SPRING Newsletter 2026

The Lighthouse Medical Practice
Patient Participation Group (PPG)

College Road Surgery 6 College Road, Eastbourne BN21 4HY. 01323 735044
Ian Gow Memorial Health Centre Milfoil Drive, Eastbourne BN23 8BR. 01323 766358

Penny Briggs - Editor **www.lighthousepractice.co.uk** **Issue No. 37**

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 a **Happy and Healthy Spring**.

We include articles by our GPs including health awareness of meningitis, its symptoms and vaccinations and clarification on the difference between medical and administrative enquiries when you use our online Engage Consult system.

As sunnier days approach maybe now is the time to think about a resolution for change to a healthier you. The interesting article on the lifestyle medicine of physical activity explains how this is one of the most powerful tools we have to safeguard our own health.

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 continuing professionalism, care, and support in 2026.

Practice Team News – Ella Sayer

From Receptionist to Student Nurse Associate: A journey shaped by lived experience

My journey in healthcare began in 2018 as a temporary receptionist in general practice while studying for a clinical psychology degree. Within reception, I was often the first point of contact for patients. The role gave me valuable insight into how patients experience healthcare, often arriving with concerns that went beyond their physical symptoms. It quickly showed me the importance of listening, compassion, and clear communication in supporting patients from the very first interaction.

Alongside my professional role, I have been living with ulcerative colitis, a chronic and often invisible condition. Managing a long-term illness while working and studying has been challenging, but it has also given me a deeper understanding of what it means to be a patient. Experiencing healthcare from this perspective has reinforced how important it is for patients to feel heard, believed, and supported, particularly when symptoms fluctuate or are not immediately visible.

These experiences inspired me to progress into training as a Health Care Assistant and now a Student Nurse Associate. My background on reception, combined with my lived experience of chronic illness, has shaped my approach to care and strengthened my commitment to holistic, person-centred practice. I aim to look beyond a diagnosis and consider the physical, emotional, and social factors that influence a person's health and wellbeing.

Being a Student Nurse Associate allows me to bring empathy, understanding, and advocacy into my clinical practice. I am mindful of how healthcare environments can feel overwhelming, and I strive to create a supportive and inclusive experience for patients, particularly those living with long-term conditions.

Looking ahead, I aspire to continue my career at the Lighthouse Practice and progress to become a Registered Nurse and eventually specialise in diabetes care.

Thank you Ella for sharing your inspiring journey with us.

Lifestyle Medicine - Move more, live better

Unleashing the Power of Physical Activity – *Dr Minil Patel*

"If exercise were a pill, it would be the most widely prescribed medicine in the world," *Covert Bailey.*

Physical activity is one of the key pillars of lifestyle medicine, a way by which we can prevent, manage, and even reverse major chronic diseases. It is not just for super fit athletes but something anyone can incorporate into their lives from children to older adults and people with mobility issues or if housebound. Movement can be adapted to suit individual abilities and limitations, and even small amounts of appropriate activity can provide meaningful health benefits.

Most people can start from any level and safely increase their physical activity at their own pace. General guidance and resources are widely available to support this. Individuals who already have specific medical conditions or complex needs should follow any existing advice they have been given by their healthcare team.

Why should we exercise?

Physical inactivity or being sedentary has been linked to an increased risk of developing obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, certain types of cancer, dementia, and early death.

Regular physical activity is one of the most powerful tools we have to safeguard our health with a wide range of positive effects on your body and mind. See table below.

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Health Area	What Activity Does	Positive Effect of Activity
Heart Health	Exercise strengthens your heart muscle, lowers blood pressure, improves cholesterol levels, and helps prevent plaque buildup in your arteries.	This significantly reduces your risk of heart attack, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases.
Diabetes Prevention and Management	Being active improves insulin sensitivity, helping your body use glucose more efficiently.	This is crucial for preventing type 2 diabetes and for managing blood sugar levels in those already diagnosed.
Weight Management	Physical activity burns calories and builds muscle mass.	Both of which are vital for maintaining a healthy weight. This is especially important if you are on weight loss medications/ injections.
Muscle, Bone and Joint Health	Weight bearing exercises help build and maintain strong muscles and bones,	This reduces the risk of sarcopenia (a gradual loss of muscle strength and mass as we age, which can make everyday activities harder) and osteoporosis (a condition where bones become weaker and more fragile, making them more likely to break) which naturally can occur with age. It also keeps joints flexible and reduces the pain and stiffness associated with conditions like osteoarthritis. Staying functional and mobile as we age is the key to healthy ageing.
Mental Health	Exercise is a powerful mood booster. It releases endorphins, which have natural pain relieving and mood lifting effects.	Regular activity can help reduce stress, anxiety, symptoms of depression and can even improve sleep quality.
Cancer Prevention		Studies show that regular physical activity can lower your risk of developing several types of cancer, including colon, breast, and endometrial cancers. It can even help support cancer treatment.
Improved Immune Function	Being active regularly can strengthen your immune system.	This makes your body more resilient to infections.

How much and how often?

Aim for at least **150 minutes** of moderate intensity aerobic activity, like brisk walking or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity aerobic activity, like jogging, each week, or an equivalent combination. For those with limited mobility use chair-based or adapted strength exercises.

Moderate intensity means you can talk but not sing, while vigorous intensity makes it difficult to say more than a few words without pausing for breath. Include muscle strengthening activities, such as lifting weights, at least two days a week, working all major muscle groups.

These might seem like lofty goals if you are not doing much now, however the evidence shows the biggest benefits are had when people go from nothing to even a little bit. For people in wheelchairs or housebound patients there are special exercises you can do either in a chair or bed and can be found on YouTube or via Move it or Lose it!, Action For Elders or the NHS website

www.moveitorloseit.co.uk
www.actionforelders.org.uk/exercise

Strength exercises - NHS, Physical activity guidelines for older adults - NHS, Fitness advice for wheelchair users - NHS,

Do you need a doctor's clearance?

Not usually. There are select conditions where someone should definitely speak to their doctor first: if they get chest pains, especially if brought on by exercise, if they are experiencing dizziness or black out episodes or people who become very breathless even on mild exertion. If you are experiencing joint or back pain, it is best to speak to a physiotherapist for tailored advice.

For most people starting gently and allowing your body to adapt is the best way to ensure you are going about things in a safe way.

People on blood pressure medications may experience a drop in pressure after exercise so the general advice is to have a longer cool down period to allow your pressure to come down slowly. People on beta-blockers like bisoprolol may have a lower heart rate than those not on the medication so need to be aware that they do not overexert themselves to get into higher heart rate zones.

Consider seeking medical advice before starting or significantly increasing exercise if you have a pre-existing medical condition such as heart, lung or cardiovascular disease, a musculoskeletal or neurological condition, a new or unexplained symptom, or have recently had surgery.

Tips for fitting activity into your life:

Finding time for physical activity can feel challenging, but it does not have to mean hours at the gym. Here are some practical tips to weave more movement into your daily routine:

- **Set realistic goals:** Everyone starts somewhere. Set achievable weekly goals and celebrate your progress. When things start getting easier, you are ready to challenge yourself further.
- **Start small:** even 10-minute bursts of activity add up. Go for a brisk walk around the block, take the stairs instead of the lift or do a few squats or walk up and down the stairs while waiting for the kettle to boil.
- **Walk more:** choose to walk or cycle for short errands instead of driving. Park further away from your destination. Take a walk during your lunch break.
- **Find what you enjoy:** The key to sticking with it is to find activities you genuinely like. Whether it is dancing, hiking, swimming, cycling, yoga or playing a sport, enthusiasm makes it sustainable. Eastbourne has so much to offer in this regard with multiple leisure centres, gyms, the seafront, and beautiful hiking trails.
- **Make it social:** Exercise with a friend, join a walking group or take a fitness class. Social interaction can boost motivation. Did you know that Lighthouse is a Parkrun Practice? Parkrun is a free community event where you can walk, jog, run, volunteer, or spectate. It takes place at Shinewater Park every Saturday at 09:00am. Some of our doctors enjoy it so much they signed up our practice as GP partner.
- **Stand up more:** If you have a sedentary job, try to stand and move around for a few minutes every hour.

Remember:
Every bit of movement matters.

By making physical activity a consistent part of your life, you are investing in your health and building a stronger, healthier future. With better weather around the corner, it is a great time to get outdoors and get moving!

Find out more:

www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active
www.hillbrowhealthandwellbeing.org/healthcare-2/wave-active-health
www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise
www.oneyoueastsussex.org.uk

Health Awareness… Meningitis

How to Protect Yourself and Others *by* ***Dr Rosamund Clift, GP Partner***

The recent outbreak of meningitis at The University of Kent has brought attention to this rare, but serious infection. Meningitis is inflammation of the protective lining (meninges) that covers the brain and spinal cord most commonly caused by viral or bacterial infection. There are other rarer causes. It can affect anyone, but is most common in babies, young children, teenagers, and young adults.

Viral meningitis is the most common form of meningitis, but **bacterial meningitis** is more serious. The bacteria that cause meningitis can be spread via close contact with other people and there is a risk of bacterial meningitis outbreaks in places where large groups of people live together, e.g. colleges or universities. Infections that cause meningitis can be spread through sneezing, coughing, or kissing.

Meningitis is usually caught from people who carry these viruses or bacteria in their nose or throat but are not ill themselves. It can also be caught from someone with meningitis, but this is less common.

The inflammation in meningitis can cause severe damage to the brain and spinal cord, and even death, if it is not treated promptly. Meningitis can develop very quickly, and early recognition of symptoms is vital to limit long-term complications and prevent sepsis and death.

The initial symptoms of meningitis can be similar to flu and include:

- Headache, Fever, Tiredness, and irritability, Feeling generally unwell, Nausea and vomiting.

In more serious cases of meningitis, the following symptoms may then occur:

- A rash of small red/purple spots or larger bruises that do not go pale or disappear when pressed (pressing a glass over the rash can help determine this), Sensitivity to light, Neck stiffness (in moderate to severe meningitis, you will not be able to touch your chin to your chest), Confusion, Drowsiness, Fit/seizures

These symptoms can appear in any order. You do not always get all the symptoms.

These NHS websites provides really helpful information about when to suspect meningitis for different age groups:

- www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk/new-parent-and-baby/meningitis
- www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk/child-under-5-years/meningitis
- www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk/child-under-12-years
- www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk/child-under-12-years/meningococcal-disease
- www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk/young-www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/

If you suspect anyone of having meningitis, this is a medical emergency, and you should call 999 for an ambulance immediately. You should not wait for all the symptoms to appear or until a rash develops. Someone with meningitis or sepsis can get a lot worse very quickly and the quicker they receive treatment, the higher their chance of making a good recovery.

Vaccinations offer some protection against certain causes of meningitis. These include the:

MenB vaccine – offered to babies aged 8 weeks, followed by a second dose at 12 weeks and a booster at 1 year.

6-in-1 vaccine – offered to children at 8 weeks, 12 weeks, 16 weeks, and 18 months

Pneumococcal vaccine – 2 doses offered to babies at 16 weeks and 1 year, and a single dose offered to adults aged 65 or over or those with certain chronic health conditions that put them at increased risk.

MMRV vaccine – offered to children at 12 months and 18 months.

MenACWY vaccine – offered to teenagers, sixth formers and "fresher" students going to university for the first time up to their 25th birthday.

If meningitis is suspected, several tests will be performed in hospital to confirm the diagnosis. It is common for patients to be started on antibiotics before the diagnosis is confirmed. **Viral meningitis** will usually get better on its own without treatment over 7-10 days and rarely causes complications. **Bacterial meningitis** will require treatment with antibiotics administered into the vein for several days and may need additional supportive care. Many people with bacterial meningitis will also make a full recovery if they receive prompt diagnosis and treatment. However, some will be left with serious long-term complications that may include hearing or vision loss, which may be partial or total, problems with memory and concentration, recurrent seizures (epilepsy), co-ordination, movement and balance problems, loss of limbs – amputation of affected limbs is sometimes necessary

Overall, it is estimated that 1 in 10 people with bacterial meningitis will die. **This is why vaccination to try and prevent bacterial meningitis and prompt recognition and action on symptoms suggestive of meningitis is so important. If you think you or your child may be eligible for immunisations that protect against meningitis, please contact the surgery to arrange this.**

Message to all Carers and those being cared for

from Pauline Barron, Carers Lead

Carers Week

Tuesday 8th to Monday 14th June

This is an annual campaign to raise awareness of the challenges Carers face and recognise the contribution they make to families and their communities. This year the theme is 'Building Carer Friendly Communities.'

www.carersweek.org

There are over six million Carers in the UK who provide unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, illness, or mental health problem or who needs extra help as they grow older. 1 in 10 people in East Sussex care for someone per Care for the Carers (CFTC)
www.cftc.org.uk

CFTC also offer volunteering roles to help Carers.

Young Carers Action Day was on March 11th. There are an estimated 21,000 young Carers in East Sussex. CFTC supports young Carers between 5 to 17 and young adult Carers aged 17 to 25 by providing support before they reach crisis point and to help their physical and mental wellbeing. Imago Young Carers services support young Carers under age 18 in East Sussex and undertake statutory young Carer assessments.

www.imago.community/young-carers-services
Tel: **0300 111 1110**
Email: **youngcarers@imago.community**

The Lighthouse Practice team, and especially me, are here to support you if you are a Carer and you need help. Please let us know. You can find helpful information for Carers on the Lighthouse website

www.lighthousepractice.co.uk/care-support/carers

and I would encourage you to register with the Practice as either an adult or young Carer if you have not already; forms are on the website or you can request a text message to complete where the information you provide is automatically saved to your medical record.

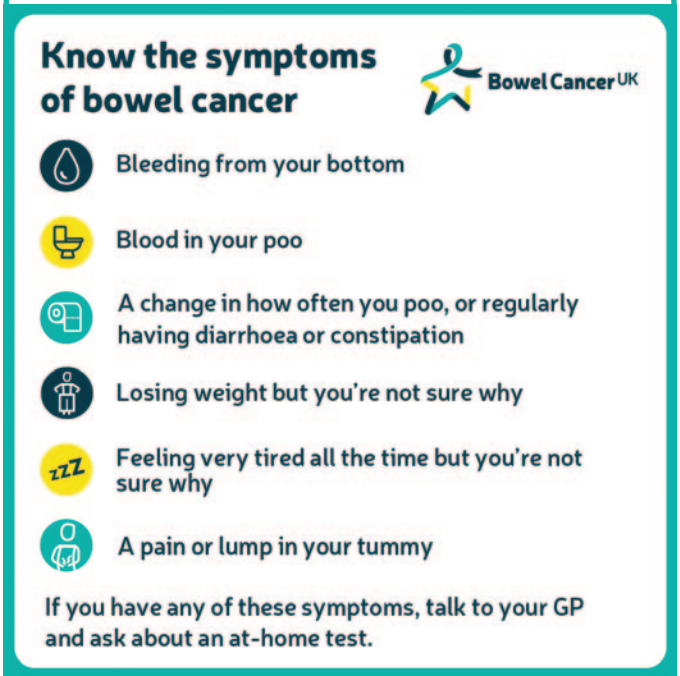
I continue to speak with Carers, and I am available for telephone consultations for me to help you. Please just contact me via Engage Consult or Reception and they will book you in for a conversation with me.

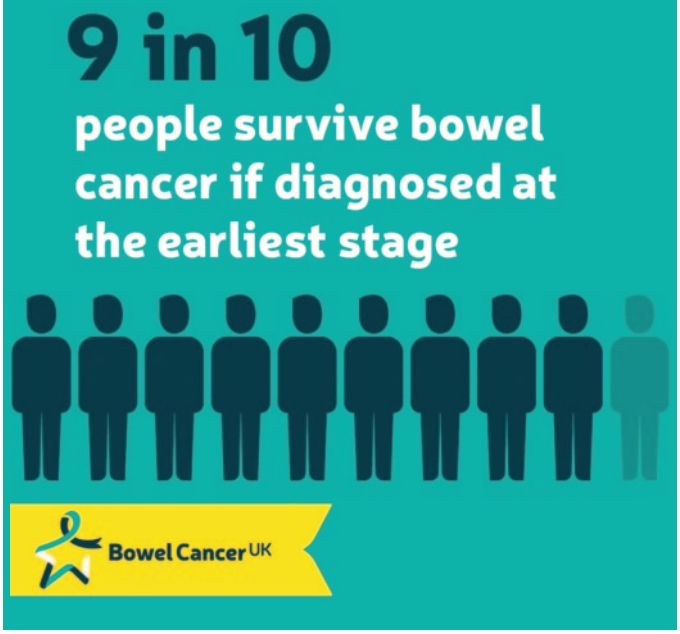
www.cftc.org.uk/resources-for-carers/what-are-my-rights
www.cftc.org.uk/help-and-advice/get-a-carers-card

Bowel Cancer Awareness

We are supporting **bowelcanceruk**'s campaign to raise vital awareness, so everyone has the best chance of an early diagnosis.

Knowing the symptoms is important to help spot bowel cancer early. The earlier it is found, the more treatable it is likely to be.





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.

engageconsult

Understanding the difference between Medical and Administrative requests

Dr Jeremy Durston, Practice Executive Partner
and **Shirl Bridle**, Practice Management Team

When using the Engage Consult platform to communicate with us, it is important to understand the difference between medical and administrative requests. This ensures your enquiry is routed to the appropriate staff and handled in the most efficient manner.

Medical Requests

Engage Consult - request medical help from a Doctor/GP

Avoid the phone queue and request help directly from our medical team. Your request will be handled in exactly the same way as if you had requested help by phone – just quicker and easier!

This can be for yourself or someone you care for. You will be asked to check and confirm that it is not an emergency.

For any clinical issues, symptoms, or concerns that require assessment and treatment by a qualified healthcare professional, you should submit a medical request. Examples include:

- Requesting an appointment for a new medical problem
- Asking questions about a diagnosis or treatment plan
- Seeking advice on managing a chronic condition
- Requesting a fit note or sick note

These medical requests are triaged by a clinician, who will then determine the most appropriate way to respond. This could involve a text message, telephone call, or an offer for a face-to-face appointment, depending on the nature of your medical issue.

Administrative Requests

Send us an administrative query

For prescription requests and other administrative queries.
PLEASE DO NOT USE THIS FOR REQUESTING MEDICAL HELP OR ADVICE.

Non-clinical tasks or information requests should be submitted as administrative requests. Examples include:

- Requesting GP letters (e.g. for fitness to fly, gym membership, "to whom it may concern")
- Asking for medical reports (e.g. claim forms, DWP/PIP assessments, insurance medicals)
- Requesting exemption certificates (e.g. maternity, medical)
- Chasing test results or diagnostic reports
- Formally requesting copies of your medical records (Subject Access Request)
- Submitting documents from other providers (e.g. hospital discharge letters) to update your GP file
- Checking on the status of a specialist referral or chasing a hospital appointment
- Ordering repeat prescriptions or asking questions about current medications
- Updating your home address, phone number, or email

Administrative requests are typically handled by non-clinical staff and may take several weeks to process, depending on the request. They should not be used for urgent medical concerns, as administration requests will not be prioritised in the same way as a clinical request.

It is important to use the appropriate channel when communicating with us through Engage Consult. This ensures your enquiry is addressed efficiently and by the right members of the team.

Please give us enough information so that we can help. Please do not just use a short phrase as we will need to come back to you to ask more. Let us know as if you were talking to us.

Be Septicaemia AWARE

Call the Practice immediately, or **111**, if you have possible early signs of sepsis, as this requires quick treatment and without this it can lead to multiple organ failure or even death. Sepsis symptoms may include a high fever or low body temperature, chills or shivering, fast heartbeat or fast breathing. **Call 999 promptly and ask for an ambulance if more severe symptoms of septic shock develop.** These symptoms include severe breathlessness, severe muscle pain, feeling dizzy or faint, vomiting, a change in mental state such as disorientation, not urinating or a loss of consciousness.

Liz Walke retires as Patient Participation Group (PPG) Chair

The PPG and Practice would like to extend a sincere thank you to our Chair, Liz Walke, who has decided to step down from her role as Chair while continuing as a valued member of the PPG.

Liz has been a dedicated member of the PPG since 2009 and has played an important role in supporting the ongoing development of both the PPG and the Practice.

As Chair, Liz has brought wisdom, commitment, and a strong focus on improving patient care. Through her leadership, and in collaboration with PPG members and the Practice team, she has helped shape the PPG into the effective and highly regarded group it is today. She has worked consistently to ensure that patient voices are heard and reflected in the work we do together.

Liz has given her time generously, always with warmth and good humour. She has worked closely with Amanda Sayer, Managing Partner, and has contributed to the wider Eastbourne area PPG. She has also attended external NHS meetings, including East Sussex Healthcare Trust Board meetings (which runs Eastbourne DGH and The Conquest) and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), helping to share insights and keep the PPG informed about wider healthcare developments.

Liz also established the Virtual PPG, which gathers patient feedback to support discussions within the group, helping to identify themes and ensure patient perspectives are shared across both the PPG and the Practice.

While Liz will be stepping down as Chair, we are very pleased that she will continue as part of the PPG, where her experience and insight will remain invaluable.

Our thanks to Liz, from everyone involved in the PPG and Practice, past and present, for her dedication and contribution over many years.

Spring into Spring!

Simple steps for better health

Amanda Sayer, *Managing Partner*

Spring is a great time to refresh routines and focus on wellbeing. As the days get longer and the weather improves, small changes can make a big difference to both physical and mental health.

- **Move a little more**

  Gentle activity such as walking, stretching, or gardening helps improve mood, balance, and heart health. Start slowly and build activity into daily routines.

- **Eat seasonally**

  Spring vegetables like leafy greens, peas, and asparagus are packed with nutrients. Adding more fruit and vegetables can support energy levels and immunity.

- **Refresh sleep Habits**

  Lighter mornings can affect sleep. Try going to bed at the same time each night and reducing screen use before bedtime.

- **Enjoy the outdoors safely**

  Spending time outside boosts wellbeing but remember sun protection and stay hydrated as temperatures rise.

- **Look after mental wellbeing**

  Spring can lift mood, but it can also feel overwhelming for some. Staying connected, getting fresh air, and asking for support early can help.

Helpful information for Parent Carers of Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

"The South East Guide for Parent Carers of Children and Young People with SEND" (from birth to 25 years), produced by My Family, Our Needs, brings together free helpful information on education, health, wellbeing, and support services across the region.

www.myfamilyourneeds.co.uk/publication/south-east-send-guide

Covid-19 Spring Booster Vaccination

Eligible patients can book in via the NHS national booking site: **www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/vaccination-and-booking-services/book-covid-19-vaccination** or you can **call 119** to book an appointment.

The eligibility criteria is the same as for spring 2025: adults aged 75 years and over (by 30 June 2026), residents in a care home for older adults and individuals aged 6 months and over who have a weakened immune system

Patient Participation Group (PPG) Update

Thank you to everyone who expressed an interest in joining our Patient Participation Group (PPG) and Virtual PPG (VPG). We have been overwhelmed by the level of response and are very grateful for the enthusiasm and support shown.

Due to the high number of applications received, we are in the process of reviewing over 500 responses and will be in touch in due course.

Thank you again to everyone who took the time to get involved—we really appreciate your interest in supporting the Practice and patient community.

Meet the Patient Forum Members

Ulrica Delaney

Originally from the southern parts of Sweden, I consider myself an honorary Eastbournian, having raised two children to (young) adulthood here. We registered at the surgery many years ago, but it was only after speaking with a friend running a dementia outreach group that I decided to become involved in the PPG in 2024. My mother was an oncologist and although I did not follow in her footsteps, I have worked in care in several roles over the years, starting as a cleaner in the radiology department at 14 - a world and an age away from my current role as a domiciliary care director. I believe strongly in cross-agency cooperation, communication for the betterment of services, and the ability of individuals to influence organisations, and the Lighthouse PPG embodies all these things. It is also a very jolly and friendly group, and I always look forward to the meetings. The only thing I would like to improve on is the lack of a practice pet – a cat would be ideal (hope springs eternal)!

Praise for the Practice

With regard to the College Road surgery, we continue to receive outstanding support and service – a comforting reassurance in our advancing years.

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

Surgery Information

Opening Hours

- **Monday – 8am - 6pm**
  6.30pm to 8.15pm at alternate sites
- **Tuesday – 8am - 6:30pm***
- **Wednesday – 8am - 6:30pm***
- **Thursday – 8am - 6:30pm***
- **Friday – 8am - 6:30pm***
- **Saturday –** Ask reception for information about Saturday appointments
- **Sunday – Closed**

* You can contact us online and by telephone until 6:30pm. Patients attending in person may be redirected to ensure they receive appropriate support. If you are calling us between 6pm and 6:30pm, please use the following number **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!

What can you do to brighten someone's day?

As the days get longer in Spring some of us are fortunate to be able to get outside more, whether in our own garden or into Eastbourne. But not everyone is so lucky. Is there an isolated or housebound friend or neighbour you can bring a bit of sunshine to their day to by making time to telephone or visit them? Perhaps you can also help them to find ways to connect and keep in contact with their friends and the local community?

Disclaimer notice: Any opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily of the Partners of the Lighthouse, but we have tried to ensure the information contained is correct. They cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies.