

THE BELLINGHAM PRACTICE NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2014



CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR ARRANGMENTS

In anticipation of a busy time around Christmas and New Year we have reduced the number of pre-booked appointments at the Bellingham Surgery & the Otterburn branch surgery between 22nd December and 2nd January.

If you need to see a doctor please ring on the day and make an appointment at Bellingham or at the branch surgery at Otterburn. Appointment times are as follows:

Monday 22nd December	Bellingham	7.15 – 11.00am	3.30 – 7.15 pm
Tuesday 23rd December	Bellingham	9.15 – 10.45 am	4.00 – 5.15 pm
	Otterburn GP		11.30 – 1.15
Wednesday 24 th December	Bellingham	8.30 – 11.00am	2.45 – 4.30 pm
Thursday 25 th December	Bank Holiday – closed *		
Friday 26 th December	Bank Holiday – closed *		
Saturday 27 th December	Closed *		
Sunday 28 th December	Closed *		
Monday 29 th December	Bellingham	8.30 – 11.00 am	3.30 – 7.00 pm
Tuesday 30 th December	Bellingham	9.15 – 10.45 am	3.30 – 5.15 pm
	Otterburn GP		11.30 – 1.15
Wednesday 31 st December	Bellingham	8.30 – 11.00am	2.45 – 7.15 pm
Thursday 1 st January	Bank Holiday - closed*		
Friday 2 nd January	Bellingham	8.30 – 11.00am	3.15 – 4.45pm
	Otterburn GP	11.30 – 1.15	

You can ring NHS 111 at any time of the day or night for health advice and information. This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines & mobile phones.

If you need to see a GP when the practice is closed, contact NHS 111, who will help you to arrange to see the out of hours GP service provided by Northern Doctors Urgent Care.

For access to the out of hours dental service ring NHS 111.

Or you can access information on the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk



If you need any repeat medication over the Christmas/New Year period please remember to order it before the holiday season (ideally by Friday 19th December) as it can be difficult to arrange during the period covered by the out of hours service.

PRACTICE TEAM NEWS

The team at Bellingham is undergoing a few changes at the moment:

We are very sad that Dr Jo Thompson is leaving on 17 December - she has provided the following for the patient newsletter:

Some of you will already know that I am retiring from Bellingham in December after more than 21 years at the practice. I shall be sad to go but recognise that it's time to retire from the front line. I will continue to teach young doctors as they enter the profession. As always in life, there are things that I will be happy to say goodbye to and things I won't.

Things I shan't miss:

- *Getting up at 4.30 on Monday and Tuesday to feed horses and arrive to start paperwork at 6.30am*
- *Paperwork !*
- *The Wannies on snowy nights and mornings*

Things I shall miss:

- *The Wannies on summer mornings*
- *My fantastic colleagues*
- *Most of all you lot!*

Thanks for everything

Jo

Dr Loren Blissett will be joining the partnership on Monday 2nd February and will do some locum sessions on Tuesday mornings in January. She is currently a partner at a surgery in Weardale, so knows all about working in a rural practice.

We have 2 GP Registrars with us until early February 2015 :

Dr Cathy Busby is here on Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday

Dr Catherine Porter is here on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday

Lisa Gillie is our new practice nurse & is here on Wednesday & Friday

Laura Beattie is leaving us before Christmas and we are currently advertising her post.

Sara Chester is now the Community Midwife for our practice area



Our Health Visitor Ish Fawcett is retiring at the end of January, after almost 20 years at Bellingham. Sara Welstead would love to hear from anyone who has drawings, cards or photos from the families Ish has supported so that she can put them together in an album for her when she leaves.

Sharon Carrick has joined the Community Nursing team & Kirsten Telfer will be joining in December as Caroline Russell is retiring at the end of the month. The Community Nursing team now have admin support from Claire Bodfield.

CARE QUALITY COMMISSION

The practice was inspected by the Care Quality Commission on 2nd October 2014. We have now received their report and rating, which is based on a combination of what they found at the inspection, their monitoring of data about services and information from providers, patients, the public & other organisations.

The overall rating for the practice was “good” and the ratings for the 5 areas covered by the inspection were:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| • Are services safe? | Good |
| • Are services effective? | Good |
| • Are services caring? | Good |
| • Are services responsive to people’s needs? | Outstanding |
| • Are services well led? | Good |

If anyone is interested in reading the full report they can access this via the practice website, the CQC website and there is a paper copy in the waiting room.

Thank you to all the patients who filled in feedback cards, talked to the CQC inspectors by telephone or while they were in the waiting room on inspection day.

SUGGESTION BOXES

Since the last newsletter we have received a suggestion that Dr Sewart attend the branch surgery at Otterburn once a month. The partners discussed this and agreed to this suggestion & Dr Sewart has attended the branch surgery on a monthly basis since September.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY TEST

From 1 December 2014 it is a contractual requirement that all GP practices must undertake the NHS Friends and Family Test (FFT). This is a feedback tool which gives people who use NHS services the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience. The FFT question asks if people would recommend the services they have used to their friends & family and offers a range of responses.

When combined with supplementary follow up questions, this provides a mechanism to highlight both good and poor patient experience. Practices can use the feedback gathered through FFT to celebrate success and to support staff to make improvements.

You can answer the FFT question on the cards provided in reception or by using the link on the practice website.

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP

Some time ago the patient participation group suggested that we provide information about support organisations for elderly people who are lonely.

Independent Age is a charity which helps older people by offering advice, befriending and campaigning. They are looking for volunteer visitors to befriend & support older people in need. If you are interested in volunteering with Independent Age contact Kay White on 01912 365039 (mobile 07595 201436) or by email Kay.white@independentage.org The advice line number is 0800 319 6789

There is more information about this on the Patient Participation noticeboard.

The September patient participation group meeting included a presentation about FARSITE. The Bellingham Practice is a research active practice & is excited to be taking part in FARSITE, which is a new initiative which will help the practice to identify patients who could be suitable to take part in research studies.

If you would like to know more about FARSITE or are interested in joining our patient participation group, please contact Jayne Reed.



WEIGHT LOSS SUPPORT GROUP

One item on the Patient Participation Group Action Plan is to support patients with managing their weight. We now have about 15 people attending the weight loss support group. It is held every Friday morning at 9.30am. If you would like more information about this please speak to Jayne Reed at the practice (01434 220203)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUP

If you are 13 or over and would like to join our Young People's Group then please contact Jayne at the surgery (either by phone or by email - jaynereed2@nhs.net). The group meets about 3 or 4 times a year and in the past we have done CPR training & looked at health topics that young people have requested.

PLAN C

We are part of a pilot scheme looking at sexual health in young people. If you attend the surgery it is likely that you will be offered chlamydia/gonorrhoea screening. This is part of a NHS initiative to promote safe sex in young people.

Also – did you know we are a C CARD outlet and can provide free condoms for young people?

APPOINTMENT REMINDERS BY TEXT

In order to reduce the number of DNAs (did not attend) our appointment system is now sending automatic texts reminders at 1pm to remind you of an appointment the following day. If you would like to use this service please check that we have your current mobile phone number on your records. It is important that you notify us if you change your mobile phone number.

If you would prefer to opt out of this facility can you please let us know and we will amend your records.



Booking appointments via practice website

www.thebellinghampractice.co.uk

- If you would like to book routine GP appointments using our website please contact the practice to register for SystemOne Online bookings.

Unfortunately it is not possible to book nurses/health care assistants appointments on line because of the different amount of time that needs to be allocated for different procedures (eg routine bloods 10 minutes, cervical smears 30 minutes, smoking cessation 20 minutes) and because of the skill mix within the team (different team members do different procedures)

- You can also order your prescriptions using the practice website

HEARING AID SUPPORT SERVICES

Anne Shilton from Action on Hearing Loss is running a monthly clinic at Bellingham Surgery to help with maintenance of NHS hearing aids. She is here on the 2nd Monday of every month (10.30-12.30). Anne can:

- Provide information on hearing loss
- Provide new batteries or tubing for hearing aids (NHS aids only)
- Clean hearing aids
- Give advice on how to look after and fit your aids & keep them working to their full potential.

She will not be able to test your hearing and can only help with NHS provided hearing aids.

If you, or anyone you know, would find this useful (rather than travelling to Hexham) please book an appointment with our receptionist (01434 220203). You do not have to be registered with The Bellingham Practice to use this service.

REQUESTS FOR HELP FROM PATIENTS

NON URGENT TELEPHONE CALLS

Our phone lines can be very busy from 8.30 – 10 am on Monday mornings – if you need to ring us on a Monday about something other than booking an appointment, could you please wait until after 10 am.

CANCELLING APPOINTMENTS

We would like to thank patients who call us to cancel their appointments as this means we can then use them for other patients (often at very short notice).

Could you **please** let us know if you are unable to attend an appointment so that we are able to allocate the appointment to another patient & also so that we can re-arrange your appointment to a more convenient day & time. This will help to improve the availability of appointments for ALL patients as it is impossible to re-book appointment slots when a patient does not inform us in advance that they will not be attending.

If we have mobile phone number it is likely that we will text you if you DNA.

If you routinely get visits from the Community Nurses and are going to be away, can you contact them on 01434 220383 to arrange a new time for your visit. They had quite a few problems last Christmas trying to visit patients who were not at home.

PRESCRIPTION REQUESTS

Can you please give us 48 hours notice when ordering your medication – this gives us sufficient time to deal with any queries there may be on your medication list and to get the prescription to your preferred pharmacy. Please remember that the pharmacy may need to order in the items you require.

HOSPITAL PRESCRIPTIONS

If you are given a prescription when attending a hospital appointment, or at the end of a stay in hospital, can you please make sure that you take this prescription to the hospital pharmacy. Sometimes patients bring them here instead, only to find that the medication cannot be issued by a GP or cannot be supplied by the local pharmacy and they then have to go back to the hospital pharmacy to get what they need.

THURSDAY AFTERNOONS - practice education and training

On Thursday afternoon we close between 1.30 and 4pm to protect time for staff education and training. During recent training events we have been disrupted on many occasions for non-urgent matters and would like to ask that you respect our need to protect this time in order to meet our mandatory training requirements and hold education events to extend team knowledge and skills.

The practice reopens at 4pm – many other practices in the county do not re-open on Thursday afternoons and have emergency cover for the rest of the day.

WITHHELD NUMBER

When making calls to patients we “withhold” the practice number to try to preserve patient confidentiality. If you are expecting a call from the surgery please bear this in mind if you usually do not pick up calls with a withheld number.

URINE SAMPLES FOR POORLY CHILDREN

If your child is unwell (under 16s) we will ask you to bring a urine sample to their appointment – this is to help to diagnose urinary tract infection or diabetes.

Sample pots are available at reception, but if you are bringing in a sample from home please use a sterilised glass container (eg straight from the dishwasher or thoroughly cleaned and rinsed in boiling water) to avoid contamination resulting in a false reading.

If your child is unable to provide a urine sample before you leave home, try to come in early and get one while you are waiting to see the doctor or nurse. We will provide a sample pot when you arrive.

If you arrive **LATE FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT** the reception staff will ask you to wait until the end of surgery or rearrange your appointment – this is to avoid delays for other patients who are waiting to be seen.

FLU IMMUNISATION PROGRAMME 2014/15

To protect people who are most at risk of serious illness or death if they develop flu, the Department of Health recommends flu vaccination each year for everyone in these groups:

People who have diabetes, are pregnant, or are aged 65 and over or those with some long term conditions affecting the lungs, the heart, the kidneys, the liver, the brain or nervous system, the immune system, or the spleen.

We still have plenty of flu injections left so if you think this includes you, get in touch to see if you are eligible for a free flu vaccination.

FLUENZ – there is now a safe and effective nasal spray vaccine to protect children aged 2 years and older against flu. If your child is 2, 3 or 4 years old we will contact you to arrange a vaccination appointment.

SHINGLES – were you aged 70, 78 or 79 on 1st September 2014?

You may be eligible to receive a vaccination against shingles.

The vaccine reduces the chances of you developing shingles, and even if you do develop shingles then the disease is likely to affect you less severely.

The national shingles immunisation programme is recommended for people aged 70 – 79 but is being introduced in phases. People under 70 will be offered the shingles vaccine in the year following their 70th birthday.

ALZHEIMERS SOCIETY

The local Alzheimers Society have provided us with a useful summary of activities and support for a person with dementia and their carer/family. We have copies in the patient information folder in the waiting room at Bellingham, or we could send one out to you.

The Corbridge Memory Café runs on the 3rd Thursday of every month from 10.30 am – 12.30 pm at the Parish Hall, St Helen's Street, Corbridge. This is for people with memory problems or dementia and their family and friends.

The local branch of the Alzheimer's Society can be contacted on 01434 607318 or by email at Hexham@alzheimers.org.uk. Their dementia advisers can give you information, advice & guidance.

One of our patients attended a dementia training course in the summer and has suggested that we should try to run one locally. This would be useful for people who are concerned about their own short term memory, people with elderly friends and relatives, and people just wanting general information about dementia.

It would be really helpful if we could try to gauge how many people would be interested in attending such a session (or sessions) as it would help us to decide whether to hold it at Bellingham Surgery or whether we would need to book a larger venue. If you would be interested in attending please contact Helen Patterson on 01434 220203 or by email at helen.patterson@nhs.net.

ARTWORK AT THE SURGERY

We have had very positive feedback about the artwork we have displayed in the corridors at Bellingham Surgery. If you are a local artist and would like the opportunity to display your work at the surgery could you please discuss this with Jayne Reed.

EBOLA IN WEST AFRICA

We are receiving regular bulletins from Public Health England.

Current countries of concern: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Mali.

The risk of Ebola in the general public in the UK remains very low.

Front line staff in GP surgeries are aware of potential risks and simple screening questions to ask, especially travel history. This is to ensure the patient receives the care they need and to minimise risks to staff and public health.

Individuals who telephone the surgery and report that they are unwell and have visited an affected area in the past 21 days and/or report a fever (or history of fever) will be told NOT to come in to the surgery. A GP will call the patient immediately to confirm travel history and gather further information. They will then discuss the case with a local specialist and decide on the best course of action to get the patient quickly and safely to an emergency department for clinical assessment.

We have included this information in the newsletter because we do have a few patients who are working in the “countries of concern”.

NORTH EAST PATIENT TRANSPORT

The Patient Transport Service (PTS) provides free transport to & from hospital for:

- patients with a **medical need** for transport
- escorts for patients who have a **medical need for an escort**

Recently the Patient Transport Service have started to rigidly apply national criteria to find out whether a patient has a genuine need to use the service. This is because recent evidence has shown that about 10% of PTS journeys were made by patients who did not have a “medical” need for transport, at a cost of £1.8million.

Some of our patients are experiencing problems in booking Patient Transport but there is an appeals process if you think you should be eligible to use this service. The Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) can assist with this – contact them on 0800 0320202. We have a patient information leaflet about this in the waiting rooms at Bellingham & Otterburn.

For those patients who are not eligible, there are some voluntary car schemes available such as the Red Cross (0191 273 7961) or Community Transport (01668 260248) – they request a contribution towards the cost of fuel. The PALS service can give you more information about these.

REDUCING PRESSURE ON A&E

There has been a lot of national publicity about pressure on A&E departments and we would like to provide information about other services that are available. A&E is for “accidents” and “emergencies” and should not be used for minor problems.

MINOR INJURIES SERVICE AT BELLINGHAM SURGERY

We are able to treat minor injuries at the surgery in Bellingham, which could save you a trip to Hexham – injuries & ailments we can treat include:

- Cuts and bruises
- Bites (animal and insect bites)
- Blows to the head (no loss of consciousness)
- Burns and scalds
- Dislocations of fingers
- Eye injuries
- Foreign bodies (including foreign bodies in the eye)
- Injuries needing more than first aid
- Injuries requiring stitching
- Minor trauma to hands, limbs and feet
- Sprains and strains
- Wound infections

Please phone reception on 01434 220203 and inform them of your minor injury and we will ensure that you are seen as quickly as possible.

URGENT DENTAL TREATMENT

If you need urgent treatment and you regularly attend a dental practice, please contact them and request an urgent appointment. If they are closed please ring the dental practice number – they will provide their emergency telephone number on an answer machine message.

If you do not have a regular dentist please call NHS 111 or go to the NHS Choices website www.nhs.uk for information about how you can register with a dentist or how you can access emergency dental treatment.

CONTACTING THE OUT OF HOURS SERVICE

There is now only one number you need to know – NHS 111

When you ring 111 the call will be answered by a team of fully trained call advisers, who will ask questions to assess the symptoms and give appropriate healthcare advice or direct you to the local service that can help you best. Depending on the reason for calling, and when the call to NHS 111 is made, this may be:

- Telephone advice
- GP in hours service (ie Bellingham Surgery)
- GP out of hours service
- District Nurses, Midwife, Pharmacy
- A&E, 999

If the surgery is closed & you need to be seen by a GP, NHS 111 will connect you to the out of hours service provided by Northern Doctors Urgent Care and they will arrange an appointment for you at Hexham. If necessary they could arrange a home visit by the out of hours doctor.

Calls to NHS 111 are free from landlines and mobile phones.