

Walderslade Surgery

Fees for Non NHS Work

(Why GPs Charge Fees)

The Government's contract with GPs covers only medical services to NHS patients. However, more and more organisations seem to involve doctors in a range of non-medical work which takes time away from their clinical responsibilities. Sometimes there is absolutely no reason for a GP's involvement, and the only reason that GPs are asked is because they are in a position of trust in the community, or because an insurance company or employer wants to ensure that the information provided to them is accurate.

Surely the doctor is being paid anyway?

It is important to understand that GPs are not employed by the NHS. They are self-employed and they have to cover their costs – staff, building rent, heating, lighting, stationery etc – in the same way as any small business. The NHS does not cover these costs for any non-NHS work undertaken. The fees charged by GPs contribute towards their running costs.

Some examples of non-NHS services for which GPs can charge their own NHS patients

Accident or sickness certificates for insurance purposes; holiday cancellation certificates; medical insurance reports.

Do GPs have to do non-NHS work for their patients?

With certain limited exceptions, GPs are not obliged to carry out any non-NHS work on behalf of their patients. Whilst GPs always attempt to assist their patients with the completion of forms, they are *not required* to do this.

I only need the doctor's signature – what is the problem?

When a doctor signs a certificate or completes a report, it is a condition of remaining on the Medical Register that they only sign what they know to be true. In other words, a doctor's career and livelihood depends on the accuracy of the document to which they are attesting their name. Carelessness or inaccurate reporting can have serious consequences for the doctor with the General Medical Council or even the police. They could be putting their career on the line, simply based on your word.

The preparation and completion of forms can be time consuming. The GPs must prioritise their NHS work i.e. offering appointments and urgent/non-urgent administration associated with patient care over completing forms and reports.

It is our aim to complete non-nhs work within two weeks of receipt.

Is there a standard or recommended fee that a GP should charge for specific work?

It is up to individual GP practices to decide how much they will charge, given that this work:

- (1) is undertaken in doctors' own personal time outside of office hours.
- (2) has potential medico-legal implications for the GP, *and*
- (3) is not obligatory

How do the fees we charge compare to elsewhere?

Most surgeries charge at a similar rate to solicitors for this type of work. Walderslade has always kept its fees substantially low, *and* does not add additional VAT. The price you are quoted is the total price you will have to pay.