

Porter Brook Medical Centre Newsletter

Summer 2020



Some of the medical staff – don't they scrub up well! Photo taken before distancing measures were put into place.

Working with Covid

This newsletter comes from and is for the patients and staff of Porter Brook Medical Centre. In this issue we are looking at some of their experiences of coping with the Covid virus.

At the time of writing we still don't know how long the lockdown will last, but what we do know is that the experience has been very different for everybody. One person may have been trying to work from home with their partner anxious about having been furloughed

and unable to get a moment to themselves because the children need amusing and the house needs a lot more cleaning. Next door, however, an elderly person who is not on the internet sits by themselves feeling lonely and scared.

At the surgery they had to make rapid changes to both the way the building could be used and how the staff worked to keep both themselves and the patients safe, whilst caring for the patients with all their different needs.

Changes at the Surgery

The whole practice has had to make major changes to their usual working day, ranging from: staff wearing full scrubs and PPE to ensure staff and patient safety, to increased social distancing within the work place, having to implement a whole new way of seeing patients overnight and staff using different methods of transport for example cycling to work.



Hayley with a facemask and behind the perspex shields

The first big change at the surgery was the introduction of perspex screens to protect the reception staff and then the change to the way appointments are booked.

With no online booking, patients are now just using the telephone to make an appointment, The receptionists book directly into a one clinic triage booking list. The appropriate doctor or nurse (the

clinicians) will then contact the patient by phone for the consultation.

As the traditional morning and evening surgeries are no longer possible in the current climate it has meant consultations taking place all through the day using the triage patient list compiled by the receptionist.



Staff taking a socially distanced break in the sunshine

Most consultations now take place by telephone or video, which is a new and innovative way of working and consulting. Video consultations and photos have been a key factor in still being able to assess and diagnose without the patients having to physically come to the surgery. The clinicians have, and still are, assessing and seeing patients face-to-face where absolutely necessary. This has had to be done in different ways as well and where possible in an outdoor setting – car parks, in cars, in gardens and doorsteps at home visits.

The practice has continued however, with key indoor clinics such as the Baby Clinic.

The clinicians now also have a morning 'huddle' daily which was put in place to allow them to regularly connect, discuss and be kept up to date with the ever changing national guidance and any internal changes that might have to be implemented quickly.

The new telephone triage system has allowed the clinicians to manage their workload better and even meant they can meet for lunch or a coffee which hasn't always been possible before and has helped keep up staff morale.

Due to the size of the admin team, a new rota system had to be implemented to adhere to the social distancing rules as there wasn't enough room to house everyone at the practice safely. This meant splitting the team into two and having one team working from the practice whilst the other team worked from home. There has also been an added challenge: Educational institutes had to change their teaching approach meaning that Sheffield Hallam University, housing our student medical practice, had to be re-housed and integrated within the Porter Brook site and staffing structure.

All staff now work together and have had to be more flexible in their normal working day to ensure that the service was not disrupted. All admin and reception staff have had to adapt and learn to cross work, prioritising essential work regardless of their previous role and responsibilities.

An admin **Management Support Team** now meets weekly to keep updated and share views on processes. This is working really well. There has also been an increase in virtual meetings to ensure that all staff have felt included whilst working from home.

Changes for patients

To begin with the number of patients who contacted the surgery each day dropped dramatically and the practice were worried that even urgent problems weren't being brought or addressed. This might have been due to a either fear of coming to the surgery, of causing unnecessarily pressure on the NHS or the practice during the pandemic and was also shown to be the case nationally.

However, the number of calls have significantly increased and it now feels back to a normal daily amount. Patients do seem to be happy with telephone consultations.

As some cases are now presenting as urgent **it is really important for patients to contact the practice if they have worries or concerns about their health.**

This is easy to do – just pick up the phone and talk, initially to the receptionist. Tell them as much as you can and they will direct you to the most appropriate person. When you get to talk to the doctor or nurse they will decide on the best next steps.

Hospital referrals

If you do need to be referred to a hospital the clinicians will give careful consideration and assess the benefits against the risks of referral or cautious delay with watchful waiting. Where referral is thought to be necessary, letters will be sent and discussions undertaken with the hospital teams to ensure this is managed as safely as possible.

Patients have been asked not to travel to the hospital by public transport and get there by their own transport, taxi or ambulance.

Getting more help

The practice has tried to ensure that their website has been kept as up to date as possible sign-posting to various guidance and useful links to help patient cope through this unprecedented and difficult time. Please use this link to access the information

<https://www.porterbrookmedicalcentre.co.uk/index.asp>

Managers have received daily guidance from the Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group together with any other useful guidance that might have come to light.

The kindness and support for others has been appreciated. Patient Protective Equipment (PPE) has been in short supply since the start due to the high demand. The practice has had donations from local businesses who were not able to remain open, Sheffield Hallam University, dental practitioners, restaurants and patients.

Contact Details

Telephone: 0114 263 6100

Repeat Prescriptions: 0114 372 3000

Out of Hours: 0114 263 6100

Web: [porterbrookmedicalcentre.co.uk](https://www.porterbrookmedicalcentre.co.uk)

Nearly all perfect

The practice feels that during this time an improved relationship in-house has been created and a greater understanding and empathy gained. There has also been a joining of staff that covered the two sites, Porter Brook and the University who have had to work more closely together and built new relationships which had been very positive. As well as staff relationships, there has also been an improved relationship with some patients where continuity of treatment via telephone consultations has been possible.

Difficulties still present whilst the practice continues to follow and implement changes to adhere to guidance of a two meter distancing rule for staff. Social

distancing from each other at work means clinical, admin and reception staff aren't mixing as much and the Porter Brook family are feeling slightly the same sort of isolation that genetic families feel.



We also know that not all patients have adapted to the change well and have found it difficult to

engage digitally and not physically, having face to face contact makes a big difference to some people. This is something that the practice will continue to monitor to ensure that patients aren't left in a vulnerable situation.

Look after yourself

For many people these have been very difficult times. To support people with their mental health and wellbeing during Covid, the **Sheffield Psychology Board** have created a selection of information leaflets with relevant resources, covering a range of specific needs.

You can find out more from:
<https://sheffieldflourish.co.uk>

Sheffield Flourish held a survey in May asking how people were coping in lockdown and whether the pandemic had been having an impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

Four main points highlighted the difficulties that people have been facing:

- Over 60% reported their mental health had got worse, which is what the NHS are currently finding nationally.

- Despite people saying their mental health had got worst most people had not sought mental health support.
- Mental health difficulties of those who are socially isolating appear to be the most significant factor.
- Fears about the future..

Telephone help

The **HelpHub** offers one-to-one telephone or video calls with a trained counsellor. Bookings need to be made online initially:
thehelphub.co.uk

To sign into the **NHS RVS chat and support** ring 0808 196 3646 and a volunteer will ring you back,.

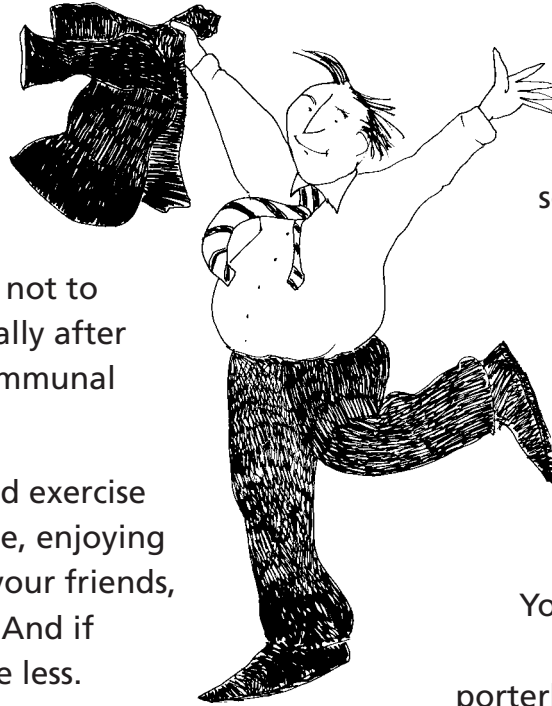


What next...

Covid-19 has been a very challenging time for most people, however there have been some positives and we need to carry the silver linings from our experiences of lock-down with us life-long to start to mend our broken society.

As our patients and staff start to try and return to some form of normal the advice is to stay alert, keep social distancing where possible, continue to wash your hands with soap and water regularly and try not to touch your face, especially after touching surfaces in communal spaces!

It is important to try and exercise outdoors where possible, enjoying nature and cherishing your friends, family and community. And if you do drive try to drive less.



Porter Brook Medical Centre has started a new **Strategy Group** to look at all the challenges and changes that have been faced; what's worked well and what hasn't worked well so far. It will be interesting to see all the staff's views and opinions.

We would love to hear from patients – the positives and negatives you've experienced over the last three months.

You can send your feedback via our website porterbrookmedicalcentre.co.uk

Are you interested in joining the Patient and Practice Participation Group?

The group exists to help the Practice communicate with its patients. As a member of this group you can get involved in initiatives to further these ends – such as working on this newsletter.

For more information contact Jenny Bristow at dysonb@blueyonder.co.uk where you can also leave feedback and ideas of what you would like to see in future editions of this newsletter.



Non Covid medical problems – the practice is still here to help you with any new or ongoing conditions or problems. If you feel you need to speak to a doctor or that we can help you please don't hesitate to call on 0114 263 6100.