

## Care Gateway – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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### **My doctor has asked me to call the Care Gateway. Why?**

If your GP surgery has asked you to contact The Care Gateway it may be for a number of reasons.

The main reasons for you to contact the service are:

- Your doctor has decided you need a referral for treatment at another location under a specialist.
- Your doctor may have asked you to arrange a blood test, which needs to be conducted off site.
- Your doctor has suggested that you may qualify for travel assistance to your appointment.

### **What is the Care Gateway?**

The Care Gateway is an NHS funded service which processes all requests for further treatment for patients registered with a GP in Manchester.

When your GP surgery believes that you may benefit from a referral for treatment at another location or a higher level of care, they will complete a referral and send it through to The Care Gateway. As part of this process your referral may be triaged by a clinician with a special interest in your condition. This clinician will then determine where you will receive the best level of care for your treatment at the most appropriate provider.

### **Why do I have to confirm my identity as the patient when I contact the service?**

The Data Protection Act mandates that all companies must take reasonable steps to ensure they have checked and confirmed the identity of the person calling before discussing any personal information with the caller.

The reason you will be asked to verify your details is to ensure that no-one other than you or your recorded nominated representatives has access to any information about your health and medical appointments. As a result of this The Care Gateway will not be able to speak to a representative without your permission unless written consent is included within your GP's referral.

### **How can I contact The Care Gateway?**

Telephone: 0161 947 0770 or 0800 092 4020

The service is open between 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

### **What are the best times to call the service?**

Calls are normally answered in less than a minute. The service is usually busiest on Mondays so you are likely to wait a little longer if calling then.

### **Why do I have to call to book an appointment? Why can't I just be sent one?**

Since the publication of the NHS Choice Framework, NHS organisations are required to encourage patients to be more involved in decisions about their own care and treatment. Under this framework, for particular types of appointments, you are now legally entitled to have a choice discussion about when and where your care takes place.

However, if you don't call us after 14 days, we will book an appointment for you and send you confirmation by post.

### **Why wasn't I offered a choice of hospitals?**

Whilst under the NHS Choice framework you are legally entitled to a choice discussion, there are exceptions to this.

You will not be able to choose if:

- A service is provided by local authorities, as your choice will depend or may be restricted to what is in place locally.
- Services for suspected cancer.
- Services may also be restricted to a particular level of care.

If you feel that you should have been offered a choice but were not offered one please refer to *"How can I provide feedback on my experience with your service?"*

### **My referral had to be deferred. What does that mean?**

If your referral has been deferred to a provider, this means at the point of your call, the provider had no appointment slots showing on the shared booking system.

Deferring to the provider means that the referral was sent electronically to the hospital's waiting list.

Once an appointment becomes available, the administrative staff at the hospital will either telephone you to book an appointment or will send you an appointment through the post.

### **How do I book transport to my hospital appointment?**

This service is only available where patients require transportation on clinical grounds. If you feel that you are eligible for NHS funded transportation, you can contact The Care Gateway where you will be assessed against the national eligibility criteria. You will be asked a number of questions, some of which may be personal in nature, and be given an immediate decision regarding your eligibility.

Please note the Patient Transport Service is only available for clinical, and not financial, reasons.

### **Do you have interpreters?**

If English is not your first language and you would be more comfortable discussing your referral in a different language, we can immediately arrange to include an interpreter in the conversation.

### **What if I need to change or cancel my appointment?**

Your appointment confirmation letter includes your Unique Booking Reference Number (UBRN) and password. Using these, you can go online at [www.nhs.uk/referrals](http://www.nhs.uk/referrals).

Alternatively, you can call the national telephone appointment line on 0345 088 888 or The Care Gateway on 0161 947 0770/0800 092 4020. If you don't have your UBRN and password yet, please contact The Care Gateway and we will happily rearrange your appointment for you.

### **I haven't heard from the hospital about my appointment yet. What should I do?**

If you haven't heard from the hospital within the below guidelines, please contact The Care Gateway.

### **Routine priority appointments**

Contact within 12 weeks

### **Urgent priority appointments**

Contact within eight weeks

### **Suspected Cancer referrals**

Contact within 10 days

### **I would like to look for cancellations. How can I do this?**

The national booking system is a live service and therefore constantly updating.

Once you have your UBRN and password you can access the booking system yourself to check for cancellations daily. You can access the online booking system at [nhs.uk/referrals](https://nhs.uk/referrals)

### **How do I know when you have received my referral?**

Once we have received your referral from your GP, we will write to you asking you to contact us to discuss your appointment

### **I have lost my letter and don't have my reference number to book my appointment.**

The Care Gateway can locate your referral without your referral reference number

### **What information do I need to book a blood test?**

Blood tests are booked when your GP requests them for you and provides you with the relevant form. You will need this form to hand when you call and when you attend your appointment.

You will need your NHS number and to know whether you require a fasting or non-fasting blood test.

### **What are your opening hours?**

Our opening hours are Monday – Friday from 08:00 to 18:00 (excluding bank holidays).

### **How long can I be expected to wait until my appointment date?**

All NHS Providers have to adhere to nationally agreed referral to treatment guidance. For all routine appointments you should be seen and your treatment should begin within 18 weeks of being referred to the service.

### **However, your right to an 18-week waiting time does not apply if:**

- You choose to wait longer due to other commitments.
- Delaying the start of your treatment is in your best clinical interests – for example, where stopping smoking or losing weight is likely to improve the outcome of the treatment.
- It is clinically appropriate for your condition to be actively monitored in secondary care without clinical intervention or diagnostic procedures at that stage.
- You fail to attend an appointment that you had chosen from a set of reasonable options.
- The treatment you were referred for is no longer necessary.

For suspected cancer referrals, you should expect to be seen within two weeks of your referral being received by the hospital.

### **I have multiple referrals for different specialties. Can I process them all at once?**

If you have multiple appointments these can all be booked during one contact with the service. Please make the agent aware when you call.

### **The hospital is saying that they haven't received the referral from you. What should I do?**

Please call us and we'll be able to help. Every referral that is processed through The Care Gateway is electronically tracked from the moment the GP initiates the referral.

### **When will I receive my confirmation letter?**

All letters from the service are sent out immediately after your discussion with the agent concludes. Letters are sent to the address provided by your GP within your referral by Royal Mail business class unless the appointment is within a week in which case they will be delivered by Royal Mail first class. Alternatively you can also request that your confirmation letter is sent by email.

### **My GP does not have my up to date details. Can you change them?**

You will need to update your details with your GP.

### **What does The Care Gateway do with my data?**

Your full patient record (including the information shared with The Care Gateway) will only be seen by healthcare professionals who are directly involved in your care or treatment.

There are strict controls on how anyone else can access patient information. The purpose must be approved before anyone can use data and they are only given access to the amount of data necessary.

Anonymised data is used by NHS providers and commissioners to monitor trends and activity.

### **How does The Care Gateway keep my data safe?**

It is essential that any NHS organisation keeps all patient data safe and secure. This is to protect your confidential information. The Care Gateway does this in four main ways:

1. By removing any identifying information (for example name/contact details) from any documents.
2. By using an independent review process to make sure that the reason for using your data is essential to your care.
3. Ensuring the service is strict about when and how data is transferred.
4. Implementing a robust high level IT security system.

### **Can I opt out of my data being used for any other reason than to arrange my care?**

Yes you can. This is called a Type 1 Opt out.

For more information please visit [www.nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters/](http://www.nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters/).

### **How long does The Care Gateway keep my information and records for?**

The Care Gateway follows the national guidance and keeps all records for a minimum of 20 years after they are no longer required in line with other national systems.

The other systems the Care Gateway uses and their GDPR information is available below:

- [eRS \(Electronic Referral Systems\)](#)
- [NWAS \(Cleric System\)](#)

### **How can I provide feedback on my experience with your service?**

We would appreciate any feedback on our service and you can do this by taking part in our automated patient satisfaction survey at the end of your call or by using the contact details below.

### **Compliments, Concerns and Complaints**

Post: Manchester Feedback and Complaints Service  
Manchester City Council  
PO Box 352  
Manchester Town Hall  
Manchester  
M60 2LA

Phone: 0161 953 8388

Email: [nhscomplaints@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:nhscomplaints@manchester.gov.uk)

You can also contact us directly:

Email: [tcg.complaints@nhs.net](mailto:tcg.complaints@nhs.net) for complaints  
[corporatesupport@nhs.net](mailto:corporatesupport@nhs.net) for any other feedback

Phone: 0161 947 0770 or 0800 092 4020