Practice Header & date

Dear Patient

**National “Improved Access” Scheme for GP Surgeries**

In future GP surgeries in England will increasingly be working together to provide services for their patients, and there will be more professionals like pharmacists, specialist nurses and physiotherapists working closely with family doctors. This is partly because there is a shortage of GPs in many parts of the country, but it also means you are more likely to be able to book an appointment to see the right person to help with your problem when you first contact the surgery.

Somerset has been chosen by NHS England to introduce a new scheme that will allow you to make an appointment to see a health professional in a GP practice outside the usual working hours of GP surgeries. The scheme works by getting a group of GP practices together so that they can open up in turn at the new times. Our group includes ………………………………………… practices. Patients from all of these surgeries will be allowed to book an appointment in “Improved Access” time at any other participating practice though because these appointments are for routine matters, once they are all taken you will need to book for a different time.

Although your usual GP may be available during Improved Access time, most of the appointments will be with other doctors and, increasingly, different health professionals. If your usual doctor is working one of the new shifts, is likely that she or he will personally have fewer appointments during the normal working week.

Outside normal surgery opening times urgent health problems will still be dealt with by the 111 call line and Somerset Doctors Urgent Care.

Each group of surgeries will be offering some appointments on every weekday evening between 6.30 and 8.00, and also on Saturday mornings. If you need an appointment at one of those times, you can either ask for a particular day – meaning you would then have you appointment at whichever surgery is open on that day, or you could ask for your own surgery and then book an appointment for whenever it is their turn to be open.

There will be small number of appointments bookable “on the day” for things that are important but not medically urgent.

Before we can decide when our group will be opening (apart from on weekday evenings and Saturday morning which has already been decided) we need to know what will suit our patients best. It is not possible to open all of the time, so please think carefully and just choose the *one* option that would work best in your opinion. That may be for you personally, or because you are a parent or carer responsible for making an appointment for someone else. Please answer thinking about the person for whom you would most often contact the surgery.

First, we need a few details about you:

1. Age band

□ Under 16 □ 16-24 □ 25-34 □ 35-44 □ 45-54 □ 55-64 □ 65-74 □ 75-84 □ 85+

2. Gender

□ Male □ Female □ Prefer not to say

3. Are you

□ retired □ working □ not in paid work

4. Do you have a health condition that requires regular monitoring and check-up?

□Yes □ No

5. How often would you usually visit your GP in a year?

□ once a week □ once a month □ every 1-3 months □ every 6 months – 1 year □ rarely

6. Would you be able to get to another surgery for an appointment? There is a list of all the surgeries in our group attached to this survey.

□ Yes, fairly easily □ With some difficulty □ Only if close to my home □ No, not at all

7. Your group of GP surgeries will be offering some routine appointments every weekday evening from 6.30 to 8.00 pm, and on Saturday mornings.

If the group offered more appointments, when would this be best for you? Please choose *three* and put “1” in the box for your first choice, “2” your second choice and “3” for your third preference. Remember that the appointment could be at any of the surgeries in the group.

□ More appointments weekday evenings 6.30 to 8.00 pm

□ More appointments on Saturday mornings between 9.00 and 12.00 midday

□ Appointments on Saturday afternoon

□ Appointments on Sundays

□ Early morning appointments from 07.00 to 08.00 am

□ None of these. I prefer my doctor/nurse to be available during the same working week hours as now

8. Some of the new appointments may not be face to face with a health professional. If you could not actually see someone about a routine condition or minor problem, would you consider using any of the following if appropriate for your condition. Please tick *all* that apply.

□ Telephone appointment

□ Skype/Facetime or video consultation

□ Online consultation

□ Online consultation with live chat

Many thanks for your help. We’ll be discussing the results of this survey with the Patient Participation Group but please contact us if you have any questions or would like a summary of the findings.

You can find out more about the Improved Access Scheme in Somerset at <http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s2927/Improved%20Access%20to%20GP%20Services.pdf>

Yours sincerely

(Senior Partner/Clinical Lead)