

PPG Newsletter June 2021

PRACTICE UPDATE

Thank you for reading this. The pandemic has affected all of us and we sympathise with all of the issues it has caused.

It has been a memorable year that is for sure. And a difficult one for staff and patients alike.

You may have read GPs have been quiet during this pandemic. In the last 12 months, we have answered 40,000 queries and requests from our websites, more than 200,000 telephone calls and offered more than 100,000 patient contacts. In fact, we have never been busier. This does not include the 10,000 and more calls to book patients for their vaccinations, and the thousands we ourselves have vaccinated (all in our own time).

We are sorry if there are delays in getting through on the phone. We are employing more staff than ever before answering patient queries, but patients are ringing with more complex and more time-consuming questions. Undoubtedly, many people are worried and long delays for treatment at the hospital isn't helping either.

But SSG has always been about trying to make the most of what we have. So in the next year or so these are just some of the plans that we will hope will make a difference.

- 1/ We are working on making sure patients on long term conditions have minimal visits to the surgery. We are rolling all the blood tests into one visit and checking that these tests have been done properly at the review and then patients discharged with medication preauthorised for a year. This will reduce typical contacts over 12 months from more than 20 to about 5.
- 2/ We are looking at projects to help improve continuity. Often patients want to speak to a doctor, any doctor, because they feel they cannot wait but often it would be better to wait a little while and speak to the clinician who really understands what is going on. We are training staff and designing processes to help with that.
- 3/ We try to reduce GP workload and our brilliant reception and admin teams contribute enormously to that and we will continue to develop that.
- 4/ We will be looking again at the patients who do not attend and reducing this burden to free up more capacity.
- 5/ We are looking at the appointment attendance pattern of those who are frequent attenders to analyse the reasons for this. There may be a host of other services and contacts that would be better suited and more effective in their care.
- 6/ You don't always need to see a nurse or a doctor. We have already teamed up with a mental health practitioner and there are other professionals we plan to offer to patients including a dietician, physiotherapist, pharmacists and link workers.

Please be assured we are working hard to ensure you get the care you need at the time that you need. But it does mean that reception will ask brief questions so they can assess better who you need to see. They are wholly trusted by the GPs to do this.

We hope that the pandemic will ease, and we will get back to normal. We know it has been a difficult time. There is just one note I would like to add. Please always speak to the team with respect, indeed as equals. Unfortunately, as well as some of the shouting and language we get, some patients belittle a person trying to help them. This can be far more upsetting than shouting and we consider it a more grievous breach of our zero-tolerance policy.

James Foster, Practice Manager



PPG UPDATE

A lot has happened since our last newsletter in January 2020. We have all had to learn to live in a very different way.

The PPG has still been there, but not quite in the active way that we had been previously.

As a group, we still meet via Zoom during Lockdown and we are looking forward to being able to meet up in person again, hopefully soon. When we do meet up in person again, we will be looking at restarting Chit Chat, our monthly community get together at the Old Chapel site, which had been going for just over a year when Covid-19 struck. We had many regular visitors, and many more who dropped in as a one off or on a semi-regular basis. We have heard from some of the regulars that they are looking forward to coming back, as they miss the contact. With this in mind we are actively working on making this happen when it can. Everyone is welcome.



If you think you would like to come along to these monthly coffee mornings, watch out for details of the reopening in the surgery and notice boards elsewhere. Also, if you think you might be interested in volunteering at Chit Chat, please let the surgery know and we will give you a call and let you know more.

Noreen Neal, Chair PPG



REFLECTION

Many things have changed since the first lockdown in March 2020. No doubt many of you have noticed changes at our surgeries, both in the precautions with social distancing and health questions before being allowed in. Covid-19 has meant that the surgeries have had to adapt to keep both staff and patients safe. The necessity for social distancing, more cleaning down of work areas, staff being on door duty and checking temperatures has meant that the way we received treatment and access to medical practices has had to change.

So, the past 18 months have been challenging for staff as well as us patients. Whilst many people have been able to work safely from home, all the staff at both surgeries have turned up day in and day out to take care of patients while facing the possibility of catching the virus.

Our practice has been open, and staff has still managed to be there for us all throughout this difficult time. My personal experience of help from the practice over the Pandemic started in March 2020 when my husband and I both went down with Covid. Personally, I was just unwell for a few days, but my husband was taken to the N&N on 28th March and I didn't get to see him again for nearly 8 weeks. During this time, when on 3 occasions it looked like he wouldn't make it the surgery were there for me, phoning and checking on how I was coping with the stress. When he eventually came home the surgery were there for him checking up on his progress. We benefitted from the support and knowing that the doctors and nurses would be there for us.

Another PPG member recalls running to the surgery for his annual blood test recently when he fell hard, got up with the help of a kind passer-by, arrived at the door with a bloody, bashed up face, hand and leg and said, 'I'm here for my blood test'. The nurse patched him up expertly and then took his blood sample, while the reception desk rang his wife to come and pick him up as he was a 'little shaken'.

So, please do remember when you have trouble getting through on the phone, or you have to wait longer for an appointment, all the staff are there for you and working hard, with your health and treatment seriously in mind.

This link below is a message of similar experiences and reflection from another practice close-by to ours.

https://fb.watch/5EDDfJo1_1/

Noreen