

Primary Care Networks (PCN)

What is a Primary Care Network (PCN)?

Primary Care Networks or PCNs, are a group of five to 10 GP practices. They are based in the local community and typically cover a patient population of 30,000 to 50,000. Every GP practice is part of a PCN. You can find out which Primary Care Network your GP practice belongs to by talking to practice staff or checking the practice website.

Why are Primary Care Networks important?

Primary Care Networks help GP practices to work closely together to:

- encourage GP practices to share best practices, expertise, and resources.
- enable services and staff to be shared across the GP practices in a Primary Care Network.
- make it easier for patients to receive personalised care and access healthcare specialists.

You will find that alongside GPs and nurses, a range of specialist medical professionals works at GP practices. Most practices will have a clinical pharmacist, a social prescribing link worker, a physiotherapist and an advanced nurse practitioner working within the practice team. These health professionals are employed by a Primary Care Network and are shared across their member practices.

Being part of a Primary Care Network makes it easier for your GP to refer you to a specialist that works in a different practice in the network.

Making appointments

Although your GP practice belongs to a Primary Care Network, you are still registered with your own GP practice and can continue to access GP services in the usual way.

When booking an appointment, the practice receptionist will ask you to share some information about your health enquiry. This allows them to direct you to the most appropriate health professional within the practice team. It makes it easier for patients to get the right help at the right time closer to home. It also frees up GPs' time to see patients that need them most.

Ask the receptionist to confirm which health professional your appointment is booked with.



Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality of care within their Primary Care Network, GP practices and other organisations that are involved in patient care must ensure that data sharing arrangements are in place which complies with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

You have the right to restrict or object to sharing your personal data. Please ask your practice for more information.

How can you help to develop your Primary Care Network?

You can influence how services are developed and delivered at the individual GP practice or across the Primary Care Network. You can do this by joining your practice Patient Participation Group (PPG) or by asking your practice manager how you can get involved.