



Frithwood Surgery

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FRITHWOOD SURGERY PPG NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2021

Caring for Carers

Help and support is available to everybody who supports another person to keep safe and well. Carrie Woods spoke about the good work undertaken by the Gloucestershire Carers' Hub (GCH) during the annual meeting of Frithwood Surgery's Patients' Participation Group.

Before Covid one in 10 people performed a caring role; now with 'Long Covid' a reality for many families, it's one in six.

GCH, which can be reached by phoning **0300 111 9000**, offers a range of services, including help and assistance during emergencies. Read more about the GCH and the services it offers on page two of this newsletter.



Latest News

Keep up to date with Frithwood Surgery's Patient Participation Group through our Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/FrithwoodPPG/>

Forward into the Future

Are video and phone consultations set to be the future for doctors and their patients? Find out more about how Covid-19 has fundamentally changed the way we use our GP surgeries and how the team at Frithwood has been working hard to keep everybody safe while keeping on top of medical conditions over the past year or so. Read Dr Tim Crouch's report on page three.

Walking to Good Health

The popular Frithwood Patient Participation Group walks are set to return this summer once restrictions have eased. Keep an eye on the surgery notice board for more information.

FEEDBACK - We would love to hear from you on any aspects of the Newsletters or the services you receive from the surgery. If you have questions or ideas that could benefit our readership, please use the 'Suggestion Box' at the surgery reception or 'e' mail frithwood.ppg@nhs.net or call 01453 882868.

Help and Support for Carers

Gloucestershire Carers' Hub (GCH) is available to everybody who is over 18 and provides unpaid support to relatives, partners or friends who are ill, frail, disabled or have mental ill health or substance misuse problems. This support can be emotional, medical, personal, physical or domestic. GCH is a free service that's part of the NHS and Gloucestershire County Council. It can help with all sorts of problems, from the failure of internet shopping deliveries to a carer simply feeling fed up, and provide advice on issues such as benefits, finances and education and early years support. All carers have to do is call the hub's helpline on **0300 111 9000**.

Speaking at the Frithwood Patients Participation Group annual general meeting, spokeswoman Carrie Woods explained that Gloucestershire Carers' Hub provided a listening ear and emotional support.

"Carers can ring us about absolutely everything," she explained.

"Sometimes someone needs signposting or information, however carers can call to have someone to talk to and let off steam so that they can carry on with the rest of their caring role."

Among the services provided by Gloucestershire Carers' Hub is the 'Carers' Emergency Scheme'.

"What would happen if something happened to you – how would you provide that support?" Carrie asked. "This is a really good reason to talk to us.

"The scheme's focus is to offer reassurance to carers that should an unplanned emergency situation arise whereby they are unable to provide care, then interim support can be arranged.

"There are two levels offering flexibility to suit carers' needs. The scheme can be activated 24 hours a day, 365 days a year."

Gloucestershire Carers' Hub is able to carry out carers' assessments, as embedded in the Care Act, which looks at how having a caring role affects an individual.

"It covers simple things, such as going out with friends, going shopping; we have carers who cannot even take a bath," Carrie explained.

"The carers assessment looks at supporting planning and building resilience."

Other facilities provided by Gloucestershire Carers' Hub include exercise groups, including 'Sit Down Samba', and access to classes covering subjects such as crafting, art and music. There's also a parents' carers group, through which parents can meet others in similar situations.

With conditions such as 'Long Covid' turning more people into carers, Carrie says the role of Gloucestershire Carers' Hub is more important than ever.

"Before Covid one in 10 people were carers; now it's one in six," she said.

"Even people who are carers for just a month can register with us and have access our support for that period of time."

www.gloucestershirecarershub.co.uk



Frithwood Face

Name: Sarah Boulton

Job: Receptionist, note summariser and medical secretary.

What I do: Answer the phone, make appointments, send referrals, deal with emails, summarise notes and lots more! The surgery is always a busy place and I'm lucky to work as part of a great team!

Why my work is important: I help to keep things running smoothly to help improve the health of the community.

Top health advice: Keep active: use it or lose it!

Most frequent thing I hear: I think I have a urine infection

Favourite way to exercise: I play an exercise DVD in my lounge.

When I'm not working: I like antiques, reading and socializing.

Most surprising fact about me: When I was younger I ran away and joined the circus!

Favourite sport: Show jumping

Favourite music: Anything involving Jon Bon Jovi.

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Face to Face Consultations on the Rise

Covid-19 has affected many of the things we used to take for granted, including the way we seek medical advice.

Instead of phoning for an appointment or just walking into the practice, access to care moved to video and phone consultations in March 2020.

The need for this was clear: a crowded waiting room was ideal for the spread of an infectious disease which could cause serious illness and even death for the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions.

This meant that in all but urgent cases, patients were assessed by phone or video call before decisions could be made about further management.

A drawback of this is that the nurse or GP taking the call was unable to examine the patient and pick up on the all-important non-verbal clues that can aid diagnosis.

However, for simple and straight forward problems it's an efficient way to meet patients' needs, which is why this element of phone and video assessment is likely to persist beyond the pandemic.

Needless to say, with the inevitable and very understandable rise in health anxiety due to Covid-19, patients are experiencing increased difficulty in accessing the care they need and demand is rising.

Yet it's not all bad news: the vaccination programme, to which GPs and nurses have made a significant contribution, has been a big success and NHS England is now encouraging an increase in face-to-face consultations.

At Frithwood, 25% of requests for a consultation are delivered face to face in the first instance - up from 12% not so long ago - and GPs are keen to increase this trend.

The frontline staff in all this have been the reception staff, who have had the difficult task of dealing with requests at a time of reduced access to appointments. To this end, they have undergone training to help them adapt to these greatly changed circumstances and demands.

The reception team have stepped up to plate and dealt well with the levels of stress that the situation has created and understandable levels of anxiety that patients are experiencing.

The media has been critical of general practice during the pandemic. This potentially lethal virus has enforced ways of practising that are far from ideal, but it's hoped that this will be understood by the wider population.

We're all striving to make the best out of a difficult situation; both staff and patients have had to struggle with the pandemic.

Frithwood Surgery would like to thank all the patients for their forbearance and understand your frustrations. Let us hope that normal service will be resumed in the not too distant future. **Dr Tim Crouch**

- **What do you think?** Frithwood Surgery Patient Participation group would love to hear your views on patient consultations as the surgery considers the balance of the types of appointment offered moving forward into the future. If you would like to be part of this consultation, please email: frithwood.ppg@nhs.net and we will be in touch with further details.



Cool Addition to Surgery

Frithwood Surgery has thanked the PPG and its supporters for raising funds for its new vaccine fridge.

"The new vaccine fridge is a huge boost to the practice, giving us the opportunity get flu vaccinations carried out earlier than normal and ensure patients are covered when the virus typically starts to emerge in autumn," says practice manager Clive Fenney.

"Last year, we received our 1,600 flu vaccinations for those aged 65+ in mid-September. We then had to wait until about half of these were given before receiving the next 600 for those aged under 65 – they arrived the end of October.

"Our new fridge capacity means we will receive all doses early September and will be looking to organise clinics straight away.

"The only 'fly in the ointment' might be availability of COVID booster vaccine IF we are asked to give these boosters with the flu vaccination. However, the new fridge means we have the capacity to hold large numbers of the booster vaccine too.

"As soon as we know more about the COVID boosters, we will start logistical planning and organising dates for the campaign and ensure our patients are vaccinated as early as possible in the autumn."