**Dear Patients,**

We are pleased to announce that with effect from 1 November 2020 Frome Valley Medical Centre will be operating an on-the day appointment system.

The Coronavirus pandemic has impacted on our lives in many ways. During the initial days of the pandemic we were forced to change to a virtually on the day appointment system. We found that this system allowed us to be able to respond more quickly to fluctuations in demand, ensure our patients were seen by the most appropriate service for their needs and allowed patients to be seen on a day when their need was greatest. After consultation with our Patient Participation Group, we have therefore taken the decision to move to a full on the day appointment system.

**What does this mean for you?**

On the day you decide you want an appointment you phone the surgery on 01454 772153. Our trained team of care navigators will guide you through a series of questions aimed at establishing your problem and matching this with the best person to support you to access treatment in the most efficient way possible. This could be a duty (emergency) GP, your normal GP, one of our nursing team or a range of allied healthcare professionals.

**What happens on the day?**

If you require a GP or emergency appointment our trained care navigators will arrange a telephone consultation for you. The GP will discuss your problem over the phone in the same way as they would do for a face to face appointment. On occasion, they may ask you to provide a photograph either ahead of, or during the consultation if you are able. This will be fully discussed with you at the time if required.

The vast majority of problems can be resolved in this way meaning that you do not have to leave home or work to visit the surgery. However, if the GP feels you need to be seen in person, they will arrange for you to visit the surgery later the same day for a face to face appointment.

**What if you have an on-going relationship with one GP?**

We would like to encourage all patients to maintain consistency of care for any on-going health issues and therefore it is important for you to telephone the surgery on the day your GP is in the practice. This information can be found in the accompanying leaflet, and available on our website.

**Why are these changes necessary?**

We believe this system will be much more efficient for you and will allow you access to your GP on the day that you need to be seen. It will help patients avoid long wait periods of time to see their GP, or booking appointments just in case their symptoms do not improve, possibly on a day they later find out they are unable to attend. In turn, this helps us reduce missed appointments from patients who fail to attend and ensure that all our appointments are used by patients who need them. Patients will get their problems resolved much more quickly.

**What other options are available to you?**

We find that many patients who contact us do not need to be seen by a GP. Many other resources are available to you which you may find are more appropriate for your needs:

* Over the counter medication
* Advice from local pharmacist
* Resources available on-line from the NHS website
* Phoning 111 and asking advice from that service
* Minor Injury Clinic
* Phoning 999 in any potential life threatening emergency

On telephoning the surgery you may be asked whether you have tried any of these solutions. In some cases it will be important that self-help is trialled first and an appointment only made if your problem has not resolved.

**To aid patients who need a consultation, we politely ask all patients phoning with a general enquiry to do so after 11:00am.**

**eConsultations**

If you are unable to telephone the surgery, or have a non-urgent routine enquiry you may find that contacting us via our eConsult facility better for you. This can be accessed via our website. Your enquiry will be dealt with at the surgery and either an appointment made for you, or the information passed to the relevant member of our team to action as appropriate.

**Nurse and Routine Appointments**

The majority of nurse appointments, and routine appointments such as smear tests, will continue to be pre-booked. Please continue to make these appointments in your normal way.

**Will I be guaranteed an appointment?**

It is our expectation that the vast majority of patients will be able to access an appointment on the day they telephone the surgery. However, on occasion, you may be asked to phone back the next day, for example if your GP does not work that day or demand is exceptionally high and your problem is not urgent.

**Feedback**

We are launching this appointment system initially on a three month trial period. We would welcome all feedback, good or bad, regarding how you have found the system to work for you. Please email bnssg.feedback@nhs.net or alternatively the Frome Valley Patient Participation Group on fvmcppg@gmail.com.