Dear GP colleagues

**Implementation of a Patient Initiated Follow Up approach**

As you will be aware, at the end of July 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement wrote to all local NHS systems to set out the [third phase of the NHS response](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/07/20200731-Phase-3-letter-final-1.pdf) to COVID-19. This highlighted the recovery of elective activity levels as a key priority and referenced patient initiated follow up (PIFU) as one intervention that can support this within outpatient services.

PIFU describes when a patient, or their carer, can initiate their follow-up appointments as and when required, e.g. when their symptoms or circumstances change. This helps empower patients to take control of their own care and frees up our capacity to see patients when they need it the most. You can get more information about PIFU in the [Implementing Phase 3 Guidance](https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/implementing-phase-3-of-the-nhs-response-to-the-covid-19-pandemic/) (pages 19-26).

We are already utilising the PIFU approach across a number of specialties within our outpatient services. We plan to further use this approach over time.

Instead of routinely booking a follow up appointment for the patient at a specified point in the future, some patients will be asked to contact the hospital to request an appointment if and when they need one, e.g. during a flare-up. This option will be available to these patients for a fixed length of time, dependent on the specialty. After this length of time has elapsed, the patients will either be discharged from the service, or we will book an appointment with them.

PIFU will not be suitable for all patients and the decision to put a patient on a PIFU pathway will be led by their clinician on a case by case basis, based on the patient’s individual needs, circumstances and preferences.

After the patient has agreed to be on a PIFU pathway, they will receive relevant information about their condition along with symptoms to watch out for and how to book an appointment if required. As their GP, we will copy you on this information.

We hope this will also help GPs by freeing up your time and reducing the workload created by chasing up follow up appointments on behalf of your patients.

For queries, or if you would like some more information, please contact

Yours faithfully