



# Practical guidance to promote extended access services to patients

November 2018

## Tools to implement in practice

There are many ways practices can make sure they are engaging patients with GP Extended Access services. It is important that all practice staff be fully aware of the extended access services in their area in order to be able to actively promote to their patients. This information includes where to call, hours of operation and types of services provided to ensure everyone has easier and more convenient access to GP services, including appointments at evening and weekends.

To assist you further in your journey of delivering extended access services we have developed “Top 10 Tips” ensuring effective utilisations of services. You can download these [here](#).

Below is guidance that can be used to make this journey of ensuring that patients are advised of access services at each touch point in your practice.

## Telephone message

Patients can be informed about NHS GP Extended Access when they are calling the surgery and are waiting to speak to someone. If a GP or someone else in your practice is well known, it is good to get them to record the message so the patients are reassured it is from their surgery. Suggested wording for the telephone message is below:

“Thank you for calling \*name of practice\*, we are working together to offer our patients better access to GP appointments which means you will be able to see a GP or practice nurse

[or other health professional] at a time which is most convenient for you. Ask us about booking appointments on evenings and weekends”.

“Thank you for calling \*name of practice\*. We offer a range of access options that include appointments on evenings and weekends so ask the practice how you can book an appointment that is convenient for you or find out more information on our online medical advice at [www.surgery website URL.com](http://www.surgerywebsiteURL.com).”

Practices should also ensure that if they use an answerphone message when the practice is closed it should have the appropriate message to signpost and redirect patients. This should also include reference and promotion of extended hour’s provision where appropriate.

## Collateral material

Practice screen image: Will be provided on the site. We recommend this is uploaded to the practice waiting room television screen.

Posters, flyers and tent cards: We would encourage you to spread these around the waiting and consulting rooms. These will be mailed to your practice and you will also be able to download for print from the website.

You will be able to find these communication tools on the Healthy London Partnership website in the resources area: <https://www.healthy london.org/resource/gp-extended-access-comms>

### **Examples of hot spots for positioning promotions:**

Jayex Board: If you have a Jayex board in your waiting room you can add the following message:

*Did you know you can access a GP or practice nurse in your local area on evenings and weekends? Ask your practice today about this service.*

### **Email signatures: A mention of Extended Access services with a suitable link on any emails signatures will help spread the message to patients:**

Using out-of-office and/or automatic responses and adding a line to any automatic email responses will again help to propagate the message to patients (please see example message below).

*Many thanks for your email. If a response is required a member of the team will respond when able. Did you know you can access a GP or practice nurse in your local area evenings and weekends, 7 days a week? Ask us about it or if your query is after hours call NHS 111 and book your appointment today.*

### **Prescriptions: Text can be added to the box on the right-hand side of the prescription slip:**

Did you know you can access a GP or practice nurse in your local area on evenings and weekends 7 days a week? Ask your practice or if your query is after hours call NHS 111 and book your appointment today.

- Leaflets can also be handed out with repeat prescriptions issued
- Learn more about Extended Access at \*[www. surgery website URL.com](http://www.surgery website URL.com)\*

### **Website**

GP Website: The website landing page must be used to promote details of extended access services and how to access these services.

NHS Choices Website: Practice must update their section on the NHS Choices website to ensure the offer of extended access is up to date and included alongside standard practice opening times.

### **Patient Wi-Fi access**

For those practices that offer free Wi-Fi, the landing page patients and staff access should include information about Extended Access.

### **Practice staff promotion and word of mouth**

Promotion by all of the practice team, particularly when seeing a patient or dealing with a telephone request for an appointment can be useful way to engage with patients.

Receptionist should be aware and trained to refer to extended access services as appropriate and you may want to consider the use of a receptionist script to support this process.

### **Texts, letters and emails to patients**

Texts can be sent to patients using the practice's existing appointment reminder system. Include a message that says:

- Need an after hour's appointment? Call your practice or NHS 111 to book today.
- Emails can be sent to all patients for whom an email address is held.
- Social media
- Publicise the service via any social media accounts that the practice is using (Twitter works particularly well here).
- Follow your CCG twitter account and promote the services in your area.

### **Champions**

Practices can nominate a member of staff to be in charge with ensuring Extended Access is promoted effectively among the staff and with patients.