

Redlands Primary Care

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Dear Valued Patient,

Here at Redlands, we are always striving to improve the service we offer but the constantly changing landscape of healthcare can mean that sometimes services are confusing and difficult to navigate. If you add in the fact that people are often coming into the service for the first time when they are unwell and stressed, it can all add up to an exceedingly difficult experience.

We wanted to give you an overview of what goes on at the practice to help you understand some of the processes you will encounter.

Over the last month we have offered 4284 face to face appointments, we have answered 9755 telephone calls and we have issued 31599 prescriptions. Our staff work hard to manage a phenomenal workload. This is only achievable because we believe in the NHS and are deeply committed to providing the best possible healthcare to our population. One that is free at the point of delivery.

Over the last two years, we have had to make significant changes to the way we work, needing to adapt to work force shortages, record high levels of staff sickness and new government targets.

From 1st April 2023, a new GP contract was introduced. This new contract requires all requests for appointments at the practice to be assessed and triaged within two weeks. The aim of this new target is to improve access for patients and stop long waits for appointments for those who need more urgent care.

We have been working towards this for the last 12 months. We have been expanding and developing our Urgent Care Team to ensure that we have capacity to meet the demand. We also moved from "e consult" to "AccuRx" in response to feedback from patients that e consult was a bit longwinded to complete.

Like many practices in the UK, we have been unable to fill all our GP vacancies. Demand post covid has been steadily increasing which has increased the gap between what is needed at Redlands and what we have been able to provide. Our GP's have been regularly working 12 hour days and it has become increasingly obvious that continuing with a traditional model of routine care is no longer viable.

Given our difficulties to recruit last year, combined with the new targets in the new GP contract, we have decided to change our recruitment strategy and restructure our clinical teams in way that is more aligned with the demands of current healthcare.

Continuity (seeing the same GP that you usually see) has been shown to be the most effective tool that we have in primary care. It results in fewer hospital admissions and a better patient experience. It also improves job satisfaction for GPs so means that they are more likely to remain in the same post. We are therefore trying to promote continuity within our complex system for patients that are most likely to benefit from this. Sometimes this means waiting a bit longer for an appointment rather than using the Urgent Care Team. Our staff have been trained to know when the urgent care team is needed or when a patient should be booked in with the same GP they have seen before.

Not everyone needs to see the same GP. Some patients need to be seen that day and will be booked in with the Urgent Care Team. Some people have straightforward or new problems and may be offered appointments with trainees, locums or simply “the next available appointment”. But for some people, it is worth waiting a little bit longer to see your usual GP. Seeing lots of different GPs about the same problem will feel frustrating and confusing as we all do things slightly differently.

Over the course of the next few months, we will introduce you to our wider team but this week we would like to give you an overview of the changes we are planning. If you would like a say in what happens at the practice, please submit a request to join our Patient Participation Group at:
<https://www.redlandsprimarycare.nhs.uk/about-us/have-your-say/patient-participation-group/>

The system is necessarily complex. We do not expect *you* to know the best option for you. It is therefore important that you are prepared to either divulge your concerns to our trained Care Navigators or use the Online Consultation Request Platform so that we can assess your needs and book you into the right appointment.

There is a shortage of GP appointments nationally – however we have managed to increase the number of face-to-face appointments we offer by **20%** despite a falling number of GPs within the practice. In some cases, a face-to-face appointment is needed in order to perform an examination, an injection, or some investigations. However, in many cases, a telephone appointment would do just as well. A face-to-face appointment doesn’t always have to be with a GP. Other health professionals are competent in many examinations and investigations.

In order to recruit GPs to the practice, we have widened our search to include GPs who do not live nearby but are prepared to work remotely. These GPs will support the in-house GPs by offering telephone appointments, and by reviewing blood test results and letters from the hospital. To make the best use of our resources, you may therefore be offered a telephone appointment with one of these GPs if a face-to-face appointment is not required. They may also contact you about blood test results or medication queries even if they are not the GP that you usually see. If you require an examination or investigation, you may be seen by one of our allied health professionals.

Our appointments are divided into Urgent, Soon and Routine. If your request for an appointment results in you being offered a “Soon” appointment, you can expect to be seen in around 2 – 4 weeks. A routine appointment may take up to six weeks, depending on which doctor you usually see and their availability over that time. Please be assured that everyone is working as hard as they can to see you as quickly as possible, but every request needs to be prioritised according to their clinical need. If you are offered an appointment, but something changes and you feel you need to be seen more quickly, you can contact us with up-to-date information, and we will reassess your case. Some patients will be used to this system as it is similar to the system that the hospital uses for outpatient appointments.

We may not be able to give you an appointment straight away. Sometimes you will be added to a waiting list and have to wait for us to contact you with an appointment. This might be done by telephone or by text. You might be sent a link which allows you to book online.

Urgent Care Team:

We have three **paramedics** working on our Urgent Care Team. They are highly qualified and experienced in assessing and managing the sort of problems that present to primary care requiring urgent medical attention or treatment. Examples include severe tummy pains, chest infections or angina.

In order to make sure patients end up with the right clinician, we have trained our Patient Services Administrators as **Care Navigators**. This training enables our staff to follow protocols which, combined with their years of experience, means that they can make a decision about which clinician you should be booked

in with. If you are not happy about their decisions, or they are unsure, there will always be a GP on hand to support their decision making.

We have also recruited GPs to work on our urgent care team. These GPs will be assessing requests for urgent appointments and supporting our paramedics by seeing more complex cases. The Urgent Care GP will offer “Sit and Wait” clinics throughout the day. If you are assessed as needing an urgent GP appointment, you will be booked into the next sit and wait clinic. If you have other commitments in your diary preventing you from attending a sit and wait clinic, this might indicate that Urgent Care is not the right pathway for you. You can choose to book a soon or routine appointment instead.

Our Patient Services Administrators will also arrange for consultations with a community pharmacist for minor illness, arrange physiotherapy appointments, signpost to primary care mental health services, make referrals to the community nurse team, arrange home visits, book appointments with a member of our nursing or clinical pharmacy team and pass on queries to the GPs.

If you would prefer to choose a time or day to consult with a specific GP, you will need to book a routine appointment.

Clinical Pharmacy Team:

Our clinical pharmacy team manage all medication requests, reviews, and queries. They work closely with the GPs offering appointments and reviewing repeat medication. You may be given an initial prescription by a GP and then be followed up by a member of our clinical pharmacy team. Our clinical pharmacist supervises the team and can issue prescriptions, amend medication, and reconcile your repeat template following a hospital appointment. Some of our nursing team also have a prescribing qualification that allows them to adjust blood pressure, diabetes medication and inhalers.

The Partnership:

We have experienced a period of great change and uncertainty. As we settle into our new premises and start unpacking the last of the boxes, we have made some other changes.

Dr Saunders, Dr Griffiths, and Dr Kirwan will no longer be business partners at Redlands. They are stepping away from the business side to concentrate more fully on their clinical work. They are remaining at the practice as salaried GPs and maintaining the same working pattern.

Dr Harris remains as a GP Partner and is joined by Mrs Kirsty Conder, Clinical Pharmacist Partner.

Richard Ward has moved on from his Practice Manager role to an exciting new role in the Primary Care Network – Digital and Transformation Lead. Richard has been the Practice Manager first at Chiddenbrook, then at Redlands for 17 years and has led the practice from strength to strength. His warmth and humour will be greatly missed. He has been dedicated to the practice through times of plenty and times of great change, providing support and leadership as well as anecdotes and jokes. I’m sure you will all join us in thanking Richard for his years of service and wishing him the very best of luck for his new role.

Michelle Freeburn, Managing Partner at Bow & North Tawton Medical Practice, has taken over the management of Redlands. We are delighted that we will have Michelle at our helm, and we are hoping to work more closely with Bow over the coming months with a view to a partnership merger in October 2023. This will not change the way that services are delivered but will provide additional resilience to the business.

The GPs:

Unfortunately, several of our salaried GPs have moved on to different practices over the last month. Drs Ziegler, Brighton, Dunn, Parker and Vidoni left us at the end of May. Whilst we are sad to see them go, we wish them all the best for their future and maybe we will see them back one day.

We are delighted to welcome to the Practice over the coming months Drs Vallis, Hutchinson-Gale, Owen, Hartley, Halliwell and Adegbayibi, along with our sessional GPs Drs Bates, Waqas and Chandler.

The Whole Team:

Together, we think we provide a pretty good service, but we want to hear from you about what we do well and what we could do better. You can do this by joining our Patient Participation Group (see above) or completing the Friends and Family Test which you can find on our website at:

<https://www.redlandsprimarycare.nhs.uk/about-us/have-your-say/friends-and-family-test/>

Please note that the current nationwide shortage of clinical staff and the chronic underfunding of the NHS is not something we are able to address. Please take this up with your local MP.

How you can help us:

- Keep your contact details up to date including your email and mobile phone number.
- Make sure we know your preferred way to be contacted.
- Use the NHS app to look at results and book appointments.
- Book your annual review in the month of your birth, you don't need to wait for us to remind you.
- Use AccuRx (our online consultation request platform) to request GP appointments if you have online access.
- Include as much information as you can about your concerns either in your online request or when speaking to our Patient Services Team.
- Accept the advice that is offered in terms of who is the right person to see you.
- Please don't ring us on a Monday morning unless it is urgent. It is by far our busiest time of the week.
- Please don't request a home visit due to transport difficulties.
- Try and see the same GP that you have seen previously even if it means waiting a little longer. This will ensure that you get the most from your appointment.
- Allow a minimum of 72 working hours (3 working days) for us to process your prescription request. Please don't ring us to chase your request before that. Your chosen pharmacy may then take up to 3-5 days to process the issued prescription.
- Use the NHS App or SystemOnline to order repeat medication.
- Please go to a community pharmacy for advice or ring 111 if you aren't sure - **before** you ring us.
- Contact the community pharmacy directly with queries about prescriptions.
- Contact the hospital directly with queries about hospital appointments.
- Please bring your form/stickers with you if you attend to have a hospital requested blood test.

We thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Jo Harris and Mrs Kirsty Conder
Redlands Health Partnership