



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

GP Practices in Wales: A Guide for Older People

**An independent voice and champion
for older people**

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is an independent champion for older people throughout Wales.

The Commissioner is working for a Wales that leads the way in empowering older people, tackling inequality and enabling everyone to live and age well.

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg // This document is available in Welsh

www.olderpeople.wales

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Introduction

As we get older, accessing GP practices often becomes a more prominent part of our lives, and can play an important role in helping us to stay healthy and independent.

In recent years, the way that services are delivered by GP practices has changed a great deal, and older people sometimes face difficulties when trying to access what they need.

That's why the Commissioner has published this helpful guide, which provides information on:

- What you can expect from your GP practice
- Your rights
- What to do if you are experiencing difficulties

The guide also provides details and contact information for organisations that can provide help and support if you are finding it difficult to access your GP practice, or the services available, or if you are concerned your rights are not being upheld.

About this guide

In this guide, you'll see reference to things that a GP or a practice **'must'** do, which means there is a legal, contractual or other requirement to do them. The same applies to things a GP or practice is **'required'** to do or has **'a duty'** to do.

If a GP or practice is not doing these things, you can challenge them about it. You can find information about how to do this at the end of this guide.

Where this guide states that a GP or practice **'should'** do something or that 'you can expect' them to do something, then it is good practice for them to do it, but it is not compulsory.

All GP practices must comply with the Equality Act 2010 when delivering NHS services. This means that they must not discriminate when providing services and must make **'reasonable adjustments'** so that people with disabilities can access their services.

If you are concerned that your GP practice is not treating you equitably, you should contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service (see page 38).

A GP practice may have premises (surgeries) in several different places. Where this guide refers to a practice, it means the practice as a whole, not a local surgery. Local arrangements may vary from surgery to surgery within the practice.

This guide applies to GP practices in Wales. People living in Wales but registered with a GP in England may find they have different rights, access and experiences from those described here.

Your rights: a summary

Understanding our rights can help us in a wide range of situations, including when using GP services. So it's useful to remember that if you live in Wales, you have a right to:

- Be registered with a GP practice.
- Have a new patient appointment within six months of registration.
- Access your practice in person, by telephone and online during opening hours.
- An appointment on the same day if a clinician decides your need is urgent.
- State a preference for seeing a particular healthcare professional.
- Free prescriptions from a pharmacist in Wales (if you are registered with a GP in Wales).
- Access your practice's information and services in a way that suits you.
- Access your personal health information, or in certain circumstances the health record of a deceased person.
- Any information you give your practice being treated in confidence.
- An information leaflet setting out the range of services your practice provides.
- Information on how to get help and advice.
- Welsh language versions of any documents provided by the Health Board.
- Move your registration to another practice.

GP practices in Wales must:

- Provide services for people who have health conditions from which they are expected to recover, chronic disease management and general management of terminally ill patients.
- Provide services at times that are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of patients.
- Ensure that people can access GP services effectively offline and online.
- Offer pre-bookable appointments to take place during core hours.
- Ensure that patients can access services throughout core hours in an emergency.
- Have their 'main premises' doors open and staff on site between 8.30am and 6.00pm.
- Provide a recorded greeting in English and Welsh on the telephone.
- Tell you if there is a charge for a service.
- Consider people's experiences of accessing and using their services and take proportionate action to address any equality issues.
- Capture, record, highlight and share your communication needs if you are living with sensory loss.
- Ensure that any new signs and notices about NHS services are bilingual; in English and Welsh.

There are also a number of things that GP practices should be doing to help meet people's needs. This good practice includes:

- Offering a mixture of remote (telephone or video), face to face, urgent, on the day and pre-bookable appointments, determined by the practice in discussion with patients.
- Treating an online request in the same way as a telephone request.
- Offering you an appropriate consultation when you first contact your practice, based on an assessment of your clinical need.
- Providing a telephone service that fully meets patients' needs.
- Considering your experience of accessing them online and by telephone.
- Asking your preferred language and making a record of it.
- Recording the fact that you are caring for someone else.

Your rights to General Medical Services (GP practice services)

If you live in Wales, you have a right to be registered with a GP practice that serves the area where you live.

You can find details of local practices in the NHS 111 local services directory, or by calling 111 on your phone.

When you contact your chosen practice and ask to be included on their patient list, you will be asked to complete a form to enable your medical records to be transferred.

You may also be asked to complete a health questionnaire so the practice has a basic health record for you while your records are transferred, which may take some time.

When you register, it's a good time to let the practice know if you are caring for someone else, have trouble with your eyesight, hearing or mobility, prefer to speak a certain language, or any other things they need to know about you.

You have a right to be offered a new patient consultation within six months of joining the practice. During this consultation, the healthcare professional will ask you questions and examine you, tailored to what they think is appropriate for you.

If you live in a care home

If you move permanently into a care home near your previous home, you may be able to stay with the same GP practice. If you move out of the practice's area, you may need to register with a new practice.

You should receive the same range of healthcare services when you are living in the care home as you received when you were living in your previous home.

Changing practices

To change your practice, you should contact the surgery you wish to register with. If they agree to take you on, they will ask you to complete a form, which will enable your medical records to be transferred there, as described above.

You do not have to explain why you want to change your GP practice.

Refusal of registration

A practice can refuse to register you if it has sufficient grounds for doing so – if you live outside the practice area, for example, or if they have closed their patient list.

If you are refused registration the practice should give you an explanation.

If you can't find a GP to register with, you should contact NHS 111 Wales (you can find contact details at the end of this guide). They should be able to direct you to an alternative practice.

Removal from the practice register

A practice can remove you from their register if you move out of the practice area. If you leave the UK for more than twelve weeks, the health board may tell the practice to close your record. If you think this is likely to happen, you should discuss it with your practice manager.

People may also be removed from the register if they have been verbally or physically abusive to people at the surgery.

You should normally receive a warning and explanation before you are removed unless you have been violent towards staff. In this case you can be removed from the list immediately.

A practice must not refuse to register you or remove you from the practice register if this would amount to discrimination under the Equality Act, as highlighted above.

Services

The exact range of services provided by a GP practice will vary, but any practice should provide access to a wide range of healthcare services suited to the needs of local people.

Practices are required to produce leaflets (online and paper copies), which provide information about the range of services they provide, which must be available from the practice on request.

Core services which must be provided include:

- GP consultations
- Chronic disease management, such as asthma and diabetes clinics
- Certain vaccinations and immunisations
- Cervical cytology screening
- Certain minor surgery procedures

GPs can also provide advice about worries or concerns you might be having and can help you find support if you are experiencing domestic abuse (or other types of abuse).

Your practice may also provide more specialised services, such as anticoagulant monitoring (medication to help with blood clotting) or minor surgery.

Some practices offer other complementary services, which can include counselling, dermatology, or dressing clinics.

Finally, a GP practice may offer non-NHS services, usually for a fee, such as private sick notes, prescriptions for taking medication abroad, vaccination certificates, employment-related medical assessments or passport signing.

Opening hours

Most GP Practices are open throughout core opening hours, which are 8am to 6.30pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

However, there is no requirement for a practice to deliver all services at all times, and practices may close temporarily for things like training or staff reviews. A branch surgery may also have different opening hours to the main surgery.

Practices are required to provide services at times that are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of individuals, and to ensure that people can access services throughout core hours in an emergency.

Out of hours services

If you need a GP after surgery hours, you should telephone your surgery and listen to the recorded message. This should direct you to the out of hours service covering your practice.

Alternatively, you can ring 111 for advice. They will determine if you need to see an out of hours GP and direct you to an appropriate service for an appointment.

Contacting your practice

In person

A main practice premises must have its doors open so that patients can physically access the premises between the hours of 8.30am and 6.00pm.

Visiting the practice in person may sometimes be subject to restrictions to prevent the spread of highly infectious or serious conditions.

By telephone

Practices must answer their telephones for the duration of core hours (8.00am to 6.30pm, Monday to Friday) unless there are exceptional circumstances, and the health board has agreed that they can use an answer phone to manage incoming calls.

If you telephone your practice, your call should be answered initially by a standard recorded message. You should then be put through to a member of the practice team, who will help you to access the right care or signpost you to another service if this is clinically appropriate.

All practices are expected to provide a telephone service that fully meets people's needs and to take feedback on the service into consideration.

If the telephone service at your practice is not meeting your needs, you should discuss this with the practice manager. If you are still not satisfied, you can raise a concern through the Putting Things Right process (details are included on page 38).

Online

Patients must be able to access the practice online for non-urgent appointments and callbacks, and the practice should consider people's experience of using digital means of access.

Your GP Practice may also use an online self-referral tool such as eConsult or Accurx.

These tools let people consult with their GP online by completing a quick form that is sent and reviewed by the practice. They also direct the patient to self-help, pharmacy advice and local self-referral services. Once your query is submitted the practice will respond to you by email or telephone.

The GP practice's digital platform is intended to be used for non-urgent access and should only be used during core hours.

You can also now manage your prescriptions and (if your practice has enabled this) appointments using the NHS Wales App, which you can download from the App Store or Google Play, or via the NHS Wales website.

To access GP services via the App, you must be registered with a GP practice in Wales that is connected to the App and have a fully verified NHS login, or a valid photo ID to set one up. If you do not have photo ID, your practice should be able to verify your registration.

If you contact your practice online, your request should be treated the same as a request by telephone. This means any help to support you to access the care you need must be equivalent to the help provided on the telephone.

Making an appointment

When you contact your practice to make an appointment, the practice must offer you an appropriate consultation if it has assessed that you have a clinical need to access their services.

The practice should offer you the appointment when you first contact them. You should not have to contact them again.

If a clinician decides that your need is urgent, you must be offered an appointment on the same day.

If your need is not so urgent, you must be able to book an appointment in advance. Your practice should normally book you in for an appointment within two to three weeks, but they may make appointment slots available up to six weeks in advance.

Practices should no longer be releasing all appointments at 8am for that day.

Finding the right appointment

Practices should offer a mixture of remote (telephone or video), face to face, urgent, on the day and pre-bookable appointments, and discuss the type of appointment with you.

An appointment usually lasts about 10-15 minutes, but you can request a double appointment if you have complex issues to discuss.

You may not need to see a GP and it may be quicker and more effective to see another healthcare professional at the practice.

When you contact the practice, the receptionist (care navigator) will need to ask you some questions to help you make the right appointment for you.

Answering these questions will help to ensure they identify the best healthcare professional for you to see. Providing the information they ask for will make it easier for them to identify the best professional for you to see.

Home visits

If you are unable to travel to your GP practice due to severe illness, disability, frailty or caring responsibilities, you may wish to request a home visit.

When requesting a home visit, it is important to give a full description of your condition and your circumstances, as this will enable the clinical team to determine the need for one.

Although the practice will have a policy on home visits, decisions should still be made on a case-by-case basis.

The practice team

Your GP practice is staffed by a team of healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses, therapists and others) who specialise in certain areas of treatment and support, and administrative staff (including the practice manager, receptionists or care navigators and administrators) who are there to help you get the right treatment from the right professional as quickly as possible.

When you contact your practice for an appointment, you may be advised to see a health professional other than a GP. This will help ensure you get the most appropriate and effective treatment and support, and that you can benefit from the specialist skills on offer within the practice. You can find more details about the roles of different health professionals working in GP practices on page 41.

Seeing a health professional other than a GP where appropriate may also enable you to be seen and treated more quickly.

You can access any healthcare professional in the practice directly when appropriate, without going through the GP first.

The mix of healthcare professionals in GP practice teams will vary from practice to practice (and from premises to premises if your practice has more than one surgery).

Your GP practice works as part of a wider network of health professionals in your community such as dietitians, podiatrists, speech and language therapists, mental health teams and community and district nurses.

In addition, community pharmacies offer health advice, provide over-the-counter medicines and dispense prescriptions, as well as prescribing medication for certain conditions in some cases.

You can access some of these services directly, and your practice may refer you to one of these services without seeing the GP first, if this would best meet your needs.

Asking to see a named healthcare professional

If you prefer to see a particular GP, you can let the practice know and they should record this. You can ask to see any GP or nurse in the practice, but doing so will depend on whether they are available.

The practice should make reasonable efforts to accommodate your preference, but they cannot guarantee that you will be able to see that person every time.

Asking to see a healthcare professional of the same sex

If you would prefer to see a female or male healthcare professional, you can ask when booking your appointment. You may have to wait longer for one to become available.

There may also not be male and female alternatives in the practice. If this is the case, your practice may be able to collaborate with a neighbouring practice to arrange an examination with a healthcare professional of the sex you prefer, although this may not be possible.

You can also ask for a chaperone to attend any appointment. A chaperone is usually a healthcare professional but sometimes a member of the administrative team.

Their role is to be an impartial observer, recognise someone's vulnerability and provide emotional comfort and reassurance.

You can also bring a family member, friend or carer with you to an appointment if you wish.

Attending an appointment

Reminders

Most GP practices in Wales use text messages to send appointment reminders and other information to their patients.

You may need to complete a consent form to use the service, or to opt out of the service if you do not consent.

Cancelling an appointment

It is important to inform your practice if you are unable to attend an appointment, and to give as much notice as possible, which will allow that appointment to be offered to someone else.

If you have difficulty attending appointments due to, for example, caring responsibilities, you should explain this to your practice.

Transport to the surgery

If you need help with transport to your appointment, your GP practice and/or local third sector organisations should be able to give you information about any local community transport schemes, volunteer car schemes, dial-a-ride and similar schemes which operate in your area.

Your appointment

Ahead of your appointment (often referred to as a 'consultation') with a healthcare professional, it can be useful to make notes to remind you of things you want to tell them or ask about.

When you speak to your healthcare professional, it is very important to give them the whole picture – even if you think something is trivial, you should not leave it out.

If you are hesitant to give a health professional certain information because you do not know them, you should still tell them.

It is also important to answer all of their questions, even if you have answered them before. Healthcare professionals often ask repeat questions for a reason (e.g. to check whether there has been any change in your condition since the last time they saw you).

If you don't understand what the healthcare professional is saying about your diagnosis or treatment, it is fine to ask for an explanation or for the answer to be written down to read again later.

It is also acceptable to ask questions about the healthcare professional's diagnosis and the course of treatment they are proposing. For example, you may want to ask:

- Is there more than one treatment?
- What are the pros and cons of different treatments?
- Are there any common side effects?

If you think you might be unable to follow your healthcare professional's advice, you should tell them so you can discuss how they may be able to help you, or how you can get help from another source, depending on the nature of the difficulty.

Second opinions

If you have doubts about your diagnosis or the treatment that has been recommended, you can ask your GP to refer you for a second opinion.

There is no right to a second opinion, but GPs rarely refuse unless there is a good reason.

You may be referred to another GP in your practice or to a consultant.

If your case is complicated or the diagnosis is unclear, your GP or consultant may seek a second opinion to ensure that all possible treatment options are explored.

Unpaid Carers

If you are caring for someone else, you should tell your practice as soon as possible so they can record this on your medical records.

Once they understand your caring responsibilities and the pressures you are under, they will be able to offer advice tailored to your circumstances and, if necessary, provide more support when they diagnose and treat you in the future.

Authorising someone else to discuss your health care

If you wish to give someone else permission to discuss your health care with your GP practice, you should put this in writing. The practice will then make a note of this on your record.

Referrals

If you have an issue that requires further investigation, your GP or another health professional may refer you to an appropriate specialist in the NHS, such as a cardiologist or orthopaedic surgeon.

Following a referral, you should receive a letter from the specialist that explains what you need to do next.

Waiting times for specialist investigations and treatment can be long and there may be little the practice can do to speed them up.

If your medical issues worsen, or you require treatment while you are waiting, you can arrange a further appointment with your GP for medical care.

If you wish to use a private specialist or hospital, you should speak to your GP practice.

After discharge from hospital

Following hospital treatment, you are discharged back into the care of your GP. Accurate information / records should be sent quickly to your GP to allow them to manage your ongoing care, although this may sometimes be delayed.

If you are concerned that you have not heard from your GP after you have been discharged from hospital, you should contact your practice.

Ordering medication

If you are registered with a GP in Wales, you are entitled to free prescriptions from a pharmacist in Wales.

For 'one off' or short-term medications, you will be provided with what's known as an 'acute prescription' by a GP or health professional, e.g. antibiotics to treat an infection.

If a problem has not got better or has come back, your practice may be able to give you another acute prescription without needing another appointment.

If you take medication regularly, you will usually have a repeat prescription, allowing you to order what you need when you need it without having to see a GP or health professional. Sometimes, however, you may need a medication review before your next prescription is issued (if this the case, you should make an appointment for the review and ask the practice to provide an interim prescription to tide you over until the review).

If you receive a prescription from a hospital, this medication should be collected from the hospital pharmacy.

Getting test results

When your GP practice orders a test for you, you should be told how long you should expect to wait for the results and how to get them.

You may need to call the practice after the expected date of return, and the practice may only contact you if it is necessary to follow up on the results.

If your test has been ordered by a hospital, the hospital is responsible for telling you the result, not your GP practice.

Reception staff can give out some test results over the phone or face-to-face. However, they are not qualified to comment on test results. You should therefore check the results and make a follow-up appointment to discuss them with a doctor if necessary.

Your practice should have strict policies on confidentiality and data protection. They should only give out results to the person they relate to unless that person has given prior permission for their release or if they are not capable of understanding them. If the person concerned is under 16, the results can be given to the parent or guardian.

Paying for healthcare from your GP practice

GPs do not charge for basic NHS treatment. Your practice must tell you if there is a charge for a service.

Vaccines which are offered to certain population groups at higher risk, such as shingles, covid, flu and pneumonia, are free.

Some travel vaccines, for infectious diseases such as Hepatitis A, typhoid and cholera are also free, but others, for diseases that are unlikely to spread if someone catches them (e.g. rabies) must be paid for.

If your GP thinks you need to see a specialist and you want to pay for it privately, they can refer you to a private consultant or specialist.

Some GP services, such as medical reports for employers or insurance purposes, are also not covered by the NHS and are charged for.

Getting the information you need

GP practices must produce a practice leaflet, which describes the services available to their patients, and provides information about things like surgery times, clinics and home visits.

GP practices have a number of duties to provide accessible information to patients and should make reasonable adjustments (where required) to meet your needs.

Sensory loss

If you live with a form of sensory loss, it is important that you share your information and communication needs with your practice.

Your practice should be able to meet your needs, e.g. by generating letters in large print and adding prompts to your medical record about your communication and information needs.

Practices are required to capture, record, highlight and share the communication needs of patients with sensory loss, under the NHS Wales Accessible Information Standard.

When a GP surgery refers you to a hospital, your information and communication needs should be sent automatically with the referral.

Language

Your GP practice should ask you which language you prefer to use and make a record of it. If you are not comfortable communicating in English or Welsh, you should ask your practice about interpretation services.

GP practices must undertake a number of duties relating to the Welsh language, including:

- Providing a recorded greeting in English and Welsh on the telephone.
- Providing Welsh language versions of all documents or forms provided by the local health board.
- Encouraging staff to wear a badge or lanyard to show that they are able to speak or learning Welsh, if they provide services in Welsh.
- Ensuring that any new sign or notice about NHS services provided is bilingual.

There may be additional Welsh language arrangements in place if your practice is directly managed by a health board. The exact requirements vary locally. Further information is available from the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner (contact details are at the end of this guide).

If you believe that your GP practice is not fulfilling its duties in relation to the Welsh language, you can raise a complaint with the health board. You can find out more about raising complaints below.

Non-digital access

You have a right to access information and services in a way that suits you. If you do not use a computer or smartphone or are not confident in doing so, you are entitled to receive the same level of information and service as people who do.

If you have difficulty in accessing what you need, you should contact the practice manager or ask for support through your health board (contact details are at the end of this guide).

The Commissioner has published a separate guide on your rights to access the information and services you need via non-digital means.

Contact the Commissioner to receive a copy or visit the Commissioner's website. Details are on page 37.

Access to health records

You have a right under the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to access your personal information, or, in certain circumstances the health record of a deceased person.

If you want to see the health record created by your GP, you should contact your practice direct and ask for a copy. They can give you a printed copy of your record or send you a digital version.

When someone dies, their GP health record is stored by the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership, so you will need to contact their local office if you wish to see this (contact details are at the end of this guide).

How to make your voice heard at your practice

Giving feedback

All healthcare professionals have a duty to listen to patients, recognising their knowledge and experience of their own health, and acknowledging their concerns. If there is something you wish to say to your professional, you are entitled to say it, provided you do so in a polite, respectful way (professionals should make allowances for the fact that you may be upset, worried, ill or in pain).

All GP practices are required to have a clear understanding of patient needs within their practices and how these can be met.

Practices are expected to carry out a National Patient Experience Survey, consider what their patients are telling them through the survey, create an action plan based on the feedback and make improvements. While the survey is running, your practice should give you the opportunity to take part when you contact the practice.

If practices are making changes to how they operate or to the services they deliver, they are expected to consult with the public in their areas in a range of ways, e.g.

- Public meeting events
- Social media engagement
- Letter correspondence
- Posters
- Notices
- Local press announcements
- Patient surveys

Practices will use different combinations of methods and may not use every method.

Patient Participation Groups

Some GP practices have a Patient Participation Group made up of volunteers from the patients registered with the practice, which meets regularly with members of the practice team.

The group represents patient views and makes suggestions about improvement to the practice and discusses the practice's policies and services.

If your practice has a Patient Participation Group, you may want to consider joining or feeding in your views through one of the members to make your voice heard.

Llais

Llais is the national citizen voice body for health and social care in Wales. Llais seeks to understand your views and experiences of health and social care, and to make sure your feedback is used by decision-makers to shape your services.

You can find contact details for Llais on page 38.

Raising concerns and making complaints

Raising concerns informally

If you have a concern about the service you have received from your GP practice, you should talk to the staff involved with your care as soon as possible, so that they can try to resolve your concerns immediately. If you prefer, you can ask your health board complaints team to do so. Health board contact details are on page 36.

If something goes wrong with your care or treatment, you should receive an apology and the practice should tell you what it will do to improve and stop the same thing happening to other people.

You should not be removed from a practice list simply because you have raised a concern.

Raising concerns formally

There is an independent process for making complaints about the NHS in Wales called 'Putting Things Right'. Further information can be found at the end of this guide.

If you wish to complain about the services provided by your GP practice, you should raise these concerns directly with the practice manager, within 12 months of the incident or problem occurring. If you do not want to deal with the practice directly, you can contact the complaints team at your local health board instead.

You can make a complaint yourself or ask a family member, friend, or carer to represent you (you will need to give them written permission to do this).

Llais also has independent and trained complaints advocates who can support you in making a complaint.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

If you go through the Putting Things Right process and are not satisfied with the final response to your complaint, you can address your complaint directly to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and the service provided is impartial and free of charge. Contact details for the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales are at the end of this guide.

Complaints against individual professionals

If you want to raise a concern about an individual healthcare professional, you can contact the regulatory body for their profession. Further information is at the end of this guide.

Discrimination

If you think you have been discriminated against under the Equality Act 2010, you should contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS). Contact details are at the end of this guide.

Further information and useful contacts

Health information and advice (including finding a GP practice)

NHS 111

Dial 111 on the telephone 111.wales.nhs.uk

(For urgent mental health support dial 111 and press OPTION 2)

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

01443 848585 nwssp.nhs.wales

Regional office contact details:

<https://nwssp.nhs.wales/contact-us/public-information-contact-details/>

Health Boards

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

01873 732732 abuhb.nhs.wales

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

01248 384 384 bcuhb.nhs.wales

Cardiff & Vale University Health Board

029 2074 7747 cavuhb.nhs.wales

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

01443 744800 ctmuhb.nhs.wales

Hywel Dda University Health Board

01267 235151 hduhb.nhs.wales

Powys Teaching Health Board

01874 711661 pthb.nhs.wales

Swansea Bay University Health Board

01639 683344 sbuhb.nhs.wales

General advice and assistance

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

03442 640 670 olderpeople.wales

Age Cymru

0300 303 4498 ageuk.org.uk/cymru

Carers Wales

029 2081 1370 carersuk.org/wales

Raising a concern

NHS Wales complaints and concerns: Putting Things Right

<https://www.gov.wales/nhs-wales-complaints-and-concerns-putting-things-right#complaints>

(printed copies available from Health Boards and from Llais)

Llais

02920 235 558 llaiswales.org

In Your Area regional team contact details: llaiswales.org/in-your-area

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

0300 790 0203 ombudsman.wales

Welsh Language Commissioner

0345 6033 221 welshlanguagecommissioner.wales

Equality Advisory and Support Service

0808 800 0082 equalityadvisoryservice.com

Professional regulatory bodies

General Medical Council

0161 923 6602 gmc-uk.org

Nursing and Midwifery Council

020 7637 7181 rcn.org.uk

General Pharmaceutical Council

020 3713 8000 pharmacyregulation.org

Health and Care Professions Council

0300 500 6184 hcpc-uk.org

Appendix: Getting to know your practice team

In this section you can find information about the roles of different healthcare professionals now present in many GP practices, and the ways in which they can support your treatment and care.

Receptionist

Reception staff will often be your first point of contact with a GP practice and are trained ‘care navigators’, which means they will identify the best healthcare professional for you to see based on the answers you give to their questions.

The more information you give the receptionist, the easier it will be for them to identify the best professional for you to see. Receptionists, like all practice staff, are required by law and by contract to keep the information you give them confidential.

General Practitioner (GP)

Your GP is a doctor who specialises in general medicine, providing medical treatment and care.

GPs discuss patients’ health and treatment in the practice, on the phone or by video call and visit some people at home. They treat acute and chronic illnesses, provide preventive care and health education to patients, make and manage referrals to hospital, and manage emergencies in the practice.

GPs prescribe and review medications, manage and deliver immunisations and review laboratory, radiology and other results. GPs also write letters in support of patients, issue death certificates and liaise with the Coroner.

Physician Associate

Physician Associates are medically trained practitioners working under the supervision and with the support of the GP. They are a relatively new kind of healthcare professional but are becoming more widespread.

Physician Associates are trained to help you in a range of ways, including taking your medical history, carrying out physical examinations, diagnosis, planning how to manage your health condition, carrying out treatment procedures and providing you with health promotion and disease prevention advice.

Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP)

Advanced Nurse Practitioners are highly skilled nurses who can make their own assessments, diagnose, and interpret test results. Your ANP can prescribe appropriate medication for you or refer you to another specialist if necessary.

Practice Nurse

Practice nurses work with GPs and other healthcare professionals in the practice team, as well as directly with patients, to provide and co-ordinate assessment, treatment and care.

Practice Nurses are trained to help you in a range of ways, including taking your medical history, carrying out physical examinations, diagnosis, planning how to manage your health condition, carrying out treatment procedures and providing you with health promotion and disease prevention advice.

Other Nurses

Other types of nurses may also work in or closely with your GP practice, including District Nurses, Community Nurses, Chronic Conditions Nurses, members of Rapid Response Teams and Health Care Support Workers. They are all healthcare professionals, skilled in care that helps people to improve, maintain, or recover their health, to cope with health problems, and to achieve the best possible quality of life whatever their disease or disability.

Health Care Assistant

Health Care Assistants work alongside nurses in the practice team, doing many nursing tasks such as taking your temperature and pulse, checking your breathing and recording your weight, and promoting positive mental and physical health.

Pharmacist

Your practice team may include a pharmacist, who is an expert on medicines management.

Your practice pharmacist can help you with advice and support on appropriate and safe use of medicines and medicines management, while also prescribing certain medicines themselves for a range of conditions, from minor ailments to long term illnesses.

If symptoms suggest it's something more serious, pharmacists have the right training to make sure you see the right healthcare professional.

Physiotherapist

Your practice team may include a physiotherapist, who is the first point of contact for people with musculoskeletal conditions (which affect muscles, nerves, tendons, joints, cartilage, and spinal discs). They also work with people who have neurological and respiratory conditions.

Physiotherapists give expert advice to help to restore movement and function when someone is affected by injury, illness, or disability. They may help you by: consulting on matters related to fitness for work, assessment and diagnosis, referring you directly for an x-ray, giving injections and prescribing certain medications, and managing your condition early and preventing deterioration.

Occupational therapist

Occupational therapists provide practical support to help people to recover from illness and injury and to overcome barriers preventing them from doing the activities or occupations that matter to them. They work with the general practice team to resolve various issues related to frailty, mental health and fitness to work.

They will assess your needs, environment, and daily activities, identifying both your strengths and challenges, to address urgent concerns like difficulties managing at home or work. Additionally, they will put in place practical support and resources, including rehabilitation, home or workplace adaptations, and self-management strategies, to enable you to live and work more independently and improve your mental health through various wellness techniques.

Advanced Paramedic Practitioner (APP)

Advanced Paramedic Practitioners are trained to triage patients, carry out assessments and examinations, review test results, carry out medicine reviews, make decisions and in some cases prescribe medication. They can also refer people to specialist services such as rehabilitation, or for certain investigations.

APPs may make home visits, especially for chest pains and breathing difficulties. If you don't need to go to hospital, an APP can provide immediate treatment and support. APPs may also run minor injury or illness clinics, help manage chronic conditions, provide end of life care and carry out minor operations.

Social prescribing (community referral) link worker or navigator

Your practice may have a dedicated link worker or navigator who will work with you to help you access community-based activities which will benefit your health and wellbeing.

These activities are typically provided by voluntary and community sector organisations, and include volunteering, arts activities, group learning, gardening, befriending, cookery, healthy eating advice and a range of sports.

Your GP or any of the other staff in your practice may also refer you to these activities.



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Older People's Commissioner for Wales