

Care Gateway – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

My doctor has asked me to call the Care Gateway why would that be?

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 may 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 may have suggested that you may qualify for travel assistance by the ambulance team to your appointments.

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 a patient may benefit from a referral for treatment at another location or a higher level of care. They will complete a referral through to the Care Gateway team. As part of this process your referral will 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, based on both the information shared by your doctor within your referral letter and their own knowledge of both your condition and local services, and may offer your GP options on treating you within your GP Practice.

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

The data protection act advises 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 other parties other than yourself or your recorded nominated representatives have access to any information around your health, and medical appointments. As a result of this the Care Gateway will not be able to speak to a representative without written consent being included within your GPs referral to the service.

How can I contact the Care Gateway?

There are a number of ways in which you can contact an agent at the Care Gateway.

Telephone: 0161 947 0770
0800 092 4020

The service is open between 8:00am and 6:00pm (Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays).



What are the best times to call the service?

Due to the large number of patients the service supports, on occasion the call centre may experience longer waits than usual due to high demand.

We will answer each call as quickly as we can. The service is usually busiest on Monday's so if you can call on an alternative day your wait will be significantly less.

Why do I have to call to book an appointment, why can't I just be sent one out?

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

As we are a patient contact centre we have to ensure that you are provided with an opportunity to make an informed choice around your care and as a result we will only secure an appointment for you after you have opted out of your 14 day engagement wait as indicated in the letters.

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 guidance.

You will not be able to choose if:

- A service has been commissioned or provided by local authorities, as your choice will depend or may be restricted to what has been put 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 or your referral, the provider had no appointment slots showing on the shared booking system for the agent to book you into.

Deferring to the provide means that the referral was sent electronically over to your chosen hospitals waiting list.

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

I need to book transport to my hospital appointment – how do I do that?

Transport for patients is only available where patients require the transportation on clinical grounds. If you feel that you are eligible for NHS funded transportation, you can contact the Care Gateway where you will go through the national eligibility criteria with a member of the team. You will be ask a number of questions some of which may be personal in nature and may require a long thorough answer, because of this it is better for the individual who requires transportation to contact the service directly.

Unfortunately if you are classed as not eligible for transport this decision cannot be overruled by any of the staff within the booking team.

I was told I had to pass an eligibility criterion to book an ambulance – what is this?

The Patient Transport Service is only available for those patients whose medical condition means they cannot get to their appointment any other way.

The service is provided to overcome barriers to patients with certain medical needs. To ensure that the resource stays available for those who need it assessment criteria is applied to all requests. The questions we ask will help to assess the type of transportation required by the patient.

The Patient Transport Service is a vital resource for those who need it and is not an alternative to a taxi or as a means to avoid the inconvenience or cost of parking; therefore it is only available for clinical reasons and not on financial grounds.

English isn't my first language – what can you do to support me?

If you come through to our service we will facilitate a conversation through an interpreter for you.

This will then be a three-way conversation as they interpret for you so that you can still be involved with the call and you are still able to choose where you wish to go for your treatment.

My appointment is no longer appropriate – what options do I have?

If you wish to rearrange your appointment and have received your confirmation letter through the post and have your UBRN and Password, you can either go online at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/appointment-booking/Pages/about-the-referral-system.aspx> or you can call the national telephone appointment line on 0345 088 888 or alternatively you can contact the Care Gateway for a more localised support.

If you have yet to receive your confirmation letter – or have not received your new reference numbers please contact The Care Gateway team who will happily rearrange your appointment for you.

I haven't heard from the hospital about my appointment yet, what should I do?

Sometimes it may take a while before you hear from your chosen hospital with an appointment; this is mainly due to the high demand for appointments.

If you haven't heard from the hospital within the below guidelines, please contact the team who will be able to help. Please be aware the team will be unable to chase up any appointments that are still within the guide perimeters.

Routine appointment (majority of appointments)

Guideline between 10 to 12 weeks

Urgent appointment (only where clinically instructed by your doctor)

Guideline between four to eight weeks

HSC205 appointment (only where clinically instructed by your doctor)

Guideline between seven to 10 days

If you haven't heard from the hospital within these timeframes please contact the Care Gateway for them to investigate.

I would like to look for cancellations – how can I do this?

When a patient cancels their hospital appointment the appointment is released back into the national booking system. The national booking system is a live service, meaning it is constantly changing.

Once you have your UBRN and password you can access the booking system yourself to check for cancellations daily if you wish. You can access the online booking system here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/appointment-booking/Pages/about-the-referral-system.aspx>.

Please follow the instructions provide on screen carefully.

How do I know when you have received my referral?

Simply put, we will tell you. Once your referral has been received into our service you will receive an alert. This will either come in the form of a text message to your mobile, or a letter to your home address. If you have not received either of these notifications, but you were expecting a referral for treatment, please contact your GP service as the first port of call.

Why does my GP use the Care Gateway?

Your GP uses the Care Gateway to ensure that you receive the best treatments available in a place of your choosing.

When your GP decides that you need treatment that is unavailable within your local surgery, your doctor will complete a referral form which will immediately alert the Care Gateway that you require assistance. The Care Gateway check that all the required information is available within your referral and a specialist is alerted to your referral for attention.

This specialist may advise your GP of treatments which they may not have tried or been aware of. They may direct your care to a local community service where you will likely be seen earlier than if you had been directed to secondary care (hospital). The specialist may also refer you to secondary care (hospital) for a different level of treatment.

The booking staff within the Care Gateway will then be able to offer you a choice of NHS hospitals, satellite services, and independent hospitals. You can stipulate where you would prefer your care, be in by the closest location, earliest appointment or maybe a clinic which runs on a particular day of the week.

The team in most case will be able to offer you a choice of dates and times, and advise you on any information you may need to know and help answering any questions you may have in relation to your referral.

Your GP wants to ensure that you receive the right care and the right treatment for your conditions and this is why your GP uses the Care Gateway.

I have lost my letter and don't have my ICG Number – what do I need to do?

Don't panic. It is not an issue. You will be asked a few security questions so that we can identify you on our systems in order to arrange your appointment. But we are able to book your appointment without you having your ICG reference number for your appointment.

Why can I book an appointment with you to some hospitals and not others?

Not all hospitals provide all services and not all services are commissioned by your Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for you to attend. You will be offered all available services where a choice is available and a selection of appointments unfortunately we are unable to make arrangements for you to attend any hospital where no existing agreement is already in place.

Why do I need to call another number?

For most services our staff are able to book appointments on the national booking system. However for some services it is deemed more appropriate for the consultant to assess your referral prior to an appointment being booked. For services such as these, we will unfortunately have to request you to contact another number, in addition to our own.

I have trouble communicating over the phone – how can you support me?

You can use type talk if that is your preferred method of communication. All you need to do is by using Next Generation Text Relay Service using the number below:

1800 0161 947 0770 or Freephone number 1800 0800 092 4020

What information do I need to know to book my appointment?

In order for you to book your appointment it would be helpful for you to have your letter to hand and your reference ready.

It would be helpful if you could ensure you have your availability ready throughout the next 18 week period to make it easier for you to arrange your actual appointment date whilst on the call.

Be aware that due to the confidential nature of your call you will be asked a number of data protection questions in order to confirm your identity prior to any discussion around your referral or appointment begins, and the team will be unable to discuss your referral with anyone else unless there is a clear note in your referral, or you pass the data protection questions yourself, and provide verbal permission to discuss your care with the caller of your choice.

What information do I need to book a blood test?

Blood tests can only be booked when your GP or doctor has requested you to attend one and has provided you with the relevant forms.

It is helpful if you have this form to hand when you call.

Information required from you is your NHS number and whether you require a fasting or non-fasting blood test. Be aware that due to the nature of your call you may need to provide details to help confirm your identity and therefore you may wish to call from somewhere private.

What are your opening hours?

Our opening hours are Monday – Friday between the hours of 8:00am to 6:00pm (excluding bank holidays).

How long can I be expected to wait till my appointment date?

All NHS Provider 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, yourself 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 appointments that you had chosen from a set of reasonable options.
- The treatment is no longer necessary which you were referred for.

The only other national agreed referral to treatment guidance all NHS providers must adhere to is in relation to referrals deemed as HSC205 referrals. For these referrals the maximum waiting time for suspected cancer is two weeks from the day your appointment is booked through the NHS e-Referral Service, or when the hospital or service receives your referral letter.

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

We would appreciate any feedback on our service and you can do this either verbally over the phone or by contacting the local Patient Services Team on

Phone: 0161 212 6270

Email: patientservices.gmcsu@nhs.net

We also do a survey at six monthly intervals.

I have multiple referrals for different specialities can I process them all at once?

If you have multiple appointments these can all be booked within one contact with the service. If it is likely that you will either have another referral in the system or where you are already aware of another referral please tell the agent so they can look for any pending or additional referrals to the reference you are able to provide.

The hospital is saying that they haven't received the referral from you what should I do?

Every referral that is processed through the Care Gateway is electronically tracked from the moment the GP initiates the referral to the moment the referral is removed from our system.

When will I receive my confirmation letter?

All letters from the centre are sent out immediately after your discussion with the agent concludes.

The letters are all sent to the address as provided by your GP within your referral by Royal Mail business class, unless the appointment is within a week, where they will be delivered by Royal Mail first class.

Alternatively you can also request that your confirmation letter is emailed out to you instead of being posted.

My details are wrong with my GP surgery – can I change them with you?

Unfortunately if your details are incorrect on your referral this can cause a large number of problems, as a result of that your referral would have to be returned back to your doctor, and they will be asked to re-submit a referral into the system with you correct address.

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 minimum amount of data necessary.

The only organisations that the Care Gateway's anonymised patient data can be shared with are:

- **NHS providers and commissioners:** use data to monitor trends and patterns in hospital activity, to assess how care is provided, and to support local service planning.

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 the NHS Digital advice site [here](#).

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 \(Cleric System\)](#)

If I have an issue with the Care Gateway how do I complain?

Post: Patient Services
Greater Manchester Shared Services (hosted by NHS Oldham CCG)
Ellen House,
Waddington Street,
Oldham
OL9 6EE
Phone: 0161 212 6270
Email: patientservices.gmcsu@nhs.net