



Information and Policy for Patients Considering Private Treatment

Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for patients in Forth Valley who are considering seeing a doctor, specialist nurse or allied health professional at a private clinic or hospital. This leaflet will refer to these clinicians as 'private providers'.

Why might patients consider private treatment?

Patients may consider private treatment due to longer NHS waiting lists for investigations, appointments, or operations. Other patients may prefer the convenience of choosing who to see at a time that suits. Occasionally, patients may wish to pay for a treatment that is not available or recommended on the NHS.

We would encourage patients to discuss any potential private treatment with one of the GPs beforehand, so that we can discuss your expectations of what treatments may be available and whether follow up might be required.

We are not able to recommend specific private providers and would recommend that you research whom you may wish to see. Many private providers also work for the NHS and all based in the UK should be regulated as an equivalent NHS professional.

NHS GPs are contracted to provide healthcare services on behalf of the NHS, in line with our General Medical Services contract: we are not obliged to follow requests or recommendations from private providers.

How do I arrange a private appointment?

You should contact your chosen private provider directly for an appointment. If you have private health insurance, check with the insurance company about who you can see and if any charges are involved.

The private provider may request a referral letter. There is no charge for a referral letter from us to any healthcare provider. A referral letter will include relevant medical details about you and can be sent electronically to the main private hospitals in Stirling, Glasgow, and Edinburgh. For other private providers a letter can be arranged. We can only send sensitive information electronically to secure NHS or government email addresses.

Private providers may request additional information, forms, or reports to be completed in addition to a referral letter. There may be a charge for this additional work.

What happens if I need a test or procedure?

If the private provider thinks that you need tests (including blood tests), scans, or a procedure, they are responsible for:

- Organising the test / scan / procedure. The cost should also be discussed with you
- Organising any medication which may be required before or after the procedure
- Giving you the results and explaining what they mean

Results of tests and investigations are returned to the person that requested them. Please do not contact the practice to find out your results - contact your private provider.

GP practices should not be asked to perform blood tests or other investigations on behalf of a private provider. A private provider can refer to other healthcare providers or NHS services directly without the involvement of your GP. This:

- Ensures the results are returned to the correct person
- Avoids delay in the private provider reviewing and interpreting the result, and arranging any follow up which may be required

Occasionally patients see a private provider online or remotely, and require tests. The private provider is responsible for arranging this with other local private providers.

What happens if I need medication?

Your private provider might suggest new medication for you, or an adjustment to something you are already taking. If a medication needs to be started immediately, they are responsible for giving you an initial supply or a prescription for the medication.

If new medications are started or there are changes to your current medications, the private provider must write to the practice. It can take several weeks for letters to be received. Any prescription requests will be reviewed by one of the GPs.

In some circumstances we may not be able to prescribe medications recommended by a private provider where they are:

- not included in the NHS Forth Valley Formulary
- requiring frequent monitoring
- requiring a 'shared care agreement' (e.g., disease modifying drugs, some psychiatric medication, medication for ADHD, some hormones, etc)
- required for a procedure
- used out with their licensing agreement
- medications for specialist or hospital use only.

In these circumstances, you will need to arrange ongoing prescriptions from your private provider.

What happens if I need to transfer my care back to the NHS?

If your private provider wishes to refer you back to NHS care for follow up, regulations allow you to be put into the NHS system at the point you finished with the private provider (i.e., you do not go to the 'back of the queue').

To facilitate this, and to provide the relevant clinical information, *any transfer of care back to the NHS should be arranged by the private provider and not by the practice, including passing on results of their tests and investigations.*

What if I need a Fit Note?

If you need a fit note because you are not fit for work, this should be provided by the private provider. The fit note should cover the period that they expect you to be unfit for work, or until your next appointment with the private provider. You should only see your GP for a fit note if your inability to work is prolonged unexpectedly.

What if I need follow up?

The private provider will discuss whether you need ongoing follow up with them, can be transferred by them to an NHS clinic, or discharged back to your GP.

What about travelling abroad for private treatment?

We would strongly advise against travelling abroad for private treatment. Overseas providers may not be regulated in the way that they are in the UK. Clinical standards may not be as strict. Some online clinics may appear to be in the UK but can be based overseas. *If you do go overseas for treatment, there will be no obligation on the GP practice or NHS Forth Valley to provide routine pre- or post-operative care. All care required should be provided within the package of care sold by the overseas provider.*

The NHS in Scotland will always provide emergency care where necessary, should something go wrong.

What if I have questions or a complaint about my private treatment?

Contact your private provider directly if you have questions or wish to make a complaint about care or treatment you have received.

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