

# **PE2070/B: Stop same-day-only GP appointment systems**

## **Scottish Government submission, 15 April 2024**

Thank you for your letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> March regarding petition PE2070.

You have asked for information on how many Scottish GP practices are now operating a same-day only appointment system.

This information is not known to the Scottish Government. GP practices, as independent practitioners, are responsible for their own appointment arrangements. The GMS regulations do however require that services are “delivered in the manner determined by the practice in discussion with the patient”.

However, the recently established Primary Care Data and Intelligence Programme is providing oversight and strategic direction to the development of evidence and data for Primary Care. Data in relation to General Practice activity is now routinely published by Public Health Scotland and we continue to work with General Practice, Territorial and National Health Boards to enhance the quality and use of this data to support service improvement.

You have asked what the Scottish Government’s view is of the 2021/22 Health and Care Experience Survey results.

It is important to note that the 2021/22 survey covered the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, where there were infection prevention control measures in place. Therefore, there are a number of important changes to how services were provided at that time that should be taken into account when making comparisons with previous surveys:

- Guidance was issued to GP practices not to treat patients face to face unless clinically necessary.
- Social distancing was introduced in practices.
- While there were more remote consultations, electronic booking systems were used less as existing systems could not screen for COVID-19 symptoms.

These measures have all now been stood down. The Scottish Government welcomes the opportunity to consider the HACE 2023/24 results when they are available later this year.

You have asked whether the Scottish Government has considered taking a similar approach on patient appointments to NHS England, and, if there is flexibility to make a similar change within the existing General Medical Services (GMS) contract.

The Scottish Government is not looking to take a similar approach to NHS England. I should note that we could not do so without amending the GMS regulations. Every GP practice’s patients have different needs and the best mix of appointment types to

the right member of the practice team is something that requires the judgement of professionals who have a long term responsibility for their patients.

Our approach has been to work with GP practices to improve access. The First Minister, in his previous role as Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, announced the formation of the General Practice Access Group in November 2022. The group sought to understand the challenges and issues affecting access to General Practice and established [high level core principles](#) to support and enhance patients' experience of accessing 'The Right Care, Right Time, Right Place'.

The report highlights four main principles:

- 1. Access to General Practice is inclusive and equitable for people, based on the principles of Realistic Medicine and Value Based Health & Care. Care will be person-centred and based on what matters to the individual.*
- 2. People should have a reasonable choice about how they access services.*
- 3. Services should be approachable, sensitive, compassionate, and considerate to need.*
- 4. General Practices should help people to get the right care from the best and most appropriate person or team to care for them (Right Care, Right Place, Right Time).*

The Scottish Government also supports a number of ongoing access programmes, including (but not limited to):

- Transition from Healthcare Improvement Scotland's Primary Care Access Programme (PCAP) which was developed and rolled out in August 2022, to the [Primary Care Phased Investment Programme](#) (PCPIP) which is scheduled to run from April 2024 to December 2025. This work aims to support the support Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP) and Primary Care Services to explore challenges and identify areas of change or improvement.
- Sharing of case studies, good practice examples and other resources developed with practices who have participated in PCAP or associated relevant access improvement programmes.
- In anticipation of the switch from analogue to cloud-based telephony systems in 2025, Practice Telephony Guidance is being developed by Scottish Government in 2024 to support general practices to improve their communication systems, while at the same time ensuring they are fit for the future and meet the needs of the public.
- Continued rollout by Scottish Government and Health & Social Care Partnerships of the Primary Care Improvement Programme to recruit and embed the Multidisciplinary Team in primary care.

**Primary Care Directorate**