

# Extended access to general practice

**Signposting your patients to evening and weekend appointments**

**Guidance for practice managers and receptionists**



# Extended access to general practice

## What do we mean by extended access?

Your local CCG is now commissioning an extended access service for your area which gives patients at your practice access to evening and weekend appointments, 365 days per year either through your practice, a practice nearby or a local GP access hub, depending on how the service has been commissioned in your local area. Extended access allows patients to see a GP, nurse or other healthcare professional at a time that is more convenient for them, including on each weekday evening between 6.30pm and 8.00pm and on Saturdays and Sundays.

## Why is the CCG commissioning an extended access service?

Extended access services are intended to provide patients with more timely and convenient access to a general practice appointment and help to ease general practice workload during core hours. Evening and weekend appointments may be especially helpful to those people who find it difficult to access appointments during general practice core hours, e.g. young people or those who are working.

## How do my patients access evening and weekend appointments?

Your local extended access provider/s should have been working with your practice to ensure that you have access via your clinical system to book your patients into evening and weekend appointments. It is important that your patients have the opportunity to fully utilise the appointments that are available to them. Your practice should therefore be offering patients the option to have an appointment in the evening or weekend through the extended access service at the same time as offering an appointment at your practice in core hours, particularly if they are unable to attend, or your are unable to offer them, a convenient or timely appointment in core hours. Patients should not have to wait for an appointment.



# How can I let my patients know about extended access?

- Patients who are registered at your practice will need to know how to access evening and weekend appointments through the newly commissioned service, to ensure that they are able to benefit fully from more convenient access to an appointment time that suits them.
- Your patients are likely to look to you and the practice team to signpost them to the most appropriate and convenient appointment.
- This will include ensuring that details of the service are displayed in a prominent position in your surgery, on your website and share details through any social media channels e.g. if your practice has a Facebook site.
- NHS England has produced a series of posters which can be placed in your surgery. Visit the NHS England website at [www.england.nhs.uk/gp/gpfv/redesign/improving-access/communications-guide](http://www.england.nhs.uk/gp/gpfv/redesign/improving-access/communications-guide) to download posters and other resources which may help to advertise the service.



# How does extended access benefit my practice?



- Evening and weekend appointments offer your patients additional access to a general practice appointment at a time that is more convenient to them, and at the same time should help to ease your workload during core hours.
- In addition, extended access could help to support your practice during periods of increased demand, e.g. during the winter or at times when your practice is under increased pressure e.g. due to staff sickness or annual leave.

# Find out more

- If you would like to know more about how NHS England is supporting extended access to general practice, please visit [www.england.nhs.uk/gpaccess](http://www.england.nhs.uk/gpaccess)
- For any queries, please contact [england.gpaccess@nhs.net](mailto:england.gpaccess@nhs.net).