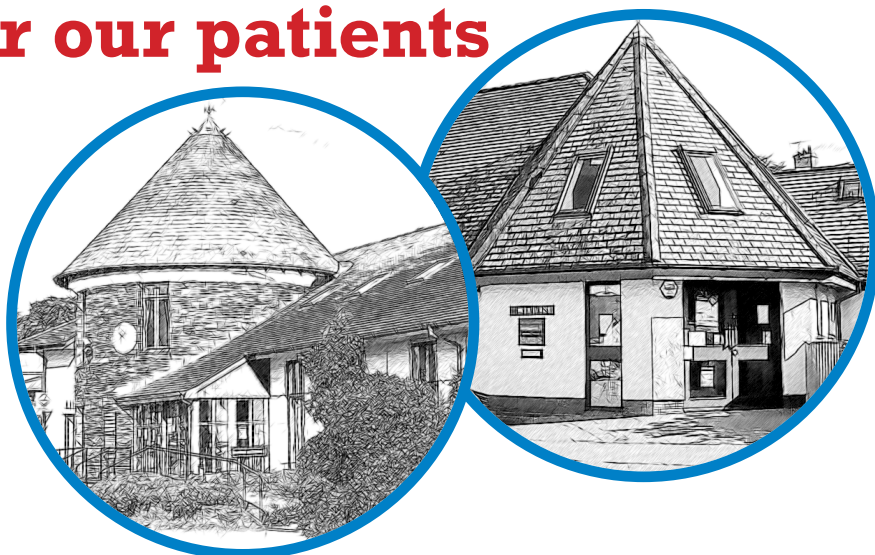


Newsletter for our patients

December 2024

Riverside Surgery
Bovey Tracey
01626 832666

Tower House Surgery
Chudleigh
01626 852379



Scan to go to our website

SystemConnect progress

We are excited to share more details about SystemConnect, which we introduced in the second week of October.

SystemConnect is designed to support safer working practices and enable our GPs to provide better, more efficient care for our patients and it helps us make the best possible use of all our staff and facilities.

SystemConnect is a triaging system: that just means that **all** requests for help or appointments are thoroughly assessed by a GP who decides what action should be taken.

The GP decides what happens

If the GP assesses that your problem or worry needs a same-day face-to-face appointment, one will be offered to you.

If a less urgent response is assessed as appropriate, you might be offered a future appointment, or a telephone call from a GP.

Some problems will be better dealt with by other staff members such as our



Our opening times for Christmas and New Year

Monday, 23rd December, 8:30 – 1pm & 2pm – 6pm

Tuesday, 24th December, 8:30 – 1pm & 2pm – 6pm

Wednesday, 25th December, **CLOSED**

Thursday, 26th December, **CLOSED**

Friday, 27th December, 8:30 – 1pm & 2pm – 6pm

Monday, 30th December, 8:30 – 1pm & 2pm – 6pm

Tuesday, 31st December, 8:30 – 1pm & 2pm – 6pm

Wednesday, 1st January, **CLOSED**

Thursday, 2nd January, 8:30 – 1pm & 2pm – 6pm

Out-of-hours, please phone 111

Note: No late sessions on 24th or 31st Dec

pharmacist, or one of our specialist nurses. It's possible too for you to be referred to other NHS services.

The whole purpose behind SystemConnect is to ensure that you will be directed to the care

which is most appropriate for you.

Clerical support

An administrator works closely alongside the GP to streamline the clerical part of the

Christmas Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year
from all of us at Riverside and Tower House

process, leaving the GP able to concentrate fully on clinical matters.

Help is always available

For those unable to complete online forms, we want to reassure you that help will always be available.

You are still able to contact Reception, whether on the telephone or in person, and our receptionists will happily assist you by completing the SystmConnect forms on your behalf.

Help other patients

If you have relatives, neighbours or friends who rely on phoning Reception rather than using online facilities, please reassure them and emphasise they're not being left behind and that we will help them all we can.

If you know of someone who needs special assistance in order to be able to contact us, please give them a hand, or let us know about them.

We are here, we are listening

We are committed to being accessible and inclusive, and we will ensure that no patient feels alienated because they are unable to use the online system.

We are dedicated to providing care that works for everyone.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

Thank you for your support: we will continue always to strive to deliver the best possible care.

What do our GPs think?

Our GPs have found that SystmConnect enables them to concentrate fully on clinical matters, allowing them to make better use of their extensive training and hard-won experience.

We want to hear from you

We have been listening very carefully to comments patients have made about the new system: we very much welcome patient feedback on how we can enhance the online forms and the overall service.

As a result of patients' views, we have already made changes to the online forms and to our

appointment systems so as to improve efficiency and ensure smoother experiences for everyone—patients and staff.

The Cottage Magazine

We have been offered space in *The Cottage Magazine* to include news from our Practice in every issue.

We're very grateful to have that opportunity.

A sincere apology

We would like to give you our apologies for the inadequate service we provided at the October Saturday flu and COVID-19 vaccination clinic at Riverside Surgery. We all deeply regret that the waiting times for vaccinations were unacceptably long.

We had underestimated the demand for the Covid vaccine this year and, also, unfortunately, we did not have enough vaccinators available on the day.

Time allowed per patient

As for previous vaccination days, we had had trial sessions to see how many minutes and seconds we should allow for each individual vaccination, including the time taken by administrative staff to add the required details to each patient's personal health record.

The NHS gave us only very short notice of an increase in the data entry requirements, and that increased the time needed for each patient, causing a build up of delay as the day progressed.

To add to that, one of our vaccinators suddenly reported ill, and that made things even more difficult to handle.

Over the years, we have successfully run many winter

vaccination clinics, and it so disappointing for us that our efforts were not good enough on this occasion.

Tower House session

For the following week's Saturday vaccination clinic at Tower House, we put into practice what we had learned from the poorly executed Riverside session: we increased the time allocated for each patient, and we also ensured that we had further staffing available on the day, should it be needed.

We've learnt from this

Please rest assured that we are taking this year's experience as a valuable lesson to ensure that we have better planning and resources for next year's clinics.

Our thanks to the team

We also want to acknowledge the tremendous effort of our team, including our PPG volunteers, who worked hard to serve our community.

Despite everyone's dedication, we recognise that we fell short of your expectations for the Riverside clinic.

Thank you for your understanding, and once again, we apologise for any distress or inconvenience.

Our first contribution dealt with SystemConnect and the second one covered the RSV vaccine and our recent acquisition of monitoring equipment to help assess patients' asthma. We've repeated the information in this Newsletter for the benefit of those who do not see the magazine.

New surgical equipment

We are very grateful to *Friends of Bovey Hospital* for providing funding for us to acquire minor surgery equipment which will allow our GPs to continue holding regular clinics to perform procedures such as incisions, excisions, and aspirations and will enable our patients to receive more timely care locally, avoiding the need to travel to Torquay or Exeter.

With this new equipment, we aim to replicate the high standards already set by our existing machine at Tower House Surgery, Chudleigh, and bring the same quality of care to Riverside Surgery.

Our new FeNo monitor

FeNO machines are invaluable for accurately diagnosing and managing asthma in line with NICE guidelines. Until now, we have had to share one machine with our Newton West PCN colleagues, and this has sometimes led to patient waiting lists.



Our new FeNo monitor.

Having a dedicated machine within our Practice enables us to reduce or eliminate these delays and enhances the care that we provide to our patients.

Our thanks again to *Friends of Bovey Hospital* for funding the purchase of our new equipment.

RSV vaccine

Respiratory syncytial virus is a common cause of coughs and colds. Most people get it several times during their life. In some people, it can cause serious breathing problems such as pneumonia in adults and bronchiolitis in babies.

Getting RSV can also make your symptoms worse if you have a lung condition, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD).

If you're pregnant, this vaccine is recommended (from 28 weeks onwards) to help protect your baby after they're born

It's also recommended if you're aged 75 to 79. If you turned 80 on or after 1st September 2024, you're eligible for the RSV vaccine until 31st August 2025.

You're not eligible for the RSV vaccine if you turned 80 before 1st September 2024.

Hand hygiene

During the Covid pandemic, we all got used to washing or sanitising our hands frequently. Unfortunately, many of us have now gone back to our previous habits and are no longer as conscientious about hand hygiene.

It's still important to look after our hands and keep them clean, particularly after using the toilet, to prevent passing on common diseases, including those which cause vomiting and diarrhoea.

The message is **Keep Your Hands Clean**, especially before doing anything connected with

preparing food. Hand washing immediately before a meal is another good idea, for adults and children alike.

You don't have to buy fancy hand washes: using water with a quality skin-friendly soap for a minute or so does the trick.

Our Patient Participation Group

Our PPG's purpose is to foster the relationship between Practice and patients, and that benefits everybody.

The Practice interacts with the PPG so that concerns raised by patients can be addressed. Patients' suggestions for improvements can be passed on too. Similarly, the Practice can give the PPG the points of view of the doctors and other staff.

Topics for the PPG to discuss

If you have something you'd like to raise with our PPG, you can email your comments to contact.btcp@nhs.net putting "PPG" in the subject line.

Alternatively, you can write your views in a short note and hand it in to Reception or post it to us. Just address your note "For the attention of the PPG".

Our Newsletters

These Newsletters are prepared by our Patient Participation Group (PPG) and enable us to let patients know about what is happening in the Practice. They also cover important medical topics as they arise.

Transient ischaemic attack

A transient ischaemic attack (TIA) or "mini stroke" is caused by a temporary disruption in the blood supply to part of the brain.

The disruption in blood supply results in a lack of oxygen to the brain. This can cause sudden symptoms similar

to a stroke, such as speech and visual disturbance, and numbness or weakness in the face, arms and legs.

But a TIA does not last as long as a stroke. The effects last a few minutes to a few hours and fully resolve within 24 hours.

Symptoms of a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

The main symptoms of a TIA can be remembered with the word **FAST**:

Face—the face may have dropped on one side, the person may not be able to smile, or their mouth or eye may have dropped.

Arms—the person may not be able to lift both arms and keep them raised because of weakness or numbness in one arm.

Speech—their speech may be slurred or garbled, or the person may not be able to talk at all, despite appearing to be awake; they may also have problems understanding what you're saying to them.

Time—it's time to call 999 immediately if you see any of these signs or symptoms.

When to get medical advice

In the early stages of a TIA, it's not possible to tell whether you're having a TIA or a full stroke.

It's important to call 999 immediately and ask for an

ambulance if you or someone else has symptoms of a TIA or stroke.

Even if the symptoms disappear while you're waiting for an ambulance to arrive, you still need to be assessed in hospital.

You should be referred to see a specialist within 24 hours of the onset of your symptoms.

A warning sign

A TIA is a warning sign that you may be at risk of having a full stroke in the near future, and an assessment can help doctors determine the best way to reduce the chances of that happening.

Looking back

If you think you may have had a TIA previously, but the symptoms have passed and you did not seek medical advice at the time, make an urgent appointment with a GP.

They can determine whether to refer you for a hospital assessment.

Treating a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

Although the symptoms of a transient ischaemic attack (TIA) resolve in a few minutes or hours, you'll need treatment to help prevent another TIA or a full stroke happening in the future.

Treatment will depend on your individual circumstances,

such as your age and medical history.

You're likely to be given advice about lifestyle changes you can make to reduce your stroke risk, and be offered medicine to treat the cause of the TIA.

In some cases, a surgery called a carotid endarterectomy may be needed to unblock your carotid arteries, which are the main blood vessels that supply your brain with blood.

A very helpful video

In a very good video on the NHS website, a patient recounts her experience of having multiple TIAs over a day or two without realising that she needed urgent medical evaluation. Fortunately, she did seek medical help eventually. You can find the video if you scroll down the page at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/transient-ischaemic-attack-tia/>

Other helpful websites:

<https://www.stroke.org.uk/stroke/type/tia>

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/heart-matters-magazine/medical/ask-the-experts/tia-what-is-a-mini-stroke>

Covid and flu vaccination

Online booking for Covid and flu vaccines was due to close on 15th December, making 14th December the last day to make a booking.

The NHS urges anyone still eligible for these vaccines to book an appointment and get potentially lifesaving protection.

This season saw the fastest ever start to the NHS flu vaccine rollout on record and more people than ever before, more than 4.5 million people, received their flu and Covid vaccines in a single appointment.

The poster features a woman's face in the background, divided into four sections corresponding to the FAST acronym. The top section is labeled 'FACE' with the text 'Has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?'. The middle section is labeled 'ARMS' with 'Can they raise both arms and keep them there?'. The bottom section is labeled 'SPEECH' with 'Is their speech slurred?'. The bottom-most section is labeled 'TIME' with 'To call 999 if you see any single one of these signs'. On the right side, there is a yellow box with the NHS logo and the text 'WHEN STROKE STRIKES, Act F.A.S.T.' and 'Act F.A.S.T. help us help you' with a small image of a hand holding a phone dialing 999.

By 30th November, a total of 11,404,669 Covid and 16,190,661 flu vaccinations had been administered by the NHS in England since the beginning of the autumn campaign – including 61.5% of people ages 65 and over having received their COVID vaccination. However, there remained thousands more people who needed to safeguard their health this winter.

It was easy to get a vaccine

A record number of sites offered the vaccines this winter, making it as easy as possible for people to get vaccinated. Vaccination is the best way for people to ensure that they and their families are protected

against flu and Covid when the viruses spread more easily at Christmas and New Year as people spend more time indoors.

It takes about two weeks following vaccination to build up the maximum defences against the viruses, so it's important to get vaccinated as soon as you can.

It is crucial to get this protection, even if you have had a vaccine or been ill with flu or Covid before, as immunity fades over time and the viruses change each year.

The 119 service, which provided booking support for those unable to access online services, was also due to close for bookings on 15th December,

but was due to continue answering queries until 22nd December.

Vaccines may still be available

It will still be possible to book your vaccinations after 15th December through local NHS vaccination services, like pharmacies or walk-in sites. However, there will be fewer Covid appointments, and you may need to travel further.

Vaccines in January

People can continue booking the Covid vaccine through local services until 31st January. After that, Covid vaccinations will close, and people will be required to wait for a future seasonal campaign unless they develop a new health condition or start treatment that severely weakens the immune system, in which case a clinician may advise vaccination sooner.

For those eligible for a free flu vaccine after 15th December, it will still be possible to book one by contacting their GP surgery or by finding a pharmacy that offers the NHS flu vaccination if you're 18 or over.

The free flu vaccine offer will then close after 31st March. However, getting it as soon as possible is encouraged so as to ensure protection over the colder months when flu is often in greater circulation.

Flu vaccine for children

Parents should also ensure that eligible children are protected against the flu (they'll be given the nasal spray vaccine), as they are at a higher risk of catching and spreading the virus. If they do catch flu, it can lead to serious problems like bronchitis and pneumonia.

Local Pharmacy Provision

If you have any concerns about how local pharmacies operate, you can express your views

Devon Sexual Health

Contraception, Sexual Health & HIV service



We provide:

- Emergency contraception
- Free condoms (all types!) and lube
- All methods of contraception, including pills, implants, IUD/IUS, injections
- STI testing and treatment
- Help with partner notification
- PEP and PrEP
- Care for people living with HIV
- Pregnancy testing and unplanned pregnancy advice
- Under 18s services, including drop-in clinics

Our services are **free** and **confidential**



For details on our clinics and opening times, further information on all our services – including options to self-test – plus dedicated professionals' area with training offers, please visit:

www.devonsexualhealth.nhs.uk

Tel: 0300 303 3989



Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

using this link: <https://devon.communitypharmacy.org.uk/>

The associated email address is: admin@cpdevon.org.uk and the telephone number is 01392 719604

Keeping warm

Electricity and gas prices seem to increase every day and people are now continually looking for ways to save money but still be warm in their homes. Heated throws are becoming more and more popular.

A heated throw is in effect a large soft blanket, often in simulated fur, which has a heating element sewn into it, much like an electric blanket.

Unlike blankets, the throws are designed to look good in your living room and to encourage snuggling under them to be cosy and warm, even if the room you're in is a bit on the cold side.

Another popular item is an electric foot warmer into which you put both of your feet (and you have to be sure to remember to remove your feet from it before you stand up!).

These electrical gadgets use comparatively little electricity and are very economical to use. Prices vary from about £50 to more than £120.

Hot water bottles

The popularity of hot water bottles is growing as people try to stay warm in bed while keeping the bedroom temperature quite low to reduce the heating bills.

All hot water bottles sold in the UK must conform with British Standard BS1970:2012 and must be marked with the date of manufacture. This usually forms part of an embossed area on the funnel at the top of the bottle.

Regardless of when your hot water bottle was manufactured, always inspect it carefully each

REQUEST FOR CONTACT

Devon Family HUBS

0-19
(25 WITH SEND)

Action For Children are supporting Devon Family Hubs. Family Hubs are a developing network of services and community groups that are working together to support families and their children to find opportunities that meet their needs. Please see our website for more details.

OUR SUPPORT:

- Online Digital Chat
- Parent Talk

For more information
Devon Family HUBS website

<https://service.actionforchildren.org.uk/devon-family-hubs/>

Family HUBS Advice & Guidance Line -
Mon-Fri 10am to 4pm

0800 538 5458

In partnership with
Devon County Council

DEVON FAMILY HUBS

time you fill it. Look out for the start of cracks in the rubber, or any other signs of dangerous deterioration: you certainly don't want hot water spreading through your bed and causing severe scalds (now termed 'burns', by the way).

You will find an explanation of the dating system, and a lot of other information, at: <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/hot-water-bottle/>

Devon Family Hubs

Family hubs are a new way of bringing together all the support a family may need. They serve as a central point of access for advice and support

for all families with children aged up to 19, or up to age 25 if they have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

In Devon, all our family hubs are currently managed by the charity *Action For Children*.

Support

Family hubs provide a wide range of support to families, including parenting advice and support and support for young adults.

Support can be accessed by phone: call the advice and guidance line on 0800 538 5458. The advice line is open Monday to Friday, 10.00am to 4.00pm, and is free to call from UK landlines and mobiles.