



The Lighthouse Medical Practice Patient Participation Group (PPG)

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Penny Briggs - Editor

www.lighthousepractice.co.uk

Issue No. 36

The Patient Participation Group consists of patients of the surgery who work together with the Practice doctors and staff to help meet and improve the needs of patients.

In this edition...

We wish all our patients and the practice team **'Best Wishes for a Healthy 2026'**.

Winter brings the risk of outbreaks of many common illnesses, and we include articles by our GPs with advice on what to do to try and help your symptoms and when to seek medical advice.

As we start the new year, maybe now is the time to think about a resolution for change to a healthier you. The interesting article on Lifestyle medicine by Dr Patel (on page 3) can help us achieve this with even simple changes to our daily behaviours.

The PPG, on behalf of all the patients, give a grateful *Thank You* to every one of the practice team at the Lighthouse for all their care and support throughout 2025.

Practice Team News – Welcome to Dr Minil Patel



Some of you may already know me, or perhaps we have interacted through our online consultation service, but for those who have not, allow me to introduce myself.

After completing my GP training in Buckinghamshire, I moved to Eastbourne in January last year. I was born and raised in North London and completed my medical degree at King's College London over nine years ago.

One of my key interests within medicine is lifestyle medicine, a field that focuses on using evidence-based lifestyle changes to prevent, manage, and even reverse chronic diseases. It addresses areas such as nutrition, physical activity, sleep, stress management, avoiding harmful substances and fostering positive social connections.

I am a member of Plant Based Health Professionals UK, an organisation that promotes plant-based nutrition and lifestyle medicine. Through this work, I have had the opportunity to speak at public events, appear on podcasts, and even feature in a documentary on Amazon Prime. I am passionate about preventative

medicine, particularly in type 2 diabetes, obesity, healthy ageing, and other metabolic conditions, all of which are strongly influenced by lifestyle factors.

Outside of medicine, I enjoy staying active through strength training and running - you may spot me on the seafront or at Eastbourne Park Run in Shinewater with some of my colleagues. **If you have not tried the Park Run yet, I highly recommend it: it is free, friendly, for all abilities and happens every Saturday at 9am.**

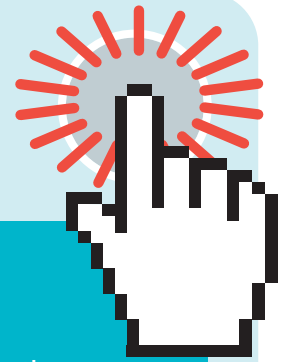
Beyond fitness, I love travelling, hiking, nature, history, and football, and I am passionate about animal welfare. I share my life with my girlfriend and our dog, follow a vegan lifestyle, and volunteer at animal sanctuaries whenever I can.

I have settled into life on the coast really well, thanks to the wonderful team at the practice. **I look forward to meeting more of you in time and hope to contribute to the health and wellbeing of our community for many years to come.**



Get in touch online - *it's easy!*

Dr Jeremy Durston, Practice Executive Partner



Why contact us digitally?

We would love you to get in touch with us using your computer, tablet, or smartphone. Here is why:

- **It is convenient** - no need to wait on hold on the telephone or visit reception
- **It is accurate** - your message comes through exactly as you write it.
- **It is flexible** - you can contact us when it suits you, and we can respond directly to you.
- **It is secure** - you can safely share photos, documents, and medical information
- **It keeps everything together** - your messages automatically update your medical record

How to contact us online

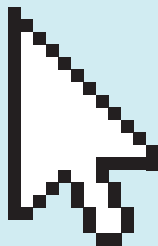
Visit our website www.lighthousepractice.co.uk and click '**Contact us online**' on the homepage.

This takes you to **Engage Consult**, where you can:

- Send messages to the practice
- Request help from doctors or nurses
- Order repeat medications
- Upload documents and photos
- Share readings (blood pressure, weight, blood sugar, etc.)
- Request sick notes
- Get help with anything relating to your medical care

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 8am - 6:30pm

You do not need to register for an account (though we recommend it). All your requests become part of your medical record.



Other ways to connect digitally

NHS App (*recommended*)

We strongly encourage all patients to download the NHS App – find out more at:

www.nhs.uk/nhs-app With it you can:

- View your medical record, test results, and hospital clinic letters
- Request repeat prescriptions
- Send us messages

Top tip: Switch on notifications so if we reply to a message you have sent us, you will get a notification.

Patient Access

Some patients prefer **Patient Access** - this is similar to the NHS App and was available before it. Speak to our reception team if you would like to set up an account.

Important: Please do not email us

We no longer accept email communication from patients for security and record-keeping reasons. Please use one of the methods above instead.

How will you contact me?

When you get in touch via our website, we will usually reply directly to your message - a bit like email.

We may also contact you by text or email with:

- Replies to your messages (just click the link to respond)
- Appointment booking links (click to choose and book your slot)
- Reminders and booking links for blood tests and annual check-ups for your health conditions
- Medical questionnaires that help to ensure your treatment is safe and appropriate
- Offers of medical help and treatment that we believe is relevant and important for your personal health
- Important practical information such as practice closures and service updates.

If there is no link but you need to contact us, simply visit our website www.lighthousepractice.co.uk, and click 'contact us online'.

Need help getting started? Our reception team are happy to help you set up any of these services – just ask.

Please remember if you cannot contact us online, you can still phone or visit our reception.

Your Feedback

Your feedback is important to the practice, so we would appreciate it if you could complete a **Friends and Family** feedback text after your appointment at the Practice.

NHS 111

Before calling an ambulance, you can call 111 for advice.

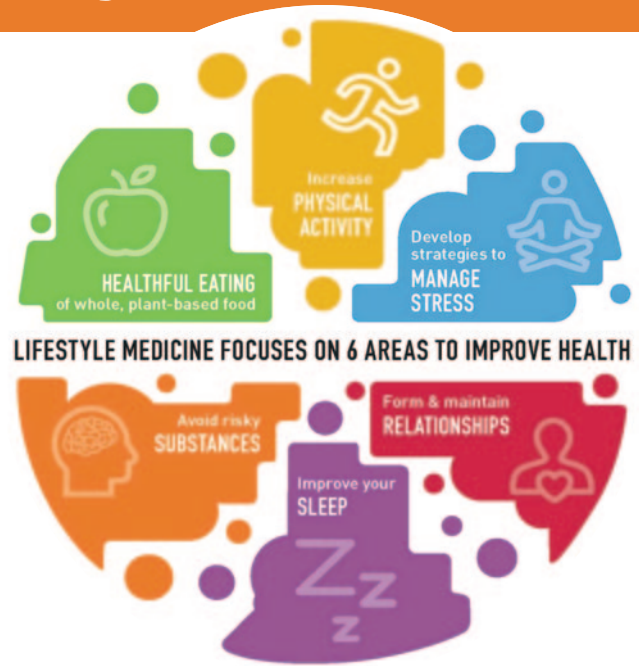
Have you heard of **Lifestyle Medicine**?

Lifestyle Medicine is a medical specialty that uses evidence-based lifestyle interventions to prevent, manage, and even reverse chronic diseases.

According to the Global Burden of Disease report, around 70% of all deaths worldwide are caused by chronic conditions such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. Remarkably, over 80% of these diseases are linked to modifiable lifestyle factors: what we eat, how active we are, whether we smoke or drink excessively, and how we manage stress and sleep.

The six pillars of lifestyle medicine target these everyday behaviours as powerful tools for prevention and healing. Research consistently shows that a balanced, whole food plant-forward diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, combined with regular physical activity, good sleep, positive social connections, effective stress management and avoidance of harmful substances, can prevent up to 80–90% of heart disease and type 2 diabetes cases, reverse early stages of these conditions, and prevent up to a third of all cancers.

What is amazing is that change does not have to be dramatic. Going for a brisk 30 minute walk each day along the sea front, swapping sugary snacks for fruit, adding more fibre to the diet, or practising five minutes of mindful breathing can all have measurable benefits for blood pressure, blood sugar, and mood.



(©2026 American College of Lifestyle Medicine. All rights reserved. lifestylemedicine.org.)

Small, consistent changes add up, improving health, reducing medication needs and enhancing quality of life. I am truly passionate about lifestyle medicine, and my goal is to empower people to see the difference they can make to their own health: living longer, healthier, and happier lives in the process. The science is clear: our daily habits are some of the most powerful medicines we have.

Dr Patel will inform us more about the six pillars of lifestyle medicine in the next newsletter.

Self-referral Services

For a full list and contact details, visit: www.lighthousepractice.co.uk

Did you know that there are some free NHS health services you can access without needing an appointment with your GP?

This self-referral could help you find the care you need quicker and more easily than going through the surgery.

Here are a few of the services, but a full list can be found on the **Lighthouse Practice website**:

• **Continence services**

Continence bladder and bowel services for adults age 19+. Also for children (but need to self-refer to your health visitors or school health team first).

• **Drugs and Alcohol Service**

Change Grow Live provide help for those who are using alcohol or drugs such as opiates, cocaine, cannabis, benzodiazepines, ketamine, MDMA, steroids and amphetamine. They offer one-to-one or group work support, substitute prescribing, detox, and rehab programmes.

• **Physiotherapy**

If you have a problem that you feel physiotherapy would help with, you can self-refer, and the East Sussex Musculoskeletal (MSK) team will be in contact with you to arrange an appointment.

• **Sexual health**

The local sexual health clinic can help with many aspects such as, STI testing, HIV, contraception, pregnancy advice, and cervical screening.

• **Young carers**

East Sussex Young Carers supports young carers aged 5-18 who are responsible for caring for a family member with a long-term illness, disability, mental health, or substance misuse issue. They aim to ensure young carers have access to the support they need and know they are not alone. Following assessment, they can offer a range of short-term interventions including signposting, one-to-one support, in school support and workshops.

Winter illness advice *Dr Jeremy Durston*

Winter brings the risk of outbreaks of **coughs, colds, sore throats, flu, covid-19, RSV, diarrhoea and vomiting bugs, conjunctivitis, sinusitis, ear infections, and other common infections.**

These common illnesses can cause a significant increase in people asking for medical help from their GP surgery and A&E.

Understandably, people do not like feeling ill. They may not be able to afford to take time off work or are due to go on holiday soon.

They worry that they might spread their infection to those close to them. They hope their doctor can give them something to make them better as fast as possible.

For most of these infections, there is very little that a doctor can do to make them go away any faster. Antibiotics do not generally help, because these infections are mostly caused by viruses, and antibiotics cannot treat viruses.

The good news is that for most people, these types of infections will get better on their own without any treatment, usually within a couple of weeks. Infectious coughs can sometimes take up to six weeks to fully resolve.

These links have lots of helpful information to help you to help yourself and to understand when to seek medical advice:

- www.lighthousepractice.co.uk/alerts/advice-about-respiratory-infections
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/respiratory-tract-infection

The NHS website is a great resource with lots of really helpful self-help and self-management information: www.nhs.uk/conditions

If you are not sure you need medical help or can safely manage your condition at home yourself, check using **NHS 111** online: www.111.nhs.uk

More serious illness

There are occasions when it IS appropriate to seek prompt medical advice.

Symptoms that can indicate a more serious lung infection include:

- shortness of breath affecting your normal daily activities
- shivering uncontrollably
- drowsiness
- dehydration
- confusion
- chest pain when breathing in and out

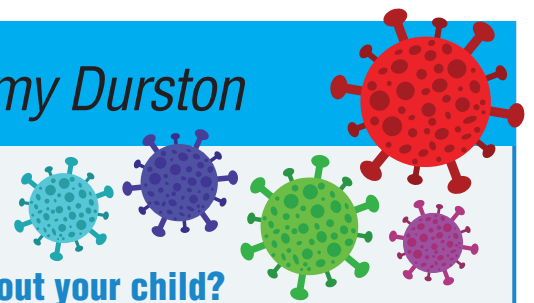
Seek prompt medical advice if you are concerned.

If your immune system is suppressed due to taking specialist immunosuppressive

medication or you have an underlying condition affecting your lungs or immune system that puts you at increased risk of a serious infection such as pneumonia, please seek prompt advice.

If you have any of the following, then please seek prompt advice if you are unwell, as they can increase the risk of developing more serious infections:

- Long-term conditions including neurological, liver, kidney, lung and cardiovascular diseases
- Diabetes
- Immunosuppression
- Severe obesity (BMI of 40 or more)
- Age over 65 years
- Current pregnancy (including up to two weeks after delivery)
- Children under six months of age



Worried about your child?

For children, www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk has excellent self-help and self-monitoring advice for a wide range of common conditions and childhood infections.

Help from your high street pharmacy

Most pharmacies can also offer prescription medicine including antibiotics for some conditions, without you needing to see a GP or make an appointment. This is called Pharmacy First.

See: www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/pharmacies/how-pharmacies-can-help

Conditions they can offer prescription medicine for:

- **impetigo** (aged 1 year and over)
- **infected insect bites** (aged 1 year and over)
- **earache** (aged 1 to 17 years)
- **sore throat** (aged 5 years and over)
- **sinusitis** (aged 12 years and over)
- **urinary tract infections (UTIs)** (women aged 16 to 64 years)
- **shingles** (aged 18 years and over)

Your local pharmacist can tell you about treatments you can buy over the counter to help relieve the symptoms of these infections, but these will not make the illness go away any faster.

Many pharmacies can also provide oral contraceptive pills free of charge without a doctor's prescription. They can also review your contraception so a nurse appointment for your annual pill check is not needed. You can find a participating pharmacy here:

www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/pharmacies/find-a-pharmacy-offering-contraceptive-pill-without-prescription/

Thank you to **Carol Voake** and **Malcolm Finnis**

The PPG and practice would like to give a grateful thank you to Carol Voake and Malcolm Finnis who have both been long serving PPG members since it started in 2006 and special friends of our practice. Both Carol and Malcolm have done a lot for the PPG and contributed to all the meetings and PPG initiatives over the years.

Carol has been a founder member of our PPG and her contribution cannot be overstated. Not only has she served as treasurer, but she has also worked onsite as our liaison, making herself available to patients and staff alike, always ready to help and support. Carol has attended countless meetings, worked on numerous projects, and has been a constant, reassuring presence throughout the PPG's journey. Her commitment to the Practice and to our patients has been extraordinary, and she leaves an indelible mark on the group. We will miss her enormously and wish her a very happy and well-deserved retirement.

Malcolm Finnis joined the group when it was set up and although had a break, has served as Chair and Secretary. He wrote a history of the group when we attained 12 years and a century of 100 meetings. Malcolm has also decided now to retire from the group.

Both Carol and Malcolm have been involved in various sub-groups throughout the time including helping organise flu clinics and played a leading role



in running a major Health and Well Being Event at the Winter Gardens with over forty stands in 2009. They also put on two Stroke and one Falls Event locally.

Carol and Malcolm, a big thank you to you both for all you have done for the practice and PPG, we will miss you!

Message to all **carers** and those being **cared for**

Pauline Barron, Carers Lead, Lighthouse Practice

Did you know that as a **Carer** you have certain rights under the **Care Act 2014**?

- Carer Assessment, which looks at the impact of your caring role
- Flexible working request (after 26 weeks of continuous work) to unpaid time off during emergencies - The Employment Rights Act 1996
- Also, the Equality Act 2010 protects from discrimination
- As a Carer you and/or the person you care for may be entitled to extra financial help contact the Hastings Advice and Representation Centre (HARC) for further information call: **01424 428375** or visit: **www.harcuk.com**



If you have registered at the practice as a Carer, you will also be eligible for a flu jab. I encourage patients that are not already registered as a Carer at the practice to do so. Also, remember to apply for your East Sussex Carers Card (CRESS) It identifies you as a Carer in an emergency, sets an Emergency Respite plan plus provides discounts and special offers.

I continue to speak with Carers, and I am available for telephone consultations. Please just contact me via Engage Consult or Reception and they will book you in for a conversation with me.

- www.cftc.org.uk/resources-for-carers/what-are-my-rights
- www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/carers-rights-day
- www.cftc.org.uk/help-and-advice/get-a-carers-card

Measles Cases (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) prompt MMR vaccine call

Dr Rosamund Clift, *GP Partner*
www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has reported an increase in measles across the country and is encouraging people to check that they and their children have had two doses of the MMR vaccine.

The free MMR vaccine is a safe and effective way of protecting against measles, as well as mumps and rubella. There has been a recent change in the childhood immunisation schedule and from 1st January 2026, some children will now be offered MMRV vaccine as part of the routine schedule now, protecting against varicella (chickenpox) as well. It is important for parents to take up the offer of the MMRV vaccination for their children, when offered.

Find out more about the new vaccine at:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/mmr-vaccination/mmr-vaccination-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers.

If children and young adults have missed these vaccinations in the past, it is important to take these up now from the practice, particularly with the increase in cases.

Check your child's Red Book to see if they have received their MMR vaccinations as scheduled or check with the practice if you are unsure.

All adults who have not had two MMR vaccine doses or if they are considered to be at high risk of exposure, are eligible to receive these and can request it from the practice. However, it is a live vaccine so should not be given to pregnant women or those who are immunosuppressed. Individuals born before 1970 are likely to have had all three natural infections and so will have developed some immunity to measles.

Measles usually starts with cold-like symptoms including a high fever, sore, red, watery eyes, coughing, aching, and feeling generally unwell. Then a blotchy rash (brown or red on white skin but may be harder to see on brown and black skin) usually appears after the initial symptoms a few days later. Some people may also get small spots in their mouth.

Anyone with symptoms is being advised to stay at home and contact the practice or NHS 111 for advice.

NHS Flu and Covid-19 Seasonal Vaccinations

There is still time to get your two jabs if you are eligible

You can book your jabs via the national booking site: www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/vaccination-and-booking-services

You can also call 119 to book an appointment. The appointments are with various local pharmacies and usually must be booked in advance to guarantee your vaccine.

The last available appointment date on NBS will be 31 January 2026 for COVID-19 but will remain open for flu only appointments until 31 March 2026.

Children aged 2-3 can still be booked for nasal flu vaccines at the surgery.

The PPG on behalf of all the patients give a grateful Thank You to the South Downs Health & Care team who ran the flu and Covid-19 booster vaccinations clinics from October through to December 2025. We were pleased to have received particularly good feedback from patients on these clinics.

www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/flu-vaccine

Eligibility for Flu vaccinations include:

- are aged 65 or over
- have certain long-term health conditions
- are pregnant
- live in a care home
- are the main carer for an older or disabled person, or receive a carer's allowance
- live with someone who has a weakened immune system
- Frontline health and social care workers can also get a flu vaccine through their employer.

Time off work

If you need to take any time off work, you do not need a doctor's note for the first seven days.

See: www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/getting-a-fit-note

If you do need a fit note, please request it via our website stating the reason for the note, and the start and end dates you would like on the note, and confirm you have already self-certified off sick for more than 7 days.

Did you know? Doctors can also issue a 'May be fit for work' note, recommending amended duties, altered hours, workplace adaptations or a phased return to your employer – see: www.acas.org.uk/fit-notes-and-proof-of-sickness/if-a-fit-note-says-might-be-fit-for-work



Blood Pressure readings provided to the Practice

A reminder to patients who have been asked by a GP to provide their blood pressure checks to the practice that the link (set by the IT systems provider) only lasts for seven days from when it is sent out, so they need to start recording their readings promptly. **After seven days the link expires.**

Positive feedback from patients is that they find it easy to use.

Would YOU like to join the PPG or Virtual Group (VPG)?

We are looking for *new members* to join our friendly team

We meet monthly and constructively discuss feedback from patients and that received from our Virtual Group on their NHS experiences recently at the practice, the Eastbourne hospitals or elsewhere. The practice team also shares news on changes with us. We are a friendly group of people and are very keen to welcome patients interested in joining us to get your perspective on what is important to you to get more out of your NHS appointment.

If you would like to learn more and contribute to the PPG and wish to attend our monthly PPG meetings, then please email: liz.walke@aol.com

We also offer a Virtual Group for patients who would like to provide feedback by email.

IT For You Training at Eastbourne Library

Eastbourne Library offers free IT training on computer skills to everyone aged 18 and over on a one-to-one basis with our volunteers.

You choose what you want to learn. We can help you use the internet to search for information and services, set up, and use an email account, discover Microsoft Office, and stay safe online.

We specialise in helping people download, register, and use the NHS app to access your medical records and order prescriptions and can show you how to use Engage Consult to contact the Lighthouse surgery online.

You can use our computers or bring your own laptop, tablet, or smartphone.

Sessions are for one hour and are available every week at the following times:

- Tuesday – 12noon to 2.15pm
- Wednesday – 10.15am to 12.30pm
- Thursday – 10.15am to 12.30pm
- Friday – 10.30am to 12.40pm

To book your free session call 0345 60 80 196 or visit Eastbourne library. You do not need to be a library member.

Praise for the Practice

“Recently, the doctor asked me to complete a four-day blood pressure check using an app they sent via my phone. It was such an easy app to use, and I am grateful our surgery is so technologically advanced, in many other ways as well.”

Surgery Information

Opening Hours

Monday to Friday 8am - 6pm

if you need to telephone us.

Engage Consult, the online medical symptom-taking tool allows you to get a message to the Practice.

Out of Hours

If you need assistance between 6pm-6.30pm on weekdays, please call the out-of-hours service on **0300 555 5252**.

At all other times, please call the **NHS on 111** (*all calls are free*).

Communication to patients on our practice changes

Please keep the practice up to date with your email address as well as your mobile and landline telephone numbers to enable them to contact you and send updates on the practice services.



Repeat Prescriptions

Our service is three working days. If you need your prescription urgently, please ask at your Pharmacy who can issue emergency medications in many instances if there is no health risk. The practice is not contracted to run an emergency prescription service

Social challenges of our time

... *Isolation* ...

Think! Especially over Winter, not everyone has a cosy home with a warm meal and someone to talk to. **A kind word always goes a long way.**

Is there an elderly, housebound, or isolated neighbour or relative you can make a bit of time to telephone or visit to make sure they are safe, warm, and keeping well in these cold months and have stocks of food and medicines. Also to make them feel less alone. Perhaps you can also help them to find ways to connect and keep in contact with their friends and the local community?

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Patterson Gallery

at The Lansdowne Hotel

A fine art gallery with an interesting selection of work in oils, watercolour, pencil, graphite, acrylic, mixed media, as well as fine porcelain and pottery.



The Lansdowne Hotel,
King Edward's Parade, Eastbourne BN21 4EE
In the **Alfriston Room** lower ground floor, 10am until 5pm
Weekends only or by appointment during the week

Tel: 07970 549873

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