

When you decide to see a private specialist for a consultation — whether in-person or via online video appointments — one common concern is how your existing NHS care team will stay informed. Will the private specialist share information about your diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up care with your NHS GP and other healthcare professionals involved in your care? Understanding how information sharing works between private providers and the NHS is essential for seamless, coordinated care.

Why Clinician Qualifications Matter More Than the Location

One of the first things to remember is that the quality and qualifications of the specialist you see matter far more than whether your appointment is remote or face-to-face. Whether your consultation happens in a brick-and-mortar clinic or via remote video appointments through a secure platform, the clinicians should be fully registered specialists with appropriate certifications and expertise.

Specialists working in reputable private clinics or independent practices in the UK must usually hold GMC registration and have recognised credentials in their field. Their training and experience ensure they can provide expert advice, diagnosis, and treatment regardless of how or where you see them.

So, while location and appointment format affect convenience and accessibility, they don't determine the quality of the care or the professionalism applied to your medical records and communication with your broader care team.

Remote Consultations vs In-Person Appointments: What You Need to Know

Remote consultations — often conducted as online video appointments — have become increasingly popular for convenience and access, especially for follow-up visits or second opinions. However, it is essential to clarify with your private provider:

- Exactly how your appointment will be structured (e.g., a full specialist review or a quick advice session)
- Who exactly you will speak to during the consultation (consultant, specialist nurse, or another clinician)
- What is expected of you during the remote session in terms of preparation and engagement

Many patients worry whether remote appointments might impact the depth of assessment or quality of communication. While in-person visits allow physical examination and direct interaction, many specialties have adapted well to remote methods without compromising care standards.

However, one thing to watch out for is the clarity of follow-up plans, including any coordination with your NHS team. Avoid vague descriptions of "quick consults" where follow-up responsibility remains uncertain.

Existing Care Team Updates: How Information Sharing Works

By default, private specialists are independent from the NHS, but effective communication is vital for your ongoing care. Here's how information sharing typically happens:

1. **Clinic Letters to GP:** After your consultation, the private specialist usually writes a detailed clinic letter summarising their findings, diagnosis, treatment recommendations, and any requested investigations. This letter is then sent to your NHS GP to update your existing records.
2. **Patient Consent and Preferences:** Private clinics will often ask your permission to share information with your GP to comply with data protection laws. You can discuss your preferences regarding what is shared and

whether your wider care team should be informed.

3. **Emergency or Urgent Sharing:** In urgent cases, information may be shared rapidly to ensure safe coordination, but this is usually highlighted upfront during your appointment planning.

Sharing information ensures your NHS GP stays informed about new diagnoses and treatments, reducing the risk of duplicated tests or medication interactions. It also helps maintain continuity of care if you return solely to NHS services later on.

Preparing Your Symptom Notes and Medication Lists for a Private Specialist

To make the most of your private specialist consultation and facilitate effective communication with your NHS care team, preparation is crucial:

- **Symptom Notes:** Write down clear and detailed notes about your symptoms, including their duration, triggers, severity, and any changes over time. Note how symptoms affect your daily life.
- **Medication Lists:** Prepare a comprehensive and up-to-date list of all medications, vitamins, over-the-counter products, and supplements you are taking, including dosages and frequency.
- **Previous Diagnoses and Investigations:** Gather any past test results, imaging reports, and letters from other doctors, whether from NHS or private clinics.
- **Questions and Concerns:** Write down any questions you want to ask during the consultation, especially about how the specialist's recommendations might fit with your existing NHS care.

Handing over this information during your appointment will help the private specialist understand your situation better, ensure accurate documentation, and create a clear clinic letter for your GP or care team.

Asking Questions During and After Your Private Consultation

Never underestimate the importance of active communication in private consultations. Here are some tips to ensure you get clarity:

- **Ask "Who exactly will I speak to?"** Identify the clinician's role and credentials so you know as much as possible about their expertise.
- **Request a clear explanation of next steps.** Confirm whether the specialist or their clinic will be sending information to your NHS GP and if you will receive a copy.
- **Inquire about follow-up appointments or investigations.** Clarify who arranges these and how coordination with your NHS care team is managed.
- **Check if you can contact the clinic afterward.** Knowing how to ask follow-up questions or seek clarifications can ease anxiety and improve outcomes.
- **Avoid unclear phrases.** If your appointment is described as a "quick consult," ask for specifics—what that means for your care and whether it suffices or further review is needed.

Summary Checklist for Your First Private Specialist Appointment

Step Action Why It Matters 1 Confirm clinician's exact name, role, and qualifications Ensures you know who you will be speaking to and builds trust 2 Clarify if appointment is remote or in-person and appointment format

Prepares you mentally and technically, especially for online video appointments 3 Prepare detailed symptom notes and medication list Aids accurate diagnosis and comprehensive reporting 4 Ask about information sharing protocols and clinic letters to your GP Ensures your NHS care team remains updated and informed 5 Request clear next steps, including follow-up plans and contact info Prevents being rushed off call without a plan and reduces confusion

Final Thoughts

Seeing a private specialist can be a positive step forward in managing your health, but close attention to information sharing helps you avoid fragmented care. Clinician qualifications and professionalism matter above all else — not the physical location of care. Remote consultations through online video appointments can be equally effective, provided there's clear communication about who you'll see, how information flows, and what your next steps are.



Being proactive by preparing your symptom notes, understanding how clinic letters to your GP work, and asking pertinent questions during your consultation will help you integrate private care with your existing NHS care team. This approach ensures you receive the best coordinated care without surprises or gaps in communication.

