

Balmoral Surgery Newsletter

Spring 23

Partnership Changes

Sadly, Dr Arvind Singh retired at the end of November. Dr Singh will be missed by his colleagues and patients, and we wish him all the best for his retirement.

We have a new salaried GP who has just started, Dr Dey. He is working five sessions a week, and this replaces the sessions that we lost when Dr Singh retired. He will work all day Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday mornings.

Sadly, Dr Viney is still on long term sick and we do not have a planned date for his return.

BMA Safe Working Guidelines

As we have fewer clinicians than ever before, we feel that it is now necessary for them to follow the **BMA** Safe Working guidelines to protect the clinicians we do have and to ensure patients being seen are offered a safe service. These guidelines incorporate **At Your Service** which is a paper written by the Policy Exchange and endorsed by Sajid Javid and states that no more than 28 encounters per day (14 per half day session) is the safe working level for GPs. This includes telephone, online and face to face encounters. It takes into account the admin needed to support these encounters e.g. dictating referrals, dealing with letters from hospitals on previous referrals, signing repeat prescriptions, reading and acting on pathology results received, completing medical reports for DVLA, Fostering/Adoption papers etc

Most of our surgery sessions currently consist of between 10 – 13 consultation slots. This is because the GPs are often supervising our learners (GP registrars and trainee ACPs) and so have two slots taken out to give them time to facilitate this. They then have extras added for eConsults, messages from patients etc meaning they often have well in excess of 14 contacts per half day session.

Once an individual Clinician reaches 14 encounters per half day session they will have no more added to their list. When we reach this level for all clinicians working on a particular day, we will be asking patients who contact us for an appointment for that day to give a brief description of their problem so that they can be sign-posted to the most appropriate service to meet their need. This may include booking ahead in our pre-bookable slots or they may fit the criteria to be seen through Enhanced Access at Deal Hospital. Patients could also be advised to seek advice from their local pharmacy or to **call 111 to access a UTC or A&E department**.

We are not an emergency service and can only provide planned care to our patients within the capacity we have to make sure the service provision is safe.

Managing our list

To enable us to continue to provide a safe service to our registered patients, we will now be managing our list. This is an unprecedented situation for us and we have never before had to manage our Practice list but unfortunately we have a lack of capacity as previously explained.

We cannot accept new patient registrations at the moment. The only new patients that we can accept are new babies born to current patients, returning patients e.g. students returning home, or patients who move into the same household as a currently registered patient.

This situation will be kept under regular review and as soon as we are able to, we will resume new patient registrations again.

How are we offering appointments now?

We are offering both face to face and telephone appointments at the practice. The majority of the time we offer patients the choice when they book their appointment. We have found that telephone appointments suited a lot of patients during the pandemic, and therefore we have kept this as an option. We do have some GPs only offering appointments remotely, and therefore patients booked in these clinics will have a telephone call, but before a patient is booked in one of these clinics, the receptionist will triage whether the problem is suitable for a telephone appointment.

Patients can also contact us with a problem via eConsult. This can be accessed via our website and is available between 8-10am.

End of the 8am scramble

You may have seen in the media that there has been a change to the NHS GP Contract. This change means that GP Practices can no longer tell patients that they need to ring back the next day to get an appointment, instead patients should be offered an appointment or be signposted to other appropriate clinical settings e.g. NHS 111, Pharmacy or A&E, the same day. The contract change only stipulates that we cannot tell patients to call back the next day, not that you have to be seen in General Practice on that day.

At Balmoral Surgery, we will be implementing the change in line with the BMA Safe Working Guidance. This means that the change will not increase the number of patients that will be seen in a day. If we have reached capacity for that day, patients will be offered an appointment in the future, advised to contact 111 or to go to A&E if the problem is urgent.

Deal Hospital & Enhanced Access

On 1st October, Improved Access and Extended Hours became one service called Enhanced Access. The practices in Deal and Sandwich PCN have decided to outsource this to a GP Federation who will provide the service out of Deal Hospital. Patients can access appointments with a GP, Advanced Nurse Practitioner and Physio through this service, Monday to Saturday, and on Saturday and Sunday there is also a nurse clinic as well.

Improved Access was introduced when the Government set out a requirement that General Practices offered a service between 8am – 8pm. The practices in Deal and Sandwich decided that it would be more efficient to offer this service together out of one place and therefore this has been running at Deal Hospital since this was introduced. Practices have been offering extended hours appointments since before this was introduced, and we used offer these on a Monday evening and Wednesday and Friday mornings, at the practice. The new Enhanced Access service means that we no longer provide extended hours appointments at the surgery.

Patients can book an Enhanced Access appointment via their practice. Each practice has an allocation of appointments based on their list size.

Enhanced Access appointments, are different from the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) which is also located at Deal Hospital. The UTC is available from 8am-8pm, and can be booked via NHS 111, or patients can present as a walk-in (when capacity allows).

We acknowledge that it is very confusing for patients, where they can be seen for an appointment at the moment, and therefore we have produced a handout which explains the way that our patients can access primary care, which we have included at the end of this newsletter and put on our television and website.

Social Prescribers

It all starts with a conversation!



At its most basic, a social prescription offers the kind of help that doesn't come in a tube or bottle (non medical). Instead, a 'social prescribing link worker' creates your own social prescription to provide you with support, help and information that will

enable you to access services or activities that will improve your health, wellbeing and overall enjoyment in life.

All you have to do is tell them **“What matters to me?”**

THESE ARE SOME OF THE AREAS WE CAN SUPPORT

- Housing related queries
- Welfare benefits & debt advice
- Help with daily living tasks
- Making lifestyle changes
- Combating isolation/loneliness
- Living with anxiety/depression
- Bereavement support
- Frequent attendance GP or A&E

Whether you just need help to find information and guidance: a little bit of inside knowledge on your situation or what local resources are available.

Someone to introduce you to a community group, a new activity or a local club.

Someone to help you start up as a gardening club, a fishing group, a ‘men’s shed’ or knit and natter group.

We are here to listen to you.

For more information or to self-refer please email us at social.prescriberpcn@nhs.net

We can’t take your call right now

If you phone the practice and get a message saying “we can’t take your call right now” this means that there are at least another 8 patients in front of you in the queue. As a practice we decided to add this message, so that patients know what to expect. The alternative was that all patients would get an engaged tone if the lines were busy, but they would have no idea what position they were in the queue, or whether their call was likely to be answered in a reasonable length of time. We have four receptionists answering phones at any given time, and therefore with 8 patients in a queue, none of these patients should have to wait that long.

Patient Forum Group

Balmoral Surgery has a patient forum which always welcomes new members. The Forum usually meets three times a year and aims to give our patients the opportunity to have their say about the services the surgery provides and to keep members up-to-date with new developments etc. The minutes of the forum meetings are available on our website and if you are interested in joining, please contact the Assistant Practice Manager. Our next meeting is on 26.6.23

Ordering Prescriptions

Please note we do not have the capacity to take prescriptions over the telephone. Patients can either drop in their repeat prescription slip, order via the NHS App or Patient Access, or order through their usual chemist. Please note that from 1st November, Paydens will no longer order prescriptions for patients. As far as we know, the other local chemists are continuing to offer this service.

Planned Closures

Please note that Balmoral Surgery is closed from 1pm on some days once a month to allow the doctors and staff to have protected learning time. These sessions are arranged by the Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Group and offer the opportunity for the Surgery teams in our locality to get together for training purposes. These sessions are on a Wednesday or Thursday afternoon once a month and at present are scheduled to take place as follows:

- 24.05.23
- 22.06.23
- 19.07.23

Local Pharmacies

For minor problems, patients can always visit their local pharmacist for advice.

Book an appointment at the practice - (01304 373444)

Appointments can be booked by telephone, online or face to face and we offer the option of a face to face or telephone consultation.

We have GPs, Advanced Clinical Practitioners, Practice Nurses and Healthcare Assistant at the practice, and you can see the clinician who is most appropriate to deal with your need.

Patients can also contact the practice via eConsult which can be accessed via our website (www.balmoralsurgery.co.uk) when available.

UTC (Previously Minor Injuries) – (111)

The UTC is located at Deal Hospital. Patients can be seen here for minor conditions and minor injuries. Patients should book an appointment here via NHS 111. However, patients can also access an appointment as a walk-in, when capacity allows.

Please note, when speaking to 111, you should refer to Deal Hospital as Victoria Hospital, to enable them to find this on their system.

How can patients at Balmoral Surgery see a professional health locally?

Enhanced Access (01304 373444)

The practices in Deal have commissioned additional appointments for their patients which are located at Deal Hospital.

These can be booked via the practice. You can see a GP, Advanced Clinical Practitioner, Nurse or Physio via this service. There are also appointments available in the evening and at the weekends via this route, as this replaces the extended hour's appointments that were previously offered in the practice.

Services that patients can self-refer to:

Physio – Please collect a form from reception, or speak to a receptionist as they may be able to book in you in via the enhanced access service.

Smoking & Weight advice – <https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/one-you-kent/>

Podiatry – Please collect a form from reception.

Counselling Services - <https://dovercc.org.uk/referral-portal/>

Patients can also phone NHS 111 anytime, and for life threatening emergencies patients should ring 999