

Open Letter To Patients

Dear Patients,

General practice is under a lot of pressure, but we are still open and here for you - let us explain.

General practice has been open for business throughout the pandemic and we want to reassure you that we are still here, although you may be seen in different ways such as by telephone, face to face, video and online consultations. Even during the pandemic, in Manchester over 140k face to face appointments were conducted.

These changes in how we consult have been necessary to protect patients and staff from further spread of Covid-19.

Over the past year our workload has grown significantly due to Covid-19 pressures, and our staff are working harder than ever to ensure that patient care is impacted a little as possible.

The healthcare system is currently under a lot of pressure and we would like your support and understanding, and we hope that this letter will offer insight into the challenges we are facing and the consequences this is having on our patients and staff.

Whilst trying to cope with this increase in demand and limited resources, general practice has been the core of the highly successful Covid Vaccination Programme - delivering the majority of doses of which we are incredibly proud.

And just like you, many of us have been affected by COVID. We have lost family and friends, and had children isolating at home while we were trying to work. However, our commitment to serving our patients has never changed.

However, this increase in workload has meant that you may for example wait longer in the queue on the phone or for a response from your GP, as well as taking its toll on our tired workforce.

This has led to a rise in complaints and verbal abuse towards our staff. Please be understanding that the increased criticism, abuse and negative comments impact on our staff member's day's and that we remind you that we have a zero-tolerance policy of abuse towards staff. We have complaints processes in place for your feedback and ask that you use these appropriately.

Thank you for your continued support and we understand that at times it can be frustrating, but please bear with us as we are doing all that we can to work through this. Your health is of the highest importance to us and we are working to ensure you are seen as quickly as possible.

So, what are we asking you, our patients, to do?

Be reassured

We are here. We are working in different ways than before the pandemic and with a wider workforce of healthcare professionals. We will see you face to face, if needed, after an initial telephone consultation. If you have symptoms you are worried about, please do contact us.

Be respectful and kind

Please respect that GPs, nurses and practice staff are working harder than ever to provide healthcare. We have a zero-tolerance policy to abuse from patients.

Be self-sufficient

If you or your child have a minor rash, signs of a cold, or other minor symptoms try home remedies, look for advice from www.nhs.uk, or ask for help from a pharmacist. Only seek an appointment if you have serious symptoms or are advised to do so by a pharmacist.

Be prepared

Keep simple remedies including paracetamol or ibuprofen at home. Order your repeat medications well in advance. Think about signing up to the NHS App or other Apps provided through your practice.

Be thoughtful

Practices are receiving a massive increase in complaints. Each complaint takes staff away from patient care to respond to. Before complaining, think whether it is appropriate - is it due to an error or mistake which practices should know about to change or improve their services? Or is it relating to the significant reduction in the current capacity to provide services by practices or hospitals and therefore no change is possible?

Be Covid aware

If you develop COVID like symptoms, please **do not** attend the GP surgery in person. Please arrange a COVID test and if you are unwell and need to speak to a GP then have a telephone consultation initially. Be aware of current guidance. Look at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19

Be patient

All health services have been significantly affected by the pandemic and unfortunately your GP cannot influence this. Only if there has been a significant change in your condition can we get an appointment or investigation brought forward.

Be cancer aware

We are concerned that the number of patients presenting with symptoms of possible cancer or other significant illnesses has reduced during the pandemic. If you or someone you know have worrying symptoms, then please do not delay but make an appointment as soon as possible. For more information, see www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer/symptoms.

Be assured

We are still here for you when you are ill and need us. Late presentation of severe illness, including mental health, is harder to treat so do contact us if your condition is not resolving or you need to discuss worsening of a pre-existing health problem – general practice is open and here to help.

We send our sincere sympathies to everyone who has been directly and indirectly affected by the pandemic. We understand and feel the impact too.

We hope that this letter has helped to explain some of the pressures that general practice is under. Please continue to work with us to protect services and patient care.

Yours faithfully,

On Behalf of Mount Road Surgery