

Right to choose

We caught up with North-east GP Dr Vickie Local to ask some questions about the right to choose pathway.



What is the right to choose pathway?

Currently if you live in England and have an NHS GP you have the option to choose who you would like to provide your care if you need a referral. This includes both physical and mental health issues.

This became available in 2018 for mental health, allowing individuals or families to choose which mental health care team they would like to be referred to. This enables patients and GPs to use services which may have shorter waiting times to help identify conditions such as autism or ADHD.

Unfortunately, as a GP we do not have the time to research or keep up to date with the available providers, so it is up to patients/families to come to us after their research and identify which provider they prefer. Providers must have a service contract with NHS England. Providers are constantly changing as they may stop taking on new patients or new providers may come forward.

Children, young people, and adults can use right to choose. The main exclusions are:

- If you are already receiving care for the same condition after a GP has referred.
- It is an emergency situation and crisis care is needed, as this should be accessed in your local area.
- Specially commissioned local services or services by community teams may not be available to choose as are funded differently.

Who is the right to choose pathway for?





**How can you access
the right to choose
pathway?**

Internet searches will help you to find lists of the available and appropriate clinics.

When you have chosen a provider, look through any forms that may need completing. Once you have completed the forms make an appointment with your GP surgery to discuss your concerns further.

As a GP I am happy to discuss this with children and adults face to face or on the phone if preferred. Often it can be distressing for some children to access the surgery, so I am happy to see a parent to address concerns.

My priority as a GP is trying to support families in having their needs met as diagnosis and assessment can be lengthy via any service. Additional services in areas may vary but speak with a member of your GP practice team if you are aware of a service that may help.

For pre school aged children, the health visiting team is a key resource and have the most up to date local knowledge.

I would also like to mention “shared care”. If medication is appropriate this can be more of a challenge, as currently GP surgeries do this on a voluntary basis as it is often medication that GP surgeries are unable to prescribe freely. So, if medication may be the goal or expectation of your referral, check that your GP is willing to prescribe under a shared care agreement.

