
MAY PATIENT NEWSLETTER



Welcome to our patient newsletter, which we hope you will find useful and informative.

Also, please don't forget we regularly post all our current news on our website and Facebook page, so be sure to take a look every now and again to stay up-to-date.

SURGERY CLOSURE DATES



Staff Training Dates

Please note all our surgeries will be closed from 1pm on the below dates for Protected Learning Time. Normal surgery hours resume the following morning. The Acute Hub at Linton will also be closed to enable our clinicians some much needed training time.

- Tuesday 12th May 2026 (Morning clinic reduced for mandatory training)
- Thursday 11th June 2026
- Wednesday 8th July 2026
- Wednesday 19th August 2026
- Tuesday 15th September 2026

We do understand an afternoon closure can be an inconvenience for some patients, but please be mindful that this protected time is invaluable for busy GP surgeries. It gives all staff, clinical and non-clinical, time to undertake formal mandatory training which cannot be completed in normal surgery hours.

In this newsletter you can expect:

Coeliac Disease Awareness Month

Starting School

Vaccination Champions

Our Bookings Team

NHS App

Greener Practice

COELIAC DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH



In May we are supporting Coeliac Awareness Month. Coeliac Disease is a autoimmune condition where the body's immune system reacts to gluten. Gluten is found in the grains wheat, barley and rye. The reaction to gluten causes the immune system to attack and damage the lining of the gut. Coeliac Disease affects 1 in 100 people and it is estimated that 64% of people are undiagnosed. Coeliac Awareness Month aims to raise awareness of the autoimmune condition and diagnosis.

Coeliac disease is an autoimmune condition. This is where the immune system (the body's defence against infection) mistakenly attacks healthy tissue. In coeliac disease, the immune system mistakes substances found inside gluten as a threat to the body and attacks them. This damages the surface of the small bowel (intestines), disrupting the body's ability to take in nutrients from food.

It's not entirely clear what causes the immune system to act this way, but a combination of genetics and the environment appear to play a part.

Symptoms of Coeliac Disease may vary person to person. It can affect any area of the body and can range from mild to severe. For example individuals may experience severe or occasional diarrhoea, excessive wind and/or constipation, persistent unexplained nausea or vomiting, recurrent stomach pains, cramps or bloating, ongoing tiredness, severe or persistent mouth ulcers, combination of iron, Vitamin B12 or Folic Acid deficiency to name a few.

The first steps to diagnosis is to discuss testing with your GP, you may be offered a blood test. The blood test looks for antibodies produced by people with coeliac disease when they eat gluten. It is essential to keep eating gluten before and throughout the testing process, otherwise your body won't produce antibodies and you could get a false negative result. It is advised that gluten must be eaten in more than one meal every day for six weeks before testing.

There is also an online self-assessment tool: [Home | Is It Coeliac Disease](#)

Pharmacy First:

Pharmacists can now provide treatment or some prescription medicine, if needed, for seven common conditions, without having to see a GP. Usual prescription charges will apply for the seven common conditions, just like if they received a prescription from the GP. Patients that were already exempt from prescription charges will still be exempt.

Each condition is subject to age eligibility when providing prescription medicine:

Condition	Age eligibility
UTI	16-64 years
Sinusitis	12 years and over
Earache	1-17 years
Sore throat	5 years and over
Shingles	18 years and over
Impetigo	1 year and over
Infected Insect Bite	1 year and over

For more information on the pharmacy first scheme please visit: nhs.uk/thinkpharmacyfirst

Starting School - Vaccinations



As children get ready to start school this September, it's important to make sure their routine vaccinations are up to date. Schools bring children into close contact with one another, which can allow infections to spread more easily. Vaccines help protect your child against serious illnesses such as measles, mumps, and whooping cough—diseases that can still circulate if immunisation rates drop.

Making sure your child is fully vaccinated not only protects them, but also helps safeguard other children, teachers, and more vulnerable members of the community. High vaccination uptake creates a protective barrier, reducing the risk of outbreaks and keeping schools a safer place for everyone to learn and grow.

If you're unsure whether your child is up to date with their vaccinations, you can quickly check their records using the NHS App. The app provides easy access to your child's immunisation history, along with other useful health information. If anything is missing, your GP practice can advise on how to catch up before the new school term begins.

Things you need to know about vaccines:

Vaccines do:

- Help to protect you and your child from many serious and potentially deadly diseases
- Protect other people in your family and community - by helping to stop diseases spreading to people who cannot have vaccines, such as babies too young to be vaccinated and those who are too ill to be vaccinated
- Undergo rigorous safety testing before being introduced - they're also constantly monitored for side effects after being introduced
- Sometimes cause mild side effects that will not last long - you may feel a bit unwell and have a sore arm for 2 or 3 days
- Reduce or even get rid of some diseases - if enough people are vaccinated

Vaccines don't:

- Do not overload or weaken the immune system - it's safe to give children and adults several vaccines at a time and this reduces the amount of injections needed
- Do not contain mercury (thiomersal)
- Do not contain any ingredients that cause harm - only ingredients essential to making them safer and more effective and only in very small amounts
- Do not cause autism - studies have found no evidence of a link between the MMR vaccine and autism

Measles and mumps in England:

Measles and mumps are starting to appear again in England, even though the MMR vaccine is the best protection against both diseases.

This is serious as measles can lead to life-threatening complications like meningitis, and mumps can cause hearing loss.

If 95% of children receive the MMR vaccine, this would stop measles spreading completely. However, measles, mumps and rubella can quickly spread again if fewer than 90% of people are vaccinated.

Everyone should be up to date with their routine vaccinations to give them the best protection.

Our Vaccine Champions

Hello, our names are Keeley and Mel and we are Practice Nurses and Vaccine Champions for Greensand Health Centre.



Mel Wates Keeley Norton

What is a vaccine Champion?

- A vaccine Champion is a Healthcare Professional who has attended additional training specialising in vaccine safety.

Vaccine Champions have two main roles -

- They provide education, build confidence in vaccine safety, and facilitate access to vaccination services.
- They motivate and encourage colleagues to improve vaccine uptake in the clinical setting.

Keeley and I are passionate about increasing vaccination uptake within our community and workplace. We hope to combat misinformation, address vaccine hesitancy, and share accurate information for all routine immunisations. The benefit of this would be to increase vaccine uptake in our local community and protect everyone living here from serious illnesses.

Why are vaccines important?

Vaccinations are the most important thing we can do to protect ourselves and our children against ill health. They prevent millions of deaths worldwide every year and are crucial, not only for the individual, but for the health of our community and vulnerable individuals who rely on us all to keep them safe. Vaccines prevent unnecessary visits to hospital and GP's and they also prevent thousands of people taking days off sick from work or school.

FACTS

- Vaccinations teach our immune systems to fight illness
- Vaccinations contain small amounts of weakened or treated diseases so that our Immune System makes antibodies against the disease
- You cannot catch the disease you are being protected from via vaccination.
- It's much safer for your immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the disease itself

What happens to our community if we stop having vaccines?

If people stop having vaccines, it's possible for infectious diseases to quickly spread again. Babies / elderly / pregnant ladies / unvaccinated individuals and vulnerable people having cancer treatment for example will no longer be protected. Not only will this lead to illness, and dying, but our National Health Service will no longer be able to cope. Remember those early Covid days when the country came to a halt?? This is what our future would look like. So we all need to work as a team to protect ourselves, our family, and vulnerable members of our community.

Vaccine safety

- All vaccines are thoroughly tested to make sure they will not harm you or your child.
- It often takes many years for a vaccine to make it through the trials and tests it needs to pass for approval.

Once a vaccine is being used in the UK it's also monitored for any rare side effects by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). It is also carefully monitored to make sure it still works.

Side Effects

Most of the side effects of vaccination are mild and do not last long.

The most common side effects of vaccination include:

- The area where the needle goes in looking red, swollen and feeling a bit sore for 2 to 3 days
- Feeling a bit unwell or developing a high temperature for 1 or 2 days
- Older children and adults may feel faint
- Feeling tired, having a headache, mild fever, or flu-like symptoms
- Some children might also cry and be upset immediately after the injection. This is normal and they should feel better after a cuddle. Common side effects usually pass after a few days.

Need further information?

If you are hesitant about getting vaccines due for you or your child, or if you would like to know more about side effects or what other ingredients are in vaccines please either send in an Anima or have a look at the following website for further information.

[Home | Vaccine Knowledge Project](#)

Stay Strong- Get Vaccinated.

The Bookings Team

Did you know we have a dedicated bookings team at the surgery? For a while now we have been operating a triage system. This enables us to ensure that patients with the highest or most complex health needs are prioritised and given sooner appointments if necessary.

What happens when I fill out an online request form?

The triage system we use is called Anima; patients can fill out requests themselves online via this system. For those who do not have access to online services, they call the surgery, and select the option to submit the form over the phone.

Once the form is completed, it goes to our bookings team. The Anima system will help recognise the urgency of the requests. A clinician working alongside the bookings team decides on an appropriate course of action and informs the patients.

On average we receive 200 requests a day (this number often increases to 250+ during the winter period).

What are the benefits of having a dedicated bookings team?

As I'm sure you are aware, we have extremely busy phone lines. By having a dedicated bookings team, this frees up our receptionists to deal with general queries at the front desk and on the phone. Our bookings team also follows strict smart booking guidelines, which helps us reduce the number of DNAs or wasted appointments.



What can reception book?

Our reception team can book the following appointments with our nurses and HCAs:

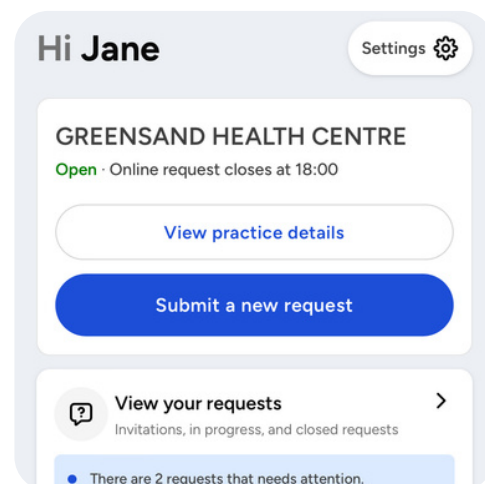
- NHS Health Checks (if patient is eligible)
- Shingles Vaccine (if patient is eligible)
- Pneumonia Vaccine (if patient is eligible)
- Smear (if patient is due)
- Asthma Review
- COPD Review
- Blood test (if requested by a clinician)
- Part 1 diabetic review
- Dressing
- B12 (if patient is due)
- ECG (if requested by a clinician)
- Blood pressure check
- Child Immunisations
- Depo-Provera Injection
- Prostag/Zoladex Injection
- Whooping cough vaccine

We value your feedback on these systems and are constantly looking into ways we can make healthcare more accessible to all our patients. Thank you for the continued support.



You can access the Anima patient dashboard online via your web browser.

Visit:
patients.animahealth.com



OR



You can request an appointment directly from the NHS App.



NHS APP

There are lots of different apps available that patients can use to access their health records and order repeat prescriptions. This is each patient's personal decision as to which app they would like to use. The NHS App gives you a simple and secure way to access a range of NHS services.

You can download the NHS App on your smartphone or tablet via Google Play or the App store. You can also access the same services in a web browser by logging in through the NHS website.

What you can do with the NHS App:

- Order repeat prescriptions, including contraception! 💊
- View your GP health record 🔍
- View your NHS number
- Look at your vaccinations
- Track referrals
- Request & cancel appointments
- View hospital appointments
- Use NHS 111 online to answer questions and get instant advice or medical help near you

What you need to set up an NHS login:

- Email address
- Mobile phone or a landline number

🔒 This is the quickest and most secure way to process prescription requests and view your GP health record.

Once your login is set up, it will ask you to verify your identity. There are two ways to do this:

- Use photo ID to prove who you are
- Linkage key from the surgery

Simply call the surgery to get your linkage key, ODS code, and Account ID or email us at itsupport.greensand@nhs.net.

Once you are logged in and your identity has been verified, you will have full access to your GP health records, tracking referrals and ordering repeat prescriptions.

If you need further assistance in setting yourself up on the NHS App, Kent Library IT Buddies can help you! Email AKL@kent.gov.uk or call 03000 41 64 38.

Alternatively, there are lots of guides on the NHS App website: www.nhs.uk/nhs-app





We have signed up to the Green Impact for Health Toolkit.

What does this mean for the Practice?

We will be making changes to become a more sustainable and greener practice by focusing our efforts on the following:

- Inhaler recycling
- Active transport solutions
- Energy efficiency
- Social prescribing
- We'll be encouraging staff and patients to think about how they can bring greener practices into their day to day lives.
- We'll be keeping you up to date with our progress on the website and around the practice – and we'd love to hear your stories too.

Why are we doing this?

As health professionals, we have a responsibility to work in the best interests of all our patients. The climate crisis is the biggest public health issue we are facing, and we believe it is essential to make changes in order to work towards a better, healthier future for all.

Health care in the UK contributes 4-5% of the UK's carbon emissions. We need to enhance the health of today's population without compromising the health of future generations, and this means operating within the sustainable boundaries of the planet. Fortunately, most of the solutions for the planet also make our health better - for example eating a mainly plant-based diet, engaging in active travel and exercise in nature, avoiding smoking, reducing pollution etc. These activities all enhance our health and reduce our need for medications, with further benefits to the NHS, your health and the carbon footprint of healthcare.

For more information please visit: www.greenerpractice.co.uk



Don't forget we regularly post all our current news on our website and Facebook page, so be sure to take a look every now and again to stay up-to-date.



Greensand Health Centre



www.greensandhealth.co.uk

Finally, we would be interested to hear any constructive feedback on what you think of our newsletter, and if you have any ideas of articles or information you feel would be useful to share in the future, please email us at kmicb.ghcfeedback@nhs.net
