

The future landscape of Primary Care

A patient's view of primary care in North Central London in the Boroughs of Barnet, Enfield, Haringey, Camden and Islington in the year 20xx.

I've just moved into the area and I'd like to find out about what's available to me from the local NHS.

Welcome to North Central London from the primary care part of the NHS. Firstly, we want to get you registered as a patient in our area. We make it as easy as possible. You may already have had an information pack from your estate agent or letting landlord, but if not just call in at any of our NHS-signed premises – Doctors, Pharmacies or Clinics - or at your local council office. You'll need to bring with you a proof of your identity and of your new address and we'll get you signed up straight away. It will then take a few days for us to complete your registration and to send you full details of what we can offer you. This will include:

- Names and addresses and full information about local general practices who are ready, willing and able to offer you registration. You can then choose the one that best meets your personal lifestyle preferences. Be assured that the quality of care is uniformly high at all of our practices, and that the differences in location, premises, size, languages and gender are the criteria by which we want you to choose, according to what suits you. Some patients prefer a small practice where they will know, and be known by, all the staff. Sometimes this means that they may have to go to another nearby practice for care that cannot be safely delivered in a small practice. Other patients prefer a larger "one stop" centre where they may not know all the staff but a wider range of services will be available. It's your choice!
- An invitation to book a new patient health check at the practice of your choice. We want to ensure that the practice get to know about you so that they can offer you a total health service. This invitation will also be extended to your family members if you are also registering them.
- A list of pharmacies in your area, with opening times and additional services. Do note that our pharmacists are able to offer you advice and a wide range of services which could save you having to go to your doctor.
- An information pack on the full range of services we can offer and how to access them, for example, dentistry and optometry. Also it will explain how to find your way through the local NHS when you need us urgently. We offer a range of urgent care and the Hospital A&E Department is reserved for the most serious cases. Most urgent care can be delivered by your doctor or pharmacist. If you're not sure you can always phone us (see attached details) and we'll signpost you to the most appropriate care centre. Do be aware that if you do go straight to the Hospital A&E, they may re-direct you back to your local primary care service for the type of care that you need.

So, as a new patient, what can I expect from my general practice?

Firstly, we can assure you that the premises will be fit for purpose, irrespective of the age and type of building. We have a mix of new and old, large and small, buildings but they are all clean, bright, and tidy and will display only current relevant information about our services. The building will be accessible for all, including the disabled, and will conform to all health and safety and requirements and be a safe environment. There will be a comfortable waiting area and all of our practices are child friendly, understanding the needs of both parents and children, at what may be a stressful time.

All consulting and treatment rooms will be appropriate for their use, and there will be decent WC facilities should you need them.

The practice opening hours will be published and they will offer you a choice of pre-booked appointments or, if you are prepared to wait, a walk-in service. From the information we sent you, you will already be aware of your choice of clinician, including gender and language preferences.

On arrival, the practice reception staff will be welcoming and will offer you a confidential check-in process. As a new patient, you will be introduced to our health advisory service, either face to face or virtually, to guide you through the things that you may find useful including:

- How to get your personal health profile
- Self care and lifestyle advice
- Exercise on prescription
- Housing, benefits, employment, healthy foods and cookery advice
- Specialist advice on drugs and alcohol abuse
- Details of how to access all our services

Your practice health care team will view you as a member of the local health community and will provide you with public health information about disease patterns, likelihood and symptoms. We know the expected patterns of ill health in a community and can advise you on healthy living, prevention and early diagnosis.

After my initial visit, how will I be able to contact the practice?

Between 8am and 6.30pm you can contact any of our practices by phone, e-mail or in person. Some of our practices are open until 8pm and on Saturday mornings. They will always respond to phone calls and e-mails within 2 hours and often immediately. Outside these hours, please ring the Out of Hours Doctor Service on the number that we have given you in our information pack.

We offer consultations with doctors and nurses by phone, by e-mail and face to face. When you phone or e-mail to make an appointment the practice will agree with you which is the most suitable option for you. If you prefer continuity, then practices will always try to offer you an appointment with the clinician of your choice. Sometimes, particularly if you require an urgent consultation, they will offer you a consultation with the first available clinician.

Whichever type of consultation you have, and whatever the time of day or night, with your permission, we can arrange for your medical records to be available to the clinician so that s/he can see all relevant information. If you have an out of hours consultation, we will ensure that your registered practice is aware of it, and they will update your records accordingly within 12 hours.

What services do you offer in your practices?

All of our practices work within a network of 15,000 to 30,000 patients across a number of practices. The network principle is that you will always be able to access the services that we offer as part of our guaranteed standard services list (see enclosed). If you are registered with a small practice, you may have to attend another nearby practice in the local network for some services.

Every practice offers, on-site, as a minimum the range of “core” services that you would expect from any general practice. Some larger practices offer a wide and growing range of additional services. Here are some examples of how the network functions:

- All practices offer a range of patient diagnostic tests in-house. If you need a blood test, then the sample will be taken in the practice and sent the samples away for analysis. The practice will advise you of the results within 72 hours.
- Some larger practices offer more specialised testing, such as ultrasound scanning, for their own patients and for those from nearby smaller practices in the network.
- If you require more specialist support and advice for a condition such as Diabetes, we may ask you to attend an appointment with a Diabetes GP or Nurse locally in the network.
- If you need an X-ray, there is a community-based X-ray service available in each borough.

Communication between practices is usually electronic. Most practices use the same computer system, but those who have a different system can still communicate with each other across the network. Practices are also able to communicate with other community based clinicians and hospitals to ensure effective transfer of relevant patient information across organisational boundaries.

You will also be able to log on to check your own health record at any time. If you don't have a computer available to you, you can use the surgery patient computer to check your records, make future appointments or re-order your medication.

In addition to the above services, practices provide home visits for housebound patients. We can also offer these patients self-monitoring equipment to measure blood pressure, blood sugar levels and other routine regular monitoring tests.

Dentists, Pharmacists and Optometrists are all an important part of our primary care services. Our information pack will give you full details of your nearest practitioners and how to access them both routinely and in an emergency. Often, they will be co-located with our general practices or will be in nearby premises, and can offer a range of services to support your health and wellbeing.

Our GPs will only ever do what they know they can do safely in their own practice, and sometimes it will be necessary to refer you for further advice or tests. Your GP will be able to offer you a consultation locally with a specialist consultant or will arrange a hospital appointment for you.

What if I need to go in to hospital for an operation?

Our GPs will do as much as they can in primary care to avoid hospital admissions. However, if they decide that an operation is necessary, they will:

- Advise you on what to expect
- Offer you a choice of hospitals
- Increasingly, arrange for you to be a day case patient without any overnight stay
- Ensure that, if you do stay in hospital, it will only be for the minimum time and get you discharged as soon as it is safe to do so
- Support your rehabilitation and convalescence at home or in a community setting.
- Arrange any follow up consultations with the most appropriate clinician, who may be the GP, the hospital consultant or another specialist clinician.

I've got what is known as a Long Term Condition – how will you manage that?

When a patient is first diagnosed with a long term condition, all our practices will:

- Provide you with full educational information about your condition soon after diagnosis
- Introduce you to our nursing team who lead much of our long term conditions management
- Advise you of additional support services, who will often be patient groups or charities, who are expert in the management of your condition
- Agree a package of care based on your needs. This will include a written Care Plan with mutually agreed goals and periodic and annual reviews.

If you need more specialist advice, all our practices work as part of a local network known as the Extended Primary Health Care Team. The team will service a population of 15,000 to 30,000 patients across a number of practices. The services include:

- District Nursing, including Community Matrons to plan and oversee your care
- Specialist nursing including School Nurses, Paediatric Nurses and other specialties
- Health Visiting
- Midwifery
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Primary mental health services, including psychology and a range of counselling and therapy services
- Social services care

If you have a complex condition, our team will appoint a named care co-ordinator, to work with you and the rest of the team. They will then work with you to implement your Care Plan.

All community members of our teams have modern technology, including telephones with GPS navigation, so that colleagues can locate them and they can locate you as quickly as is necessary.

What about my medications?

For those patients with long term conditions, we offer repeat dispensing from your named pharmacy without the need to request a repeat prescription from your practice. The pharmacist is an expert in medicines management and will advise when you need to see your doctor again for a review of your medications.

Your pharmacist will also advise you on any side effects or concerns that you have arising from your medication and will consult with your doctor about any recommended changes.

What services do your practices offer to pregnant women?

Hopefully, your practice will already know you and have offered you pre-conception advice as part of our normal service. The practice will seek to confirm your pregnancy as early as possible and offer you advice about your choice of birth settings. They will then offer you, and your partner, a range of ante-natal services including exercise and parenting classes. Our team of midwives will work closely with you and your GP to monitor your pregnancy and to support you in a safe birth.

After the birth, the practice team of doctors, nurses, midwives and health visitors will provide additional support services for the first two years. This will include:

- Immunisations
- Child development monitoring
- Parenting skills support
- Ongoing conception advice

What can you offer me if I am diagnosed with a terminal illness?

We will agree a Care Plan with you based on the MacMillan Gold Standard for end of life care. In addition to your GP, our extended Primary Health Care Team nurses will look after you and support and advise you on your options requiring decisions.

How do you assure the quality of your GPs?

All of our GPs are committed to ongoing professional development. They all have written personal development plans, and take part in an annual appraisal of their performance with a qualified GP appraiser. They attend regular education and development programmes on key GP skills.

All GPs are now required to apply for professional re-accreditation every 5 years.

GPs arrange for their practice staff to attend regular professional development training and education programmes suitable to their role. In addition to professional clinical training this includes customer care training for our reception teams. Our practices aim to build a culture of high standards of clinical care and service.

How do you know whether your GPs are doing a good job?

There are a number of statutory measures by which we can assess the overall quality of service provision by our primary care colleagues. In addition, we encourage a culture of incident reporting and group learning.

Our practices actively seek and welcome feedback from patients on their experience of our services, and view complaints as an opportunity to improve services.

Our aim, and that of all our practices, is to offer you a high quality primary care team service which will enable you to live the best possible lifestyle in respect of your personal health and wellbeing.