

**A MESSAGE FOR OUR PATIENTS**  
**FROM**  
**DR SOOD & DR SHAH**  
**BILLINGE MEDICAL PRACTICE**

The Partners at Billinge Medical Practice wish to inform patients that we recognise and understand the concerns that patients may have regarding changes that have occurred at Billinge Medical Practice over the last 12-18 months. We know that patients are feeling very frustrated - particularly regarding access to the Practice.

We feel that it is important to explain some of the changes and the work taking place at the Practice to make the required improvements which are necessary to provide the best possible care for our patients.

**CHANGES TO THE PARTNERSHIP**

During the past 18 months, two doctors have resigned from the Partnership, leaving Dr Sood as the sole partner at Billinge. He was joined in February this year by Dr Nisha Shah, who also became a partner. Dr Sood and Dr Shah are both experienced GPs, and are committed to providing the best patient care and support to the local community.

***Dr Rohit Sood***

MBBS,

Diploma in Dermatology

Special interests in Dermatology, Diabetes, Minor surgery

***Dr Nisha Shah***

MBBS MRCGP DRCOG

Special interest in women's health

GP Appraiser

Medical Student Tutor

**DIFFICULTIES WITH ACCESSING SERVICES**

We understand that our patients have found it extremely difficult to get through to the Practice on the phone to book an appointment. Please accept our sincere apologies for all the difficulties and delays you have experienced.

In response to this:

- We have reviewed staffing rotas and more staff have been made available on the phones to meet the demand throughout peak times during the day.
- We are working with the phone provider to review the number of calls we receive so we can ensure enough staff are available.
- All our staff have had additional training on the phone systems and customer care so we hope you will see improvements
- the Partners will be monitoring the situation going forward.

## **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT WE ARE GETTING**

We are being supported by NHS St Helens Place and a Primary Care IT expert and have a Primary Care Consultant supporting us to make the required improvements. This includes reviewing Practice systems, to maintain and improve the quality of patient care and service delivery.

## **CLINICAL SYSTEM UPGRADE**

We have recently changed to a new clinical IT system, which will support the day to day needs of our patients and the healthcare team. The new IT system is a more commonly used system, which will enable good interaction and integration with the wider healthcare system and is designed to maximise patient safety and improve patient services. The transfer to the new system is now up and running and staff are completing their training in using the system.

## **NEW STAFF WORKING ALONG SIDE US AND STAFF RECRUITMENT**

We are a member Practice of St Helens North Primary Care Network. Because of the computer upgrade, we are receiving additional clinical support from the network including Frailty Practitioners, Pharmacists, Nurse Associates and Care Co-Ordinators, to increase clinical capacity at the Practice.

We are also hoping to recruit additional GPs to increase doctor availability at the Practice. Our change of IT system will help enable access to a greater pool of GPs.

## **LOCAL CHALLENGES IN ST HELENS**

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted how understaffed all GP Practices in St Helens are. There are not only a below average number of GPs per head of population, but also a below average numbers of Practice Nurses. Fewer GPs and fewer nurses unfortunately have had an impact on the number of appointments that are available for our patients.

The increased use of e-consultations by patients has exposed significant unmet need in our community. This means that the GP and Practice workload has increased by about 30%, but without the equivalent increase in workforce to accommodate that demand.

We are in a perfect storm of increasing patient need on a background of reduced doctor and nurse numbers. We are not dismissing the access issues at the Practice, but we do want to put the situation into context so that our patients can understand some of the challenges that we have.

We are also concerned that some of our most vulnerable patients may be struggling to get access to us at all because of the use of IT and technology. Our overall priority is to improve access for all our patient groups.

## **HOW YOU CAN HELP US TO HELP YOU**

We want to work with our patients to improve services for you. If you would be interested in joining our Patient Participation Group please contact:

Tracy Cunningham via email at [billinge.surgery@nhs.net](mailto:billinge.surgery@nhs.net)

You can also help us by:

### **Telephone Calls:-**

- Please ring in the morning for urgent “need to be seen on the day” problems only
- Please ring after 4p.m. for test results

- If you have completed an on-line e-consultation or submitted a query on our website, there is no need to follow this up with a telephone call as this causes a backlog of calls on our phone system

#### **What type of appointments we offer:**

- Please use our website for e-consults and other queries
- Once your request has been triaged, you may be signposted to other Clinicians who form part of the Practice Team, i.e. Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP); Practice Nurse; Pharmacist; Frailty Team; Musculoskeletal Practitioner; Mental Health Practitioner; Social Prescriber; Nurse Associate; Health Care Assistant
- Right Person, Right Place, Right Time – for some minor ailments you can seek help from the Chemist / Over the Counter Medication / Self Help

#### **When to use e-consults /Website (48 hour turn around)**

- Routine Problems
- Opportunity to request other Services, i.e. fit / sick note; Musculoskeletal; Midwife; Prescription Requests

#### **How to order a prescription:**

- You can drop your paper request in our prescription letter box or you can request via our website. Please do not ring the surgery to order your prescriptions, we do not take requests via telephone for our patients' safety. We will only take request via telephone for truly house bound patients. If you are truly house bound you need to register this with the Practice
- For any request for medication after your hospital appointment or discharge from the hospital, please allow 2 weeks for us to process. Without any hospital documentation we will not be able to issue you with the medication. This is for your safety. We will not be able to take any further actions that may have been suggested by the consultant for you without the hospital letter

#### **How to order a fit note:**

- Fit notes can be ordered by dropping your request in our letter box or via email. Please do not telephone the surgery. For the first week you can self-certify. If you have not been seen by a Health Care Professional in hospital or in the community then we need to assess your health for your safety before we can issue you with a fit note. Fit notes can be back dated from the week after your first day of illness.

#### **How to get test results:**

- Please only ring after 4pm. We normally do not contact you if the results are normal but if you still have concerns then please do not hesitate to contact the surgery.
- If you have been seen at the hospital and have had diagnostic tests, then these results will be given to you by your Consultant. Please **do not** ring the surgery for hospital results.

**Referrals:**

- We will not make a referral to other Clinicians without you having been consulted/ assessed in the first instance

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT**

We will continue to try our very best to improve access to our services and make sure that we help our patients get the right type of help and support they need.

We hope that with your understanding and support you will see vital improvements in your patient journey at Billinge Medical Practice.

We will continue to keep you updated with improvements as they take place at Billinge Medical Practice over the coming weeks. Please visit our website for additional information:

<https://www.billingemedicalPractice.org/>

We will also be arranging some drop-in sessions over the coming weeks for you to attend and hear about the on-going improvements being implemented at the Practice.

Thank you again for your understanding and support.

Dr Rohit Sood

Dr Nisha J Shah