



Policy Name: Communications

Policy Number: 135

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the standard at which all communications between The Chorley Surgery, its patients and other external persons will be conducted, and how this will be incorporated into the various forms in which communication can take place.

Communication Standards

The following standards of communication will be adhered to by Practice staff at all times:

- Patients and visitors must be dealt with in a positive, efficient manner;
- Communication will be delivered in a timely fashion, and in a format relevant to the information being given;
- Information will be in plain language which cannot be misinterpreted. Use of jargon and unknown abbreviations are to be avoided;
- Communication will be open and honest, with further explanation given where decisions made give-rise to additional queries;
- All communication with patients and visitors will be consistent with the Practice's policies, protocols and procedures and, where required, be reflective of the NHS as a whole;
- All general patient communications will ensure they reach the correct patient groups in the appropriate format in a timely fashion.

Communication Types

- Face-to-face;
- Telephone;
- Letter;
- E-mail;
- Web Site
- AccuRx/iPlato text messaging
- Video consultation
- Facebook



- Practice staff will be polite, positive and efficient towards patients and visitors to the Practice;
- Reception/admin staff will aim to see any patient or visitor to the Practice within 10 minutes. The Chorley Surgery's aim is that patient appointments will commence within 20 minutes of their scheduled time. Where there may be confrontation from a patient, carer or representative, staff should try to remain relaxed and calm, listen to their concerns carefully and then request they take a seat while they address the problem.
- Where a problem exists and it is due to lack of understanding / notice on the part of the patient, carer or representative (e.g. a patient wishes to collect their prescription before the 48 hrs required lead time) the Practice will produce and use appropriate leaflets and posters to inform them why their problem cannot be resolved immediately, or alternatively direct the patient to our website, <https://www.thechorleysurgery.com/prescriptions/> where further information is available (People tend to respond more positively to official documents and notices rather than what they perceive as somebody just being awkward);
- The Practice will use a face-to-face opportunity to inform patients about other clinics, services and focus groups that may be of interest. Where this is not possible patients will be signposted to the surgeries, Facebook and Website page

Telephone

- Practice staff will be polite, positive and efficient towards any person who calls The Chorley Surgery or when calling externally themselves (smiling when talking comes across to the person at the end of the line!);
- Should there be confrontation from a patient, carer or representative, staff should stay calm and acknowledge their concerns. The patient should be placed onto the triage list for a call back, and the Duty Doctor be advised by placing a note on the appointment booking
- Before calling a patient, ensure that use of the telephone is appropriate for the message being given. In certain circumstances a face-to-face meeting may be more beneficial.
- When calling externally, Practice staff will ensure they are speaking to the correct person before divulging any patient-sensitive information;
- If the intended recipient of the call is unavailable, enquire when would be a suitable time to call back;
- Staff should listen carefully to the enquiry being made, then field the call to the appropriate person where possible;



- If the call is for a doctor or nurse in surgery, then a call-back is likely to be necessary. Please inform the person calling when a call-back is possible. The Doctors have specific slots for telephone appointments.
- Business enquiries should be fielded to the Business Manager
- Operational enquiries to the duty Operational Manager
- Practice enquiries to the Practice Manager
- Where the person being asked for is not available, the staff member who answers the call should take an appropriately detailed message, including: name and address of caller; telephone number; details of query; time when call-back is convenient.
- If a caller is put on-hold, they should be regularly informed by the staff member who has answered that they are still on-hold and that they will be dealt with shortly.

Letter

Staff members will consider the following points when receiving, writing or sending any letter:

- Reply to letters received by The Chorley Surgery within 20 working days;
- Letters written will be clear and easy to understand (make sure you do not over-complicate text unnecessarily);
- Ensure the layout of text is clear and that it includes paragraphs, indents and breaks;
- The letter should be free from jargon and abbreviations (Practice internal references will not mean anything to external persons);
- Spell and grammar check your letter;
- Provide a named contact in-case of query, complaint or if a response letter is required;
- Any instructions and directions given must be clear and concise;
- Where previous errors have been made, a clear explanation and / or apology will be included;
- Personalise your letter rather than signing it from the Practice;
- There is a standard template available for all correspondence to promote consistency and a business-like approach.

Website

The Chorley Surgery website is maintained in-house. Wherever possible the practice will ensure that the information on the website is:

- Up to date, clear and concise
- Avoids technical jargon

| Version 1.2 |

Person responsible for the review of this policy: Andrea Trafford, Business Manager

Reviewed: January 2023

Next Review Due: January 2024





- Includes practice contact details
- Includes information about staff and clinicians
- Contains information and news relevant to our locality and population

AccuRx text messaging

- All members of staff must ensure that when communicating with patients via a text messaging service that explicit consent has been sought from the patient prior to sending any text messages and that this has been coded on their records
- That an opportunistic check of the patients mobile phone number is completed and any changes updated to the patients record
- That only relevant and appropriate health related/appointment information is sent to the patient
- That the message sent is saved to the patients care history records

Video Consultation

- Should be completed following a telephone consultation where a visual view of the patient is required
- Clinical staff are to ensure that explicit consent has been sought from the patient prior to any video consultation taking place and that this is noted in the patient records
- That all video consultations are used appropriately and where it is deemed that an appropriate diagnosis cannot be ascertained via video, that a face-to face appointment should be offered to the patient
- That appropriate time is afforded for each video consultation based on the information gathered via the telephone consultation
- Where the video consultation may be of a sensitive nature and intimates part of the patient's body may be shown a chaperone for the clinician and patient should be offered

Facebook

The Chorley Surgery Facebook page is also managed in house. The practice updates the page on a regular basis and ensures that all information is

- Up to date, relevant and clear and concise
- Includes information on appropriate health and wellbeing related issues and support mechanism available in our area
- Includes Practice news
- Includes important health campaigns