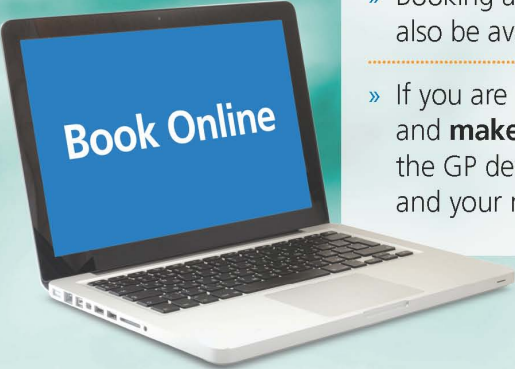




for people with mental health difficulties to get the best out of your GP & practice.

v.1 | 2015

Going to a GP practice can seem daunting. This leaflet aims to provide you with useful help and advice to make it as easy as possible, and to let you know where else you can get support and information.



While you're at the practice

- » Most GP practices will have at least one GP who has a particular experience in mental health. If it is not clear from the practice information ask receptionists or other patients.
- » Receptionists may ask you about your problem to help you access who and what you need. Don't forget it's **ok to ask for privacy**, or to say that you'd rather not, as its personal.
- » You may feel that some receptionists are not very understanding when it comes to mental health issues, **try to get to know the ones that are** – they can really help you access what you need.

Booking your appointment

- » Ask about whether you can **book online** and how to register for this. It may take the stress out of booking an appointment and is useful if you are not an early riser.
- » Booking a **telephone appointment** may also be available on request.
- » If you are new to a practice, you could try and **make a routine appointment** to help the GP develop an understanding of you and your needs.

Preparing for an appointment

- » When you need help with a problem, before the appointment, **think about what you want to say and maybe talk it through with a friend or supporter**. This could help you to be as clear as possible about what you want from the consultation e.g. on-going support, a change or review of medication, or a referral to specialist mental health services, Time To Talk or other supporting organisations.
- » **Take a short bullet point list** of your issues and what you are hoping for. You can share the list with the GP early in the consultation.
- » **Consider taking a friend or supporter** into the appointment and introduce them and how they are related to you.
- » There may not be any magazines in the waiting room, **try taking a 'prop'** like a newspaper or book to reduce anxiety while waiting.
- » Most GPs would like to spend longer with people but because of the system sometimes they are short of time and seem rushed. If there are lots of things you want to talk about, the GP may need to help you with the most important ones and get you to **come back to another appointment** to cover everything properly. Some practices offer double appointments.
- » GPs are not trained in psychological therapy but your GP should be **understanding and supportive** and know where you can get help with your recovery.



General Tips

- » If, after agreeing on a test or referral, you are waiting a long time to receive the result or an appointment, **don't be afraid to go back to the practice** and enquire.
- » If you have been diagnosed with a long-term problem due to your mental or physical health, the practice may invite you by phone or letter to see a nurse or GP appointment for an annual check-up. Any of the following problems make you eligible for one of these reviews:- bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, other psychoses, taking lithium, diabetes, asthma, COPD, epilepsy, heart failure, dementia.
- » These reviews are a great opportunity to **develop links with the practice nurse** and to discuss problems when you are not so unwell.
- » You could ask what's available to help you to **improve your general health**. For example, stop smoking clinics are usually available or emotional wellbeing services can also be accessed for fitness and weight management.
- » Hopefully supportive relationships with a GP and practice staff can develop over time so that you can **work together** to improve your health but if the doctor patient relationship is not working positively, it may be helpful to try another GP. It's always good to try to resolve issues and the practice manager may be able to help. If this really isn't possible you could try another practice.

NHS

**Coastal West Sussex
Clinical Commissioning Group**

Useful resources

- » **More help to prepare to see your doctor**
www.docready.org
Useful website that gives a great way to help prepare for a GP visit
- » **Find help and support for mental health**
www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk
If you need help and support for mental health, find out more about what is available locally from the NHS.
- » **Time to Talk**
www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk
'Time to Talk' is a friendly and approachable service offering talking therapies to people who are struggling with conditions including stress, worry, depression and anxiety.
- » **Looking for advice and information?**
www.coastalwestsussexccg.nhs.uk/your-care
Find out more about local support organisations, useful websites, and apps to help and support you.

USEFUL NUMBERS

Someone I can talk to

My GP

Mental Health Helpline

0300 5000 101

Samaritans

116 123

NHS 111

Call 111 for 24/7 advice

Next of Kin