

Poole Bay & Bournemouth Primary Care Network

Member practices:

Denmark Road Medical Centre
Leybourne Surgery
Westbourne Medical Centre
Winton Health Centre

14 April 2020

Dear Patient

I would like to thank you for supporting the changes that Poole Bay & Bournemouth Primary Care Network and its member practices have made since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Undoubtedly, further changes will be necessary as the outbreak develops.

We are doing everything possible to maintain essential primary care services during this time. We understand the uncertainty and anxiety caused by this unprecedented global health emergency and maintaining essential services, in a safe and sustainable environment, is our primary focus.

Guidance provided by the Government, NHS England and Public Health England asks that you do not visit your usual GP practice unless you are told to do so by one of our clinicians. For anyone with COVID-19 related symptoms, please use the online NHS 111 service (<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>) or telephone NHS 111 for advice.

Should you have any other medical concerns that you feel requires assessment then please contact your usual GP practice for advice. We have introduced a range of options to enable patients to contact their usual GP practice and these include eConsult, SystmOnline and telephone. You can also use the NHS App (<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/the-nhs-app/>) which is owned and run by the NHS.

eConsult enables patients to submit their symptoms or requests to their own GP electronically and offers around the clock NHS self-help information, signposting to services, and a symptom checker.

SystmOnline allows patients, or someone acting on behalf of the patient, to proactively manage their care. The online services available include the ability to view an online Electronic Medical Record (EMR) as well as booking appointments and managing medication. SystmOnline is available as an online service or via apps, providing patients with convenience and flexibility when managing their care.

The NHS App is a simple and secure way to access a range of NHS services on your smartphone or tablet; services include booking appointments, order repeat prescriptions, check your symptoms, view your medical record and register your organ donation decision.

Telephone lines are open 0800 to 1830hrs Monday to Friday. Reception staff currently pre-screen all appointments by asking what the appointment is for to ensure the patient is signposted to the most appropriate resource.

We are encouraging patients to use eConsult, SystmOnline or the NHS App as the preferred method of contact but if that is not possible, or you have a greater urgency, then telephone your GP practice.

We have introduced a telephone triage service so you will be contacted by one of our healthcare professionals who will either deal with your problem over the telephone wherever possible or arrange an appointment for you to attend the practice.

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That appointment will either be at your usual GP practice or at another GP practice within our Primary Care Network. Where possible, we will look to minimise additional travel and inconvenience.

Repeat prescriptions should be ordered online via eConsult, SystmOnline or the NHS App where possible. Please do not over order medication; there is no capacity to 'stockpile' medicines and it places unnecessary, additional pressure on the wider healthcare system. Repeat prescriptions cannot be requested from your practice by telephone. You can request these by telephoning your usual pharmacy but do allow an additional 1 working day to accommodate the additional workload currently being experienced.

Please follow public health service advice. We know that hand washing, and social distancing does work to slow transmission and 'flatten the curve'. We also know which groups of patients are most at risk and there is good online guidance for all of these groups (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>).

Our response to this pandemic is based on national guidance and collaboration with our local commissioners (Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group), BCP Council, our primary care colleagues and the hospital Trusts. Our dedicated COVID-19 Team meet (via conference call) three times every week to address any issues that arise and ensure that each member practice has sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and is following the latest clinical and operation guidance.

To summarise, we have taken the following steps:

- ✓ Stopped the booking of routine appointments
- ✓ Moved to an online service using various forms of easily accessible technology
- ✓ Minimised the need to bring vulnerable patients into the practice
- ✓ Restricted face to face patient appointments
- ✓ Adopted 'red' zones within each practice that facilitates the assessment of suspected COVID-19 symptoms
- ✓ Created a 'hot' site that provides patients with COVID-19 symptoms to be assessed in a safe environment without bringing them into the practice
- ✓ Put in place a COVID-19 Response Team
- ✓ Appointed Leybourne Surgery as our Disaster Recovery site should one of the practices be required to close for deep cleaning

These measures are necessary to ensure that we continue to provide the highest level of healthcare for all of our patients in a safe and sustainable environment.

Our teams across Poole Bay & Bournemouth Primary Care Network have 'stepped up' without hesitation and continue to provide healthcare services in these challenging and changing conditions. We will flex our service provision accordingly as this pandemic develops and will ensure that patients are kept informed throughout.

Best wishes



Dr Stephen Morgan
Clinical Director, Poole Bay & Bournemouth Primary Care Network

On behalf of the Partners at Denmark Road Medical Centre, Leybourne Surgery, Westbourne Medical Centre and Winton Health Centre