



January 2021

Bourn Surgery Newsletter

www.bournsurgery.nhs.uk

Special Update

On Tuesday 12th January we held our first virtual Patient Participation Group (PPG) meeting, and used this opportunity to bring those members who were able to attend up to speed with what has been happening at Bourn Surgery, how we are responding to the Level 5 emergency response initiated last week, and progress on local delivery of the COVID-19 vaccination.

We would like to thank those PPG members who gave us their time on Tuesday evening, for what we hope was a useful and productive meeting. If any patients are interested in becoming members of our PPG, please do email our practice manager Mrs Tracey Wilson on tracey.wilson@nhs.net.

How Bourn Surgery is responding to the move to Level 5 emergency response and new national lockdown:

Moving to Level 5 emergency response means that all non-essential general practice work should be stopped to allow general practice to cope with very significant, potentially overwhelming, demand relating to COVID-19, acute deterioration in long-term conditions, new symptoms indicating potentially serious disease and the COVID-19 vaccination roll out. We have spent time in the last week working out what this means for Bourn Surgery.

The major message we want to communicate is that **we are open**. We have remained open and here throughout the pandemic and previous two lockdowns, and will continue to be here during this next stage of the pandemic. We have maintained our normal level of appointments throughout, and will continue to see patients face-to-face when clinically needed. **If you need us, we are here.**

We do however need to ensure that we are able to protect our vulnerable patients who need to see us in person at the Surgery, by providing an environment that is as safe as possible. We also need to protect our staff from any unnecessary contact to reduce the risk of the nightmare scenario, which has happened in a number of practices, of having so many staff off sick and isolating that the practice has to close. **We are open and we are here, but we must act to protect our communities and our patients.**

The current important points are:

- All GP appointments will continue to be by telephone/video in the first instance. Only after this initial appointment can a decision be made about whether a face-to-face contact is required.

- No-one is to enter the practice building unless they have a pre-arranged face-to-face appointment. If you need to speak to Reception to book an appointment or update us, please do this by telephone.
- Dispensary are now handing out medications from the side window into the car park. We have an awning to ensure you have shelter from inclement weather, and are fixing the lighting to make sure that visibility is good in the evenings. We have used cones to create a safe space within the car park for this.
- Due to the impact of needing to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination programme at pace (see more below), no appointments will be available to book more than 7 days in advance. This is to ensure that we do not have large volumes of appointments to rearrange when we are informed of our vaccine delivery dates and need to release doctors and nurses to the vaccine centre.
- We will continue to work proactively to reach out to our patients who have more complex medical needs, to ensure that we continue to monitor and safely manage their health conditions throughout this pandemic.

We discussed the results of a survey we have carried out asking patients about their experiences of telephone and video appointments with the PPG. We reflected that, once the pandemic has passed, for certain groups of patients telephone and video consultations can be a much more convenient and accessible way of engaging with us, and we are keen to ensure that we build on the technological advances that the pandemic has necessitated.

This is a unique and challenging situation for us all, and so far 2021 is not proving any easier than 2020. We will continue to review, revise and revisit the way that we are responding to the pandemic, and we are grateful for your support as we do so.

COVID-19 Vaccination update:

Finally we are able to share some news with you! The communications given out around the vaccine programme are tightly controlled by NHS England, and up until this week we have been asked to simply say “you will be contacted when a vaccine is available for you”. Thankfully that has now changed.

Locally the Pfizer vaccine began to be delivered at the end of December by local hospital hubs. Due to the complexity of the Pfizer vaccine, its cold-chain requirements and very short shelf-life, sites have to be able to give 1,000 doses within 3 days to the eligible cohorts. This is clearly very challenging, especially for small rural GP surgeries such as ours.

At the current time it is not possible for individual GP practices to deliver either the Pfizer or Astra Zeneca vaccine from their own premises to their own patients. This is a nation-wide directive. Instead, GP practices are working together as groupings (otherwise known as Primary Care Networks) of 45-50,000 patients to deliver the vaccine from one single site within that grouping, for all patients of the group of practices. We are pleased to announce our local vaccination hub will be in Royston.

The Royston site will become operational from **Monday 18th January**, but we still await confirmation regarding when our vaccine delivery will be. We will be notified at least 3 days before our vaccine is due to arrive, only then can we start to book patients in.

The vaccine priority groups (ie who gets called for a vaccine when) have been decided centrally by NHS England. We have absolutely no ability to alter to this or make exceptions. The first groups to be vaccinated are care home residents and staff, health and social care workers and social care workers, and the over 80s. As each cohort is completed, we can then begin calling those in the next priority group.

We are not allowed to offer a choice of vaccine. Again, this is a national mandate. Our priority has to be to ensure that no vaccine is wasted, and that every dose is given to an eligible patient.

We do know that automated booking systems will be used to help deal with the huge administrative burden of booking hundreds of vaccine appointments in an extremely tight timescale. Those with mobile phone numbers on their records will be contacted by text initially, therefore if we do not have a record of your current mobile number, **please ensure you update us with your mobile number**. As soon as we are able to book appointments for those in the first priority group, you will be contacted. Please **DO NOT** contact Reception about this until you are invited to do so.

We know that this has been a very frustrating time for you all, and the lack of information has been questioned by some.

As we are sure you can imagine, we are desperate to get going with this work. This will inevitably have an impact on staffing levels at the Surgery over the next months, as clinicians and admin staff are needed to staff the vaccine centre whenever we are in receipt of vaccine delivery. We will do our very best to ensure that we strike a balance between continuing to provide care from our Surgery, and playing our part in the vital national vaccination effort.

Thank you very much for reading this (rather long!) update, but we hope it is useful to help you have a better understanding of this difficult and complex situation that we find ourselves in.

Reception

- **Mon-Fri:**
8.30am-1pm, 1.30pm-6pm
- **Appointments:** 01954 719469
- **Emergencies:** 01954 719313
- **www.bournsurgery.nhs.uk**

Dispensary

- **Mon-Fri:** 8.30am-1pm,
2pm-6pm

Out of Hours

- **NHS 111**