**St Luke’s Primary Care Centre Newsletter**

**Telephone system**

One of the most common frustration patients have told us about is accessing the surgery via the phone system.

Initially we upgraded the phone system to provide patients with a queue position. This was helpful, but we then identified that people were choosing to wait in the queue as they had no way of knowing all appointments were taken.

We then invested in new software that allowed us to close the phone access once all appointments were full preventing people queueing redundantly.

Figures have identified that this created a significant reduction in the time patients were waiting to speak to a Care Navigator (previously known as a receptionist), enabling us to speak to and help more patients each day.

**Why is access still being flagged as difficult?**

We operate a total triage model for appointments. This means that any appointment request is reviewed by a doctor and directed to the most appropriate help. Our triage process involved keeping patients on the line whilst the doctor reviewed the request. This meant that each call involved some time with the patient on hold, sometimes up to 10 minutes as the doctor may have needed to go through the patient’s electronic medical record. This contributed to queue time.

**What are the next steps?**

We are currently piloting a system where the Care Navigators follow an algorithm taking the relevant details from the patient. The patient is then advised that the doctor will review the request and a member of the team will be back in contact to advise of the next steps.

Initial data on this is very promising and appears to demonstrate a further reduction in call queue times. It has also shown that we are able to process patients queuing at the front desk more quickly.

At present we are still collating data on this and will share it as a soon as we can.

**How will this help?**

This means that the Care Navigators can process the calls and queries at the front desk more quickly. This in turn reduces the amount of time you are waiting to speak to someone.

**What this will not do?**

This will not change the number of available appointments at the surgery. Once all of the appointments are full, you will still need to wait for the next release. However, this change means you will not need to wait on hold. Usually, you will be advised of the next steps within 20 minutes of your original call.

**Can we create more appointments?**

Usually our answer is “no”, however we are part of a scheme across Northampton called Enhanced Access. We have a finite number of staff and so offer a finite number of appointments. We cannot create anymore ourselves. The Enhanced Access scheme is an extension of the GP practice and allows us to book routine nurse and doctor appointments in the evenings and weekends. The Enhanced Access scheme offers a combination of face to face and telephone consultations. This service is staffed by existing Northampton doctors & nurses who have chosen to work additional hours. They will be able to see your full medical record and any consultations carried out by them will be filed in your medical record for the practice to see.

**What can you do?**

Remember the Care Navigation team want to help. They cannot give you what they do not have. If our appointments are full, they will signpost you to other services or can booked you in the Enhanced Access scheme. You may find that other services are more appropriate for you, for example evening and weekend appointments.

**Other projects we are working on to improve the patient journey?**

Over the last year we have developed our services to include:

* Sending appointment URL’s (links) to your mobile so that you can book an appointment online for Chronic Disease reviews, for example diabetes checks, regular blood tests, ECG’s & blood pressure checks
* Loaning out home blood pressure machines
* Using questionnaires sent direct to your mobile to enable us to carry out medication reviews

We are now working on the following:

* Online registrations - a fully digital way of registering at the surgery (paper registrations are still available)
* Streamlining and improving how we process email requests
* A pilot to book patients into consultations at a pharmacy
* Hosting Spirometry, Diabetic eye screening and non-evasive Cardiology procedures in house run by specialist teams so that patients can be seen here rather than at the hospital

**Accessibility**

We appreciate that these technologies may not be appropriate for all patients. However, by offering a variety of options patients have a choice in how they access our services.

**How have you found today?**

You can visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and leave a comment. You can find our surgery by clicking on “Find a GP” and typing in our post code “NN5 6FR”. You can then click on “leave a review”

**We really appreciate you taking the time to do this, as we marked on our reviews**

**Would you like to join the PPG (Patient Participation Group)?**

The PPG are a vital link between the surgery and our patients. They help the practice improve and designed services for patients. They also help us with various projects, for example the Flu Clinics.

Please visit our website and click on the PPG section under Practice

Information