

SEAFORD MEDICAL PRACTICE

PATIENT UPDATE



These are just some of the hundreds of comments made via complaints, social media and in person.

We are truly sorry that patients are finding it difficult to get what they need.

Our Practice is and always has been committed to providing high quality, timely care to its patient population.

We won't go through everything that's happened over the last 2-3 years but suffice to say there has been an unprecedented shift in the demand on health services overall and Primary Care services have not been immune to this shift.

So what's going on in General Practice?

Whilst there is no clear answer to why General Practice has become such a challenged service, there are numerous contributing factors and our Practice, like so many other Practices, have felt the full force of the challenges.

Below are some pointers to what's changed at our Practice.

We have had a reduction in GPs, due to retirement or career opportunities elsewhere.

There is a national shortage of GPs – and it is difficult to recruit replacements, but we are trying and will continue to try. But

GOOD NEWS! New GP starting in January!

We have recruited an amazing team of very experienced and highly qualified Advanced Practitioners, who join our two existing Paramedics to complement our GP workforce and support patients who have more acute issues.

The team have years of experience in diagnosing, treating and prescribing for single and complex conditions.

In addition, the Practice has an excellent team of Practice Nurses, Health Care Assistants, and Phlebotomist, all offering high quality care in a range of clinics.

Our Practice has a Physiotherapist (First Contact Physio), who is available for patients who have a musculo-skeletal problem.

We have a number of Pharmacists who work in the Practice, to support our GPs and patients with their prescription requirements.

We also have available a Social Prescriber, who is able to provide advice and guidance on a range of non-clinical services.

Why does it take so long to get through on the telephone?

We received approximately 20,000 telephone calls during November, which equates to around 1000 calls a day. We do our best to answer calls quickly but it simply is overwhelming.

We have a large, well trained and experienced Reception workforce but we still cannot keep up with the demand.

Our telephone system enables us to monitor how many calls are waiting to be answered and we constantly move people around to ensure we have as many people answering the calls as possible.

Why don't you have more appointments?

The combination of a reduced workforce, coupled with a limit on our accommodation means we cannot stretch our appointments any further. We are continuing to look at different ways of working to improve the situation.

BUT PATIENTS CAN HELP US TO HELP THEMSELVES

Before calling for an appointment, check if there's another way of dealing with your issue. Can a Pharmacist help? Is it urgent – contact NHS111 or attend the Emergency Department at the local hospital. Have you checked out [The NHS website - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) where there are lots of advice and guidance on a range of conditions.

Please remember we are not an EMERGENCY service. If your issue is urgent and/or life-threatening don't delay – call NHS111 or go straight to the Emergency Department at the local hospital.

We are able to offer appointments outside of our normal hours – these are called Extended Hours – and GP appointments are available six days a week from 6pm-8pm and all day on Saturdays. These appointments may be in Eastbourne or Seaford and via telephone or face to face.

When is this all going to improve and get back to normal?

We have all got to understand that going back to normal is not going to happen.

What we can do, however, is to continue to plan for a new normal and continue to make improvements.

- We are continuing to advertise for clinical staff, including GPs.
- We are advertising for nursing staff.
- We are having discussions about our accommodation and how we can improve on that.
- We are looking at different ways of working to help with the huge demand.