

Halton Primary Care

Total Triage

Primary Care remains at the forefront of the coronavirus “challenge”. NHS England continues to require practices to operate under a total triage platform.

Total Triage includes telephone consultations, on-line consultations (known locally as eConsult) and video consultations. Every contact to primary care is first clinically triaged. If a patient clinically requires a face to face appointment this is offered.

Primary Care for patients who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 will be delivered from a patient’s registered practice. Patients who have any symptoms of COVID-19 or indeed live in a household where COVID-19 symptoms are present must be treated in a separate environment by separate clinical staff through the local operationalised COVID response service.

COVID Service

Both Halton Primary Care Networks covering the populations of Runcorn and Widnes continue to ensure access to services are available for patients with suspected/confirmed Covid-19 and their household members. The specific separate services available during the peak are being adapted.

Plans are being developed to provide this service from the two Urgent Treatment Centres with the ability to scale up the provision should a second peak occur. This service includes home visits where required.

Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS)

The Halton PCNs are reviewing workforce and intend to maximise the funding available via the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme. This will increase the number and enhance the skill mix of staff within primary care to support demands over winter. This will assist total triage in directing patients to the most appropriate member of the primary care clinical workforce.

Improved Access

Extended Access

Primary Care in Halton will continue to provide evening and weekend appointments, or extended access, at two sites. In Runcorn this is provided at Heath Road Medical Centre whilst in Widnes this is provided within the Urgent Treatment Centres. All patients across Halton can attend either site. Appointments are available between 6.30pm-9pm weekdays and 9am-3pm weekends and during bank holidays.

Prior to the pandemic NHS 111 were able to directly book patients into this service. Whilst this was switched off during the initial pandemic peak, direct booking is being re-introduced and will once again be available over the winter.

Discussions also continue to improve the links between the Extended Access service into the Urgent Treatment Centre and vice versa allowing patients to be seen by the most appropriate healthcare professional; and the development of robust pathways.

Extended Hours

Following the introduction of the 2019/20 PCN Enhanced Service for Extended Hours, all practices now offer additional early morning or evening appointments. Whilst this service was stood down during the pandemic, this is now fully re-instated and will be available this winter.

Care Navigation

Halton Care Navigators have been established since September 2018. One of the top ten high impact actions outlined in the GP Five Year Forward View, care navigation supports patients to make informed decisions on how they access services as an alternative to waiting for a GP appointment. Whilst the pandemic had disrupted access to these services, this is being re-instated as the local system returns to pre-Covid service levels. Patients can be signposted to the following services:

- Community Pharmacy
- Health Improvement Team
- Minor eye conditions (MECS)
- MSK service
- Sexual health
- Wellbeing Access

Primary Care Network Enhanced Health in Care Homes & Provision of Anti-Viral medication

Since 2017 GP practices have been aligned to specific care homes, ahead of the new PCN DES requirements. Whilst patients retain the choice to decide which practice they would like to remain registered with, the scheme promotes registration with the aligned practice offering an improved and less reactive model of care by providing regular ward rounds.

This scheme has been invaluable during the Covid-19 Pandemic with ward rounds being held virtually to ensure continuity of care. Both Halton Primary Care Networks are fully implementing the new national requirements and are looking to retain the additionality that the local scheme brings to ensure patients in care homes continue to receive pro-active primary care provision.

In addition, the CCG will continue to commission PC24 to provide anti-viral medication to care homes in the event of a Flu outbreak.