

# Changes to NHS referral services

Do you live in England  
and see a doctor at  
a Welsh GP surgery?



# **Living in England and registered with an NHS Wales GP Practice – what does this mean when you are referred for onward NHS treatment?**

Until recently, patients living on the border received their healthcare from the NHS in the country where their GP practice was registered.

So, patients living in England but registered with a Welsh GP practice received their care from the Welsh NHS, and vice versa.

Recent changes to the healthcare system in England mean that if you live in England and are registered with a GP practice that is either in Wales or is registered with the NHS in Wales, then the way you are referred to a consultant will be different to how you have been referred in the past.

If you live in Wales you will not experience any change.



# Supporting better NHS care and consultant-led treatment - whether you live in England or Wales

- If you live in England, your local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has responsibility for organising and buying the care and treatment that you receive on behalf of your local NHS.
- And if you live in Wales, your Local Health Board (LHB) is responsible for your NHS care and treatment.

We want to make sure that people who live on or near the border between England and Wales understand how care and treatment is arranged by their local NHS.

Although there are some differences between the NHS in England and Wales, both are committed to delivering excellent patient care.

Regardless of which side of the border you live on, we want to make sure that you continue to receive high quality care in the right place, at the right time.

This information leaflet explains what it means if you live in England and see a GP registered in Wales and need to be referred for consultant-led treatment.



# NHS healthcare arrangements in England and Wales – what's the difference?

You may, or may not, know that the NHS is different in each of the four countries:

- Wales
- England
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland

Each country has its own way of organising and running healthcare to look after the people who live there.

## My NHS consultant-led care: what choices do I have?

The choices available to you will depend on which country you live in. Due to differences in how the NHS is structured, some choices are more relevant to patients in England than in other parts of the United Kingdom.

**In England**, if you need to see a consultant or specialist, you can choose where you have your NHS care.

You can also choose which consultant will be in charge of your NHS care and treatment. However, you can only choose a consultant at a healthcare provider that offers the right care and treatment that is appropriate for your condition.

There are times when you do not have a right to choose, such as when you need urgent care or emergency treatment.

**The NHS in Wales** has different rules on patient choice. You do have the right to see a consultant, who offers the right care and treatment for your condition, and you can speak to your GP and your local health board if you would like to be considered for treatment from a different hospital, clinic or doctor.

## Waiting times for consultant-led treatment

The NHS is committed to ensuring that you are seen as quickly as possible according to your health needs.

**In England**, you should start your planned, consultant-led NHS treatment within a maximum of 18 weeks from GP referral to treatment, unless you choose to wait longer, or it is clinically appropriate that you wait longer.

**In Wales**, if you are referred by your GP for planned treatment you should receive it within 26 weeks or less. If your care is too complex to be undertaken within 26 weeks - or if you choose to wait longer - you will receive your treatment within a maximum of 36 weeks.

There are slightly different waiting time targets for treating cancer patients in England and Wales.

**In England**, the current cancer treatment targets are:

- No more than a 2 week wait between the date the hospital receives an urgent GP referral for suspected cancer, and seeing the specialist doctor or consultant.
- Starting treatment no more than 31 days after the meeting at which you and your specialist doctor or consultant agree the treatment plan.

**In Wales;** there are two pathways that a patient may follow:

- Patients suspected of having cancer and urgently referred by their GP, should wait no more than 62 days from GP referral to the start of treatment.
- Patients who are newly diagnosed with cancer, not through a GP referral, should start their treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat.

If patients have to wait longer, it should be because they choose to or because they need extra tests to fully diagnose their cancer.

Throughout the UK, waiting times can vary depending on the type of cancer you have and the type of treatment you are going to have.

## **Prescriptions**

If you live in England, and are registered with a Welsh-registered GP practice, you will continue to be entitled to free prescriptions. The changes to healthcare set out in this leaflet will not affect this entitlement. If you live in Wales, there are no planned changes to your prescription entitlements.



# Being referred for consultant-led treatment

We want to make it easy for people who live in England, and are registered with a GP practice based or registered in Wales, to understand what these changes mean for them. Patients should not experience any changes to care provided by their GP. However, there are a few changes to onward care that patients need to be aware of:

- If you need to be referred for consultant-led care there will be a new referral process.
- Your GP will arrange for your details to be sent to a central NHS Referral Assessment Service (RAS) - hosted by NHS Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in Shrewsbury.
- Once your referral is received, a member of the RAS team will contact you to arrange a convenient appointment at the hospital or clinic of your choice.
- If you prefer, you can still choose to receive your consultant-led treatment and care in a hospital or clinic in Wales instead of England.
- If you are cared for by the NHS in Wales you will receive high quality care to the same standards and policies as Welsh patients.
- Referral to treatment times are different to those in England and are described earlier in this leaflet.



# How we will use your information?

To enable you to be seen by the team of your choice to deliver your healthcare, your information will need to be sent to the Referral Assessment Service (RAS). Your GP will send your information via a secure system to the RAS.

The RAS will use this information to contact you and arrange the most appropriate appointment for you, and they will also seek your permission to administer your referral. With your permission, your information will also be used to update local and national systems. This helps the NHS plan and provide local services.

## Who can I contact about this change?

If you have any questions regarding the information in this leaflet please contact

**Gloucestershire CCG**

**Tel: 0800 0151 548**

**E-mail: [glccg.pals@nhs.net](mailto:glccg.pals@nhs.net)**

**FREEPOST RRYY-KSGT-AGBR**

PALS, Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group  
Sanger House, 5220 Valiant Court, Gloucester Business  
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If you need this leaflet in another format or language please contact: 0800 0151 548

This leaflet has been written in partnership with NHS England and NHS Wales with the kind input from LHBs and CCGs and local GPs and patients.