**Online Access to GP Services (Total Triage) Policy**

**Total Triage in UK GP Practices**

Total triage is a patient management system implemented in UK general practices to streamline access to care by ensuring all patient requests are clinically assessed (triaged) before appointments are allocated. This model prioritizes need over timing, aiming to improve efficiency, equity, and patient safety.

In the new NHS contract, “from the 1st of October 2025 GP practice must ensure that their website provides continuous access to online consultation forms during its core hours between 8am to 6:30pm.  At Matching Green Surgery, we are already preparing for this significant change, and we are already providing online access from 8am to 5:00pm which will be changed to 8am to 6:30pm on the 1st of October 2025.

We use the Accurx - GP software tool to manage all our online consultation requests.  Below is a detailed breakdown of its key aspects:

**Definition & Core Principles**

* **What It Is**: Total triage requires patients to submit their symptoms or requests via digital forms (e.g., Accurx) or with receptionist assistance. A clinician then reviews the information to determine the appropriate response (e.g., face-to-face appointment, phone consultation, self-care advice, or referral to another service).  Patients will also be informed of service providers like Pharmacy First Services for common conditions.  We have provided the inclusion criteria for this service and the local providers of this service.

**Key Goals**:

* **Equitable Access**: Prioritizes patients based on clinical urgency, not who calls first.
* **Reduced Footfall**: Minimizes unnecessary in-person visits.
* **Workforce Efficiency**: Allocates tasks to the most suitable clinician (e.g., pharmacists, nurses, mental health practitioners, paramedics.

**2. How It Works**

* **Patient Submission**:
	+ **Digital**: Patients complete online forms detailing symptoms. Non-digital users can call reception, where staff input their information into the same system.
	+ **Triage**: A clinician reviews submissions, categorizing urgency (e.g., same day, within 7 days) and directing patients to the right service.
* **Outcomes**:
	+ **Remote Consultations**: Many queries are resolved via phone, video, or messaging.
	+ **Face-to-Face**: Reserved for cases requiring physical examination.
	+ **Signposting**: Patients may be redirected to pharmacies, mental health services, or physiotherapists.

**3. Benefits**

* **For Patients**:
	+ **Convenience**: Avoids 8 AM phone rushes; submissions can be made anytime during core opening hours.  Also, access to some services like admin requests can be accessed during this time.
	+ **Faster Access**: Urgent cases are identified promptly.
	+ **Transparency**: Clear pathways for care and allows patients to choose the most convenient time to attend for their appointment.
* **For Practices**:
	+ **Workload Management**: Reduces pressure on GPs by delegating tasks.
	+ **Data-Driven Care**: Digital records improve continuity and monitoring.