

THAXTED SURGERY POLICY

Non-NHS Work and Fees

Policy Statement

Introduction

Thaxted Surgery provides a number of services that are not covered by our NHS contract. For example:

- accident or sickness certificates for insurance purposes
- school fee and holiday insurance certificates
- reports for health clubs to certify that patients are fit to exercise
- some travel vaccinations

Because these are not covered by the NHS, we charge a fee to cover the considerable costs of running a surgery, including staff costs, medical consumables, office expenses and overheads. If we do not charge fees, we are effectively putting more pressure on our already strained day to day NHS practice.

Our policies and our fees are aligned with guidance produced by the BMA.
<http://bma.org.uk/practical-support-at-work/pay-fees-allowances/fees>.

Charging structure

Rates are set for the following categories of work.

- **Simple letters and signatures.** This rate is applied to items taking 5 minutes or less of GP time and without any patient examination. They usually consist of 1 (max 2) paragraphs of factual statement and do not include any medical information or values from the patients record

In gauging the time, we include consultation time if the matter takes consultation time that would otherwise not have been needed.

- **Medical forms.** This rate is applied to items taking up to 15 minutes of GP time, and requiring a GP to review and summarise medical information and values from the record, but not requiring full medical examination.

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, therefore, the doctor might have to check the patient's entire medical record. Hence, even where a form is prefilled by the patient and the GP "only has to sign," this rate will be applied.

- **Medical examinations.** This is a per hour rate, and should be applied to medical examinations, including HGV, employment medicals etc. The hourly rate covers time with all clinicians.
- **Access to medical records.** This covers access to copies of medical records, and access to records on a computer screen in the surgery. Prices are in line with BMA guidance. From May 2018, with the introduction of GDPR, we no longer charge for access to medical records. We can provide on-line access for patients to view their own records, and we can provide copies by e-mail. GDPR does allow us recoup reasonable costs for repeated or otherwise "unreasonable" requests.
- **Travel Clinic and Private Medication**
A limited number of travel vaccines are provided on the NHS for public health reasons. This includes typhoid and hepatitis A. Travel vaccines not provided anywhere under the

THAXTED SURGERY POLICY

Non-NHS Work and Fees

NHS for public health reasons, are privately provided by the practice in travel clinics. Anti-malarials are also provided privately by the practice in travel clinics.

Prices for travel vaccines and anti-malarials are set to be comparable to average prices charged by private travel clinics, including an allowance for the fact that private travel clinics sometimes charge a consultation fee, which we do not.

We sometimes provide private medication – e.g. Tadalafil, Levitra. Prices for these are also set based on the average market price.

Services we do not provide

There are a some services that we have taken the decision not to provide. These are:

- Passport signatures
- Sick notes for the first seven calendar days of a patient's sickness absence. (Patients can self-certify for this period.) This includes letters to schools within the first seven days of a patient's sickness.

Time to complete forms

Time spent completing forms and preparing reports takes the GP away from the medical care of his or her patients. In addition, forms should be completed by the GP who best knows the patient, and that GP may be booked up for a couple of weeks ahead. We therefore are unable to commit to fast turnarounds for medical forms and letters. 3 to 6 weeks typical.

Urgent requests may mean that a doctor has to make special arrangements to process the form quickly, and this will cost more.

Payment Terms

Payment must usually be made at the point of picking up the documents or receiving the treatment (e.g. Travel Clinic). We accept payment by cash, cheque, credit or debit card. The exception to this is where insurance reports are sent directly to the insurer, who will then pay according to their usual terms.

Waiving and reducing fees

We often have requests to waive and/or reduce fees. We are sympathetic to our patients, particularly if they are on benefits or otherwise struggling. However, we have to be fair and open, and mindful that, if we do not charge fees, we are effectively putting more pressure on our day to day NHS practice. In order to ensure fairness and transparency, decisions on waiving or reducing fees are made by the partnership as a whole, and not by an individual clinician or member of staff.

VAT

Where the main purpose of a medical service is the 'protection, maintenance or restoration of the health of an individual' then that service is not subject to VAT. However, where the purpose of a medical service is not, primarily, the treatment of a patient (for example, the completion of medical insurance reports by a doctor), this service is subject to VAT. GP reports are therefore subject to VAT.