

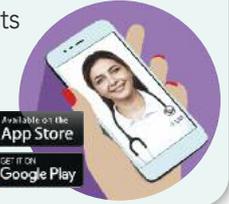
Victoria Medical Centre

**It only takes a moment.  
When you need a GP.**

Free on the NHS to patients of this GP practice.

**livi**

See page 3 for details



## Teething Problems...

**O**n 10th August 2021 the new Victoria Medical Centre (VMC) formally opened to patients.

Like any such enterprise it has experienced teething problems, although in this case they were exacerbated by significant challenges – first the development was hampered by the pandemic and second because it required the simultaneous amalgamation of three separate clinics: Green Street, Enys Road and Bolton Road.

We are proud of the achievements to date in this respect and the enduring excellent reputation of our medical staff. It has however, taken time to make all the necessary process changes and we are acutely aware, as a result of feedback from the Victoria Patient Participation Group (VPPG), of the dissatisfaction being widely expressed over some aspects of the service; these include car parking difficulties, accessing the VMC by telephone, lack of organisation at Reception, the website and other issues.

Allowing for the fact that all medical practices across the UK have experienced difficulties coming through, and possibly out the other end of the pandemic with a recognised different approach to the provision of medical services - the intention here is to explain how we are working with the VPPG to address each of these problems and later in this Newsletter give clear instruction on the various ways you can effectively contact us.

## The Car Park



**D**uring construction of the VMC, on 11th March 2021, the VPPG had a meeting with the Developers to discuss the recommendations they had submitted concerning car parking, based on the patient requirements. These had mostly been accepted, but two had not. A pedestrian entrance from Victoria Drive, not in the original plans, had now been included at their request, but only as steps, not with a slope as well for people who needed wheels to aid their mobility; unfortunately, the local Council has turned this down because of some protected tree roots.

The second issue was the width of the individual car spaces, which the VPPG had asked to be wider than the standard to aid certain people to get in and out of their cars. This again had been blocked by the Council. There are four spaces reserved for Blue Badge holders, but at the meeting, the VPPG managed to agree a further five spaces which would be clear of other vehicles on one side, for which priority for physically restricted people and those with infants would be given.

At the time of opening of the VMC on 10th August 2021 the car park had yet to be signed; in the interests of patient safety and best use, the VPPG led the design and installation of signs to establish good traffic management, now in place.

## Reception

Reception is open from 8am each Monday to Friday. The ground floor Reception area is now, for the most part, staffed by two people who will be able to discuss the availability of appointments for that day as well as

over the coming weeks. One person will be behind the desk available for queries or the making of appointments. To alleviate the queuing that occurs at the busiest time of the day – early morning – one of the two on duty will be in the waiting area with a laptop to check patients in and direct them to the correct waiting area for their appointment.

In addition, a screen is available on the wall to the left of Reception to enable patients to sign themselves in. Appointments with a Nurse will usually take place on the ground floor. Please go straight to the first floor for all GP appointments - where a separate Reception area will check you in and advise the GP that you are waiting.

# VMC Website

[victoriamedicalcentre.co.uk](http://victoriamedicalcentre.co.uk)

The VMC website is now fully functional and should be used for access to all information including online access as detailed below.

The websites for Green Street and Bolton Road are no longer operational. The deletion of the Enys Road website is proving more difficult as it sits with another provider. In the meantime, it is not being updated and should not be used.



# Correspondence

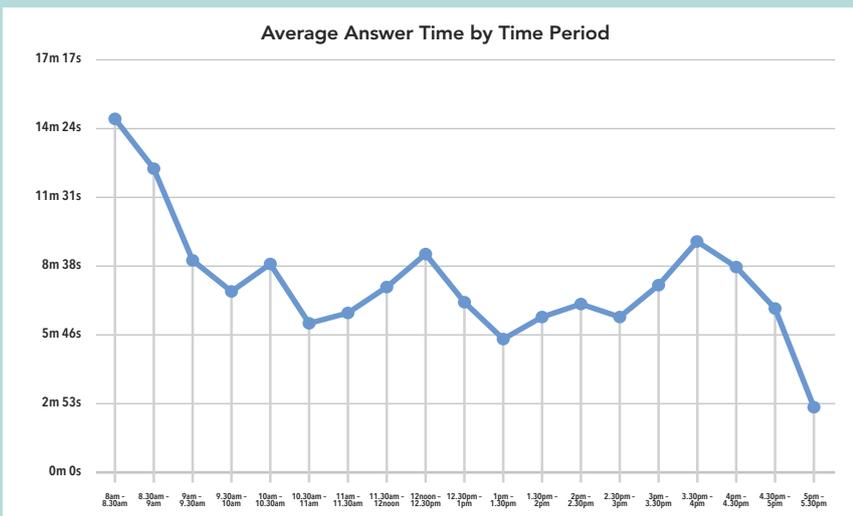
At the time of opening in August, the Admin team were coping with all levels of correspondence that came into the VMC – a volume running at 3,000 plus emails to be dealt with at any one time covering any manner of queries/correspondence that came in for the 13 GPs registered at the VMC, as well as record keeping and covering the telephones. To provide a speedier response and also ensure all queries go straight to the right place to be dealt with, the VMC has recruited a team of PAs whose hours have been aligned to the team of GPs ensuring all their correspondence is identified quickly and dealt with centrally, leaving the balance of queries to be dealt with by the Admin team.



# Telephones

In addition to the above, we have recruited a total of 11 new staff since 6th June 2021 and the actions outlined above have, in turn released the Admin team to focus on telephone answering. Over the last couple of months the monitoring has shown an improvement in the call wait times, it is still not consistent and where we would like it to be which is the commitment of no more than ten minutes. There is a system now in place that triggers all staff to focus on answering telephones when the registered wait time reaches 10 minutes. The graph below shows the pattern through December...

Average Answer Time by Time Period



It is inevitable that UK wide initiatives, such as the Covid vaccine programme and, in part, the latest emphasis on boosters, will have an impact on volume calls to any Practice.

# Flu Clinics

The flu vaccine this year, is being given at the walk in Vaccine Centre in the Beacon and you should not therefore call for a specific appointment but simply 'walk in', having checked opening times of the Clinics on the website.

Equally, if a patient has an appointment at the VMC, they can receive the flu vaccine during that appointment. Please check the website for up-to-date information on any specific flu clinics.



With reference to the vaccine campaign, we would like to take this opportunity to **thank all of the volunteers** (many of whom are members of the VPPG or supporters of the VMC) who have helped us to deliver this challenging programme on a daily basis in the Beacon Centre.

# And so to how we can work together to make the systems work from both sides:

**If you have any immediate worrying concerns, then the first action to take for any serious urgent medical need is to call 111 or 999.**

## Appointments

The first thing we would ask you to do is to consider whether you really need to speak to a GP urgently?

In terms of an appointment with a GP, 'urgent' in this sense means that you feel the need to speak to a GP on that day, or soon after. For that to occur you should use one of the following:

## Telephone 01323 407900

The lines are open at 8am and the day starts with appointments available from 8.30am to 5pm daily. If your appointment is not urgent for that day, there is the opportunity for you to book an appointment in the next six weeks. You will be advised at the time whether that appointment will be a telephone consultation – face to face appointment or an alternative. We would like to suggest that you call the VMC after 10am for non-urgent appointments to help spread the volume of calls for that day.

Don't forget that you can access your **Covid Pass** for 'travel' and 'entry to venue' purposes on the **NHS App**.



## Online application

### Engage Consult



This is a service available to all between the hours of 7am to 11am, enabling you to send admin queries to the VMC and request a telephone consultation with your GP. Requests for a telephone consultation will be accepted if there are appointments available for you to receive a response that day. If your request is denied it will simply mean that the appointments for that day have been taken and you will need to try again the following morning - or telephone the VMC as detailed above.

If you open the website for the Victoria Medical Centre, you will be directed to a main page with menu bars shown listing from Online Consultations to Emergency Information. If you click on 'Online Consultations' you will see the full instructions to download, sign in to and use Engage Consult. Once logged in you can then request help from the surgery.

Having stated that this is a service to all, we fully accept that, for a variety of reasons, some patients may not be able to fully manage an online application. Engage Consult has the facility for one person to sign on behalf of another and Reception will be able to help you register.

## Patient Access, the NHS App and LIVI

These are all free and can be downloaded from the App Store (for Apple) and Google Play (for Android).

Once you are registered and can sign in, a limited number of VMC GP appointments are then available for you to book via Patient Access and the NHS App. It must be stressed that these will, in the first instance be a telephone consultation for the same day or a future date depending on availability. The time given cannot be guaranteed as it depends on the GP programme for that day.

With regard to LIVI, the appointment will be with a remote GP who will have access to your medical records. The actual appointment will be held by the GP arranging to speak to you by video and they will talk you through the setup for this.

If you have a phone that will allow an App to be downloaded, but you are having difficulty in this respect, then Reception will be happy to assist you with the registration process.



# New Services Available

**Dementia Care** and **Social Prescribing** are two new services now available to all VMC patients and the full details are given below.

## Dementia Care

Dementia UK is an outside organisation that provides one-to-one support for carers looking after people with Dementia, to seek specialist advice, support and clinical guidance about dementia, in confidence.

Admiral Nurses have the skills, knowledge and experience to talk about, amongst others: understanding the diagnosis, practical tips and advice for caring for a loved one with dementia, transition into nursing or residential home, or stays in hospital, understanding symptoms and changes in behaviour, and managing your own feelings. Gary our allocated Admiral Nurse has a base at the VMC.

If you are caring for someone living with Dementia and are interested in this service, please call 01323 407837, alternatively you can email [sussexanclinic@dementiauk.org](mailto:sussexanclinic@dementiauk.org)

Gary is still taking on new Referrals via his platform and continues to provide the service Face to Face and via telephone calls.

## Social Prescribing

Kay Johnson is our new Social Prescriber and offers Face to Face Appointments as well as Telephone Consultations.

Social Prescribers can support patients with health and well-being, leisure activities, social networks, housing, education and training, debt and finance support, volunteering and employment.

If you are interested in being referred, referrals are still being accepted into the service.

Kay is based at the Victoria Medical Centre, but also travels out into the community.

You can Self-refer yourself via emailing the Social Prescribing team on [social.prescribing@nhs.net](mailto:social.prescribing@nhs.net)

Alternatively you can speak to the VMC Reception team in order to speak to someone about the service, the administrator can then refer you on.

## Repeat Prescriptions



These can obviously be ordered by using the paper listing that is handed out when each prescription is fulfilled by your nominated Pharmacy.

We would however like to encourage all patients to use the online facility available through **Patient Access** and the **NHS App**.



## Additional Improvements Achieved...

...as recommended by the VPPG during the development phase on Behalf of Patients

- Automatic doors provided at the main entrance.
- Doors open 30 minutes before the first appointment.
- Reception opens well before first appointment.
- Discreet area at Reception to discuss confidential matters.
- Check-in screen advises if more than two patients are waiting ahead of you.
- Provision of some higher than normal chairs with two armrests to assist those who have difficulty getting up.

**Further major issues are currently in hand.**



## Victoria Medical Centre

We hope that the information given above goes some way to explain our efforts to improve the service provided, helps to make your contact experience more effective and continues to recover the reputation of the Victoria Medical Centre as a facility we can all be proud of – *thank you for your support to date.*

The content of this Newsletter specifically covers areas of dissatisfaction brought to the attention of the VMC by the Victoria Patient Participation Group (VPPG) and fulfils the need to ensure that issues are dealt with and developments communicated by the VMC, who provide the factual data. The VPPG will continue to monitor the services provided and future Newsletters will continue to address such issues, as well as keeping patients updated on future services at the VMC.