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Dear patient of Seaside Medical Centre

There has been a lot in the national media recently about how GP practices are working, and we wanted to take the opportunity to share with you, what you can expect at the current time as one of our patients.

Firstly, we want to say thank you. Thank you for your support over the past year for working with us in such uncertain times. Like many, we had to change the way we work very quickly to keep patients and colleagues safe and that has only been possible because you – our patients – have adapted to these changes.

We'd like to reassure you that we are open and still want and need to know if you are unwell or worried about your health.

We are and always have been providing face-to-face appointments every day, as well as supporting people over the phone or online. Face-to-face appointments will be offered when they are medically needed, and can be with a range of health professionals currently working within the practice depending on the support you need. Using a mix of face-to-face and phone appointments allows us to keep the number of patients and staff on site to a minimum. This ensures we can all socially distance if you do need to come into the practice.

We are asking that if you need our help and support, you still call us first if you are able. We know that some people have struggled to get through to us on the phone or had a long wait and we thank you for your patience. Talking to you helps us understand what kind of support you need and how urgent it is, and means we can work out the best way for you to receive help.

We have seen an increase in calls since the start of the year and we are working to try to meet this demand and support all of our patients. In the last week we had 1,500 calls, and this time last year we had 1,000. We know that some people have put off seeking medical support for some time, including to protect the NHS, and we are committed to making sure all of our patients who need our help can receive it. Our GPs and clinical team are working incredibly hard on this and although we have lost two GPs recently we are doing our best to replace them as soon possible.

We have also seen a substantial increase in new patients joining us and currently have some 11,800 patients on our list.

Whilst we recognise that not everyone has access to a computer, smartphone or tablet, we do want to make you aware of:

- **LIVI** – Providing GP appointments 7 days per week from home, work or on the go, download the App from livi.co.uk
- **The NHS app** (is owned and run by the NHS, it is a simple and secure way to access a range of NHS services, including ordering prescriptions and validating your vaccines.)

- **Pharmacy** – Pharmacists are qualified healthcare professionals and can help you with minor health concerns and medication advice.
- **eConsult** – you can use this from the front page of our practice website seasidemedicalcentre.co.uk. Requesting our help via eConsult is the same as booking an appointment at the practice. There is no need to phone the practice as well, and we will deal with your request based on your medical needs within 72 hours.

If you do not have access to these, you can make your request for a repeat prescription in person into the box at the practice entrance or speak to your local pharmacist, and together we will action this as soon as we are able.

As we all continue on the road out of lockdown, we can also update you on plans for services over the coming weeks:

- From August telephone consultations will be available a week in advance.
- Evening clinics are scheduled regularly on Tuesdays until 8.00pm
- The local GP service (Extended Access Service) has appointments available until 7.00pm on weekdays
- The advice from the government and NHSE is that the wearing of face coverings and social distancing measures should still occur **in medical settings** such as ours. This is to keep our vulnerable and sick patients attending the surgery as safe as possible and to keep our services running while COVID-19 is still in the community

If you have a question about the Covid-19 vaccine or booster, please visit the information on our website and www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/keepsussexsafe/sussex-covid-19-vaccination-programme/ if you are able in the first instance. These websites have answers to common questions and where you can get help in relation to specific queries.

We know that we don't always get things right the first time, but our team is working hard to be the best we can be. We welcome feedback from our patients so that we can share when things go well and learn when - and how - we can make things better.

We welcome your suggestions which can be communicated via our website www.seasidemedicalcentre.co.uk.

We do ask that as we are here for you, please continue to be respectful and kind to our teams both when you are speaking to them and with regards to personal comments online and on social media. We want to enable a culture of mutual respect and have a zero tolerance policy on verbal and physical abuse. No patient, carer, visitor, staff member or volunteer should ever be subjected to abusive or anti-social behaviour or language. Appropriate action will be taken if this does occur. We thank you for the respect and the care you show our team, we hope you experience the same in return.

Thank you for your support.

The Seaside Medical Centre Team