

Hello again fellow patients of Grove Park Surgery, how are you? Feeling a bit more optimistic I hope. Maybe not sunshine breaks abroad at Easter time (late summer/autumn?!) but at least a sense that everyone is more on top of what is going on compared with this time last year. The medical profession has faced an unbelievable learning curve in the past 12 months. But they also have a tremendous slog ahead, especially GPs, I discovered this week.

I waited until there was something interesting to say, but now this email may be a bit long for one sitting. Perhaps just hang on to it for later if the links below are useful.

So what news on vaccinations?

The group currently being contacted in Chiswick are the over-65s and, belatedly, those with learning disabilities (which covers a great number of genetic disorders that make someone especially vulnerable to very serious illness. You will have seen the shocking figures in the news.) Fortunately Hounslow did a lot of work in the past 24 months making sure they had identified all such patients aged 16 and up so feels confident it can be quite efficient inviting them for vaccination. The Astra Zeneca vaccine is licensed for ages 18+ and the Pfizer 16+.

This week there was a small allocation of the Astra Zeneca vaccine to Chiswick but I hear the surgery is hoping for a sizeable supply of the Pfizer vaccine at Chiswick Health Centre from the 26th of Feb.

Alternatively if you are simply over-65, you do not have to wait to hear from the surgery or even get a letter from the NHS, you can (should be able to!) go online at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/> to book an appointment at a mass vaccination centre. There is one at Heathrow, one at Twickenham and also Wembley. I probably don't need to say this but it is all FREE, anything else is a scam.

Second vaccination: the current plan

The way the roll out is currently planned to work is that 10-11, probably 11, weeks after the first delivery to Chiswick Health Centre exactly the same type and size of delivery would be sent as in the first week of vaccinations there. And the same patients would be called. This would continue day by day, week by week. So, until things change, keep an eye out 10-11 weeks from your first vaccination. Messaging will be by text, combined with phone calls from the surgery for anyone not registered for text or who does not respond.

What could change? Despite the current "same as" plan, by that time (in late March) alternative venues may be bookable via the text, possibly one in Brentford, and the doctors will also be working through younger age-group cohorts. Initially, Chiswick GPs were going to be relieved of vaccinating the under-65s but it's worked so well so far, this will now fall to them!

The other burden GPs face this year is that, since the end of 2020, they have been allowed to park non-urgent and non-critical work, such as annual routine check ups, while they undertake vaccinations. Once vaccination pressure eases they will be under the cosh to catch up on all of this. Our surgery has tried to stay on top of it but there is bound to be a backlog. In the autumn there will also once again be a flu vaccine programme and possibly booster Covid-19 vaccinations.

As you know, our practice has managed to stay "open for business" and the telephone appointments have been effective for most people. There is also "e-consult" on the website as a way to ask for medical advice. But you probably saw last week's text from the surgery about "Push Doctor" . This adds another way to consult a doctor.

Push Doctor

The GPs in Hounslow have jointly commissioned "Push Doctor", previously just a private online GP consultation service but now available free to patients registered with an NHS GP. Once you sign up with Push Doctor you can make an appointment with an NHS GP (not necessarily local) who will consult you by video (a bit like Zoom or Facetime). The GP you see and talk to will have access to all your notes held by Grove Park Surgery and everything he or she advises/ prescribes will go on to your notes. It's described as being like seeing a locum at our surgery.

Importantly, unlike many other online GP services, you remain a patient of our practice. Appointments are usually available from 8am from the following day and I'm told are not time-limited, unlike physical appointments. But it has to be a video call, so you see each other, not just audio.

To check it out (click "for NHS patients" under "how it works") on <https://www.pushdoctor.co.uk/how-it-works>.

Please be reassured this is only an addition to the services of our practice not instead of. Some people will find it suits them and the way they live and work, maybe wanting to check out quickly a medical issue, while others will prefer to phone the practice for an appointment with a familiar GP. Horses for courses...

Hounslow's Community Hub and Community Solutions

I just want to remind you of this wonderful operation. Initially set up to make sure food reached vulnerable and shielding people, soon people were calling in to it about financial insecurity, mental health concerns and general anxiety. And they find answers and offer guidance. Most recently they have added driving shielding and vulnerable people safely to vaccination appointments. If you are confronting a problem you can't solve, whether under your own roof or for a friend or neighbour, I do recommend turning to them. Contact: 020 7084 9697 or email Hub@hounslow.gov.uk .

I'm sure that's enough from me. Thank you so much for your kind messages about previous emails but do let me know if you no longer need them.

And please pass this on if you wish.

Warmest wishes,

Liz and the GPSPG committee