

GP practice data available for first time

- New data published on GP appointments for the first time ever allows patients to make a more informed choice about the practice they choose to visit
- This comes after over 4,000 GPs accepted on training placements, hitting the government target for the fifth year running
- Autumn Statement reiterates government's commitment to primary care and improving patient access to it

Patients will be able to make more informed choices on the GP practice they choose to visit after data showing detailed appointment waiting times was published for the first time ever today (Thursday).

The statistics, which cover all GP practices across England, is being made available to inform patients how many appointments each practice is delivering and on the length of time taken from booking an appointment to the appointment itself.

This will improve transparency about performance and give patients more information to help them make informed choices when choosing their practice.

The statistics, NHS Digital's website, will form part of the GP data published monthly which for the first time will include details at practice level. This was announced in Our Plan for Patients.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

We promised to prioritise patients and improve access and that is exactly what we have done – and this is just the start.

I am determined to make it easier for people to get an appointment with their GP practice when they need one and this will allow patients to make a more informed choice about the care they receive.

The Autumn Statement reaffirmed the government's expectation that all those who need an appointment can get one within two weeks, with urgent appointments on the same day.

This will include offering one million additional appointments and providing an additional 31,000 phone lines which will help people avoid the 8am rush for appointments with new digital tools to improve IT systems and ease administrative burdens.

Minister of State for Health Neil O'Brien said:

This is about making sure patients can make genuine choices about where to access their care.

More than 90% of a patient's direct experience of the NHS is through primary care and their GP practices so it is vital appointments are available when needed.

This government reiterated its commitment to the NHS during the Autumn Statement and improving access to data is just the start.

The government is also set to reach its target of 26,000 additional members of primary care staff and has hit its target for new GP trainees – more than 4,000 this year – for the fifth year in a row.

This comes as we provide more support for the sector, with struggling GP practices receiving support with their most acute access challenges to improve performance – such as the delivery of a framework to support all practices to secure cloud-based telephony systems.

Work also continues to incentivise the most experienced GPs to stay in practice by amending pension rules regarding inflation and implementing permanent retirement flexibilities.