

## MERROW PARK SURGERY PATIENT INFORMATION March 2019

We are currently experiencing unprecedented demand for all of our appointments, but primarily with the medical team. For the last few weeks our routine GP appointments have been fully booked ahead for 6 weeks. We feel there are several reasons that are contributing to the long wait time which we would like to clarify below.

- Our number of patients has not significantly increased. We are offering the recommended number of medical appointments for the number of patients on our books as suggested by Guildford and Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
- It is a fact that people across the country are consulting more frequently. Our allocated budget for the surgery is based on the total number of patients registered, and has no consideration of the number of times patients are seen through the year. The current rate of funding we get fails to reflect that in a decade, the average number of consultations per patient per year has doubled. The national average amount of funding per patient a GP surgery gets is £151.37. This amount has to cover everything from staffing costs, administration and building running costs.

**Data source:**

- 1) <https://www.bma.org.uk/-/media/files/pdfs/.../press%20briefings/general-practice.pdf>
- 2) <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-payments-to-general-practice/nhs-payments-to-general-practice-england-2016-17>

- Even with an infinite budget, recruitment and retention of doctors and other health professionals remains an issue. The promise in 2015 of 5000 extra GPs by 2020 is currently a long way off and in fact, the net number of GPs since 2015 **has reduced by 1018** as of March 2018. In some parts of England there are surgeries who are unable to recruit GPs at all, and there have been hundreds of Practice closures in the last 6 years.

**Data source:**

- 1) <http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/gp-topics/employment/nhs-has-lost-1000-gps-since-jeremy-hunt-set-workforce-target/20036703.article>
- 2) <https://www.bma.org.uk/news/2018/june/gp-closures-expected-as-forward-view-falls-short>

- At Merrow Park Surgery, we are an accredited training practice and continue to take an active part in expanding the workforce. However, supervising and training juniors does take GPs away from seeing patients.
- The number of recommended patient contacts for a doctor to have in one day is 25. We are currently on some days providing more than double this to try and meet demand.

## ACTION PLAN

As a result of this exceptional demand, we have restructured our appointment system to try and **increase the number of routine bookable GP appointments**. The changes will also allow improved means of communicating with your GP without necessarily seeing or speaking to them directly. This system will be implemented over the next few weeks. Our receptionists will do their best to signpost you to the most appropriate avenue to help deal with your query or problem. We can also **text information to patients** so do please let reception know if you would like to opt in to this service.

There will be a change to a **Morning Only Telephone Triage system** between 8-11 am if you need to speak to a GP urgently or request a home visit. We will assess your problem via telephone and if necessary, book a same day face to face appointment with a GP, Nurse or Paramedic Practitioner. This will enable us to prioritise the most unwell patients and serious medical problems that require our attention quickly. The practice will still accept same day triage calls after 11am from:

- Other health professionals worried about a patient
- Under 5s whose parents are concerned about a new or deteriorating illness
- Patients who are undergoing cancer treatment (chemotherapy)
- Patients who are having palliative (end of life) care
- Patients who are on medication that suppresses their immune system
- Anyone concerned about a particularly vulnerable patient

Please note that **Home Visits** are for housebound patients (unable to leave the house unless in an ambulance) or palliative care patients only. Patients who are able to travel in a car must make their own arrangements to attend the surgery.

We hope that with these changes, we will be able to respond to our patient needs in the best way possible, utilising all forms of communication and helping tackle the challenges facing primary care in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### What patients can do to help

- **Prescriptions** take up a lot of doctor time. Please allow 48 hours for all medication requests to be processed. NHS England recommend patients obtain any “over the counter” (OTC) medication items directly from pharmacies and only in very specific situations will prescriptions for these items be issued from the surgery. (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/medicines/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed/>).
- **Eye problems** in the over 5s can be seen by the local Acute Minor Eye Service (ACES), run from Specsavers, who can be contacted on **01483 452225**. Suitable conditions include: sore eyes, red eyes, visual disturbance, eye pain, foreign bodies, flashes or floaters, and excessive tears.
- Patients need to consider if their problem really does require a Doctor’s attention. We have some extremely capable **Pharmacist** colleagues nearby who are happy to assess you first.
- Please consider that our funding covers a limited urgent care service. If you are contacting us with an **urgent problem** and need to be seen, we may not be able to accommodate your working pattern or existing commitments. Employers have a legal obligation to allow employees to seek medical attention.