



BURNLEY GROUP PRACTICE - Patient Newsletter April 2021

This is a plea – we're asking you to be a patient patient

We know from your communications with us that our service hasn't been up to the standard we would like it to be over recent months. There are various reasons for this:

- The merger – we haven't been able to go through the normal process we would have done due to the pandemic
- The pandemic – this has affected our capacity – like you we have had absent staff or staff working from home due to shielding, isolating, quarantining or illness. Our resources are finite
- The Covid vaccination programme – as well as having to telephone thousands of patients to book them for their Covid vaccines, and now for their second vaccines, we have had thousands of queries to deal with either at the desk, by telephone, by email or online services, we have been overwhelmed. We have also had to send staff to man the clinics – Doctors, Nurses, Receptionist and Managers. We are only told about deliveries of vaccines at very short notice and have to reprioritise our workload
- The telephone system – our telephone system is centrally provided and is the same system as other local practices in Burnley and the North West, we know that you can wait a long time in the queue, then get cut off, we know that often you simply receive an engaged tone. These issues are regularly reported to the provider and there is work going on to look at this or alternatives, there are software problems and capacity issues with the telephone system. We know that other practices locally and nationally are reporting the same issues. The usage of the telephone system has increased phenomenally over the last twelve months due to the pandemic (more people phoning us rather than coming in, more telephone consultations) and this is a contributory factor

Please be reassured that we have both short and long term plans in place to mitigate some of the issues which are within our control, and we hope that our service will improve.

However **you can help us** by:

- Only contacting us if you need to – have a look on our website, the government or NHS websites – often we cannot answer the questions you have about the vaccination



programme, guidance on shielding or the rules related to lockdown but these websites can

- If your query is relating to a hospital / secondary care encounter, can the hospital help rather than the practice? You should contact the hospital regarding results from tests that they have requested
- Be kind to our staff – they have all worked incredibly hard throughout the pandemic and are all doing their best – they do not deserve to be spoken to in the way some patients speak to them. We do have a Zero Tolerance Policy and patients who abuse our staff will be removed from the practice list
- Understanding that we are trying to protect our staff, you, and other patients:
 - Wear a face covering when you attend our sites – we want to protect our staff and other patients
 - We are not refusing to see you for face to face appointments, we are following national guidance when you have a medical need by booking you in for a telephone consultation; following a risk assessment the clinician will then ask you to attend the surgery if your problem cannot be dealt with over the telephone
 - Use the hand sanitiser provided at our sites, particularly if you are using the touch screen
 - Some services have been suspended or limited, also on national guidance, these include minor surgery and travel vaccinations
- Joining our Patient Participation Group – we currently meet every 2-3 months via Zoom – you will be able to find out more about how the practice runs and will understand some of the issues facing us. You can see minutes of previous meetings on our website and these will help you to understand the issues we are facing

Poem

Amanda Halstead, a Health Care Assistant who works in secondary care has written a poem to help patients understand what she has been through over the last twelve months, whilst the poem is focussed on Secondary Care, the last three lines below echo what we are feeling also:

*'One year on everyone is exhausted, suffering with stress and upset,
But we carry on regardless,
WE ARE THE NHS.'*