

Patient Update – March 2023

Dear Patients

We are writing to update you on the current situation at our practice.

Recently we have seen a rise in the amount of feedback from patients who are finding it difficult to access appointments.

We fully appreciate and sympathise how frustrating this can be with long waits on the phone, and difficulty obtaining appointments when we have reached our capacity for extra appointments. We hope that by writing this letter we can explain what we are doing to try and address this issue.

Demand for our services has increased considerably, even on pre-pandemic levels. In January 2019 we conducted 5,104 face-to-face clinical consultations and 2,618 telephone consultations.

In January 2023 there had been a notable 31% increase to 6,708 face-to-face appointments and 87% increase to 4,896 telephone reviews.

Our Patient Care Advisors work as quickly and efficiently as they can to answer our phone lines. Our Head of Patient Care Advisors also monitors our incoming calls and if patients are shown to be waiting more than 20 minutes, where possible more staff are drafted in to help answer the phones. This is not ideal as these staff also deal with behind-the-scenes work including referrals, post management and typing. However, we realise the importance of patients being able to make contact by phone and this is a priority to us.

To help with the increased demand we have recruited additional staff. This includes Dr Tania Longman and a further new GP, Dr Ruth Delany, starting in April. We have also recruited a Practice Paramedic, an additional Practice Pharmacy Technician & two Practice Nurses.

We have been fortunate to be able to recruit more staff to the Compass House Team, as we are aware of other practices locally and nationally that have struggled to recruit NHS staff.

With the additional staff and new site at Brixham Hospital, we have been able to increase the number of face-to-face appointments we offer for acute conditions requiring same day treatment. These include patients with chest infections/ear infections etc. However, ultimately, we do not have unlimited resources and are currently working to maximum capacity.

We kindly ask that you consider some of the following things that you can do to help us:

- 1 Firstly, consider if the surgery should be your first port of call. Your local community pharmacy can help with a range of common problems, and some can

even see you and prescribe medication for certain conditions (such as urinary tract infections, eczema, coughs and colds). You can also call NHS 111 or visit <https://www.nhs.uk/> for information on how to manage certain conditions and what symptoms to look out for. We are still seeing a large quantity of problems that could be managed by an alternative service to a GP appointment.

- 2 If you are able, for routine queries use our on online patient triage form via our website <https://florey accurx.com/p/L83055> This helps ensure we get you the right outcome, and also eases pressure on the phone lines for people who do not have online access.
- 3 Please do not book appointments asking the doctor to expedite a routine referral or chase up the hospital on your behalf. We have seen a significant number of appointment requests for this reason and there is nothing the GP can do with regards to Hospital waiting lists.
- 4 Support our Patient Care Advisors when they ask you the reason for your appointment. Our team work to a protocol designed by our GPs which enables them to direct you to the right person, first time. Please have patience with our reception/admin team – many of them are new and learning the role, and they are all doing their best to support you.

Zero Tolerance

Unfortunately, we have seen a considerable increase in inappropriate behaviour towards our staff. This has involved raised voices, unpleasant name calling, and incidents of staff being screamed at down the phone. We operate a zero tolerance to any form of abuse. Aggressive behaviour, be it physical, verbal or online, will not be tolerated and may result in patients being removed from the practice list. Please be aware that all calls to the surgery are recorded and will be reviewed by the Partnership if any verbal aggression is suggested.

We have over 14,800 patients and we realise this behaviour relates to a very small percentage of our patients. However, this is having a huge impact on our staff wellbeing, and we have a duty of care to protect our staff.

So please be patient with us whilst we try our best to help you. We may not always get it right, but we all come to work to do our very best. We appreciate systems are frustrating and waiting lists are long but the whole NHS system is under immense pressure.

We hope this letter has helped raise awareness of how the surgery operates and all of the work that we are undertaking at the moment. Compass House Medical Centres is committed to providing a high-quality service to you and we want to assure you that we are doing everything we can to maximise availability of appointments.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Kind regards

The Partners of Compass House Medical Centres

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