Balmoral Surgery Newsletter

Summer 2021

**New Staff**

We are pleased to welcome a several new members of staff to our team. We have a new administrative assistant called Julie. Julie will be supporting the secretarial team. We have a new receptionist at the practice called Debra. We are pleased to welcome a nurse practitioner to our team called Lucy. Lucy will be working with us four days a week and has a specialist interest in minor illness. Finally, we are very happy to welcome back Dr Taj Ansari as a salaried GP. Dr Taj Ansari was a registrar at Balmoral Surgery, several years ago. He has since been working as a salaried doctor locally, and he is very happy to be returning to Balmoral Surgery.

# Covid – 19 – How Balmoral Surgery has responded

While the Government is lifting restrictions on 19th July, it has asked that everyone continues to act carefully and remain cautious in their approach to everyday life. That is especially true for healthcare services; where some patients are very vulnerable.

Therefore, in line with Infection Prevention Control guidance issued to health care settings and advice from the Kent & Medway CCG, we have decided that patients and staff will still be required to wear masks. We are also continuing with all of the processes and procedures we currently have in place, including telephone appointments as first line.

This decision is in place for all practices in Kent & Medway.

**Covid 19 Vaccinations**

If you are aged over 18 years, and you have not booked your Covid 19 vaccination, please do this by either visiting [www.nhs.uk/book-a-coronavirus-vaccination or by calling 119](http://www.nhs.uk/book-a-coronavirus-vaccination%20or%20by%20calling%20119).

At the moment, we are still awaiting news on what the plans will be for the Covid Phase 3 vaccination and this year’s influenza vaccination. We will update our patients when we have this information.

**Getting in touch with us**

We are aware there are significant problems getting through to us on the phone. We are sorry this is the case and would like to explain a little about why that is.

Many GP surgeries across the country are in a similar position. We understand how frustrating it can be for it to take longer than normal.

We would like to reassure you we are working hard to resolve the situation.

There are three things that are challenging us:

1. There has been an unprecedented post-lockdown increase in demand. Part of this is because many of our patients have been managing health issues themselves rather than contacting their doctor over the last year and some hospital procedures and appointments have been necessarily delayed.  As confidence in general is returning, patients are now quite rightly contacting us.
2. We have been  involved in helping with the country’s largest ever vaccination campaign.
3. We have had to change the way we work to keep things safe for our patients and our staff.

What can you do to help?

* Choose well – can the pharmacy help your symptoms?  Call 111 if you are unsure which sort of treatment you need. You can also go online 111.nhs.uk
* Download the NHS app. You can use this to order repeat prescriptions.
* Use our online consultation system, if you are able to.
* Cancel appointments you no longer need.

It’s useful to remember our teams are on the front line and see both the best and the worst of us all. They work incredibly hard to help patients navigate the system, but may not be able to offer you exactly what you want at all times.

Please be patient and courteous, they want to find the best solution as much as you do.

We are grateful for your understanding.

# Military Veterans

**Are you a Military Veteran? Have you ever served in the Armed Forces?**

A veteran is someone who has served in the British Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) for at least one day. Veterans also include any member of the Merchant Marine who has served in a war zone.
This includes crew from convoys in World War 2 and more recently in the Falklands conflict and Gulf Wars.

There are around 2.4 million British Armed Forces Veterans in Great Britain, of whom 89% are male and 60% are aged 65 and over.

About 18,000 service people move back into civilian life every year. While most of these individuals have similar levels of health to the general population, around 2,000 leave on medical grounds. The top reasons for medical discharge are for issues relating to back, knees, mental health and hearing.

There are dedicated NHS services where veterans can be referred into if needed.

If you have not already informed the practice that you are a military veteran please contact us so we can add this to your medical record.

There are a number of charities dedicated to helping veterans:

Combat Stress - <https://combatstress.org.uk/>

Help for Heroes - <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/>

Royal British Legion -  <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/>

**Zero Tolerance Policy**

Sadly, we once again have to remind our patients that we have a zero tolerance policy in the practice. Our receptionists work extremely hard to help patients as efficiently and promptly as they can, yet unfortunately there are still occasions when our staff encounter rude and aggressive behaviour from patients.

We are aware that this is the small minority of our patients, and we are aware that when patients contact the practice they are often unwell and that navigating through the healthcare system can be frustrating. Nevertheless, we do not tolerate rude or aggressive behavior towards our staff.

Mental Health and Well being

We are aware that the last year has been a very difficult time for a lot of our patients. We have listed below the names and contact details of some Mental Health charities which may provide some support to any of patients who are struggling.

Healthful Numbers for Adults

* **MIND South Kent** - Call 07876 476703, email Canterbury.mhm@nhs.net or visit their website <https://www.southkentmind.org.uk/support/>
* [**Mental Health Matters**](https://www.mhm.org.uk/)**:** available 24/7. Call 0800 107 0160
* [**Shout**](https://www.facebook.com/415457775898789)**:** available 24/7. Text 85258.
* [**Samaritans**](https://www.facebook.com/27770740767): available 24/7. Call free from any phone on 116 123.
* [**The CALMzone**](https://www.facebook.com/49764419689) (Campaign Against Living Miserably): Phone: 0800 58 58 58, 5pm–midnight, 365 days a year or [webchat](https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help/) 5pm–midnight, 365 days a year.

Helpful numbers for children and young people

* Text the **[YoungMinds Crisis Messenger](https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/get-urgent-help/youngminds-crisis-messenger/)**, for free 24/7 support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you need urgent help text YM to 85258.
* [**Kooth.com**](https://www.kooth.com/) is for young people 10-16 years to get advice, information and chat to a qualified counsellor
* [**Chathealth**](https://chathealth.nhs.uk/) – confidential texting service for young people aged 11-19 years. Text Chat Health about any concerns or health issues on 07520 618850.
* [**Childline**](https://www.childline.org.uk/): [call free on 0800 1111](https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/contacting-childline/) or log in for a 1-2-1 [counsellor chat](https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/1-2-1-counsellor-chat/)

**Deal & Sandwich Primary Care Network (PCN)**

The Deal & Sandwich PCN have recently recruited three new posts. Starting on 4th October 2021, the PCN will have a business manager. The PCN has also recruited a new Paramedic and a Nurse Practitioner to work in the Care Home Team with the Care Home Co-Ordinator.

**Ordering prescriptions**

Please note we do not take prescriptions requests over the telephone. This is to ensure that patients, who need to seek medical assistance, are able to get through and book an appointment. Patients can order their prescriptions via the NHS app, patient access, dropped it into the surgery (or in the letterbox on the gate), in the post, or via one of the local chemists.