

# Bakewell Medical Centre

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We frequently have complaints about access to appointments. To emphasise how seriously we take this matter, this letter is addressed to all our patients to ensure the rumours and criticisms currently circulating are dealt with in the best way possible.

Whilst the vast majority of our patients are kind, understanding and polite, the appointment issues have resulted in our receptionists regularly being verbally abused, both on the telephone, and face-to-face.

The NHS and Bakewell Medical Centre have a ZERO TOLERANCE policy for any such behaviour; which we will implement as necessary. All of our calls are recorded and we listen back to any calls which our receptionists highlight as being inappropriate. The receptionists are also advised to terminate any calls when callers are being abusive to them.

The complaints, and the manner in which a minority of patients are so rude, has perplexed us. Our doctors are now more accessible than they have ever been. We would ask you to take a little time to read this letter please to understand both the system we have, and the reasons for the changes.

Many years ago we held open surgeries in the mornings and pre-booked surgeries in the afternoons. This received a mixed response from patients – some being happy and others not – this system meant that some patients waited in a queue to be seen for up to 2 hours or 2 weeks for a booked appointment.

As you are aware, the NHS is ever changing and it became compulsory for surgeries to book on the day appointments – this raised the issue of people phoning at 8am and being held in a queue to book an appointment.

Many patients became frustrated and many called back day after day without getting an appointment. We then introduced some appointments which could be booked in advance and some that could only be booked on the day, specifically for those with acute/urgent problems. This system remained in use until recently. Some patients complained that they were calling back day after day at 8am to get a suitable appointment.

It soon became evident that some patients who needed access to an appointment were not able to get one. As Doctors, we felt this was unsafe for our most vulnerable patients such as the frail and elderly or those with a mental health problem. These were the people who needed us the most but who may have ended up in A&E or admitted to hospital for weeks at a time.

At this time there was a huge increase in the demand for appointments – this more than doubled in 5 years – our Doctors started adding on extra appointments at the end of surgeries and this extra workload was becoming unsafe to manage with the on call (duty) Dr seeing anyone who deemed themselves as needing ‘urgent’ appointments up to an extra 10-20 patients per surgery.

In April 2014 we decided that patient (and Dr) safety needed to be at the forefront of our appointment system so when unrestricted appointments ran out for receptionists to book into, patients would have their names added to a telephone consulting list for the duty Dr (on call) to call back. The duty Dr has access to restricted appointments on the day and in the weeks ahead. It was soon realised that many ‘problems’ can be sorted out on the phone and do not need a face to face consultation This still means that the on call Dr can have 70 – 80 consultations in a day, but this work is safer than it was previously as ALL those wanting an appointment will speak to a Dr.

Patients can contact a duty doctor in the surgery Monday-Friday 8am – 6:30pm. If a duty Dr thinks that you need to be seen, an appointment will be arranged for you either as an emergency on that day or that week, if not urgent. There are still appointments which can be pre-booked.

In Bakewell we pride ourselves on our team working and although you may not be able to access the Dr of your choice at the time of your choice, a duty Dr can access your records and understand the nature of your consultation/problems.

As you will be aware the Government require Doctors to have more input into NHS locality meetings so all of our Doctors have to attend meetings outside of the practice at regular intervals, so your favoured Dr may be at a compulsory meeting on the day you wish to see /speak to them. We also pride ourselves on being a small, family centred and personal practice – we like continuity of care, as do you.

This year for the first time in many, many years there are far more GPs leaving the profession than joining it. It is predicted that this problem will worsen with many practices within North Derbyshire losing experienced, valued family Drs.

No matter what the Government say to us – we as GPs are fully aware of the crisis we are now facing within the NHS and at Bakewell Medical Centre we are continually striving to make things safer and better for ALL of our patients.

We sincerely hope that this letter at least goes some way to explaining why we have had to change our appointment system; the problem at our surgery is far from unique but we are incredibly proud of all the excellent things we do for our patients and the high standard and quality of care we provide. From our excellent front of house – our reception and dispensary team - to our back office management team. We are not perfect but always endeavour to do our very best in increasingly demanding times for the NHS. Our staff work here because they care about our patients and want to make a difference to people’s lives.

We would be very happy - supported by our Patient Participation Group (PPG) - to hold an open meeting one evening to discuss this further if there was an interest in this (if you would like to attend such a meeting perhaps phone or email [bakewell.adminsurgery@nhs.net](mailto:bakewell.adminsurgery@nhs.net) to give us your name and preferred time e.g. daytime or early evening); better still we would invite you to join our PPG which meets bi-monthly. Please contact the Practice for further details.

Yours sincerely

The Doctors, Bakewell Medical Centre