Newsletter for our patients

October 2026

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Tower House Surgery
Chudleigh
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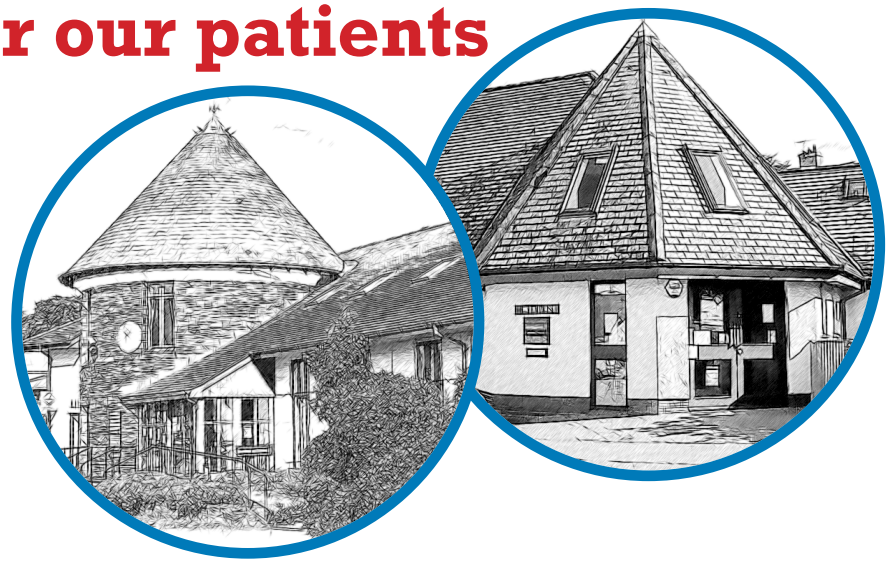
Scan to go to our website



Seasonal health

Stay well this winter. Winter conditions can worsen existing health problems, especially for people aged 65 and over, or those with heart disease, kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma or diabetes.

Being cold can also cause your blood pressure to rise, potentially increasing the risk of strokes and heart attacks. So try not to get cold.

Stay strong with free winter vaccines

You can help yourself stay well in winter. This includes getting your flu and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Getting the vaccinations you're offered every year is important. The jabs top up your protection and reduce your risk of getting severe symptoms.

Free NHS vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and your family this winter. They help keep you healthy and reduce your chances of becoming seriously ill or needing hospital care.

Flu vaccinations

The free NHS flu vaccine is available to people most at risk from flu, and their carers. Flu viruses change each year, so you need to get vaccinated every year if you can.

Are you eligible?

You can get the free NHS flu vaccine if you:

- are aged 65 or over (including those who will be 65 by 31 March 2027)
- are aged 18 to 64 and have certain long-term health conditions
- arepregnant
- live in a care home
- are the main carer for an older or disabled person, or receive a carer's allowance
- live with someone who has a weakened immune system
- are experiencing homelessness or staying in a homeless hostel or night shelter
- Frontline health and social care workers can also get a flu vaccine through their employer.

Health conditions that mean you're eligible for the flu vaccine

The flu vaccine is strongly recommended for people with certain long-term health problems, including:

- conditions that affect your breathing, such as asthma (needing a steroid inhaler or tablets), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or cystic fibrosis
- heart conditions, such as coronary heart disease or heart failure
- chronic kidney disease
- liver disease, such as cirrhosis or hepatitis
- some conditions that affect your brain or nerves, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy
- diabetes or Addison's disease
- a weakened immune system due to a condition such as HIV or AIDS, or due to a treatment such as chemotherapy or steroid medicine
- problems with your spleen, such as sickle cell disease, or if you've had your spleen removed
- a learning disability
- being very overweight—a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above

Speak to your GP or your specialist if you have a health condition and you're not sure if you're eligible for the flu vaccine.

Book your flu vaccination

Please book all your vaccinations via our GP

Practice if at all possible because every vaccine we adminster gives us a little extra income to help support and improve the services we offer our patients throughout the year.

If you're eligible for the flu vaccine and are aged 18 years or over, you can book a flu vaccination appointment via our Practice or online or in the NHS App. You can also book a vaccination appointment for a child aged 2 or 3 years.

Children's flu vaccine

Flu can be very unpleasant for children and can sometimes cause serious problems, such as pneumonia.

Each winter in the UK, thousands of children who do not have a health condition do go to hospital because of flu.

Children can catch and spread flu easily. Vaccinating them also helps protect others who are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from flu, such as babies, anyone who's pregnant and older people.

The children's flu vaccine is recommended for:

- children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2026 (born between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2024)
- school-aged children (Reception to Year 11)
- children aged 6 months to 17 years with certain long-term health conditions

Children's vaccinations have been available from 1st September. Parents and guardians should read full information and recommendations about the children's flu vaccine, including how to get it.

All the details are at: https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine/

COVID-19 vaccinationa

COVID-19 vaccines are for people at highest risk of serious illness. This includes:

- people aged 75 or over
- people aged 6 months to 74 years old who have
- a weakened immune system because of a health condition or treatment
- residents in an older adult care home

Book your COVID-19 vaccination

Please book all your vaccinations via our GP Practice if at all possible because every vaccine we adminster gives us a little extra income to support and improve the services we offer our patients throughout the year.

If you're eligible for the winter COVID-19 vaccine, you can book a COVID-19 vaccination appointment via our Practice or online or in the NHS App. Alternatively, visit https://nhs.uk/BookCovid, or you can call **119**, or find a walk-in centre at https://nhs.uk/covid-walk-in.

Vaccination appointments started on 1st October for most people, though some, including anyone who is pregnant, and eligible children, could get vaccinated from 1st September.

Other important vaccinations

You may also be eligible to receive other vaccinations, including a **pneumococcal vaccine**—if you're aged 65 or over.

NHS

Patient Standards

These are the minimum standards patients and carers should expect following a referral to hospital for planned care (also known as elective care).

When you are referred	
	You will know within 28 days whether your referral has been accepted or what the next steps are.

While you are on the waiting list and throughout your care	
	Communication will be clear and easy to understand. If you have specific communications needs, you will have the opportunity to tell your provider these.
	When your referral is accepted, you will get information to help you while you wait.
	You will get regular updates on your wait, at least every 12 weeks.
	Before your appointments, you will be able to tell your provider of any additional needs and reasonable adjustments you require.

Planning and understanding your appointments	
	You will receive clear information about your appointments at least 21 days in advance.
	If your appointment is cancelled, by either you or your provider, a new date will be communicated within 28 days.
	You will be told when your care is complete and what happens next.

There's also an **RSV vaccine**—available if you are pregnant, aged 75 or over, aged 65 to 74 and have a weakened immune system or a long-term lung condition (this does not include asthma that is under control), or live in a care home for older adults

These two vaccines help protect against serious illnesses that are more common in the winter, including pneumonia.

Check with our Practice if you think you may be eligible.

Who's most at risk from cold weather?

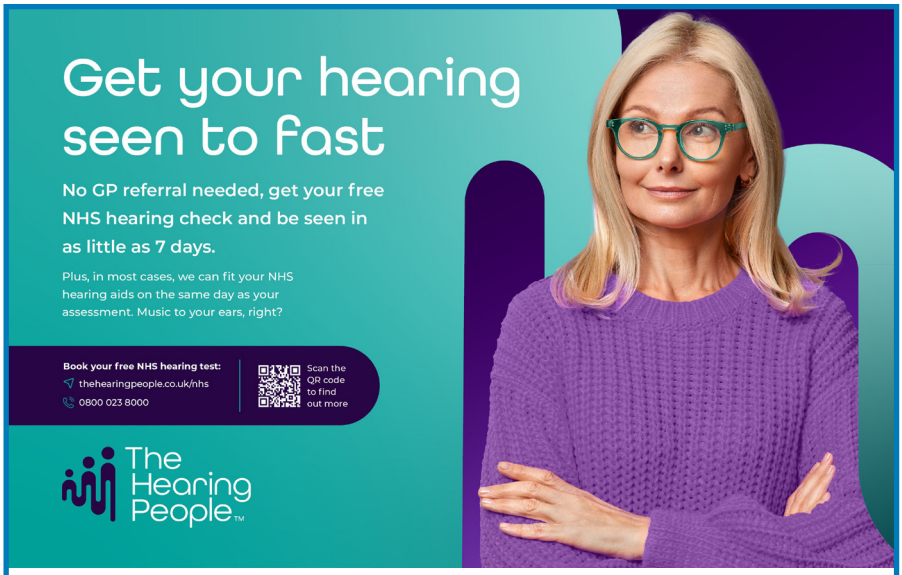
Some people are especially vulnerable to the effects of cold weather. This includes:

- people aged 65 and older
- babies and children under the age of 5
- people on a low income (so cannot afford heating)
- people who have a long-term health condition
- people with a disability
- pregnant women
- people who have a mental health condition

If you're 65 or over, or in one of the other at-risk groups, it's important to get medical help as soon as you feel unwell.

You can get help and advice from:

- a pharmacy—pharmacists can give treatment advice for a range of minor illnesses and can tell you if you need to see a doctor
- your GP—you may be able to consult a GP online or over the phone, or go in for an appointment if they think you need to
- **NHS 111**—go to https://111.nhs.uk or call **111** if you have an urgent medical problem and you are not sure what to do



The Hearing People are renting a clinical room at Riverside Surgery every Tuesday and Wednesday, and the occasional Friday.
You can book your free NHS hearing consultation at Riverside at https://thehearingpeople.co.uk/nhs or by phone on 0800 023 8000. You don't need a GP referral.

The sooner you get advice, the sooner you're likely to get better.

In an emergency, go to **A&E** immediately, or call **999**.

Keeping warm and safe

Keeping warm over the winter months can help to prevent colds, flu and more serious health problems such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression.

Room temperature

Heat your home to a temperature that's comfortable for you. If you can, this should be at least 18°C in the rooms that you regularly use, such as your living room and bedroom. This is particularly important if you're getting on a bit or you have a health condition.

It's probably best to keep your bedroom windows closed at night.

Heating by gas

Check that your heating and cooking appliances are safe. Contact a Gas Safe registered engineer to make sure they're working properly, especially your boiler. You can find an engineer from the Gas Safe Register website: https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/

If you have gas heating, it's a good idea to check if you should have a CO (carbon monoxide) alarm in your home.

Safe from fire

Make sure your home is fire safe. For fire safety advice specific to you and your home, visit the online home fire safety check website to complete a safety check for your home: https://www.fireservice.co.uk/safety/home-fire-safety-check/

Another useful site is: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-safety-guidance

See if you're eligible for help

Older people often seem to miss out on money they're due.

Make sure you're getting all the help that you're entitled to. There are grants, benefits and advice available to make your

home more energy efficient, improve your heating or help with bills. Check with Citizens' Advice or organisations such as AgeUK at https://ageuk.org.uk

Find out more about ways to save energy in your home at https://gov.uk, or call the government helpline on **0800 444 202.**
You can also find out more from https://gov.uk about benefits and financial support if you're on a low income.

Keep an eye on neighbours

Look in on vulnerable neighbours and relatives Remember that other people, such as older neighbours, friends and family members, may need some extra help over the winter. There's a lot you can do to help people who need support.

Make sure they get their prescription medicines before the holiday period starts , especially if bad weather is forecast.

If they need help over the holiday period when the GP surgery or pharmacy is closed or they're not sure what to do, go to https://111.nhs.uk or call **111**.

If you're worried about a relative or elderly neighbour, contact your local council or call the Age UK helpline on **0800 678 1602** (8am to 7pm every day).

Hypothermia

If you're worried that a person may have hypothermia—an abnormally low body temperature of 35degC or lower—don't delay, go to: https://111.nhs.uk
or call **111** for immediate advice.

Help for older people

Age UK offers several services to help you stay connected and supported:

The Silver Line Helpline is a free, confidential telephone service for people aged 55 and over. Whether you're feeling lonely, need help accessing support, or just want a chat, you can call **0800 470 80 90** to speak to a friendly team member 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Help from volunteers

Many local Age UK offices run befriending schemes that involve friendly phone chats or volunteers visiting you at home or accompanying you to appointments.

Age UK also runs a telephone friendship service that matches you with a volunteer with similar interests for a free weekly chat. You can call **0800 434 6105** to find out more

Local Age UK offices offer various clubs and activities that provide opportunities to meet new people in your area.

You can also volunteer with Age UK, which is a great way to make a difference, meet new people and feel more engaged in your local community.

You can visit https://ageuk.org.uk or call **0800 169 6565** to find out more about how Age UK can support you.

Help for veterans and serving personnel

Our Practice is accredited "Armed Forces veteran friendly" and we take that obligation seriously.

There's a mental health charity which supports veterans from every service and conflict, focusing on those with complex mental health issues resulting from their experiences during military service. The associated website is: https://combatstress.org.uk

The charity's Combat Stress helpline can be used by all those in the Armed Forces community, including veterans, serving personnel and their families,

The helpline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. A specially trained team provides advice and support about how Combat Stress, or other organisations, can help.
Call: **0800 138 1619**
Text: **07537 173683**
Email: helpline@combatstress.org.uk

The Combat Stress website has a lot of helpful information and links, including a comprehensive list of self-help resources, at: https://selfhelp.combatstress.org.uk

Dealing with any sudden crises

Combat Stress and their Helpline do not provide crisis services.

If you are in an emergency and need urgent support, please call the emergency services on **999** or the Samaritans on **116 123**.

Health and well-being coaching

Here's a report about how Joey Milburn, our health and well-being coach, worked with a patient to improve their life.

Joey's first session with Patient A focused on long term goals and a target to aim towards together.

Patient A really wanted to feel healthier and more confident, and they believed that the way to get there should be focused solely on losing 2 stone within 6 months.

In that first session, Joey helped Patient A to look at the actions they could leave with: focusing more on reducing alcohol, doing more active movement and taking time for selfcare and personal well-being each week.

Over the course of six sessions, patient A managed to get their daily routine concentrated on spending time

each day for art and drawing and having alcohol only on special occasions. They also continued attending regular activity classes.

During the sessions, patient A's initial focus on losing 2 stone of weight had been successfuly shifted to the idea of creating and maintaining healthy habits, together with better health both mental and physical.

Looking after yourself as you move through life

As you progress from being young, through middle age, to eventually being elderly, or even old, there's still a lot to enjoy in life. Some of us, though, increasingly need help with the ageing process or with our finances, or both of these.

Here are details of an organisation which provides information and help for older people

Independent Age

This charity has been known as Independent Age since 2005 but has a history stretching back to 1863 when the United Kingdom Beneficent Association (UKBA) was established.

UKBA was incorporated under Royal Charter to become RUKBA, and later merged with two other charities, Counsel and Care and the Universal Beneficent Society.

Today, IA works to improve the lives of older people in financial hardship.

The Charity has a website: https://www.independentage.org/ where you will find a full account of its activities and how it strives to reduce the incidence on poverty in later life.

The latest spring/summer IA magazine is available at: https://www.independentage.org/IA-magazine-spring-2026 and you can see the contents list for a recent issue in the illustration on this page.

The IA Helpline is a free, confidential service supporting older people. Many older people are hesitant to reach out for advice but, with Independment Age, there's no stigma. A simple call or a simple question can open up a whole world of support

If you are struggling, or know someone who is, get free advice by calling the IA Helpline on **0800 319 6789**, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.30pm, or by emailing helpline@independentage.org

Looking after your eyesight

It's important to have your eyes regularly examined, once a year if possible, particularly as you get older.

Your optometrist (optician) is highly trained not only to prescribe glasses or contact lenses if you need them, but will also do some vital checking of your health by looking in detail at the back of your eyes.

Many community optometrists now have access to hospital-grade cameras and specialist scanners which can record and save pictures of the structures in your eyes. This makes it easy to spot any changes which might be occurring year on year.

Macular degeneration

One of the risks as we get older is that we might develop

Welcome

No matter who we are or where we live, we all need that feeling of 'home' – safety, comfort and, perhaps above all else, peace of mind.

And that's what your enthusiastic campaigning and fundraising, and unfailing support, is delivering to older people experiencing financial hardship.

This Independent Age Magazine brings home what a difference we're making together to improve the lives of older people. After years of campaigning with other organisations, the Renters' Rights Act is now law – the biggest reform of the private rented sector in England in decades. Our Helpline continues to lift older people out of poverty through guidance and with understanding. And news of who we are and what we can do is finding more of the older people who need us.

When the place you live feels unsafe and uncertain – and unaffordable – you and your quality of life suffer. With Independent Age, you are changing that – thank you.

Joanna Elson, CBE
Chief Executive

Contents

2 A big step forward for older renters
4 What the Renters' Rights Act means for you
5 Five questions with... Billy
6 "I thought I'd end up homeless again"
8 Kindness in action
10 Interview time: Tony Discipline
12 We need your brilliant ideas
13 Puzzle page

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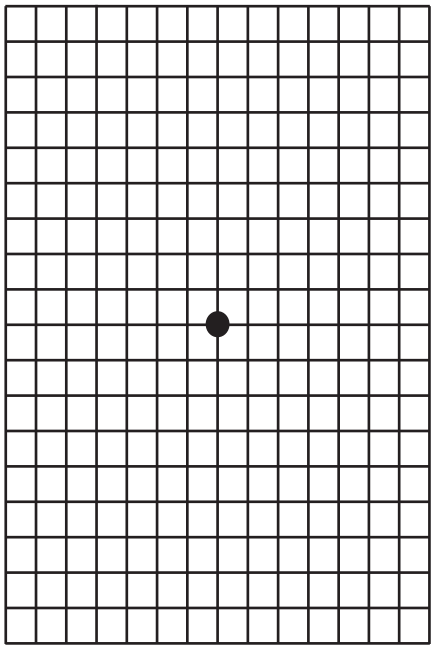
macular degeneration. The macula is a part of the retina, the light-sensitive area at the back of your eye, and is responsible for your central, detailed vision.

Visual distortion

One of the first signs of macular degeneration is distortions in sight.

There's an easy way for you to monitor your vision and detect changes. All you need in order to do this is an Amsler Grid—this is nothing more than a series of lines on a chart like the one below. Under the chart, you'll find how to use it to check the sight of each of your eyes.

More information is available from the Macular Society (the trading name of the Macular Disease Society, a registered charity).



Hold this Amsler grid at eye level about 30cm or 1ft from your eyes. Wear your usual reading glasses if needed, but NOT varifocals.

Cover one eye and look at the central dot in the grid.

Do the same for your other eye.

If any of the lines appears wavy, distorted, fuzzy, or has gaps, you should get an appointment with your optometrist (optician) immediately—it's really important to get your eyes examined as soon as you can.

For help and information, phone **0300 3030 111** or visit the website https://www.macularsociety.org

The Macular Disease Society is dedicated to helping people with macular degeneration, improving treatments and funding research to find a cure for the condition.

Newton Abbot Community Transport Association

This local charity started up in 1991 to provide accessible, affordable transport and services for the local community, by supporting increased mobility, social contact and independence.

The Charity provides:

- Wheelchair accessible vehicles from six to sixteen seats
- Ring & Ride door to door transport to Newton Abbot and surrounding areas
- Minibuses for community groups, clubs and schools
- Hire of shopmobility scooters, wheelchairs and walkers
- Sales and Advice about aids to daily living (DCC/NHS approved)
- Local scheduled bus services
- Support by friendly staff and volunteers—all of them trained and happy to help—and they do take into account that not everyone is as agile as they might like to be
- Fares are kept as low as possible and are re-invested to foster "mobility for the community and by the community".

Areas covered

All parts of Newton Abbot are covered. Services are also run elsewhere in Teignbridge including Kingsteignton, Chudleigh, Bovey Tracey, Ashburton, Buckfastleigh and Buckfast. Services are updated from time to time, as people's needs and requirements change.

Independence at home

The Charity can also supply aids for daily living, from walking stick ferrules to commodes.

Asking for help

If you are in need, you can contact the Charity on **01626 335775** to find out if they can be of assistance.

Website

You can learn more about the Charity at:
https://www.newtonabbotcta.org/
Email: shopmobility@newtonabbotcta.org
Email: transport@newtonabbotcta.org

Volunteers live longer!

There seems to be a lot of research being talked about at the moment about how volunteering not only impacts the people and associations helped by volunteers, but also seems to give the volunteers a longer and more fulfilled life.

It would seem that if you want to get the best out of a long and fulfilled life, it would be a good idea to become a volunteer as soon as you can.

Volunteers come under the classification of "not for profit" as do many local activities and organisations such as clubs and societies.

There are a great many organisations for volunteers to get involved with, and of course, volunteers can help other people on a one-to-one basis by, for example, befriending a lonely person and giving them someone to

share their interests, activities, and perhaps their worries.

There's a leaflet, illustrated below, which sums, it all up. We believe it was produced to encourage volunteering in Teignbridge but we were not able to find its origin.

Website

Teignbridge has a web page https://devonconnect.org/teignbridge which is entitled "Teignbridge Together".

Via that page, you can "Make connections, share information, search for volunteering opportunities and access activities within your local community".

There's also a website for Teighbridge Community and Voluntary Services: https://teigncvs.org.uk

The aim of that website is to help local communities or groups to be effective, efficient and safe. To that end, support is provided for local charities, voluntary groups, and social enterprises in Teignbridge to build and grow a stronger community.

The Voluntary Services people work to empower local communities to come together and take collective action to provide solutions to meet common problems.

There's a telephone number: **01626 357844** and an email address: office@teigncvs.org.uk

There's also a page covering volunteering: https://www.teigncvs.org.uk/support/volunteering

Is it sepsis?

Sepsis is a life-threatening condition, a medical emergency. Quick recognition and treatment are vital and can save lives.

Sepsis happens when the body is overwhelmed by an infection and and begins to damage its own tissues and organs. Without rapid treatment, sepsis can lead to organ failure and death.

Sepsis is associated with 1 in 5 deaths worldwide. Greater awareness of the signs and symptoms can help people seek urgent medical attention sooner.

September was Sepsis Awareness Month — a global campaign aimed at increasing awareness, improving recognition and helping people understand when to seek urgent medical help

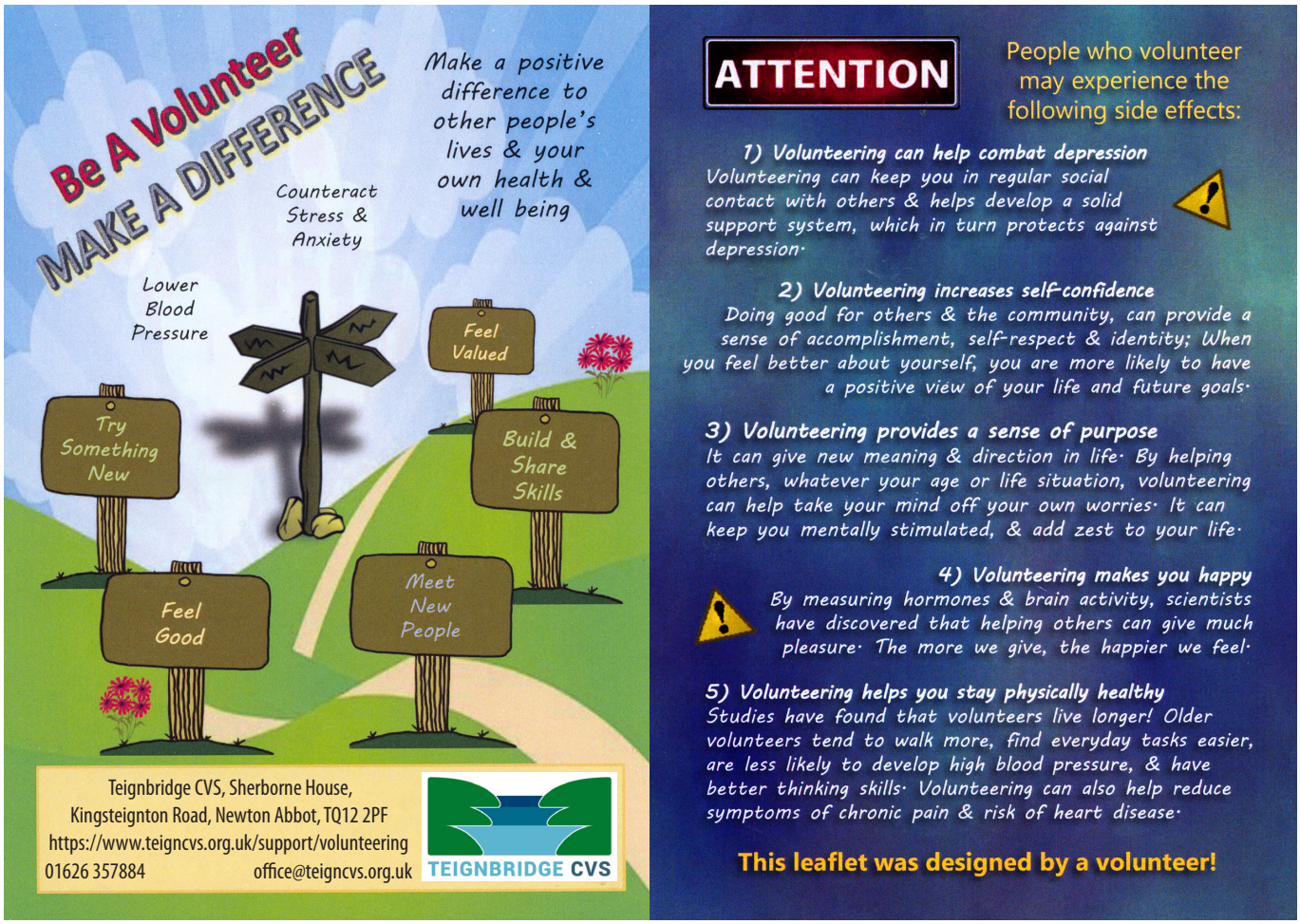
Sepsis assessment online:

https://sepsistrust.org/about-sepsis/spotting-the-signs-of-sepsis/

https://sepsis-assessment.onlinegp.co/assessment

How to spot sepsis in adults

- Slurred speech or confusion
- Extreme shivering or muscle pain
- Passing hardly any or no urine (in the last 18 hours or longer)
- Severe breathlessness



- Sufferers often feel as if they're going to die
- Skin mottled or discoloured. On darker skin, this may be easier to see on the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet

If you or another adult develop any of those symptoms, it is vital to seek urgent medical attention.

Call **111** or contact your GP if you are worried about an infection. Call **999** or visit A&E.

Just Ask: Could it be Sepsis?

A child may have sepsis if they:

- Are breathing very fast
- Have a 'fit' or convulsion
- Look mottled, bluish, or pale — on brown and black skin, colour changes may show on the palms or the inside of the forearms
- Have a rash that does not fade when you press it. You can use a clear glass to press on the rash to see whether it fades or not.
- Are very lethargic or difficult to wake
- Feel abnormally cold to touch

Call **111** or contact your GP if you are worried about an infection. Call **999** or visit **A&E** if a child has one or more of the sepsis symptoms listed above.

Just Ask: Could it be Sepsis?

Children under 5

A child under 5 may have sepsis if they:

- Are not interested in feeding
- Are vomiting repeatedly
- Have not passed urine for 12 hours

Call **111** or contact your GP if you are worried about an infection.

Call **999** or visit **A&E** if a child under 5 has one of the sepsis symptoms.

Just Ask: Could it be Sepsis?

Unpaid carers

Quite a few of our registered patients are unpaid carers looking after people, such as a partner, relative, friend or neighbour who could not manage without their help.

We care about carers

Being a carer can be very stressful and onerous, and we do our very best to look after the welfare of carers.

Tell us if you're a carer

If you're an unpaid carer, please let us know, either by calling in to Reception and filling in a form there, or by going to our website: https://towerhousesurgery.co.uk.

There, click on the links: Services>Carers>Carer Registration Form.

Please fill in the online form so that we will always be aware that you're an unpaid carer.

The form has space for you to give us details of the person or persons you're caring for.

Being a carer changes your life

Most carers find their many responsibilities significantly alter their lives and routines. This was very much brought home to us only recently by a local carer, a patient of our Practice, who was admitted to Torbay Hospital for planned (not emergency) abdominal surgery.

The carer told us that they had found their short stay in hospital "weirdly enjoyable". A remarkable thing to say, but they explained that while in hospital, they were being cared for, as opposed to always being actively caring for someone else: they were briefly completely free of all their caring responsibilities, and they could relax for once and concentrate on looking after themselves.

Food for thought!

Comments from patients, September 2026

Nikki the receptionist ,was absolutely fantastic! So helpful and really caring! Nothing was too much trouble, lovely lady, Thank you Nikki.

Katie could not have done anything better, she was amazing. Thank you.

Easy login to notify of where I am in the queue to be seen by a professional. Plenty of seating area available and clean looking. Katie spent time checking me over for my asthma review and suggested a new type of inhaler which is going well for me. Very polite receptionists who are always willing to help without rushing to get to the patient behind in the queue.

Everyone thoughtful and efficient. And prompt.

Helpful, telling me how to reorder my medication myself.

I have had 6 × coaching sessions with joey and they have been fantastic, I've lost weight, I've become healthier and generally improved my lifestyle. The swimming vouchers were amazing and this is a service which a lot of people should benefit from.

Michelle really helpful and thoughtful in her guidance to me

Dear Tower House Team A short note to convey my thanks for organising a rapid appointment and then the time and attention yesterday, in working out what was going on. Nicole's thorough approach was appreciated as was Dr Keeler's follow up and review that determined it was something other than we'd thought. Knowing what it is hugely helpful and takes a lot of concern out of the symptoms as they change, knowing that it's part of the process, the pain is a lot more bearable. I know that it's incredibly busy for everyone in primary care at the moment and both my wife and I consider ourselves fortunate to be with Tower House over the last 20 years.

If I need an appointment they are quick to deal with it. If I need advice they will text if I don't need an appointment. They follow up when needed. I believe they give great care and are great at listening. I wouldn't want to go elsewhere. The care is outstanding.

Recently I visited the surgery to have a bad burn redressed, Andrew, the practice nurse was fantastic with such a caring, kind reassuring manner, I can't thank him enough. The previous week I was seen by Dr Enyi who was equally thorough, kind & reassuring.