

Summer
Newsletter
August 2023

Ouse Valley Practice



this issue

Message from the Partners **P.1**

Dispensary & Flu Update **P.2**

Other Practice Updates **P.3**

Zero Tolerance

Unfortunately over the last few months we have noticed a significant increase in verbal abuse, abuse on social media and threatening behaviour towards our staff. This leads to distress for our staff and concerns about retention of staff and therefore the ability to continue to provide the services we offer.

Ouse Valley Practice supports the government's 'Zero Tolerance' campaign for NHS staff. This states that staff working in GP surgeries have a right to care for others without being attacked or abused. To successfully provide these services a mutual respect between all the staff and patients has to be in place. All our staff aim to be polite, helpful and sensitive to all patients' individual needs and circumstances.

Aggressive and abusive behaviour will not be tolerated and can lead to removal from the practice list.

Message from the Partners

Dear Patients at Ouse Valley Practice,

We hope you are all enjoying the Summer weather and are taking time to look after yourselves and others.

We want to thank you for your patience and understanding during a very difficult time for the whole of the NHS and in particular General Practice. Nationwide, there has been a significant increase in demand on General Practice since COVID and those pressures can be seen here in Mid Sussex. We have noticed a significant increase in demand for appointments, patients presenting with more complex health needs and we are now often managing patients who would previously be managed in Secondary Care due to the pressures also being experienced by the hospitals.

We are aware that there have been several concerns and suggestions raised and we have listened to these and made some changes to the practice. Here are just a few examples:

1. **You mentioned that you would prefer more Face to Face appointments rather than telephone appointments :** We have now changed our appointments so at least 80% of all our appointments are now Face to Face.

2. **You mentioned that you would like to be able to book more appointments online:** We are gradually rolling out the ability to be able to book more appointments online and through our text messaging system.
3. **You mentioned that you would like to be able to book appointments in advance more easily:** As well as routine appointments which are usually bookable a month in advance we are also able to offer appointments within 1 or 2 weeks. We also have a limited number of appointments available for the same day for acute, urgent conditions.
4. **You mentioned that you would like to be able to get through on the telephone more easily:** We are aware that sometimes it can be very difficult to get through on the telephone and apologise for this but unfortunately the demand is so high. We have recently updated our telephone lines and have changed our process so that between 8:30 and 9am our reception desk is not open so that there are more members of staff able to answer the phone.

We thank you for your patience and understanding.
Many Thanks
Drs Hardingham, Camilleri, Farrant and Briggs

Flu Vaccination Clinic update – 2023

Although we are still in the summer holiday season we are already planning our flu vaccination clinics.

We will be initially offering 2 Saturday morning clinics in September / October (dates TBC) at Handcross and additional clinics in both Handcross and Balcombe. We will be sending out Text Messages to eligible patients in August with details on how to book an appointment.

We have been notified that the eligible groups this year will include:

- Those aged 65 or over
- Those aged 6 months to 65 in clinical risk groups
- Pregnant women
- All children aged 2 or 3 on 31st August 2023
- Patients in long stay care homes
- Primary school aged children (this will be offered through the schools)
- Carers
- Frontline health care workers
- Close contacts of immunocompromised patients

Unlike previous years patients aged 50-64yrs of age, not in a clinical risk group will NOT be eligible as per the government advice.



Ouse Valley Practice Dispensary Update

We are very grateful for your continued support to the dispensary at both Handcross and Balcombe. For many it is a lifeline as they live in rural communities and do not drive, as well as the ease of being able to collect your prescription immediately after seeing a Healthcare professional. We really value your ongoing support to be able to continue this service and apologise if your experience of the dispensary hasn't been at the standard you would expect or the standard we would hope to deliver earlier in the year.

We have listened to many of your comments and made some significant changes which we hope will improve the service we offer.

1. **You said that you would like steps taken to improve confidentiality at the Handcross dispensary :** Unfortunately with the building at Handcross we have no alternative location for the

dispensary so to be able to facilitate this we have reintroduced the ticketing system. We apologise that this has had teething problems but hope that now the dispensary is working more efficiently this will be beneficial and help to maintain your confidentiality.

2. **You mentioned that you were experiencing delays in receiving prescriptions:** Due to difficulties in recruitment and staff sickness we have had significant staff shortages in the dispensary over the Spring months. Our staff have worked tirelessly to try and ensure that your prescriptions are available. We have now successfully recruited a new dispensary manager and new dispensers and this has improved. We now aim to have your prescription ready for collection within 5 days of requesting it.

3. **You mentioned that you would like us to review the opening hours of the dispensary:** Due to staff shortages we have had to reduce the number of hours the counter is open to allow the dispensers to have time to dispense medications in a safe and uninterrupted environment. Once our new dispensary staff are fully inducted and trained within the practice we will review these hours and look at extending the hours from the current opening times.

4. We have decided to remove the re-ordering facility for repeat medications which we used to offer. This will ensure that the correct medications at the correct dose are requested each month at the most appropriate time and aim to reduce waste for the NHS. To request your monthly medications please either request via the SystemOnline app, e-mail the dispensary at sxicb-wsx.ousevalleyprescribing@nhs.net or put your request in writing. To help prevent any errors we will not be able to accept verbal requests.

Thank you



Wellbeing Walks at Nymans Gardens

Our Social Prescriber, Pam Murray and our Care Coordinator, Sharon Woolven have been organising regular "Wellbeing Walks" in conjunction with Nymans Gardens, National Trust in Handcross.

These have been really enjoyed and have been found to be very beneficial to many patients. Patients have told us that they have seen an improvement in mood and emotional wellbeing as well as developing new friendships. Patients have also noted a reduction in social isolation and an improvement in their

physical mobility.

Here is feedback from one of our patients who has participated in this initiative.

"The free access vouchers from The Social Prescribing Project are a real bonus and I would personally like to thank Nyman's for participating in this venture. I have found the scheme invaluable and it has been great to meet up with everyone, who have now become friends, and I feel I can go up on a Monday and meet up with the others for a leisurely walk, refreshments and a chat in the café."

We have managed to go out in all weathers and be able to see the changing scenery, even weekly, as things change so rapidly. The staff and volunteers in the house and gardens have been most welcoming and informative and make the outings something to really look forward to. Thank you."

If you wanted to find out more about these walks and the scheme please contact Pam or Sharon via Reception at Ouse Valley Practice.

GP Training

At Ouse Valley Practice we are committed to help train the next generation of GPs.

To qualify as a GP, individuals are required to complete their medical degree (5 or 6 years studying), work for a minimum of 2 years as a hospital Doctor and then begin GP training which lasts for a minimum of 3 years.

During the first 2 years of GP training (ST1 and ST2) the Doctor spends some of their time working in General Practice (4 or 8 months placements) but also experiences some hospital specialities such as Paediatrics, A&E, Gynaecology and Mental Health.

In the trainee's final year of GP training (ST3) they spend a whole year working in one GP surgery. We support GP trainees at all levels of their training. As they are qualified Doctors they are able to practice independently but are always supervised by an experienced GP and are able to debrief at the end of each clinic or ask for support during your appointment with them.

In August we welcomed several new trainees including Dr Girish Murali (ST3), Dr Jacob Rees (ST3), Dr Mohammed Karim (ST3) , Dr Molly Horton (ST2) , Dr Aisling Burns (ST2) and Dr Yalda Kazempour.

We thank you for your support in helping to train your future GPs.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

We are planning to restart our PPG meetings in early Autumn and are looking for volunteers to join the group.

The PPG is a group where you can help provide constructive suggestions to help the surgery work as well as it can for patients, staff and doctors

We plan to meet quarterly and would be looking for volunteers within the PPG to help with organising the meetings, minuting etc.

More information about PPGs can be found at <https://www.patients-association.org.uk/>.

If you are interested please e-mail the practice for the attention of Sharon Shotter at sxicb-wsx.ousevalleypractice@nhs.net

Drug Shortages

Unfortunately over the last few months there have been several national drug shortages which have been out of our control. These have affected a range of drugs including HRT preparations, diabetic medications and creams.

We continue to try and resource these from our three suppliers but if needed we may need to prescribe an alternative.

Commented [BK1]:

Online access

We would encourage all patients to be able to have access Patient Online Service (SystemOnline). If you don't have access to SystemOnline please ask Reception. You will be required to show a valid form of photo ID.

With this access you are able to request prescriptions, book online appointments and cancel appointments.



NHS Health Checks

In the coming months if you are aged between 40 and 74 years of age you may receive an invite to attend an NHS Health check. We are initially starting inviting patients with additional risk factors.

An NHS Health Check is a 30 minute appointment with one of our Health Care Assistants. It includes a general discussion about your lifestyle, past medical history and family history. Your blood pressure will be checked and finger prick test will be completed to check your cholesterol and blood sugar.

If there are any abnormalities in your readings further tests and investigations may be recommended.

We would encourage everyone invited to attend these appointments as by identifying risk factors we can help to reduce your chance of having a stroke, diabetes or heart disease.

National Bowel Cancer Screening Programme

In 2022, almost 280 practice patients ignored the bowel cancer screening test kit when it came through the post. The age when you are first invited for bowel cancer screening, dropped this year to 54. The National Screening Programme sends out Kits in the post, every 2 years until you are 74 years of age. The test looks for the presence of blood in your poo, which you cannot see. If found, you are likely to be invited for further investigations, most people do not have bowel cancer but if found, it is often found early, when the cancer is easier to treat.

If you have any questions about competing this test, need a new test kit, or need assistance to complete the test, you can speak to Nurse Esther Walker. Ask at reception and I will contact you.

If when you go to the toilet, you are seeing blood in your poo, or have a change in your bowel habit, do not wait for the bowel cancer screening kit, contact the surgery to make an appointment to discuss your symptoms with your GP.

If you would like to continue to read this at home please find it on our website – www.ousevalleypractice.nhs.uk.

If you do not have internet access and would like a printed copy please ask at Reception.