



Skene Medical Group

CHANGE TO APPOINTMENT BOOKING

We would like to inform you of a change to our way of working. From 18.00 on 17/06/21 the **eConsult system was turned off** and is no longer available. Instead from Monday 21st June, patients can book telephone consultations with specific doctors and, where an examination is required, a face to face appointment.

Some of you may be disappointed that eConsult will no longer be available. Others will be relieved. We are grateful to those who have endured its faults and who have used it appropriately. However, the overwhelming patient feedback has been negative, and the unfiltered access to it has created an unmanageable workload, in part due to its disproportionate use by some patients.

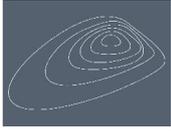
Face to face appointments will be staggered to allow 2 metre social distancing in our waiting room. The introduction of these appointments will inevitably lead to a delay in routine / non-urgent contact with us compared to the current way of working. At present, consultations have generally been started on the same day, or the day after submission of an eConsult.

A "duty" team of doctors and a nurse practitioner will be available each day to deal with urgent problems. We ask the reception staff to find out some basic details about your problem/symptoms. This is crucial in order to allow appropriate triage and to help us see the most serious/urgent cases immediately.

We would request that you recognise this and book appointments appropriately, using face to face appointments only when an examination is likely to be necessary. During these appointments we will only have time to deal with 1 problem per appointment. As we have discovered during the pandemic, a significant proportion of problems may be dealt with very effectively by either telephone or video consultation.

We would respectfully ask for your patience and understanding during this time of change. The NHS as a whole is under severe and ever increasing strain with demand outstripping resource in a way than none of us have experienced in our careers. A number of secondary care services are not back up and running yet and others have huge backlogs to manage. These factors further increase the workload and strain on general practice as inevitably, these patients require ongoing management, often for worsening symptoms.

We, as a practice, have been open, busy and working hard throughout the pandemic seeing patients face to face when the clinical situation has demanded. The vast majority of patients have been very supportive during this time however a small number have been rude and abusive to clinicians and administrative staff. This is both unacceptable and hugely demoralising for a team who are trying very hard to operate in challenging circumstances



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Fortunately the efforts of the vast majority have helped avoid the potential threat of a completely overwhelmed NHS during the pandemic but while vaccination numbers rise, and Covid cases fall we now face a different challenge. There is a perception that as lockdown restrictions reduce, things at the practice will rapidly return to normal. Social distancing alone provides a huge hurdle, and we also have a backlog of work that we have to manage alongside the new acute activity.

This will take several months to unfold and in the interim we would wish to reassure patients that we are trying hard to use our available resources as efficiently as possible for everyone's benefit.