

Accessing our services as the COVID-19 pandemic continues – your questions answered

It is now over a year since the COVID-19 pandemic compelled us to change the way we offer healthcare services to our patients. The experience of patients and staff may be different at the moment but we remain committed to providing services which are safe, effective, caring and responsive to all patients. The last year has been extremely challenging for everyone in so many ways and, as a practice team, we have worked hard to balance our usual work of caring for patients with the whole range of illnesses and health conditions and caring for patients with covid. We thank you for your patience and understanding.

We are delighted that Dr Matt Shaw has joined Dr Little and Dr Stockill in the partnership running the practice; Dr Margaret Jackson has joined the NHS retainer GP programme meaning we keep her valuable contribution for longer; and Dr Ros Davies, an experienced GP and GP Trainer has joined the team to replace Dr Hall. We have also been joined by Marie Mullen as the practice's new clinical pharmacist and hope to recruit more staff later this year.

What have the team been doing during the last year?

Contrary to inaccurate reports in some media, GPs and their teams have not been sitting around doing nothing. We have dealt with more patients than ever before and in more difficult circumstances. What else has been achieved this year?

1. Maintained important services such as referrals for suspected cancer, home visits for clinically vulnerable patients, and mental health reviews for people with depression and other conditions.
2. Rapidly adopted new technology to support safer remote patient assessments.
3. Run an expanded flu vaccine campaign last year (including weekend and evening clinics) with all over 50s being offered the jab as well as people with long term health conditions (and with our highest uptake ever).
4. Undertaken pro-active health checks with our most vulnerable patients including those with learning disability, with serious mental illness, diabetes, chronic heart or lung conditions, and those who were asked to shield during the pandemic.
5. Worked together with colleagues in neighbouring practices to improve the clinical care in local care homes.

6. Continued to train the doctors of the future through our teaching of medical students and training of new GPs.

Alongside all this since December 2020 our practice staff have played a vital role in the local Covid Vaccination Service based at Whitby Pavilion where over 36000 doses of vaccine have been given so far. We are so grateful for the cooperation of patients and the contribution of volunteers (including Dr Newman and Dr Suckling) in making this happen, as our part of the largest mass vaccination programme in the history of the NHS.

What differences will I still see at the practices?

1. **Reception.** To protect patients and staff we continue to use the outside reception windows at Sleights and Sandsend alongside a new, dedicated dispensary window at Sleights for prescription collections. This helps prevent over-crowding inside the building.
2. **Waiting rooms.** We need to remain careful with access to the building to reduce infection risk between patients, but safe alternatives are in place. Before you enter the building, you will be asked screening questions to assess any risk of Covid infection. The GP or nurse you are seeing will decide if it is safe for you to wait in the waiting area (eg depending on your mobility or clinical condition). We encourage patients coming for appointments to wait in their cars where possible – or the outside shelter - then be escorted into the buildings safely by their nurse or GP. This helps us keep the waiting room socially distanced and safe for those patients who need to use it. We have improved our waiting area at Sleights to improve infection control and disabled access.
3. **Assessment area.** We have a temporary assessment bay in the car park, and an adjacent covered and discreet shelter which can be used for patients waiting for an appointment or for patients to be seen for higher risk conditions (eg Covid like symptoms). This is safer for other patients and helps us see more patients quickly as it reduces the number of times we need to clean consulting rooms between patients.
4. **New technology.** We are upgrading our telephone service to increase the number of available lines to make it easier to get through on the phone. However, we also encourage those of you who can, to use more digital health options such as online consultations and prescription ordering. We have the ability to review your photographs eg for worrying rashes or skin lesions which we can share with experts to get you a speedier diagnosis and treatment. Please ask reception for details.

5. **New staff.** We have some new reception staff – Libby, Jen and Sheila. They are settling in well but we asked for your help and patience as they continue their training.
6. **Face masks and hand hygiene.** We continue to comply with public health guidelines on using face masks indoors. We politely ask patients to do the same unless you are one of the few who are exempt on medical grounds. We will also provide hand sanitiser and the entrance and exit to the practice.

How can I get a consultation with my GP / nurse / healthcare assistant?

1. To obtain a consultation please ring our reception or use the new online consultation service available via our website.
2. All our clinical staff are conducting telephone, video, online and face to face consultations between 8am and 6:30pm Monday to Friday.
3. All urgent problems are dealt with on the same day (as normal) with an initial telephone triage assessment with the duty GP who will then agree with you the best way to deal with the problem. Where needed, a face to face consultation will be arranged in the practice or the assessment area.
4. All routine appointments with your regular GP or advanced nurse practitioner can be booked via reception. The initial contact will be by telephone and face to face appointments can then be arranged during the telephone consultation if required.
5. Video consultations can be a helpful alternative to phone calls – they are secure and simple to use if you have a mobile phone or webcam and internet connection.
6. Online consultations allow you to submit non-urgent queries to our admin, dispensary or clinical teams and we aim to respond to you within 2 working days. You can continue to order prescriptions online too. For further details see our website.
7. Our nurse and healthcare assistants continue to undertake reviews for long term health conditions like asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure as well as wound care, family planning, childhood immunisations, cervical smears etc. These appointments are usually arranged by us contacting you when your review is due and are usually face to face.
8. Some NHS services (physio, psychological therapy, community support) are available directly for you to self-refer without seeing a GP. Please see the section on self - referral.

How do I order my medicines and collect prescriptions safely?

To request your repeat medication, please order online or leave a message on our prescription line: 01947 811500. If we dispense for you please wait three working days to collect from the surgery.

To collect prescriptions come inside the main entrance to the new window located in the old porch and foyer, following the marked out one-way system. Please remember to wear a face mask and maintain social distance.

How can I help?

We urge you to contact us if you have serious concerns about your health – please do not delay – we are here for you. We particularly want to hear from you if you have concerns that could be related to cancer eg a persistent cough, changes to your bowel habit, passing blood in your poo or wee, a rapidly changing mole or lump anywhere, or unexplained weight loss. We also want to hear from you if you have serious mental health concerns or if you worrying problems such as chest pains, breathlessness or pain.

- Unless your request is urgent please consider avoiding our busiest times eg phoning reception on Monday mornings or collecting prescriptions on Friday afternoons.
- To let us know you have arrived for your appointment, please phone reception from your car or come to the side window.
- All patients coming into the surgery for whatever reason **MUST** wear a face covering. [Read our guidance on exemptions.](#)
- To book appointments and make enquiries please avoid walking into the surgery. Please telephone us instead or use the online consultation service.

For any non-urgent queries, please use our website to contact us

<https://sleightsandsendsendmedicalpractice.nhs.uk/>

As always, DO NOT come to the surgery if you have COVID-19 symptoms including a new cough, a fever or change in taste and/or smell. DO NOT come to the surgery if you or your household is self-isolating, have had a positive COVID-19 test result or waiting for a COVID-19 test result. You can always reach us on the phone if you are unwell and need to speak to a GP.

Sleights and Sandsend Medical Practice
Website: sleightsandsendsendmedicalpractice.nhs.uk

We would like to say a huge thank you for all the support you have given to us, for your patience and understanding as we work together during this prolonged difficult time.

Self-referral links and contacts

Physio Direct – Do you have any muscle or joint problems? If you are over 16 years of age and not under a consultant, you can access this NHS service Mon-Thurs 9am-12pm. 01947 899223

- IAPT – For those experiencing anxiety, depression or phobias visit www.northyorkshireiapt.co.uk
 - Out of hours mental health helpline - 0333 0000 309
- CaVCA- Nonemergency support for:
 - Telephone/email friendship service
 - Support with collecting shopping/prescriptions
 - Information and guidance to self-isolators or otherwise affected.
 - Brokerage service for offers of help.
- If you need help or can offer help, please leave a voicemail on 01723 362205 or email ccr@cavca.org.uk