

Primary care update, June 2023

Context

1. This report provides an update on primary care services across Hampshire. It includes an update on enhanced access services, as requested by the committee, and further local updates on wider access and estate issues raised previously. The report also includes a summary of national developments which may be of interest to the committee.
2. General practice continues to the foundation upon which effective patient care rests. NHS health services are divided into primary care, secondary care, and tertiary care. Primary care is the first point of contact for the majority of people in need of healthcare, and may be provided by professionals such as GPs, dentists and pharmacists.
3. There are three types of contract used for primary care nationwide, the most common is the General Medical Services (GMS) contract. This is a nationally negotiated GP contract and the most common type of primary care contract in Hampshire. It is negotiated annually between the British Medical Association's General Practitioners' Committee and NHS Employers. The Carr-Hill Formula has been used as the basis of core funding for GMS practices for over fifteen years, which is a nationally set formula but also takes into account patient needs, demographics such as age and gender, mortality ratios, and cost of living in geographical areas.
4. A GMS contract exists in perpetuity. Unlike other areas of the health service, primary care services are predominantly delivered by small businesses (GP partnerships) and shifting market forces are placing considerable strain on this operating model. In a review of the partnership model, commissioned by the Secretary of State for Health in 2018, it was concluded that if the GP partnership model were to survive in the future, then changes would be necessary. The review recognised the benefits of GP partnerships in terms of their efficiency and ability to be highly patient centred but also recommended the need for practices to work together to promote resilience and to bring in more skill-mix to support GPs in their working day.
5. GP services in England are independently regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which monitors and inspects providers of health and care services on quality and safety standards. Practices rated as good or outstanding usually receive inspections at least every 5 years; practices rated requires improvement or inadequate will be inspected within twelve and six months respectively of the previous inspection.

Appointments and access

6. We recognise patients continue to share concerns around difficulties in accessing GP appointments. In response to this, GP services are currently offering more appointments year on the year but demand for these services also continues to rise

significantly. The data below, which is published by NHS Digital, compares the January to March period in 2023 to 2022 for practices across the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board area.

	January 2023 to March 2023	%	January 2022 to March 2022	%
Total no. of appointments	2,787,105		2,509,344	
Did not attend	125,001	4.5%	105,871	4.2%
GP appointments given	1,319,767	47.4%	1,227,574	49%
Other healthcare professional staff	1,395,688	50.1%	1,201,260	48%
Face-to-face appointments	1,797,743	64.5%	1,460,537	58%
Home visits	22,903	0.82%	18,355	0.73%
Telephone	885,663	31.8%	946,568	37.7%
Same day appointment	1,220,795	44%	1,104,687	44%
Next day appointment	227,478	8.16%	228,990	9.16%
2-7 days appointment	543,249	19.4%	511,108	20.3%

7. All of these appointments have been offered in addition to delivering the COVID-19 and flu vaccination programmes.
8. Face to face appointments have risen in January to March 2023 compared to the previous year, at almost 65%. There has been a small decline in telephone appointments, reflecting the rise in face to face appointments. 44% of appointments are offered to patients on the same day.
9. While the data provides an overview in terms of what is being offered, it does not necessarily show the true picture of demand or provide narrative as to a practice's circumstances. The data may show some inaccuracies with how practices record interactions with patients.

Enhanced access services

10. Last Autumn new arrangements came into place across our area for additional primary care capacity outside the core hours of GMS contracts (8.00am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday excluding public holidays), formally known as enhanced access services. These are available from 6.30pm to 8.00pm Monday to Friday and 9.00am to 5.00pm on Saturdays. The changes are designed to improve access, promote patient choice and support primary care resilience.
11. A Primary Care Network (PCN) comprises of GP practices working together with community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital and voluntary services in their local areas. The new arrangements aim to remove variability across the country by putting in place a more standardised and better understood offer for patients. It is for the PCN to determine, based on discussions with their ICB and engagement with their patients, the exact mix of in person face-to-face and remote (telephone, video or online) appointments, how many appointments are for emergencies, same day or pre-booked (including screening, vaccinations and immunisations) and which services should be available when and what skill mix is needed to deliver these.
12. Specific data on uptake on these services is not yet available. However at this time we understand demand is high, in line with demand for primary care services more broadly. Feedback over many years has been that patients would like more choice over timing of appointments and access to a greater range of clinical support.

Additional roles in primary care

13. GP practices offer a wide range of specialist roles, alongside GPs, to ensure you get the right help as soon as possible. These include:

Clinical pharmacists

Undertake medication reviews for patients with complex, long-term needs and helping them to manage their conditions. They also work closely with the practice team to help with prescription and medication enquiries, supporting the repeat prescription system, dealing with acute prescription requests, and providing expertise in clinical medicines advice and medicines optimisation.

First contact physiotherapists

They are usually physiotherapists with enhanced skills that can help patients with issues such as back, neck and joint pain. By making it easier for patients to see a physiotherapist, they will have quicker access to diagnosis and treatment, helping them to manage their conditions more effectively and recover faster, so they can get back to normal life quickly. They will also help GPs to manage their workload more effectively and reduce the need for onward referrals.

Physician associates

A physician associate is a clinical graduate who, while not a doctor, has the skills and knowledge to help diagnose and manage the treatment and care of patients,

alongside the practice team, under the supervision of an experienced GP. They can provide extra capacity to help with continuity of patient care and help free up consultants to concentrate on more complex cases.

Nursing associates

Nursing associates help bridge the gap between healthcare support workers and registered nurses to deliver hands-on care as part of the nursing team. They allow nurses to focus on more complex clinical work. Nursing associates work with people of all ages and in a variety of settings.

Pharmacy technicians

Pharmacy technicians work alongside the clinical pharmacists and the wider practice team. They help with prescription and medication enquiries, providing safe and effective medicines optimisation as well as ensuring any hospital medication changes are up to date and accurate.

Occupational therapists

Occupational therapists work with people who have difficulties carrying out various day to day activities because of disability, illness, trauma, ageing, and a range of long-term conditions. They help people to get on with their every-day activities and stay in their own homes by providing adaptations.

Dietitians

Dietitians are experts in nutrition. They work with patients to alter their diets based on their medical condition and individual needs. Dietitians advise people and help them make informed and practical choices about their food and nutrition. This could include people with digestive problems, those who want to lose weight, or who need to put on weight after an illness, or people with an eating disorder or a food allergy.

Social prescribers

Sometimes people visit their GPs for issues caused by non-medical things like loneliness, anxiety, debt and unemployment, where a medical prescription is not the best solution. A social prescriber works with patients and their families to help them access a range of local community services that provide practical or emotional support and guidance of a non-medical nature. This helps improve the health and wellbeing of people in the community and allows people to remain independent and live their best lives.

Health and wellbeing coaches

Health and wellbeing coaches engage with people to support them in taking an active role in their health, by providing advice and support. They take a holistic approach, helping people to identify difficulties or issues in all areas of their life and helping them find solutions and lifestyle changes that mean they can lead happy and fulfilled lives. Health and wellbeing coaches can also play a key role in helping to tackle health inequalities.

Care co-ordinators

A care coordinator is a trained health professional that helps to support people's care. They offer a range of support such as monitoring and coordinating treatment plans, help educate people about their condition, connect people with services, and evaluate people's progress.

Patient advisors

Receptionists are trained as patient advisors to ensure you get the right care, from the right person at the right time. Providing them with brief information means they can signpost you accordingly. This can save you time if an appointment is not needed or there are other services that can also support your needs. For example other members of the practice team or community services.

Paramedics

Paramedics work in a variety of roles within a general practice. Their background in pre-hospital care means that they are used to working with people with a variety of health conditions from coughs and minor injuries to more serious conditions such as asthma and heart attacks. They work alongside GPs and help manage routine or urgent appointments, telephone triage (assessment of urgency of illness or injury) and home visits.

National developments to support primary care and improve access

14. In May 2023 the government published its recovery plan for primary care, and it was launched by the Prime Minister during a visit to nearby Southampton. The plan aims to:
 - Empower patients to manage their own health including using the NHS App, self-referral pathways and through more services offered from community pharmacy. This will relieve pressure on general practice.
 - Implement modern general practice access to tackle the 8am rush, provide rapid assessment and response, and avoid asking patients to ring back another day to book an appointment.
 - Build capacity to deliver more appointments from more staff than ever before and add flexibility to the types of staff recruited and how they are deployed.
 - Cut bureaucracy and reduce the workload across the interface between primary and secondary care, and the burden of medical evidence requests so practices have more time to meet the clinical needs of their patients.
15. We are well placed in our area to take forward this plan. Our additional roles in primary care are established and already working to support patients and we are building up better relations with pharmacy providers in light of our newly delegated responsibilities.
16. The Government's recovery plan followed the publication of the Full Report a year earlier in May 2022. Dr Claire Fuller, a practicing GP and Chief Executive for Surrey Heartlands NHS Integrated Care Board, was asked by NHS England and Improvement to carry out a stocktake of primary care.

17. The report set out how systems can accelerate implementation of the primary care, out of hospital care and prevention ambitions in the NHS Long Term Plan and drive more integrated primary, community, and social care services at a local level. The stocktake shares views on how services should develop, as well as setting up short-term next steps. To address health inequalities and improve the health of the local population, it considered how primary care networks can support Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) by bringing key partner organisations together.
18. The report centred on three essential offers it recommends are at the heart of integrating primary care:
 - streamlining access to care and advice for people who get ill but only use health services infrequently: providing them with much more choice about how they access care and ensuring care is always available in their community when they need it
 - providing more proactive, personalised care with support from a multidisciplinary team of professionals to people with more complex needs, including, but not limited to, those with multiple long-term conditions
 - helping people to stay well for longer as part of a more ambitious and joined-up approach to prevention

Local updates

- **Bury Road Surgery, Gosport**

19. We are pleased to provide an update on the future of Bury Road Surgery. As a reminder, the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board wrote to patients in January 2023 to confirm that, just before Christmas, the GP Partner at Bury Road Surgery resigned his contract to deliver General Medical Services. Since that time we have been working with our stakeholders and engaging with the patient community to consider all the options available to the ICB. We are pleased to confirm that we have now successfully approved for Blossom Health Partnership (an existing Partnership of GPs, Nurses and other healthcare professionals already operating in Hampshire) to take on Bury Road Practice from 1st July 2023. This means that the Bury Road Surgery site will continue to offer Primary Care services from this location. Existing staff will be able to remain at the practice should they wish to do so.

- **Merger of Willow Group and Gosport Medical Centre**

20. In April 2023, The Willow Group and Gosport Medical Centre merged to form a single practice. There will be no staff redundancies and all existing sites will remain open for patients. The practice has engaged with its patient population, to address queries raised and showcase all the improvements and services available to patients.

- **Shakespeare Road, Basingstoke**

21. From December 2022 Shakespeare Road Medical Practice has been run by Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust, in collaboration with Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Solent NHS Trust and North Hampshire Urgent Care. The practice is starting to recruit more staff and making positive improvements.

- **Chineham Medical Centre, Basingstoke**

22. We have been working with Chineham Medical Practice to secure new accommodation. As part of any process to secure new accommodation for primary care, the NHS is required to seek the views of the District Valuer on the proposed lease or purchase of a building. In this case, the District Valuer determined that plans to refurbish and extend Jameson House would not represent value for money to the NHS. We have therefore unable to proceed with this option and are now working closely with our public sector partners to explore alternative, local, accommodation for Chineham Medical Practice.

- **St Clement's Surgery, Winchester**

23. Construction work has now begun for the much-anticipated new St Clements GP surgery in Winchester. The multi-million-pound building is being built on the car park site on the corner of Friarsgate and Upper Brook Street, replacing the current St Clement surgery on Tanner Street. Construction work began in March 2023. The new development will include state-of-the-art accommodation for staff and patients, featuring 15 consulting rooms, 3 treatment rooms, admin facilities and larger reception and waiting areas. The new building also includes an interactive health hub, space for Primary Care Network Services, a Chiropractor plus other ancillary health services. Expansion space has also been built in for additional services to be delivered from the newbuild in the future too.

24. As part of the relocation to a new facility, the NHS and Assura have co-commissioned a study by Wessex AHSN to assess the benefits the new facility will bring, with further research planned once the GPs have moved and are seeing patients. The new building will be delivered to the latest sustainability standards and energy efficient with a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating for its performance. It will have the ability to generate onsite energy through the installation of PV Panels on the roof and is designed with regard to Net Zero Carbon principles.

- **Primary Care Network review, North Hampshire**

25. In 2022 we undertook a review of primary care in the North Hampshire area. This review was conducted following a number of practice mergers and difficulties experienced by primary care colleagues in the area. The review found that patients wanted improved communications with general practice, shorter waits for routine appointments, easier telephone access, a greater emphasis on supporting mental health, and improved relationships between patients and GPs. Since the review,

PCNs have recruited to additional roles to support with appointments including mental health practitioners, as outlined above, patient participation groups have been expanded to have more regular meetings, and wider improvements have been recommended nationally to improve access for same day care. We continue to support practices experiencing difficulties and welcome to moves nationally to further improve this support.