

## Good messaging tips for Practices

There is a contractual requirement to make all “directly bookable” appointments available online, as well as by phone/in-person. This includes appointments that do not need to go through a triage process, e.g. blood test.

### Tips for Practices:

- The more types of appointments made available to book online, the more time saved for reception staff.
- Consider offering online appointments in a staged approach to target specific cohorts for example cervical smears or hypertension reviews.
- The option to “embargo” appointment slots can be useful, to release appointments at chosen intervals.
- Avoid sending a message advising patients to contact the practice to “book an appointment” as this can increase the volume of unnecessary calls or trips to the surgery and cause frustration if there are no appointments available. If possible, we suggest sending a link directly to the patient, to book a convenient appointment.
- Promote the use of the NHS app to your patients by placing posters in waiting rooms, advertisements on tv screens, practice website and batch messaging.
- Adding links to relevant resources rather than typing lots of text to save SMS fragments
- Making use of and creating common templates for all staff to utilise.

### Naming appointments:

- Avoid clinical terms and use simple language when naming appointments so patients know which slot is most appropriate for their need.
- Make the appointment type clear, e.g. telephone call or face to face.
- Clearly state the purpose of the appointment e.g. blood test, smear test, INR test.

