THE GLEN MEDICAL GROUP

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A message to our patients regarding GP service changes from 1st April 2026

Dear Patient,

We are writing to inform you about upcoming national changes to the GP contract, which will affect how GP practices across England manage appointments and hospital referrals from April 2026. These changes have been introduced at a national level and will apply to all GP practices.

As your GP practice, we feel it is important to communicate openly about how these changes may influence the services we are able to provide, and to share some of the additional challenges they may present.

General practice has been under increasing pressure for a number of years. Many services that were previously delivered in hospitals are now being provided in primary care, often without the additional resources required to support this shift. At the same time, demand for appointments continues to grow, particularly as people live longer and require ongoing care for multiple and complex health conditions.

We are committed to expanding our team to help manage this increasing workload and the changes outlined below. However, without a corresponding increase in funding, this is becoming increasingly difficult.

Changes to Appointments

One of the key changes within the new contract is a requirement for practices to triage all patient requests before booking appointments. We have already been using this approach, as it helps us manage our appointment capacity as safely and effectively as possible.

You may be aware that since 1 October 2025, our eConsult service has been available for routine queries until closing each evening. While this has improved accessibility in some ways, it has also had a significant impact on clinical capacity. In particular, it has required GP time to be redirected from urgent clinical care to reviewing and managing incoming requests. We estimate that this has reduced available GP time by approximately 21 hours per week (approximately equivalent to 70 GP appointments per week).

With the introduction of the new contract requirements from 1 April 2026, it is likely that additional GP time will need to be allocated to triage processes. As a result, this may further reduce the number of routine GP appointments we are able to offer.

Due to the earlier changes introduced in October 2025, we have had to introduce waiting lists for non-urgent concerns. This means that patients with routine issues may experience longer waiting times. Please be assured that patients with urgent medical needs will continue to be prioritised. However, waiting times for non-urgent appointments may increase further.

Changes to Hospital Referrals

There are also changes to the way patients are referred to hospital specialists. Under the new arrangements, GPs are expected to make greater use of a system called Advice and Guidance, where a GP seeks input from a hospital consultant before making a referral.

This may mean that:

- Referrals could take longer to arrange
- Consultants may recommend treatment through your GP rather than proceeding with a hospital referral
- Additional tests or information may be required before a referral is made

These processes also require additional GP time, which may further impact appointment availability and increase waiting times to see a GP.

Our Commitment to You

We would like to reassure you that we remain fully committed to providing safe, high-quality care for all our patients. However, these changes have been introduced nationally and were neither agreed locally nor nationally by GP practices. The professional body representing GPs, the British Medical Association, has not agreed to the new contract and remains in dispute with the Government, and indeed 98.9% of GPs rejected the new contract changes on 26th of March.

We do have concerns about the potential impact of these changes on patient access and safety. While we will always aim to meet patient needs during our normal opening hours, there may be occasions where, in order to maintain safe care, patients are directed to other NHS services such as NHS 111 or local urgent care providers.

If You Have Concerns About These Changes

The GP contract is determined nationally by the Government. If you would like to raise any concerns about how these changes may affect access to GP services in your community, you may wish to contact your local Member of Parliament.

Kate Osborne MP – Jarrow and Gateshead East

kate.osborne.mp@parliament.uk

Emma Lewell MP – South Sheilds

emma.lewell.mp@parliament.uk

You can also find your MP using your postcode at:

https://members.parliament.uk/members/commons

Thank you for your understanding and continued support.

Yours sincerely,

The GP Partners

Dr Akporhewe

Dr Hutchinson

Dr Ellenger