



Victoria Medical Centre

Beacon/Victoria Drive

We are rebranding our branch site. It is now called VMC – The Beacon Practice and is no longer part of the Digital First brand.

The branch is an extension of the Victoria Medical Centre, with the same phone number, email, and website. You can attend either site for appointments and queries.

A major driver in the circulation of this first Newsletter for a while, is to explain to our patient population that, for the past 12 months, at the same time as thankfully emerging from the stresses that could be attributed to the Pandemic, we have been dealing with the various issues that came out of the Care Quality Commission review at the end of 2022 – the results of which have been widely reported. We have addressed those issues head on, and later in

this Newsletter we respond to specific criticisms received, to underpin a level of excellence in the service we provide going forward to the 29,500 patients registered with the VMC.

As the first full communication for a while, it was felt that it would initially be helpful to once more go over the basic aspects of dealing with the Practice and hopefully make the systems work well from both sides.

We start with the various ways to contact us...

Telephone – 01323 407900

We are delighted with the progress we have made here in reducing the answer times to an average of three minutes, by recruiting more staff and training staff in other areas to support the need when necessary. We have also received very positive feedback on the call back system now in operation which is set up to give you the opportunity to register for a call back from the surgery by pressing 9 using your telephone keypad when you are in any position up to and including 6 in the queue. You will know that this request has been accepted as you will be

advised to simply hang up and wait for the call rather than hanging on. If you have registered for the call back, please remember to have your phone with you to receive the call.

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. You may be asked if it is convenient for you to attend the Beacon Centre where a GP, Nurse and Phlebotomist are on duty. 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. The Practice is a teaching practice and occasionally trainee GPs, Paramedic and Nurses may, as part of their training, be required to sit in with their trainer GP/Clinician during consultations with patients. You will always be asked if you consent to this prior to your consultation.



Patient Access – the NHS App

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.

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.



Reception

For clarity, Nurses' appointments, and GP appointments are held on both the ground and first floors and there are Reception areas on both floors.

The respective Receptions are open from 8am each day Monday to Friday and will, for the most part, be staffed by two people who will be able to answer any queries and discuss availability of appointments for that day, as well as over the coming weeks.

If you have an appointment, then on arrival:

You can check in at either of the two Reception areas, but please consider:

The ground floor Reception, because of its location, may have a queue and may be dealing with any number of issues raised by each patient ahead of you in the queue – especially first thing in the morning.

The first-floor reception will be more accessible and, if you feel that the reason behind your request for an appointment is sensitive in nature, then the space on the first floor will allow more privacy in that respect.

You will not be disadvantaged in any way using the first floor, as opposed to the ground floor, Reception area.

All Physio appointments are now held in the Private Suite on the first floor (through the double doors to the left of the stairs, or right out of the lift) – there is no need to check in, simply take a seat in the waiting area and the Physio will find you.

Until recently, an automated system was available on both floors for automatic check in on arrival. Regrettably a software malfunction has developed so, for the moment, these screens work intermittently and registration with the Reception area is required if they are not working, so that you know where to be seated for the Nurse or GP to find you.

Returning to the automated check in system, we are now reviewing a superior system for checking in that will only require the day of your birth, the year of your birth, and your gender, to identify you and find your appointment. It is our preference for an automated system to be used in this way, primarily to remove the need for you to queue. *More news on this in the next Newsletter.*

We are also conscious of the queue that forms both outside and inside as the Surgery opens each morning. At the same time as reviewing a new automated check in, we are also looking at a system that would enable you to take a number and take a seat immediately upon entering the Surgery – and then respond to your number being called – again with a view to removing some of the queuing process.

General Enquiries

Please see above regarding Engage Consult, which has a facility to submit general enquiries.

In addition, you can telephone 01323 407900 – the enquiry line is open from 10.30 – 5.30 or you can email on Admin.vmc@nhs.net

Flu Vaccine

Flu vaccines are still available - please contact us for an appointment if you require one.

COVID Vaccine

The Covid vaccine programme for 2024 will commence during April. The vaccine will be offered to all those patients over the age of 75 and any patients that are classed as belonging to a vulnerable group. Patients will be contacted direct by NHS England.



Cancellations



If you make an appointment and then cannot attend, please inform us as soon as possible, as we will be able to offer the appointment to someone else.

In January alone we had 403 people not arriving without prior notification across all appointment types amounting to 67 wasted hours and a financial impact of £12,090.

Repeat Prescriptions



There is a box on the wall outside of the main entrance to the VMC for paper submissions although patients are now encouraged to submit their requests online using **Patient Access** and the **NHS App** – see above.

Requests by telephone - 01323 407900, option 3 – is open daily Monday to Friday, 11am to 3pm.

Online Consultations

This is a service available to all between the hours of 8am to 2pm enabling you to use this messaging service to ask for help about a non-emergency medical problem or for general advice from your doctor or other members of the Practice team. By signing to use this service, you can get advice from the Practice without the need to travel to the surgery or use the telephone. You will need to have an email address to sign up as that address will be used as your Username for Engage Consult and any replies to the request you have sent will be sent to this email address - including any alert that there is a message waiting for you.

How to sign up

Go to the VMC website lead page and click on 'Online Consultation' - do not click on 'Online services' or 'Patient Access'.

Click on the 'Request help from the surgery' box. On the next screen click on 'sign up' and you will then be taken through the process.

Take your time to enter your details correctly as that will enable the Practice to check that they can match any request against the correct records.

At the end you will need to tick the boxes that show you agree to the End User Licensing Agreement Policy. Then you're ready to go once you have added a Password for your own security.

How to use Engage Consult

Go to the VMC website lead page and click on 'Online Consultation'.

Click on 'Request help from the surgery'.



Using your login details, add your Username and Password and click 'Login'.

Click on your name.

Choose the service you want to send your message to.

Response

If you have asked for help from the surgery:

The capacity for same day responses differs between surgeries. At the VMC access to Engage Consult is available from 8am to 2pm. Your request will be accepted if there is capacity available for the surgery to respond to you that day with a nominated telephone consultation. If that capacity has been reached, then you will be advised to use an alternative method to contact the surgery or try Engage Consult again the following day.

If you have submitted an admin query:

You will be notified at the time of submission, whether your query has been accepted and when you can expect a response - which may take longer than 24-hours.

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 with registration to enable you to make use of this service.

VMC Website

www.victoriamedicalcentre.co.uk

is fully functional and should be used for access to all information including online access as detailed here.



Measles - Are you protected?

As you will see from the CQC response overleaf, we are completely up-to-date with children's vaccines, so we are now addressing our adult population.

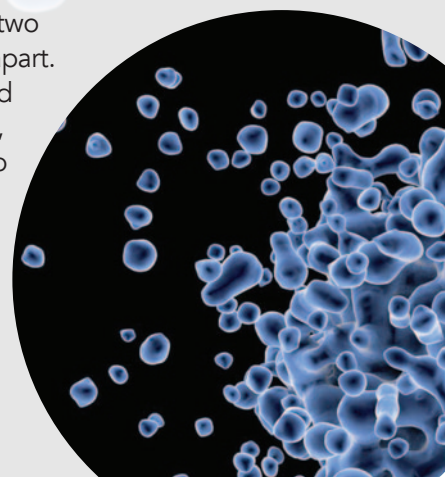
You need two doses of the MMR vaccine for lifelong protection. If you haven't had both doses, you could be at risk. Contact the surgery if you have concerns about not being up to date.

Older adults

Adults born in the UK before 1970 are likely to have had measles, mumps, and rubella as a child, or to have had single measles or rubella vaccines which were used before MMR was introduced in 1988.

If you are unsure whether you have had these

infections or the vaccines to protect against them, you can ask your GP to vaccinate you. You will need two doses, one month apart. Even if you have had the vaccines before, you will not come to any harm from having extra doses as your immune system will recognise and quickly destroy the vaccine viruses.



CQC Report

While we appreciate that some of the headings listed below may not be of interest to individual patients, it is hoped that this will assist the overall understanding of the depth of the Review subjects addressed as well as the range of activities managed daily in the running of a successful Practice. The *italics* under each heading highlight the criticism levied – which is then followed by the action taken.

Safeguarding Systems

We didn't have a clear Policy.

That policy is now in place, supported by dedicated staff.

Staff training

There was no clarity on the training taking place

We have invested in all levels of staffing to ensure a good level of competence is achieved at each level as well as extending the ability to cover other areas as required – e.g telephone coverage detailed above

Staffing levels

There was no detailed plan to cover staff shortages due to sickness

This has now been addressed through recruitment and the training referred to above

Medical reviews – Cholesterol and Statins

We were not meeting the targets required for regular reviews.

Our pharmacists have now been fully engaged on this exercise – and, with the introduction of weekend clinics we are addressing this issue specifically.

Medicine reviews

Insufficient numbers were being carried out in the CQC approved format.

This has now been fully addressed.

Significant events and Complaints Procedure

Incidents covered under this heading were not being a) recorded properly or b) addressed.

This has now been fully addressed and we are up-to-date.

The complaints/compliments/feedback is: sxicb-esx.vmccomplaints@nhs.net

Children's vaccines

Historically Child Health used to book the vaccines and the introduction of two sites (VMC and Beacon) had caused a disruption to the flow of information.

This has now been addressed and we are fully up-to-date.

Cervical smears

We were below target.

We introduced weekend clinics and are now ahead of target and have been asked by Public Health to pass on the learning to other Practices.

Last 12 months of patient's life and carers

Adequate plans were in place but not audited correctly to show evidence.

That has now been addressed.

It is also worth mentioning that, on average, we receive between 400-600 pieces of correspondence from other medical sources daily – all to be read, reviewed and filed appropriately or action taken.

Survey

To validate our perception of the work listed above and to ensure we are aware of any additional concerns you may have, a survey will follow shortly which we would encourage you to complete. The results will be shared in full, together with any action taken, in the next Newsletter.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

We have an active Patient Participation Group (PPG), the purpose of which is to ensure that our patients are involved in decisions about the services provided by the Practice. Further information about the PPG will be included in the next Newsletter.

Social Prescribing

Social Prescribers can support patients with health and well-being, leisure activities, social networks, 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.

You can self-refer yourself by emailing the Social Prescribing team on 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.