

Alverthorpe Surgery

Dr Barnsley

Online Consultation Position Statement

At Alverthorpe Surgery, we are committed to delivering accessible, high-quality healthcare services that recognises the evolving landscape of digital health. Digital technology is an integral part of improving patient outcomes, reducing barriers to care and provides an efficient patient-focused consultation experience.

Our online consultation service, PATCHS, is an integral part of this commitment, designed to offer patients timely and professional medical advice in a secure, convenient, and efficient way. We have established this position statement to outline our approach to online consultations and reflects our commitment to maintaining the same high standards of care in the virtual environment as in our in-person services

Purpose

The primary purpose of our online consultation service is to:

- Provide a secure and convenient platform for consultations and routine health assessments.
- Allows patients to make requests at their convenience avoiding sometimes lengthy telephone queues and waiting room times.
- Enhances accessibility to medical advice and support for patients who may face barriers in attending face-to-face appointments. This is particularly beneficial for individuals who may find traditional communication methods challenging, such as those with hearing or speaking impairments, patients with anxiety, or for those whom English is a second language.

Service Availability

Online consultations are available during our normal operating hours which is Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 18:30pm. We are dedicated to providing continuous and uninterrupted support for non-urgent health concerns.

Our Commitment

Accessible Healthcare: We believe that quality healthcare should be within easy reach for everyone. Our online consultation service is designed to eliminate barriers and offer prompt access to medical advice. We provide support to help patients navigate the digital platform and ensure that language or technical challenges do not impede access to care.

Patient-Centred Approach: Each consultation is tailored to meet individual needs ensuring personalised care. Our healthcare professionals are experienced in delivering care through digital platforms while maintaining the highest standards of practice.

Quality of Care: Our clinical staff are fully trained in digital consultation methods. We ensure that clinical assessments, diagnoses, and treatment plans delivered online meet the same rigorous standards as an in-person consultation.

Patient Safety: Online consultations are conducted with careful consideration of patient safety. Our clinicians use their clinical judgment to determine when an online consultation is appropriate, and where a case requires physical examination or further diagnostic intervention, patients will be advised to attend an in-person appointment.

Secure & Confidential: The privacy and security of our patients are of utmost importance to us. Therefore, our online consultation system complies with all relevant data protection regulations, ensuring that all interactions are conducted via secure, encrypted platforms that remain confidential and secure.

Scope and Limitations

Comprehensive Medical Advice: Our online service covers a wide range of non-emergency medical issues including general health inquiries, follow-up consultations, and chronic disease management.

Transparency: Patients are fully informed about the nature of online consultations, including the benefits and limitations.

Consent: Before initiating an online consultation, patients provide informed consent acknowledging that they understand the process, our data handling practices, and any potential limitations inherent to an online consultation.

Appropriate Use: Whilst online consultations provide a valuable and convenient resource, and is ideal for many types of healthcare needs, it is not suitable for all conditions. We urge patients to contact us via telephone or in person if their situation deteriorates after using PATCHS.

Limitations: The system is not designed for urgent or emergency situations. In cases where immediate medical attention is required, patients should contact 999 or attend Accident and Emergency Department.

Continuous Improvement: Alverthorpe Surgery is committed to reviewing and updating our online consultation service to continually enhance our service delivery, incorporate new technologies, and align with best practices and regulatory standards. We value patient feedback and are committed to evolving our practices to provide the best possible care to our patients. We therefore actively encourage all patients that use PATCHS to complete the family and friends questions sent to them by SMS following use of the service.

Conclusion

Our online consultation service reflects our core commitment to provide accessible, timely, and patient-focused healthcare. By offering uncapped access during operating hours - when it's safe to do so - we ensure that every patient has the opportunity to receive medical support when they need it most. This position statement applies to all Practice staff and guides the protocol to ensure safe, effective, and confidential care in the use of online consultations.