

# **South Cluster Home Visiting Policy (Eligibility Criteria)**

## **Stockton Heath Medical Practice, Latchford Medical Practice, Appleton Medical Centre, Stretton Medical Centre, Brookfield Surgery and Lakeside Surgery**

### **Background**

The South Cluster of General Practices have developed a cluster wide home visiting policy which establishes the eligibility criteria applied to home visits and sets clear parameters to what constitutes a home visit and what does not. It is recognised that home visits are not effective use of a GPs time and therefore have to be restricted to those patients who really need them in order that a GPs capacity is used most effectively.

CQC guidance 250 ratifies the need for a home visiting prioritisation framework with a clear process and timescales.

### **Who is Eligible?**

Patients whose illness prevents them from attending the surgery can be visited in their own homes because this is clinically safer for the patient. In response to the home visit request a doctor or nurse may phone the patient back as it may be that the problem can be dealt with by telephone advice, or that it would be more appropriate to send a nurse, or indeed to arrange a hospital attendance.

GP home visits make clinical sense and are the best way of giving a medical opinion in cases involving:

- Terminally ill patients
- The truly house bound patient for whom travel to the premises by car would cause a deterioration in their medical condition and/or severe discomfort and do not normally get out of their home.

### **Home visit request for an acutely ill patient**

- A Heart attack
- Severe Shortness of breath
- Severe haemorrhage

For acutely ill patients an ambulance should be called immediately either by the caller or the practice. The acutely ill patient may then be supported by a GP's attendance to prepare them to travel to hospital, this is based upon the GPs other commitments and ability to get to the home before the ambulance.

## **Conditions not classed as being eligible for a home visit**

### **Child Illness and Common Symptoms:**

- childhood fevers,
- cold, cough,
- earache,
- headache,
- Diarrhoea/vomiting (D&V) and most cases of abdominal pain. In cases of D&V the staff may ask you attend the practice at non peak times to avoid cross contamination and spreading the condition to other patients.

These children are usually well enough to travel by car and home visits will not normally be supported by a home visit. The Practice is not expected to pay or arrange for any transport.

### **Adults Illness and Common Symptoms:**

- cough,
- sore throat,
- influenza,
- back pain and abdominal pain

These patients should be seen in the GP Surgery and are not eligible for a home visit.

### **Elderly Patients**

Common problems in the elderly, such as poor mobility, joint pain and general malaise would also be best treated by having a consultation at the Doctors surgery where the facilities are available for a full examination and investigations.

The exception would be the truly **house-bound** elderly patient.

## **Patients Living in Care Homes**

The criteria for patients living in a care home **are exactly the same** as a patient who lives in the community. Eligibility for a home visit will only apply to:

- Terminally ill patients
- The truly house bound patient for whom travel to the premises by car would cause a deterioration in their medical condition and/or severe discomfort. These are patients who do not normally get out of their home.

## **Home Visit request for acutely ill patient**

- A Heart attack
- Severe Shortness of breath
- Severe haemorrhage

An ambulance should be called immediately either by the care home or the practice. The acutely ill patient may then be supported by a GP's attendance to prepare them to travel to hospital, this is based upon the GPs other commitments and ability to get to the home before the ambulance.

## **Decision Making Pathways**

It is accepted that dependent upon the size and demography of the practice involved there may be slightly different operational pathways for prioritising and processing home visits. It is noted that the General Practice can and will operate a degree of flexibility if they believe the home visit is in the best interest of the patient, is feasible and clinically safe to do so.

Appendix 1 – Patient Poster outlining the Eligibility Criteria

## **SOUTH CLUSTER OF GENERAL PRACTICES**

Stockton Heath Medical Practice, Latchford Medical Practice, Appleton Medical Centre, Stretton Medical Centre, Brookfield Surgery and Lakeside Surgery

### **NOTICE FOR PATIENTS WHEN TO REQUEST A HOME VISIT?**

Please note that eligibility for a Home Visit is restricted to those patients that are:

- Terminally ill
- The truly house bound patient for whom travel to the premises by car would cause a deterioration in their medical condition and/or severe discomfort and do not normally get out of the house.

The South Cluster of General Practices are working together to provide better access, services and care for patients and have established the home visiting eligibility criteria to ensure we are making best use of GP time and the available resources. Only patients fitting the criteria will be visited at home by a GP and all other patients will be asked to attend the practices.

Thank you for your cooperation