

P-06-1558 Simplify and standardise the process for booking an appointment with a GP in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 2 Mawrth 2026
Petitions Committee | 2 March 2026

Reference: RS26/13164-1

Introduction

Petition Number: [P-06-1558](#)

Petition title: Simplify and standardise the process for booking an appointment with a GP in Wales

Text of petition:

It's currently very difficult to book appointments to see a GP in local surgeries. This is causing unnecessary stress for patients and it is also causing unnecessary strain on emergency departments in our hospitals.

People should be able to phone their surgery at any time (within opening hours) to arrange an appointment with a GP. People are not always available at the times specified by surgeries and this prevents working people from securing appointments.



One example is surgeries that require people to phone the surgery at 10:00am in order to arrange an appointment for the same day on the following week. This lack of flexibility does not work for people in certain job roles who are unable to hang on the phone for 30 minutes in the hope of securing an appointment. These restrictions don't work for people who would like to arrange a routine appointment further into the future as they are restricted to only being able to make appointments for the following week. These processes are clearly flawed, inflexible and work against certain members of the public.

The text provided above is submitted by the petitioner. The petitions team make every effort to ensure it preserves their authentic voice. This text has not been verified for accuracy, or errors, and may contain unverified opinions or assertions.

Mae'r testun uchod yn cael ei gyflwyno gan y deisebydd. Mae'r tîm deisebau yn gwneud pob ymdrech i sicrhau ei fod yn cadw ei lais dilys. Nid yw'r testun hwn wedi'i wirio am gywirdeb, neu wallau, a gall gynnwys barn neu honiadau heb eu gwirio.

Background

Most GPs in Wales operate as independent contractors under the General Medical Services (GMS) contract.

In December 2021, the then Minister for Health and Social Services announced changes to the GP contract aimed at improving access to appointments, including ending the “8am bottleneck”. The changes, supported by £12m of additional investment, were intended to remove the practice of releasing all appointments at 8am and to ensure patients are triaged appropriately and receive an appointment suitable for their clinical needs.

The new GP access commitment came into force on 1 April 2022. Welsh Government guidance stated that practices should offer a mix of remote, face-to-face, urgent, same-day and pre-bookable appointments, and should adopt a more planned approach to scheduling. It emphasised that releasing all appointments at 8am was no longer acceptable.

In March 2023, the Minister acknowledged that the changes represented a significant shift for many practices, noting that they would take time to fully embed, and that many patients still struggled to secure timely GP appointments.

Most recently, following the successful conclusion of negotiations for the 2025–26 GMS contract, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Jeremy Miles MS,

said further steps would be taken to strengthen the access standards. A dedicated working group will review and enhance these standards, with improvements expected from April 2026.

In its response to the Petitions Committee (5 January 2026), the Welsh Government said it had strengthened compliance around the 8am bottleneck and pre-bookable appointments, with updated guidance issued to practices. Health boards are expected to check that these standards are being maintained as part of routine GP contract management.

It also highlighted that the [NHS Wales App](#) now provides a digital way for people to view and manage certain GP appointments, with further updates planned.

Health and Social Care Committee inquiry

The Health and Social Care Committee has completed evidence gathering for its [inquiry into the future of general practice in Wales](#). The Committee also held an evidence session with the patient voice organisation [Llais](#) to better understand people's experiences of accessing GP services. The Committee's report is expected to be published before the end of the current Senedd term.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.