

Private referrals and providing Private Prescriptions

If you would like to be referred privately to a private consultant, clinic or specialist, you will usually need a letter from your GP. If using health insurance, this is usual practice. Occasionally the GP may need to complete a form.

We are happy to arrange a referral to a private service, where the GP agrees a specialist or private appointment is of benefit to your health, and are pleased to say **we will not charge for a private referral letter**. It is also possible to refer you without a GP appointment in most cases. Please contact us, preferably via our online consultation portal (Patches), to request a private referral and provide us with the following information.

- Please provide as much detail as possible as to why you wish to see a specialist. Information about your symptoms, how long you have them, what you are worried about or what you expect (e.g. a diagnosis, treatment, surgery etc), is very helpful
- Please indicate if you are self-funding, or whether you are using health insurance.
- Your GP will review your request for a referral and indicate if you need a GP appointment first.
- If you are using health insurance, you will need to contact them directly once a private referral has been agreed by your GP. You will receive details from them as to how you arrange a private appointment (some insurance companies deal with certain private providers).
- If you are self-funding the referral, you need to contact a private hospital yourself and arrange an appointment. The GP may be able to advise you on the type of specialist you need to see. You may also have to do this if you have health insurance, having been instructed to do so by your insurer.
- Once you have an appointment, please let us know (via Patches) who you are seeing, when, and where.
- We will then prepare a letter. Please let us know if you need the letter sending to you directly, to a specific consultant (please give us their contact details), or whether you wish to collect a paper copy of the letter from our surgery. Our secretaries will then contact you when the letter is

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done. We will attach any previously arranged investigations or NHS / Private letters or assessments related to your condition for their information.

- If you have a separate referral form to complete (sometimes requested by a health insurer) this is usually completed by the consultant/specialist. However, if the GP is expected to complete a referral form there will be a charge (dependent on the length of time required to complete the form)

Please note, if having had a private consultation, the specialist requests the GP to complete investigations on the NHS, we reserve the right to refuse to carry this out. It is the responsibility of the private specialist, the insurer (if applicable), and the patient, to fund further investigations recommended by the private specialist in most cases.

There is a charge of £15 to fulfil a private prescription recommended by a private specialist, and only if the GP agrees to accept clinical responsibility to do so. These take a minimum of 48 hours to complete. Please note that in most cases, **a private prescription cannot be converted to an NHS prescription**. Therefore, if your private specialist recommends a medication and provides you with a private prescription, we encourage you to use this prescription at the private hospital rather than bringing it to the surgery.

It is the position of the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board that GPs can provide some medicines to patients on the NHS following advice from a clinician in the private sector.

If you wish for the GP to prescribe a medicine There are a number of circumstances when a GPs may decline this request however, or offer to prescribe an alternative medicine.

1. GPs cannot prescribe an unlicensed medicine.

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2. GPs cannot initiate or prescribe medications classified as “specialist only” medications. More information on which medications are “specialist only” or not available on prescription on the NHS can be found at <https://www.cheshireformulary.nhs.uk/>
3. A GP may also refuse to prescribe if:
 - a. A clinical letter explaining the full rationale for the treatment has not been provided by the consultant in the private sector.
 - b. The GP feels the medicine is not clinically necessary.
 - c. The medication is prescribed outside of its licensed indication.
 - d. The medication is not one a GP would normally prescribe.
 - e. The medication needs specialist monitoring.
 - f. The use of the medication conflicts with NICE guidance or locally agreed protocols.
 - g. An equivalent but equally effective medicine is recommended locally as per the Cheshire and Merseyside Joint formulary. In this situation you will be offered an equivalent medicine if appropriate and safe.

In any of these circumstances you will retain the option of purchasing the recommended medicine via a prescription from your consultant in the private sector.

There is also no provision for refunding any money already spent on private treatment, including medicines.

Thank you for your understanding.