

# Your views about services at your GP practice

How your GP practice has been working  
during the pandemic and how to share  
your experiences

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# Introduction

Your GP practice is working with NHS Southport and Formby Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS South Sefton CCG to ask for your experience of using its services since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Importantly GP practices in Sefton have remained open and have continued to provide services throughout this time, including seeing anyone who needs a face to face appointment.

So that patients could continue to be treated as safely as possible, some measures were introduced at the start of the pandemic that changed the way all GP practices in England work.

We want to know about your experience of these measures. This will help us to understand what has worked well, what has not and what will work in the future. We will explain how you can comment and how to request any support you may need to do this.

## About us

NHS Southport and Formby Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS South Sefton CCG are made up of 47 GP practices, covering population of over 280,000 patients.

We are responsible for planning and buying nearly all healthcare services that our residents need from a range of providers. Working with NHS England, we have responsibility for managing primary care services in the area.

We are committed to making decisions in a fair and open way, to ensure we spend our money as wisely as possible, in order to meet the healthcare needs of our residents.

Working together with all our partners and residents, our aim is to offer a wide range of accessible, high quality and easy to use services, to help people stay healthy and improve their wellbeing.

You can find out more from our websites:

[www.southportandformbyccg.nhs.uk](http://www.southportandformbyccg.nhs.uk)

[www.southseftonccg.nhs.uk](http://www.southseftonccg.nhs.uk)

# The current picture

## About general practice services in Sefton

Your practice has a dedicated team of healthcare professionals to support you - from doctors and practice nurses to reception staff, pharmacists and social prescribers, who can provide you with lifestyle and wellbeing support.

These services are mainly offered through appointments at the GP practice you are registered with during normal opening hours.

There are a number of other ways that general practice services are provided in Sefton:



Pre-bookable evening and weekend appointments for non-urgent conditions - provided within Litherland Town Hall Medical Centre for south Sefton residents and The Family Surgery for Southport and Formby residents



Home visits for those who need one - provided by your practice or by our acute visiting service

You may also be offered a GP appointment if you contact NHS 111 when your practice is closed and your practice may also refer you to another primary care service, like our Care at the Chemist scheme that operates in a number of pharmacies in Sefton.

## How your practice is working now

Throughout the pandemic GP practices in Sefton have been open and have continued to provide advice, support and treatment to their patients. Face to face appointments have also continued throughout this period for anyone who has needed to be seen in person.

As well as continuing to deliver their regular services, Sefton's practices have also been working together in groups, called primary care networks to deliver the first phase of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

To make sure services could continue NHS England and Improvement required your practice to put in place a range of measures to protect patients and staff at the start of the pandemic. We call these measures 'triage'.

# Triage

## What is triage?

As well as keeping you and staff safe 'triage' helps your practice to better manage its patients and balance its workload. Triage measures could include:



Asking you to make contact by telephone or online first, using a system called e-consult rather than walking into your practice without an appointment



Asking you some extra questions when you contact your surgery to understand what help you need and who is best placed in the practice or elsewhere to provide it



Offering you a video or telephone appointment with a member of the practice team, whenever it is medically appropriate

Different GP practices operate their triage systems differently. For example, some practices will use video consultations, whilst others will offer telephone appointments.

## Why is triage still happening?

As the pandemic continues triage remains important because:

- It helps your practice signpost you to the right medical or health and care professional
- It helps reduce the number of people visiting practices, reducing the risk of spreading infection and saving patients unnecessary trips to their GP practice
- It helps practices to better manage the increasing number of patients who need their advice, support and treatment

# Why we need to change

Currently, the whole of the NHS is extremely busy and GP practices are no exception. Before the pandemic, Sefton's GP practices were already very busy. Now they are giving advice, support and treatment to more patients than ever before and the number of people contacting their practice for help continues to rise.

From January to June 2021 practices in Sefton organised a total of 656,693 appointments for Sefton residents. These appointments were a mix of face to face, home visits, telephone or video and e-consult.

## From January 2021 to June 2021...

### GP practices took:

✓ 590,407  
Incoming  
phone calls



### GP practices held:

✓ 303,107  
Telephone  
appointments

✓ 280,534  
Face to face  
appointments

✓ 66,286  
Video  
appointments

✓ 6,766  
Home visits

### GP practices issued:

✓ 1,668,020  
Prescriptions



The real number will be much higher as this figure does not include appointments for COVID-19 vaccinations, or any of the other services provided on behalf of our practices. Services like extended hours, which offers pre-bookable slots in the evening and at weekends and COVID hubs, that provided dedicated care for anyone with coronavirus, are not included in the figures.

As well as booking and carrying out appointments, there is a wide range of other work that your practice team needs to do to look after its patients. This includes issuing prescriptions and managing medications, reviewing blood tests and investigations, responding to requests from hospitals and referring patients on behalf of other professionals.

A good example of the scale of the work that goes on behind the scenes is prescriptions. Each of the 1,668,020 prescriptions issued during January 2021 – June 2021, need to be reviewed and signed by a clinician before they are issued. This takes time and medical expertise.





# What could change

**Our GP practices continually look at different ways to cope with the increase in the growing number of people who need to use their services. Taking part in our survey and sharing your views will help your practice to do this.**

Your experience of using services at your GP practice during the pandemic will be important in helping shape how your practice works in the future. Your practice will look closely at the feedback from all its patients. This will help your practice make improvements where things have not worked well and do more of the things that patients have benefited from.

It is important that your practice offers the right mix of face to face and digital appointments. Your experiences will help practices review this. Getting the right balance for each practice will also take account of the different challenges they each face. This includes the number of staff in each practice determining the number of appointments it can offer, or having a small waiting room that limits how many people can be in the building at one time.

It will also help your practice to identify areas to work on with other local practices through their primary care network to provide specific developments or services, like COVID-19 vaccinations.

## Will all practices make the same changes?

All practices work differently, so they will need to look at the individual results from their patients to see what will work for them. There are many reasons why this is the case. It could be because of the type and condition of building they are based in or the telephone system they use. They will also manage the appointments they have available differently based on the different number of staff and patients they each have.

Although practices do operate differently, your views will help us to identify common areas where improvements can be made depending on what is possible at your practice. This could be better online services, or improved telephone systems.



# How you can have your say

## Complete our survey

We are working with all local GP practices to carry out this survey, which is being launched in different areas of Sefton at different times over the coming weeks.

You can find the online link to the survey and more information from our website:

[www.southseftonccg.nhs.uk/gpsurvey](http://www.southseftonccg.nhs.uk/gpsurvey)

If you are unable to complete the survey online, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Team via:

- Freephone: 0800 218 2333
- Email: [MLCSU.customercares@nhs.net](mailto:MLCSU.customercares@nhs.net)

You can also contact the team to request the survey or this document in a different language or format such as large print or easy read.

## How we will use your feedback

All the feedback we receive will be shared with our GP practices in Sefton. They will look at their individual results to inform how they will operate in the future based on your experiences and what is possible to change in their practice.

Your practice will discuss the survey results and how it is responding to them with its patient participation group.

We thank you in advance for taking the time to take part in our survey.

**As the pandemic continues, we would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing patience and support, and for continuing to wear face coverings and following social distancing when visiting the surgery and all other NHS services to keep the most vulnerable safe.**

**Your continued patience and kindness to our practice teams is also greatly appreciated. Staff are working hard to support patients at a time when they are busier than they have ever been before. So, if services take a little longer to access than normal, rest assured that the whole practice team is there to help and working as hard as possible to get to you.**