

# GP practices are changing

## Primary Care Networks (PCNs)

### What is a Primary Care Network (PCN)?

Primary Care Networks, or PCNs, were created in 2019.

They are typically a group of 5 to 10 GP practices, based in the local community, covering a patient population of 30,000 to 50,000.

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 enable GP practices to work closely together. This:

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

The model proved to be very successful when responding to COVID-19.

### What will not change?

You will still be registered with your own GP practice and will continue to access GP services in the usual way.

### What is changing?

In addition to traditional GPs and nurses, there will now be a range of specialists working at your practice. GP practices have some choice in who they employ, but most practices will have a clinical pharmacist, a social prescribing link worker, a physiotherapist, or an advanced nurse practitioner working within the practice team.

### Making appointments

When booking an appointment, the practice receptionist will ask you to share some information about your health inquiry. This allows them to direct you to the most appropriate health professional within the practice team, to make 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 on the Primary Care Network level by joining your practice Patient Participation Group (PPG) or by asking your practice manager how else you can get involved.

# Who else works at GP practices?

As well as **doctors** and **nurses**, there are a number of NHS health professionals that work at GP practices. GP practices can choose who to hire based on their patients' needs. Such staff will often work for more than one GP practice within a Primary Care Network.

## Clinical Pharmacist

They have a pharmacy degree and further qualifications allowing them to prescribe medication. They are experts on medicine, side effects, and interactions between medicines.

### What they do:

- carry out medication reviews and order further tests.
- review hospital discharge letters and check that the newly prescribed medication is working well.
- help patients understand their treatment and get the most out of their medication.
- treat minor illnesses and infections.

## Pharmacy Technician

They support clinical pharmacists and the practice team with technical knowledge of medicines, and work under the supervision of a clinical pharmacist.

### What they do:

- prepare repeat prescriptions.
- undertake prescribing audits.
- help patients get the most out of their medication.

## Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP)

They are registered nurses who have additional academic qualifications that allow them to look after patients like a GP. Based on their previous experience, they often have an area of expertise, such as diabetes or people over the age of 65.

### What they do:

- assess symptoms and build a picture of a patient's health.
- treat minor health problems, infections, and minor injuries.
- prescribe medication where necessary.
- manage patients' presenting with long-term conditions.

## Physiotherapist or First Contact Practitioner (FCP)

They are experts in muscular and joint health conditions.

### What they do:

- diagnose, treat, and offer advice on how to manage your condition.
- order diagnostic tests if necessary.
- some can administer steroid injections or prescribe medication.

## Paramedic or Emergency Care Practitioner (ECP)

They undertake five-year medical training and have nursing and paramedic skills.

### What they do:

- manage routine or urgent appointments
- run telephone triage - assess the urgency of illness or injury.
- carry out home visits.
- some can prescribe medication.

## Social Prescribing Link Worker

They are non-clinical members of staff who help address non-medical issues that impact patients' health and wellbeing. They listen to patients and help connect patients to services that suit their needs.

### What they do:

- help find activities such as exercise or art classes.
- suggest opportunities to volunteer or meet people.
- signpost to organisations that can help with money worries, housing or finding other help you need.

## Healthcare Assistant (HCA)

They are trained in particular skills and can assist with a range of clinical duties that help monitor and record patients' conditions.

### What they do:

- carry out tests, such as taking blood samples or blood pressure checks.
- carry out new patient health checks.
- provide health promotion advice.

## Physician Associate (PA)

They are medically trained generalist healthcare professionals, who work alongside GPs with close medical supervision.

### What they do:

- take patients' medical history.
- diagnose and plan treatment for patients.
- analyse test results.
- provide health promotion advice.