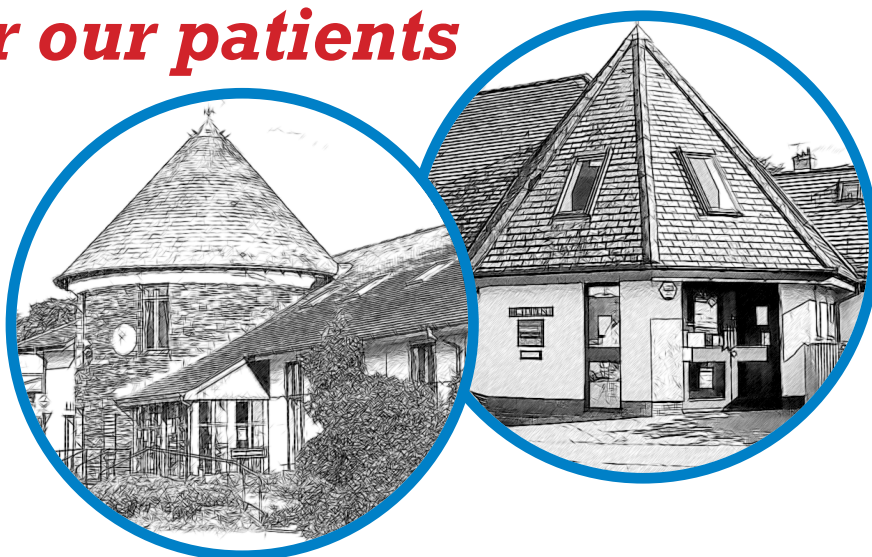


Newsletter for our patients

December 2020

Riverside Surgery
Bovey Tracey
01626 832666

Tower House Surgery
Chudleigh
01626 852379



Practice staff news

We have now recruited two long-term locum GPs to fully cover Dr Keeler's and Dr Williams' maternity leave. We are delighted to welcome Dr Christian Winiger who will be working three days a week from Riverside and Dr Celia Ballard who will be working three days a week from Towerhouse. ●

The Practice over the Christmas period

While Christmas for all of us will be a little different this year, things will run as normal at the practice. The practice will be open and telephones manned Mon. to Fri. during our usual opening hours, but we will be closed on Friday 25th and Saturday 26th Dec. and Friday 1st Jan. On the days when we're closed, please still phone us on the usual telephone numbers and you will be redirected to Devon Doctors just as you are at weekends throughout the rest of the year. ●

Covid-19 Vaccine

We're sure that you have all been following the good news about the new vaccines.

We are currently working on a collaborative plan with other local practices to vaccinate our population and will be in touch with our patients in due course with further information and to book appointments.

We will be systematically working through the groups of eligible patients as set out in the priority list drawn up by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Please do not phone or write to us to request vaccination - we will be sending out appointments just as soon as we can.

Further information on the Covid-19 vaccine can be found here https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/?gclid=EAlalQobChMliuPM7YvG7QIVyZ7tCh25PwYgEAAYASAAEgK8CPD_BwE

We are fully open

As we're now into what's been well publicised as likely to be 'a challenging winter' we want to reassure everyone that we are still here, we are still open, and we are ready to meet the needs of our patients as we have always done and have continued to do throughout the Covid -19 pandemic.

Across England, after the end of the first lock-down, patients were accessing general practice as much as they were before the pandemic. With tight restrictions now in place for everyone's activities, levels of patient contact have reduced again.

We do want to reassure all our patients that we are open and able to provide all the services that you're used to, though there

might be different ways of doing things.

You can be certain that where there is a clinical need to do so, we will always offer a face-to-face appointment with a member of our clinical team.

We would ask patients to make all routine queries by telephone, email or by the eConsult service (which you can access on our website www.towerhousesurgery.co.uk).

Please only attend your surgery in person if you have a booked appointment or are asked to do so by a member of staff. This is to ensure we can sufficiently protect our staff and enable them to continue to provide a service to you and other patients.

If you do need to attend the surgery, we kindly ask that you wear a face covering.

We would also like to advise any of our patients who were previously 'shielding' that should you be expected to fully shield again you will receive a letter or an email advising you to do so. Otherwise, further guidance can be found on the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/advice-for-people-at-high-risk/>

As always, if you are experiencing any Coronavirus symptoms, your first step should be to visit <https://111.nhs.uk/> or phone 111. Please be assured

that whether the clinicians at 111 think that your symptoms are Covid-related or not, if your symptoms require the attention of a doctor, 111 will inform us and we will be in touch with you.

If you need any further information on Coronavirus or want to book a test you should visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Cancer symptoms

You may well have seen articles in the press about the reduction during the pandemic in the numbers of patients going to their GP with possible cancer symptoms. While numbers did increase to near normal during the period after the first lockdown, there are signs now that the numbers are reducing again.

It might be that patients don't want to visit the surgery if they can avoid it, perhaps thinking that they 'don't want to bother the doctor at this difficult time' or perhaps they're just worried about going out and having other people around them.

It's important for patients to spot any early signs of possible cancer. The earlier cancers are detected, the better the outcomes can be.

Do be reassured that we take all the recommended measures to keep all visitors to our surgeries as safe as possible and you should feel confident that you'll be well looked after when attending for a doctor's or nurse's consultation.

More advice about cancer symptoms can be found at <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-symptoms/spot-cancer-early>

2020 Flu campaign

Carrying out our annual flu vaccinations is always an extremely challenging but rewarding task in the last few months of every year. This year has been even more of a challenge than usual, with the addition of new groups of eligible patients and the

necessity to social distance because of Covid-19. We've had to space our appointments out, allowing for social distancing and use of PPE, resulting in the average time per jab this year being three minutes rather than last year's one minute.

In essence, our flu clinics took us three times longer than usual. We overcame this by running full day Saturday clinics, whereas previously we only did half days. We also ran multiple mini clinics from both Riverside and Towerhouse, and were able to utilise our extended access evening clinics too.

We are proud with the way our team has pulled together, worked longer and harder. So far we have successfully vaccinated over 3700 of our patients.

We would like to thank all the patients who have taken the time to offer us their thanks for our vaccination programme. Everyone on the team really values the feedback.

Our nurses

Carol, our lead nurse, reports that the nursing team has adapted well in managing the restrictions of Covid-19 with the needs of our patients.

The team wears masks, gloves and aprons for every interaction, and rooms and equipment are fully cleaned before each patient's visit to prevent cross infection.

It has been a worrying and stressful time for the nursing team, not least because wearing a mask very much hinders communication. If they sound muffled or unclear, please ask them to repeat what they say, or to write it down for you. Under the mask they are still smiling!

The team has remained very busy throughout the last eight months but find themselves working in very different ways. They have had to reduce the number of face-to-face appointments, and to stagger appointment times, as well as limit or withdraw some

procedures. Where possible, they have switched to telephone contact.

The nursing team asks for your understanding and support if they cannot always see you as soon as you would like but we can reassure you they are here for you when you need them.

Blood pressure monitoring at home

Some of our patients have to have their blood pressure monitored at regular intervals, by attending for a consultation with a nurse. Many of these patients find having to make regular visits to the surgery a bit of a nuisance and a bit of a worry while Covid is still active.

We now can recommend home monitoring of BP for most of those patients. Equipment to do the monitoring at home has come down in price to make its purchase attainable for many such patients.

When it's set out as a series of instructions, monitoring your BP at home could at first seem complicated, but please do persevere and you'll very soon get the hang of it.

We've aiming to make home BP monitoring easy and are currently preparing a leaflet and report form for patients to use.

Just remember that after the first few times of monitoring your BP at home, you'll rapidly get used to doing it and it will seem so easy from then on.

When our leaflet/reporting form is available, we will be able to email it to you, or you will be able to download it from our website www.towerhousesurgery.co.uk

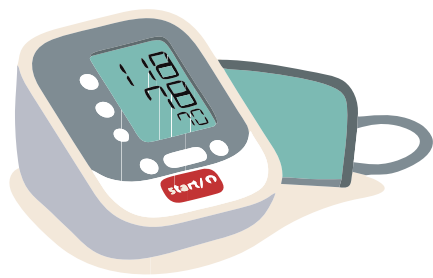
A Christmas present?

If you know a patient who has regular monitoring of their BP, here's an opportunity to give them something very useful this Christmas, a home BP monitoring device.

There are many devices on the market, with a wide range of prices, and it may be difficult

to know which to purchase. The best way of buying one is probably to visit a local pharmacy and see what they have in stock or available, or recommend.

The machines we suggest our patients should use consist of a unit with an air pump and a digital display powered by internal batteries. The air pump is connected by a flexible rubber tube to an inflatable arm cuff.



There are other monitoring devices which have a wrist cuff or a finger cuff, but these devices are not considered suitable for reliable clinical monitoring. The same applies to digital wrist watches or fitness monitors.

Most blood pressure machines for home use have an internal digital clock which you set to the correct time and date when you switch on the machine for the first time. Every time you take a blood pressure reading, the machine will remember the reading, and the time and date on which they occurred, though it's a good idea to write down in a note book your dates, times and readings, just in case the machine 'forgets' the readings, perhaps when you have to fit new batteries.

If the person for whom you're buying the BP monitor has wide upper arms, you might need to buy an extra-large cuff. Measure round the middle of the person's upper arm and check that the cuff you're buying is an appropriate size.

Social Prescribing

Recent studies in GP practices (such as one carried out in Frome) have demonstrated the

benefits to local health of treating patients holistically rather than just for physical ailments and problems. The success of this type of approach has been borne out by reductions in the incidence of long-term health problems in communities and reductions in emergency attendance at A&E departments.

At Riverside and Tower House, we are continuing to increase the number of patients being referred to and supported by our social prescribing team especially now that we have a Social Prescribing Link Worker in each of the practices within our Primary Care Network.

We've been contacted by some patients whom we've supported during lockdown and they said that the welfare checks we'd made were very much appreciated.

To measure our results, we're going to be developing a feedback questionnaire for patients who have been discharged after they've been helped by the social prescribing service.

The social prescribing team hopes that the service will be a valuable resource to help patients who come to the surgery with a non-medical need.

We plan to do some work with patients who are frequent GP attenders in order to evaluate the impact of social prescribing support. This will be something for the New Year.

Our intention is to provide our reception staff, nurse practitioners and nurses with the ability to refer to the social prescribing team any patients who need non-medical support. Some of these patients' worries can be solved quickly by the team, sometimes with a single phone call.

Local cooperation

Our social prescribing team has been able to refer patients to the Dartmoor Community Kitchen lottery-funded pilot for hot meal

delivery within the community. We were also able to begin a pilot with the local libraries enabling them to refer directly to us (no other organisation can do this as yet) but had to postpone this due to the latest lockdown.

We're continuing to work with Moorland Community Care Group and many of our patients have accessed the excellent telephone activities the group has organised.

Getting in touch

At the moment, referrals may only be taken via GPs, but from January 2021 we will be able to accept referrals direct from external organisations and direct from patients.

Nurses are able to refer patients if they consider help from social prescribing would benefit the individual. The process starts with a conversation during a routine nurse appointment.

We recently assisted the surgery team in contacting patients who were eligible for a flu vaccination, combining it with a welfare check at the same time. Several patients were identified as needing some additional advice, information and support.

We are fortunate to have the flexibility to be able to work creatively to meet the needs of our patients.

Now that we have expanded the team, there is the opportunity to consider work with specific groups of patients such as those living with long-term conditions, for example, COPD or diabetes.

In many ways COVID has made what we do more challenging in terms of being pro-active. For the moment, most of the team's work is reactive, especially for individuals and families who are experiencing financial and food hardship.

Health and Wellbeing Coaches

NHS England developed this new role to be a part of a multi-disciplinary social prescribing

approach. Health coaching is a supported self-management approach as part of the six evidence-based components of the NHS Comprehensive Model of Personalised Care, as set out at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/comprehensive-model-of-personalised-care/>

NHS England sees these coaches as part of its 5-year plan /Social Prescribing provision.

Measuring results

Health and wellbeing coaches will use the patient activation measure (PAM) in order to tailor their coaching to the patient to increase their 'activation' level in their own healthcare. This will eventually provide quantifiable data on the outcomes of this new role.

The use of PAM in general health coaching has been widely studied as a measure of change, showing a positive impact on long-term behaviour change leading to reductions in system use (A&E admissions; reduced reliance on clinical appointments; improved and more proactive relationships with healthcare professionals).

Who trains the coaches?

The Personalised Care Institute has a list of accredited training providers that newly appointed health and wellbeing coaches can choose from.

Coaches must complete at least a 4-day accredited health coaching training session, with a follow up portfolio.

Who are the coaches?

Health and wellbeing coaches are chosen currently from a range of backgrounds, most commonly a nutrition or exercise science background. As with social prescribing, this does vary, and each coach will have a particular skill set to draw upon when working with patients.

The specific coaching skills required for the role are then taught in the 4-day

accredited health coach training, which ensures no matter the individual's background, a uniform approach to coaching is kept.

How does the coaching work?

After you've been referred, your health and wellbeing coach will work with you in a coaching relationship over a number of sessions to help you to work through a health-related problem. The sessions will help you identify goals set by you in order to change lifestyle behaviours, such as diet and exercise.

Your coach can help you to find your own solutions and to build your knowledge, skills and confidence in living with your condition and dealing with its challenges and ups and downs.

You will be in the driving seat of these sessions. Your coach will be there to support you and help you to set appropriate goals. They will be able to sort out any difficulties you have, and may provide you with tools and tips in order to reach your goals.

One aim of coaching is to help patients who have a long-term condition or who are at risk of developing a long-term condition. Another group of patients is those who need help in achieving a change in their life style.

Ashleigh Hellier

Ashleigh, our health and wellbeing coach has been in post since August and is currently in training.

She has completed the four days of accredited health coach training and is now in the process of completing a portfolio of case studies with a small group of patients who are currently on the social prescribing caseload.

Ashleigh's training formally ends at the beginning of February; however, supervision is ongoing. Following this, she will be continuing to expand her caseload.



Ashleigh Hellier

Ashleigh recently graduated from the University of Plymouth with a degree in Nutrition, Exercise and Health and is a Registered Associate Nutritionist.

Alongside studying, she volunteered for two years with *Food is Fun CIC*, delivering cookery workshops and nutritional education in the community for vulnerable groups, schools and families.

Community has been at the heart of the work she has done in the past, including developing a simple recipe book to accompany food bank parcels and helping to run a food-based support group during lockdown.

Ashleigh is based at Riverside and Tower House and works among all our three PCN practices. She is very much enjoying her new career with Newton West PCN.

The process

The coaching does not follow a rigid program of sessions. The average number of sessions is six, but you will be able to decide how often you would like to see your coach.

The sessions cover

- ❖ Your current experiences of managing your health
- ❖ What is important to you and how you would like to make a change
- ❖ How we can help you to achieve your goals

After referral, Ashleigh will phone you to introduce herself and arrange your first 1-hour coaching session. This can be by phone or via a video call.