

20/12/2021

Dear Extended Access/Minor Illness Service GPs,

Re: End of shifts

I wanted to write to clarify the situation of when extended hours and minor illness shifts can end. I understand there is some uncertainty around this and so thought a letter clarifying the correct position would be helpful.

Kingston GP Chambers is contracted to provide care for a set number of hours – at the weekend in extended access for example this is 8am to 8pm. We are not contracted to provide a certain number of appointments and nor is the shift based on appointments done – shifts are paid by time.

Minor Illness Clinics/ Weekend Extended Access

At weekends our phone lines are open between 8am and 8pm and we should be prepared to provide care throughout that whole period - just as in normal General Practice where a GP would be expected to be available to deal with late emergencies up until 6.30pm (even if they have had a full surgery).

Whilst we allocate appointments, and ring fence face to face appointments we expect that a doctor stays on site until the end of the session should they finish early - being available should any patients need to be seen urgently. We are in very difficult times, A&E departments are overrun and it's not appropriate to tell patients to attend A&E if we have time to provide care.

Weekday Extended Access

We expect all doctors to be thorough, provide full consultations (not triage) and ensure that patients are phoned at the time of their appointment before DNA'ing them but given that the phone lines are not currently open the strict 8pm rule need not apply here.

That being said, please be very mindful of the fact that sessions are paid on an hourly basis and rattling through clinics and repeatedly finishing early will draw attention. There have been lots of conversations over the months about whether we should be ring fencing F2F appointments (essentially proving 2 x 10 minute appointments for one problem) and this becomes harder and harder to justify if the majority of clinics are finishing early.

I hope this helps clarify the situation and gives some insight into the discussions taking place in the chambers management team behind the scenes. We are extremely grateful to everyone who works so diligently in the clinics and are really lucky to have an excellent team.

I hope everyone has a happy Christmas and new year and stays safe.

Bw

Rick

Dr Richard Hughes
Clinical Lead