

Patient's Guide

What is DOCTORnow?

DOCTORnow is a private General Medical Practice. It is an independent organisation that has no official ties to the NHS. We are a growing team of healthcare professionals concentrating on patient centred care. We are subject to the rigorous scrutiny and licensing process of The Commission for Healthcare.

Where is DOCTORnow?

DOCTORnow is situated in Mulberry Court, Windsor End, Beaconsfield, Bucks, HP9 2JJ

What does DOCTORnow offer?

We promote accessibility to the Doctor and ensure continuity of care by allowing 24 hour a day access. We offer second opinions and are willing to refer to specialists for expert opinions, using only those specialists who we hold in high regard. We are keen to work in concert with NHS GP's and do our utmost to affirm good practice.

Services that we offer include –

General medicine

Review of history, initiation of investigations as appropriate, to make diagnosis and initiate treatments or referrals for all acute medical presentations. We are pleased to be able to offer a review or second opinion regarding an established diagnosis or offer alternatives and suggest routes of referral for illusive diagnosis. We are glad to offer routine care for minor though troublesome complaints. Health education is central to our modus operandi.

Long-term care and supervision of chronic diseases

Including asthma/atopic conditions, diabetes, ischaemic heart disease, thyroid disease, epilepsy. It would be rare for this group of patients not to be under the supervision of a consultant as well.

Paediatrics

Diagnosis and management of simple child hood illnesses, Developmental checks and reviews from post-natal discharge to the standard 6 week, 8 month, 18 month and 3 year checks.

Musculo-skeletal medicine

Sports injuries, repetitive strain injury, rheumatological conditions including the arthritides. We do not initiate treatment with DMARD's but will continue them when initiated by a specialist. Joint injections are offered as appropriate but can only take place in the hospitals.

Psychiatry

Diagnosis and management of mild to moderate depression (severe depressions are only managed in conjunction with specialist supervision); management of psychotic illness would only be undertaken in a shared care fashion where a consultant is involved. Should initial onset of a psychotic illness present at DOCTORnow a specialist referral will always be recommended. We do not undertake administration or supervision of depot anti-psychotic medication.

Gynaecological services

Including contraception and HRT advice, menstrual irregularities and preliminary investigation of infertility including counselling.

Obstetric services

We are able to offer on-site confirmation of pregnancy by urine test. We will undertake prenatal advice and appropriate blood tests to check rubella status and in early pregnancy will perform the standard battery of antenatal blood tests. More complete antenatal screening tests, such as amniocentesis, chorionic villus sampling and scanning will be arranged by referral to a specialist. On-going antenatal care will only be undertaken in support of a consultant-supervised package.

Termination of pregnancy

We do not undertake termination of pregnancy but will be involved in counselling and advice regarding the options. We will give information regarding specialist centres that provide termination services and make referrals as appropriate.

Vaccinations and immunisations

We are a registered MASTA Clinic and provide a comprehensive list of vaccinations administered by the Doctor or a qualified Nurse, appropriate to travel medicine along with standard childhood immunisations. We also undertake regular BCG clinics in surgery and in schools. Annual Flu campaigns also take place in the surgery, with corporate options available.

Alcohol and drug addiction

Counselling and advice ref: alcohol abuse and dependence. Referral to specialist services/clinics either for inpatient or community based withdrawal programmes. We will offer the base line medical assessment including blood work-up at initial presentation. All patients suffering addiction will be referred to specialist units. The Practice will not undertake methadone prescribing or be involved in methadone withdrawal packages. We will prescribe medications to assist drug withdrawal but only when recommended by a specialist.

Medicals and screening

We undertake well person checks as well as sports medicals (diving/racing driver). We also perform driving medicals including HGV/PSV and forklift truck driver medicals. We also undertake all insurance medicals. We do not perform aviation medicals. We do not perform exercise ECG's (stress tests). We can undertake routine cervical smears and are able to refer for mammography. We have a strong alliance with Health Screen First who offer abdominal aortic aneurysm screening as well as screening for carotid artery disease. They are also able to offer osteoporosis screening using CUBA technology, We are pleased to discuss referral for more elaborate screening such as total body scan provided that we have the opportunity to discuss the pro's and cons of such an approach.

Details of service

Appointments

A standard appointment is thirty minutes although we have a flexible approach and can offer 15, 30, 45 and 60-minute appointments as appropriate and on request in advance. All appointments are made via the administration office by telephoning 01494 410888. At the time of your enquiry for an appointment the receptionist will inform you or your agent of appointment availability.

We accept cancellation at no charge provided that this is notified more than an hour before the appointment time. Non-attendance in the absence of notification will incur a charge at the rate of £80 per half hour or pro-rata.

Home visits can be requested on the day or booked in advance. There is a separate fee scale for visits.

Appointment venues

The vast majority of our consulting is from our surgery in Beaconsfield.

Method of payment

Non-members will be invoiced at the time of service and payment will be expected either by cheque, credit card or cash at that time. Members will be invoiced at the time or subsequently as they choose. Payment will be expected within two weeks of the invoice date.

Patient Records

All patients' demographic details and clinical records are held on a secure data based powered by bespoke clinical software.

All your letters generated within DOCTORnow will automatically be copied to you as well as the Specialist and all post received regarding the your case will be scanned to the computer record and the original sent to you with a copy to any other medic involved with your care as appropriate and with permission.

Access to records: a copy of the computer record can be requested at any stage. There will be no charge to our members for this service but we reserve the right to make a charge based on the time input from one of our staff to facilitate this service to non-members.

We are registered for purposes of Data Protection and The practice computer system complies with the 1998 Data Protection Act.

Correspondence with the NHS

DOCTORnow will always seek permission to keep your NHS GP informed. In rare circumstances this may not be appropriate but exceptions will be judged on a case-by-case basis. Should a patient decide that

they do not wish their NHS GP to be appraised of a clinical situation DOCTORnow reserves the right to withdraw service on ethical and safety grounds.

Emergency visits will be documented manually so that the NHS practitioner will receive a faxed copy of the record before midday on the next working day.

Investigations and tests

We are able to offer or arrange all tests. All tests requested by DOCTORnow will be done privately and so will incur a charge. The costs of individual test are available on request. Some of these costs may be born by private health cover but this cannot be assumed and should be checked in advance.

While NHS patients are entitled to have their tests on the NHS there is no mechanism to facilitate requests that arise in the private sector.

Copies of all test results will be supplied to the patient as a routine. A letter of explanation will accompany the results and this may be preceded by a telephone call as appropriate.

Specialist referrals

Should a specialist referral be required this can be done via the private sector or NHS as requested or as appropriate. DOCTORnow reserves the right to decline referrals that are felt to be medically inappropriate and likely to be to the detriment of the patient.

The GP's at DOCTORnow are not able to make direct referrals to NHS clinics/specialists. All NHS referrals are managed through a clearing system to which all NHS practitioners must defer. There are specific situations which bypass this process including cancer referrals and suspected heart disease referrals.

Should a patient who has been seen at DOCTORnow wish to be referred to the NHS then we can facilitate this referral by writing to the registered NHS GP outlining the situation and requesting a referral. There are 4 possible sequela i) The GP will make the referral ii) The GP may request a consultation with the patient prior to making a referral iii) The GP may ignore the correspondence iv) The GP may feel the referral is not warranted and decline to do so.

We endeavour to co-operate openly with the NHS at all levels and the level of co-operation is usually excellent.

A referral privately does not preclude the specialist from transferring an individual's care to the NHS if that was felt to be in the best interests of the patient. However they generally expect those referrals that are clearly best dealt with within the NHS service to be referred appropriately from the start.

Prescriptions

All prescriptions issued by DOCTORnow will be outside the NHS prescription system. All chemists will fill private prescriptions but will make a charge based on the true cost of the medication. In general chemists tend to stick to a formula to set the private price: dispensing fee + cost of the medication + 20 - 50% of the cost of the medication.

If a patient wishes to get an NHS script for their medication then DOCTORnow is happy to write to an individual's NHS GP giving the clinical details and the suggested prescription. However the NHS GP has no obligation to fill the request though many who know our service do: they may insist on seeing the patient to make their own assessment and judgement or they may be unable to prescribe certain items because the items are not on the approved lists as set by the practice's formulary or by the Primary Care Trust. We remind patients that whichever doctor signs the prescription for a medication is taking the medico-legal responsibility for that medication and all the potential outcomes, both beneficial and adverse.

We will only prescribe repeat prescriptions for those patients whom we have seen. Requests can be made by telephone, fax, letter or e-mail. We are able to send prescriptions to your registered address or to the chemist of your choice. We are also able to telephone/fax prescriptions through to local chemists with whom we have an on-going relationship. In addition we have now established a working alliance with BR Pharma who are able to dispense all medication and deliver the medications to the patient's home or office as requested. For further details please ring the office. All repeat prescribing ultimately requires regular clinical reviews even if this is simply on an annual basis.

Emergency service and out of hours availability

DOCTORnow's service is guaranteed 24 hours a day, seven days per week for VIP24 members. Our VIP24 number will automatically divert the calls to the emergency doctor's phone for VIP24 members; rarely a patient may be asked to leave a name and contact number on an answer phone: this would only occur if

the emergency doctor was in an area of poor signal or actually seeing a patient. Our response to such a message would be prompt.

All out of hours contacts generate a data or call sheet which is designed to capture the appropriate data set and also to be faxed through to the NHS GP the by midday on the next working day to ensure continuity of care.

We remind patients that the appropriate advice may be an instruction to "call 999".

Comments and complaints

DOCTORnow welcomes positive comments even if critical. We aspire to offering impeccable standards of care. Should you have a complaint we do have a complaints procedure in place a copy of which is available on request.

Should you wish to seek independent advice this is available though The Health Care Commission (0207 448 9200), the General Medical Council or the Royal College of Nursing.

Confidentiality

We guarantee complete confidentiality. Results can be requested by phone but only by the patient themselves unless a previous arrangement has been agreed by the doctor and recorded in the file.

Policy on seeing minors

All children under the age of 12 must be accompanied by an adult throughout the consultation and examination. Young people between the age of 12 and 14 can consult alone but must attend the clinic accompanied by a responsible adult whose permission and co-operation will be sought. 14-16 year olds may attend un-accompanied and consult alone provided that the doctor assesses them to be competent as adjudged by The Gillick criteria or where there is express permission from the legal guardian. 16 year olds and over may make their own appointments and attend unaccompanied and consult with full confidentiality provided that the doctor is content that that person is responsibly competent.

Chaperone Policy

A chaperone is available for any consultation at any stage. This can be requested via the reception staff or any clinical staff member. Before all examinations a chaperone will be offered.

Medical Insurance

Most UK medical insurance policies do not cover general practice. Some policies allow GP's to request tests privately and will cover the costs. We always advise that this should be checked in advance, as some tests can be very expensive.

DOCTORnow is able refer privately in the same fashion as the usual NHS GP and to activate as well as complete the relevant paper work as needed.

Personnel

Dr Brian McGirr	Managing Director, Medical Practitioner
Dr Richard Angwin	Medical Practitioner
Dr Sarah Marshall	Medical Practitioner
Liz D'Arcy-Evans	Practice Nurse/ Nurse Manager
Cathy Anderson	Practice Nurse
Barbara Angwin	Practice Nurse, Laser Therapist
Lynda Hunter	Patient Services Manager
Rachael Toovey	Reception Manager
Priyanka Iandoli	Receptionist
Adriana Nedelcu	Receptionist
Ann Russell	Receptionist
Cherry Lane	Medical Secretary
Jane McGirr	Company Secretary, Accounts and Receptionist
Kate Dukes	Practice Manager

All members of staff have appropriate professional insurance and current CRB checks