

Bruton Surgery News

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Welcome to May

Our newsletter this month focuses on the current demands on general practice, together with how and why we are continuing to operate a 'triage first' service.

How we are working, and why

The first thing to make clear is that the practice is open and providing primary care services. Indeed, throughout the pandemic period the practice has never been closed.

Included within this newsletter are two letters to patients, one from Symphony Healthcare Services Ltd who own and run Bruton Surgery, and one from Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group who oversees services in Somerset. These letters explain the pressures that practices including Bruton are currently working under.

The practice provides a range of different appointment types with different clinicians, depending on what care is needed. This is generally split between our Nursing Team and our Clinical Team.

Our Nursing Team has provided a wide range of face to face appointments throughout the pandemic where in-person contact with the patient is necessary. This includes blood tests, cervical smears, dressings, ECGs, INRs, injections etc.

In addition, the Practice Nurses provide Chronic Disease reviews which are currently provided by telephone. These are arranged after a blood test, so that your results can be reviewed and discussed. You will be invited for a pre-screen including blood test (and foot check if diabetic) before your review call.

Our Clinical Team is a multi-disciplinary team with a range of skills including GPs, Advanced Nurse Practitioners and Emergency Care Practitioners. They have different skills and experiences which are appropriate to different care needs.

Since March 2020 and on the advice of NHS England and the Government, the practice moved to a 'triage first' approach. In April 2020, the practice introduced AskMyGP as practices were encouraged to make use of online consultation software.

What does 'triage first' mean?

'Triage first' means that requests for clinical consultations are discussed with you first before an in-person appointment is offered if it is appropriate and necessary for your care. Many requests can be dealt with by telephone and this is often more convenient for many patients as it saves a trip to the practice. It also allows us to deal with more requests during the day than in-person appointments only would allow.

All requests which require a Clinical Team response are managed through AskMyGP as this enables all requests to be reviewed, prioritised and assigned to the most appropriate member of the Clinical Team. They will then contact you to discuss your care needs – this will likely be by telephone in the first instance but may be by email message depending on the request and the preferred method of responding.

This allows us to prioritise those requests which require an urgent medical response and we will make contact as quickly as possible to those with the most urgent need. For requests which are not medically urgent, we will respond as quickly as possible but it may be up to 3 working days depending on demand. We will try to let you know when to expect a call but please let us know if there are times you won't be available.

However, because all requests are triaged this means Reception do not book appointments with the Clinical Team on request. It is for the clinician to decide with the patient if an in-person appointment is needed and if so, this will be arranged usually for the same day.

Why can't I book an appointment with my GP?

We appreciate that this is a different way of working to before the pandemic, but we also know that Bruton, like many practices, struggled to meet the demand for appointments before the pandemic.

When in-person appointments were offered, there was a finite capacity which when full, meant further requests were either denied or delayed. There is always a concern that appointments are filled with minor concerns, when patients with more urgent needs are unable to book. We will always ensure that those patients that clinically require a face to face appointment will receive one and with the right member from the Clinical Team.

We are also very aware that the practice building is very small, and that those patients who are coming to the practice for in-person care tend to be more vulnerable or at risk. By reducing attendance at the practice helps us to keep the practice building, patients and staff safe by minimizing the risk of infection.

The practice is open, it has been throughout the pandemic. However, we have had to change how we work to keep everyone safe and meet the increased demand now being seen.

 <p>Self Care Care for yourself at home</p> <p>Minor cuts & grazes Minor bruises Minor sprains Coughs and colds</p>	 <p>Pharmacy Local expert advice</p> <p>Minor illnesses Headaches Stomach upsets Bites & stings</p>	 <p>NHS 111 Non-emergency help</p> <p>Feeling unwell? Unsure? Anxious? Need help?</p>	 <p>GP Advice Out of hours: Call 111</p> <p>Persistent symptoms Chronic pain Long term conditions New prescriptions</p>	 <p>UTCs Urgent Treatment Centres</p> <p>Breaks & sprains X-rays Cuts & grazes Fever & rashes</p>	 <p>A&E or 999 For emergencies only</p> <p>Choking Chest pain Blacking out Serious blood loss</p>
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Open Letter to Patients – Somerset CCG



To everyone in Somerset

Access to GP services

Your local GP surgery and all the staff who work across the county, continue to work hard to support the health and care needs of their communities. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and the vaccination programme, they continue to care for people in Somerset. They have provided face-to-face, telephone and online support for patients who have needed them.

As a result of COVID-19, many local people's physical and mental health needs have increased. In some cases, this is due to the lockdown measures in place and the impact this has had on people. We also know that people may have also delayed contacting their GP about their healthcare needs over the past few months because they may not have wanted to put pressure on vital services, or might have been concerned about accessing healthcare during the pandemic.

This means that GP practices are experiencing very high numbers of patients now trying to contact them. From January to March 2020, approximately 779,000 appointments took place; an average of 260,000 per month.

In the same period for 2021, approximately 837,000 appointments were provided across Somerset GP practices, with an average of 279,000 per month – this means we have already provided an additional 7.5% increase in appointments in the latest three-month period. 47% of all appointments were provided face-to-face.

GP practices have taken a leading role in supporting the roll out of the Somerset COVID vaccination programme, delivering around 70% of the total vaccinations through GP-led community sites. As at 16 May, over 570,000 vaccines have now been given across the county to the highest priority groups.

The vaccination programme has been carried out in addition to day-to-day GP practice work. As a result, you have probably noticed a delay in getting through to your practice or getting an appointment; this is, in part, due to the volume of patients trying to get through because of the backlog of people needing care. Practices are doing all they can including installing additional phone lines and offering online contact via their websites.

While face-to-face appointments continue to be offered to those based on clinical need, many issues can be resolved during a phone consultation without patients having to travel to a surgery. You should expect to be asked about your problems in advance by a member of the practice team. This is to ensure that your problem is dealt with quickly and effectively and you are directed to the most appropriate healthcare team for your needs.

GP services are required to follow national guidelines to prevent the transmission of COVID. This includes social distancing and wearing face coverings. Please follow these requirements which are there to keep you and the GP team safe. Practices are still operating at reduced capacity in the buildings and have very limited space in waiting areas; appointment times are longer to allow for cleaning in between patients and changing of personal protective equipment by staff.

Because of the backlog of people needing care, there are currently longer waits for routine appointments than usual at some practices. The NHS in Somerset is doing all it can to reduce waiting times both in General Practice and in the Hospitals. We know that there are many people needing healthcare help.

We understand how anxious people must feel when they simply want to talk to someone about a healthcare concern or worry and how frustrating it must be to not be able to get through on the phone or have to wait for an appointment.

We are asking the people of Somerset to continue to be patient with us. We are working hard to ensure access to all that need us but we need your support to help us do this. Unfortunately, we continue to see a small number of people taking their frustrations out on staff. This is unacceptable. The NHS has a zero tolerance approach to abusive and threatening behaviour towards healthcare staff and we will take action against anyone who threatens practice staff.

Our staff care about their patients and are simply trying to do their best to support everyone's healthcare needs in the most suitable way, despite the current levels of demand. We need you to support your local GP practice and allow them to do their jobs without fear of abuse.

You can also continue to support us by seeking help when you need it from the most appropriate service. We will refer you if we think you need another service.

There are a range of options to get help in addition to your GP surgery:

Pharmacy

As lockdown eases, don't forget your local high-street pharmacist can provide health advice and help with minor illnesses like coughs and colds, sunburn, hay fever and diarrhoea. You don't need an appointment and they can even provide you with the right medicines at the same time.

Mindline

If you, or someone you know, is struggling with their mental wellbeing, our 24/7 Mindline is open to people of all ages. Just ring 01823 276 892.

111 First

Our 111 service is available 24/7 to provide advice, treatment and care. Just ring 111 or visit <https://111.nhs.uk/> and the service will provide advice and refer you to another service if you need it; if you need to be seen in person they can book you a time slot.

Minor Injury units

Don't forget that A&E is for life-threatening emergencies. There's also a network of minor injury units to provide the treatment you need – often they'll see you quicker and closer to home.

Please continue to help us keep Somerset safe and thank you for everything that you have done to support us.

With all best wishes



David Heath

Chair of the Somerset Primary Care Commissioning Committee
Somerset CCG Non-Exec Director, Patient and Public Engagement

Open Letter to Patients – Symphony Healthcare Services Ltd



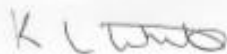
Letter to Patients: 20th May 2021

Following the recent article from the British Medical Association, we thought it was important to reiterate the pressures currently felt on general practice. We have been running our services throughout the pandemic, with our teams working above and beyond to deliver care in line with official guidance to ensure the safety of each other, our patients and our communities. On average, across our nine sites that use askmyGP, we have dealt with more than 3,600 patient requests each week - we've also had to maintain other clinical administration, such as lab results and prescriptions, and more recently undertaken the Covid-19 vaccination hubs alongside this. This work will not ease however as the other contractual elements of the GP contract that were postponed last year to accommodate the vaccinations have already recommenced. This is more than our clinical staff have ever had to deal with – whilst taking extra infection prevention control measures and adapting to constantly changing guidance.

Importantly, all of our practices have continued to offer and use face to face appointments where these have been clinically appropriate. Surprisingly, this has been difficult for some to accept and over the last year, we have been compared to supermarkets, stores and pubs with questions about why we cannot open freely either. Please remember that if our trained medical professionals were to have contracted Covid-19, our local populations could have been without a surgery, as with the already limited resource of clinicians available to support practices, cover was finite. It must also be remembered that like many of those across the UK some of our staff are vulnerable themselves and have had to shield, creating additional gaps in resource. To support this, our decision to only allow patients with appointments to attend the surgery was risk assessed throughout the year and we firmly stand by our processes – which kept both our staff and patients safe, enabling us to continue to provide care, albeit in a different way. We strongly believe that the processes and procedures put in place across our sites were a key contributing factor in preventing the unnecessary spread of this serious disease – which was pivotal for us when supporting 82,000 patients.

We await updated national standard operating procedures to guide us on how services may be delivered going forward and how to ensure the safety of patients and staff when reopening reception. We understand that the roadmap continues to allow more and more freedom to the public but we are still in a pandemic, and the news about rising case numbers of the Covid-19 variant first identified in India, highlights that a sensible and cautious approach to returning to normal in general practice is key.

We know that the last year has been testing for all but we continue to ask for your patience and understanding towards all of our staff as we continue to review and adapt our processes to protect and serve our patient population, as well as protect the wellbeing of our teams



Kerry White
Managing Director



Dr Berge Balian
Medical Director

www.symphonyhealthcareservices.com

COVID vaccinations

The practice continues to work with our GP colleagues in the 'Rural Practice Network' to deliver Covid vaccinations, and this has been a remarkable success!

In early May, the vaccination clinic moved to Haynes International Motor Museum as we can accommodate more patients in a single day – and is working very well.

In Somerset, over half a million vaccinations have been given and many local patients have already received second dose as well as younger patients being invited for their first dose.

As the practices are informed of their vaccine delivery (either Pfizer or AZ) about 10 days in advance, we cannot book first and second doses at the same time. Invitations are sent by text message from Millbrook Surgery on behalf of the local practices so please respond if you receive an invitation.

Alternatively appointments can be made via the National Booking Service 119. The position in Somerset as at 16 May is below:

When attending your vaccination, please wear a face mask at all times.

It protects us and it protects you.



So far together we have given:



572,874

**COVID-19 vaccinations as of
16 May 2021**



349,766
first doses



223,108
second doses

Please ensure that we have your up to date contact details, particularly if you have changed your mobile phone number!!

We are only informed of your contact details by you – if you haven't told us about your change of address or new number, no one else will!

If you move or change your phone numbers (landline or mobile) please inform the practice by calling us or by emailing bruton.surgery@nhs.net. Thank you.

Cervical Smears

Attending your routine smear is so important to do. If you are invited for your smear, please attend your appointment as it's the best chance to make sure that there is nothing to worry about, or to catch it early.

For further information about cervical smears and cervical cancer, please visit www.jostrust.org.uk.

If you are at all worried about your appointment, here are some tips to help:

A smear test isn't always easy

Our tips can help

Ask to book a longer appointment

More time to ask questions and feel ready for your smear test.

Bring someone you trust

They can be with you in the waiting room or during your appointment.

Ask for a smaller speculum

A smaller size may be more comfortable for you.

Wear a skirt or dress

If you want to wear one, you can keep it on during your smear test.

Talk to your nurse

If you need any support or have questions, your nurse can help.

Due to COVID precautions we would prefer you to come alone. However, if you are worried to come alone, please speak to us first.

If you have questions, we're here:

0808 802 8000

jostrust.org.uk



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Healthcoaches – here to help

A Health Coach will help you gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to improve your health and well-being.

Nobody knows you better than you know yourself and we believe everyone is capable of making positive changes in their lives.

With you, they will:

- Explore what is important for your life and wellbeing
- Identify the local activities and services you can benefit from
- Gain support and encouragement to start using services that can help you

For more information about our Healthcoaches including a leaflet about their work, please visit our website: <https://brutonsurgery.nhs.uk/practice-staff/#> or contact us on 01749 812310.

Patient Group – new members welcome

Our Patient Group is open to new members – the group meets with the practice leadership (Practice Manager and Clinical Lead) at least four times a year to discuss the practice from a patient's perspective. The role of the patient group is to:

- Be a critical friend to the practice
- Advise the practice on the patient perspective and provide insight into the responsiveness and quality of services
- Encourage patients to take greater responsibility for their own and their family's health
- Carry out research into the views of those who use the service
- Organize health promotion events and improve health literacy
- Provide regular communication with the patient population

(Source: The Patients Association).

The Patient Group works best when it reflects the whole practice population – we would particularly be interested to welcome younger patients or those with recent experience of the practice.

If you are interested, please email bruton.surgery@nhs.net or contact the Practice Manager for a discussion.



Somerset's Local Authorities
Coronavirus support helpline
0300 790 6275

Available 8am to 6pm, seven days a week

A single number is now available for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus related support from Somerset's Local Authorities. Anyone who can't find help within their community can use the helpline to get help and advice surrounding:

- Emotional support if you're feeling worried or anxious
- Financial support
- Personal care and support including food and delivery of prescriptions
- Housing and support for the homeless
- Social Care or Medical transport needs
- Waste collection and disposal
- Employment, skills and business advice



Bereavement support

The Somerset Bereavement Support Service is here if you've been bereaved and need emotional support or someone to talk to.



Call **0800 304 7412**
 9am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday.

In partnership with



Here for you 24/7, rain or shine.



Somerset
Mindline 01823 276 892