

Dear Patients

Following all recent media campaigns re: GP Access and the Government's response of a £250m support package, we thought it was a good opportunity to provide you an update with Seaside Medical Centre's response. Obviously, we know there are national variations to GP access, but would like to speak for ourselves and be clear:

- **We are seeing more and more patients face to face** – our GP team continue to prioritise face-to-face appointments for those patients who need to be seen, following an initial telephone consultation.
- **A balance between calls and face to face appointments is still necessary** – not only is it the most efficient way to manage current patient demand, many of our patients prefer for matters to be dealt with quickly and effectively over the telephone. In addition, many have embraced video consultations via the LIVI GP service. A high percentage of problems can be dealt with by careful assessment and investigation remotely, it is not always necessary to see a GP face to face. Remember a GP will readily change a phone or video consultation to a face to face appointment if necessary.
- **Patient demand is higher than ever** – and a key reason why it is proving difficult to get an appointment. Our full time GP Partners now have over 2,600 patients on each of their lists, they usually have 1,900. We have sadly lost 3 GPs within the last 6 months as a result of relocations and a fourth GP is on long term sick leave due to a recent cancer diagnosis.
- **Getting more GPs is not simple** – we have 6 GPs at Seaside Medical Centre and that is not enough Doctors to meet demand. There is a national shortage of GPs and that includes locum GPs.
- **Don't believe everything you read in the papers** – the media is plagued with misinformation and does not represent what is happening in reality within your local GP surgery.
- **COVID remains a massive problem, it has not disappeared** – and, together with Flu & other winter viruses circulating, is why we continue to take infection control seriously. This is to protect both patients and staff. If all our doctors, nurses and other health care workers move back to seeing everyone face to face, the waiting rooms will contain up to 25 people, including our most vulnerable patients, which would be irresponsible. Face masks must still be worn in the practice to protect vulnerable patients and the clinical team - we need to keep our workforce healthy.
- **GP/Nurse workload** – our GPs are working at least 12 hour days, dealing with current demand plus the work that our hospitals cannot cope with. Our Nursing Team are working 6 days per week to provide our patients with their flu vaccinations in addition to routine care. To suggest they are "*doing*

*nothing", "cowering in the shadows", "refusing care" or "putting barriers to healthcare" is not true.*

We know there is a lot of frustration regarding access to the practice and long wait times on the telephone. We are taking over 2000 calls a week and still cannot keep up with demand. So, in an effort to alleviate this:

1. **We have installed a new telephone system**
2. **We have opened reception** – our reception desk is open between **08:30 and 17:30**, to answer patient's queries and make appointments. Please note this will entail a queuing system outside, as we continue to limit the number of patients in the small reception area.

**Please note that whilst the above will provide an alternative form of contact from our telephone system, it does not guarantee an appointment. Please continue to be understanding and polite to our receptionists, who are doing their best to support you.**

**NEW SERVICE** - Our receptionists will be offering patients 'on the day' consultations with a qualified Pharmacist for certain minor illnesses from December 2021. Pharmacists can treat patients for many illnesses quickly and safely.

**THANK YOU for being great patients who we all love looking after.**

**LIVI opening hours at Christmas:**

**8.00am to 4.00pm on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.**

**7.00am to 10.00pm on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> December.**

**8.00am to 4.00pm on New Year's Day.**

**7.00am to 10.00pm on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> January.**

Download the LIVI App from the App Store or visit [livi.co.uk](http://livi.co.uk)

Check our website for your local **Pharmacy** opening hours

[www.seasidemedicalcentre.co.uk](http://www.seasidemedicalcentre.co.uk)