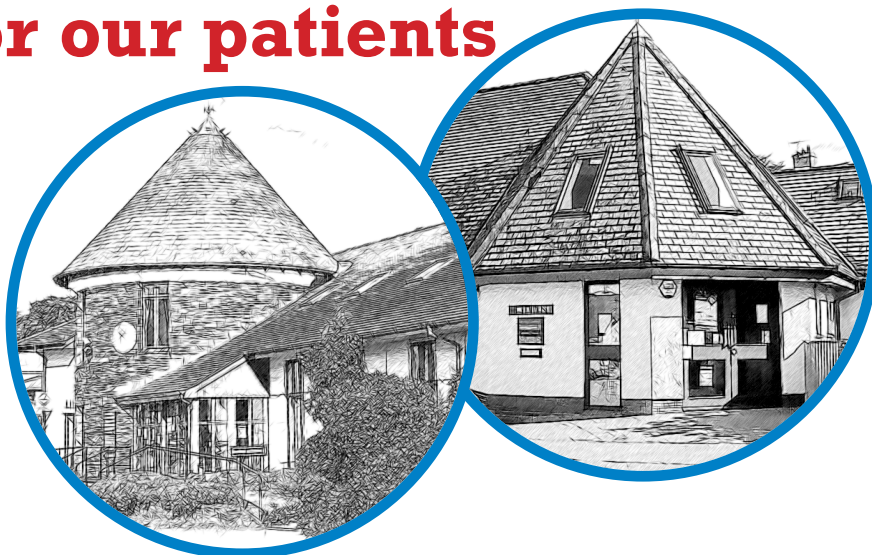


# Newsletter for our patients

## December 2021

**Riverside Surgery**  
**Bovey Tracey**  
**01626 832666**

**Tower House Surgery**  
**Chudleigh**  
**01626 852379**



### Covid Vaccinations

The NHS Covid-19 vaccination programme has been changing considerably over the last few weeks, and is likely to be amended from time to time in the future.

We had hoped to be able to give detailed information in this Newsletter about how our patients become eligible for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd (booster) doses. Unfortunately, the criteria for being eligible to receive a dose of vaccine are rather complex, and involve, among other things, a patient's age and their vulnerability to infection.

**Up to date information on vaccine eligibility and booking an appointment is always available from the NHS at the site:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

You should consult that site if you wish to check your eligibility for a dose of vaccine or wish to book a vaccination.

If you do not have access to the internet, you could ask a family member or friend who does have internet access to help you find the information you need. Alternatively, you can phone **119** to be connected to the Covid-19 eligibility and booking helpline.

At the time of writing this (10th December), here are

some basic details of vaccine eligibility:

- ❖ Patients eligible for a third primary vaccination dose can book these eight weeks after a second dose or as advised by a secondary care clinician.
- ❖ Covid-19 boosters can be booked from three months (91 days) following a second or third primary dose rather than six months, for anyone over 18, or 16 year olds who are living in a household where there is anyone with severe immunosuppression.
- ❖ 16 and 17 year olds are now able to book a second vaccine dose eight weeks after their second dose,

unless they have tested positive for Covid in the last 12 weeks. In that case, they need to wait 28 days following a positive PCR test.

- ❖ Patients over the age of 16 can book first doses if they have not done so already.

Currently it is not possible to vaccinate 12–15 year olds at Newton Abbot Racecourse, but such patients can book an appointment at another site by using the **119** telephone service or the on-line booking service at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

### Christmas and New Year Opening Hours

Friday, 24th December	8:30 – 1:00pm & 2:00 – 6:00pm
Monday, 27th December	CLOSED
Tuesday, 28th December	CLOSED
Wednesday, 29th December	8:30 – 1:00pm & 2:00 – 6:00pm
Thursday, 30th December	8:30 – 1:00pm & 2:00 – 6:00pm
Friday, 31st December	8:30 – 1:00pm & 2:00 – 6:00pm
Monday, 3rd January	CLOSED
Tuesday, 4th January	8:30 – 1:00pm & 2:00 – 6:00pm

Please note, our phone lines are staffed continuously from 8:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.

On the days when we are closed, you can call our usual telephone numbers and you will be redirected to Devon Doctors, just as you are throughout the rest of the year.

## The vaccination programme may change

Please remember that the information set out on the previous page could be out of date quite quickly. For the latest information, please look at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

## Going to a walk-in vaccination site

You can check your eligibility via:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site/>

## Changes from January 2022

From 1st January, our Practice will no longer be able to take requests for Covid vaccinations nor to handle queries about vaccination eligibility or appointments. All enquiries and bookings will be dealt with nationally via the 119 telephone service.

All appointments at the vaccination centre at Newton Abbot racecourse will be handled by the **119** service. Riverside and Tower House surgeries will have no access to the vaccination service. Therefore we would ask our patients not to telephone either surgery about booking a Covid-19 vaccination or eligibility as **we will be unable to help**, other than by directing the caller to the **119** service.

## Supporting Carers to have their vaccination

Carers who would like to have their COVID19 vaccination but cannot leave those that they care for can now access help to get their vaccination.

Contact the Devon Vaccine Support Team at [d-ccq.devonvaccinationsupport@nhs.net](mailto:d-ccq.devonvaccinationsupport@nhs.net) / or on **01752 398836** to

discuss how they can support you to get your vaccination.

## NHS Covid pass now available

You can now get proof of your Coronavirus vaccination details using the NHS Covid pass service.

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/nhs-app-help-and-support/health-records-in-the-nhs-app/about-the-nhs-covid-pass-service/>

From the NHS App you can view and share your Covid pass for event trials and travel abroad.

To get your Covid pass log onto the NHS App, select get your NHS Covid pass on the homepage and the follow the online instructions.

## Practice Staff News

In June, Sophie and Angel joined the reception team. Sophie works three days a week as a Medical Receptionist and Angel works four days a week as an Apprentice Medical Receptionist, working towards her NVQ Level 2 in Customer Services.

### Amanda Coleridge

After her 30 years of service, we said an emotional farewell to our Practice Manager Amanda, who retired at the end of July.

We are so grateful for the calm and steady leadership she has shown throughout the years and she will be very much missed.

Enjoy your retirement Amanda, you most certainly deserve it!

### Ben Bishop becomes Practice Manager

Ben has now stepped into Amanda's shoes as Practice Manager, and we wish him all the best in his new role.

He is supported by his management team, which has welcomed a new member, Jade, as Personal Assistant. Jade joined the team from her previous role as Reception Team Lead.

## Dr Thomas leaves

We said goodbye to Dr Danny Thomas in September as he wished to gain further experience in general practice, and in particular, to work in a smaller and more rural practice, with new challenges.

It was a difficult decision for Dr Thomas to leave and we wish him all the best for the future.

## New partner

We are delighted to announce that Dr Graham will become a Practice partner from April 2022, taking over from Dr Thomas.

## Three doctors have joined us

Dr Jonathan Bialick, Dr Charlotte Stanley and Dr Natalie Lukeman joined the Practice as salaried GPs in September.

Dr Bialick works on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at Riverside.

Dr Stanley works on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays at Tower House.

Dr Lukeman works on Wednesdays and Fridays at Tower House.

## Two doctors return from leave

In October, we welcomed back Dr Tessa Keeler and Dr Emma Williams after their maternity leave.

## Admin team

We have said goodbye to two of our team: Abbie, a Medical Receptionist left in September, and Zoe, our Admin Team Leader, left in October. We wish them well for the future.

During our recruitment process we have welcomed Una, Miriam and Melissa to our Admin Team. They have all settled in really well, and we are sure they will be a real asset to the Team.

## Why are GP practices still working differently?

Following the government announcement in July, most

Covid-19 restrictions were lifted. However, the pandemic is not over.

To protect everyone, all GP surgeries must maintain safe infection control and minimise unnecessary physical contact.

As a nation we still face many challenges and it can feel as if there is no end in sight. It's vital that we all act responsibly, support one another and be kind to one another.

Remember:

- ❖ Get medical help if you think you need it
- ❖ Keep any booked appointments or procedures unless you are told not to
- ❖ Go to hospital if you are advised to

## How is our Practice working?

We are using a 'telephone first' service where you will be assessed by a clinician to decide whether you need:

- ❖ To be seen in person
- ❖ To have a phone or video consultation
- ❖ Help from a community pharmacy or other service

This enables everyone to get the care they need without having to travel to the surgery unnecessarily.

Often, health issues can be resolved with a telephone or video consultation. **If you do need to be seen in person, you will be given an appointment to attend the Practice.**

## Where else can I get help?

If you need help and it's not an emergency, visit <https://111.nhs.uk> or dial 111 if you do not have internet access.

Visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) for advice on common symptoms and a list of local services or speak to your community pharmacist first for advice on minor illnesses. Find

## Dr Danny Thomas writes

After joining the practice in 2013 to complete my training to be a GP, and staying on ever since, I left Tower House Surgery at the end of September.

I enjoyed my time with my colleagues and patients: I learned and developed a huge amount over that time.

I have moved to a similar role in a smaller, more rural practice, as part of a planned change for my personal and professional goals.

I would like to thank all the patients and staff at Tower House Surgery and Riverside Surgery for their support and kindness over my time there.

your nearest pharmacy: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy>

If you feel the other services are not suitable, contact us via eConsult (see page 8).

## What about emergencies?

Always dial **999** in any life-threatening emergency.

For serious problems which need urgent help but do not appear to be life-threatening, you can phone **111** or go to your nearest A&E (which would be Torbay Hospital, Lowes Bridge, Torquay TQ2 7AA or Royal Devon & Exeter, Barrack Road, Exeter, EX2 5 DW).

If you have an injury such as a sprain, broken bone, bite or sting, cuts, grazes or wounds you can go to the Minor Injuries Unit at Newton Abbot Hospital, open 7 days a week, 8am until 8pm. **01626 324500** <https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/urgent-and-emergency-care/minor-injuries-units/>

## Anxiety, depression

If you are struggling to cope with feelings of anxiety and depression, a GP can refer you for NHS talking therapies or, if you prefer, you can refer yourself online without speaking to a GP <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-psychological-therapies-service/>

## Attending the Practice

Our waiting room capacity will, for now, remain unchanged. Our current arrangements are more than sufficient for the number of patients attending the practice.

With local Covid-19 infection rates remaining relatively high compared to earlier 'waves', on reflection it still feels unwise to increase capacity in the waiting room. We will of course continue to review this alongside infection rates and capacity demands.

## Reception Desk

Given the high levels of telephone traffic we are still experiencing, we are no longer requesting patients to enter the premises only if they have a pre-booked appointment.

We have now resumed dealing with prescription, appointment, and other queries at the front desk.

## Alternatives to coming to the Practice

Our staff are still immensely busy, and we would ask patients to consider whether their query could be directed to a more appropriate service such as a pharmacist, the minor injuries unit at Newton Abbot Hospital or a phone call to **111**.

You can find the answers to most Covid-19 queries on <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> or by phoning the **119** Covid-19 enquiries and booking helpline.

## Mask wearing

Patients and staff will still be required to wear masks while in our Practices (unless exempt).

Even if the national policy about mask wearing in certain settings changes, our local policy has been approved by the Practice partners and will remain in force until further notice.

We know that many people find mask wearing difficult or uncomfortable, but we ask that you respect this Practice policy and the staff enforcing it.

## I wanted to see my GP, so why am I seeing someone else?

Our Practice includes a range of professionals (e.g. advanced nurse practitioners) who can diagnose and treat health conditions. This ensures that you see the right person at the right time more quickly.

## Why do Reception staff ask personal questions?

Our Reception staff are a vital part of the health care team and ask questions in order to direct you to the best support. They are skilled in assisting with triage and they treat all information with absolute confidentiality.

## Please be patient

Please continue to be nice to our staff, socially distance where possible, and wear a face mask in all healthcare settings.

## Cervical Screening

Cervical screening is a free health test available on the NHS as part of the National Cervical Screening Programme.

### What is it for?

Cervical screening is not a test for cancer, but it helps to prevent cervical cancer by checking for a virus called high-risk HPV (Human papillomavirus) and cervical cell changes. You should be invited for cervical screening if you have a

cervix. Women are usually born with a cervix, and trans men, non-binary and intersex people may also have one.

In the UK you will automatically be invited for screening if you are aged between 25 and 64 and are registered as female with a GP.

### Do have a test if it's offered

Cervical screening prevents at least 2,000 cervical cancer deaths each year in the UK. It's important for you to take up the offer of a test, even if your last test was normal.

### Appointments for screening

We are still offering a cervical screening service here at the Practice and appointments can be booked via reception or via SystemOnline.

You can book a cervical screening appointment at any time. It is however, best not to book a screening when you have your period as it can be harder to get a result.

### Cervical Screening Tips

Talk to your nurse if you feel embarrassed or worried, or if you have had a bad experience before, or have experienced anything that makes the test difficult for you.

If you have any worries, tell the person doing the test about them. Our staff will always try to give you the right support.

Ask for the first appointment of the day if you feel uncomfortable in waiting rooms.

If you find a standard size speculum too uncomfortable, you can ask to try another size.

### More information and support

A lot of people are worried or unsure about cervical screening, but we are here to support you and give you any information you need.

A very helpful website is available:

<https://jostrust.org.uk>

On that website, you will find information for:

- ❖ Under 25s
- ❖ Over 64s
- ❖ People with a learning disability
- ❖ Survivors of sexual violence

If you have questions, you can phone the website's helpline on **0808 802 8000**—check the opening hours at <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/get-support/helpline>

If you want to talk with others going through a similar experience, you may like to join Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust Online Forum: <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/forum>

They have an Ask the Expert service for general medical queries: <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/get-support/ask-expert>

## Spot cancer early

If you notice something that is not normal for you, talk to your GP.

Remember, when it comes to your body, you're in charge. Don't worry about wasting your doctor's time. If something's unusual for you, or won't go away, we want to hear about it.

## What to watch out for

Some symptoms of possible cancer are shown in the diagram on the next page, *but do remember that you can have some of those symptoms without having cancer.*

Spotting cancer at an early stage means that treatment is more likely to be successful.

In most cases it won't be cancer—but if it is, finding it early can make a real difference.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the doctor will usually talk to you by phone, video chat or via an online messaging service first.

## Keeping appointments

If they do ask to see you face-to-face, it's important that you

attend. To keep everyone as safe as possible, you will need to wear a mask.

The most important thing to remember is that the NHS is still there for you, and your doctor is ready to see you safely.

### Anything abnormal?

Be honest: tell your doctor about anything that's not normal for you, even if it doesn't seem that important or you think it might be a bit embarrassing. They've seen and heard it all before.

Be thorough: mention all your symptoms and don't put it down to 'just getting older', or assume it's part of another health condition.

If something's bothering you, then your doctor will need to hear about it.

### Remote consultations

It's particularly important to be detailed if you're speaking to your doctor online or by phone and they can't see you.

Stick with it: don't worry you might be wasting your doctor's time. Even if you've been to see them already, they want to know if your symptoms haven't gone away, or if something still doesn't feel quite right.

Be prepared: have a think about how to describe the changes, and roughly how long you've had them for.

Writing down the things you want to say can help. It can also be useful for your doctor to have a list of medications that you are taking, including any over-the-counter or herbal remedies.

You may want to take notes and write down any next steps during your appointment.

Having notes to refer to later is better than trying to remember exactly what you were told.

### Follow up

After your appointment, your doctor may ask you to call back if your symptoms don't clear up after a certain length of time.

These are some of the key signs and symptoms of cancer. But if something's unusual for you, it's best to tell your doctor—even if it's not on this list

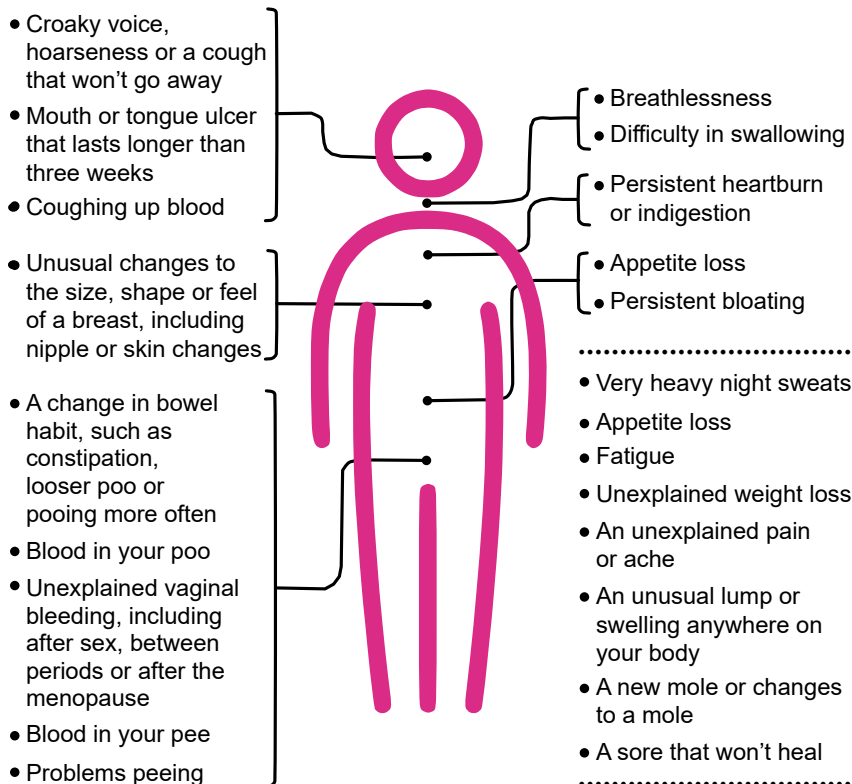


Diagram: www.cancerresearchuk.org

And it's very important to do so if your symptoms don't go away, or if you develop any new symptoms.

### Referral

After speaking to, or seeing your GP, they might make an 'urgent referral'. This will be to have your symptoms investigated further.

Due to the pandemic, you may have to wait longer for your appointment.

An urgent referral means that you should see a specialist within two weeks. If you don't get your appointment details within a week, contact your GP surgery.

### Tests

You might need to have some tests to find out what is wrong and to see if could be cancer.

The people who do your test may not be able to give you any immediate information about your test results.

### Results

The time it takes to receive results varies—you may have

to wait several weeks. It is more than likely that it will be your specialist who will give you your results.

It is normal to worry when you are urgently referred to see a specialist by your GP. However, more than 9 in every 10 people (90%) referred this way will not be diagnosed with cancer.

### Devon Carers

If you look after someone, who looks after you?

Since COVID-19, the number of unpaid carers in Devon has increased by almost 50% to approximately 130,000 (source: Devon County Council). It has never been more important to identify and support carers.

### What is a carer?

A carer is someone who provides unpaid support to people such as family, friends or neighbours who could not manage without their help on a regular basis.

Devon Carers are passionate about helping those who support others.

## Becoming a carer

Anyone can become a carer at any time. It may happen gradually as a person's health deteriorates or instantly, as a result of an accident or unexpected health condition.

Quite often a person does not recognise themselves as a carer, even though they have a caring responsibility.

No matter who a person is caring for and whether they have the same condition as somebody else, their situation is unique to them.

Devon Carers is an organisation which supports unpaid carers to maintain their own health, wellbeing and independence, to be able to care safely, confidently and effectively. The support is free and available to all unpaid carers, irrespective of any input by Health and Social Care agencies.

The service is provided by Devon based charity Westbank and has been commissioned jointly by Devon County Council and NHS Devon Clinical Commissioning Group. They provide a range of services to over 20,000 carers across Devon, excluding Plymouth and Torbay.

These services include:

- ❖ Website—an excellent information resource—visit [www.devoncarers.org.uk](http://www.devoncarers.org.uk)
- ❖ Quarterly magazine—with the latest news, carer stories and training courses
- ❖ Helpline and webchat—available Mon–Fri 8am–6pm Sat 9am–1pm. **03456 434 435**
- ❖ Emergency Plan—a record containing important and useful information to help others if a carer is unexpectedly unable to carry out their caring role
- ❖ Alert Card—to alert others if a carer becomes unexpectedly ill or taken to hospital with the result that they are unable to

## A message from Lloyds Pharmacy

Clare from Lloyds Pharmacy has been in touch to let our patients know how their prescriptions are sent to the Pharmacy, and how long the dispensing process takes.

### Clare writes

We would like to let you know that we had a new system installed at the Pharmacy a few weeks ago and we had a few problems initially. We are now up and running, albeit sometimes a bit slower than normal.

Staff have been in over some weekends to try and catch up on the backlog.

### When are prescriptions ready?

The Pharmacy is getting an unprecedented number of patients coming in to collect repeat prescriptions just two days after ordering.

Some patients come in straight from an appointment saying to us that 'a prescription has been sent over, so it should be ready'.

Unfortunately, the NHS system doesn't work like that.

Once 'send' is pressed by the GP, the prescription is sent automatically into an 'IT cloud' and so it does not go directly to the Pharmacy.

We get no alerts to tell us that prescriptions are available. To get hold of them, we have to 'request' them, which then contacts the 'cloud' and pulls down to us all the prescriptions which have been sent over to the Pharmacy.

There is no way to request a single prescription by name unless we have a paper prescription token.

Often, there can be up to 100 prescriptions on one 'request', which all slowly download individually, in no particular order. These must all be printed out before we can find the one that patient has come in for.

It would be useful if all patients were aware of this as, generally, by the time we have printed the prescription, checked it against a patient's current medications, put it through the system, ordered stock, labelled the item and done final checks, this can be a 20-minute process.

### Allow at least seven days

*Clare says that all of this is why patients should allow at least seven days for repeat prescriptions to become available to collect from the Pharmacy.*

care for their loved ones or to summon help for them

- ❖ Carers Passport—all the information you need about you and your role in one place. It includes a Devon Carers ID card, which you can use to access a range of benefits and discounts through the Carer Friendly Devon scheme
- ❖ Training—opportunities to learn skills to assist with the caring role
- ❖ Peer Support—connecting carers to mutually support each other

- ❖ Hospital services—additional support following an admission to hospital
- ❖ Carer assessments—a personalised assessment of how caring affects your health and wellbeing and how we can support you with one-to-one assistance if required.

Devon Carers treats each carer as an individual, taking time to find out what's important to them, and work out together how they can support them in their caring role.

## We have a great local service

The challenges carers face in different parts of the county can vary greatly, so having a local team here in Devon enables them to provide specific advice and support.

The teams also liaise closely with health and social care services and have strong links with voluntary and community organisations.

If you think you are an unpaid carer, or know someone who is, please get in touch with Devon Carers.

To find out more visit <https://devoncarers.org.uk/> or phone 03456 434435

## Befrienders

The Befrienders are a voluntary organisation and registered charity that provides transport to and from appointments at the surgery, local hospitals, and other health care premises. To use their service you must

be registered with Riverside Surgery.

The Befrienders can also arrange for prescription collection and delivery in an emergency situation (e.g., if you are temporarily housebound due to an illness or following an operation).

The primary aim of the Befrienders is to help those who cannot get to appointments unaided because they cannot drive, have mobility problems etc.

Befrienders' drivers are not allowed to offer help to patients to enter or leave the car. If you require such assistance, you should have a carer with you.

The service is not intended for those who can call upon family and friends to provide transport, nor for those who have their own transport, unless they are unable to drive on a temporary basis, for example following an operation.

## Rules

Please also note the following rules which are to ensure your own and the driver's safety, and that of any accompanying passengers (e.g. carers);

- ❖ Drivers, patients, and any other passengers should wear masks
- ❖ Drivers, patients, and any other passengers would be required to have had two vaccinations unless there was a valid medical reason why they could not have them
- ❖ Drivers would not be allowed to sit in the surgery to wait for patients. Rules for waiting at hospitals would be subject to local hospital rules
- ❖ Drivers, patients, and any other passengers would be required to use hand gel on pick up and after the hospital/surgery visit to minimise risk of contamination to the car.
- ❖ A donation to reimburse the driver's mileage expenses is asked for. Monies are collected by the driver, handed to the treasurer, and the driver will make a mileage claim.
- ❖ There is a suggested list of donations, the amount depending on the length of the return journey.

## Healthy Lifestyles

Our local NHS Trust has a great many sources of information on how to make the most of your life, with programmes to help with weight, smoking, type 2 diabetes, exercising, mood and long-term medical conditions. Have a look at <https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/healthy-lifestyles/>

## Strength and balance exercise classes

The sessions on this 12-week course form a programme to help boost confidence, improve flexibility, mobility, strength and stamina.

To improve strength and balance, and maintain bone health, exercises are carried out while standing, with the use of a chair for support.

**Healthy Lifestyles**  
Torbay and South Devon  
NHS Foundation Trust

**Strength & Balance Exercise Classes**  
Fun social, **FREE** exercise sessions in Torbay & South Devon

**Why should I attend?**

- Improve strength and balance
- Improve confidence
- Improve mobility & flexibility
- Improve quality of life
- Meet new people

**How long can I attend?**  
12 weeks, once weekly

**How do I sign up?** Speak to your GP for more information or call 0300 456 1006 to refer yourself

Locations: Bovey Tracey, Newton Abbot, Buckfastleigh, Totnes, Dawlish, Teignmouth, Torquay, Paignton, Brixham, Dartmouth

For some participants it may be necessary to begin the programme seated before progressing to standing.

The aim is to ensure that you are able to maintain a good quality of life and to remain as independent as possible.

## Wheelchair users

Unfortunately, the Befrienders cannot carry wheelchairs; if you are a wheelchair user, we suggest you contact

Newton Abbot Community Transport (**01626 335775**), Professional Cabs (**01626 335151**), or alternatively the Wheelchair Taxi Co (**01803 644644**).

## How much notice is needed?

Wherever possible you should book transport as soon as you know the date of your appointment. We ask, however, that bookings are not made more than 6 weeks in advance.

It is appreciated that patients may sometimes be given urgent appointments at very short notice. In such cases Befrienders will make every effort to help, although we cannot guarantee this, especially if it less than 3 days' notice. We are unable to accommodate same-day requests.

### How to book a driver

Requests for transport are made through the surgery. A receptionist will take the necessary details for a Befrienders request. Please give as much information as possible to assist in finding a suitable driver. It is important to know if you have mobility problems, especially if you use a walker, or are bringing someone with you. If it is a hospital appointment, you should make sure the receptionist records the department being attended, not just the name of the hospital, as drivers need to know where to park. It is also helpful, if possible, to tell the receptionist how long, approximately, the appointment is likely to be.

### What happens next?

A Befrienders volunteer coordinator will collect your request at the end of the afternoon. He or she will then organise a driver and telephone you within the next day or two to confirm the booking and give the name of the driver and the driver's telephone number (if the driver permits). The driver will then telephone you the evening before the appointment to confirm and arrange a pick-up time.

Should an appointment be changed/cancelled, or if you are unable to keep it for any reason, Befrienders need to know.

Please phone the surgery to inform them of the change of circumstance and tell them that you have a Befrienders driver booked. If this happens on the

day of the appointment, and you know the driver's telephone number, please let the driver know direct.

### The day of your appointment

If possible, it is helpful if you have the correct money ready for your donation. If not familiar with the suggested donations, the receptionist at the practice can advise from a list kept in the Befrienders file.

If you have a Blue Badge, please bring it with you, as it helps with parking.

If attending a hospital appointment, remember to bring your hospital letter with you.

### Finally

Due to increasing demand—nearly 1800 requests were dealt with in 2019—Befrienders are always on the lookout for more volunteer drivers. If you know of anyone who might be interested (e.g., recently retired/looking for voluntary work) please ask them to get in touch (phone numbers below). Even a half a day a week helps.

We aim to provide a high standard of service at all times, but if you have any questions, comments or complaints do not hesitate to make them known.

### Befrienders contacts:

Kevin Addey (Chairman)

**01626 834002**

Wendy Ferguson (Principal Coordinator) **01626 832850**

### Flu

We are sure you are aware that the majority of our efforts are focused on the Flu Vaccination programme at the moment.

Currently we have vaccinated:

- ❖ 56% of all 2- and 3-year-olds
- ❖ 71.9% of all 65 years and over
- ❖ 37.3% of all 18–64 at-risk patients

The flu vaccine is a safe and effective vaccine. It's offered every year on the NHS to help

protect people at risk of getting seriously ill from flu.

More people are likely to get flu this winter as fewer people will have built up natural immunity to it during the COVID–19 pandemic.

If you get flu and COVID–19 at the same time, research shows you're more likely to become seriously ill.

Getting vaccinated against flu and COVID–19 will provide protection for you, and those around you, for both these serious illnesses.

### What if you've had Covid?

If you've had COVID–19, it's safe to have the flu vaccine. It will still be effective at helping to prevent flu.

### Who can have the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine can be given free on the NHS to people who are 50 and over (including those who will be 50 by 31st March 2022)

Also included are people under 50 who have certain health conditions:

- ❖ Asthma
- ❖ COPD
- ❖ Emphysema
- ❖ Bronchitis
- ❖ Diabetes
- ❖ coronary heart disease or heart failure
- ❖ Chronic kidney disease
- ❖ Liver disease, such as hepatitis
- ❖ Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy
- ❖ Problems with the spleen, sickle cell disease or if they have had their spleen removed
- ❖ Weakened immune system as a result of conditions such as HIV or AIDS, or taking medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy

If you're under 50 and in any of the following categories, you're also eligible for a flu vaccine:



- ❖ You are pregnant
- ❖ You are in long-stay residential care
- ❖ You receive a carer's allowance, or are the main carer for an older or disabled person who may be at risk if you get sick
- ❖ You live with someone who is more likely to get infections (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)
- ❖ You're a frontline health or social care worker

For further information please visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/>

## Bowel Screening

The South Devon Bowel Cancer Screening Programme covering Plymouth, Torbay, Teignbridge and the South West has now recovered from the 2020 pause in screening invitations due to Covid, and invitations are now once again being sent within six weeks of screening due dates.

The intention of this national programme is to detect bowel cancer at an early stage, when treatment is more likely to be effective.

Screening is available to everyone aged 60 or over and South Devon Bowel Cancer Screening Centre have recently commenced an expansion to include some 56 year olds.

1 in 15 men and 1 in 18 women in the UK will develop bowel cancer during their lifetime

It is the fourth most common cancer in the UK, and the second biggest cancer killer—over 16,000 people die each year (Cancer Research UK 2019)

## Risk reduction

Regular bowel cancer screening has been shown to reduce the risk of dying from bowel cancer by 16% (Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, 2006)

**e consult**

**Want advice from your doctor, self-help information or have an administrative request (such as a sick note or test results)?**

eConsult and get a response before the end of the next working day or sooner

**GET STARTED**

## How to get a home test kit

Everyone aged 60 to 74 who is registered with a GP and lives in England is automatically sent a bowel cancer screening kit every two years. The programme also includes some 56 year olds.

If you are 75 or over, you can ask for a kit every two years by phoning the free bowel cancer screening helpline on **0800 707 60 60**

## HANDi App

Our Practice is seeing more children with respiratory illness than usual for this time of year as restrictions ease and children mix more.

If your child is breathless, has a persistent high temperature or isn't feeding properly, it could be a sign of severe respiratory illness.

If you want to check your child's symptoms for any common illnesses and get local advice and guidance, we recommend downloading the free HANDi paediatric app from <https://tinyurl.com/vmfhkbns>.

Just search for 'HANDi app' on any Apple or Android phone.

## eConsult

If you have a non-urgent medical problem you'd like help about, you can use **eConsult** which is available on the first page of the Practice website <https://towerhousesurgery.co.uk/> (see picture above).

When you use the **eConsult** service, you will receive a

response within 48 hours, by email, text or phone.

## Integrated Care System for Devon

The Integrated Care System for Devon (ICSD) is a partnership of health and social care organisations working together with local communities across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay to improve people's health, wellbeing and care.

ICSD is led by Jane Milligan who said: "It's a pleasure to have joined as the chief executive of the Integrated Care System for Devon (ICSD) and NHS Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and I'm looking forward to working with our many local partners and communities over the coming months.

"The launch of the Integrated Care System for Devon (ICSD) on 1 April 2021 means every area of the country is now operating as an integrated care system, achieving a major milestone in the NHS Long Term Plan.

"Having previously spent six years working here and across the border in Cornwall, I'm really pleased to be returning to help continue the good work that has been undertaken to ensure the very best care for local people."

<https://www.icsdevon.co.uk/>

## MyHealth Devon

MyHealth Devon is part of ICSD. The associated website is: <https://myhealth-devon.nhs.uk/>