

As the country begins to get back to normal, Downend Health Group is keen to share with you our own plans to return to normality.

Firstly, we would like to thank you for adapting to the different ways of working that were introduced over the past two years. It has been a difficult challenge for us all, we are very proud that despite our own struggles with unprecedented staff absence due to Covid, we have continued to maintain healthcare services.

Of course, these challenges have meant that demand for healthcare services has exceeded our capacity to provide appointments for every request. We are aware of the dissatisfaction with access and have listened to your frustrations. Taking this into consideration, together with the lifting of Covid restrictions, we are now in a position to make changes which we hope will improve your experience.

Behind the scenes, our Operational Managers and GP Partners have considered ways in which we can improve, and we are pleased to tell you that from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022 the following changes will come into effect:

- The front doors will open and there will be no requirement to use the intercom function
- There will no longer be a need for a one-way system, and you can enter and exit the building through the main entrance
- The majority of appointments will now open on the day
- We have employed more GP's and welcomed additional new members to our Urgent Care Team, increasing the number of appointments available to you
- You will have the option to choose a face to face or telephone appointment
- We will support our GPs in line with national guidance on safe working practice
- We ask that you continue to follow NHS guidance and help protect our staff by wearing masks or facial coverings, and respect social distancing rules whilst in the practice

We understand that many of you now value the telephone appointment service and the convenience this offers, and as such we will continue to provide this as an option.

Downend Health Group has an experienced team of 20 Patient Assistants who are trained to answer your calls from our designated call hub, navigate your concerns to the relevant clinician and greet you at our reception areas. As health and social care employees, the practice staff members are bound by NHS guidance to continue with isolation rules relating to Covid. This continues to impact on our staffing levels so please bear with us, we will answer your calls and respond to your queries as soon as we are able.

Unfortunately, demand for appointments remains at an all-time high, and to effectively use the time available at each consultation, please can we respectfully request that you work with your clinician on prioritising one health concern per consultation. If you have multiple health concerns, please speak with a member of our Patient Assistant Team who will be able to advise you of the different consultation options available to you.

We would like to bring to your attention a number of additional services on offer to you in addition to GP appointments to help support a range of needs.

The local Mental Health Helpline 0800 953 1919 is available 24/7

The GetUBetter App offers tips and exercises for muscular pain

Please do consider your local Pharmacist for advice too as they are particularly skilled in treating minor ailments.

Finally, there may be a few teething problems as we transition to these new changes so, please bear with us. We hope these will only be short term and provide long-term benefits for you and our staff.

**Thank you, Downend Health Group**