

# PARK LANE SURGERY

8 Park Lane, Broxbourne, Herts, EN10 7NQ

Tel: 01992 465555

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Practice Manager: Mrs Helen Conaghan

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Re: **Capacity at Park Lane Surgery**

10 June 2022

Dear Patient

We understand that there are often long waiting times on the telephones to make an appointment. This is due to the high call volume which we are trying our best to get through as quickly as possible. There are times when we will not have an appointment to offer you, this is not the service we strive to offer, but we, like many other Practices in the UK, are struggling to meet the current level of demand for our services. We will continue to do our best each day to deliver as many appointments as it is safe to do so. **Ultimately, we do not have unlimited resources and are currently working to maximum capacity.**

We have changed the telephone queueing system and have removed some of the telephone options to enable the reception staff to answer calls as quickly as possible.

Sadly, there has been a huge increase in verbal abuse to staff, both over the telephones, in person and on social media. The staff that work at the surgery do so to help patients and we ask patients to treat staff with courtesy and respect. The surgery has a zero-tolerance policy and patients that verbally abuse staff may be de-registered from the practice list.

**Our current policy for booking appointments is:**

By phoning the surgery – Tel 01992 465 555 - Same day appointments are released at 08:00 & 11:30.

By submitting a e-Consult - When we have reached capacity, the e-Consult service will be turned off for that day.

We are currently unable to book appointments if you come into the surgery, due to infection control restrictions; to protect our vulnerable patients and to create equality for patients that are unable to come into the surgery; however, this is under frequent review.

Many patients also have the NHS App on their mobile phone and find this incredibly useful. Not only will it provide your widely needed COVID pass (if applicable), it can also assist in finding advice, ordering repeat prescriptions and seeing your test results. The App is free to download. In addition, there is also information on our website – <https://www.parklanesurgerybroxbourne.nhs.uk>

**Accessing Health Services if the Surgery is Closed or Fully Booked**

Unfortunately, once our appointments are fully booked, we are unable to create more. We have increased our appointments as much as we are able within a safe level and if we cannot offer an appointment at a time you want, we will try to provide an alternative or signpost you to other services who can help.

Please note: Park Lane is not an emergency service, but we work alongside emergency services to try to meet the needs of our patients. You should use the NHS 111 service if you urgently need medical help/advice, but it is not a life-threatening situation. The call handler will assess your need and direct you to the most appropriate service.

You can find more information about NHS 111 on their website. <https://111.nhs.uk/>

Although we acknowledge there is still an unmet need, we are offering as many appointments as we physically can.

The European Union of General Practitioners and British Medical Association (BMA) have recommended a safe level of patient contacts per day for a GP to deliver safe care, at not more than 25 contacts per day. At Your Service, published by the Policy Exchange and forwarded by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, states that 28 patient contacts

per day is safe. Our GPs frequently have in excess of the recommended patient contacts per day, but unfortunately it is still not enough to meet demand. This is a National-level problem that cannot be resolved at individual Practice-level.

The reality is that there are simply not enough Doctors, Nurses, other Professionals or resources in General Practice to meet demand. This puts immense pressure on all staff who are working in General Practice. Despite this, we have been at the forefront of the NHS's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, delivering thousands of vaccines whilst maintaining non-COVID care for patients throughout.

Unfortunately, the increase in abuse, accusations and general negative attitude towards staff who remain working extremely hard in General Practice is not a good advertisement for more to join the profession, further compounding the problem. In February 2020, in a bid to reverse the DECLINE in GP workforce numbers, the Government announced a drive to recruit an additional 6,000 GPs by 2024, an aim which will not be achieved. Thus, GP practices across the country are still experiencing significant and growing strain, with rising demand, declining GP numbers and struggles to recruit and retain staff.

**Additional challenges:**

Some patients generally have a lower tolerance for requesting help, with a large number of appointments requested for minor ailments that are usually self-limiting, such as sore throats, coughs, and colds. These conditions would previously have been managed at home without GP input and would be better dealt with by your local Pharmacist.

The scope for more complex disease management has increased, and a large portion of the maintenance care of these conditions, such as Diabetes, has moved from Secondary to Primary Care.

GPs can make referrals into consultant-led outpatient services, however the pressure in hospitals means there is no extra capacity in secondary care, and those referrals are rejected or are on long waiting lists. The care for these patients does not disappear. Instead, these patients need to be cared for by GPs while they wait for hospital treatment to go ahead, adding to the backlog in primary care.

The BMA have addressed the mounting pressure on general practice in England with the Support Your Surgery campaign. To see how you can help, visit: <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/covid-19/gp-practices/support-your-surgery>

We have a Patient Participant Group (PPG) who are patients of the surgery that give ideas on how to make surgery improvements. We meet quarterly via Zoom. If you would like to join the PPG, please email: [enhertscg.parklanesurgeryppg@nhs.net](mailto:enhertscg.parklanesurgeryppg@nhs.net)

We wish we are able to tell you that we will take the necessary action to rectify this situation, but in reality, we can only guarantee that the staff and doctors at the Practice will continue to work as hard as they can to deliver the best service, they are able to provide within the limitation of the resources they have at their disposal. We appreciate that this must feel frustrating, and we share this frustration, as we really want to help you when you need us most. All our patients are equally important, but as previously stated the resources we have available to us does not meet the demand; therefore, we have written this letter advising how we can best support our patients given the incredible level of demand we are receiving from our 11,000 patients.

Kind regards,

*Helen Conaghan*

**Practice Manager**

**On behalf of the Partners and staff at Park Lane Surgery**