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1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to establish robust principles and procedures governing the fair and equitable use of the Rapid Health online booking system by all patients registered at Mickleover Medical Centre. This policy is designed to optimise accessibility, uphold clinical safety, and ensure the responsible utilisation of appointment resources in accordance with nationally recognised best practice standards.

This policy is aligned with guidance and recommendations from the British Medical Association (BMA), National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), Care Quality Commission (CQC), Royal College of General Practitioners England (RCGP England), Healthwatch England, The King's Fund, and NHS England.

2. Scope

This policy applies exclusively to patients registered at Mickleover Medical Centre who access Rapid Health for the following purposes:

- Booking appointments with General Practitioners (GPs), clinicians, or allied health professionals.
- Requesting medical advice or clinical triage through the digital platform.
- Cancelling or rescheduling existing appointments online.

This policy does not encompass bookings made via in-person visits, telephone calls, or alternative online systems managed directly by practice staff.

3. Principles of Fair Use

Mickleover Medical Centre is committed to implementing online booking practices that adhere to national digital health standards and promote equitable patient access. These principles are underpinned by BMA and NHS England guidance, as well as recommendations from CQC and The King's Fund:

- All registered patients should have equal opportunity to access online appointment facilities, without discrimination or exclusion.
- Online booking systems should incorporate robust security measures and data privacy protections in accordance with NHS England and CQC standards.
- Appointment availability should reflect clinical capacity and prioritise urgent medical needs as per NICE and RCGP England guidance.
- Feedback mechanisms should be in place to allow patients to report concerns or suggest improvements.
- Informed by Healthwatch England's advocacy for patient voice.

4. Responsible Use and Patient Responsibilities

All patients are expected to use the Rapid Health online booking system responsibly, in accordance with the following obligations:

- Patients must ensure that bookings are made for legitimate clinical reasons and refrain from reserving multiple or unnecessary appointments, in line with BMA guidance.
- Appointment slots should be cancelled or rescheduled as soon as possible if no longer required, to facilitate optimal resource utilisation for all patients.
- Persistent misuse, such as repeated no-shows or excessive cancellations, may result in restricted access to online booking, subject to review in accordance with CQC regulatory requirements.
- Patients must provide accurate and complete information when submitting booking requests or seeking clinical advice via the digital platform.
- Under specific circumstances, access to this system may be limited in order to uphold professional boundaries and ensure the safety of both staff and patients. Such restrictions may apply if a patient poses a risk to staff members or is related to someone on the clinical team.

5. Clinical Safety and Safeguarding

Mickleover Medical Centre prioritises the safety and wellbeing of all patients accessing online services.

- Online booking processes are subject to periodic review and audit to ensure compliance with NICE, CQC, and RCGP England clinical safety standards.
- Safeguarding procedures are integrated into digital triage workflows to identify and support vulnerable patients, with reference to The King's Fund and NHS England safeguarding frameworks.
- Patients requiring urgent or emergency care will be directed to appropriate services in accordance with NICE and NHS England escalation protocols.

6. Continuous Improvement and Patient Engagement

This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to substantive changes in national guidance or local practice requirements. Patient feedback will inform ongoing improvements to digital access and booking procedures, as advocated by Healthwatch England and The King's Fund.

- Patients are encouraged to engage with practice surveys and consultation initiatives relating to digital health services.
- Significant amendments to this policy will be communicated via practice noticeboards, newsletters, and the official website.

7. References

All guidance documents and further reading referenced within this policy are available at:

- NHS England. Digital Primary Care: The Good Practice Guidelines for GP electronic patient records (GPGv5). <https://www.england.nhs.uk/digital-gp-good-practice-guidance/>
- Care Quality Commission. GPs and online primary care: information for providers. <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-regulation/providers/gps>
- Royal College of General Practitioners. GP online services toolkit. <https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/mod/book/tool/print/index.php?id=13455>
- Rapid Health FAQs. Rapid Health is classified as a Class I medical device. <https://chawtonhousesurgery.co.uk/RapidHealthFAQ/>
- NHS Digital. NHS Login. <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/nhs-login>
- Guideline on safe triage and remote consultation in primary care. <https://www.nice.org.uk>

This policy reflects Mickleover Medical Centre's enduring commitment to safe, equitable, and high-quality patient care through innovative digital solutions.

This policy establishes principles and procedures to ensure that the Rapid Health online booking system is used fairly and equitably by all registered patients. It aims to optimize access, maintain clinical safety, and prevent persistent misuse of appointment slots.