

Westgate Surgery

Private Medical Fees

Why does my GP charge a fee for medical reports and letters?

The practice has a primary duty to provide services for the management of patients who are ill. Writing letters and reports (i.e. for insurance providers, adoption and fostering, driving (DVLA), housing and benefit appeals, schools, health clubs and employers) all falls outside of the NHS GP contract. When medical reports are provided they are a private service and as such, have to be completed in the GP's own time outside of their paid NHS working hours. These services incur a fee and we set our fees with reference to the British Medical Association guidance on private fees.

What if I cannot afford to pay a fee?

The practice recognises that many of our patients may have significant financial difficulties and would not wish to increase their financial stress. For this reason the practice offers two levels of support:

1. Provide the patient with a summary of their medical record including key diagnosis and current medications as previously recorded and read coded in their medical record. There is no charge for this level of support.
2. Provide a specific letter or report to patients for a fee.

Whilst we understand the financial pressures patients may be experiencing, we receive a high volume of these requests and set all of our fees based on the time the GP takes to complete the work, so that we are equitable to all patients and our doctors. We are not able to negotiate our rates or offer reduced prices.

Why does it sometimes take my GP some time to complete my form?

Time spent completing forms and preparing reports takes the GP away from the medical care of his or her patients.

Most GPs have a very heavy workload and paperwork takes up an increasing amount of their time, so many GPs find they are already doing extra NHS paperwork on their days off, in the evenings or at weekends. The time taken to complete a form will depend on their NHS workload and how many reports or letters have been requested by other patients at that time.

I only need the doctor's signature - what is the problem?

When a doctor signs a certificate or completes a report, it is a condition of remaining on the Medical Register that they only sign what they know to be true.

In order to complete even the simplest of forms, the doctor might have to check the patient's entire medical record. Carelessness or an inaccurate report can have serious consequences for the doctor with the General Medical Council (the doctors' regulatory body) or even the Police.

What fee should I expect to pay?

We have provided details of our fees on our website and on posters in the surgery. Whenever we receive a request for a letter or report the doctor will review the request to work out how long they need to complete the report and therefore what fee to charge.

Unfortunately from time to time patients have asked for a report and then refused to pay once it has been completed by the doctor. This means we now ask patients to pay for the report before the doctor completes any work.

We will always tell the patient what the fee will be before the report is completed, so they can decide whether they want to go ahead.