

Thornton and Denholme

Denholme surgery re-opened in August and we would like to thank all the patients for their understanding when we had to close. We know this was difficult for patients with the hourly bus routes, but it was important to be able to keep all our patients and staff safe during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have had comments from patients stating that the infection control policies have been beneficial and very much appreciated. The surgeries are now open longer to cater for patients who work office hours, and both patients and carers have appreciated that they can attend later in the day.

We are very grateful to the local neighbours who have tended to the front of the surgery throughout the pandemic, working alongside our Garden maintenance team. It looks lovely and makes a real difference when you visit the practice.

Localities

Over the Pandemic we have developed robust new ways of working, including covering other sites, leading to more resilience across our practices. We have now split our sites across three localities: The North covers Shipley and Haigh Hall, the West covers Thornton, Denholme and The Willows, and the South covers Cowgill and Sunnybank. This means that when we have had staff off self-isolating or ill then we have been able to staff all the sites more successfully. Although it may still seem very busy when you are trying to contact us, this way of working has ensured that we can manage more patients safely, as well as supporting our staff and ensuring their mental and physical wellbeing.

Home Visiting Team

Over the pandemic Dr Sam Lyles, Mrs Caroline Hill and Mrs Rachel Ash have developed a fabulous new Home Visiting Team across our South and West localities. They work with our fantastic Health Care Assistants, Caron and Siam, in order to manage all our housebound patients at home, via face to face visits, video consultations and telephone calls. This means great continuity of care and we have had great feedback from our patients and their carers. If you are housebound, either permanently or temporarily please let the reception member know, when you contact us, and you will be looked after by this team.

Covid 19 and Your Practice

We know that things have changed for our patients in the way that they access their GP and healthcare services over the past 18 months. We have never been shut during the pandemic and have always been available by telephone or e-consultation to provide care and advice, and to arrange to see our acutely unwell or vulnerable patients face to face if needed.

As the world starts to open up again we can all catch a glimpse of things beginning to return to normal. However, covid is still present and we are not out of the woods yet, so we need to continue to protect our patients from the virus and this means that routine face to face surgeries are not yet possible.

Face coverings

In keeping with NHS England guidance we continue to require you to wear face coverings when you visit our practices. If you have a medical exemption let our staff know. You will get a call from a clinician to conduct a risk assessment over the phone, in order to facilitate your appointment. You may be asked to stay in your car until your appointment. Please don't get upset with the reception staff as this is Affinity Care wide protocol, in order to keep all our patients and staff safe. Please don't visit the practice if you have a new cough, temperature, or change in taste or smell. Even if you have had both vaccinations you can still get Covid-19, and also, importantly, infect others, so if you have any of these symptoms you are still advised to book a PCR test. You can do this by ringing 119 or visit <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

Care Navigation

Your first contact with the surgery is still likely to be by phone call and our trained reception staff will use this contact to determine the best person for you to speak to. This process is called "Care Navigation". At Affinity Care, we now have a large team of highly qualified pharmacists, physicians associates and advanced clinical practitioners as well as the nurses and doctors you are used to. The reception staff will ask you some questions in order to book you in with the most appropriate clinician or to signpost you to other healthcare services outside of the practice such as the community pharmacists, midwives, physios or counselling services, as well as self-care via the NHS website.

You may not feel comfortable telling the reception staff why you are calling but please understand that they are trying to find the best care for you whilst also needing to prioritise those vulnerable patients and urgent cases who need our care the most. It does not mean that we think some patients are more important or less important, but with the growing pressures on all the NHS services, there are other, more appropriate, people who can help you with your conditions.

Think before you ring. Do you really need the GP?

You can also do your part to reduce unnecessary calls to the GP. When you ring us please think if the GP is the most appropriate person to contact. Is this about a hospital appointment, letter or prescription? If so please, please contact the hospital department you are under first. Is this about a self-limiting condition such as a sprained ankle or a sore throat? If so, please visit www.nhs.uk. Is this about something minor, such as a few days of ear-ache or a new rash? Then please visit your local pharmacy. If you have symptoms of a dental abscess please ring the dentist or 111 as we are unable to prescribe you antibiotics. If you have a red eye or visual problems please visit your local opticians as they can treat many conditions and refer you to the eye clinic if needed.

By considering these options you will be reducing the pressure on the GP practice, reduce waiting times on the telephones and improve access for the occasions when only the GP practice can help you.

Covid Vaccination Programme

We have also been vaccinating our patients to reduce the risk of them catching, transmitting and being hospitalised with covid. To date we have given over 42,500 covid vaccinations. More than 81% of our patients have had their first dose and 75% have had both doses of the covid vaccination. Of our Clinically Extremely Vulnerable group, 90% have had their first vaccine and 88% have had their second dose. We are now working on our under 18 group and so far we have given 34% of them their first dose, with many future clinics planned.

We will continue to offer vaccines for all eligible groups – if you would like your vaccine or are due your 2nd dose and haven't had an appointment then call our team on 01274 424001.

Patient Participation Groups (PPGs)

Our PPG members are valued patients who have volunteered their time to help feedback and work with us to improve our practices and our services. Our PPGs are starting to remotely meet up again. As a patient of our practice, we value your thoughts and opinions. Would you like to be a 'critical friend' to your practice, advise the practice on the patient perspective and help the practice to improve its services? If so, then come and join us, please register your interest at either www.affinitycare.nhs.uk/patients/ppg or ring your practice and let us know you are interested.

Practice Health Champions and volunteer led groups

Currently we are restarting our activities across Affinity Care but need to be aware of ongoing Covid-19 guidelines.

Tuesdays there is a walking group across the Thornton viaduct, this walk can be accessible by wheelchair.

Wednesdays there is a coffee and crafts morning within the Thornton Community Center.

We would love some more support across Affinity care to create more groups for patients to attend and enjoy at other surgeries sites, so if you are interested in becoming a Practice Health Champion and supporting some of these groups please contact Francesca on 07425639671 alternatively email Francesca.willet@thebridgeproject.org.uk for more information.

Affinity Care Community Partnership

Affinity Care Community Partnership is a group of allied community health, care and wellbeing services, through locally led partnerships, covering the approximate 57,000 patients across the sites of the Affinity Care group of GP practices.

We consist of a leadership team who are working together to share their knowledge, ideas and expertise to support each other in understanding their roles and how they can work better together to improve the lives and experiences of people in the local community. This team includes people from a variety of health, social care and third sector organisations and consists of patient representatives, staff from the Affinity Care GP practices, community nursing, mental health services, community pharmacy, voluntary organisations including Hale, The Bridge Project and Carers' Resource, the council ward officers, and community and hospital NHS staff.

We are currently helping support local projects, including using Haigh Hall and Cowgill practices as pilot sites to become Dementia Friendly Practices. Our Self-Care Champion, Abi, and Volunteer Co-ordinator, Francesca, have also been helping with the covid vaccination project.

New Website

We are proud to announce that we have a new website: <https://affinitycare.nhs.uk>

From here you can access any of the practices as well as general advice about the organisation, our staff and our ethos. You will be able to find self-care advice, link to other organisations and news about Affinity Care.



Social Media

We are on both Facebook and Twitter under the handle @AffinityCarePCN. We also have a YouTube channel, Affinity Care PCN, and post some videos from time to time. Please keep an eye on all these avenues for more up to date news and interesting links to important medical advice and organisations.

Zero Tolerance

We have a strict zero tolerance policy. We appreciate that everyone is frustrated, but if you are abusive or aggressive towards our colleagues or other patients, or make any bigoted remarks or behaviour, including homophobic, transphobic, biphobic, racist or sexist comments, you will be at risk of being removed as a patient.

Finally, thank you for all of your support during the last few months – your support and encouragement as well as your feedback is always welcome and your heart-warming stories are all gratefully received always good to read.

Thank you for reading and take care.