



16 July 2021

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your continuing hard work and efforts in maintaining general medical services (GMS) over the last 15 months in extraordinary conditions during the pandemic.

As we begin to see the success of lockdowns and the COVID19 vaccination campaign, much of it delivered by GPs and their multi-disciplinary teams, we are also seeing the accumulation of clinical need that NHS Wales as a whole is having to respond to and address. This will be a challenge when your teams are tired and have been working hard to keep the public safe during a global pandemic.

There are numerous stories of patients who have delayed presenting to their practice who are consequently now experiencing more severe disease or complications. There are also patients presenting with multiple problems, many of which have been stored up for months, but now expecting them all to be addressed within one consultation. Patients with long term conditions such as diabetes, COPD/Asthma or heart conditions will have missed some or all their regular reviews, and so will be expecting resumption of their usual preventative care with their practices.

With this in mind, we need to shift our focus to moving forward. It is important that we keep the public informed of the different ways of working and how to appropriately access GMS.

- Send an important message to your community that **General Practice is open**; ensure patients are able to contact the practice when needed.
- **Communicating with your patients is essential** – Practices have always been open for patients and we would encourage you to promote this at a local level. We will also be undertaking some communications nationally to support this key message.
- **Offer Digital Services** which can provide an effective way for some patients to communicate with practices.
- **Continue with effective Triage Systems** (e.g., Total Triage or Telephone First), which when performed by senior clinicians and integrated into practice systems and multi-disciplinary teams, can safely screen out problems not requiring face to face encounters with GPs and also improve patient experience by directing the patient to the most appropriate clinician first time.

- Promote the opportunity for patients to ring throughout the day, ensuring there is a mix of both **same day and pre-bookable appointments where appropriate.**

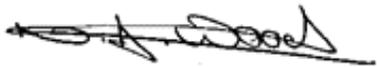
In support of the work you undertake, a [short video](#) has been produced to help inform the public of what they can expect when contacting their GP practice which is part of the Welsh Government's Help Us to Help You campaign.

We recognise the extraordinary demands and pressure you are facing and that many if not all of you will already be doing these and much more. At times of unprecedented pressure on behalf of the Welsh public we wish to thank you again for all you have done and continue to do.

Yours sincerely,



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