

Unity Healthcare Patient Newsletter

Dr David Brandon, Clinical Lead GP

Dear Patients,

It is a bleak time for the NHS right now.

Everything is rather creaking at the seams. Ambulance response times are at a record high¹, A&E waiting times are higher than they have been since the 1990's², and likewise waiting times for hospital treatment are upsettingly long³. General Practice is in crisis, with a shrinking and demoralised workforce delivering record numbers of consultations^{4,5}. A workforce crisis across the NHS leaves the entire system under increasing strain⁶.

Despite this bleak introduction, you can be reassured that your local surgery continues to deliver you safe and responsive healthcare. The vast majority of our patients continue to receive the help they need on the same day, or at the latest by the end of the next working day.

It's a bleak time in the world right now.

The lingering effects of the pandemic continues to disrupt our lives. The cost of living is rising, which is pushing many people into poverty. Food and energy bills are rapidly rising and becoming unaffordable. There is an epidemic of in-work poverty, with wages stagnating behind inflation. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to the largest humanitarian crisis in Europe since the Second World War.

Despite this, I see examples of kindness and compassion every day. Support within the Haverhill community given to the elderly and less able. Local charities working hard to provide to those in need. An outpouring of public support for the people in Ukraine. This makes us proud to support you as your local GP Surgery.

However, this is not easy at the moment. Much of the frustration experienced by many of you about the state of the NHS (and the state of the world as a whole) is palpable. I'm sorry that we cannot always offer you what you want. Please do not take this out on us.

We are human, and a finite resource.

Everybody is working hard and doing their best. The more we are stretched, the smaller the investment of time we can provide to each enquiry. If you contact us about minor illness, do expect to be signposted to the community pharmacy, and have self-help information provided. If there is a more suitable service for you, do expect to be pointed in their direction. This is so that we can offer more time to the next patient, who might have just discovered they have cancer or recently lost a loved one.

Our eConsult-first system allows us to ensure that everybody gets what they need in good time, even if it isn't necessarily a face-to-face appointment. Consider that many GP surgeries are currently in the position we used to be in; no routine appointments available past 08:02am, long wait times on the phone, and often no option for those seeking help other than to try again later.

We continue to successfully recruit new healthcare staff to help with growing demand.

Long Term Medical Conditions

We hope that this (April-April) year can offer less disruption to our long-term medical conditions clinic. For those included, you will be contacted for your review, in (or close to) your month of birth to arrange your routine review. I appreciate that this may not be in sync with previous reviews, you may be prompted to have an additional blood test in the interim for your medicines safety. This will make things a little more predictable for everybody going forward.

How can you help?

- Be kind and courteous to practice staff, who are doing their best to help you.
- Contact us via eConsult if you can, by telephone if you can't.
- Try to provide as much information about your problem and concerns as you can when completing your eConsult. That way we can help you more efficiently.
- Photographs are very useful for many enquiries, and can be attached to eConsults easily.
- Avoid the temptation to take your frustration out on us online. My team read hurtful comments and wonder why they bother sometimes.
- Give credit where credit is due; a message of thanks gives energy and hope to an exhausted team, doing their best to help you.
- Remain hopeful for the future. Times are hard right now, but remember that whilst it may be stormy, it doesn't rain forever.

Dr David Brandon

1. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/03/20220310-Statistical-AQI-Note.pdf>
2. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/ae-waiting-times-and-activity/>
3. <https://www.myplannedcare.nhs.uk/east/>
4. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/appointments-in-general-practice>
5. <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/nhs-delivery-and-workforce/pressures/pressures-in-general-practice-data-analysis>
6. <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/positions/nhs-workforce>

Unity Healthcare Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Want to have a say in how your surgery is run? Why not become a member of the Unity Healthcare PPG?

We are always looking for new members as we need your help to ensure our surgery continues to improve.

As a PPG member, you can better understand how your practice is run, discuss areas of improvement and give your input on changes.

To register your interest, please ask at Reception or email:

Contact Us

If you have any questions or wish to share feedback with us, please email:

wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net

Or call: **01440 841 300**

To keep up to date with our news, please visit www.unityhealthhaverhill.org.uk or search for 'Unity Healthcare' on



Facebook.

Patients can also join the Surgery's Patient Participation Group. To find out more, please email wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net

Healthwatch Suffolk

You can also share feedback with Healthwatch Suffolk, an independent body set up to shape and influence local NHS and social care services.

Call **01449 703 949** or email info@healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk

healthwatch
Suffolk