

**Holmcroft Surgery
Holmcroft Road
Stafford
ST16 1JG**

01785 242172

www.holmcroftsurgery.nhs.uk

Dear Patients and Service Users of Holmcroft Surgery

Holmcroft Surgery has been part of the Primary Care Directorate within North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust since 2022. The Directorate currently runs three practices, the other two are Moorcroft Medical Centre and Keele Practice, some staff work across all sites, therefore you may receive telephone calls or other communications from staff working from one of these, however the service provided to you will remain local to Holmcroft, that is at the surgery or from sites provided by the Stafford Primary Care Network.

To support our patients in accessing care from Holmcroft Surgery, the practice has created an information sheet covering some frequently asked questions and topics.

We hope that this information is useful to you when accessing our services. Please contact the surgery if you have any questions or need further information.

How do I make an appointment?

You can make an appointment by completing an online Patches request form, which can be accessed from the practice website: **www.holmcroftsurgery.nhs.uk**

You can also continue to make an appointment by contacting the practice by telephone on **01785 242172**. Our Reception team will complete a Patches request on your behalf, requesting relevant information from you to process this. Additionally, you can request an appointment at the practice's reception desk. Our Reception team will complete a Patches request on your behalf, requesting relevant information from you.

Your request will then be reviewed by the practice team. You may be offered an appointment for the same day or a later date, or you may be directed to another service such as a pharmacy. As part of the booking process, you may be provided with a booking link via text to book your appointment, or a Reception team member may contact you by telephone to book this directly with you. Appointments may include a consultation with a GP, Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Urgent Care Practitioner or Practice Nurse.

We ask that you contact the practice as early as possible in the morning, as demand for appointments can be high. Once all appointments are full for the day, the practice will only be able to offer an emergency service for patients with an urgent medical need. However, Patches requests can continue to be added throughout the day for administrative purposes.

If you need any additional support in booking an appointment, please let the practice know. We are here to assist you in accessing care that best meets your needs.

What happens when practice appointments have run out?

Unfortunately, due to demand and a significant strain nationally on general practice funding, our daily appointments can run out. When this happens, Patchs will indicate that it is closed when you log in, or our Reception team will inform you over the phone that no further appointment requests can be made that day.

When appointments are fully booked, we remain open for **emergency services** only. If you require urgent clinical assistance, please contact the practice at **01785 242172**. Your urgent request will be reviewed by the GP on call, who will advise on the best course of action.

This could include:

- An emergency appointment at the practice
- A referral to a Walk-in Centre
- Advice to attend Accident & Emergency (A&E)
- Instructions to contact the surgery on another day to request a routine appointment.

What is the difference between an urgent and a routine appointment?

Urgent (acute) appointments are for medical concerns that need to be addressed immediately or within the next few days.

Routine appointments are for non-urgent medical care, ongoing conditions, or long-term complex needs. Routine appointments should continue to be requested via Patchs or through our Reception team, who can submit a request on your behalf.

How do I use Patchs?

Patchs can be accessed via the practice website. You will need internet access via a **laptop, computer, or smartphone**. A detailed information leaflet on how to use Patchs is available in our waiting room. Our Reception team can also provide **individual Patchs tutorials** for patients who need extra assistance when using the system for the first few times.

What is a Patchs admin request, and what can it be used for?

Patchs remains open 24/7 for administrative requests, which include:

- Medication requests and queries
- Fit note requests
- General queries that do not require an appointment

These requests remain available even when Patchs is closed for appointment bookings.

Can I still use the telephone to contact the practice?

Yes, the telephone remains a key way to contact the practice, including for appointment requests. To reduce waiting times, we have introduced a telephone callback facility to improve patient

experience and a virtual telephone assistant. The practice continuously monitors call access and waiting times to ensure efficiency.

How do other clinical roles support my care alongside GPs?

General practice teams now include additional healthcare professionals alongside GPs, such as Advanced Nurse Practitioners and Urgent Care Practitioners – highly experienced in advanced clinical practice, capable of managing a range of acute and complex conditions and authorised to prescribe medication.

Holmcroft Surgery is also part of Stafford Town Primary Care Network (PCN), which enables us to share additional healthcare professionals, including:

- First Contact Physiotherapist
- Social Prescriber
- Mental Health Practitioner
- Pharmacist

We also offer extended access appointments, available at the practice and other PCN sites during the week. An extended access appointment is a pre-bookable, route appointment available outside of our usual opening hours i.e. outside of 8am to 6.30pm. All healthcare roles within our practice are designed to ensure patients receive care from the most appropriate clinician based on their medical needs. More details on these roles are available in the waiting room.

Reports and Other Administrative Requests

Requests for non-NHS work and medical reports should be handed in at the reception desk. The practice will process these as quickly as possible, and a fee may be payable for some services. Information on the latest fees is available from the reception desk.

Please be aware that the practice can refuse to undertake non-NHS work, such as applications to join the gym.

How do I request a Fit Note?

You can request a fit note via a Patches request. You can also contact the practice by telephone or visit the reception desk, where the Reception team will complete a request on your behalf. You will be asked for details regarding the fit note request. Your request will be forwarded to our GP team for review. Where a fit note is agreed, it should be ready for collection or can be sent to you via text within two working days.

How can I request repeat medication?

Repeat medications generally take **two working days** to process and should be requested in advance to ensure you do not run out of your medication.

You can continue to request your medication from your pharmacy in the usual way agreed with them. Routine medication can also be requested via a Patches administration request, which is available **24 hours a day, seven days a week**.

You can submit the **right-hand side** of your prescription directly to the practice, ticking off the medication that you require and posting it into the practice letterbox.

Please note that we are unable to accept telephone requests for medication.

Why do we send text messages?

Text messages have become an important and convenient way of communicating with patients who have access to a mobile phone. We send text messages for a number of reasons, including:

- Appointment booking links when you have requested an appointment
- Appointment information and reminders
- Medical care updates (e.g. blood test cards or patient information leaflets)

To support our work around long-term conditions and public health initiatives, our nursing team may contact you via text. Communication may include:

- Requesting a current blood pressure reading, which can be sent back via text (there is a blood pressure machine in the waiting room that patients can use at any time during opening hours)
- Requesting your current smoking status and providing information on smoking cessation services available

Under national requirements, we are required to ask children aged **14 and over** about their current smoking status.

If a patient does not have access to a mobile phone, the practice will continue to contact them via telephone or letter.

We recognise that receiving an unexpected text message from the surgery can be concerning. An example of what a text message from the practice looks like is available in the reception waiting room.

What is the process for routine health checks and chronic health reviews?

We aim to review all patients with a long-term health condition annually. Where possible, we will combine multiple reviews into one appointment. For example, an asthma review and diabetic review may be completed together. The practice operates a recall system based on a patient's birthday month. For example, if your birthday is 2nd February, you will receive an invitation for a review during February each year. We may ask you to complete certain actions before your visit, such as having blood tests, to ensure we can complete a holistic long-term condition review.

Why are we asking for blood pressure readings to be taken in the waiting room?

We encourage all patients to purchase a blood pressure machine for routine home monitoring. Where this is unavailable, a waiting room blood pressure machine is available for use and the reading can be handed in at Reception. Appointments solely for taking a blood pressure reading are not a good use of clinical time, which could otherwise be used for other clinical work. Patients with high blood pressure (hypertension) will still be requested to attend a hypertension review.

How do I raise an issue or complaint?

We encourage patient feedback and are happy to assist with any concerns. You can raise issues via:

- **Phone or Reception desk** – for quick resolutions
- **Written complaints** – submit to the management team at the practice
- **Email complaints** – contact **NSCHTPPrimaryCareComplaints@stoke.nhs.uk**

Alternatively, you can contact the North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust Patient Liaison and Advice Service at:

- Telephone: **01782 275031** or **0800 389 9676**
- Email: **patientexperienceteam@combined.nhs.uk**
- Text: **07718 971123** (charged at your provider's rate)

Comments

We may text you for feedback on your experience of the surgery, there are also Friends and Family Test cards available in reception for you let us know about your overall experience.

Cancelling Appointments

Missed appointments impact patient care. Please **cancel in advance** so we can offer the slot to another patient.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Holmcroft Surgery has a Patient Participation Group (PPG), which meets bi-monthly. The group serves as a communication link between the practice and the community, helping patients make the best use of available facilities and influencing practice policies based on patient feedback. If you are interested in joining, please email **NSCHTPPrimaryCareComplaints@stoke.nhs.uk** or speak to our Reception team.

We hope this leaflet is helpful. Please contact the practice if you have any questions or require further support.

Holmcroft Surgery Team