**Why you don’t *always* need to see your GP**

**– explaining the evolution of Primary Healthcare in the NHS**

Even since before the COVID pandemic the NHS has been under great pressure and demand for appointments. General Practice in particular has seen a lot of change during this time.

The population is getting older, which in turn increases the number of people with complex chronic medical problems. This often means more people, with more medications and treatments that are needed, more referrals to hospital (who are also struggling with capacity issues) and this of course leads to a bottleneck.

We want to treat everyone safely and fairly but there are only a finite number of patients any one doctor or clinician can see in a working day before it becomes untenable and unsafe. Furthermore, GP numbers have fallen about 7% across the NHS since 2016 and it takes many years to train doctors and GPs. Therefore across the NHS both in general practice and hospitals you may have come across two major changes to allow as many patients to be seen as possible: “**new” roles** and **“triage”.**

Both of these existed well before the COVID pandemic but have come to the fore as effective ways to support increasing demand.

These **roles** include highly trained and experienced clinicians such as Nurse Practitioners, Paramedics, Physician Associates, Pharmacists & Physiotherapists. They specialise in their own particular area and at Midway Surgery always have the backing and support of a GP whenever they need it. They have been through rigorous training and professional development to reach the ability to practice in primary care. Outside of the surgery hospitals have more tailored services such as minor injury units, better set up to deal with falls and knocks which may require x-rays or treatment, and community pharmacists are also increasingly experienced in dealing with minor self-limiting illnesses as well as providing a number of treatments over-the-counter which you can get hold of much quicker than waiting for a GP.

**Triage** is something a lot of surgeries prior to COVID used to support their day-to-day work and it has become even more important now as has been encouraged by NHS England. This involves essentially matching the patient’s problem to the most appropriate person that can help with it. Our GPs are highly trained in helping you access healthcare professionals, whatever role they have, to best treat your problem. As always a GP can be accessed for those need one even if booked with another clinician. Also, triage allows more appointments to become available, which is something we have increased year on year since COVID, and now we are also increasing the number of advanced or prebookable appointments to allow for better access to your chosen doctor.

In this way we hope we can ensure we can help more patients and prioritise those who need the help the most in a safe and appropriate manner. We hope this helps you understand the systems in place both at Midway and across the NHS better and thank you for your ongoing support.