

BUNTINGFORD & PUCKERIDGE MEDICAL PRACTICE

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Newsletter – Spring 2022

Welcome to the bumper Spring edition of the Practice Newsletter. We are delighted to see the first sign of spring with warmer sunnier days.

Our services continue to be busier than ever before, delivering more appointments but in a different way. We know that in recent months we have heard of experiences of people finding it difficult to get through on the telephone during busy periods or who are unhappy with the types of appointment offered. Please be assured if you need to see someone in person, you still can. We have taken steps to increase capacity and are reviewing the current telephony systems to improve the experience of calling the surgery. We appreciate your patience during this difficult period.

Why are things different from before the pandemic?

We know that the prevalence of COVID-19 has started to decline, but infection control remains a high priority especially in healthcare settings where there are sick and vulnerable people. To keep patients and staff safe we need to avoid crowded waiting rooms as well as to carry out cleaning between patient consultations. If we can meet your needs by a telephone or video call this could be safer for you and others and can often be quicker and more convenient.

Currently around half of appointments are in person. Our GP team will make sure we arrange these types of appointments when needed. The practice team is working hard to make sure that you get the same high standard of care whether you receive help on the phone, or in person.

With practices now doing more work over the phone, and due to the increase in the number of patients seeking help from their GP, unfortunately some patients have found it hard to get through and have faced longer waits than we would like. We know this is frustrating and can be disruptive for you. We are sorry for this and are working hard to improve your experience when contacting us.

Please do continue trying to get through to the practice on the phone when you need to.

Please also continue to be reassured the reception staff are trained to support you to get the right appointment for your needs and sometimes you might be asked to give information that you would prefer not to share with someone other than a doctor or health professional. It really does help to have this information in order to arrange the right appointment for you.

You may be offered an appointment with a different trained professional who works at the practice rather than a GP if this is the best person to help you. This might be a nurse, a pharmacist or a healthcare assistant.

The whole team are here to help you. Thank you for the many messages of support we have received, I cannot express how much this is appreciated whilst we continue to provide our services in challenging circumstances.

Thank you for your patience and support during these difficult times for everyone.

Teresa Davidson – Practice Business Manager

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What do I do if I need an urgent or emergency appointment?

We still operate an emergency triage list every morning and if you have an emergency that cannot wait for a routine appointment you must call between 08.30 – 10.00 and you will be triaged for a same day call.

If you have a medical emergency, please remember to call 999, or 111 if outside of surgery hours.

Calls for urgent or emergency appointments should be made as early as possible before 10.30 am

Activity Numbers – previous 8 weeks

	Jan 17 th – Mar 13 th 2022
Telephone calls received	20,833
Total Appointments available	17,314
Face to Face appointments	9,476
GP Appointments	8,415
DNA (did not attend)	Improving
The above appointment numbers do not include COVID or Flu vaccinations, these have been provided by the practice on top.	

Practice Staff News

New GP's

We are delighted to welcome Dr Chin who joined the Puckeridge site in February 2022.

New Nurses

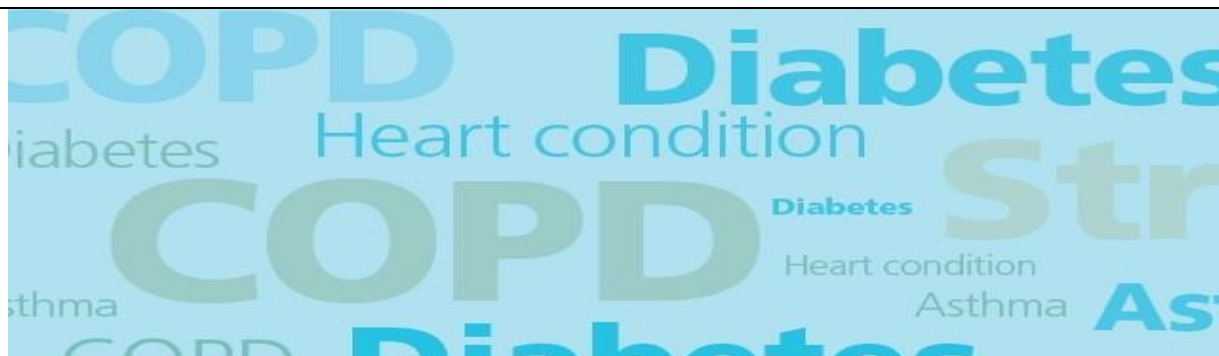
We were delighted to welcome back Nurse Noemia in January following her period of Maternity leave.

We will be joined by two new nurses Karen Wood and Karen Ferrira in April 2022

	Good Friday 15th April 2022	Easter Sunday 17th April 2022	Easter Monday 18th April 2022
Upper Lea Valley			
Andrews Pharmacy, 104 High Street, Ware, Hertfordshire, SG12 9AP	Closed	10:00 - 12:00	Closed
Avenue Pharmacy, 73 The Avenue, Bengo, SG14 3DU	Closed	10:00 - 12:00	Closed
Crescent Pharmacy, 2 Fleming Crescent, Sele Farm, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG14 2DJ	Closed	12:00 - 14:00	Closed
IMED Pharma Ltd, 38 High Street, Puckeridge, Hertfordshire, SG11 1RN	Closed	09:00 - 12:00	Closed
St Andrews Pharmacy, 44A St Andrews Street, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG14 1JA	Closed	14:00 - 16:00	Closed
Tesco In-Store Pharmacy, 5 West Street, Ware, SG12 9EE	9:00 - 13:00	Closed	09:00 - 13:00
Tesco In-Store Pharmacy, Ware Road, Hertford, SG14 1QA	9:00 - 13:00	Closed	09:00 - 13:00

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Long Term Conditions (LTC) include:

Asthma

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Cardiovascular disease (hypertension, heart disease and stroke)

Diabetes

Following Covid-19, the Practice has changed ways of working and how we review patients with long term conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, or asthma.

From April 2022 onwards we are aiming to review patients around 12 months following their last review. There will be a transition phase as we work towards this. For example, if your last review was in April, you will receive an invite from the Practice to attend for a Long-Term Condition review in that month. Usually this will mean a face-to-face appointment with a Healthcare Assistant for bloods, BP and other physical checks (foot checks, Pulse etc), followed by a telephone call from a member of our Nursing team to complete a review of your conditions.

We are going to use more digital/online ways to help with this. You may be sent an SMS message asking you to complete an online questionnaire to help us collect important information. This information helps the nurses know if you are having any particular problems ahead of any review appointment you may be asked to attend.

You may also receive an SMS message containing a [link](#) to book both the face to face and telephone appointments online so that you can select the most convenient appointment times to suit you.

Following receipt of your questionnaire and/or appointment(s), we will then review your medication. If at any time your repeat prescription has reached its review date, please request your medication in the normal way; we will review your medication remotely and only contact you if there are any queries. If you order online, please use the "custom note" box if you are having any issues with ordering.

This should streamline our Long-Term Condition review process and by doing it the same time each year we are hoping it makes it easier for you to remember when your review will be due. We hope that patients will find these changes more convenient.

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Spotlight on.....

The needs of our communities are greater than ever before. Our population is being impacted more and more by complex, long term conditions. There is a growing concern about areas of longstanding unmet health need and the social determinants of health are playing a bigger role than ever before. These new challenges are increasing the pressure on General Practice and the wider system to deliver for those in our communities and there is more that we can do to shift our focus from treating those who are unwell to preventing ill health and tackling health inequalities.

The creation of **Primary Care Networks** builds on the core of current primary care services and aims to provide increased proactive, personalised and more integrated health and social care. Through our Primary Care Network we have recruited additional roles to create multi-disciplinary teams to assist us. In this series of articles, we shine a spotlight on the additional roles we have introduced to support our team and the patients of The Buntingford & Puckeridge Medical Practice.

They work with and alongside the general practice team, taking responsibility for patients with chronic diseases and undertaking clinical medication reviews to proactively manage people with complex medication use, especially for the elderly, people in care homes and those with multiple conditions. Clinical pharmacists are and can help people in a range of ways.

Clinical pharmacists are highly qualified experts in medicines and work as part of the general practice team in a range of ways to improve value and outcomes from medicines and consult with and treat patients directly. This includes carrying out structured medication reviews for patients with ongoing health problems, providing extra help to manage long-term conditions and improving patient safety. The role is pivotal to improving the quality of care and ensuring patient safety.

Having clinical pharmacists in GP practices means that GPs can focus their skills where they are most needed, for example on diagnosing and treating patients with more complex conditions. This helps GPs to manage the demands on their time.



Angela Chalmers and Cathy Deane are our Clinician Pharmacists who joined our team in the last year, here Angela provides insight of their role and how they work with our patients.

It is a privilege to be part of the wider surgery team, and since joining in October 2022, I have found the role of Clinical Pharmacist extremely rewarding.

Our role is to ensure you are getting the absolute best from your medication, that it is clinically appropriate and reviewed periodically.

Both Cathy and I are in the process of assessing which tests are required before you have your annual medication review. In the coming months, you may receive an invitation for an annual blood pressure check, annual diabetic, asthma or COPD check and certain blood tests. We are so grateful for the actions you take when we request them, as this provides us with up-to-date clinical information that informs your medication review.

Once we have these tests completed, we will carry out a medication review.

We can also assist you with any general medication queries.

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GP PATIENT SURVEY



Your views can help improve local GP and health services

Some patients registered at this GP practice will soon be invited to take part in a national survey about their experiences of local NHS services.

Visit
www.gp-patient.co.uk
to find out more

It covers issues that concern patients, such as access to care and satisfaction with treatment.

If you receive a questionnaire, please help NHS England by filling it in as soon as possible.

It is really important that we hear your views, even if you have received a questionnaire like this before. Your response will help us to improve GP practices and other local NHS services so they better meet your needs.



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Patient Participation Group

Patient Participation Group **Buntingford and Puckeridge Medical Centre**

There are currently 19,939 patients registered with the practice which serves Buntingford, Puckeridge and the surrounding villages and hamlets. Over the last eight weeks there have been 20,833 telephone calls into the practice with an average wait-time of 5 minutes at peak times. Late morning and late afternoons are good times to call if your need is not urgent. 17,314 appointments were allocated and, of these, 9,476 were carried out face-to-face, 8415 with a GP which is a rise over the previous eight weeks. 'Did not attend' data continues to be monitored as face to face capacity increases to ensure that professional time is not wasted. If you no longer need, or are unable to attend, your appointment please could you contact the surgery so that it may be reallocated.

Dr Chin has now started at the Puckeridge site and two new practice nurses are due to start in April, one for each site. The Puckeridge extension is almost complete and the plan is to move into the new build in April when the builders will transfer into the existing space to freshen it up. Unfortunately, this means that staff will be working in the smaller space temporarily and ask that patients attend alone, if possible, in order to make life easier for everyone. Parking is also slightly reduced and you are asked to you park off-site if at all possible to leave the available spaces for those who are unable to walk any great distance. The phlebotomy clinic will be in Buntingford for the immediate future. Everyone is very excited about this new, extended facility and can't wait until it is all complete and can be enjoyed fully. Discussions with Buntingford Town Council continue regarding options for the Buntingford site.

Spring booster jabs are now being rolled out for the over 75's and those with weakened immune systems provided it is over six months since your last jab. Appointments can be accessed through the national booking service on the NHS website. The surgery will take delivery of a small supply of vaccine which they will use for their care home and housebound patients and possibly smaller clinics at the surgery sites for eligible patients. The surgery will contact you to advise you of any future clinics. If you have not yet had your first, second or booster COVID vaccine please have these as soon as

possible.

The surgery is now conducting reviews for patients with long term and chronic conditions. These are for those suffering from asthma, cancer, coronary heart disease, COPD, diabetes, mental health issues, osteoarthritis, pain or stroke. The reviews will be done through a mixture of face to face and online consultation and discussion and patients should wait for their invitation to make an appointment. The minor surgery clinic has also recommenced.

The national guidelines regarding the management of COVID continue to relax and the practice would like to thank all patients for their support during the difficult last two years. However, the virus is still very much with us and patients should continue to contact the surgery by telephone and use any relevant on-line services. Masks should still be worn when attending the surgery in person for an appointment in order to protect the most vulnerable in our communities. Clinicians will also continue to wear PPE in all consultations.

As mentioned previously, any call to the surgery will be answered by the receptionists who are bound by a duty of confidentiality regarding anything they may be told. They will ask a number of questions regarding your problem and any self-help treatment given to date so that they are able to direct you to the most appropriate clinician or service. This is important so that they are able to prioritise patients quickly when dealing with 100+ calls each morning. If you would prefer not to disclose details just say so and they will do their best to help you find the person you need to talk to.

Whilst the Patient Participation Group is most definitely not a forum through which to air personal stories it was lovely to hear about a couple of very positive experiences where the practice responded with speed and sensitivity in a range of situations. They may not always get everything absolutely perfect for everyone, all the time, but we are most fortunate to have this hard-working and outstanding facility serving our community.

Jenny Dingley
PPG Member

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Puckeridge Surgery Premises update

Those patients that visit our Puckeridge surgery site, may have noticed that building work on the new surgery extension is progressing well. We are very excited that the new section of the surgery is on schedule to be complete in early April 2022 when we will move services into the extension whilst work is undertaken to refurbish the existing building. Work on the existing surgery includes the roof and creating a larger waiting room which we hope to be completed by mid-July 2022.

When services move into the extension we will operate a new temporary **Surgery Entrance**, **Reception** and **Waiting area**. Signage directing you into the building will be in place.

The temporary waiting areas will be limited, we request that where possible patients, other than children and those requiring assistance, attend appointments on their own to avoid overcrowding.

Whilst we will regain some of the parking area, we continue to ask those patients who are able, to either park offsite or walk to the surgery to ensure sufficient parking space for those who are less able. Please also try to avoid waiting in the car park as this can create congestion as vehicles attempt to manoeuvre in and out.

During the temporary occupation all Phlebotomy Services will be provided daily from our Buntingford site and some doctors may be located at Buntingford on some days, we will ensure that you are given clear information when this is the case.



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Waiting for an appointment with a local hospital?

My Planned Care

Helpful information and guidance for patients waiting for a hospital consultation, treatment or surgery.

My planned care is a useful website for patients to use which provides information of the approximate waiting times for ROUTINE appointments at the various hospitals in the East of England.

Please visit <https://www.myplannedcare.nhs.uk/>

Need help to lose weight?



Sign Up: www.shapeupherts.com

STARTS
26TH APRIL '22

**Free 12 Week
Weight Loss
Course**



Entry Criteria

Hertfordshire Resident
Male Aged 18-65
Body Mass Index of 30+
BMI above 27.5 for
BAME participants

Further Information

Nicky Simbotin
07510380639
nicky.simbotin@stevenagefcf.com

Location: Ware - Wodson Park Sports Centre



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Face Covering in our Surgeries

We need to continue to do what we can to keep people safe from catching Covid-19. One way we can all help with this is by continuing to wear a face-covering in our practice and we are asking all patients to do that, as well as our staff.

Keeping our staff safe is essential to keep operating efficiently.

We are also continuing to increase face to face appointments which may make the waiting room busier than usual, therefore masks will assist in reducing the chance of infection.

For the time being we will also continue to maintain the use of personal protective equipment, asking patients to wear face masks, continuing with virtual consultations, social distancing and extra premises cleans which have helped protect staff, patients, and visitors. Taking these steps has also enabled us to continue providing many of the non-urgent services that would otherwise have been postponed.

We want to make sure you can all be confident about accessing or visiting local healthcare services safely.

Thank you for your understanding and your cooperation with this – it makes a huge difference.

Private Referrals

We are aware that sometimes the waiting list for referrals on the NHS can be a long time, which in turn may mean you want to go privately in order to be seen quicker.

We at the surgery will do everything we can to help you with your private referral but please note that there is a 7 working day turn around for private referrals/letters to be completed. Therefore if you are on the phone to the clinic and they offer you an appointment within the next week we cannot guarantee that the referral/letter will be processed in time for your new appointment.

Electronic prescriptions

Following the rollout of electronic prescriptions during the pandemic, we ask that **ALL** requests for repeat medication should be submitted via Online services or the NHS App. This is to improve safety for our staff, accuracy & efficiency of the process and an audit trail of medication requests. If you have difficulty accessing or using Online Services, please contact the surgery.

Please allow up to three full 'working' days for prescriptions to be processed and remember to take weekends and bank holidays into account.

Please remember to order your repeat medication in plenty of time.

We cannot accept prescription requests over the telephone

Ear Syringing

We are continue to experience high demand for Ear Syringing procedures resulting in significant waiting times for appointments. Patients may be offered appointments at our Extended Access hub or alternatively Specsavers are currently offering an earwax removal service. Please note there are other private providers who also offer this service.

<https://www.specsavers.co.uk/hearing/earwax/earwax-removal>

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HELP US CANCEL OUT CANCER

Be aware of the signs and symptoms of cancer, why screening is so important and how we can all help ourselves to prevent cancer.

Find out more about Cancel out Cancer and where you can join an information session at:
www.enhertscg.nhs.uk/canceloutcancer



Supported by
CANCER
RESEARCH
UK

Helping to Raise Cancer Awareness

Did you know that you can reduce your risks from Cancer? The FREE programme: 'Cancel Out Cancer' can answer your questions on how to prevent cancer, the symptoms to look out for and the screening programmes available. Live and interactive, it is currently being presented online via video link on several dates in 2022.

Dates to choose from: 25, 27, or 28 April at 7pm.

Please follow the link to Book at <https://tinyurl.com/5n8j68sr>

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And finally.....

Are your Contact details up to date?	Surgery Car Parks A continued plea
<p>Please make sure that we have all your correct contact details. It is especially important that we have your up-to-date telephone number for when the surgery needs to contact you or for when you have requested a telephone call from a doctor.</p> <p>If you have a change of address or telephone number, please ask reception for a change of personal details form. Not only are these details important for the surgery's use but they are equally important if we refer you on to another service or hospital.</p> <p>You can also change your details by downloading the form from our website, simply follow the link then click on the 'Online services section': http://www.buntingfordandpuckeridgepractice.co.uk</p>	<p>We continue to be challenged with car parking space at the surgery sites, particularly as we increase face to face appointments and see increased footfall for general enquiries.</p> <p>The surgery car parks have limited space and should only be used by patients and visitors to the surgery. We continue to experience vehicles being left in the surgery car parks whilst the drivers visit the neighbouring schools or shops. We kindly request that the car park is only used when visiting the surgery and that patients do not use the doctor parking spaces which must have access in to and out of at all times in case of emergency.</p> <p>As mentioned in the previous article, the building works at the Puckeridge site has significantly impacted on parking capacity. Where patients are able, we kindly request that you park offsite, or walk to the surgery.</p> <p>Your co-operation is very much appreciated.</p>

Practice Website

Don't forget.....

Our surgery website is full of useful information and advice, including forms, phone numbers and general information.

You can also gain access to the online services which allows you to book, cancel and amend appointments as well as request medication.

Please note if you are looking to register with us it is currently not possible to complete the registration process online, as we require a signature and ID documentation.

<http://www.buntingfordandpuckeridgepractice.co.uk>

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WHAT TO DO WHEN THE SURGERY IS CLOSED



If you need medical assistance when the surgery is closed please consider the following options:

Call 999 in a medical emergency when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk e.g.: choking, chest pain/heart attack, blacking out, bleeding heavily, stroke.

A&E departments deal with genuine life-threatening emergencies. There are A&E departments at The Lister, The Princess Alexandra and Addenbrooke's Hospital.

Call 111 for non-emergency medical help (see below for details).

Minor Injuries Units (MIUs) can treat: cuts, bumps, bruises and sprains, broken bones, scalds or burns.

Please contact all destinations prior to arrival as they may have face to face contact:

Bishops Stortford 01279 827450

QEII 01438 314333

Cheshunt 01992 622157 or email cheshuntMIU@nhs.net with your contact details and phone number

Urgent Care Centres can treat: minor injuries and urgent minor illnesses when your GP surgery is closed. There is an Urgent Care Centre at the New QEII Hospital (open 24hrs a day, every day) and the Hemel Hempstead Hospital (open 8am to 10 pm).

Your local pharmacy can help with: medicines, coughs and colds, aches and pains, vomiting and diarrhoea, allergies, minor illnesses. Remember to check when your local pharmacy is open over the holiday period.

111 is the NHS non-emergency number. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. Call NHS 111 if:

- You need medical help fast but it's not an emergency
- You don't have a GP
- You need to access a GP but your surgery is closed
- You don't know who to call
- You need health information or reassurance about what to do next

When you call NHS 111, a team of fully trained healthcare advisors, supported by clinical advisors, is there to help you. They will ask you questions to assess you and will ensure you receive the right care for your condition.