

You're not alone. Many patients in the UK feel stuck in a cycle of episodic care—where every visit to the NHS (National Health Service) feels like starting over. For LGBTQ+ people over 50, this can be especially frustrating, contributing to mistrust, isolation, and poorer health outcomes. If you've ever wished you could see the same doctor consistently, or wondered why your care feels so disjointed, this post is for you.

We'll unpack why continuity of care (seeing the same healthcare professional across visits) matters, explore real challenges facing LGBTQ+ older adults, and offer practical care coordination tips. Plus, we'll highlight trusted community resources like Opening Doors and Gay London Life Events Diary to help you find support outside the clinic. You'll also get hints on using WhatsApp and Pinterest to stay organised and connected.

What Is Episodic Care and Why Is It a Problem?

Last month, I was working with a client who was shocked by the final bill. Episodic care means healthcare that happens in isolated "episodes" rather than as part of a continuous relationship. Imagine seeing a different GP or nurse every time you visit, recounting your story from scratch, and feeling like your unique history isn't fully understood or respected.

While NHS walk-in centres and urgent care are great for emergencies, they are not designed to provide ongoing management for chronic conditions or complex needs. Without continuity of care—sometimes called *care coordination*—patients often:

- Receive duplicate or conflicting advice
- Undergo repeated tests or procedures
- Experience delays in diagnosis or treatment
- Feel alienated or mistrustful of the NHS

This is more than inconvenient—it can lead to worse health outcomes, especially if conditions are first diagnosed late or deteriorate unnoticed.

Why Continuity of Care Is Crucial in the UK's NHS System

Continuity of care means building a trusting relationship with a named General Practitioner (GP) or healthcare team, ideally based at your local surgery. When you see the same doctor or nurse regularly, they understand your medical history, lifestyle, and preferences, enabling more personalised and timely care.

For people living alone or those without family involved in their care—common among LGBTQ+ older adults—having a consistent clinical relationship provides:

- **Safety:** Early warning signs of health problems are more likely to be caught promptly.
- **Trust:** Being known and respected lowers barriers to honest communication.
- **Emotional support:** Healthcare can feel less transactional, reducing feelings of isolation.

Continuity of Care GP UK: What To Ask Your Surgery

If you want to improve continuity, here's a tiny checklist of questions to ask your GP practice manager or receptionist:

1. Can I register for a named GP who I will see regularly?

2. What is the policy for booking follow-up appointments with the same doctor?
3. How can I contact my GP team between appointments if needed?
4. Are there LGBTQ+-friendly clinicians I could request to see?

Remember to keep these questions in your phone's notes app or use the WhatsApp share function to send yourself reminders before calls.



The Role of Trust and Discrimination in Healthcare Access

Ever notice how unfortunately, many LGBTQ+ people, especially those over 50, have experienced discrimination or misunderstanding in medical settings. This can lead to avoiding or delaying care, which worsens outcomes. Anecdotal reports and research show:

- Fear of judgment discourages full disclosure of lifestyle, symptoms, or mental health struggles.
- Healthcare professionals sometimes lack cultural competency regarding chosen families or trans health.
- Past negative experiences contribute to mistrust of NHS services.

If you've felt this way, organisations like Opening Doors offer safe spaces, signposting, and advocacy specifically for LGBTQ+ people over 50. Their peer support can help you navigate your care options with confidence.

When Care Feels Discriminatory: What To Do

It's empowering to know you can challenge or report poor treatment:

1. Ask to speak confidentially with the GP practice manager if you feel uncomfortable.
2. Use NHS complaints procedures if needed — details are usually on your doctor's website.
3. Seek advice from LGBTQ+ health organisations like Opening Doors.

Isolation, Living Alone, and the Importance of Chosen Family

Living alone in later life is more common among LGBTQ+ people due to estrangement from birth families or partners passing away. This isolation can worsen mental and physical health, especially when the NHS isn't equipped to see beyond immediate clinical needs.



Many rely on “chosen families” — close friends or support networks who may not have legal standing but act as carers or advocates. Unfortunately, in mainstream NHS care, this social reality is often overlooked.

What You Can Do to Support Your Chosen Family's Involvement

- Make sure your chosen family members are named as Next of Kin or in your medical records.
- Complete a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) for health and care decisions if possible.
- Inform your GP practice about who you want involved in your care.

These legal steps help ensure your chosen family can speak for you in appointments or emergencies. If you want to keep this information handy or share tips with your friends, try visually organising your notes on a Pinterest board, then share the link.

Late Presentation and Worse Outcomes: A Harsh Reality

Because of episodic care, discrimination, or isolation, LGBTQ+ people over 50 often present to NHS services later in the course of illness. Late diagnosis naturally leads to worse prognosis, heavier treatment, and sometimes avoidable complications.

By prioritising continuity of care and strong communication, you can:

- Ensure regular health checks and screenings are not missed.
- Spot changes in health or mental wellbeing early.
- Build a healthcare relationship where you feel heard and believed.

Practical Care Coordination Tips for Patients

If you feel bounced between appointments and want to take control, here's a checklist to keep your care smoother:

1. **Be Your Own Historian:** Keep a simple, up-to-date record of diagnoses, medications, test results, and hospital visits. Apps like Notes on your phone or even a Pinterest board with scanned documents and dates can help.

2. **Ask for Written Summaries:** After appointments, request a summary letter or printout of your care plan.
3. **Share Your List:** Before new appointments, text or email your care history (securely) to minimise repeated storytelling.
4. **Use NHS Resources:** The NHS website has detailed advice on contacting GPs, booking appointments, and accessing urgent care.
5. **Connect with LGBTQ+ Peer Support:** Opening Doors and local events listed on the Gay London Life Events Diary can reduce isolation and provide advice on navigating services.

Summary Table: Strategies vs Challenges

Challenge	Strategy	Why It Helps
Seeing different doctors every visit	Request a named GP and book follow-ups with them	Builds trust and ensures personalised care
Feeling misunderstood or discriminated against	Contact LGBTQ+ services like Opening Doors for advocacy	Supports you in accessing respectful, competent care
Living alone and isolated	Establish chosen family legally (LPA, Next of Kin) and involve them	Ensures you have advocates during appointments and care
Broad health history and confusing care pathways	Keep a personal record and share with healthcare teams	Improves care coordination and avoids repeat tests

Final Thoughts

Stopping episodic care and building continuity is challenging but essential, particularly for LGBTQ+ older adults navigating complex health and social landscapes. You have the right to ask for a named GP, to be involved in your care planning, and to access respectful, consistent healthcare.

Use tools like WhatsApp to remind yourself to book appointments or prepare questions, and Pinterest to keep important care information organised visually. Reach out to community groups such as Opening Doors for personalised support, and check out social and wellbeing events tailored for LGBTQ+ older people on the Gay London Life Events Diary to reduce isolation.

Remember, credible care isn't about fast fixes or hand-wavy wellness claims—it's about consistent relationships, respect, and coordinated effort between you and your healthcare providers.

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