

## New telephone system

**We are pleased to announce that both surgeries will shortly have a new telephone system. This will allow us to handle more calls and have one number for each surgery dedicated to patient enquiries, because a direct-dial facility for NHS callers and suppliers will free up the switchboard. These changes are in response to patient feedback from the last satisfaction survey and the suggestion boxes, and also from the priorities agreed with our Patient Participation Group.**



If you can't get through on the usual number at any time, please call the other site and staff will be happy to help you. Please let them know which site you wish to be seen at if this is for an appointment.  
Firs House 01223 234286  
Telegraph Street 01954 251180

We will only know the new system's actual launch date a week before it goes live. The two surgeries will switch on different dates; Cottenham will be first. (Histon may not be able to change until very early January 2015.)

There will be a short period of time — possibly up to two hours — on the day of the switch-over when the number will not be available. If affected, patients should call the other surgery. It won't be possible to put a message on the phones or divert calls because the number will temporarily go out of service in the short period from the analogue line being removed and the digital line being set up. Both surgery numbers will remain the same.

The new system will have much more capacity than the old with double the number of lines. Together with other changes to our procedures, telephone access in general will be vastly improved. As a result we have opted not to have a large queuing system, which will save patients (and the Practice) the cost of holding on, but it will be possible to queue a small number of calls.

If you call out of hours you will no longer need to ever dial a second number — our system will automatically send calls to the right place at the appropriate time, which is outside our core hours of 8.00am – 6.00pm and lunchtimes.

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### Newsflash — Blood pressure readings: Did you know?

If you are taking medication for blood pressure you should have your blood pressure checked every 6 months. Once a year you should have a routine blood test to check your kidney function.

Do you think you may be due your blood pressure check? If so please call the practice and we will be able to help you. If you take your own blood pressure at home, please bring these readings with you to your appointment.



Dr. Michael Grande

Dr. Simon Poole

Dr. Emma Baldwin

Dr. Joanne Pritchard

Dr. Simon Robinson

Dr. Emily Manning

Dr. Claire Aho

Dr. Juliet Usher-Smith

Firs House Surgery

Station Road, Histon, CB24 9NP

Tel: 01223 234286

42 Telegraph Street

Cottenham, CB24 8QU

Tel: 01954 251180

Website: [www.firshouse.com](http://www.firshouse.com)

#### Normal surgery hours

Monday to Thursday

Morning 8.30 – 10.40

Afternoon 15.30 – 17.30

Friday

Morning 8.30 – 10.40

Afternoon 15.10 – 17.10

#### Reception opening hours

Histon

8.00 – 13.00 and 14.00 – 18.00

Cottenham

8.00 – 12.00 and 14.00 – 18.00

#### In this issue

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Join our Virtual Patient Group to receive updates and be notified when our newsletter is available. Register on our surgery website or at reception.

## New Telephone System *continued from page 1*

The new system is ISDN digital and incorporates a management system. This means that for the first time we will be able to measure our performance in handling calls. We will use this data to ensure enough staff are in place at the right time to deal with the calls and minimise waiting.

We have less staff working at our Cottenham surgery, but the new system will allow your call to transfer to Histon if the wait at Cottenham is too long. Staff will know which site you called by looking at on-screen information, but please say which site you would like to attend for an appointment as you have the option of attending either.



## Mental health and the festive season

*This article has been edited to fit the newsletter from a longer and more detailed article. It was written by Claire Harris, BSC MSC CPsychol AFBPsS, Mental Health Promotion Facilitator, Cambridgeshire County Council. The full version, which includes more information, can be found on our website and in all waiting rooms at the surgery.*

**With darker evenings and Christmas fast approaching, this is often a challenging time of year for both our physical and mental health. There are lots of things we can do to stay mentally well over the festive period. The *Mental Health Foundation* recommends the following tips:**

**Plan ahead** - This can save you stress, time and money. Make list of jobs, presents and food to buy. Shopping online can cut out the stress of a busy supermarket.

**Drink sensibly** - Although a few Christmas drinks can help you relax, it's important to remember alcohol is a depressant, and drinking excessive amounts can cause low mood and irritability. By drinking moderately, you will be better able to sustain good mental and physical health.

**Eat well** - What we eat has a direct effect on our mood, and Christmas is often associated with over-indulgence. Where possible, maintain a good balance of fruit, vegetables, carbohydrates, protein and omega 3 sources in order to be in good physical condition and have sufficient energy. Maintaining a healthy diet and weight can improve your mood and can work towards preventing symptoms of lethargy and irritability.

**Be active** - Physical activity releases the feel-good chemicals, endorphins, which help you to relax, feel happy and boost your mood. By being active such as cycling to work, walking in the park, or joining in with Christmas games, you can benefit from reduced anxiety, decreased depression and improved self-esteem. Recent research has shown that regular exercise can help to boost our immune systems, enabling us to better fight off colds and flu viruses that are prolific in winter months.

**Get involved** - Face-to-face communication has been shown to improve our mental and physical wellbeing, as this interaction produces the hormone, oxytocin, which can benefit our immune system, heart health and cognitive function. Seeing our friends and family more often can help to boost both our own, and others', mental health.

**Relax** - Christmas can be a very busy and stressful. Feelings of being under pressure can produce symptoms of anxiety, anger and difficulty sleeping which, if prolonged, could have a long-term impact on your mental health. By exercising regularly or practicing mindfulness — a combination of meditation, yoga and breathing techniques — you can help to both alleviate the symptoms of your stress and gain more control when coping with difficult situations.

**Do Good** - Helping others is good for your own mental health. It can help reduce stress, improve your mood, increase self-esteem and happiness and even benefit your physical health.

**Sleep** – The nature of the Christmas festivities can cause disruption to our sleep routine, e.g. through early starts or late nights' socialising. There is mounting evidence on the link between the quality of your sleep and your mental health. There are several steps you can take towards achieving a better night's sleep: attempting to get back in to your regular sleep routine as soon as possible after the party period, consuming less alcohol during the festivities, implementing regular exercise into your weekly routine, and taking measures to alleviate your stress.

**Stay in touch** - Talking can be a good way to cope with a problem you've been carrying around in your head. If something is worrying you, whether it's work, family problems or other feelings, just being listened to can help you feel supported and less alone.

## Local support services for mental health

If you are experiencing difficulties with your mental health there are many local support services you can access, either yourself or via your GP. The earlier you get support and treatment, the sooner you can begin to recover.

### Phone

- Samaritans — 08457 90 90 90
- Lifeline — Freephone confidential support service 0808 808 2121

### Online

- Living life to the full — [www.llttf.com](http://www.llttf.com)
- Mood Gym — [www.moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome](http://www.moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome)

### Ask your GP about the following:

- Improving access to psychological therapies — Guided support
- Reading well: Books on prescription — Self-help books
- Exercise referral — Supported exercise programme
- Arts on prescription — Weekly art groups for people with mild anxiety and depression
- Perinatal Mental Health Service — For pregnant mums and up to the child's first birthday

### Self-referral

- Invigorate — Physical and leisure activities for mental health service users in Cambridge (Sports Development Team) 01223 457532
- Mind in Cambridgeshire — 01223 311320/01480 470480
- Lifecraft — Support for mental health service users 01223 566957
- Centre 33 — Support for all people under 26 years old 01223 316488
- Richmond Fellowship — Employment support 01223 301032
- Make do and mend — Creative workshops for better mental health 01223 521634
- St Columbus — Therapy and counselling 01223 357221
- Red2Green — Support with the community and volunteering 01223 811662
- CIAS — Mental health support service 01223 218500

## Help us to help you – Repeat prescriptions

- Please order your prescription in good time; the surgery needs 48 working hours to process your request. We will of course help you if you have run out of your medication.
- If you are asking for something that is not on your repeat list, please telephone us 24 hours later to check if the GP agreed to prescribe your item or not, as you may need an appointment.
- If you are ordering early, please let us know. For patient safety we don't allow prescriptions to be done too early, but if let us know the reason for this (e.g. you are going on holiday) to avoid your request being rejected automatically.
- Register to order your prescription online, this is convenient and secure.
- If you are unable to order online, please try to order your request in writing, clearly ticking the items you want. It can be confusing when patients use a cross as some patients put a cross by what they don't want and some patients put a cross by what they do want. As you can imagine this could easily lead to an error!
- If you are given a hospital prescription please try to take it to the hospital pharmacy. They are not accepted at non-hospital pharmacies, and in any case we will still need 48 working hours' notice.
- Taking a prescription reorder over the telephone is not ideal as it can take a long time if a lot of drugs are being ordered, especially when the patient is not sure of the name of the drug and only knows what it's used for. However, we don't want to take away phone access for patients who find these other methods difficult. Therefore we will take calls for repeat prescriptions, but only after 10am in morning surgery and after 3pm in afternoon surgery. This is to make it easier for patients who need an appointment or urgent medical attention to get through.

# Focus on asthma

## Do you ever think, "It's just asthma"? • Have you ever forgotten to use your preventer inhaler • Have you ignored worsening asthma symptoms?

Most people don't think they're at risk of a potentially fatal asthma attack, but did you know these statistics?

- 75% of people with asthma are not in control of their symptoms
- Because of asthma more than 200 people are admitted to hospital every day — three of these will die
- There are 5.4 million people with asthma in the UK, which means asthma affects one in five households
- One in 11 children has asthma, making it the most common long-term medical condition — on average there are two children with asthma in every classroom in the UK
- There were 25,073 emergency hospital admissions for children in the UK in 2011-12 — on average 69 per day

Although there's no cure for asthma, there are effective medicines that allow most people to control their asthma so that it doesn't interfere with daily life.

As asthma is a lifelong condition and attacks can happen unexpectedly. It's important that you take your asthma medicine as directed. Your doctor or asthma nurse should have explained how to use your inhalers properly, so that every dose gives you the most benefit.

If you use an asthma action plan you are **four times less likely** to have an attack that requires emergency hospital treatment. Fill this in with your asthma nurse. It will help you to know what medicines to take and when, how to recognize when your asthma symptoms change and what to do when this happens.

It is important to keep in contact with your GP or Asthma nurse so that any concerns can be dealt with. You can do this in a number of ways: face-to-face consultations, a questionnaire that you can complete at the surgery or online via our website, or during a telephone consultation.

We generally ask that you have such a contact at least once a year. We are hoping to put reminders on your prescription forms. Please don't ignore them — don't become one of the statistics.

Lucy Blatch & Marie Claire Hiscock — Asthma Nurses

## Online and SMS Services

We would like as many patients as possible to register for online services so that you can order prescriptions, book or cancel appointments and change your contact details online. This is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We would also like SMS and email consent so that we can send you appointment reminders, contact you if we need you to come in for a review, and send you a hospital appointment when we refer you to the hospital. You can register for all of these things by visiting reception or via the practice website. From next April you will also be able to access your summary care record online.

We are planning to run a couple of sessions to help patients who are having difficult registering for online services and also to help set this up via an app. If you would be interested in attending please email us at [firs.house@nhs.net](mailto:firs.house@nhs.net) or leave your name and a contact number with reception. We will contact you once we have set the dates. This is likely to be on a Saturday and an early evening, and in small groups.



The practice is now running the **Family & Friends Test**. This means you can fill in a comment card at any time to let us know if you would recommend us to your family and friends and the reason why. This replaces the usual annual satisfaction survey.

We are keen to receive your feedback and will review the cards each month.

## Clinical governance half-day closures

The Surgery closes for occasional half days to enable staff to concentrate on development and training. Cottenham surgery will close from noon and Histon from 1.00pm on Thursdays 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014, 19<sup>th</sup> March and 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2015. You will still be able to call the surgery if you need to see a doctor.

**Message from Cottenham Care Car Scheme** Hopefully, by the next newsletter we will have news of the start of the Histon and Impington Social Car Scheme. Before then they need more volunteer drivers and a part-time coordinator. Cottenham Care Car who, for the last three years have done a wonderful job of looking after a number of Histon and Impington villagers, are also looking for volunteer drivers from the Cottenham area. For information on both call 01954 251929. Don't be shy!