

## FIRS HOUSE PARTNERSHIP

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### **FIRS HOUSE SURGERY HOME VISITING INFORMATION AND POLICY**

The introduction of the current GP Contract in 2004 re-affirmed that it is the doctor's decision whether or not the patient can reasonably be expected to attend surgery. We have a limited capacity for home visits; however, we understand they are sometimes necessary. Home visits from a doctor are reserved for the following groups and we occasionally find that it is more appropriate that another service can visit or that telephone advice can deal with the problem:

- o Terminally ill
- o Housebound patients (any patient who is able to leave home for any reason is not considered to be housebound)
- o Severely ill patients who cannot be mobilised.

General practice has never been, and can never be, an emergency service along the lines of the police or ambulance. There is neither the human resource for this, nor the infrastructure to try and work this way, as it would inevitably harm other aspects of the Practice's work.

#### **Requesting a Home Visit**

Most patients who need to consult a GP will be seen at the surgery but we continue to make a limited number of home visits when this is appropriate. In order to optimise quality of care, effectively use finite resources and to benefit the greatest number of patients, home visits are to be offered exceptionally, not routinely.

We want to offer the shortest waiting times for patients to see a doctor so please bear in mind that four to six patients can typically be seen by a doctor at the surgery in the time it takes to complete a single home visit. Our doctors also have access to your full records, more facilities and equipment at the surgery. This is why if you are able to, it is essential you attend the surgery for the most appropriate care.

Requests for visits must normally be made before 10:00am and at the latest 11:30am. Visiting will normally take place after morning surgery. Please only request home visits if you are incapable of attending the surgery. Whenever possible, we expect patients to come into the surgery as the facilities are far better for examination and treatment. When you call to request a visit, please give the reception team reasons for the visit request including any symptoms you are experiencing as it helps us to judge the urgency of the call. Please also provide a contact number as your visit request will be triaged by a doctor who may wish to get more detail in order to get you the care you need which may include directing you to a more appropriate care provider, or conducting a telephone consultation instead of visiting. The receptionists are trained to deal with your calls so do expect to be asked about details relating to the request. All information is confidential. Visits requested later in the day that are for the housebound, but are not urgent, will not be seen that day but instead triaged to a more appropriate time.

#### **Children**

We will always aim to see sick children as soon as possible if brought into the surgery. It is not appropriate to wait for a visit. We rarely visit children at home as a responsible adult should be available to bring them to surgery.

## **Our home visiting policy**

Our guidelines are in accordance with the National and local recommendations.

You cannot insist that a GP visits you at home.

A GP will only visit you at home if they think that your medical condition requires it.

A GP can also decide how urgently a visit is needed and may direct you or your request to another appropriate care provider.

Due to increasing demand, GPs can no longer automatically visit any patient who requests a home visit. All visits will now be triaged and dealt with according to clinical need.

GPs are better able to assess patients in the surgery where they have access to specialist equipment, good lighting and examination facilities. Therefore, it is always the preferable site for any face to face consultation.

GPs having to visit inappropriate house call patients are delayed from visiting those patients who are in genuine need of a visit and therefore this poses an unacceptable clinical risk.

Lack of transport, finance, weather conditions and other situational reasons cannot be considered grounds for a home visit.

The status of a patient living in a care home is no different to any other patient living at their own home. The requirement to visit a patient exists only when there is a reasonable clinical reason for the visit and a reason, on clinical grounds, why the patient cannot attend the surgery.

GPs are not obliged to visit a patient if they have assessed the patient's clinical need and found them to be suitable for an alternative method of healthcare.

As long as the GP has made this assessment and offered an appropriate alternative (which may be an appointment the same day, a future day, telephone advice or attendance at other healthcare site such as A&E) then the partners of Firs House Partnership will support any such decision made by a doctor working at the practice.

## **Family Pets**

To ensure the safety of our staff we kindly ask that any family pets are not present in the room in which the patient is to receive the visit.

We understand that most family pets pose no risk in normal circumstances. When an owner is unwell it can be a stressful environment and pets can react unexpectedly to new visitors or in some situations such as when a patient is examined or where emergency care is required.

In these circumstances a pet can pose a risk to our staff and it is our policy that all visiting healthcare professionals will not enter a patients' premises where a pet is not secured. This would involve simply putting the pet in a separate room from that in which the patient is being seen for the duration of the visit.