

Dear Patients

I want to share with you a few important updates.

First and foremost, coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine is here!

Suffolk GP Federation and Unity Healthcare have worked together to set up a mass vaccination centre at The EpiCentre in Enterprise Way, Haverhill Research Park, to serve the entire population of the town and surrounding areas, which is approximately 50,000 people. This has been an enormous piece of work behind the scenes, and I'm sure you will share my appreciation for the unsung heroes who have been involved in this ambitious set-up.



### **Some Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **Q Why are you not doing vaccinations at the surgery?**

A The nature of this vaccine is that 1,000 doses need to be administered every week. We do not have sufficient space to offer appointments at this level at the Clements Surgery (or any of our satellite sites) while adhering to social distancing measures and continuing the general work of general practice.

#### **Q When will I get my vaccination?**

A NHS England has produced a priority system, and patients will be contacted when it is their turn. The practice has no influence over this, so please do not contact us.

#### **Q How do I know that my invitation to make an appointment for vaccination is genuine?**

A You're right to be wary because there have been a number of scams. You will never be asked to pay for this vaccination, nor for personal or financial details. COVID-19 vaccination is provided free of charge by the NHS.

#### **Q Why The EpiCentre?**

A We needed a location with sufficient space, suitable storage facilities and good parking that was available for use in a prominent location. We are very grateful for the offer from The EpiCentre to use their excellent facilities.

#### **Q Is COVID-19 vaccine safe?**

A All of the COVID-19 vaccines have been through rigorous testing. They have been developed relatively quickly because doctors and scientists from across the world have been working on it as a global priority. No shortcuts have been taken.

**Q I don't think I'm at risk, so why should I have the vaccine?**

A Being vaccinated against COVID-19 is a fully tested and safe way to reduce the risk of dying or becoming seriously unwell from this potentially deadly disease. Vaccination, sanitation and clean water are the main reasons why we are living longer than we did in medieval times. Many people have mild symptoms, but it only takes a look at the daily figures from Government briefings to see alarming numbers of hospital admissions and deaths. What is often under-represented is the number of people who have the infection leading to longer term, often disabling, symptoms known as "long COVID" which can affect all ages. There is currently no treatment for this longer-term complication. The best chance we have of getting life back to normal is mass vaccination as soon as possible.

**Q Why are you not doing more, faster?**

A We are limited by the amount of vaccine but anticipate that the programme will continue to accelerate as supplies become more readily available.

**Q Do you have enough staff to do deliver the vaccination programme?**

A Yes, but this is another reason why it is being done outside of the surgery. Suffolk GP Federation has back office resources which has enabled a large number of additional people to sign up to help administer the vaccine and the clinic, with supervision from a duty clinician. We will do our best to continue providing (as close to normal as practicable) GP services as we have done throughout the pandemic via the Unity Healthcare team based at the Clements Surgery.

**Q How can I help?**

A When invited for vaccination, please respond promptly and make sure you attend your appointment. Avoid spreading misinformation online and try to reassure your friends and neighbours. Be kind and courteous to the staff who are working tirelessly to help you. Continue to support one another as you have done so well throughout this pandemic, which a real credit to the people of Haverhill.



## Other news

An invitation to provide feedback to a public consultation regarding the formal closure of the Camps Road site has already been circulated. Please feel free to contribute your views. We are not using this site (other than as a shared coronavirus “hot site”). It would be better used if community services and/or the Haverhill Family Practice could occupy it.

We continue to be available to help you as best we can with your medical needs. As the vaccination campaign gears up, we may ask you to bear with us as we juggle these responsibilities. However, we will continue to try our hardest to provide you with the excellent access and support that you have grown more accustomed to since we implemented our new system. We continue to recruit new staff (as resource allows), so you will see growing numbers of new faces, voices and names. Please make them welcome!

**Dr David Brandon and the Unity Healthcare Management Team**