



## HOW READING GPs ARE PLANNING TO TRANSFORM YOUR CARE

People across Reading should start to see changes at their GP surgeries, thanks to the launch of six primary care networks (PCNs) across the borough on 1 July 2019. Since then, groups of surgeries have been working together to decide how they will spend extra government funding going directly to PCNs on services for you.

In their first year, PCNs will be able to use this funding to:

- employ a social prescribing link worker
- employ a clinical pharmacist
- offer more convenient appointments to patients during extended hours

PCNs covering 30,000 patients will get around £137,550 in funding in their first year, rising to £181,202 for those with 50,000 patients, towards the extra costs of taking on additional staff and running the networks.

The networks are also expected to:

- help shape healthier neighbourhoods by working more closely with the council, which funds public health, leisure and social care services

- engage, liaise and communicate with patients, including 'seldom heard' groups



- make more use of technology
- move some hospital care into the community, closer to the patient
- use Population Health Management (action based on detailed data about local health needs).

From their second year, PCNs will get government funding towards the cost of employing:

- physiotherapists
- physician associates
- paramedics.

**Although it is early days for the PCNs, Healthwatch Reading has started to hear their latest plans.**

**Our special issue includes:**

- **details of which primary care network your GP surgery is part of**
- **latest plans from each PCN on transforming patient care**
- **a guide to various professionals you could see instead of doctors.**

### READING CENTRAL PRIMARY CARE NETWORK

**GP surgery members:** Abbey Medical, Eldon Road, Chatham Street, Russell Street, Pembroke, Kennet, Melrose and Reading Walk-In Centre

**Number of patients:** 50,789

**Latest update:**

**First Contact Physio:** Surgeries are taking part in a pilot of this scheme from September-November 2019 in which patients with joint, bone or muscle problems will be able to see a physio at the surgery instead of needing to see a GP first. (See box: 'What is a first contact physiotherapist?')

**Closer working:** Pembroke, Melrose and Kennet are in talks about sharing IT and phone lines.

**Workforce:** Pharmacists are currently employed by Pembroke, Kennet, Russell Street and Chatham Street. Melrose, Kennet, Pembroke and the Walk-In Centre and Pembroke also employ nurse practitioners to assist with the workload.

**Technology:** Patients can book appointments online to see a clinical pharmacist, as well as GPs, at Pembroke Surgery. The Walk-In Centre finally launched an electronic prescribing service in July 2019, which allows a doctor to electronically send prescriptions, including repeats, to a patient's chosen pharmacy. This service has been available in other Reading surgeries for some time.

## UNIVERSITY PRIMARY CARE NETWORK

**GP surgery members:** University Health Centre, Whitley Villa Surgery

**Number of patients:** 31,034

**Latest update:**

**Social prescribing:** The PCN has advertised for a social prescriber whose role will be to provide holistic support to people who are isolated, or who have mental health, long-term conditions or complex social needs.

The job ad says they will have their own caseload, be supervised via weekly meetings with a GP and be paid up to £25,000 a year.

**Workforce:** The healthcare team already has additional roles in place, of three practice

pharmacists, one physician associate, and two paramedics, with a third paramedic due to start in October. (See box, What is a community paramedic?)

**Technology:** Saturday appointments and nurse appointments have been added to the online appointment booking system, which elsewhere has mostly only allowed people to book an appointment with a GP, on weekdays. The practice has also started offering online consultations via the Patient Access app.

**Blood tests:** Saturday appointments with a phlebotomist are now available for working patients unable to visit the surgery on weekdays.

## TILEHURST PRIMARY CARE NETWORK

**GP surgery members:** Tilehurst Village, Grovelands and Westwood

**Number of patients:** 35,766

**Latest update:**

**First Contact Physio:** Surgeries are taking part in the First Contact Physio scheme, as described earlier on the first page of this newsletter

**Workforce:** Grovelands employs an urgent care practitioner, pharmacist and paramedic as well as doctors and nurses.

**Medication:** A pharmacist is carrying out an audit across all three surgeries to see which patients on anti-inflammatory drugs need to manage their symptoms and differently to avoid risks to their health. (See box 4: What is a clinical pharmacist?)

## READING WEST PRIMARY CARE NETWORK

**GP surgery members:** Tilehurst, Western Elms and Circuit Lane surgeries

**Number of patients:** 41,438

**Latest update:**

**Workforce:** Patients at Western Elms may be offered an appointment with a nurse practitioner, paramedic, pharmacist or community physiotherapist. Many issues that people need help with can be dealt with by other health professionals. Patients can be matched with the one that is best suited to their problem. A GP leads this multidisciplinary team (MDT). The Potteries (Tilehurst Surgery) also has a diverse workforce, with three practice paramedics and two pharmacists.

**Buildings:** Building work has now come to an end at Western Elms, providing consulting and treatment rooms for the expanded MDT. One of the rooms is a designated 'charity room'.

Talking Therapies and Age concern are already using this to see local clients. An extension was opened at The Potteries in the summer, which created space for a new treatment room, two consulting rooms and two multipurpose admin areas.

**Appointments:** Western Elms and Circuit Lane surgeries have merged their patient lists and IT systems and may offer patients pre-booked appointments at either surgery.

**Patient participation:** The Patient Participation Group (PPG) at each surgery has followed their GPs' example to now work more closely together. The PPGs held a combined meeting for patients from all three surgeries in August to explain PCNs and hosted a guest speaker from Talking Therapies, the Berkshire-wide NHS mental health service. A further joint meeting is planned for November.

## CAVERSHAM PRIMARY CARE NETWORK

**GP surgery members:** Balmore Park Surgery and Emmer Green

**Number of patients:** 31,356

**Latest update:**

**Social Prescribing:** The PCN has been talking to local organisations (Reading Voluntary Action and Age UK Berkshire) that have run social prescribing in our town for the past few years about how this could work for their patients.

(see box, What is a social prescriber?)

**Workforce:** The number of pharmacists working in the surgeries is going to increase from one to three, supporting both practices with medication reviews and review of some long-term conditions.

**Patient participation:** The two patient participation groups are set to hold joint meetings in the future.

## WHITLEY PRIMARY CARE NETWORK

**GP surgery members:** London Street, Milman Road, South Reading and Shinfield, and Longbarn Lane.

**Number of patients:** 34,964

**Latest update:**

**First Contact Physio:** All five surgeries are taking part in a pilot of this scheme, as described above.

**Workforce:** Milman Road Surgery has employed a GP on a part-time basis whose main role will be to take part in multidisciplinary meetings with other professionals such as

community nurses and social workers, to agree care plans to help patients who have multiple needs. Such meetings can potentially avoid the need for patients to visit lots of different people and repeat their story.

**Technology:** Milman Road Health Centre has just started to offer video consultations, for patients who register on the 'NextGenGP' app.

**Extra services:** Longbarn Lane is now offering minor procedures for patients at the surgery. This includes removal of warts, cysts, and in growing toenails.

## THE EXTENDED HEALTHCARE TEAM EXPLAINED

### What is a social prescriber?

A social prescriber, or social prescribing link worker as they are also known, takes a holistic approach to a person's wellbeing, and can:

- connect isolated people to community resources, such as clubs and activities
- signpost people to local charities for expert advice, support or practical help
- encourage or coach people with long-term conditions to gain confidence or make lifestyle changes.



### What is a physician associate?

A physician associate usually has a science degree, and must complete a two-year postgraduate diploma covering general medicine. They can:

- see patients and carry out physical examinations
- diagnose problems, under the direct supervision of a GP
- help develop a plan for the patient's issue
- give advice to patients on preventing ill health.

They may offer longer appointment times of up to 20 minutes, but they can't currently write prescriptions or order X-rays for patients.



## What is a clinical pharmacist?

A clinical pharmacist employed by a GP surgery or PCN, can:

- see patients who have long-term conditions to check their medication
- review patients who are on lots of different drugs
- authorise repeat prescriptions (if they have a prescribing qualification)
- visit care home residents to check their medication and educate staff
- check that vulnerable people in their own homes are using medication properly
- check that people discharged from hospital have the right medication in place
- give people advice on common minor illnesses and signpost to pharmacies
- educate GPs and other clinicians about safety and effectiveness of medicines
- offer longer appointment times than a GP.



## What is a First Contact Physiotherapist?

Also known as an advanced level physiotherapist, they can:

- hold appointments at the convenient location of a GP surgery
- get the patient quick access to help, the first time they seek an appointment for a musculoskeletal problem, such as back pain
- offer longer appointment times than a GP, of around 20 minutes, so the patient gets time to explain their issue and feel listened to
- perform clinical tests during the consultation
- give patients advice and exercises to manage the problem
- directly refer the patient for a course of physiotherapy, a scan, x-ray, or specialist help, if the problem persists or is more serious.



## What is a community paramedic?

Also known as a primary care paramedic or urgent care practitioner employed at a GP surgery, they can:

- carry out home visits of patients who are very unwell or immobile
- see minor injuries and illnesses, or symptoms like chest pain
- perform and interpret ECGs (to check your heart)
- offer patients longer appointments than GPs
- carry out specialist health checks and reviews
- help people avoid unnecessary hospital admissions.



## What is a nurse practitioner?

Also known as an 'advanced nurse practitioner', this role is carried out by experienced nurses who have gained a Master's. They can:

- see patients, taking detailed histories and carrying out examinations
- diagnose the patient's problem
- refer the patient for further investigations when needed
- prescribe medicines within their competence (if they have gained their independent prescribing qualification)
- take a holistic approach to patients' needs
- make independent decisions, but usually as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

