone. If, as a result of the telephone conversation, a prescription is required, we can send this to the J W Vicary pharmacy. This saves the patient coming to the surgery if it is not required.
- The issue needs to be dealt with by someone other than a member of the practice team; this may include self-care, local pharmacist, dentist, social care.

**The Practice feel the new system will work better for the following reasons:**

**Patients will continue to be able to pre-book appointments. We have increased the number of pre-bookable appointments available.**

GP telephone assessment is a national system that has been developed and tested by the NHS Institute. The evidence shows that of all the requests for appointments, only approximately one third actually need to see a GP, one third needed to be seen by another member of the primary healthcare team (usually a member of the nursing team) and one third do not need to see anyone – the issue can be dealt with over the telephone.

Adopting this system will enable us to run more efficiently, better manage the demand for appointments and will ensure that those who need to see a GP should find it easier to be seen. The system should run more effectively for patients and the practice ensuring that the best service is accessed for each patient dependent on clinical need and assessment.

In the current system, obtaining a face-to-face day only appointment generally depends on either waiting in the phone queue or coming to the surgery first thing in the morning. The new system will ensure that everyone who wants an appointment will have a GP consultation but accessing a face-to-face appointment will be based on the need to see a GP rather than how quickly a patient can get to the phone each morning.

Since all appointment requests will initially be assessed by a GP, the GP can make a clinical assessment as to how quickly a patient needs to be seen and can book the appropriate appointment. For most patients this will continue to be on the same day but for a few patients this may mean a few days in advance. This may be particularly useful for patients who work. A request for a GP assessment call can be made with reception. When the GP calls they can discuss urgency vs convenience and agree a mutually acceptable appointment time. This is an area which we are aware the current appointment system does not satisfactorily address.

We have built into the surgery session a number of telephone assessment slots throughout the day. For patients who are calling to request an appointment, the expectation is that they will be called back within the hour. This is an improvement on our current system and should be more efficient. Patients will have a better idea of when the GP will call back and GPs should no longer find the patient is unavailable when they call-back as is often the case currently. Patients can still call with general queries – these call backs will be made at the end of the am and pm surgeries.

Patients will be able to request a specific GP to call them back if the GP has availability. Our aim is that this will happen whenever possible but we cannot guarantee this since it will depend also on the individual GP workload. It is helpful if you don't mind which GP calls you; in this case one of the GPs working that day will call you – they will all have access to your complete medical record.

Since there is now no advantage in calling first thing, hopefully phone calls will be spread more evenly throughout the day. This should make it easier for patients to get through on the telephone and avoid the frustration patients feel at the moment with the queuing system.