

YOUR VOICE, YOUR NEWS

Patients' Participation Group for the Sid Valley Practice

In this issue:

- A note from the Chair
- Stay safe in the sun
- NHS screening programmes
- Accessing health services

A note from the Chair



Hello, I am Chris Gill and would like to introduce myself as the new Chair of the Patients' Participation Group (PPG). Cathy Gunnell retired as Chair at our AGM in May—although she is still actively involved as a Group member. We are extremely grateful to

Cathy for the leadership she has given the PPG for many years—she leaves large shoes to fill. We also have a new Vice Chair in Gillian Mitchell. Gillian and I will hold office until the 2024 AGM. We also have three new members, Brian, Jan and Salma, who you can meet on page 4.

This is our third newsletter for all the patients of the Sid Valley Practice (SVP). We are the PPG: a group of volunteers registered as patients with the Beacon. Our aim is to represent your voice to the practice and to let you know what the practice is doing.

In this edition we are looking at topical issues that come to mind in the warmer weather: we are lucky that our new member Brian is an expert in skin sun exposure. We have a useful summary of the current free NHS screening programmes—so important for everyone's health. There is also a reminder on accessing health services efficiently and some useful links for local health and social care support services.



"It is great to see the newsletter being a regular part of the

communications to our patients. We hope you find this issue interesting and informative."

Joe Styck

Practice Partner

where you see a [blue](#) word, you can click for more information.

All views expressed are those of the author or the Patient Participation Group, not the NHS or Clinical Commissioning Group.



BEACON DEVELOPMENT

Click [here](#) for the latest press release confirming that the development to increase facilities at the Beacon now has the go ahead.

At a glance.....

Sid Valley Practice has announced plans to improve and expand facilities at the Beacon site, while re-locating the Blackmore site to Sidmouth Community Hospital in the town centre next year.

The expansion at Beacon will mean a staggering 16 new rooms will be available for patients and staff at the Beacon site in late 2023 – a significant increase to the capacity of the current practice and their ability to provide services.

The Blackmore branch surgery, which has a lack of safe and modern healthcare facilities, will re-locate to Sidmouth Community Hospital. The same services that were provided at Blackmore will be provided from the hospital.



ENJOY THE SUN

SAFELY

In this edition we meet PPG member Brian Diffey, skin sun exposure expert, who shares insights on how to stay safe in the sun.



When we found out that Brian is an [acknowledged expert](#), having actually invented the UVA Star Rating for sunscreen in conjunction with Boots, we asked him what we can do to keep ourselves safe in the sun.

“With summer upon us and rates of skin cancer - the most common human cancer - continuing to rise in the UK and especially here in the southwest, these are some of my favourite tips.”

Shade: the Sun’s ultraviolet rays are strongest around the middle of the day and if you’re planning time outdoors why not seek shade under a beach umbrella or a tree to enjoy your lunch.

Clothing: almost all summer-weight clothing provides excellent protection against the Sun and is generally more effective than sunscreen.

Wear a hat: a hat with a wide brim, such as a Panama, is very effective at protecting not only the top of the head but also the nose, ears and eyes. Wearing a hat is especially important for balding men, where the scalp is a common site for sun damage.

Sunscreens: apply sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher and a 4- or 5-star UVA rating. Sunscreen is important for protecting skin that can’t easily be protected by clothing, such as the face and backs of hands, and should be applied generously to vulnerable exposed sites like the shoulders if you’ve taken your shirt off.

“And finally, look at your skin at the end of a summer’s day. If it hasn’t gone pink or red then you can be confident that you haven’t had excessive sun exposure that day. Red, or sunburnt, skin is a marker for increasing your risk of developing melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer.”



Frederick McShaw is a local [Independent Prescribing Optometrist](#) and CL Senior Optometrist Glaucoma unit Bristol Eye Hospital. We asked Frederick to explain how exposure to the sun can affect your eyes and what you can do to help protect them.

Your local Optometrist is uniquely placed to give advice about your eyes and sun protection.

“The sun helps us sleep and helps build vitamin D essential for healthy bones and teeth. Children spending time outdoors helps their vision and helps prevent near sightedness so spending time outdoors is not just uplifting it feeds our bodies and our eyes.

When the sun shines, most of us know that we should protect our skin by applying sunscreen and limiting time in the sun. We also need to remember that our eyes need protection too from an early age. Wearing UV-blocking sunglasses means you can enjoy the amazing weather whilst reducing your risk of damaging your eyes.

UV radiation can over time damage different eye structures, which are needed for our vision, including the eyes’ surface tissue, cornea, lenses and macula. You increase your risk of developing eye cancers and cataracts each time you’re enjoying the sun without protective eyewear. Children and babies need to be wearing hats and sunglasses too. Those enjoying sports or workers who are out in the midday sun such as scaffolders, fishermen, surfers and skiers, all need to be reducing their risks due to repeated sun UV exposure.

It’s worth remembering that growths/lesions that change in colour, size and appearance may be malignant or benign. The sun’s UV rays can penetrate clouds all year round. UV coating is a safety measure. Ask your Optometrist or retailer for sunglasses with 100% UV protection or UV400. Wearing sun glasses means you and your loved ones can enjoy the sun safely and we all need a little sunshine, don’t we?”

Keep your eyes peeled for future NewsFlash editions which will bring you up to date with latest news between newsletters.



NHS Screening Programmes

NHS ENGLAND

Screening is a way of identifying apparently healthy people who may have an increased risk of a particular condition. The NHS offers a range of screening tests to different sections of the population.

Screening is run centrally by NHS England. Invites come from the NHS, not your GP, even if some of the actual tests are performed in your GP surgery. Likewise results come from national services who write directly to patients and GPs usually at the same time. Your GP can not get your screening results earlier for you.

The Practice may offer ad hoc tests to check things like your cholesterol or prostate blood test levels if we are worried about your risk for certain health problems. This may be referred to as a screening test but is very different from a screening programme.

This article focuses on adult screening.

Screening programmes for adults



[1 in 4 women](#) invited to attend cervical screening do not take up their invitation. [Cervical screening](#) is offered to all women and people with a cervix aged 25 to 64 to check the health of cells in the cervix. It is offered every 3 years for those aged 25 to 49, and every 5 years from the ages of 50 to 64. Ring 0800 802 8000 if you have missed an invitation.

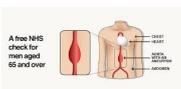


Nearly [4 in 10 women](#) do not take up their invitation to breast screening. [Breast screening](#) is offered to women aged 50 to 70 to detect early signs of breast cancer. Women over 70 can self-refer. Call 01392 262 600 if you have missed an invitation or want to self-refer.



[Up to a third of people](#) invited to take a home test to screen for bowel cancer didn't send their test back. Everyone aged 60 to 74 is offered a [bowel cancer screening](#) home test kit every 2 years.

If you're 75 or over, you can ask for a kit every 2 years by phoning the free bowel cancer screening helpline on 0800 707 60 60. One-off tests at age 55 are also starting to be sent out.



Abdominal aortic aneurysms (AAAs) are a dangerous swelling in the aorta. [AAA screening](#) is offered to men during the screening year (1 April to 31 March) that they turn 65. Men over 65 can self-refer. Call 0180 3655 441



From the age of 12, all people with diabetes are offered an annual [diabetic eye test](#) to check for early signs of diabetic retinopathy. [Diabetes](#) is the leading cause of preventable sight loss in the UK. Call 01392 241 000



There are several screening tests offered to pregnant women:

[screening for infectious diseases](#) (hepatitis B, HIV and syphilis)

[screening for Down's syndrome, Patau's syndrome and Edwards' syndrome](#)

[screening for sickle cell disease and thalassaemia](#)

[screening to check the physical development of the baby \(known as the 20-week scan or mid-pregnancy scan\)](#)

[diabetic eye screening if you are pregnant and have type 1 or type 2 diabetes](#)

And for new-born babies:

a [physical examination](#), which includes the eyes, heart, hips and testes

a [hearing test](#)

a [blood spot test](#) to check if the baby has any of 9 rare conditions



Get the best from your services

Different ways to access health services



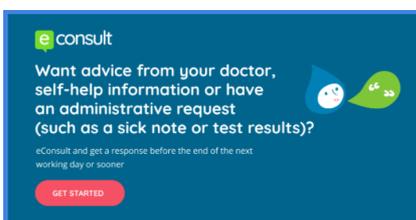
Practice Manager Andy reminds us about efficient ways of accessing your health services and we also take a look at other health and social care services available locally.

First up is the new **Community Pharmacy Consultation Service**.

“When you call us for an appointment, our Reception staff will ask you a few questions to make sure they are directing you to the right healthcare professional. Under this new approach, patients reporting one of a pre-defined list of minor ailments can be directed straight to a Community Pharmacist for clinical assessment and advice.

“If your symptoms could be resolved by a consultation with the pharmacist instead of the GP, you will be given a same-day referral to your nominated pharmacy. The pharmacy will then contact you and offer a same day consultation slot. This in turn frees up GP appointments for those people with more complex symptoms who need to see a GP. The aim is to direct patients to the most appropriate healthcare professional, which may be a GP, nurse, physio or a pharmacist.

“Pharmacists are qualified healthcare professionals and experts in medicines. They can offer clinical advice and over-the-counter medicines for all sorts of minor illnesses. If your symptoms do need a GP assessment, the pharmacist will contact the surgery.”



“Then there is the **eConsult**, available online, 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, on the Practice website. It’s simple to use and you are guaranteed a response within 24 hours.

This isn’t for emergencies, and if you enter information that the system recognises as a possible emergency, the system will stop and tell you to phone an emergency number. You can also access general advice on a variety of health problems.”

How does it work? It’s a three step process.

- You complete a simple form about your problem of request
- Your GPs decide on the best treatment for you
- The Practice responds with advice, a prescription or an appointment

If you leave the system before your form is submitted, the Practice will not know. So if the system closes your form and tells you to call Emergency Services, the Practice will not know this either.



There’s more to health and social care services than our GP Practice and Sid Valley Help operates a signposting service with a website and telephone and email contacts that provides information on local, county and national health and social care services. You can go to their [website](#) or use these contact points:

01395 892 011 07378 964 521 sidvalleyhelp@gmail.com

You can also [volunteer with SVH](#)— there are opportunities to suit every skill set. Click [here](#) to read an NCVO research briefing about the benefits of volunteering.

Your PPG—your voice

A reminder of your PPG members



Chris Gill
Chair



Gillian Mitchell
Vice Chair



Jan Barrett



Michael Brittain



Salma Chowdhury



Brian Diffey



Sharon Drew



Cathy Gunnell



Andy Hosking
Practice Manager



Ann Liverton



Rebecca Selby



Joe Stych
Practice Partner



Ann Worthington