

# The Hart Surgery

York Road, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 2DR  
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## IMPORTANT

THE WAY YOU BOOK YOUR GP APPOINTMENT IS CHANGING

### INTRODUCING OUR NEW GP APPOINTMENT TRIAGE SYSTEM



All GP appointment requests will be triaged by a senior GP on the day they are requested

- Simply fill out an online triage form to request any GP appointment. Our receptionists can help you fill this out over the phone if you prefer.

Appointments will be given on the basis of clinical need

- You will be offered an urgent same day, 3 day or 10 day appointment

You will be given the option of a telephone or a face-to-face appointment

- Giving our patients the choice of the type of appointment that suits them best



### NURSE AND NON-GP APPOINTMENTS

The way to book nurse, blood test and all other non-GP appointments remains unchanged. Please use the NHS App, Patient Access or call our reception team who will be happy to help



Dear Patients

Now that we are through the pandemic and working life is returning to 'normal' I wanted to write to inform you of a new appointments system which will be going live on 11th October.

We have always been a surgery that prides itself on our connection with our patients, providing a safe and friendly service to all. This has become increasingly difficult to maintain in the past decade with patient demand rocketing, an increasingly elderly population and the increased medical complexity we are dealing with day to day.

This had led to several our doctors moving on from The Hart or choosing to leave the profession perhaps earlier than they would otherwise have done. Thankfully, we are thrilled to have the expertise of 3 new doctors starting at the surgery.

Jo Kyte is a very experienced doctor with a background in oncology who has joined us from Marlow surgery. Caroline Hall grew up locally and has just moved back to the area having been working in a GP practice in London, and Jessica Sutton, our current registrar, who will be starting as a fully qualified GP in November. Those of you who have met her over the past 2 years will know she is a brilliant doctor and a great addition to the team.

We are also pleased to announce the arrival of Tee Balakumar, our experienced Physicians Associate who will assist the GPs in seeing patients.

To mark this new start at the surgery we plan to re-launch with an appointment system which I hope will mean we can continue to provide a high level of care for years to come.

A number of practices locally are deciding to move toward a more focussed triage system and we have been in contact with them for advice on how the system runs and its benefits with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

I understand that there will be a bedding-in period, as with any new system, and I would ask that you continue to be supportive and kind to our staff during this time. Our hope is that in time you will see that your medical issues are being dealt with in a more efficient and prompt manner with the same caring and connected approach we have always given.



## How will it work?

If you require an appointment with a GP then you should fill in the appointment triage form which will be available to access via our website every day from 7am-5pm. An example of this form is attached to the end of this letter.

The triaging GP for the day will review every appointment request and decide who is the best clinician to manage this problem, the required urgency and the most appropriate type of appointment. They will base this on the details given as well as our prior knowledge of the patient and their medical conditions.

You will then receive either a call or text from reception arranging an appropriate time slot.

There will be 3 levels of urgency for appointments:

- 1) Same day
- 2) Within 3 working days
- 3) Within 10 working days

All appointments will be either telephone calls or face-to-face and the triaging GP will decide which is most appropriate based on the triage information given and your expressed preference.

The triaging doctor will have designated time throughout the day to review incoming appointment requests, but we would ask that, if possible, requests are made before 10am so that urgent cases can be dealt with in a timely manner and urgent morning appointments are not wasted.

We do understand that for some patients it will be difficult to navigate the online system and we will of course still have receptionists on the phone to take appointment requests and deal with queries. The receptionists will not be able to book appointments directly but will help to fill in the triage form on your behalf and the request will then be passed to the triaging GP alongside the online requests.

This will also be the case for patients who walk in requesting to see a GP, unless of course it is a clear emergency. I would ask that patients who think they have a medical emergency to attend A&E or call 999.

Any requests for appointments made via email or other avenues will be directed to use the online triage form. E-consult submissions will be triaged alongside the online requests.

**Please note the triage system is for patients requesting GP appointments only. Appointments for the treatment room nurses, blood tests and other specialist nurse appointments should be made by calling reception in the usual way.**



## Addressing concerns:

There will be, I'm sure be several concerns regarding this change of system, but I hope the reasons below for choosing this method will explain our reasoning:

### This is not an attempt to block access to appointments, quite the opposite

Currently the system can allow those with the loudest or most persuasive voices to demand appointments ahead of those more willing to wait. This new system will allow for true fairness when giving appointments, with those most in urgent need being rightly prioritised and those with less urgent problems being dealt with on a more routine basis.

### Reduced waiting times:

Currently patients can sometimes wait up to 4 weeks to see or speak to a GP- clearly this is unacceptable, and this system should mean every case is dealt with within 10 working days and the majority within 3 working days. This ties in with the latest government announcements regarding access to GPs.

### GP led triage:

This new GP triage system should give you all the reassurance that your symptoms have been reviewed confidentially by a GP and triaged appropriately. Please note that if you are calling our receptionists to help with filling in the triage form you will be required to give the appropriate medical information for them to do so. Please be reassured that every member of our team signs a confidentiality agreement prior to starting their employment.

### Utilising specialist clinical roles:

Several of our GPs have specialist interests and skills. Triage will allow us to place patients with those GPs with the most clinical knowledge in certain areas, eg: women's health/ dermatology etc.

We also have a number of new staff in supporting roles who are highly trained in managing specific areas of medical care - our pharmacists eg are incredibly knowledgeable about your medications and interactions and managing long-term conditions such as high blood pressure. Our social prescribing team are experts in dealing with social, housing, and financial problems and our new physician's associate is able to manage a range of medical conditions and will help the GPs with their paperwork and relaying results to patients where appropriate. It may be that your problem will be better managed by one of these clinicians rather than by a GP.

### Reducing the need for duplicate appointments:

The presenting symptoms of a patient, for example 'fatigue', will often mean a specific set of blood tests are needed and if these can be arranged prior to seeing the doctor it makes the subsequent consultation much more fruitful and will save unnecessary repeated trips to the surgery which is of benefit to all.



### Improving continuity of care:

You will be able to request to see your registered GP. We will do our best to accommodate these requests, particularly for routine matters. However, if a case is urgent then clinical need will take priority and you may be placed with any available GP for that day. We are fortunate to have a team of excellent GPs and I would be very happy for myself or any member of my family to be treated by any one of them.

### Increasing face-to-face consultations:

Prior to Covid we were already performing many consultations by phone, but it is true that the pandemic meant this number increased significantly. Recently there has been increasing demand to return to a more face-to-face appointment system. We will be able to offer this option to more people, but for many the convenience of a telephone call will I'm sure continue to be their appointment of choice. The triaging GP will consider your request for a preferred appointment type when reviewing your case.

Can we ask those who are able, to park down in Waitrose and walk up if possible as surgery parking may be more difficult with this increased footfall.

### More predictable appointment time:

Due to the large volume of calls each day it has been impossible to give anything more than a very broad timescale when a GP might call you back. The new system will aim for more fixed appointment times, allowing you to plan your day without waiting by the phone.

We are really looking forward to being able to put this in place from Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> October onwards. We would ask that you give it time for any teething problems to be ironed out, and we hope you will all see the benefits going forward.

With best wishes

Dr Mark Bish  
**Senior Partner**



# Request for Consultation

Please complete to request a GP appointment.

**Name** *(Required)*

**Date of Birth** *(Required)*

**How can we help/what are your symptoms?** *(Required)*

0 of 250 max characters

**How long have you had the symptoms?** *(Required)*

**What have you tried / medications taken so far?** *(Required)*

0 of 250 max characters

**How quickly do you feel your problem needs to be dealt with?** *(Required)*

Please note that the final decision on the urgency of an appointment will be made by the triaging GP

**What type of appointment would you prefer?**

- Telephone  
 Face-to-Face  
 No preference

Please note that this would not be guaranteed and the final decision regarding appointment type will be made by the triaging GP.

**Are you happy for us to notify you of your appointment by text?**

- Yes  
 No

It makes it easy for us if we can but we understand that this doesn't suit everyone.

**Do you have a preference for a particular GP?**

This cannot be guaranteed but we will take your preference, the nature of your condition and clinical urgency into consideration when allocating your appointment.

- No Preference  
 Any female GP  
 Any male GP  
 My Registered GP (if available)

**Are there times or days when you are not available?**

**Is there any other information you would like us to know?**

0 of 250 max characters