

Dear Patient,

We are writing to you as we recognise the frustration that many of you are feeling regarding the long delays for hospital appointments at the current time.

If you have been waiting for an appointment and have not heard from the hospital, you should contact the hospital switchboard in the first instance and then the Consultant's secretary. The PALS service (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) can also be contacted if you are unable to get through to the right person or are unsure of who you should contact. You can call PALS on 0300 123 1732 or email: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Please be aware that once your referral letter has been sent, your GP is not notified of waiting times, nor do they have access to any hospital hotline numbers.

Practices are experiencing an increasing number of requests from patients to expedite their hospital appointments. Please note that waiting a longer time for an appointment does not deem your request as urgent and your GP will not be able to provide a letter to expedite your appointment for this reason.

If you are experiencing worsening symptoms relating to the condition for which you have been referred, we advise you to contact your specialist directly so that they can assess your condition and make the necessary arrangements if they feel they need to bring your appointment forward. Only the hospital can compare your needs with other patients on their waiting list. The hospital are aware that GPs will not provide such letters on behalf of patients, and they should not advise you to contact your GP.

If you have difficulty contacting your specialist, we advise you to contact the hospital PALS department for assistance as stated above. If you wish to, you can also write directly to the specialist outlining any change in your condition and requesting that they review your hospital notes alongside your letter to determine whether your appointment should be brought forward. In this letter you should also request that they contact you directly to inform you of the outcome of that decision, and the likely wait for further care.

In the event of a change in a potentially life-threatening health condition - for example a known cancer, or heart or lung symptoms you should contact NHS 111. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, you should dial 999 or attend A&E.

Thank you for your patience and support at this time of intense demand on general practice. By following the actions outlined in this letter you will help your GP practice to free up valuable appointments for those who need them.

**On the behalf of Worcestershire Local Medical Committee.
Independent Representative of GP Practices throughout Worcestershire.**