

## Surgery



**From** <johnambrose@holbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk>  
**To** <clerk@holbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk>, 'Gerald Abbott' <geraldabbott@holbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk>, 'Robert Allinson' <robertallinson@holbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk>, 'Rick Connick' <rickconnick@holbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk>, 'Sally Ingleton' <sallyingleton@holbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk>, 'mel holmes' <melholmes@holbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk>, 'Andrew King' <andrewking@holbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk>, 'Denise Martin' <denisemartin@holbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk>, 'max pittman' <maxpittman@holbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk>, 'Justin Stephens' <justinstephens@holbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk>, [1 more...](#)  
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Dear All

After the last council meeting, I contacted the surgery and I was offered the opportunity to sit in with the receptionists one morning before meeting the practice manager. Below are my notes.

On Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April I reported to the Shotley surgery to sit in with Sue and Jane to observe what happens when they open the phone lines at 8am. Immediately the phones started ringing and there were some people waiting at the surgery, most calls were for appointments to see a doctor and by 8.27am all the doctor appointments for that morning at both sites were taken! During that time both surgeries received 60 phone calls. At both Shotley and Holbrook there were two doctors on duty, all offering 10 minutes appointments though some patients required a double appointment. In addition to the doctors, there were 3 nurses on duty at both sites.

Next week, on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April I met with Lorna Bacon and Helen Hazelton to discuss the concerns raised at the council meeting. The first thing mentioned was the 81 missed appointments in March when patients failed to turn up.

I asked why appointments could not be booked in advance and was informed that NHS England controls the appointment system and only allows 10% of all appointments to be booked in advance, most of these are the blood test appointments along with a few requests by Doctors to see patients later. The practice is closely monitored by NHSE to check that the figure of 10% is not exceeded. If we want to change how appointments are booked, this should be raised with NHSE.

The good news is that the practice has a full complement of staff including doctors and that they are offering 10 minute appointments at both surgeries for most mornings and afternoons. The issue with both surgeries is that lack of consulting rooms, at Holbrook there is only one nurse's room which explains why patients are offered nurse appointments at Shotley as they have more rooms available for the nurses.

Whilst not going into fine detail about funding and salaries, I was assured that the global GMS funding is fully used to pay for the doctors and other staff, in 2024 these costs will raise by 6% but the practice will only receive a 1.6% increase!!! In addition the practice receive PCN funding for some staff and the enhanced services available which is shared between 5 practices, I found out that they lost their pharmacist to the Hadleigh practice as she was funded by the PCN and it is the PCN that decides where these staff go. The practice is hoping to appoint another pharmacist but the person will be based at Shotley as that surgery has more space than Holbrook. The practice is monitored to ensure it is using all funding to deliver services to the community, this explains why there are so many admin staff at both surgeries.

In May, a new phone system will be introduced which will offer a "call back" option, I was assured this will see some improvements to the system.

Please remember that anyone can join the Peninsular Patient Network to become more involved with the practice.

My personal view is that unless changes are made by the Government and NHSE, there will be no changes at the surgeries and it is up to individuals to use their vote to make this happen but this is getting political and I will say no more. Even whilst recruiting more GPs may appear to be the answer, the surgeries do not have space to accommodate them in addition the lack of trained GPs. Did you know that after qualifying and working two years as a junior doctor, it takes at least another three years to train up to be a GP?

Finally, whilst we all hear the complaints, I must say that a lot of people I speak to do sing the praises of the surgery and the care they receive from the dedicated hard working staff and I passed this onto Lorna.

John Ambrose  
Chairman Holbrook Parish Council

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