

PE2070/F: Stop same-day-only GP appointment systems

NHS Ayrshire and Arran submission, 19 April 2024

GP Practices are independent contractors who deliver General Medical Services (GMS) through their agreed contract with NHS Ayrshire & Arran. Practices are able to deliver services in a manner that best suits the needs of their patient population. Following the pandemic many practices still operate a triage first model, where a clinician triages the call and if deemed clinically appropriate the patients are given an appointment, however, this model varies and many practices have returned to their pre-pandemic model of delivery and offer pre-bookable appointments.

The Primary Care Team recently conducted a survey with the 53 GP Practices in NHS Ayrshire and Arran. Out of 44 GP Practices who responded to the survey, we can confirm that 40 of these practices offer pre-bookable appointments to patients and 4 practices offer on the day only appointments. Only 2 of these GP Practices have a specific timeframe of when their patients can contact the surgery for an appointment.

During the pandemic a number of practices introduced an online platform for their patients to access practice services and clinical advice. Practices who utilise online platforms have feedback from patients that it is easier for their working population to access services out with core opening hours. It also allows Practice staff to respond to patients directly without requiring an appointment at a time suitable to the practice/patient, thus supporting more efficient use of admin time. Of the 44 GP Practices who responded to the survey, all confirmed that they offer an online system for their patients to request repeat and/or acute prescriptions.

Over recent years there has been a significant increase in patient demand, which at times outweighs clinical capacity available in some practices.