

# CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER



PPG Newsletter | [ppg.wwgp@gmail.com](mailto:ppg.wwgp@gmail.com)

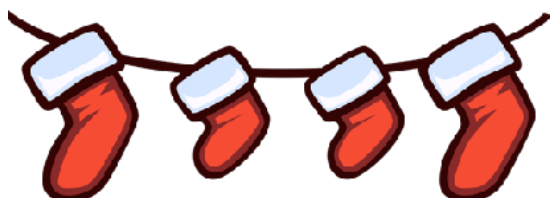
## 'Flu Clinic Update

'Flu clinics have been going really well. To start with, some of the appointments had to be delayed because one of the manufacturers had announced a last minute delay with their product (the vaccination for 6 month to 64 year olds). However, by 23rd September West Wirral Practice had already vaccinated over 1300 patients (all age groups).

'Flu vaccinations are now starting to become available for the previously none eligible patients of 50 to 64 years and this began early December. Appointments for this should be visible online so patients will be able to book via the website rather than via the switchboard.

If you have had your vaccination already we hope that the measures we have put in place made you feel safe whilst you were at the practice. Any feedback is always welcome.

***We would like to take this opportunity to wish all our patients a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!***



## Christmas Opening

Over the Christmas period the surgery opening times will be as follows:

Thurs 24 Dec	08:00 - 18:30
Fri 25 Dec	Closed
Sat 26 Dec	Closed
Sun 27 Dec	Closed
Mon 28 Dec	Closed
Tues 29 Dec	08:00 - 18:30
Wed 30 Dec	08:00 - 18:30
Thurs 31 Dec	08:00 - 18:30
Fri 01 Jan	Closed

If you have an urgent medical need then please use the [NHS 111](#) service if the surgery is closed.

## Patient Participation Group

*If you have any articles for the next newsletter or if you are interested in becoming a patient representative, please contact the Patient Participation Group either by email ([ppg.wwgp@gmail.com](mailto:ppg.wwgp@gmail.com)) or by post addressed to: Patient Participation Group, c/o The Warrens Medical Centre, Arrowe Park Road, Wirral, CH49 5PL*

## Meet the Team

*Sam Pinkerton, Operations Manager, Healthier West Wirral PCN*

Hello, I'm Sam and back in September I joined Healthier West Wirral PCN, as Operations Manager. I'm from Newcastle but have spent the past 10 years living and working in the Liverpool Region, I now feel very at home here. I have a background in Retail and Business Management and after 7 weeks in role can see great opportunities to use my corporate experience to support general practice. Currently, my role is very much that of a coordinator and project manager, however as the PCN grows and evolves so will my role. I'm excited for the future of my work and proud to play my part in general practice learning to work at scale. I feel this will have long term benefits to our patient population and the service they receive, one of the key reasons I made the move to Primary Care.



## NHS Wirral CCG Letter

There has been a lot of media coverage recently in relation to people being able to see a GP face to face during the Coronavirus pandemic.

We want to reassure all Wirral residents that General Practice has been open and seeing patients throughout the pandemic. The way GP's work had to change very quickly in March to ensure that patients with COVID-19 and those without, could be helped according to their need. As with all parts of the NHS, the Coronavirus pandemic has been a significant challenge and, as you will be aware, there were significant issues with the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

The purpose of this update is to assure our patients that they can access their GP, and that their GP is able to discuss and decide with them, the most appropriate way for them to be assessed.

For many patients a telephone or video consultation is sufficient to meet their needs. Face to Face appointments have been discouraged unless clinically necessary, in order to comply with national guidance about social distancing and to reduce footfall through practices, none of which were designed or built with a coronavirus pandemic in mind.

Following the easing of restrictions in the summer, practices have been actively working to recommence routine work such as health screening and immunisations, and the annual Flu vaccination programme is currently being rolled out across Wirral.

As we enter the winter period it is evident that the challenges presented by the Coronavirus pandemic will not go away and we will continue to operate in the way we have worked since March throughout the winter months. It is absolutely vital that all parts of our local NHS work together to manage not only the rise in COVID-19 infections but also the usual challenges that winter presents.

We all have a role to play in getting through this difficult time and we would ask all residents to ensure that they follow the guidance from the Government and Wirral Council. This will help your local NHS manage through the winter.

We would like to thank all Wirral Practices and that is including **all clinical and non-clinical staff** for the hard work that they have undertaken during the pandemic.

We hope that this update reassures you of the continued commitment of NHS Wirral CCG and the 51 Wirral GP Practices to deliver Health and Care to Wirral residents.

Please keep safe and well during these difficult times.

[Dr Paula Cowan, Chair & Dr Simon Delaney, Medical Director NHS Wirral CCG](#)

# Repeat Prescriptions

Did you know the most efficient way of ordering your **repeat** prescription is online?

This can be done by signing up to the 'NHS' app: (The only input required from the practice is your NHS number, (which can be provided if necessary) - all other ID checks are performed via the app.

## *The NHS App*

Owned and run by the NHS, the NHS App is a simple and secure way to access a range of NHS services on your smartphone or tablet.

The NHS App is available now on iOS and Android. To use it you must be aged 13 and over and registered with a GP surgery in England



*or by simply emailing your request directly to the prescribing team on: [wiccg.wvgp-prescribing@nhs.net](mailto:wiccg.wvgp-prescribing@nhs.net)*

(This is the best option for requesting non repeat (acute) items as well as regular repeats or repeat dispensing items)

**Note: this is not the NHS COVID-19 app**

To find out more about the NHS COVID-19 contact tracing app and to download it, go to [covid19.nhs.uk](https://covid19.nhs.uk).

- Online ordering is a quick and convenient way of ordering medication at any time, but particularly useful during the Covid-19 Pandemic. General medication queries can also be made via the email address above but please be aware you may instead be directed to the eConsult service if this is more appropriate.
- You will receive an automated response upon sending your email so you can be sure it has been safely received by the prescription team.
- Please allow up to 48 hours from the automated response for your prescription to reach your nominated pharmacy.

Please sign up ([via your pharmacy](#)) for the text service which many now offer, this means you will be alerted by them when your medication is ready to be collected.

*Please be advised we **DO still accept paper prescription** requests via the post box at the surgery, although these may take slightly longer to process during the pandemic due to staff having to work remotely (as we are only able to access the online requests when having to work in this way)*

Thank you

Prescription Team at The Warrens Medical Centre

## Smear Tests

Covid-19 put things on hold at the beginning of the year but we are now back on track with smear tests. Rest assured that the surgery has planned carefully to make it as safe as possible for patients to attend their appointment.

It will look a little different from the last time you came but the staff are here to help make your visit as smooth and stress free as possible. For example, there will be very few people in reception when you arrive. The nurses, wearing a mask, visor, apron and gloves, will collect you from the waiting area and take you into their private room. They will talk you through the smear test procedure and put you at your ease. If you feel a chaperone would help you we can arrange that. We have a one-way in and one-way out system in place and the nurse will guide you to the exit.

We all know that smears are important but it is so easy to put it off and then a month becomes two and before you know it your smear is well overdue. Check out this link that explains all about the smear: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening/>

So, if you have had a letter inviting you for your smear, pick up the phone, ring 929 5555 and ask to book in for your smear. All we ask is that you wear a mask when you come into the surgery and come alone unless you need a carer. The staff may be wearing masks but underneath it is still us and we are still smiling!

# Social Prescribing: 12 Days of Christmas Self-Care

Self-care is particularly important at this time of year. The holidays can be great fun – many of us will have time off work and hopefully time spent with families, partners and friends too. But the holidays can also be difficult for all sorts of reasons including financial pressures, social anxiety and the amplification of loss, pain or loneliness. Whether we feel it or not, we are all worth looking after. So, whether it is jigsaws and colouring, a daily walk or jog, journaling or time with your friends, do try and plan in time for yourself.

If you need emotional or practical support to get yourself ready for the festive period, your Social Prescribing Link Workers, Alastair & Leah are here to help! You can find our top 12 Christmas self-care tips below but if you need to 1:1 support, please contact the practice and ask for a social prescribing referral.

## 1. *Tackling debt and money problems*

Many people feel pressure to buy the right Christmas presents for family and friends. If you have debt, money or family worries, you can gain advice and support from Citizens Advice Wirral at: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/> or **0300 33 00 111**

## 2. *Coping with anxiety, stress and social pressure*

Christmas can be overwhelming. TV films, adverts and social media make us feel like we need to have a perfect magical time. Find ways to manage anxiety, low mood stress and reduce the pressure at: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/> or speak to Talking Together on **0151 649 1859**.

## 3. *Getting enough sleep*

Feeling sleepy and not getting our recommended hours can leave us feeling low, irritable, groggy and even more prone to stress. Make sure you take time to look after yourself and plan to get between 7 & 9 hours sleep over the Christmas period. You can find top tips on better sleep at: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/sleep/>

## 4. *Safer Seasonal Drinking*

There's lots of pressure to drink alcohol at Christmas. Get tips for safer seasonal drinking at: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/drink-less/> or <https://www.changegrowlive.org/>

## 5. *Practising self-care*

Try mindfulness, take time out for yourself, go for a walk in the fresh air or learn a new skill. Try arts and crafts, baking and recipes, exercise and dance, gardening and the outdoors, health and wellbeing, music and singing, needlework and textiles, reading and writing or technology skills. Find out what works for you at the Virtual Village Hall: <https://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/virtual-village-hall/>

## 6. *Not overdoing it*

Chocolates, mince pies, big dinners: there are lots of ways to overindulge at Christmas. Eating some nutritious food and getting fresh air and exercise can really boost your mood. For guidance on eating better and moving more, please contact The Warrens and ask for a referral to Jan Shaw, Health Coach or visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/>

## 7. *Keeping warm*

Staying warm is important this winter. Over 60s can call Citizens Advice Wirral on **0151 346 8787** to check you are in receipt of the right benefits and support to help you stay warm and safe this winter.

## 8. *Using relaxation techniques*

Getting ready for Christmas can be hard work and stressful! Find tools and techniques to help you relax and unwind from the charity MIND at: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/relaxation-tips/>

## 9. *Preventing loneliness*

Christmas can be a lonely time for many people, but it doesn't have to be that way. Contact Age UK Wirral's Home & Communities team to register for the Befriending Phone Link, the Blg Community Check In, Carer Support and Cold Weather Army on **0151 482 3456** or <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/wirral/our-services/home--communities>

## 10. *Remembering loved ones*

Christmas can be a difficult time if you've experienced a close bereavement whether recently or in the past. Find ways to look after yourself at: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/> or call the helpline **0808 808 1677**

## 11. *Helping others*

Giving your time to help others can be really rewarding and help boost your wellbeing too. Spare 5 is supporting Wirral to reduce feelings of isolation and promote inclusion. Find out more at: <https://healthwatchwirral.co.uk/information/> or by phoning **0151 230 8957**

## 12. *Asking for help*

Many people struggle at Christmas. Don't be afraid to reach out. There's always someone to talk to right through the holidays.

\*Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS Trust Mental Health Support - 0800 145 6485

\* Samaritans: 24/7 telephone support - 116123

\* Shout: 24/7 text message support for crisis of any kind - 85258

**Wirral Council Covid Helpline 0151 666 5050** (for food and fuel support) and **Wirral Info Bank** <https://www.wirralinfobank.co.uk/> for advice on local community support services, health and care services, and up-to-date advice and information about coronavirus (COVID-19).

**Ask Us Wirral** will provide you with support on benefits, consumer issues, family life, housing, legal matters. Call **0300 33 00 111** or visit <https://askuswirral.org.uk/>

So, please take care over the holiday period: be kind to yourself and others, seek help from someone and somewhere you trust should you need it, notice and take action if you see someone who needs help and hold those you love tight over the holiday period.

We wish you a calm, peaceful Christmas and a happy and hopeful New Year!

Alastair & Leah, Social Prescribing Link Workers.



# NHS 111 First : Wirral Rollout

As you may be aware, colleagues from across the NHS in Wirral have been working to develop a new way in which people can access A&E (Emergency Department) and other urgent care services in Wirral by encouraging people to contact NHS 111 First.

Wirral is one of the first areas in the North West to implement the new nation-wide system from 24 November. NHS 111 First is being rolled out nationally in December.

## *What is NHS 111 First?*

To ensure social distancing in the Emergency Department waiting areas, people who do not need an ambulance are being asked to contact NHS 111 for an appointment *before* attending. The service will then book them a time slot at the Emergency Department at Arrowe Park Hospital or at the most appropriate health service for the patient.

The new approach will ensure that patients can access the clinical service they need, first time.

They will be spoken to by a trained professional and a clinician if needed. If it is decided they should go to the Emergency Department then they will be given a suitable time to attend and staff at the hospital will be expecting them.

People may also be directed to another service in Wirral as an alternative to A&E.

Anyone who attends the Emergency Department without an appointment from NHS 111 will still be seen but could be directed to other services for treatment.

People with life threatening conditions that need emergency attention should still call 999. Likewise, if the condition is not serious, they should still seek advice from their pharmacy or make an appointment with their GP.

## *How will people know about NHS 111 First?*

Wirral became live from 24 November 2020 and we have a range of communication materials which help explain the new system. This includes an overview of [what patients can expect](#) and an [explainer video](#). We have also worked with colleagues at Healthwatch Wirral to develop further localised communications to ensure that the messages for people in Wirral are local to our community.

NHS 111 First was rolled out nationally from 1 December 2020 and will be supported by a national media campaign.

Following the national launch, practices will receive a communications toolkit containing Wirral creatives, briefings, key messages and website narrative which can be used to help raise awareness of the service in Wirral.

The launch of NHS 111 First is about improving our offer to patients by helping them to access the right service quickly and, importantly, about keeping them safe during the current pandemic.

Michael Chantler

Assistant Director – Communications and Corporate Affairs

Wirral Health & Care Commissioning

## “Mum, are we there yet?”

With all these promising vaccines; and delivery possibly starting before the end of the year; can we all heave a sigh of relief?

Not really. The vaccines do sound amazing, so in some ways there is an end in sight. But it is still a long way off, maybe just possibly Easter. The worst time for Covid-19 was always going to be these winter months, our normal flu season. So message number one is, “Make sure that you have had your own flu jab.” By the time this is read the over-50 flu jabs should be in full swing so make sure you are included.

Am I alone in thinking that this whole pandemic thing is dragging on a bit? In the surgery, in the early months we were getting used to the new patterns of working, the major change from patients sitting in our rooms, replaced by video and telephone consultation; setting up the GP Care hub in the doctors’ car park, getting used to PPE and parading in our new theatre scrubs. But 8 months later we all share the general discontent and a feeling that this is not as good as the way things used to be. On a positive note, none of our doctors or nurses have gone down with the virus; and none of our patients have picked up the virus from their contacts with general practice. The rate of infections in our practice area remains comfortably low; although there have been far too many deaths, especially in the nursing homes.

So, even if it is dragging on a bit, we must fight the temptation to let things slide. The reason why we can’t go back to the old volume of house calls and a waiting room full of patients is because the virus is still out there. To pinch a line from our PM, “Tis the season to be jolly.... careful!” When the government update can remind us of 500 new deaths that day, we dare not become complacent.

With all that in mind, what about e-consult, the latest way of engaging with your GP? The idea of using more technology has been around for many years and promoted as the way forward for general practice. As usual, West Wirral Group Practice has been suspicious of innovation, preferring the way that we have always done things. E-consulting was endorsed as the cure for surgery sessions that seemed to go on for ever; patients and clinicians alike would be delighted with the system if only it was given a proper try. We remained sceptical. But then Covid-19 arrived and left us with no choice but to accept the inevitable. Has it been the promised panacea? Not really. We seemed to have a few weeks of lull when many patients simply avoided all contact with anyone medical, while others slowly learnt how the system worked. This temporary ease in workload has long since vanished and we are back to work as normal – why are the phones so busy in the mornings, why are there not enough appointment slots for all the requests, why are the surgeries running over-time, why are the emergency surgeries laden with all these extras, what ever happened to a lunch break?

On the other hand e-consult does help the doctor to hit the ground running with every consultation. It is so useful to have an outline of the next problem coming up and the patient’s expectations, with opportunity to check previous relevant details, results or hospital letters. The process for the patient is clearly long-winded. It has been set up in a similar fashion to the 111 service, to err on the side of caution. There are few tragedies on 111 and that is simply because the script for the operator ensures that all the vital questions get asked. They are set up to include things that may seem quite strange; but the end result will be safe. E-consult does the same thing, often asking quite obscure things; but the end result is equally safe. For those who can’t manage the technology involved the reception staff has been trained in e-consult lite – a shortened version with just the basics. Details are taken over the phone and can then be typed up for the doctor to view. However, as noted on a web site, if you lie to reception and say that your phone or computer is broken then the receptionist has to do all the hard work for you. So, if you are waiting a long time to get through to us, then just hope that this gentleman’s advice is not being followed!

For now the message is, "More of the same!" Still keeping the social distancing, regularly washing our hands, wearing the wretched masks, following the spirit of the latest change in regulations and trying to ignore the silliness or contradictions that are so easy to spot. USA has seen an experiment with a less regulated approach with the resultant 1,000,000 cases a week and a total of over 250,000 deaths: other countries have had far stricter policies and their death rate puts ours to shame. For the sake of our elderly and most vulnerable let's do our best to be neighbourly and considerate, despite the fact that it is dragging on a bit.

So, all together now, "Tis the season to be jolly..... careful!"

Dr. Alan Johnston



## E-Consult – A Patient's Experience

Having used the E-consult process a few times for different medical issues, it is fair to say that using E-consult is more tedious than being able to just speak to someone at the Practice.

It is easy to find faults in the process, which is, after all, a computer tick-box.

It cannot make short-cuts by asking the questions that an experienced GP would know to ask because the process is a formulated one.

It is perhaps especially frustrating that there isn't a 'short-cut' through the process for patients who have chronic conditions and/or those who require follow-up appointments about a condition that the GP is already aware.

Again, it is frustrating having to repeatedly fill in all the general details that you will have previously provided if you have used E-consult before.

And, yes, it is even more frustrating completing the whole process only then to be 'told' to ring 111 or the GP.

No doubt there are others too.

However, although being a reluctant user of such online systems, it is fair to say that I have had to accept that E-consult, with all its faults, has a place nowadays as we all face up to the challenges associated with Covid-19.

As we continue to adjust to the impacts of the pandemic and accommodate the enforced changes to the way we live our lives, we also have to find ways to make the transition to the 'new normal', which must include reducing the risk of transmission of the virus to the very staff who are working hard to keep the health services available to their patients.

So, I suppose, using E-consult is part of doing 'our bit' by helping to reduce the footfall in GP surgeries.

Of course, it does not suit an urgent need to speak to, or see, a GP but, if a patient has a non-urgent issue or a medical enquiry etc, and has access to a computer, the E-consult process provides a way of contacting a GP when most convenient to the patient.

Its introduction seems to be helping ensure that the patients attending the surgery are those that need a face-to-face or 'hands-on' consultation, which must be helping GPs make best use of their time.

Before the pandemic, making a GP appointment had its own challenges. They were different to those now being posed by having to use E-consult, but they're not all that significant really when compared to

those that many people are experiencing as the new coronavirus continues to wreak havoc around the world.

Whilst not my first choice of communication, I can say that the few times I have used E-consult, I have had satisfactory outcomes. Yes, it was somewhat laborious and frustrating completing the online questions, but on each occasion I have received the call back or requested information within the stated timescales; and on the occasion that the GP felt it was necessary to see me (having read my E-consult submission and made an initial telephone call), I was invited to the surgery for a physical examination.

That said, there is scope to improve the system and I hope that those who have developed E-consult will acknowledge the less desirable aspects of the process and address the issues that patients are repeatedly complaining about (and being acknowledged by many GPs) – especially for frequent users.

E-consult may be here for a long time to come, so the system needs to be such that patients feel encouraged to use it.



## Activity Corner *(Answers page 11 & 12)*

### Christmas Quiz

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- 1) What Christmas decoration was originally made from strands of silver?
- 2) What Christmas beverage is also known as 'milk punch'?
- 3) One of Santa's reindeer shares a name with a famous symbol of Valentine's Day. Which reindeer is that?
- 4) The Snowman was shown on TV for the first time on Boxing Day of which year?
- 5) Which country donates the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square?
- 6) Which country started the tradition of putting up a Christmas tree?
- 7) What Christmas-themed ballet premiered in Saint Petersburg, Russia in 1892?
- 8) Which character declares "Merry Christmas, one and all!" in Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol?
- 9) In what modern-day country was Saint Nicholas born?
- 10) What beverage company has been using Santa Claus in its advertising since 1931?
- 11) Which monarch made the first royal Christmas broadcast?
- 12) In which Children's classic is it 'always Winter but never Christmas'?
- 13) Who invented the Christmas cracker?
- 14) Which Christmas hit originally released in 1984 has been No. 1 in the UK charts three times?
- 15) Mariah Carey's iconic Christmas hit 'All I want for Christmas' officially signals the start of the festive period - but what year was it released?
- 16) Who is the patron saint celebrated on the 26th December?

- 17) What does Harry receive from Dumbledore during his first Christmas at Hogwarts?
- 18) When was the first Christmas card printed?
- 19) What well-known Christmas carol became the first song ever broadcast from space in 1965?
- 20) What were mince pies made with, in Victorian times?

## Christmas Word Search

Find the '12 Days of Christmas' in the grid below

G	N	I	G	N	I	M	M	I	W	S	A	S	N	A	W	S
F	T	M	P	R	T	R	G	N	V	H	F	A	I	N	G	A
E	R	A	P	E	V	C	D	L	L	E	R	L	P	N	I	B
G	E	E	S	E	A	L	A	Y	I	N	G	I	I	E	O	T
N	O	O	N	L	E	R	P	E	Y	S	L	M	P	C	L	E
I	M	L	H	C	U	W	S	I	G	V	M	A	E	O	D	E
C	H	E	D	G	H	F	A	D	D	U	D	I	R	H	M	P
N	B	C	O	E	T	M	M	H	R	C	H	D	S	A	M	R
A	B	R	I	W	N	M	G	D	A	I	S	S	P	E	V	O
D	O	V	E	S	C	R	S	E	E	A	B	A	I	G	P	L
E	E	D	G	P	I	R	O	S	L	R	O	M	P	D	T	G
M	L	E	D	P	E	A	P	E	T	W	S	I	I	I	H	N
M	I	E	R	M	M	D	A	I	R	F	P	L	N	R	E	I
G	B	H	M	T	A	P	O	D	U	R	I	K	G	T	H	L
N	L	U	O	E	I	R	B	A	T	D	W	I	S	R	U	L
I	R	W	F	N	T	C	U	L	L	M	S	N	V	A	F	A
D	T	S	G	N	I	R	D	C	V	I	O	G	A	P	W	C

PARTRIDGE

CALLING

MAIDS A-MILKING

PEAR

BIRDS

LADIES

TREE

GOLDEN

DANCING

TURTLE

RINGS

LORDS A-LEAPING

DOVES

GEESE A-LAYING

PIPERS PIPING

FRENCH

SWANS A-SWIMMING

DRUMMERS DRUMMING

HENS

## Christmas Quiz Answers

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1. Tinsel
2. Eggnog
3. Cupid
4. 1982
5. Norway (since 1947)
6. Germany
7. The Nutcracker
8. Tiny Tim
9. Turkey (originally Patara, a city in the ancient district of Lycia, in Asia Minor)
10. Coca-Cola
11. King George V in 1932
12. C.S. Lewis' The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe
13. Tom Smith, a 19th century London sweet shop owner
14. Do They Know it's Christmas
15. 1994
16. Saint Stephen
17. Cloak of Invisibility
18. 1843 - a man called John Calcott Horsley printed the first Christmas card for the friend that gave him the idea, Sir Henry Cole
19. Jingle Bells
20. Beef and spices

## Word Search Answers

