

This policy has been drafted to clarify how the doctors at Berkeley Place Surgery approach requests for home visits to ensure that all requests are treated consistently and fairly. We understand that a doctor's visit may be seen as convenient, but some patients do not understand the impact that their request has on the provision of medical services for other patients. Additionally a doctor's ability to properly assess a patient in their own home is hampered by the non-ideal clinical conditions such as poor lighting, unhygienic conditions, and by simple difficulties such as soft beds that make it impossible to properly palpate an abdomen. There are also issues with the personal safety of the doctors involved due to the risks of lone visiting.

It is always the case that the patient will receive more prompt attention if they attend the surgery and for that reason we will always encourage patients to attend the surgery if at all possible. The regulations that we work to clearly state that it is the decision of the assessing doctor if it is appropriate to visit or not.

We are happy to visit those that are truly housebound, palliative care patients, and those that are truly bed bound (regardless of age) in whom travelling by car would cause deterioration in their medical condition or unacceptable discomfort. It is not the doctor's responsibility to arrange transport to the surgery. Such arrangements remain the responsibility of the individual or the person with parental responsibility in the case of a child.

Situations where visits are rarely required include common symptoms of childhood e.g. fevers, cold, cough, earache, headache, diarrhoea/vomiting and most cases of abdominal pain. These patients are almost always well enough to travel by car. The old wives tale that it is unwise to take a child out with a fever is untrue. It may well be that these children are not indeed fit to travel by bus, or walk, but car transport is sensible and always available from friends, relatives or taxi firms. It is not a doctor's job to arrange such transport. Adults with common problems of cough, sore throat, "flu", back pain, abdominal pain are also readily transportable by car to a doctor's premises. Common problems in the elderly, such as poor mobility, joint pain, general malaise would also be best treated by consultation at a doctor's premises. The exception to this would be in the truly bed bound patient.

**Visits to Children in situations where the parent refuses to attend the GP surgery or Out of Hours centre:**

**The safety of the child is paramount in these situations where the parent is not fulfilling their responsibility in making arrangements for travel. In this situation the GPs will visit the ill child first and discuss with the parent later. Repeated requests for visits in this situation may lead to the practice requiring that the family involved register at another surgery.**

Updated Jul 16 on behalf of Dr Ropner

## VISITING GUIDELINES AT A GLANCE

Request for medical care made by patient (usually by telephone) to general practitioner or other person trained in triage and backed by appropriate protocols

