

Medical Director's Notes

I have been working with members to identify how we can support practices during this period of unprecedented demand. The top priorities are restarting the paramedic advice line to quickly get crews back on the road and avoid unnecessary conveyances to hospital; housebound covid vaccine boosters and additional capacity such as wound dressing and GP+.

Next April our CCGs become the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care System or ICS. The reorganisation seeks to better integrate health and social care. There is clearly a risk that the voice of primary care might be lost in the changes. I am working with colleagues, from both CCGs and the Suffolk Local Management Committee, to ensure members have a voice and the general practice viewpoint is heard.

Can I ask if you have some time over the festive period you consider supporting us with some GP+ or Out of Hours shifts? Details of how to sign-up are in this newsletter.

Ruth Bushaway – Fed Medical Director

Roll-out of new mental health service

Suffolk is commencing a 10 year programme to improve services. This includes Primary Care Network (PCN) mental health Practitioners who will support practices. There will also be improvements to Crisis, Wellbeing and Children Families & Young People's services.

Practitioners will be part of the GP practice team but also integrated with secondary mental health services (with current IDTs being renamed Locality Recovery Teams). The Practitioners will deliver additional mental health capacity, more timely assessments, an MDT for complex patients, access to a comprehensive suite of interventions (including for Personality Disorder) and improve links with secondary services.

The new approach has been piloted in Haverhill for the last 24 months. It involves a different way of working and took time to establish. In Haverhill around 40% of mental health work is now undertaken by the Practitioner team and rest by the practice team.

Help with housebound vaccinations

PCNs and our CCGs have asked us to vaccinate just over 2,000 housebound patients. We will be using volunteers who worked with us before and our fleet of Out of Hours cars and drivers.



Changes to how GP+ operates

From 1 December we will be reverting to phone clinics in GP+ for GP & ANP appointments - with face-to-face where appropriate. This will return us to daytime practice and address concerns raised by our clinicians.

Could practice teams take care when booking phone slots? If a face to face is needed the patient will need to go to the base where the telephone slot was booked - please inform the patient. Patients, where possible, should bring a mobile phone and care navigators should document the patient's preferred contact number.

Can you help over the festive break?

PCNs and the CGs have asked us to provide extra appointments over the break. We have substantially enhanced rates to time and a half and double time over the period. If you are a GP, ANP, nurse or UCP and can offer a shift or two there are a couple of options:

- If you have already been inducted to the Fed shifts can be booked via RotaMaster or by calling the Rota team on 01473 921800 (or email gpfed.rotateam@suffolkfed.org.uk)
- If you are new to the Fed please email hr@suffolkfed.org.uk and we will fast track you onto the rota. We have shifts for GPs, ANPs and practice nurses.

News in short

- **PGDs for podiatry antibiotic prescribing** – this has taken several years to implement but should start in December. It will save patients being referred to their practice for routine antibiotics.
- **East ultrasound** – the team have worked really hard and urgents and now being done in two weeks and routines are down to 9 weeks.
- **North East Essex diabetes** - Our diabetes team have replicated their approach for one PCN of eight practices in mid Essex. The improvement in clinical outcomes were significant and the CCG intends to replicate it across the other PCNs.
- **Do you use Twitter?** We are trying to get a Suffolk community going so if you use Twitter please follow us @SuffolkGPFed and we will follow you back.

Member practice support

Over the years the Fed has supported member practices in a variety of ways including sharing ideas workshops, introducing skills mix, the GP Support Hub, locum chambers and an HR advice service. Generally these have been ad hoc responses to requests for support.

Your Board has started to consider how we could formalise our support to member practices. One option is a standalone Support Unit incorporating the services we already provide but with its own budget and dedicated staff. If you have any views on this please email David Pannell.

Primary care estates support post

One of the major pressures on members is estates. In order to try and address this issue, the Fed and CCGs will be recruiting a joint primary care estates role.

The appointee will work with PCNs and practices to help deliver a primary care estate fit for purpose and with capacity to meet future needs and service developments. This will include examining opportunities to collocate or use existing estates in line with the NHS five year plan.