

# Unity Healthcare Patient Newsletter

**Dr David Brandon, Clinical Lead GP**

## Dear Patients,

I was hoping to pen a more upbeat Christmas newsletter.

Once again we are engaged in a stand-off with the Covid-19 virus. Optimism and hopes for a national recovery from the pandemic are facing yet another setback with the threat from the new Omicron variant and it's as yet unknown forthcoming impact on the severity of illness, the health service and on wider society. What we do know is that it is spreading fast, is more contagious, and evades the protection provided by 2 doses of vaccination. A third dose seems to increase protection significantly.

Advice, rules and guidelines seem to be changing daily, which I appreciate is highly frustrating and at times confusing. One thing that has not changed however, is the importance of arranging a PCR test if you have a new cough, fever, or loss of sense of smell / taste. A lateral flow test cannot be used to exclude Covid-19 in someone who has these symptoms.

After our initial decision to focus our priorities here on delivering General Practice services (with the delivery of routine Covid-19 vaccination being offered by other providers→), there is now a clear need to increase the urgency of the vaccination programme.

We have therefore been mandated to once again suspend some routine services (such as long term conditions health-checks) in order to focus on vaccine delivery, as we did when delivering the first rounds of vaccination at the EpiCentre. We apologise for frustration that this may cause you, but do appreciate that we cannot do everything at once. My colleagues may be a team of super humans, but are not magicians.

You will be contacted by practice staff to book your booster, so please do not contact the practice directly to request this. Doing so will not get you booked in any sooner and just serves to increase telephone queues, makes everyone wait longer and diverts practice staff from other duties.

You can of course continue to access the national vaccination booking services and other providers via the NHS website, or attend one of the many walk in events in the region should you prefer. It is really "all hands on deck" for this one, to get as many jabs in arms as quickly as possible.

<https://sneevaccine.org.uk/> or call 0344 257 3961

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/> or call 119.

We will continue to do our best to maintain our other urgent medical services as comprehensively as we can (in the first instance accessed via eConsult, or telephone if unable), and will continue to ensure that a safe and high quality service is provided on a timely basis. Please do not be put off consulting with us if your health problem is urgent, or are concerned that you may have symptoms of cancer. We will continue to be available to help you.

Despite many of the substantial pressures facing General Practice in the UK, our innovative approach has continued to allow us to ensure that all of our patients are able to access what they need (if not necessarily always what they want), in a safe, responsive and accessible manner. Do please be mindful that my team are working under considerable pressure, and treat them with kindness and respect.

We have continued to recruit and expand our numbers, including further long-term GP staff who continue to join us. I appreciate that there are a lot of new faces in our growing team, and thank you for making them feel welcome.

I do hope that you can extract some joy from the festive season, and continue to support one another during these difficult times.

Dr David Brandon

# Unity Healthcare Patient Participation Group (PPG)

## Want to have a say in how your surgery is run? Why not become a member of the Unity Healthcare PPG?

We are always looking for new members as we need your help to ensure our surgery continues to improve.

As a PPG member, you can better understand how your practice is run, discuss areas of improvement and give your input on changes.

To register your interest, please ask at Reception or email:

## Contact Us

If you have any questions or wish to share feedback with us, please email:

[wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net](mailto:wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net)

Or call:

**01440 841 300**

 To keep up to date with our news, please visit [www.unityhealthhaverhill.org.uk](http://www.unityhealthhaverhill.org.uk) or search for 'Unity Healthcare' on Facebook.

Patients can also join the Surgery's Patient Participation Group. To find out more, please email

[wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net](mailto:wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net)

## Healthwatch Suffolk

You can also share feedback with Healthwatch Suffolk, an independent body set up to shape and influence local NHS and social care services.

Call **01449 703 949** or email [info@healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk)