

What's in our Summer edition?

- Upcoming Retirements & Hellos
- Patient Education Evenings
- AI Digital Tool Website
- Online consultations
- NHS App
- Training Dates
- Going Green!

Weaver Vale Surgery

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Spring/Summer 2025 Edition

Farewell to Dr Fallon and Nurse Bev

Dr Fallon writes:

I started in University College Galway Medical School with Declan Kelly in 1977. We are both from Ballinasloe in Co Galway and when Declan offered me the chance to come to Winsford in 1991 to interview for an assistant post with Dr Green and partners, I flew over from Rosmuc in Connemara and started with the practice in Oct 1991.

I have been very fortunate to work with enthusiastic and supportive colleagues, both clinical and administrative over the ensuing years. We have been supported too by the Local Health Authority, now known as the ICB (Integrated Care Board). In 1995 the practice was offered an additional GP to support general practice development in a scheme known as the Primary Care Initiative, led by Dr Roy Woodward and Dr Ken MacKay, supported by Gary Lucking and Chris Hannah from the Health Authority. Dr Kathy Winterburn (Fallon) was "parachuted" into the practice.

In 1998 Weaver Vale Surgery opened its doors with GP's Dr June Green, Declan Kelly, Michael Fallon, Fenella Cottier and Kathy Winterburn. Our practice manager Val Callow led the development of the practice and worked with Declan Kelly and Geoff Leigh our local IT support at that time, in the computerisation of the practice. Weaver Vale moved from Winsford Health Centre (now Vale House) into the Winsford Primary Care Centre in 2007 and this move was supported by Mike Pyrah from the Primary Care Trust (now ICB).

During the Pandemic we had particular challenges and appreciated the support and understanding of our patients and the Winsford community, in particular John and Hilary Malam who helped to set up car park marshalling and gazebos for our Covid Hot Clinics and Vaccination clinics, Mark Bailey from Winsford Town Council who provided the WTC gazebos for the hot clinics- erected by David and Nathan, and Ernie Welsh who has provided direct and moral support to the practice over the years. We are so grateful to all those who volunteered as car park marshalls during the pandemic, at a time when they did not know what risk they were going to be exposed to, but signed up for the role simply because it was the right thing to do for the general population.

The IT team were unsung heroes during the Pandemic- Gavin McDermott and his colleagues at Midlands and Lancashire Support Unit have been ever present in helping us with IT developments, but at the outset of the Pandemic they facilitated an almost overnight transition to remote working with the roll out of enabled laptops across Cheshire.

Speaking of Unsung Heroes, I must mention the cleaning team who continued to work throughout the pandemic, this work involved going in to clinical rooms in the knowledge that they were exposing themselves to a higher degree of risk of infection, but they carried on. We are fortunate at Weaver Vale to be welcomed into work by Lucia our ever present cleaner who serenades us with Eurovision hits to greet us in the morning and lift our spirits in the evening!

We are very fortunate in having St Luke's Hospice in Winsford and the care team there who dovetail so well with our McMillan and District Nurses have provided outstanding care to so many of our cancer patients over the years.

Val Callow our practice manager retired in 2009 and succeeded where many managers have failed, (not mentioning any football clubs here), in appointing Linda Donegan to succeed her. Linda set about expanding the practice team by appointing pharmacists and in house physios and also nurturing the young apprentices in the practice, and it has been so encouraging to see the growth and development of many of our clinical and admin team over the years so that we have now reached a very strong blend of youth and experience, ready to face the challenges ahead. The practice team are supported by our social prescribers and care co-ordinators. We simply could not manage without these additional team members who have been directly responsible for improving patient care.

Sadly we are losing Practice Nurse Bev Welsh to retirement. Bev epitomises the spirit of the practice since the days of Dr Green, by always "going the extra mile".

I am very grateful to the Winsford patients I have served over the years, who have been patient with me when I haven't seen the wood for the trees, and I am most grateful for the friendship and support of all my colleagues at Weaver Vale and particularly from Dr Kathy Winterburn, my wife!

Nurse Bev writes:

Goodbyes are never easy, especially after spending over 2 decades in such a wonderful practice.

My heart is filled with nostalgia and gratitude. Twenty plus years is a long time and during this time the surgery has become more than just a workplace, it is a community and as such, it has been a privilege witnessing staff changes coming and going, staff advancing through their careers and generations of patients and their families growing, sharing joys and sadness and supporting each other through all the challenges we meet.

The Doctors have unwavering dedication and commitment to proving the best possible care. I am continually inspired by the expertise of the old and the new doctors I have had the good fortune to work with. The incredible practice team, Dr's, nurses, manager, and all the admin staff are all the heart and soul of the surgery. Their hard work and kindness, along with professionalism has allowed them to keep everything running smoothly in a very busy environment.

And our wonderful patients, thank you! Thank you for your trust and kindness and allowing me to be part of your lives, I am often touched by the bravery and resilience patients show every day.

I have seen many changes over the years, but one thing that has remained constant is the sense of community that exists within these walls. It is a testament to the people who work here and the patients we serve. I will miss you all.

Hello & Welcome to... Nurse Dani Webster

Nurse Dani joined Weaver Vale Surgery on 1st April 2025. Nurse Dani brings a wealth of experience and expertise from her role as Respiratory Matron at the Countess of Chester. Nurse Dani is currently attending primary care training sessions which will benefit her current clinical knowledge. Welcome!

Dr Dale Burgess will become a GP Partner from 1st April 2025.

Evening Patient Education Sessions

Skin Health: This evening was held back in the summer 2024 just in time for the summer holidays. The focus was on 3 main types of skin cancer, risk factors, how to prevent and spot lesions/moles. The evening was a huge success. Following the presentation patients had the opportunity to have moles/lesions checked which resulted in confirmation of 3 malignant skin cancers which were able to receive early intervention and treatment. Patients feedback that they felt able to take the education away and encourage family members and friends to check and spot moles and lesions and get them checked. Patient reviews were really good—one patient commented *"Firstly can I express my appreciation that you offer this type of clinic. I had no idea it was available and have been putting off having moles checked as I didn't want to use waste a GP appointment doing so. Clear information was given on the types of moles I have, next step procedures discussed with reassurance. Fingers crossed for my results but I have no doubt that I will be supported by this practice"*.



Gut Health: In February this year we held another evening education session, this time focusing on Gut Health and the Microbiome. Patients learned to recognise the symptoms associated with "leaky gut" including bloating and cramps, and how to self help through diet and lifestyle. We were lucky enough to try some tasty gut boosting food to try on the evening too. Many of the patients who attended had expressed that they found the information invaluable, particularly those suffering from Crohn's, Ulcerative Colitis, IBS and Coeliac. One patient commented *"Participated in your talk at Weaver Vale tonight ... thank you so much! So good to hear a local doctor promoting how important gut health is. I have followed so many people online (Dr Will Cole, Dr Ranjam Chatterjee, Max Lugavere etc) and taken snippets away, but it was great to have everything there set out clearly in your talk. I have taken away so much from the evening and going to read over my notes tomorrow to make an action plan as leaky gut is something I definitely think I suffer with (years of depression, anxiety and adhd symptoms) even though I think I'm eating a good diet and exercising. Going to introduce fermented foods and pre and probiotics as they are currently not in my diet – Thank you again!!"*

Look out for our next evening patient education session which will focus on **Men's Health**, including information on PSA, Cholesterol, HbA1C and Lifestyle.

New AI Digital Assistant — Weaver Vale Surgery Website

We are delighted to introduce the new AI digital assistant to help navigate you around the practice website. <https://www.weavervalesurgery.nhs.uk/>

This new tool will help you locate practice information, self care help, voluntary support and many other useful information. Either click on one of the prefilled tabs for further support or type in what you are looking for. The AI tool will continue to grow with any questions or queries that have not been answered via the AI tab, by constantly refreshing and updating the knowledge basis with the frequently questions asked.

Remember you can also contact us online via the Website <https://www.weavervalesurgery.nhs.uk/>



NHS App

- Book and manage appointments
- Order repeat prescriptions and manage your nominated pharmacy for medication collections
- View your GP health record and access your NHS number
- Access your COVID-19 vaccinations and COVID-19 Pass
- Register your organ donation decision
- Choose how your data is used by the NHS
- Use NHS 111 online to get instant advice or medical help

The NHS App is NHS Englands choice of online app. It allows you to access a range of NHS services. The app is free to download and can be used on your phone or tablet. If you currently use Patient Access or MyGp, speak to a member of the admin team on how to switch to the NHS App.



PLT training dates: The practice will be **closed all afternoon**, from 1pm and will reopen the next morning at 8am. If you have a medical emergency that cannot wait, ring 111 or 999 if emergency.

14th May 2025	8th October 2025
3rd June 2025	4th November 2025
16th July 2025	3rd February 2026
9th September 2025	11th March 2026

GOING GREEN! Update

Prevention is better than cure?

Over the past 50 years preventive medicine has taken an increasing share of the service that the NHS provides to patients. This may involve screening for certain cancers, ie breast, bowel, cervical and lung cancer. Also vaccination campaigns and medical management of high blood pressure, raised cholesterol, lifestyle advice regarding diet, alcohol or drug misuse, stop smoking advice. Management of certain chronic disease ie asthma, COPD, diabetes.

The doctor/nurse/health care assistant will see you now!

This preventive medicine may result in patients being invited in several times a year for blood tests and consultations with one of the practice team. Some patients may have several conditions that require 6 monthly or annual review, as well as having to attend hospital appointments. As we use up more and more appointments for preventive medicine, there is a reduction in the amount of appointments available for patients who want advice about acute conditions.

One stop shop!

Our practice pharmacist Anastassia Volkov is currently looking at ways to improve our management of chronic disease to see if we can streamline our blood testing so that patients only need to have their bloods done annually or biannually. We hope that if Anastassia's project is successful we may be able to free up appointments for patients who need "on the day" appointments for acute conditions.

Did you know large amounts of medicines are wasted in Cheshire and Merseyside each year?

We need your help to reduce this. Check what medicines you have at home before you order your repeat prescriptions. If you have enough, only request the medicines you need this time. You will still be able to order others again in future.

Here are some tips to help you only order what you need:

- Try keeping all medication in one place at home so you can see what you have left and what you need to reorder.
- For each prescription, take medication from one pill packet at a time so that you can keep a track of what you've taken and what you have left
- Make a note on your calendar 7-10 days before your prescription due date to go through your medication and see what is left. Being organised in this way means that if bank holidays or weekends are coming up, you will have planned enough for these dates too.

Speak to your pharmacy team if you have any questions about how to change your prescription request.

Thank you for helping to reduce medicine waste.

Repeat prescriptions? ☒

Only order what you need

-  **10% of medicines** prescribed nationally are not needed
-  **In Cheshire and Merseyside huge amounts of medicines are wasted**
-  **Speak to your pharmacy team** about only ordering what you need
-  **Take your medications when you go into hospital to avoid waste**

Find out more about our medicine waste campaign at:
cheshireandmerseyside.nhs.uk/medicines-waste

Happy National Social Prescriber's Day!

Jackie, Debbie & Neil, Social Prescribers covering all the Winsford GP Practices, celebrated the National Social Prescriber's Day on 19th March 2025 with a cake and celebrations. Our Social Prescribing Team can help with all social matters such as: Relationship breakdown, Domestic Abuse support, bereavement support, volunteering opportunities, work, education and training, housing advice, benefits and financial advice, debt advice, caring responsibilities, support with one or more long term conditions, emotional wellbeing support, lifestyle changes, social isolation, family support services, mental health support as a direct result of social factors.

The Social Prescribing service is available to all patients aged 18 and over who are registered at one of the Winsford GP Practices. Ask admin for details of how to self refer into the service or visit our practice website:

<https://www.weavervalesurgery.nhs.uk/self-refer/>

