

Working through and beyond the Coronavirus pandemic

The national media enjoy portraying a perception that GPs have not been fully operational during the Coronavirus Pandemic, however, nothing could be further from the truth.

So what have we been doing?

In March 2020, NHS England **mandated** a move to 'total triage' – as we are contracted to NHS England – we were bound to obey these instructions:

- All practices should be using a total triage model to protect patients and staff from avoidable risks of infection.
- All practices must have access to an online consultation system to support triage.
- Patient requests should be triaged wherever possible to decide on what the most appropriate mode of care delivery is for that patient and to enable care to be provided by the right healthcare professional with the right level of urgency.
- Practices should continue to provide remote consultations (online, phone, video) alongside face to face care for those that need it. The approach should be tailored to the person, the circumstance and their needs.

Newtons Practice adopted these new ways of working and rapidly set up systems to enable us to continue to care for our patients, whilst keeping them safe from Coronavirus.

New ways of working

- The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the rapid adoption of digital technology in the NHS and significant changes in the delivery of services more widely – to free up space and capacity in acute hospitals, enable remote working and reduce the risk of infection transmission in NHS settings. Primary care in particular has seen a huge increase in remote appointments.
- There has also been a surge in patients' uptake of remote health services, including registrations for the NHS App, NHS login and e-prescription services.
- These changes have happened at an incredible pace. Central bodies have taken steps to enable the changes to occur, providing guidance on information governance and fast-track procurement frameworks, for example. Meanwhile, health care professionals have had to respond innovatively to continue to provide services to patients.

All throughout the pandemic, patients have continued to be seen face-to-face, by a GP, when it has been established that it is safe and necessary to do so.

Delivering vaccination programmes, screening programmes and patient care

Last winter, GPs have also managed to successfully deliver the flu vaccination programme to vast numbers of people, in a safe and socially distanced manner. They have also taken the

lead in delivering an unprecedented mass vaccination programme for the Covid 19 vaccine, over evenings and weekends and in addition to their usual day to day practice.

GPs continue to deliver the childhood vaccination programme, we are still providing women with smears – both essential programmes.

Our nursing team have continued to see patients for chronic disease reviews, dressings, blood/urine tests, injections, ECGs and numerous other procedures – the majority of which have been face-to-face.

We continue to provide hundreds of prescriptions every day.

We continue to monitor patient's health with bloods urine tests, blood pressure checks and all the other things we would be doing in a normal day's work.

We continue to care as normal for terminally ill patients, housebound patients in their own home and for those in care homes.

As you can see, GPs have adapted to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic and they have certainly not been sitting on the side-lines. Some of our ways of working will inevitably change but going forward, patients will have the choice of a telephone or face-to-face consultation. Please support us with our continuing efforts to carry on through the Pandemic and to provide excellent, safe patient care as we always strive to do.

NEWTONS PRACTICE