

# GP practice winter communications resource pack

Tools, resources, and ready-made content to help you communicate with and inform your patients

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This resource pack has been developed by the Leeds GP Confederation to support GP practices to consistently and effectively communicate with patients during times of increased demand, especially over the winter.

Inside you'll find a range of resources, adapted from existing national and local materials, and for a range of channels. Please feel free to select and use the content which best meets your needs and helps you reach your patients.

**PLEASE NOTE:** text highlighted in yellow, as you will need to edit and update these parts with details specific to your practice.





# Context

- GP surgeries are experiencing significant and growing strain whilst being at the forefront of the NHS' response to the COVID-19 outbreak, delivering vaccine appointments whilst maintaining non-COVID care for patients throughout.
- To protect our staff and resources, it is important that people are helped to access the right support the first time.
- The choice of appointment offered should take account of patient preferences and the access they have to the internet and telephone. Patients should also have the option of coming to the practice in person while adhering to IPC guidance
- Practices should continue to engage with their practice population regarding access models and should actively adapt their processes as appropriate in response to feedback.
- Care Navigation and Sign Posting training is available via your Primary Care Development Facilitator. Evidence shows that 27% of appointments could be sign posted elsewhere freeing up GP time.

## When communicating with patients:

- Be clear that practices are open, and that face-to-face appointments remain available.
- Help to explain the difference between online/remote triage (navigation) and remote consultations.
- Ensure patients continue to receive the right care from the right person at the right time.
- Help to explain the different roles and specialisms available and why this might mean not seeing a GP in order to access more appropriate support.
- Ensure that you are meeting the Accessible Information Standard, taking account of patients' communications preferences and requirements.

## Making our information accessible

All organisations that provide NHS care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The Standard sets out a specific, consistent approach to identifying, recording, flagging, sharing and meeting the information and communication support needs of patients, service users, carers and parents with a disability, impairment or sensory loss.

[NHS England »](#)  
[Accessible](#)  
[Information Standard](#)



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## Website content

Ready-made copy to add to your own practice website. This helps inform patients of new ways of working and how to access the best support.



## More resources

Links to existing information and resources that have been produced locally and nationally to share consistent messages with public and patients



## MJOG text

Messages for your practice to copy and send out. These promote self-care and direct access to other support, such as online resources or social prescribing.



## Phone messages

For when your phone lines are busy and patients might be waiting. These messages provide information about other types of support available.

# Website content

## We're here for you

[practice name] is here for you and we will continue to do all we can to keep people safe and well through the winter months and beyond. During this time of increased demand and pressure on our services, it's even more important that you get the support you need in the right place, at the right time, by the right healthcare professional.

## Helping you choose the right service

Several NHS services are available to provide the best health care for your needs. Choosing well will help get you the best advice quickest and reduces pressure on services, freeing them up to help those who need them the most.

### Self-care

For treating minor ailments, grazes, bruises, choose [self-care](#). If required, your pharmacist or NHS 111 service can advise you what to do and what to take. You will also find a wealth of information on conditions and treatments on the [NHS website](#).

### Your community pharmacy

Your community pharmacy can give treatment advice about a range of common conditions and minor injuries such as tummy upsets, coughs and colds. Best of all, there is no need for an appointment. If you want to buy an over-the-counter medicine, the pharmacist and their team can help you choose. Find your [local pharmacy](#)

### NHS 111

For urgent medical help that isn't life threatening, choose [NHS 111](#) online or phone 111. The team can provide confidential advice and help you access the most appropriate local health services to meet your needs. If you are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired you can contact the NHS 111 service using the [NGT Relay](#) services.

### Medications

For repeat medications without having to call your GP practice, choose [the NHS app](#). Order any repeat medications 7 days in advance. It typically takes 72 hours for any repeat medication request to be ready at your pharmacy.

### Living well advice

For advice and support on living well, choose [NHS Live Well](#) or the [Leeds Directory](#), which connects you to checked and vetted local services and tradespeople as well as local activities and events.

### Linking Leeds

For social isolation, emotional issues or wellbeing concerns, choose [Linking Leeds](#). You can self-refer to this free social prescribing service, which links people aged 16 and above with local community services to improve wellbeing.

### Mental health support

For information and support to help you take care of your mental and wellbeing, choose [Mindwell](#) for adults or [MindMate](#) for young people.

### Sexual health

For sexual health advice, Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) screening and treatment, HIV testing, and contraception, choose [Leeds Sexual Health Service](#). If you are under 18, please visit our [young people's sexual health advice during COVID-19](#) page.

### Walk-in centre or urgent treatment centre

For minor injury care from specialist nurses without an appointment, choose one of our [urgent treatment centres](#) or the walk-in centre.

## Accident and Emergency (A&E) and 999

For serious and life-threatening emergencies only, choose [your nearest A&E](#) or phone 999.

## GP Out of Hours Service

For fevers, infections and other problems that cannot wait for [\[practice name\]](#) to re-open, choose the GP Out of Hours Service by calling NHS 111.

## Dental Emergencies

If need urgent treatment, choose your regular dentist for advice. If you do not have a regular NHS dentist, contact NHS 111.

## Accessing care at [\[practice name\]](#)

The easiest way to access our services is to complete our [online consultation form \[hyperlink\]](#). The response is often much quicker too because you do not have to wait in the queue on the phone or wait by the phone for a call-back. If you do need to call us, please phone [\[insert phone number\]](#)

Sometimes the GP is not the most appropriate Healthcare Professional to deal with your ailment. Our patients often need more tailored support than a General Practitioner (GP) can provide. That's why [\[Practice name\]](#) has several, new, specialised roles, such as mental health practitioners, physiotherapists, and pharmacists [\[please update with services relevant to your practice and hyperlink to more info on your site if possible\]](#). You can even self-refer for some services without seeing your GP. This means you get straight to the specialist care you need whilst allowing our GP appointments to be used for those who need them.

Our practice team will ask you some questions so they can best assess your need and book you in with the most suitable clinician at an agreed opportunity. That could be the same day or over the coming days and weeks, dependent on what is clinically appropriate.

If you are not able to attend your appointment, please let us know in good time so that the slot can be used for someone else.

We care for many people and are working hard to give everyone the help and information they need. Sometimes that causes others to wait for our services or when reaching us on the phone. We really appreciate your patience and understanding.

## How you can help

### 1. Look after yourself and each other

There are many [ways to stay well](#) this winter. This includes staying warm, eating well, and checking up on vulnerable neighbours. Many minor illnesses and injuries such as a sore throat, coughs, colds and small cuts can be treated in your own home with a well-stocked medicine cabinet and plenty of rest.

### 2. Save time by booking your appointment online

Use our [online consultation form \[hyperlink\]](#) to request advice or treatment. You will receive a response as soon as our practice team has assessed how to provide your care by the most appropriate person, usually within two working days. This might be with a GP or with a specialist professional more suited to your needs.

### 3. Have jabs and get tested

It's not too late to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Please have your second dose as two doses are needed for full protection, get a booster and flu jab when offered. If you have symptoms, [get a COVID-19 test](#) and don't visit a healthcare setting (GP practices, pharmacies, accident, and emergency).

### 4. Continue to be kind to our staff and each other

This includes helping us by socially distancing where possible and wearing a face mask in healthcare settings

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# More resources

## **Community pharmacy messaging guide**

Information included in this guide assists you with key messages and resources to help understand and support local conversations.

<http://www.cpsy.org/doc/2962.pdf>

## **Locally developed patient materials**

Leeds CCG has developed a range of resources and messages to support you to share key messages and changes.

<https://www.leedscg.nhs.uk/about/covid-19-primary-care/communication-resources/>

## **Nationally developed resources**

Downloadable materials are available to help promote and help patients understand more about roles in the general practice multidisciplinary team.

<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/98-nhs-general-practice-multidisciplinary-team->

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# MJOG text

Dear patient, [practice name] is here for you. Please help us to help you this winter by choosing the right service for your needs. We now have specialist professionals who can offer you direct support without seeing a GP. Find out more and save time by booking online at [web address].

Dear patient, [practice name] looks after lots of people in our area and we are particularly busy right now. There may be other services or healthcare professionals working in practice you can see to access the support you need without seeing a GP. Find out more by visiting the practice website about services and support available to you. [web address].

Hello, this is a message from [practice name]. To help you get the right care and support from the right health professional, please let us know your symptoms when booking an appointment online or with our receptionists. Thank you.

Don't forget to update the text highlighted in yellow with your own details.

Dear patient, this winter we can all take simple steps to look after ourselves and others. This includes staying warm, eating well and checking on vulnerable neighbours. By looking after yourself and those around you, you really will be helping your NHS. Take care, from all at [practice name].

Dear patient, our health and care services are seeing unprecedented increases in the number of people needing help. We are working hard to help people get the information and support they need. Please help us to help you this winter by choosing the right service for your needs. Find out more at [web address]. Take care, from all at [practice name].

More information and NHS guidance on sending emails and text messages to your patients is available at: [Email and text message communications – NHSX](#)

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# Phone line message

Hello, thank you for calling [\[practice name\]](#). We care for lots of people and are working hard to give everyone the help and information they need. Sometimes that causes others to wait. We appreciate your patience and understanding.

If you are calling due to a life-threatening condition, please hang up now and dial 999. For very urgent medical problems, seek NHS advice online at [111.nhs.uk](http://111.nhs.uk) or telephone 111. Or visit your local community pharmacy for clinical advice on minor health concerns. Otherwise, please listen to the following options and note that calls are recorded.

Sometimes seeing a GP isn't the most appropriate solution and we want to offer our patients more tailored support. That's why [\[practice name\]](#) has several, new, specialised roles, such as mental health practitioners, physiotherapists, pharmacists, and more [\[please ensure accurate reflection of services you provide\]](#). Often you don't need to see a GP or wait to be referred to these health professionals. Choosing the right service for your needs will help you get the best advice, most quickly, and reduces pressure on services.

If you are able to, please visit [\[web address\]](#) to find a range of information and support available to you. The easiest way to access and book our services is to complete a confidential online form to request advice or treatment. You will receive a response as soon as our practice team has assessed how to best provide your care by the most appropriate person, usually within two working days.

If you need to speak with us, please hold the line and we will be with you as soon as we can. Our reception staff will ask you some questions so they can determine how best to meet your needs. This might be signposting you to alternative support or booking an appointment with a Doctor or other specialist health professional. Thank you.

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