



August Newsletter 2025



The Apples Medical Centre – August 2025 Newsletter

Apples PG Chair notes August 2025 - We have some important updates from the Apples Medical Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG) to share with you.

Leadership Changes: After seven years of dedicated service, Bruce Duncan and Simon Galvin have stepped down as Chair and Vice-chair of the PPG. We extend our heartfelt thanks to both for their stalwart service. During April's meeting, there was considerable discussion about the future direction of the PPG. Despite a request for volunteers, no one stepped forward to take on the role of Chair. I have offered to temporarily assume the role of Chair.

Collaboration with The Grove PPG: There is a strong desire to work with The Grove Medical Centre PPG. We believe there is much to gain from sharing insights and experiences. An open invitation has been extended for representatives to attend each other's meetings, fostering collaboration and mutual support.

Practice Improvements: The major story for our patients has been the significant changes implemented following a four-month analysis by an external independent body of experts, the General Practice Improvement Plan (GPIP) in August 2024. This national campaign focused on three key areas: Patient access/GP rota, Results, and Clinical letters. The changes have led to the introduction of same-day, 2-week, and 4-week pre-bookable GP appointments, an improved Results process, and enhanced administrative processes within the practice.

Since January, the new telephone procedure allowing for Call-Back has made enquiries more efficient. The introduction of new rotas and working practices aims to benefit every patient.

PPG Survey Results: (Please find PPG patient survey results & action plan at the end of this newsletter.) The PPG will provide regular updates to patients on actions taken in response to the survey results. Updates will be shared through newsletters, the practice website, and notice boards in the surgery.

Challenges and Commitment: The burdens of running a general practice remain heavy, and recruitment at qualified levels is challenging. Maintaining service standards is difficult, and we ask for your understanding and patience if things do not always go as planned. Rest assured, everyone at the practice, including your PPG, is doing their best to provide excellent care.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement with the Apples Medical Centre.

Tony Bishop
Temporarily PPG Chair

Website: <https://www.sherborneapples.co.uk>
Facebook: The Apples Medical Centre
Instagram: sherborneapples



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Summer/Autumn Suggestions:

As we transition from summer to autumn, here are some health tips to keep you and your family well:

- Stay hydrated and enjoy the seasonal fruits and vegetables.
- Keep active with outdoor activities while the weather is pleasant.
- Prepare for the cooler months by ensuring your home is ready for autumn.

PRACTICE NEWS:

Preventive NHS Health Checks 40 yrs to 74 yrs: Regular health screenings can help detect potential health issues early. We will be inviting all eligible patients to book an appointment with our HCAs.

Flu & Covid Clinics - Vaccination Awareness: Stay protected by keeping up to date with recommended vaccinations. Our **Flu and Covid clinics** are scheduled for **FRIDAY 17TH October and FRIDAY 7TH November**. Eligible patients will be contacted. Clinics to be held at The Digby Hall, by appointment only

Farewell to Departing Staff: We bid farewell to several valued staff members who have left in 2025:

- Trudy, Lead Nurse
- Carina, Phlebotomist
- Lily, Dispensary Manager
- Sharon, ANP
- Karen, Practice Administrator

We wish them all the best in their new adventures. A special mention to Nikki, our beloved Receptionist, who is retiring at the end of September. Nikki has been with us for many years, and while we are sad to see her leave, we wish her a joyful retirement.

Welcome to New Staff Members: We are excited to welcome new faces to our team:

- Lesley, Nurse
- Rose, Dispensary Manager
- Alison, Receptionist
- Becky, Nurse
- Anita, Practice Administrator
- Sharon, HCA

We look forward to everyone joining the practice and contributing to our community.

Dispensary Opening Hours Update

Thank you for your patience whilst our Dispensary had reduced hours. We are pleased to inform you that from 1st September, the dispensary will be back to its original opening hours.

For detailed opening hours, please visit our website. We appreciate your understanding and support during this period.

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Dates for the Diary:

Please note our upcoming closure dates:

Tuesday, 12th August, 1pm - 2pm
Thursday, 4th September, 1pm - 2pm
Thursday 6th November 1pm – 4pm TBC
Additional closure dates will be confirmed soon

If you require medical assistance during surgery closures, phone 111 or 999 in the case of an emergency.

Summary of PPG Patient Survey Results – number of completed surveys 266, either by paper form or survey monkey

Section 1: Test Results Communication

- Awareness of Communication for Normal Test Results:**
132 respondents were aware that they may not be contacted directly if their test results are normal, while 112 were not aware, and 22 were unsure. *This indicates a need for better communication about test result protocols.*
- Availability of Test Results on NHS App:**
125 respondents knew that test results are usually available on the NHS App within 5 to 7 days, while 132 did not. *This suggests a need to increase awareness about the availability of test results on digital platforms.*
- Inquiry About Use of NHS App or SystmOnline:**
60 respondents reported being asked by practice staff if they use the NHS App or SystmOnline, while 165 were not asked. *This highlights an opportunity for practice staff to engage more with patients about digital tools.* Of those who were asked, 66 use the NHS App, 28 use SystmOnline, 17 do not use either, and 23 were unaware of these options. *This indicates a need for education on the benefits and availability of these digital services.*
- Interest in Help with Digital Setup:**
25 respondents expressed interest in receiving help to set up the NHS App or SystmOnline, while 62 were not interested, and 21 were unsure. *This suggests a potential area for patient support initiatives.*

Section 2: Telephone System Changes

- Satisfaction with New Telephone System:**
92 respondents liked the new telephone system, while 26 did not, and 120 were unsure. *This shows a generally positive reception but also indicates room for improvement.*
- Use of Call-Back Option:**
61 respondents have used the call-back option, while 114 have not, and 35 were unsure. *This suggests that the call-back feature may not be widely utilised or understood.*



7. **Experience with Call-Back Service:**

Of those who used the call-back service, 45 rated their experience as excellent or good, while 10 rated it as fair, and 8 rated it as poor. *This indicates a need for further refinement of the call-back service to improve user experience.*

Section 3: GP Rota & Appointment Booking Changes

8. **Awareness of Pre-Bookable Appointments:**

73 respondents were aware of the ability to pre-book GP appointments up to 2 weeks in advance, while 181 were not. *This highlights a need for better communication about appointment booking options.*

9. **Awareness of Re-Bookable Appointments:**

Only 52 respondents were aware of the option to re-book appointments up to 4 weeks in advance, while 198 were not. *This suggests a significant gap in patient awareness.*

10. **Offering of Pre-Bookable Appointments:**

29 respondents had been offered a 2-week pre-bookable appointment, while 151 had not. *This indicates a need to ensure patients are informed about and offered these options.*

11. **Offering of Re-Bookable Appointments:**

17 respondents had been offered a 4-week re-bookable appointment, while 86 had not. *This suggests that the option may not be widely utilised or communicated.*

14. **Ease of Booking Appointments:**

Respondents found booking appointments under the new system to be challenging, with only 10 finding it very easy, and 40 finding it difficult or very difficult. *This indicates a need for improvements in the booking process.*

15. **Impact of Rota Changes on Care Planning:**

Only 12 respondents felt that the changes to the GP rota made it easier to plan their care, while 23 did not, and 68 were unsure. *This suggests that the changes may not be effectively meeting patient needs.*

Overall Recommendations:

- Enhance communication and education about digital tools like the NHS App and SystmOnline.
- Improve patient engagement regarding the use of digital platforms for accessing test results.
- Refine the telephone system and call-back service to enhance user experience.
- Increase awareness and utilisation of pre-bookable and re-bookable appointment options.
- Address challenges in the appointment booking process to improve ease of access for patients.

Implementation Timeline:

- Short-Term (1-3 months): Develop communication materials, enhance call-back system, and provide patient support for technology use.
- Medium-Term (3-6 months): Implement flexible appointment times, improve prescription management, and establish follow-up procedures.



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- Long-Term (6-12 months): Continuously collect feedback, refine the appointment booking process, and expand patient education initiatives.

Thank you for your valuable feedback. We are committed to improving our services and ensuring a positive experience for all patients