

choose and book

Linda Piper

Patient, Southmead and Henbury Family Practice, Bristol

Linda Piper has been a patient at The Southmead and Henbury Family Practice for as long as she can remember. Recently Linda was referred to Bristol Eye Hospital by her GP using Choose and Book, a new electronic booking service that lets patients choose their hospital and the date and time of their first outpatient appointment.

Choose and Book allows GPs to shortlist appropriate hospitals for their patients to choose from. Patients can then make an appointment then and there in the surgery, over the phone with the Appointments Line, or online at www.healthspace.nhs.uk/chooseandbook. Sometimes, a staff member of the GP practice can make an appointment without the patient even being present. Patient Linda Piper explains:

“I had been to see my optometrist to get my eyes tested and they noticed that a cataract had formed in one of my eyes. After my consultation they wrote a letter to my GP, Dr Goldie, explaining my problem and asking him to refer me to hospital for treatment.

“Dr Goldie called me when he received the letter and told me that he could book my appointment through Choose and Book over the phone without me coming into the practice. We discussed the local choices available to treat my condition and I chose to go to the Bristol Eye Hospital as I had been



there before, and they held my previous notes.”

“Some of my friends have also used Choose and Book to be referred through to a specialist, and some of them have chosen to travel to be seen at a hospital which they wouldn't have normally considered.”

Dr Goldie says, “Being able to refer patients into a booked appointment over the phone in a situation like Linda's saves time all round. Not only does it save Linda an unnecessary trip to the surgery to see us, it opens up slots for our other patients that we do need to see.

“Looking at the big picture, Choose and Book provides a level of security to patients that we were unable to achieve with the old system. Patients now have the confidence of knowing when and where they are going to be seen immediately, and we can send the

patient's referral letter and test results electronically so that all relevant information is available to the specialist at the click of a button.”

Linda continues; “I chose a date when I was available to go into the hospital and received a letter confirming the date and time of my appointment in the post a few days later. It really does make the whole process easy, and I do like the idea of knowing when my appointment will be straight away.”

“I see this as a big step forward for patients, especially those of us who are busy and aren't always able to change their plans at the drop of a hat. I no longer work, but I can imagine that the flexibility of Choose and Book would be fantastic for those who lead busy lives at work, look after children, or who travel a lot. It really does make sense.”

Linda Piper