



Our ref: WQ83920

Andrew R T Davies MS
Senedd Regional Member for South Wales Central

AndrewRT.Davies@senedd.wales

7 December 2021

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your Written Question asking me what discussions the Welsh Government has had with the British Medical Association regarding a return to face-to-face appointments in GP surgeries?

The Welsh Government has regular engagement with the BMA including GP Forum bimonthly meeting with both the BMA and RCGP Wales where the way practices operate is often discussed including face to face consultations. From these discussions, during the summer, a joint letter was issued to the GP profession from Welsh Government, GPC Wales, RCGP Wales and the health boards expressing the importance of patients being able to contact the practice and how there is an expectation for practices to see patients both face-to-face and via remote consultations.

GP's, as independent contractors, are ultimately responsible for the specific appointment system used by their practice, but are required to provide a system that ensures the safety of staff, patients and the clinician. For some people, where clinically appropriate, face to face consultations are the best option but for others it may be quicker, easier and just as effective to do so by phone or video.

On 1 December I announced the agreed changes to the GMS contract for 2021-22, which includes new requirements around access that will mean patient need is managed more effectively and in a more forward looking and planned way. Crucially, these changes mean that the release of all appointments at 8am, or other narrow window of time, is no longer acceptable. These changes will support the new blended model of access that includes face-to-face and remote consultations, in line with clinical and patient need.

In addition, Our Help Us Help You campaign has produced materials in collaboration with the BMA and other partners to help inform the public of what they can expect from their GP practice. We will continue to build on that campaign, where needed, in light of the recent contract changes.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Eluned.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Eluned.Morgan@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The emergence of the Omicron variant has placed additional demands on an already challenging vaccination programme. GP's and their staff continue to play a key role in the delivery of the vaccine, especially to those most at risk. I welcome the ongoing support from the profession in supporting this programme, in addition to the provision of GMS.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services