

DECEMBER 2021 – JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

Well, has everyone had a good 2021? I hope nerves aren't too frayed and everyone's sense of humour is still intact (and that's just the practice staff!). Let us hope next year will be better for all.

Booster Vaccinations

As you might be aware, the plan is to offer every adult a booster dose by the end of the 2021 – we thought the previous target of the end of January 2022 was impossible. We have great reservations about the 'routine work' we are expected to stop in order to vaccinate the entire country. Politicians certainly seem to demonstrate little understanding of what is currently happening in general practice and what we actually do.

We had planned not to take part in the booster programme as primary care workload is already too high and we felt this took priority but we have been strongly encouraged to take part so we will try to offer a limited booster programme.

Vaccines will not become available until 21.12.21 so we have put on sessions 21 and 22.12.21. Other sites are available including the Mass Vaccination Site at Totally Wicked, Well pharmacy at 18 Church Road, plus many other pharmacies.

Looking back on 2021, it has been a very interesting and at times frightening period to be working in the NHS. We have worked together with other St.Helens practices to deliver the first and second doses to those most vulnerable due to age or underlying condition, we have again delivered the flu vaccine programme al fresco (not to be confused with au naturel), whilst also trying to offer normal routine and emergency care and chronic disease management.

Moving forwards, demand has increased tremendously and is now much higher than pre-Covid. Too few people are going into medicine and those that are might look at the way primary care is hammered in the press and decide 'no thanks'. GPs can no longer physically see every patient who wants to be seen though we do want to see all patients who need to be seen so please make contact if you are concerned. 'Additional role' staff members have been employed across the Primary Care Network (we are in North Network) so it is more important than ever to 'choose well' when selecting who is best placed to deliver care to you. We have a First Contact Practitioner for assessment of musculoskeletal conditions, a mental health practitioner for mental health issues, a pharmacist for medication reviews and post emergency hospital admission discharge reviews. In addition, the pharmacies are available for certain minor conditions – we can book patients into pharmacy slots directly if appropriate. Self-referral for physiotherapy is also available.

Over the winter, additional GP appointments will be available for patients through St.Helens Rota and also through PC24. If we have no capacity, please help us by agreeing to use these additional services.

A huge thank you for your patience and understanding with all the upheaval of the last 12 months. It would have been even harder without your support. Wishing everyone and joyous and peace filled Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.

