



Changes to Our Appointment System from November 2014

To all patients of Fairlands and Glaziers Lane Surgeries

As you know from all the media coverage the pressure on health services continues to grow across the UK. People expect ever quicker access to GP practice services at a time when practices are also being required to undertake additional work to reduce the pressure on hospitals and accident & emergency services.

Like all practices Fairlands and Glaziers Lane surgeries have felt these pressures growing and although our overall patient list size has not really increased for some years we find that our patients are visiting us more often.

The effect of this is that we receive a very large number of calls every day from 8.00am requesting an immediate urgent appointment with a doctor on that day. We know that the volume of calls can mean a long and frustrating wait for all our patients.

At the same time, in the experience of our GPs, a large number of the calls we receive are in fact for minor ailments which could be managed by the patient (**supported by advice from a pharmacist or from the NHS Choices website**) or for medical conditions which could be managed by a highly qualified and experienced nurse.

Importantly while the practice is managing this 'urgent' demand some patients who are more elderly, vulnerable or who have more complex and ongoing medical conditions, may lose out and wait longer to be seen.

Against this background and based also on the results of our last patient survey (February 2014) we wish to revise our way of working to redress the balance and improve access for all.

Dr Norris, Dr Lukaszewicz and I met with our Patient Representative Chair, Frank Clement - Lorford and representatives from our patient group in March and agreed an outline strategy for a new way of working. Central to this was the recruitment of a very experienced Nurse Practitioner – a senior nurse who can **diagnose, treat and prescribe** for patients with a wide range of medical conditions.

The objective was that a single doctor, working closely each day with the Nurse Practitioner and reception team would ensure that any patient needing medical care urgently on the same day would receive it. This approach would in turn free up all of the appointments of the other doctors within the Practice to be available for our patients to book in advance by phone, face to face or via the Internet.

Our Nurse Practitioner – Natasha Wasum – joined the practice in June and over the summer months we have been trialling a new way of working and ironing out any problems along the way. We now feel we are ready to introduce the new system to our patients.

There is more information about how this will work in the **Questions and Answers** overleaf.

Deborah Slade, Practice Manager

Your Questions Answered

Q. When does the new appointment system start?

A. The new system will be introduced in **November 2014**

Q. How will it work if I need a same day appointment?

A. When you phone Fairlands Surgery the automated telephone system will ask you to select whether you require an 'urgent same day appointment' or 'an appointment for a future date'.

If you select 'urgent same day' appointment you will be connected to a receptionist who may ask you some simple questions about your condition in order to direct your call to the doctor or nurse practitioner. The receptionist may ask you to come to the practice for an appointment later that day or, if appropriate, arrange for a doctor to phone you first.

If you prefer to phone Glaziers Lane surgery you can do so as the receptionists here will also have access to the same day appointment facility.

Q. Do I need to phone at 8.00am for a same day appointment?

A. No, there is no need at all to rush to make your call at 8.00am. The same day service is available all day until we close at 6.30pm. However if you or someone you care for is unable to get to the surgery and you think you may require a **home visit** we would still ask that you try to call us before 11.30am. This is so that the practice knows how many visits are needed during the day and can plan these. Our GPs usually make their visits between 12pm and 3pm.

Q. What if I don't want to talk to a receptionist about my medical condition?

A. Our receptionists are highly experienced and confidential members of the team. They work to procedures set down by the GP Partners and will only ask you for the information they need to direct your call most quickly and effectively. If you don't wish to explain your problem they will respect your wishes but you must understand they will not then be able to attach a priority of any kind to your call.

Q. I normally go to Glaziers Lane Surgery; can I still use this same day Nurse Practitioner service?

A. Yes you can, however you will need to travel to Fairlands Surgery as we are only able to offer the service at one location currently. However don't worry, if you need an urgent appointment and you are unable to arrange transport to Fairlands Surgery you can phone Glaziers Lane as usual and the receptionist will be able to assist you.

Q. How do I book a routine appointment with a nurse or GP for a future date?

A. You will be able to book routine appointments at Fairlands Surgery or Glaziers Lane Surgery as you currently do - in person, by phone or via the Internet. If you phone Fairlands Surgery to do this please select the option for 'Book a routine appointment'

Q. Do I need to phone at 8.00am for a routine appointment?

A. Not at all. Routine appointments are available up to 4 weeks ahead and can be booked at any time of day. In our new system we hope we will no longer need to hold back appointments in case of same day demand

and this enables us to remove the appointment 'lottery' which has led in the past to a mad rush and long call waiting times at 8.00am.

Q. What sort of medical problems is the same day service designed for?

The new system is designed to assist patients who have a new and urgent problem that has not been troubling them for more than 4 weeks. If you have a long standing or chronic problem you should book an advance appointment with a doctor.

Q. What sort of conditions can the Nurse Practitioner deal with?

The nurse practitioner can deal with a very wide range of problems and can prescribe medicines and make referrals on to hospital services if appropriate. The Nurse Practitioner is working throughout the day with the duty doctor and will always arrange for you to be seen by the doctor if that is more appropriate.

Q. Where can I get help and advice to manage my own and my family's health?

Many common minor illnesses and injuries can be treated at home. Lots of helpful tips are available on the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk

Your pharmacist also has knowledge of everyday health issues and can help you with advice on a range of common illnesses and can save you a trip to the GP surgery. There are often pharmacies in supermarkets and many are open late.

Q. How can I get more information or give the practice feedback on the service and how it works for me?

A. You can raise your questions or fill in a feedback form during your visit or via the 'Contact Us' page of our website at www.fairlands.co.uk Or you can email the Practice Manager, Deborah Slade, via the reception team at GWCCG.fairlandsreception@nhs.net