

Kingstone Newsletter March 2023

Snow, Strikes and more strikes! It's been a roller-coaster March so far. This newsletter is a rollercoaster too- so brace yourselves for both the good and bad news.

Prescriptions, the bad news: The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has announced that from 1st April 2023, the NHS prescription charge will **increase to £9.65 per prescription item**. Remember if you have more than 3 prescriptions in 3 months (or 11 items in 12 months) you may save money with a prepayment certificate. More info at <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/> on this and also eligibility for free prescriptions.

Prescriptions, the better news: Finally, after years of political pressure and a private members bill, HRT medication is at last going to be less expensive to patients. Women can buy an annual prepayment certificate (PPC) for the same cost as 2 single NHS prescription items which then enables them to free HRT prescriptions for the next 12 months. HRT PPCs do not automatically renew. The DHSC determines the cost of the HRT PPC and this may change on 1 April each year.

On more local prescription updates, our dispensary manager Rachel has asked me to remind everyone of a few points:

- Please remember we ask for 3 working days notice for routine prescription requests. The dispensary are getting many requests on Friday afternoon asking for collection on Monday morning. This jeopardises the usual workflow. Remember, within this 72 hours the prescription request is viewed and authorized by a GP (sometimes requiring notes review) and then the medication may need to be ordered, checked and bagged up.
- There are several bank holidays coming up (three in a month?!). This should not disrupt the usual request procedures and medications should still be issued on time.

There are developments in staffing, too. **The bad news:** Leslie Farmer is retiring this month. She has been part of the admin team at Kingstone Surgery for over four years and will be much missed. More **bad news** is about GP numbers in England. Over the last year, the NHS has lost 402 individual (headcount) GP partners and 244 salaried, locum and retainer GPs. In England we actually now have the equivalent of 2,078 **fewer** fully qualified full-time GPs compared to the September 2015 baseline.

This means I am even more pleased to share our next **good news** (I warned you this was a rollercoaster). Herefordshire GP Dr Bringsty Edwards is joining the Kingstone team in April. Our ANP Elaine Macguire has been kindly filling in until she starts.

Spring Booster COVID vaccinations: We have chosen to sign up to deliver the Spring COVID vaccinations at Kingstone, and will be contacting those who are eligible as soon as we are sure of our supply. The JCVI has announced that those eligible will be adults aged 75 years and over, older adult care home residents and those over 5 years who are immunosuppressed.

And finally, more **Good News** for those who have been concerned about the plight of the surgery orchid. This rather sad looking plant has been revitalised thanks to admin member Sophie Williams and it proudly sporting new flowers. Happy spring!