

PARTNERSHIP FOR HEALTH



FRIENDS OF DAVENPORT HOUSE

BULLETIN NO 11 – APRIL 2020

CONTAINS IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR EARLY READING PLEASE.

THE VIRUS THAT HAS CHANGED THE WORLD

In the last month, most services have made profound changes to their daily routines, with the view to keeping staff and patients safe and healthy.

This article is to inform you of what changes have happened within Davenport House, in case you need to contact us.

Coming into the Surgery:

The inside set of doors to the Surgery are locked, but you can come into the porch and collect and drop off urine sample bottles. You can also post prescription requests and any other letters into the letter box.

Entrance into the main Surgery is only by ringing the bell and you will only be let in if you have an appointment with a doctor or nurse, or if you have been specifically told to come in to collect something.

Appointments:

If you feel you need to see a GP, you will have to ring the Surgery and speak to a receptionist. The facility to book via online or via Patient Partner has been suspended temporarily.

The receptionist will ask you the nature of your problem, and then book you a telephone appointment with a GP.

Please do share the nature of the problem with the receptionist, as it helps her to know who best to book your appointment with and what priority to give it. If, however, you feel it is very personal, you can say that, and your wishes will be respected.

You may not always get a GP of your choice when you call, and this maybe because we have allocated different roles for the doctors. Thus, each day there are some doctors dealing with routine problems, some dealing with 'on the day' problems, some doctors only doing visits, and some doctors doing Admin sessions. It is also possible that the doctor you want is self isolating! Some of these doctors are able to work from home and you may well get a call from a GP from their own home, although you may not be aware of it!

The GP will call you as close to the booked time as possible and try to manage the problem over the phone, and if necessary, will be able to offer you a video consultation. For this, we send you a link to your mobile phone, and you have to open the link and follow the very simple instructions.

In these unprecedented times, we often need to rely on your examination of yourself! On the video, we might ask you to press a certain part of your body, or to examine another part by copying the doctor. If you have a thermometer or Blood Pressure monitor, we might ask you to tell us your readings. Information from other gadgets can also be helpful.



**Dr Alka Cashyap
Senior Partner**

Patients are being extremely co-operative, and we are finding that we can deal with the vast majority of problems this way. However, on some occasions, a face to face appointment is unavoidable, and this will be made for you at the Surgery, or in our newly set up Harpenden hub, based in the old Harpenden Memorial Hospital on Stewart Road, or to one of the main hospitals.

There is more information on the Hub in a separate article on pages 4 and 5.

Our nurses:

Our nurses have also adapted to the new challenges. Face to face appointments are still available for essential services which cannot be done remotely, such as wound and ulcer dressings and injections, but many general queries are being answered over the phone, and some routine annual chronic disease management checks are also being done this way.

Some service provisions have changed hands temporarily. For example, for the time being, immunisations for babies and children are being provided in a different location by the School health nurses, so do not be surprised if you get an invite which asks you to go to a different address.

If you get an invitation letter from the Surgery, please do follow the instructions, as some essential services continue to be offered as they would have been normally. These include invites for some special injections and for women who need an annual smear examination.

Prescriptions/Sick notes/other Communication.

You can continue to ask for prescriptions through the Electronic Prescription service or by e-mailing the Prescription team. We are preferring to send as many prescriptions as possible electronically, so as to minimize patient contact. This facility can be easily set up for you if needed.

Many letters and forms that you might need, can be filled in by the doctor and e-mailed to you.

We can also send you texts onto your mobile with short messages, although unfortunately, you cannot text back a reply.

Waiting Room:

If you are invited to the Surgery for a face to face appointment with a doctor or nurse, please stay at least 2 metres apart from the receptionist or any other patient or staff who maybe there. If you do need to cough or sneeze, please make sure you do this into a large tissue, dispose of this properly into an appropriate bin, and wash your hands afterwards.

Try to avoid touching anything you don't need to. Alcohol gel is available for you to use if needed.

Personal Protective Equipment:

This had been in short supply for several weeks, but we have some at the moment. The doctor or nurse who sees you will be wearing this during the consultation. This PPE consists of a face mask, a visor, gown and gloves. You may also be provided with a mask to wear. Despite this, you may find that the doctor or nurse is keeping a distance from you. Please be respectful of this. Young children may need to be prepared for this as they may find it strange or frightening to see the doctor dressed this way.

Testing for Covid:

At the time of writing this article, testing is not available in the community for the average patient, but we hope this will be available at some point in the future.

Referrals to the hospital

Any conditions diagnosed during this current phase that need immediate attention, WILL be referred to the hospital right away, as urgent and 2 Week wait referrals are still being dealt with.

So please do not hesitate to contact the Surgery if you are concerned about your health. However, routine out patient appointments and elective procedures which were already booked, have been cancelled. You would have received a letter from the hospital about these.

If you have a consultation that needs a new referral for a problem that can wait, we will not be sending this referral to the hospital at the present time, but will do so after the lockdown is released and the hospital have let us know that they are ready to receive new referrals.

High Risk patients

High Risk patients have been contacted already both by the Surgery and some central sources. If you feel your health problems put you at high risk, but you have not received a letter, please speak to your GP.

Website:

We have provided lots of very useful information for you on our website. There is guidance for you on how to keep safe, and what to do if you suspect you have symptoms.

What can you do to help.

There is tremendous pressure on all the Surgery staff at the current time, as we are all working in new and unusual ways

We receive a large number of e-mails each day which are full of the latest guideline or policy for different medical conditions or for service provision. Based on these we are constantly reviewing our way of working and sometimes the processes change on a weekly basis. So the information I have provided you in this bulletin, could have changed by the time you actually read it.

As you may know, the 111 service is also working under tremendous pressure and if you think you need advice, do call the Surgery first, then consider 111 online, and keep calling them over the phone as the third option.

Look after your own well being also, as this is really important. There is guidance on our website also for this.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, please do not hesitate to seek help if needed. There are concerns that many people are presenting with non Covid illness, but which has become quite severe, simply because they were avoiding contacting the Surgery or attending the hospital. We are doing our best to keep the Surgery a safe environment, so please do seek help when you feel unwell.

The Covid-19 pandemic is the greatest challenge the NHS has ever faced, but we are all in this together, and with the joint efforts being made, there is no doubt that we will come through this.

Dr Alka Cashyap
20 Apr 2020

Geoff Mainwaring

Many of you may already be aware that Geoff Mainwaring died on Easter Sunday peacefully at home after a long illness (not Covid 19 related). He will be remembered with great affection as founding the Patient Group in partnership with Dr Derek Bird.

A service of committal will be held on Monday 4 May at 2.00 pm for close family members and hopefully his life will be celebrated at a later date when it is possible.



LOCAL CONOVIRUS HOT HUB - By Dr Chas Thenuwara



The Stewarts which is part of the Harpenden Memorial Hospital has recently been converted to a centre for triaging and assessing patients with suspected COVID-19.

The current coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak, which began in December 2019, has presented a significant global challenge to healthcare systems. The Covid-19 pandemic is quickly resulting in unprecedented pressures on the health and social care system, with all elements of the system being put under tremendous pressure. General Practice clinicians have been consulting via telephone with patients who have fever/respiratory symptoms that may be Covid-19 and who needed face to face clinical assessments.

The HOT HUB is a facility where anyone with suspected Covid-19 can be triaged assessed and treated appropriately. From now on if a patient phones with symptoms of COVID -19 are unwell and the doctor feels they may have COVID-19 they can be assessed in a local facility instead of putting enormous strain on struggling hospitals.

The respiratory hot hubs are being commissioned by Herts Valleys CCG (HVCCG) to support general practice in effectively and safely managing patients with respiratory and/or fever symptoms whilst supporting the wider system to cope with this pandemic.

Patient Journey

If a patient phones with possible Covid-19 symptoms a GP from Davenport may well assess over the phone. If they become concerned that you need further assessment they will refer you to the hot Hub. The hot hub will call the patient within 2 hrs and then the doctor from the hot hub will assess further. If the patient is called in a nurse will take the patients observations e.g. oxygen saturation, pulse respiratory rate and other measures outside in the observation area using full PPE and the patient will be asked to wear a mask too.

The doctor will then assess the information and decide whether the patient can go home, come in for further assessment or needs referral to hospital. The IT system allows us full access to medical notes and medications.

The centre is split into a green amber and red zone depending on the possible risk of exposure and is equipped with emergency equipment including defibrillator and oxygen if needed. We have managed to get supplies of PPE and IT is set up so we can view patient records. We can even organise prescriptions, order blood tests and Xrays. We are hoping to organise a Home Visiting facility.

My Experience - Dr Chas Thenuwara

I am the clinical lead for the facility and have been working with local colleagues to get this facility up and running. It has been a great achievement and a fantastic Medical Assessment area for the local community. The facility looks great and I am sure will be well used and appreciated by our patients.



There is a great team spirit within the HUB. It opened on Tuesday 14 April. I worked the first shift and was naturally apprehensive about what to expect. There were naturally teething problems. For example the patient couldn't hear me on the phone through my mask, problems with putting on and off PPE equipment (donning and Doffing) correctly, printers not working and IT crashing. However with the help of an enthusiastic and Multi-talented team from infection control nurses, security, admin, nurses, doctors and IT specialists we got through together in getting things running. We had a soft launch so only a few Practices could refer patients. All the patients I have seen have been very grateful to be assessed in a local facility which is safe and well run. We have time to explain to patients their readings and organise a management plan. We then contact the GP for follow up if needed.

Summary

The Hot Hub is a local safe area where patients can be assessed if they are unwell with COVID 19 symptoms. It is also important to have this facility so that patients who have other medical problems can be assessed safely in their GP Surgeries. So remember if you have an important medical problem please contact the Surgery

Dr Chas Thenuwara
20 April 2020

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