

# Same Day GP Appointments Accessibility Guide

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independent living



## **Ruils Independent Living Your Say Group**

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Your Say, Richmond's user-led co-production group, has created the following guide to support GP practices and the Richmond GP Alliance to improve accessibility for disabled people in making same day GP appointments.

The group, comprised of local disabled people, discussed their experiences, both good and bad, and have come up with recommendations around the following themes:

1. Online Accessibility
2. Accessible Information
3. Recording Access Needs
4. Open Channels of Communication
5. Creating and Inclusive Culture

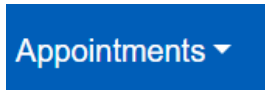
If implemented, these changes would significantly improve access to same day appointments for many local disabled people.

# 1 Online Accessibility

GP practice websites must improve the accessibility of their online information. Websites are key information points used by patients to find out how to make an appointment. It is critical that the layout, content and design of websites are accessible. To improve accessibility, we recommend practices:

## 1. Create a clear accessibility tab:

Clearly outlining access information for both navigating the website and what personalised support is available to patients during appointments. This could include information on how to adjust font size to how to access a ramp at the surgery. It is vital that patients know their options and given clear information.



Appointments

Accessibility

## 2. Clearly structure information on websites through appropriate headings:

Ensuring that format, design and content is streamlined and concise will mean that people can easily find the information they need. Creating clear headings and sub-headings to structure information and eliminating jargon are key priorities. For appointment booking all available options must be outlined in one place and include corresponding links (i.e. to online triage) for onward scheduling.

## 3. Embed a standard website layout across the Borough:

Websites across the borough are disjointed and provide different levels of information on making appointments. We know the Richmond GP Alliance has been working to support practices to improve websites. We would like to see standard templates for information on making appointments implemented across all websites. This will create a standard, making pages feel more familiar and accessible for patients.

# 2 Accessible Information

Information on appointments, how to make them and necessary GP contact details must be provided in print outs and easy reads for patients who are digitally excluded. Digital Exclusion has been highlighted as a key barrier to access, specifically around making appointments. To improve accessibility, we recommend practices:

## 1. Create easy read leaflets and posters to be displayed in practices and distributed to patients unable to get online:

This could include the ways to make an appointment, important phone numbers and opening hours. Crucially, this shouldn't just be given to new patients upon registration. Resources should be available to all patients so that they are kept up to date with any changes in the appointment making process.

## **2. Ensure practice information is up to date and displayed in the surgery:**

It is essential all patients are kept informed on internal and operational changes. To maintain access for all, it is imperative that practices display updates in the surgery through the use of screens, notice boards or leaflets.

## **3 Recording Access Needs**

GP Practices must keep detailed information of patient access needs which is shared with all appropriate staff members and other providers who may need this information. Having this information present when making and allocating appointments ensures patients are given the appropriate support at the first interaction. We recommend surgeries:

### **1. Offer the right appointments to meet the patient's access needs:**

Recorded access needs should be used to make appropriate appointments. If patients request a specific type of appointment based on their needs, it should be prioritised.

### **2. Ensure physical access to the surgery:**

Patients need to be able to have physical access to their GP surgery so they can fully engage in their care and should be provided with clear information on all access points and how they utilise these. For example, information should be available on any areas that are not wheelchair accessible.

## **4 Open Channels of Communication**

GP practices must provide as many channels as possible for making appointments so that people have more than one option. A key concern for disabled people is the pressure point caused by phoning practices for an appointment. Many are marginalised by the systems in place and we would like to see practices work to change this by:

### **1. Offering all available channels for making appointments, including:**

- Online Triage System
- Online Booking
- Phone
- In Person (limited to specific patients)
- NHS App (including clear information on how your surgery uses the app and what functions you don't use)

### **2. Openly sharing an email address for patients to contact if needed:**

All GP surgeries are required to share their general email address, but many in the borough do not meet this standard. The should be clearly displayed and given to patients who may need to specifically contact the surgery about their access needs.

### **3. Having a dedicated phone line for those with access needs:**

A dedicated phone line would help those with access needs to reach the surgery without waiting in a long phone queue or missing the morning rush to make a same day appointment.

## 5 Creating an Inclusive Culture

Creating mutual respect and empathy between staff and patients is so important. Disabled patients have flagged different levels of support received from receptionists when requesting their access needs are met. Inconsistency in approaches and lack of appropriate training mean that many receptionists don't know their best way to help. To build empathy, we recommend:

### 1. Consistent training for all staff on accessibility and recording needs:

Consistent and regular Equality and Diversity training will enable staff to better identify, record and meet access needs. It may also allow staff to have a deeper understanding of the barriers that disabled people experience that may impact their ability to use 'typical' communications methods.

### 2. Add accessibility as a standing agenda item at practice meetings:

Keeping accessibility as a standing item will allow space for all staff to highlight successes, identify issues and come up with solutions. Keeping the conversation alive is important because not every need can be anticipated. Having an open dialogue may also reduce the pressure on receptionists and staff to come up with solutions on their own.

### 3. Appoint an Accessibility Champion:

We would love to see one member of staff at each surgery appointed as an accessibility champion; someone who is responsible for making sure all information on access is up to date and supporting the team to take an inclusive approach. They could take on a higher level of equality and diversity training and bring learnings back to the team or come up with new ideas on how the surgery can support disabled people. We are happy to help surgeries implement this and support the Accessibility Champions.

This guide has been created by local disabled people, working alongside local practice managers and the Richmond GP Alliance.

## Contact

**Mary Harrison**  
Your Say Chair  
yoursay@ruils.co.uk  
020 8831 6083

