

A View from the Practice

By Tracy Wilson

Practice Manager.

Corona Virus – yes it's still here....the schools are back and local restrictions have been eased but we are far off from it ending.

Here in the practice we have been open throughout lockdown – we have had to change our service to ensure we can still care for our population keeping everyone safe. It has been very difficult.

6 months into the pandemic and things may feel like back to normal, it's true, but normal here in the NHS is never going to be the same again.

We are currently not allowing patients into the building via the front doors – you will be seen by a doctor or nurse upon invitation after you have spoken to them over the telephone or via video or through the practice e-consult system. We are still dealing with the vast majority of queries over the telephone.

When lock down happened people were scared – the community was amazing and people started to self-care for the simple things. When you felt unable we have been here as always to help you, we have just done it in a different way.

Lockdown has eased, people are moving around more and feel like they can approach us for issues that have been managed at home for a time but not cleared so now need professional support. We are here to provide this – that has never changed and never will.

What is really difficult for everyone at the minute is that all contacts with the practice have to be done over the telephone. We have increased staff answering the phones but we can potentially have 100 – 150 people call within an hour, if you are person 150 in the queue then you will have to wait your turn, this can take some time. We have seen the number of calls into the practice almost double over the last week or two and we are acutely aware of how frustrating it is to wait and then not get the help you feel you need. We are trying our very best.

We are considering a dedicated phone line for prescription requests and are looking at purchasing a free standing mail box (we don't have a letter box) so you can drop off your repeat requests. You can also request medication via patient online – see the info on the website.

You can have a virtual consultation using Engage Consult – this sends the information you give us to a doctor for them to review and decide the best way to treat you.

We are working really hard using new technologies to keep everyone safe. We are seeing patients face to face and providing nearly all the services we were before the pandemic started. We are just working in a different way – a way that is here to stay.

No one knows or can predict if and when a second spike may happen – other countries have seen them and they have been worse than the initial wave. If we see this in the winter months it has potential to kill lots of the vulnerable members of our community who normally find winter difficult without the added worry of corona virus.

We all need to stay safe – the NHS will continue to provide health care in the safest way possible. Only together can we get through this pandemic.