



An Apple A Day

Newsletter for patients registered at GP Surgeries in Hitchin,
Whitwell and at Bridge Cottage (Welwyn)

HWPCN

**Hitchin & Whitwell
Primary Care Network**

Welcome to the second newsletter from HWPCN!

We would value your feedback on this issue as well as ideas on what you might like us to cover in future.

Best wishes for a safe and healthy new year.

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What's new for 2022?



Vaccine programme: At the top of everyone's agenda is the need to tackle the spread of Omicron and keep our patients safe and well. As a PCN we have ensured that our most vulnerable patients were prioritised for booster vaccines in the autumn, and we have collectively signed up in response to the government's drive to get the whole population protected as quickly as possible. In the meantime this will mean changes to normal services, and we ask you to bear with us as we all adapt to another challenging time.

Staffing: We have appointed 3 nursing associate apprentices who begin their 2-year course at the University of Hertfordshire this month. For 4 days a week they are based in GP practices and will have the opportunity to work in other community settings, including the Lister Hospital, during their placements. We are excited to see how these new roles develop and look forward to what they will add to our patient care.

Wellbeing support: At the end of 2021 we launched a Health and Wellbeing Coaching service for young people in alliance with GRIT, a Hitchin-based charity. Our 2 new coaches are initially working through local schools and we know this additional support for children and teenagers will be really welcome.



Service Spotlight

In the last issue we featured an interview with Natalie Kelly, our new Social Prescriber. This time it's the turn of Clinical Pharmacist Andrew Wenham...

"I really like talking to my patients"

Who are you?

My name is Andrew Wenham and I am a Clinical Pharmacist. I am three years qualified as a pharmacist from Portsmouth University. As a pharmacist I get to use all my knowledge, whilst meeting and talking to people and trying to make a positive impact on their health.

How did you get here?

Since qualifying, I worked for three years as a community pharmacist, checking prescriptions and advising patients that came into the pharmacy seeking help. However, I missed the clinical aspects of the work, that is finding out how they were feeling and addressing their health needs more directly. My role in the Primary Care Network (PCN) adds that extra dimension to my work and means I am able to use my knowledge and build on my interests more.



What does a Clinical Pharmacist do?

There are five of us in the area, four of us working directly for the PCN and all linked to local surgeries. More than half our time is spent working directly with patients. Each of us has slightly different interests, skill sets and experience, so our jobs are all a little different. We try to use our respective skills to best support the surgeries and the patients' needs. Some of the clinical pharmacists can also prescribe. This requires us to get additional qualifications, which I am working towards.

A patient might come to us directly if they need answers to questions about things such as drug side effects, or the compatibility of two drugs, or how and when to take medications. We can also help with things like synchronising repeat prescriptions.

A patient could be referred to us by a doctor for a review or for updating their medications etc. We might also ring a patient if there are issues that need resolving, for example a pharmacy not being able to obtain a regularly prescribed medication.

We deal with medications related to hospital discharges and high-risk drug monitoring, including making sure regular blood tests are done on time.

Patients often have slightly longer appointments with the clinical pharmacist than they do with doctors, so there is time to talk things through and get a better idea of what is needed and what the patient thinks they need. I think patients appreciate this time being given to them. A patient-centred approach is really important.

The best part of your job so far?

It has to be patient interaction, which really matters to me. This post gives me the opportunity to have a real impact on patients' health and I feel like I am beginning to make a difference for some of them.

Is there a highlight you would like to share?

I thought the COVID clinics were great. They were really well organised and everyone was very appreciative. There was just a good atmosphere and it was a good way to meet patients that I might not come across again. Also, as a new member of the team, I got to meet staff from all the PCN practices.




Banish winter blues

Health and Wellbeing Coaching is available to patients of all ages through referrals from our social prescribers and through GP Plus, our local mental health service. This is provided by an experienced team at the Letchworth Centre for Healthy Living with whom we have worked for a number of years. Their Director Roberta Meldrum says 'Our 3 qualified coaches – including a primary school head, a former teacher and a former

district councillor – are helping people with often complex issues to formulate their own goals and take steps to achieve them. I am so impressed with the power of the coaching approach: by the end of their 12 sessions, clients will have learned and become accustomed to using a range of techniques to support themselves in future should they 'have a wobble'. It is remarkable how something so simple can make such a difference in people's lives!"

- The **Healthier Together** website is an online resource for families with a fantastic range of health and wellbeing advice available 24/7 at <https://hwehealthiertogether.nhs.uk/>.
- The **Healthy Memory Café** is a monthly meet-up for people with memory loss or dementia and their carers. These sessions offer a cuppa, chat, information and support from professionals, and are held in the Create Community Hub Letchworth from 10-12 on the last Thursday of every month. For more info contact **01462 792190**.
- **Hertfordshire Independent Living Service** (HILS) is a charitable social enterprise providing meals on wheels and other services to help older and vulnerable people stay happy, healthy, and independent at home. If you are struggling to look after yourself and would like some help, you can find out more on their website at <https://hertsindependentliving.org/> or by phoning **0330 2000 103**.

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HM Government

If you have any Covid-19 symptoms, however mild, take a PCR test.

nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119

NHS
Test and Trace

STOP COVID-19
HANGING AROUND