* **“I failed to get an appointment following three attempts”**

Practice Response:

The Vale Of Neath Practice has seven GP Partners, a salaried GP, 2-3 GP Registrar’s and a Nurse Practitioner, all of which provide clinical appointments for our patient register of approximately 9,500 patients. The European Union of General Practitioners and BMA (British Medical Association) have recommended a safe level of not more than 25 patient contacts per day for a GP to deliver safe care;

<https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/managing-workload/safe-workload-guidance-for-gps-in-wales>

Which means that the availability of appointment slots will vary day to day, depending on how many of our clinicians are available to work across the weekdays.

We comply with the Welsh Government access standards, by offering patients the option to book GP appointments digitally in advance via the NHS Wales App and on the day via Ask My GP. To ensure our patients are not digitally excluded, we only release a proportion of the available appointment slots to be booked via a digital method, with a larger proportion of appointments available for patients to book via the telephone.

We are sorry that with 9,500 patients potentially vying for a comparatively small number of appointment slots, there may be times when all of the available slots have already been booked by other registered patients. The Vale Of Neath Practice also offer patients the opportunity to join a non-urgent call back list, so patients do not need to ring the surgery again to register their request.

* **“Limit using locums”**

Practice Response:

Each of our GP’s and other clinical staff members understandably have annual leave entitlement, study leave allowance, and other Practice related commitments which often require administrative time away from seeing patients. To ensure we continue to provide an appropriate number of GP appointment slots to service our 9,500 registered patients, we will occasionally engage the use of GP Locums to maintain GP appointment availability during periods of our regular staff absence and after Bank Holiday’s etc….

* **“More physiotherapy appointments needed as the wait is too long for a call then an appointment”**

Practice Response:

Unfortunately, The Vale Of Neath Practice have no influence or control over the Physiotherapy appointments, as this is a service which is delivered exclusively by Swansea Bay University Health Board.

* **“Trying to get through on telephone”**

Practice Response:

With 9,500 patients on our register, there is understandably going to be times where patient demand is going to exceed the number of call handlers we physically have available to answer calls. Our telephone system has a call queue feature, to allow calls to be “stacked” until a call handler becomes available.

We are sorry that at peak times patients may experience a longer than anticipated wait in the call queue and would encourage patients to consider registering for one of our digital solutions the NHS Wales App or Ask My GP as an additional method of contact.

* **“More Gps”**

Practice Response:

The Vale Of Neath Practice has seven GP Partners, a salaried GP, and 2-3 GP Registrar’s available to consult with our patient population, in comparison to most other GP Practices across Swansea Bay University Health Board there are not many other Practices that can routinely offer appointments with a choice of up to 10 GP’s.

* **“Nothing needs changing, the practice is always very efficient and is second to none.”**

Practice Response:

All our GP’s, Nurses and Admin staff continuously strive to provide the best possible service to our patients, and we are grateful to receive positive feedback and comments such as this example. That does not mean that we are complacent and not take the opportunity to change things or learn from any negative comments or concerns raised by our registered patients.

* **“Yes go back to the way it was booking appointment to see the doctor has you got to wait for the doctor to phone you can be a few hours then they tell you come up to see them not very professional waste of time.”**

Practice Response:

The Vale Of Neath Practice is required to deliver General Medical Services (GMS), in line with the GMS Contract in Wales. There are a number of access commitments that we must comply with, and these can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-04/gms-access-commitment-guidance-2024-to-2025.pdf>

One of these requirements is that we offer a mix of remote, face to face, urgent on the day and pre-bookable appointments. The Vale Of Neath Practice complies with these requirements, which are devised by the Welsh Assembly Government and monitored by Swansea Bay University Health Board.

* **“Time waiting for blood test.”**

Practice Response:

When a clinician deems it necessary for a patient to have blood test investigations, these blood samples are requested under that specific clinicians name, so the lab result is returned and filed to the clinician that requested the blood test. Under normal operating procedures, clinicians will manage their own workload and review their own blood test requests. Depending on the requesting clinicians normal working pattern and process time from the laboratory, there could be a longer than anticipated wait before the clinician is able to read their blood test results.

* **“The way appointments are made is shocking think it needs to be overhauled!”**

Practice Response:

The Vale Of Neath Practice is required to deliver General Medical Services (GMS), in line with the GMS Contract in Wales. There are a number of access commitments that we must comply with, and these can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-04/gms-access-commitment-guidance-2024-to-2025.pdf>

The Vale Of Neath Practice offers a variety of booking methods in line with the Welsh Government access commitment guidance.

* **“Giving copies of blood tests with full explanations”**

Practice Response:

Whilst our Reception and Administration staff have the ability to print or email blood test results from the GP Portal in line with a patient request, they are not qualified to offer any explanation. The requesting clinician will review the result and assign a suitable comment (Normal Result, Tell Patient Acceptable, Speak To Requesting Doctor etc..), which our call handlers will repeat to patient when they call to obtain the result. Our clinicians would not routinely offer any explanation for a result which has been marked as normal or within acceptable range.

* **“Easier access to speaking with a Gp the phone lines are not open long enough”**

Practice Response:

The Vale Of Neath Practice is required to deliver General Medical Services (GMS), in line with the GMS Contract in Wales. There are a number of access commitments that we must comply with, and these can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-04/gms-access-commitment-guidance-2024-to-2025.pdf>

The Vale Of Neath Practice offers a variety of booking methods in line with the Welsh Government access commitment guidance.

The Vale Of Neath Practice also offer patients the opportunity to join a non-urgent call back list, so patients do not need to ring the surgery again to register their request.

* **“Would be nice to have face to face instead of over the phone as it is harder with phone call cause of my illness.”**

Practice Response:

The Vale Of Neath Practice is required to deliver General Medical Services (GMS), in line with the GMS Contract in Wales. There are a number of access commitments that we must comply with, and these can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-04/gms-access-commitment-guidance-2024-to-2025.pdf>

One of these requirements is that we offer a mix of remote, face to face, urgent on the day and pre-bookable appointments. The Vale Of Neath Practice complies with these requirements, which are devised by the Welsh Assembly Government and monitored by Swansea Bay University Health Board.

* **“The overhang from COVID. The over long phone message.”**

Practice Response:

The Vale Of Neath Practice is required to deliver General Medical Services (GMS), in line with the GMS Contract in Wales. There are a number of access commitments that we must comply with, and these can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-04/gms-access-commitment-guidance-2024-to-2025.pdf>

One of these requirements is that our opening message is available in both English and Welsh and is no longer in duration than two minutes, our telephone system messaging complies with this requirement.

* **“Being able to book in advance for non urgent appointments. Especially for working patients to arrange in days off.”**

Practice Response:

We comply with the Welsh Government access standards, by offering patients the option to book GP appointments digitally in advance via the NHS Wales App. To ensure our patients are not digitally excluded, we only release a proportion of the available appointment slots to be booked via a digital method, with a larger proportion of appointments available for patients to book via the telephone.

Working patients can register their request in advance on a day to suit via the NHS Wales App, or request a callback on the day via Ask My GP. Once they have spoken with the clinician any follow up face to face appointment can be arranged to fit around work and family commitments with the clinician during that initial telephone callback.

* **“the receptionist are not doctors can you remind them that”**

Practice Response:

The Vale Of Neath Practice is required to deliver General Medical Services (GMS), in line with the GMS Contract in Wales. There are a number of access commitments that we must comply with, and these can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-04/gms-access-commitment-guidance-2024-to-2025.pdf>

One of these requirements is that our staff have the opportunity to care navigate and signpost patients to more appropriate services which may be available, to facilitate this our GP partners have asked our call handlers to obtain a brief description of what the patient would like to discuss with the Doctor. Obtaining this information not only allows our staff to signpost to other services where appropriate, but it also allows our clinicians to identify and prioritise the clinical needs of the patients within their own callback list.

* **“Accessing the Practice is so time consuming and cumbersome. Many of the tasks are inconsiderate, antiquated and completely unnecessary. The lines of initial communication or simple requests are ridiculously impossible to navigate, especially by patients who have jobs and places of employment. No patients should be expected to drive a 5 mile round trip to post a slip of paper through the door to request a repeat prescription! Then do another 5 mile trip to collect it! That is CRAZY in this day and age!”**

Practice Response:

Once registered, patients can order Repeat Prescriptions online through the NHS Wales App. The Community Pharmacies also offer a repeat ordering service for patients who wish to sign up for this service, following the completion of a Pharmacy Preference form.

* **“Would be useful if there was an audiology department.”**

Practice Response:

Patients who are registered at The Vale Of Neath Practice can access Audiology and Wax Clinic appointments at the Cluster Hub, which is located in Dyfed Road, Neath. Our Reception staff have access to the shared Upper Valleys Cluster appointment books, and these appointments can be booked without the need for a GP referral.

* **“Sometimes I feel it would be beneficial to be able to contact the practice via email about a non urgent medical matter that might not need a full appointment or might benefit from one but not immediately.”**

Practice Response:

The digital solution that the Vale Of Neath Practice has adopted for patients to message the Practice about a non-urgent medical matter is called Ask My GP, and instructions on how to register for this service can be found via the following link:

[**https://my.askmygp.uk/?c=W98046#/intro**](https://my.askmygp.uk/?c=W98046#/intro)

We release a proportion of our available appointment slots via this system each morning at 7:30am, to ensure no patients are digitally excluded a larger proportion of appointment slots are made available to book via the usual telephone methods.

* **“This ask my GP and waiting all day to receive a phone call when your in work and U sent a msg at 7.30 and told to expect a call before 12 but then it doesn't come till 14.00 it's sometimes 17.00 it's ridiculous especially as a working person for the people on benefits at home or elderly not so much but for a working person ridiculous this has to change.”**

Practice Response:

Our clinicians are each allocated 5 Ask My GP slots for each morning clinician sessions and 3 Ask My GP slots for each afternoon session. These appointment slots are allocated by the time they are received by the Practice, if patients are allocated an afternoon slot our Care Navigators send the patient a pre-set message to inform them of this to manage their expectations and allow them to plan their day. Some of our clinicians may on occasion also ring patients on their afternoon list in the morning, if they have managed to save some clinical time through the course of the morning. By registering a request through Ask My GP at 7:30am, patients are assured of a callback at some point during that day without having to telephone our appointment line.

* **“Getting an appointment is near impossible, it can take weeks with the online system. More morning and afternoon appointments should be allowed as often it is just a question that could be answered quickly. The system works well when you get a slot as you can chat to doctor and send photos.”**

Practice Response:

We comply with the Welsh Government access standards, by offering patients the option to book GP appointments digitally in advance via the NHS Wales App and on the day via Ask My GP. To ensure our patients are not digitally excluded, we only release a proportion of the available appointment slots to be booked via a digital method, with a larger proportion of appointments available for patients to book via the telephone.

We are sorry that with 9,500 patients potentially vying for a comparatively small number of appointment slots, there may be times when all of the available slots have already been booked by other registered patients. The Vale Of Neath Practice also offer patients the opportunity to join a non-urgent call back list, so patients do not need to ring the surgery again to register their request.

* **“Video appointments would be useful as it is sometimes hard to get to the building to attend a face to face appointment”.**

Practice Response:

Our clinicians have access to the Video Consulting software “Attend Anywhere”, whereby patients can receive a link to join a virtual waiting room and participate in a video consultation. Patients with a smartphone can use the camera and microphone on the device to communicate, and desktop/laptop users will require the use of a webcam or similar device attached.