**Bridges Medical Practice**

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**Practice Winter Newsletter**

Dear patients,

We hope all of you had an enjoyable summer, as Summer 2020 was slightly different due to COVID. Now winter is approaching and the variant OMICRON is spreading fast, we ask you to stay vigilant and follow government guidance. In this letter we will give you a brief update on what has happened within our surgery over the last year.   
  
**1) Clinical Appointments**

Since January 1st, we have offered over 22,000 clinical appointments, whether it be with a GP, Nurse or HCA. Initially at the beginning of the year many GP appointments were via telephone unless it was clinically unsafe for the patient not to be seen. Telephone appointments will still be available going forward, where necessary but we are now seeing over 50% of our appointments face to face. Throughout the last year we have had DNA rate of 3.3% meaning over 650 appointments have been wasted, please try to remember to inform us when you can't attend, or the appointment is no longer needed.   
  
**2) Vaccination Programme**

**Flu** – As of today we have administered over 1430 vaccines, thank you for protecting yourself and supporting your GP surgery. If you are eligible & have not had your vaccine, please contact reception to book in.

**COVID vaccine** – Clinics are still being held at the Bede centre, Gateshead on a Thursday & Saturday. You can book in for your vaccine via

the national booking system, whether it be for your 1st, 2nd or your booster vaccine. Currently this is still overseen by all your local GP surgeries, from the middle of January our colleagues from CBC Health will be taking over this.

**3) Patient Participation Group (PPG)**

I’m Elaine, and this year’s Chair for the Patient Participation Group (PPG), and wanted to take this opportunity to tell you a bit about the group and invite any interested patients to join us.

The PPG meets 4 times a year for around an hour at a time, so isn’t a big drain on your time - and we make sure to schedule our meetings either at lunch time or after core working hours to ensure that everyone who is interested is able to attend. Even if you can’t attend a meeting itself but are a member you can share your thoughts on agenda items with me as the Chair, Derek our Secretary or with the Practice and even have items raised for discussion that we can report back on.

PPG meetings are an opportunity for the Bridges Team, led by Dr Evans (Sole Partner) and Joanne Palmer (Practice Manager) and members of the patient population to discuss in a frank and open way our GP surgery. In our meetings the Practice has their chance to speak - this can be everything from recruitment of new staff to asking for our feedback on proposals - after all, as patients we know what we need! It is also our chance as patients to hold our surgery to account - if something isn’t working well, we can share our thoughts and help to recommend solutions. This feedback is often implemented - a good example is you can now book your blood test appointments up to 8 weeks in advance (a massive help for patients who need regular blood monitoring!)

We do need more members though - as we all know Gateshead is a busy and vibrant place to live with a large (and growing) population, and for Bridges to be the best possible surgery for each one of us we need to make sure we have representation from all population groups. Your voice matters - and this is a way to make sure you are heard. You don’t have to be a permanent resident of Gateshead - even if you are just here for a year you can make a positive difference for our GP surgery.

If you’ve got questions about the PPG, please email ngccg.bridgesmedicalpractice@nhs.net and between Joanne and I we will answer everything we can. Our next meeting is in January 22 and there is certainly time to get signed up as a member between now and then - we’d love to hear from you.  
  
**4) Staff**   
We would like to welcome 2 new members of the team, who are joining the practice in January. We would like to welcome:

**Kate Sutton** – Locum GP, working Thursdays all day.

**Caitlin Baker** – Admin, working full time.

**5)Services**   
**Early morning smears** – We are now offering smear appointments from 7:30am on a Monday and Thursday morning with our Nurses.

**Coils** – Our Nurse Kerry offers coil/implant change, please book a routine appointment with her to have your initial consultation.

**Care Home** – Dr Turner visits the surgeries linked care home every Wednesday, which is Alexandra House.

**Student/Young Persons Clinic** - We now hold a young people's clinic (0-24) on a Wednesday afternoon between the hours of 13:00 - 15:00. This is a drop-in clinic, no appointment needed, just turn up. (Term-time only)

**6) CQC Inspection.**  
We recently had a telephone call with CQC inspectors. From the phone call they have deemed us as 'good', meaning at this current time they are happy with how the practice is run & we do not require an in-person inspection.   
  
**7) New Developments Nearby**  
Earlier this year Gateshead Council approved planning for new developments around the Town Centre, thus meaning our patient list size will most likely increase. We have plans in place

to cope with the potential growth & pressures that come with this. We will keep our patients updated as and when this happens.