



Bassett Road Surgery Patient Participation Group

Newsletter Issue 9 - March 2022

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A few words from the Editor . . .

As we learn to live with COVID, the time has come to start getting things back to some sort of normality. As a PPG we are aware that we haven't issued a patient newsletter for quite some time, so we felt this would be a good place to start and have a packed newsletter for you. Our intention is to produce newsletters on a more regular basis and keep you updated on what is happening in the surgery and local community.

Improved Timing of Telephone Appointments

Bassett Road Surgery (BRS) has listened. You told BRS how frustrating it is when your telephone appointment call does not take place on or close to the time you booked, sometimes resulting in missing a call due to other appointments, work commitments and childcare. BRS now aims, as far as possible, to ensure that all telephone appointments take place within a one hour window, i.e. no earlier than 15 minutes before your booked appointment time and no later than 45 minutes after it.

When you book an 'on the day' appointment via Reception you will be given an approximate estimated 'window' for your call. When you book a 'pre-bookable appointment' via the online booking system, we anticipate the same window*.

*Please bear in mind that the BRS team are being impacted by the current increase in COVID infections and it may not always be possible to adhere to this as we transfer rotas between personnel but we *will* do our best.

Help BRS to Help You

When booking an appointment, please help BRS by ensuring they have your correct contact details. If you have a BRS online account, you can update your details via the 'Your Account' section at any time.

Duty Team Update

In response to the growing demand for urgent 'on the day' appointments, BRS began trialling a new Duty Team approach from 1 October 2021. Lead by a GP Partner as Clinical Supervisor, each day 4 Duty GPs and a Duty Matron concentrate solely on urgent telephone and face-to-face appointments, including referrals from 111. The Duty Team also has access to a Duty Pharmacist.

Early indications are that this new structure has resulted in significantly more patients receiving an 'on the day' appointment for an urgent condition than was previously possible. In response to the particularly high volume of patients seeking an emergency appointment on Mondays, an additional GP is allocated to the Duty Team on Mondays to address this.

BRS will continue to assess the effectiveness of the new Duty Team approach in the coming months. If patients wish to feedback comments on their experience of the new 'on the day' system, please email bassettroadppg@gmail.com

Telephone And Face-To-Face Appointments

Following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic the NHS required all general practices nationally to adopt patient triaging whereby patients receive an initial telephone consultation with a medical practitioner prior to a face-to-face consultation, where required. This process was put in place to ensure patients maintained ready access to GPs, while also ensuring the risk of large numbers of patients assembling in surgeries at any one time was avoided. During each telephone consultation, the GP determines whether the patient needs to be seen in person and, if so, books the face-to-face appointment with them there and then.

Conditions which do not require telephone triaging

Face-to-face appointments - without an initial telephone consultation - are available on request from Reception for those patients experiencing any of the following conditions:

- **Skin complaints**
- **Lumps and/or bumps**
- **Requests for steroid injections**
- **Pessary changes**
- **Vaginal bleeding**
- **Patients needing to book 8-week baby & post-natal checks**

To request a face-to-face appointment, please explain to Reception (tel: 01525 373111) which of the above applies to you. Currently, it is not possible to book face-to-face appointments via the online booking system.



Pharmacy First

Every day, our GPs see patients with ailments and illnesses that could be easily treated with over-the-counter medicines and advice from a pharmacist. With GP appointments at a premium, it's important we all think '**Pharmacy First**' when we have certain common conditions.

Pharmacists are qualified healthcare professionals who can offer clinical advice and over-the-counter medicines for a range of ailments and symptoms.

- ✦ You'll probably be able to see a pharmacist more quickly than a doctor especially as they are often open late and at weekends
- ✦ Over-the-counter medicines are often cheaper than a prescription
- ✦ Most pharmacies have a private consultation room
- ✦ Pharmacists will tell you if they think you should see a GP, nurse or other healthcare professional
- ✦ You'll be freeing up an appointment at the surgery for someone who can only be cared for by a doctor; remember, next time, it could be you who needs to see a GP.

Here are some of the more common conditions for thinking '**Pharmacy First**'.

Coughs and colds	Earwax/Ear ache	Warts and verrucas	Aches and pains
Sore throat	Constipation	Allergies, bites, stings	Eye infections
Cold sores	Diarrhoea	Skin rashes	Morning-after pill
Acne	Haemorrhoids/Piles	Cystitis	Head lice

Current Patient Numbers at BRS as at 28th Feb 2022 - 18,937.

BRS staff changes and other news

Joiners:

- Kaz, Kim and Orla have joined Linda and Karen in Dispensary
- Mary-Anne and Lany have joined our reception team
- Penny and Sarah have joined Allie, Jackie and Sara in our Practice Matron team
- Drs Grama (f), Sharma (m) and Weston (f) have joined Drs Gill, Evans and Plumtree in our Salaried GP team
- Drs Dami Adio (f) and Janice Yiu (f) have joined Drs Abd(m), Ahshan (m), Joshi (f) and Noori (m) in our GP registrar team

Movers:

- Sarah has moved from our dispensary to our admin team

Leavers:

- Sue has left our management team
- Allana has left our Treatment Room
- Drs Atkinson, Darley & Phang have left our Salaried GP team.

Note from the PPG - Sue Elliott, Deputy Practice Manager, retired at the end of the year. The PPG greatly appreciated Sue as our link with BRS staff. We shall miss her calm presence, knowledge, expertise and support - Thank you Sue! Sue had recently been working alongside her successor, Angie Sellar, to whom we extend a warm welcome and look forward to working with in the future.

Other news:

- **2021-2 Vaccination Campaigns** – 5,000 COVID jabs administered at the surgery at weekends since October of last year; over 5000 flu vaccines in house, 8350 in total.
- **Community Pharmacy Consultation Service** - There is a new system for referring patients to pharmacy colleagues at various chemists in town to help with health problems such as eye infections, ring worm, thread worm, oral and vaginal thrush and hayfever. Once referred, the patient is contacted within 2 hours. Watch this space for further updates...
- **Have your say on the future of Community Pharmacy in the East of England.** Share your views and ideas for how your local pharmacy can help you with your health needs in the future. **Complete this online survey by 31 March:** <https://bit.ly/3GJYQ4a>;
- **Addition of healthcare colleagues employed via the PCN** – Jo & Dylan (Pharmacy) Kayleigh (Nursing Home), Lisa, Sami & Edward (Health & Wellbeing Coaches) have joined the PCN team and will shortly have a paragraph on the services and support they are able to access on our website. The aim of their roles is to improve access for non-medical issues, thereby releasing GP and Nurse time in the practice. Watch this space for further updates...

2021 National GP Patient Survey

The GP Patient Survey is an independent survey run by Ipsos MORI on behalf of NHS England. The survey is sent out to over two million people across the UK. The results show how people feel about their GP practice and sent to patients at random. 273 were sent out to BRS patients and 130 returned. To view click here [2021 National GP Patient Survey](#).

The National GP Survey 2022 has now been launched, if you do receive a request to take part, please do so. Your feedback provides patients' experience of healthcare services, it helps the Surgery and also the NHS assess how primary care services are performing.

What's it like to be a doctor in a pandemic? by a BRS doctor

What's it like to be a doctor in a pandemic? This is a question often asked by friends and family. More recently, since I finished my GP training and decided to stay as a GP at Bassett Road, "What's it's like to be a 'proper doctor' in a pandemic?"

In all honestly, it's bloomin' hard work! After years of training in how to take histories, examine patients and manage problems, we're now to be experts in solving complex situations in 10 mins without the luxury of seeing and examining our patients. It's a very different skill set from what I started learning when I graduated from medicine in 2015.

Being a GP is a wonderful rewarding career with new challenges every day. It's a pleasure to get to know and care for patients, to make a difference to somebody in need or at the end of their life. Our job is a real privilege.

Contrary to many media reports, we haven't locked our doors and we've not been on holiday for the last 2 years; we have been firefighting. We have managed the implementation and staffing of the local vaccination programme, on top of our usual workload and the capacity that local hospitals have been unable to accommodate.

We balance the need to see our patients with the need to keep the waiting room empty enough to keep those most vulnerable, in need of attention, safe. We manage what we can remotely and identify those we really need to see Face to Face for examination.

An average day starts by 8:30am with a morning list of 18 appointments; this is regularly full by 9:00am and often requires a list at least the same length of 'extras' to be fitted in. Typically seeing patients at 10 min intervals pre-pandemic, this is often 5 mins for remote consultations meaning we can help more people but that we have precious little time to properly understand and resolve the patient's issues. We are very aware that many patients have delayed care and been in difficulty during the pandemic and are doing our best to stretch our resources to care for everyone.

When we add more GP availability, the lists fill up all the same or it's hard to book in advance with a trusted GP as everything is reserved for the morning rush. We have been further hampered by blood bottle shortages, labs too busy with PCR testing to run routine diagnostic tests and dwindling staff numbers due to COVID or isolating and the tricky can feel impossible.

After everyone pitches in to call the patients on the list, we grab something to eat whilst we discuss complex and/or unusual issues that have left us puzzled, and things that have not gone as well as we'd hoped, sharing learning with our nurse, pharmacy and GP colleagues.

The next hour is devoted to signing prescriptions, reading letters from hospitals and actioning the investigations or medication changes they advise. We review our lab test results and implement changes as needed. We sign sick notes, fill in forms for benefits applications, dictate referral letters and visit bereaved families to arrange the paperwork they need.

By 3pm the doors are open for our afternoon lists; we make our calls leaving voicemails when we've missed patients due to school runs, work commitments and dashing to the loo! We manage sore throats, asthma, rashes, aches and pains, COVID, diabetes and heart failure. We distinguish strokes from innocent vertigo, indigestion from angina and innocent moles from cancers.

We try to keep you safe and away from the over-stretched hospitals when we can, doing our best to battle, juggle and help before dashing off for our own school runs. Squeezing what we've been unable to manage in the 'office day' into our evenings and days off, we clear the day's work before starting again the next day.

Why? We do it because we trained for many years, because we care and because we love our jobs – even when they're a little different from what we signed up for!



Announcement - Leighton Buzzard Voluntary Patient Transport (LBVPT)

Leighton Linslade Town Council has awarded LBVPT the **Community Volunteer Award 2022**. This will be presented to one of our founding members in May by the Town Mayor.

This service is for the old and vulnerable patients in Leighton Buzzard, who have hospital and clinic appointments and do not qualify for NHS non-emergency transport and who are unable to use public transport or obtain lifts from friends and family.

Our vetted volunteer drivers can take you to outpatient appointments at Milton Keynes, Luton & Dunstable, Stoke Mandeville, High Wycombe, Amersham and Bedford Hospitals. The driver waits and brings you back home after your appointment. We ask for a voluntary donation to cover the driver's expenses.

To book a driver or for more information please telephone our friendly call handlers 07873 497633 from 9am-5pm Monday to Friday or visit www.lbvpt.co.uk

We are in urgent need of volunteers as call handlers and drivers. If you have some spare time and would like to be involved, please contact us. Basic training will be given.

This Non-emergency hospital transport, LBVPT, is for those who need our HELP, so please can you help us to HELP them. Please get involved with an award-winning service for the community - Thank you!



The Chatty Café

Bringing the community together for a natter with tea and cake

Come along from 1st March 2022
Free - Every Tuesday 10am-1pm
at the TACTIC Centre, 17 Hockliffe Street, LU7 1EZ

Initiative of Bassett Road Surgery, Patient Participation Group and supported by TACTIC young volunteers

 <p>Teenage Advice & Information Centre TACTIC: 01525 373838</p>		 <p>Bassett Road Surgery Patient Participation Group Rose (PPG) 07538 331443 Email: bassettroadppg@gmail.com</p>
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PCR Test Scam - Beware

One of our patients has made us aware of a PCR Scam. There is an email circulating that appears to come from the NHS, but it is a scam requesting you make payment for the test.

The message they received - NHS: You have been in contact with someone with the Omicron Variant. Apply for a Test Kit today: <https://fast-teskit.com> **Please be vigilant**

Could it be Menopause?

The menopause is something ALL women will go through and yet we are told very little (if anything) about what to expect and, more often than not, don't realise it has begun as there are so many symptoms we are completely unaware of.

It's not all hot flushes and periods stopping!

In fact, some women do not experience hot flushes or night sweats and a small percentage will have no significant change to their menstrual cycle for quite some time.

To clarify - you can be peri-menopausal even if you are still having periods.

For many women the first symptoms can be psychological; anxiety, low mood, depression, loss of confidence etc, these can be frightening and concerning especially if you don't know it is hormone related. Others can experience joint pain, heart palpitations, recurring UTIs, dry skin/eyes/mouth etc, low libido, cognitive function issues such as brain fog and memory problems leading to many women worrying that they have early onset dementia.

Here are two symptom checkers you can download and print out.

[Menopause Symptom Checker](#)

[GSM of Menopause](#)

What can I do?

If you find that you are experiencing some of these symptoms and they are adversely affecting your quality of life, please complete your symptom checker and arrange to speak to a GP about the range of treatments available to patients on the NHS, and which of these might be most suitable for you.

Support

If someone you care about is struggling as they navigate through the menopause please download and print this out to help you to understand how you can support them better. [Understanding Menopause for Partners blog](#).

Falls Prevention Strength and Balance Sessions

Improve strength and balance, avoid slips, trips and falls, build confidence and stay independent longer

- † Are you over 65 and at risk of falling?
- † Have you recently had a fall?
- † Are you worried about falling?

FREE 12 week strength and balance programme might be the answer
(rolling programme so you can start your 12 weeks at any time)

Where - Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre, LU7 2AF
When - Tuesday 12.30pm

To be referred to this programme please contact your GP. For more information call 0300 300 6372 or email active.lifestyles@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



'Just Ask' Healthwatch Event



Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
JUST ASK...
Talk to us, we are listening

TALK TO US!

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will be visiting an area near you to provide information, advice and guidance about **local social care, health, housing and additional services**. We will be joined by our partner organisations and local voluntary groups.

Please come along to find out more about the services available in your local area.



Tuesday 21st June
Market Square, Leighton Buzzard
9am - 1.30pm



Wellbeing Walks in Leighton Buzzard (previously Walk 4 Health)



Walks are led by trained leaders, take place weekly and are free, just turn up on the day and go*

There is a choice of length and pace:

- **Short** (approximately 30-40 minutes) on Wednesdays
- **Intermediate** (approximately 60 minutes) on Monday
- **Longer** (maximum 90 minutes) on Thursdays

All walks start at 10am from Bell Close car park, Leighton Buzzard (LU7 1RX) with the opportunity to meet afterwards for refreshments. *You will need to fill in a registration form the first time you take a walk with the group.

For more information

Email : healthwalksLB@outlook.com Web: www.lb-ramblers.org.uk/healthwalks.php
Tel : Julian 07770 344914

Stoma Support Group in Wing



Do you have an Ileostomy, Colostomy or Urostomy? Local stoma support group meets first Monday of every other month at Wing Hall 11am-12.30pm
Join them for a coffee and talk with like-minded people – carers and partners' welcome.

2022 dates – 4th April, 6th June, 1st August, 3rd October, 5th December
Contact 0800 0360100



Patient feedback on the newsletter

We would love to hear your feedback on the newsletter. Did you find it useful and informative? Is there something you would like us to cover in future issues? Do you have a non-clinical question that you would like answered? If so, email us at bassetroadppg@gmail.com or leave a comment in the PPG Comments Box in the Waiting Room – with your contact details and we will get back to you.