

# School Lane Surgery

## Patient Reference Group (PRG)

(Condensed)

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2022

This evening a special guest joined us, Dr Meriel Overy, now a full-time GP and partner in the School Lane Surgery practice; this was Meriel's day off and we are very grateful to her for coming to see us.

### 1. Previous minutes

No issues were raised concerning the previous minutes.

### 2. Covid-19 update

The Covid clinic is now very quiet and the surgery is in the process of trying to convince those patients who have so far not been vaccinated are persuaded to do so. The next booster jab is scheduled for October and so the clinic will be ramping up again, with visits to factories and work places for those who are not able to get to School Lane or the Healthy Living Centre.

There is a move away from the compulsory wearing of masks at this point, introduced at the surgery this very week, but the continuation of this policy very much depends on how the virus develops.

It looks like there will be an annual vaccination in the future, but again this will be dependent on how the virus develops. The surgery is finding that the majority of patients now being infected are unvaccinated.

It is estimated that over 50% of the population of Thetford have had Covid, but very few of those infected have reported long-term effects; around two dozen.

The number of face-to-face appointments at the surgery is increasing but there is not yet the capacity to get right back to 'normal.' Patients will have to get used to a return to having to wait for an appointment as though the practice list has not increased greatly, the demand from existing patients certainly has.

Triage is carried out by a senior clinician at the surgery and they try to see the more serious cases first, but patients really must get used to trusting reception staff and give as much detail as possible.

### 3. CCTV (Closed-Circuit Television)

The practice has had to install a CCTV system at the surgery since a break-in during March of this year.

### 4. Practice Services

**Enhanced Access** (extended hours) will be offered by the surgery from October and a questionnaire that aims to find out the patients preferred day and time, as well as method of contact (face-to-face, phone, video or email/text message) is being circulated.

**Health checks** are to be offered in the surgery building for the homeless, refugees, sex workers etc.

**Spirometry** (tests for COPD, asthma, breathing issues) was halted for Covid but this is to restart in July.

**General health checks** for the over 40's are ongoing, to find diabetes, hypertension etc in patients who often don't realise they have a potentially serious health problem.

The practice has recruited another **Care Coordinator**, one of whose tasks will be to phone patients when they leave hospital and ensure that everything they need is put in place.

Two **mental health practitioners** have been sponsored to identify mental health issues and to offer interventions to help patients cope while they are waiting for their treatment; recovery workers are to encourage those patients to attend meetings. Also, the practitioners will be based at the surgery and not at poorly performing hospitals.

There is the **Mental Health Hub**, the access point in the community, where things are very informal and patients can seek help in a stress-free atmosphere. Mental health practitioners will be in attendance at the surgery on 3 days per week, which is good news for the surgery and its patients.

As a part of the **Mindful Towns** initiative, a receptionist is being trained to deal with mental health enquiries, to be a mental health champion and to promote awareness.

## **6. Breckland Primary Care Network**

From July our Clinical Commissioning Group will become a part of an Integrated Care Board, which will allow care and social care groups to work more closely together. The Health and Wellbeing Management Board will be a part of the local council's meetings, and with their cooperation this should make it easier to get services to patients as well as give a better picture of the state of health of the local population, and the level of need.

## **7. Development of the Healthy Living Centre**

Thetford has had to develop a strategy as surgeries have found themselves with more clinicians than rooms to see their patients! There has been recognition for some considerable time that the building has a vast amount of underutilised space, mostly on the first floor, and it is envisaged that this space could be used to develop services and even perhaps become a walk-in centre.

The original plan for Thetford was that new buildings or major services would not be introduced until at least 2034, but we got lucky. Following the withdrawal of another Norfolk town from the list of medical facilities to be improved, Thetford was next in line.

After many patient enquiries the surgery can announce that the dentistry service will be coming back to the Healthy Living Centre, though no date can yet be given.

## **8. Staffing**

The surgery has a new GP, Dr Zack Magkrachi, but is also having to use locums. Interviews are currently taking place to recruit admin and clinical staff.

## **9. Other Business**

- a) Patients have commented on the length of the recorded message when phoning the surgery to book an appointment or make an enquiry and this has been taken onboard, it will be shortened.
- b) As the outgoing chair of Thetford U3A (University of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age), Mike is able to offer 10 funded memberships, for the first year at least, and the surgery is grateful for this offer. Places should be allocated to patients who are lonely and on their own.
- c) Demand for the online consulting service has outstripped demand - surprise! – and this has raised a potential danger as there is a possibility that time critical cases would not be seen quickly enough. The online forms now shut earlier, at 1 o'clock, as by that time the critical load has usually been reached.
- d) New housing developments in the town have not yet shown a big increase in patients registered with SLS, though around 11,000 new residents are forecast to be in the town by 2034.
- e) There is now 3 full-time GP's at the practice, all others are part-time, and we are struggling to recruit new clinicians; the situation is not helped by the governments proposed introduction of extended hours, working until 8 in the evening on weekdays, and Saturday clinics too.
- f) The surgery has no say or input when it comes to ambulance waiting times. Category A calls for heart attacks, stroke etc, get priority and everybody else has to sit and suffer. If you are in the surgery while having an emergency yourself, you will go down the list of priorities because of the fact that clinicians are already in the building.
- g) One member complained that the Healthy Living Centre pharmacy is making too many mistakes – wrong size pills, important prescriptions held back because one item was not immediately available, vitamin D!
- h) A new Parkinson's Group will hold its first meeting at the Warrener on July 13<sup>th</sup>. The surgery has asked for details, and there should be an advert in the About Thetford magazine. It was suggested the Norfolk Community Foundation might be worth approaching for funding.

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> August, 7 pm at School Lane Surgery**