



Extended hours DES update

The 2017/18 changes to the GP contract included the condition that meant practices who regularly close for a half day, on a weekly basis, will not ordinarily qualify to deliver the Extended Hours DES.

The contract was not specific on what 'open' means. Ros Roughton, NHS England's Director of NHS Commissioning told MPs on 10 March her view was that services which met the level of 'reasonable needs' of patients were:

'...[as a patient] you should be able to phone your practice and book an appointment, pick up a prescription, drop off a specimen. If results come into the practice that require urgent attention there should be someone there to pick that up...'

Londonwide LMCs has further discussed this with NHS England and conclude that in order to satisfy the requirements of being 'open' and qualify to deliver the Extended Hours DES, practices should ensure that:

the practice door should be open during core hours, ie, 8:00am-6:30pm

a receptionist should be on duty

the telephone should be answered by a person in the practice

as a minimum, the patient should be able to book appointments at reception or by phone, collect and drop in repeat prescription requests/insurance forms/specimens and ask about test results

a doctor should be contactable for urgent advice. This does not necessarily mean that the doctor must be at the practice premises but that he/she must be contactable to provide the patient with urgent advice. The clinical decision may be to advise the patient on appropriate management of their condition, and to determine when and where the patient should be appropriately seen

As was originally agreed between NHS England and the General Practitioners Committee, if a practice wants to participate in the extended hours DES but felt it necessary to close for half a day, their case would be looked at on its own merits, eg, a branch practice may not need to be kept open.

If you have any queries about this, please contact gpsupport@lmc.org.uk.