



For Action

General Practices

For Information

Scottish General Practitioners Committee
NHS Boards' Primary Care Leads

Policy Enquiries to:

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Dear Colleague,

Closure of the COVID Community Pathways – What does it mean for General Practice?

From 1st April 2022 patients who contact NHS24 with COVID symptoms during the in-hours period i.e. Monday-Friday 8am – 6pm (may vary depending on local agreements), and are unwell will be advised to contact their own General Practice.

For the out of hours period, the Out of Hours Service will continue to manage COVID patients directed by NHS24 as a matter of course.

From 1st April 2022 any patient who contacts NHS24 in-hours with COVID symptoms will hear the following message:

For the latest information regarding Coronavirus, including how to arrange a test or vaccine please visit NHS Inform at www.nhsinform.scot or call 0800 028 2816.

If you or the person you are calling about think they have any COVID symptoms and are unwell please press 1.

At this time of day if you have any COVID symptoms and are unwell please contact your GP Surgery. A directory of GP services in your local area can be found on [NHS inform.scot](http://NHSinform.scot). Please also visit NHS inform for more health information advice including how to assess common symptoms using self help guides. To Return to the main menu please press 1.

The following message is played when callers choose the Accident and Emergency option to pick up those who have pressed the option in error:

This line is for those who do not have any COVID symptoms. If you have any COVID symptoms and are unwell please hang up now and contact your GP Surgery. Otherwise please continue to hold and we will answer your call as soon as we can.

We would ask that all General Practices carry out the following to ensure a smooth transition for patients and practices:

1. Ensure all receptionists (patients advisors/ care navigators) are aware of this change so that they are no longer signposting/ guiding patients with COVID/ respiratory symptoms to NHS24 or their local COVID Assessment Centre (CAC), in hours from this date.
2. Ensure that all signposting/ care navigation guidance/ protocols in the practice are updated to reflect this change (an example care navigation tool is available [here](#)).
3. All practice websites and social media such Facebook/ Twitter are updated to reflect this change.
4. All practice telephone answering services and any other messaging is updated to reflect this change.
5. Ensure that all staff working in the practice are working to the standards of the [National IPC manual](#) which provides detail on physical distancing, IPC, PPE, screening questions etc. This guidance is likely to change over time and it is important that practices remain up to date. Having an identified member of staff to support this may be helpful.
6. Code all patients that are seen in the practice with COVID/ respiratory symptoms. Guidance on what codes to use are available from the [SCIMP/ PCI website](#).

A [press release](#) has been published by Scottish Government informing the public of this change and NHS Inform will also be updated to reflect this change in policy. We are working with marketing colleagues to develop social media and website resources which you will be able to utilise. These will be available on [PRgloo](#) along with the GP Receptionist and the Healthcare worker RESPECT campaign which you can continue to utilise. A new [COVID sence](#) campaign has also been developed which you can utilise to remind the public what is in place for health and social care settings.

Boards are required to work with their local GP Sub-Committees to support the implementation of this decision and to ensure that systems are in place to monitor the ongoing impact of COVID on both practices and patients.

We would like to take this opportunity to again thank you all for your hard work and dedication during the pandemic.

Primary Care Directorate, Scottish Government