

Temporary list closure – your questions answered

Question 1) What's going on?

Our Practice is one of a number in the area which has introduced a three-month temporary suspension of patient registrations. We are still accepting new patients who move into the area and a few other exceptions – but it means people cannot at present transfer to our practice from another local GP Practice for the time being. We are asking patients to remain with their existing surgery at present, unless obviously they are moving home to a new area.

Q2) When will this temporary suspension start and finish?

It started on 1 October 2021 and ends on 31 December 2021.

Q3) How many Practices are involved?

Seven Practices in Havant, Cowplain and Denmead are involved. That is:

- Bosmere Medical Practice, Havant
- The Denmead Practice
- Homewell Practice, Havant
- Oaks Healthcare, Cowplain
- Park Lane Medical Centre, Havant
- Staunton Surgery, Havant
- The Village Practice, Cowplain.

Q4) Are any Havant-area Practices not included in this scheme?

Yes, The Vine Medical Practice at Waterlooville and, because of their location, three other surgeries - the two at Hayling Island (The Elms Practice and Waterside Medical Practice) and the Emsworth Medical Practice. These four practices will all accept new patients as usual, providing they live in their catchment area.

Q5) So what does the temporary suspension mean for me exactly?

It means that:

- Patients cannot leave Oaks Healthcare, The Village Practice, The Denmead Practice, The Homewell Practice, Bosmere Medical Practice, The Staunton Surgery or Park Lane Medical Centre and register at any of these practices unless they move home into the Practice boundary between 1 October and 31 December 2021
- Patients cannot leave The Vine Medical Practice and register at Oaks Healthcare, The Village Practice, The Denmead Practice, Homewell Practice, Bosmere Medical Practice, The Staunton Surgery or Park Lane Medical Centre
- Patients can leave Oaks Healthcare, The Village Practice, Denmead Practice, Homewell Practice, Bosmere Medical Practice, Staunton Surgery or Park Lane Medical Centre and register at Vine Medical Practice if they live in the Vine Medical Practice boundary
- New patients to the area can register at any practice – providing they live in its boundary area.

Q6) Why are you stopping me from transferring to another Practice?

The stability of local Practices has been threatened by a much higher than usual number of patients seeking to change surgeries – with 2,319 patient transfers in the 13 months until the end of June 2021. This has led to a very high number of extra routine and other appointments for ‘new’ patients – as all new patients are given an appointment for medical and other checks; and a lot of extra administrative work behind-the-scenes, such as the safe transfer of patient records.

Q7) How does this temporary suspension help?

It will give all seven Practices involved the chance to draw breath whilst they catch up with the changes and see their existing new patients. All Havant area GP Practices are currently facing extreme pressures on a number of fronts, especially the resilience of an increasingly stretched and tired workforce, which is causing considerable stress for many existing staff – who have also had to help deliver the huge COVID vaccination programme on top of their other work. Many local practices rely on using locums (doctors employed on a temporary basis) – who are becoming an increasingly scarce resource.

Q8) Why are so many patients moving between Practices?

Patients usually move because they are dissatisfied with the access arrangements and how fast they can book appointments at their current Practice – but they are usually unaware that other Practices are experiencing the same issues.

Q9) Did you have to get permission from anyone to make this decision?

Our request for a temporary suspension of our patient list was approved by our local commissioners – the NHS Hampshire, Southampton, and the Isle of Wight Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The decision was made by the CCG’s local Primary Care Operational Group, which includes representation from NHS England and lay members who try to ensure that all decision-making is in the best interest of patients. Patient representatives from the Practice’s Patient Participation Groups were invited to a CCG meeting where the temporary suspension – and the reasons for it – were explained to them, and they were given the chance to ask questions and shape this factsheet.

Q10) Are there any exceptions to the list closure?

As mentioned earlier, new patients who move into the Havant area, and their dependants, will still be able to register with Practices. Other exceptions include babies of those already registered, and patients who move house within the borough and are in a new practice boundary. Bosmere Medical Practice will be the only exception to this as it has been granted a full list closure due to exceptional circumstances and therefore will only be required to register new babies of those already registered.

Q11) Why are things different for Bosmere Medical Practice

Bosmere is facing particular challenges, particularly in regard to pressures mainly caused by problems recruiting GPs and clinical staff. This means that it would benefit from a full list closure for a while.

Q12) Surely I have a right of choice over which Practice I attend?

This is a short-term, three-month temporary suspension to help get us over a high and sustained period of pressure on our GPs, other clinicians and our staff who work so hard behind-the-scenes. It will help local Practices ensure their continued stability, which we believe is something that most patients will understand and support. There were similar problems in Gosport two years ago – and a three-month suspension there successfully gave them time to catch up with new patient registration and ensured that they could still provide their full range of primary care services.

Q13) Won't this temporary list closure hinder my chances of getting faster appointments at another practice?

The recent shift in patient numbers means that a practice which, a few months ago, could potentially offer a faster appointment than elsewhere may now not be able to do so. And because a Practice needs to offer an appointment to all its new patients, the recent high numbers of patients transferring between local practices has put further pressure on staff and has at times led to the opposite effect – and caused delays to patients waiting for appointments. The stringent infection prevention control measures required in all healthcare settings to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission to patients and staff have also caused extra work for staff in surgeries and restricted the flow of patient numbers – also adversely affecting the number of appointments available.

Q14) Can you guarantee that the temporary extension won't be extended to a longer period of time?

The temporary suspension is just that – a short-term arrangement to help us all through this very busy time and let things settle down. It will give us a breathing space.

Q15) Why aren't you replacing GPs who leave or retire?

We are continuing to make every effort to recruit for vacant positions. There are issues nationwide around GP recruitment and retention, and many towns across the country are competing hard to attract doctors, including us. We welcome efforts by NHS England to attract more trained staff into doctor and nursing jobs. We also warmly welcome the fact that more patients are using our website and online services to get the advice and support they need – freeing up GP time for those who need appointments.

Q16) Isn't there anything else you could do?

In recent years, every GP Practice in the country has constantly had to review the way it works to help meet the growing demands for our primary care services and so that we can best meet our patient needs in future. This means you might not always see a doctor for the same conditions that you used to. Many Practices have recruited other highly-trained professional clerical staff such as specialist nurses and mental health practitioners, who may be better placed to help, treat or advise you. We are also working far more closely together with other neighbouring GP Practices as Primary Care Networks, which means we may at times ask you to go to another local Practice. All local Practices offer extended access in evenings and weekends – to help improve patient choice. This was not so readily available in the past.

Q17) Are there any other changes we should be aware of – or restrictions of service?

A big part of the reason why we have sought this temporary suspension is to ensure that we have capacity to continue providing our full range of primary care services so we can also offer you the highest quality and best possible services that we can. During this temporary suspension, Practices involved in the temporary suspension will not be holding a waiting list of patients wishing to register in the future to avoid facing a repeat of the current problems. This means you can't ask for your name to go down for transfer at a stage in the future – until after the temporary suspension is lifted.

We thank you for your support and understanding during this challenging time for all local GP Practices.