

Q&A session

Questions were taken by the surgery staff.

Does the practice offer video consultations?

Yes, video calls are being used, and you can request one at reception when you make the appointment. However, the staff are finding that photos are actually much more effective for making a diagnosis because the photo resolution is much higher. This is particularly the case with skin conditions.

When will we return to face-to-face appointments, as they were in pre-covid times?

We are not going back to the model that was used pre-covid, because the new model has actually proved to be beneficial for a huge number of people. The move across the whole of the NHS in England is towards more phone, video and text appointments, and this is a permanent change. The government was planning this change before covid came along, and it has just been brought forward a bit. The change has been beneficial for many people.

Having said that, face-to-face appointments have been available throughout the covid pandemic and are still available now, where it is beneficial to have one. They are definitely available to anyone who needs one. Some patients actually prefer remote appointments as they are easier to fit into their day, and avoid travel to the surgery, but patients who would specifically like a face-to-face appointment can request one when they book at reception and that is fine too.

If remote consultations are seen by the government as the way forward, is it likely that there will be a time in future when we ring up to talk to a doctor and find that we are talking to someone in a call centre far away instead of at our local surgery?

No, this is not where the system is going, either locally or nationally. Huntingdon Road values the list system where GPs have their own patients, and a phone appointment will always be with the patient's own GP at Huntingdon Road Surgery.

If a patient struggles to have privacy at home to talk to the GP on the phone, is it okay to request an in-person appointment, so as to have the conversation privately in the GP's office?

Yes, that is absolutely a situation where it is appropriate to request an in-person appointment. The consultation cannot be effective, if the patient can't say what they need to say, when they are on the phone.

When is it appropriate to email the GP?

This is tricky to answer, because even three years ago the practice didn't have a direct email address, so there is no established pattern of how it should be used.

The important rules are – never email about medical matters or emergencies.

Ideally it is better not to email, but to call through to reception. This is because when you leave a message with reception it is logged as a query with your own patient record and goes into the system in the right way. If you send a query by email, it doesn't go into the system in the same way, and that makes things complicated. So ideally, please phone reception, rather than sending an email.

Is it okay to email and ask for a call-back if we would like to book an appointment that will be more than a week away?

It is theoretically possible, but we wouldn't like to encourage this. Ideally, please ring through to reception.

Beth Brown thanked the surgery staff for organising the vaccine drive for the students. She says the vaccines have been very much appreciated.

Dr Flinn responds by thanking Beth and saying that there will be another walk-in vaccine clinic for students in the week after fresher's week. This is to accommodate those people who are not in Cambridge at the time when vaccines were previously offered. This is likely to be at a location in town, but the details are not clear yet. The surgery is also now looking at running vaccine clinics for clinically vulnerable people who need a third jab, and it is possible that that will be run in conjunction with the flu jab drive.

What happens if we ring up with a question for our GP and our GP is not there that day?

All staff have received "navigation training" to make sure they know where all queries should be sent to. If your GP is away then another GP will be covering their list, and your query will be forwarded on to that person.

The chairperson and Dr Flinn thanked everyone for attending and the meeting concluded at 10.50am.

Appendix 1

Huntingdon Road Surgery (HRS) Patient Participation Group (PG)

AGM Report - August 2021

What is our Ethos?

The PG committee aims to be a communication bridge between the patient and staff populations at Huntingdon Road Surgery.

As a committee, we are especially focussed on inclusivity. We welcome people from all backgrounds, and work hard to make sure that illness or disability is not a barrier to membership. We are very keen to recruit people from minority ethnic communities, and from the LGBTQ+ community.

A large proportion of our population is graduate educated or in under-graduate education. They are highly resourceful and employed in demanding work.

Both staff and patient populations are highly motivated to achieve the best possible outcomes for each other.

Working together, the PG Committee and surgery staff figure out ways to work with the unique characteristics of our population, to achieve the best possible outcomes for both patient care, and staff work-life balance.

How often do we meet?

The committee meetings used to be every other month. During the covid year, we have been chatting by email when the schools were closed, and meeting by zoom at other times.

The surgery bought us a zoom licence, which enabled us to hold longer meetings online. This has proved invaluable and has opened up many opportunities. It has also simplified accessibility for ill and disabled people considerably.

What have we done this year?

Cervical screening

- We contacted the YouScreen trial to ask if HRS could join and send home screening kits to the patients, but there are no more vacancies for GP practices.
- We have contacted Public Health England (PHE) to ask if we can join the next trial, and are following the PHE screening blog to look for other opportunities.

Keeping an eye out for people struggling in the community

We keep in touch with local community and feedback to the surgery if there are problems for people accessing care. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

- We received reports that people were struggling with the quiet intercom at the front door, and helped find someone who could repair it. It is now working well.

Open meetings moved to zoom

- We ran open education meetings on zoom:
 - Delirium after a stay in intensive care (with or without covid).
<https://www.huntingdonroadsurgery.co.uk/patient-group-seminars>
 - Mental health first aid for students
(Not minuted, as the information was proprietary).

Students

- Our student representative has greatly improved communications with the student community, including by running a digital questionnaire in her own college.
- She was able to tell us about her role as a student welfare rep, personally co-ordinating covid self-isolation among students.
- She is able to tell us when students are due back to campus and about the mental health pressures they are under.
- We have run a further end-of-year online questionnaire, which was distributed by all colleges in catchment.

Improved communications – Eddington

- Our new Eddington Resident's Association committee member has greatly improved communications with the Eddington residents.
- He makes regular, informative posts on their digital media channels.
- The patient group and resident's association carried out a joint survey of Eddington residents online.
- One major discovery through this work, is that 5% of respondents are not registered with a GP at all. We are working to address this.

Eddington Health Centre:

We have been working with HRS, the Cambridge and Peterborough CCG, and the University estate management staff, to try to figure out what is holding back the opening of the new Eddington Health Centre.

We figured out that the trigger for the health centre opening is likely to be the predicted arrival of unsustainably high numbers of patients registering at HRS. Apparently when numbers are high enough, the CCG will release funding for the new health centre to open.

We have passed on this information to the Eddington population via a blog post, urging them to register as patients with HRS. Our worry is that the residents may be failing to register, because they are waiting for the new health centre to open. The adverts imply that this will happen any day now. In fact, it is better that they do not wait, and instead register at an existing practice, so that the CCG can count them accurately.

Covid vaccine uptake

- Members of the committee have been gathering feedback on vaccine side effects so this can be addressed on the surgery website.
- We very much like the HRS covid vaccination web page, which is extremely informative and kept regularly updated. We have been passing the URL on to registered patients when we are asked for information.

Future plans

A lot of changes have taken place in recent months, so the plans for the coming year will be reconsidered when we meet again after the AGM.

If you have ideas or would like to be involved, please write to
HuntingdonRoadPatientGroup@gmail.com

If you would like to know more about our questionnaires from this year, please also write to
HuntingdonRoadPatientGroup@gmail.com.