



199 Preston Road
Whittle-le-Woods
Chorley
PR6 7PS

September 2021

Dear Patient,

As a practice we wanted to write to our patients to explain the current situation in General Practice and our practice. As you are aware, we have been through a very difficult period during the COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted everyone one way or another.

The main issues we hear from patients are:

1) GPs and staff are not working and do not see any patients – patients are unable to book appointments

From 16th March 2020 the practice was advised by NHS England to triage patients remotely to reduce the transmission of coronavirus. We have always provided face-to-face appointments where clinically necessary and have since provided more face-to-face appointments for patients with our GPs and nurses.

We have never at any time been closed like the media states. We have continued to consult with around 150-160 patients per day, whether this was via telephone, video or face-to-face. **In fact, since 16th March 2020 to 20th September 2021 we have carried out 60,036 consultations which equates to around 780 consultations per week.**

Our practice is also under sustained demand as our list size continues to increase significantly each year. We now have over 10,700 patients registered at the practice. As a practice we try to manage the demand for appointments as best we can, but we are constrained by our current building - we will be moving early 2022 to our new build!

There is also a significant increase in demand for appointments following the COVID-19 pandemic. This is affecting all areas within the NHS and has a significant impact on general practice. There are long waiting lists for secondary care services which in turn means patients attend general practice for assistance whilst they are waiting (creates more demand for GP/ANP appointments). Unfortunately, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the NHS was underfunded, and services have been constrained for several years. The pandemic has just made the situation worse. We would ask that patients contact secondary care directly if they have any queries as a large number of our appointments are taken up by queries relating to secondary care.

Our clinicians work hard each day to provide appointments for patients. There are only a set number of appointments available each day and we cannot increase capacity as it would become unsafe for clinicians and patients.

2) Patients cannot get through on the telephone

We are aware that our current phone system is not fit for purpose. This is a phone system supplied in the local area to most GP practices. It does not have the capacity required for our practice and we

are actively searching for a new phone system. This will be in place before our move to our new build. We are aware how frustrating the system is, and we can only apologise for this. Our receptionists are not deliberately cutting patients off or dropping them back down in the queue – this is a fault of the phone system.

Our GPs and practice team work extremely hard for our patients and it is quite alarming the increase in verbal abuse our team (especially the receptionists) are receiving now. It is very upsetting for the team to receive daily abuse for things outside of their control. Whilst we understand the frustrations patients face, it is not acceptable to verbally abuse staff who are doing their job and trying to help.

We would like to take this opportunity to ask patients to please be kind to our reception team who are under significant pressure answering calls and dealing with patients at the desk for up to 10 hours per day. They are here to help but they cannot increase capacity when we no longer have any appointments left. They should not be subjected to abuse for doing their job.

We would also like to ask patients to support the BMA petition asking the Government to urgently assist with funding for more general practice staff <https://www.bma.org.uk/supportyoursurgery>

We hope that you will continue to support the practice during these difficult times.

Yours faithfully,



Dr H Desai
GP Partner



Dr A Fairhurst
GP Partner



Mrs K Unsworth
Practice Business Manager