

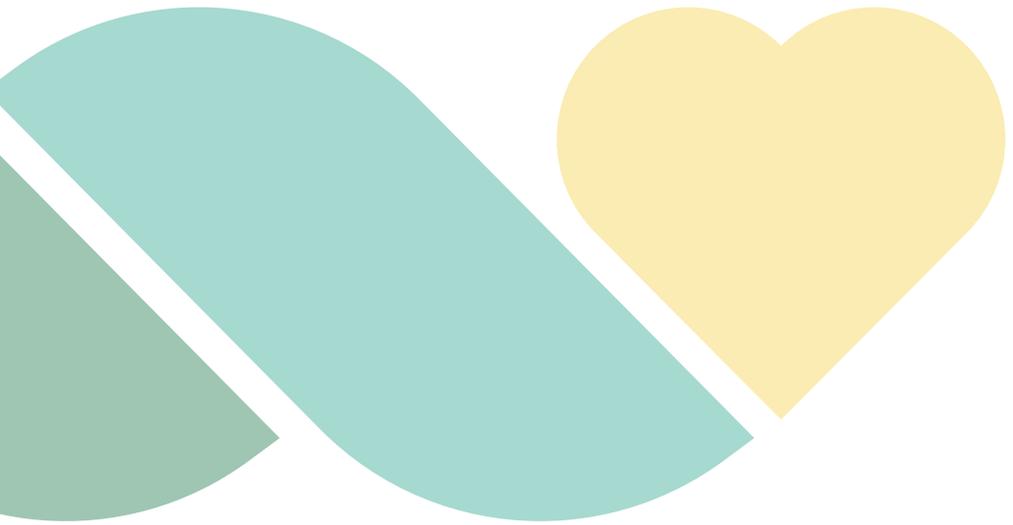


Triage in General Practice



Weardale
Practice

01388 528 555
www.theweardalepractice.nhs.uk



What is Triage?

Triage is a way of making sure patients get the quickest possible response to urgent healthcare needs. It also helps us to better manage the increasing demands for urgent appointments.



The trained **Receptionist** will ask the nature of the problem and assess the need. An urgent issue will be placed on the triage list for a call back within 3 hours.

1



2



The Clinician, Emergency Care Practitioner or GP will call back.

They will assess your symptoms and concerns, and then agree with you how these needs might best be met.

This could be advice over the phone, a follow up appointment, or in some cases, admission to hospital.

3

Advice or appointment in 1-4 days as not deemed urgent

**GP or other Clinician Appointment
Home Visit
Admission**

Telephone triage and telephone consultations aim to improve access to care. As the number of patient contacts in general practice steadily rises and the nature of healthcare becomes increasingly complex, it is perhaps not surprising that many practices view triage as a way of safely managing the increasing demand while also meeting patients' understandable desires for a timely response to their requests for urgent healthcare.

The purpose of triage is to ensure that the patient is referred to the most suitable clinician for the appropriate level of care within an acceptable period of time.

What is an Emergency Care Practitioner (ECP)?

Working alongside our doctors, we now have highly qualified Practitioners (ECPs). They have undertaken additional medical training and education to provide advanced nursing care and to prescribe medication.

ECPs are all trained in the assessment and diagnosis of common medical conditions, can prescribe medications and arrange sick/fit notes once the patient has been assessed. The ECP appointments are booked using the same method as that of a doctor.

♥ **Prescribe medication**

♥ **Diagnose and treat illness**

♥ **Treat minor illness such as chest infections, UTIs**

♥ **Treat tonsillitis, cough, sinusitis**

♥ **Manage illness associated with long term conditions**



Weardale Practice uses experienced Emergency Care Practitioners (ECPs) and GPs to undertake the role of triage by telephone, for requests for urgent or same day appointments.

They assess the patients' symptoms and concerns, and then agree with the patient how these needs might best be met. This could be by giving telephone advice, an appointment that day with a GP or other clinician if needed; a home visit; or an appointment over the next few days, or in some emergencies, an admission to hospital. On average every other one of these triaged patients will need to be seen face-to-face by either a GP or another clinician.

Weardale Practice offers our patients an average of 135 triage appointments per week, though some days as many as 40 patients are added to the triage list. There is no set cut off for capacity and provision is made following long weekends to deal with high demand. Triage helps to determine the order and priority of emergency treatment, providing patients are willing to give a brief reason for the request when ringing initially.



For our patients a triage appointment ensures that all urgent requests to see a clinician are dealt with on the same day. No patients are turned away and the practice has not needed to use the urgent overflow clinic at Bishop Auckland.

Triage ensures that every patient contact counts and patients are seen, if necessary, by the most appropriate clinician.

Using a triage system, we hope will give patients a greater understanding of the processes we use to give them the best possible treatment as quickly as possible.

What do our patients think?

Feedback from our patients is very positive with an appreciation of the fact that they can always be seen on the same day when there is a genuine need.



Case Study

“8 weeks ago, I fell and hurt my arm. I didn't feel it necessary to go to A+E so tolerated the pain for a couple of weeks, hoping it would go away!

However, it didn't, despite self-medicating pain killers as well as massage with Ibuprofen gel. Therefore, I decided I better get it looked at, so phoned the surgery. I was offered a Triage appointment with Mark, an Emergency Care Practitioner (ECP). He phoned me back within 20 minutes, took my history and invited me down for an appointment within the hour.

After examining my arm thoroughly, he put my mind to rest that I hadn't broken it, but in fact had a really bad sprain. He prescribed some stronger painkillers, gave me up to date advice on how to manage a sprain, spoke to Dr Hackett about further treatment, offered me further investigation if I wanted it (which I declined as was happy with his diagnosis) and then organised physiotherapy at the surgery, which I started to receive within 2 days!

What an absolutely invaluable, extremely professional service, all dealt with locally. I would totally recommend this Triage service to everyone.”

Karen, Stanhope



**Working together to maximise
the health and wellbeing of
individuals and our community**



**Weardale
Practice**

COMMUNITY HEALTH
& WELLBEING

Stanhope Health Centre
Dales Street, Stanhope
DL13 2XD

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