

# Ball Tree Surgery Newsletter – Winter 2018



[www.theballtreesurgery.co.uk](http://www.theballtreesurgery.co.uk)

Including: [new MyGP App](#) and [Mental Health - Access Survey](#)

## Post-Merger Update

It has now been about 4 months since Ball Tree and Kingfisher surgeries merged. Thank you to everyone who has been helping us and supporting us during this time, your kind words, patience and understanding have meant much to us all. We thank the 91% of 1,000 of our patients who say that they would recommend us to others. Thank you to all of you who use our services and support Ball Tree and we hope that we will improve the 91% soon.

**Why did we merge?** There were two reasons for the merge, one far more pressing than the other. The first reason was to improve access and services in the long-term. The second reason was that we had to merge to prevent the collapse and closure of Kingfisher. This would otherwise have happened at the end of September 2017.

Kingfisher would have closed due to GP partners leaving. If Kingfisher had closed it would have meant that the other surgeries in Lancing would have needed to take on 5,500 more patients. This was impossible without the other surgeries also struggling as we are all already under significant strain. The merger prevented this and ensured there was no break to your GP services in Lancing.

There is no financial benefit for Ball Tree for merging with Kingfisher. In fact it has taken considerable resources. The GPs who own Ball Tree have absorbed the work and cost and taken on the considerable risks involved to prevent our local community from losing a local GP service. Please see information later on about how you can help.

## Why has this been a difficult process?

It has been an extremely complex process merging two separate businesses, each with differing systems, working across two separate sites, during the busiest time of the year. Unlike many other organisations when they merge, we have done this without closing or pausing any of our essential services.

We have had and continue to experience, unprecedented and unforeseeable levels of staff sickness and absence. Those staff absent are away for important reasons. We are very aware of the impact for everyone that the absences have had, especially during the flu season with all the associated additional pressures that face the NHS in winter.

Our priority has been to maintain the safety of our service with a view to improving the quality of what we can provide in the long-term. Unfortunately we simply do not have the resources financially, or with current staffing to fully back-fill positions when we have people away.

**Sorry if things haven't been up to our usual standards.** We are aware that at times, due to the above, our access and some of our administration services have not been up to the usual standard. We assure you that we are striving to improve this and minimise any disruption. We thank you for your patience and understanding during this time. We apologise if you have been inconvenienced. We would be keen to hear your feedback and constructive suggestions as to what we do well, and where we can improve. There are suggestions slips at the surgery and a feedback area on our website, or if we have your email address we send out questionnaires for feedback to inform our system changes. <http://www.theballtreesurgery.co.uk/ppg.aspx?t=1> We have a NEW Survey about our [Access and Mental Health](#) we would welcome your thoughts.

**Things are getting better!** Services will gradually improve over time as the merger dust settles, but it is important that you are aware that NHS resources are getting lower and our pressures are increasing. We want you to have a safe, caring and effective service that you can trust. We want this and will work for this as we want to be proud of our service to the community. However, you will need to change what you expect from the NHS, now and in the future. It will be different from what you expected in the past. If you are unhappy about this please do talk to your politicians, do ask them about the underfunding. Please do not be angry with our teams who are all working extremely hard to keep things going during a difficult time for us all. **We share your frustration.**

**The next few pages** let you know about how we can work better together, some changes to our services as well as some news about projects we are working on with our community. It is important that you read this through as this will affect you and your family and friends who use our service.

## Together we can make a real difference for you and for us... (Part 1)

### - ACCESSING OUR APPOINTMENTS

- **ALL** our **Non-Urgent GP** appointments and **Blood Test** appointments are bookable without having to call us and wait on the phone. **You have exactly the same access as our reception team.**
- If you book online or via the App it will be much faster for you and it is much clearer what the availability is.

### - TRY THE NEW APP!

- If you have a smart mobile phone - please download the **MyGP App** – visit **<https://www.ilovemygp.com>** – **Apple iOS & Android**

- This has a button that says 'Book Appointments' which is very easy to use
- In future MORE appointments will be available via the App e.g. certain nurse appointments
- If you only have one mobile number in your household, more than one person can benefit from the App as you can also link them to our system. You cannot request medication via the App

### - ALSO SIGN UP FOR ONLINE SERVICES AS WELL

- Please sign up for Online Services as well as the App – forms to do this are [on our website](#).
  - **Order medicines**
  - **Book appointments**
  - **Update your details**
- If you have signed up for online services you can view the services web-page via the App

### - CORRECT CONTACT DETAILS

- We have HUNDREDS of bounce backs to phone numbers and email addresses.
- You are missing out! Please make sure that we have the right information.

### - INDIVIDUAL CONTACT DETAILS

- Please provide individual mobile numbers – benefit from appointment reminders and check at which location your appointment is going to be.
- Please provide individual email addresses (it is free to create an email address)
- If you share your contact details – you are consenting for us to share information about you with anyone who can see your email or your phone.

### - PAPERLESS PRESCRIPTIONS

- Please sign up for paperless prescriptions – it will benefit both us and you. You can do this with our reception team or ideally, at your preferred chemist.
- Nominating a specific pharmacy speeds up your prescription processing and ensures it is the correct place for collection. Due to how our computer systems work, it is impossible for us to guarantee where your paper prescription will be printed. This means that you may have to collect it from one or other of our sites. If you go paperless you don't have to worry about this. You can ask us or your pharmacist to put you onto paperless prescriptions.

### - ORDERING MEDICATIONS

We are aware that there have been delays at times in processing prescriptions. We apologise for this. This is partly due to working across two sites with, at the same time, a significant increase in the number of prescriptions.

- **Service change:** It is now taking **3 working days** to process a routine prescription request.
- **Ordering on time:** If you order at the last minute this causes significant disruption, so we thank you for respecting our system. [SEE OUR GUIDE](#) [PDF]
- **Bring medicines into line:** If you are finding that you need to order more often than monthly as your medicine runs out at different times, please let us or the pharmacist know. We will try to bring all your repeat medication into line so that you can order less often. This will help you and it will also help us as we will receive fewer requests. Please see our website for further information.
- **Save our NHS:** To save our underfunded NHS please only order the medication you really need and let us know if you have stopped taking a medication and why.

## Together we can make a real difference for you and for us... (Part 2)

### - SEEING THE SAME GP

- Please try to see the same GP for ongoing issues – we know that sometimes this can mean a bit of a wait however it will save you repeating your story and we want to do our best to keep 'continuity of care'. It is always better if we are able to get to know you.

### - COME TO YOUR APPOINTMENTS

- Always come for your appointments or cancel them well in advance so others can benefit
- Every time someone doesn't come – they are stealing that time from other people and costing us money. Please protect your NHS.

### - REPLY TO US

- Always reply to our first invitation to come for a clinic or appointment. Please say yes or [no thank you](#). We have to keep asking until we have a reply under NHS Rules – don't assume ignoring a letter or text is the same as a no – [please tell us](#) – you are saving us money and time.

### - TALK TO US - Signposting – how we can help direct you

- We have asked the trained reception team to always ask as much information as possible when taking your calls. Please talk to them!
- They may be able to assist themselves or will then be able to direct you to the most appropriate person in the most appropriate timescale.
- It is really important you answer these questions; reception are there to help you have your answer more quickly and not to stop you from seeing someone.
- It could be that we can direct you to another clinician or service that can see you or help you sooner
  - We have Expert Nurses who can prescribe
  - We have MIAMI GP appointments at New Pond Row (Minor Illness And Minor Injury)
  - We have, for a limited time during winter, a MIAMI visiting service
  - There are MIAMI Saturday appointments for GPs and for Nurses (smears etc.)
  - MIAMI Clinicians can see your records (with your permission)
- **The GPs have asked the reception team to ask the questions – they are definitely not being nosy and everything is kept fully confidential.** It is their business to help our business.

### - THINK BEFORE YOU CALL

- Always consider if you really need to call the surgery – can you self-care / see a pharmacist / look information up online? One in five GP appointments could be directed elsewhere. That is a huge number that could be freed up for those more unwell or to give time and space for your GP to sign prescriptions and do reviews of your medication. See more at [www.nhs.uk/staywell](http://www.nhs.uk/staywell)
- Many illnesses are 'self-limiting' – you will get better just by waiting for a few days. Think very carefully do you really need to see a GP? For advice on how to manage simple conditions visit <https://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx>, speak to your pharmacist or visit links to self-care on the front page of our website.

### - FLU SYMPTOMS + DIARRHOEA and VOMITTING SYMPTOMS

- If you have any of these symptoms please call the surgery for advice and a member of the clinical team will call you back.
- Please do not come to the surgery unless asked to ensure these are not spread to our more vulnerable patients or to our staff.

## Your Feedback

If you have a mobile number we are currently asking if you could give us some feedback via Text after your appointment. These are the current results which we feel are positive considering how much change there has been.

### How likely are you to recommend Ball Tree to your Friends and Family?

Very Likely	70%	91%	😊
Likely	21%		
Neutral	5%	9%	😐
Unlikely	4%		

We know that sometimes we get things wrong. We are sorry when this is the case and hope that we can reduce the 9% over the next few months.

## Changes changes changes....

### SERVICE AVAILABILITY

- **ANNUAL REVIEWS** - At both sites we now provide a 'joined up' annual review service where people with chronic conditions can be seen for multiple conditions.
- Look out for your invitation near the month of your birthday. It is really important that you reply to our invitations.
- **IMPLANTS & CONTRACEPTION** - There is access to enhanced contraceptive services. Implants and coils can be fitted at Ball Tree site.
- **Time to Talk** counselling and the **Wellbeing Service** both operate out of Ball Tree site.

### SERVICE CHANGE – EAR SYRINGING

- Due to a lack of funding, it has been decided across the whole Adur Locality that, along with many other surgeries in Sussex, we will no longer be able to provide an ear syringing service unless it is specifically requested by Audiology or ENT departments from the hospital. We apologise for this.

### SERVICE ACCESS – TRAINING

- To ensure that our systems work efficiently and smoothly and to improve communication with those using our services, we now have fortnightly staff training sessions on Tuesday lunch times. While the front door of Ball Tree site will be closed, you can still access us by phone in an emergency.

## Other projects with our community...

### WELLBEING and [Mental Health - Access Survey](#)

It is well known that our physical wellbeing is linked to our mental wellbeing. By looking at ways to help our mental wellbeing it can help how we feel about ourselves day to day and help us cope with whatever life throws at us.

Whether we have mental health problems or not it can benefit us and those around us to look at our own and our community's wellbeing. We are working with **Coastal West Sussex Mind** on their [Pacesetter project](#).

[We want to hear from you](#) about how we can help improve our access if people are experiencing mental health problems. This is for you whether or not you have had personal experiences with mental health – you may have ideas to help us based upon how friends or family have accessed their GP. We will review all your responses and aim to make the changes that you suggest wherever possible. [CLICK HERE](#) to complete the survey

#### The five areas of wellbeing are:

- **Connecting**
- **Being active**
- **Taking notice**
- **Learning**
- **Giving**

The **Wellbeing Team** continues to work from the surgery, supporting and signposting people who have concerns around their physical and mental wellbeing. Michelle, our wellbeing advisor, can

direct you to clubs and activities as well as to offering information and support. You can self-refer via their website or ask at reception or your GP.

**Time to Talk** provides support to those with anxiety or depression. They can also support those who are struggling emotionally after a heart attack or if they have diabetes. Ask your GP or a nurse at your annual review if you would like a referral.

**Sustainable Mind** is running mindfulness sessions, group and drop in from the Sompting Big Local Hub. Visit <http://www.sustainablesussex.org/project/splash-point/> for more information

## SOCIAL SUPPORT

We are working with **Sompting Big Local** and **Sompting Parish Council** with a view to providing access to wellbeing support based out of the Harriet Johnson Centre. We are still awaiting confirmation from the Borough Council for the start date. We are also excited to hear the plans for rejuvenating the centre to improve the space available for the local community, for more clubs and groups and possibly a community café.

We are also working with **Guild Care** to look at a pilot project to support older people in our community who may be lonely and isolated or who may benefit from some social support. Watch this space...

**Sustainable Sussex** is a project that provides volunteering opportunities to a wide range of people. They are moving from their current base in Durrington to the Sompting Estate. If you are interested in building, digging and helping others they would welcome volunteers to help with their projects. We can also refer you if you prefer. Visit: <http://www.sustainablesussex.org/> or look them up on Facebook for more information.

**Sompting Big Local** have created a register of all local clubs and activities. The information is available on their website. <http://www.somptingbiglocal.org.uk/whats-on>

Information is also available from <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/westsussex/activities--events/adur-community-clubs/>

## NEW BALL TREE?

### Housing Projects and the need for a New Building...

- There is the potential for significant number of new houses to be built at New Monks Farm and Sompting Gap. We firmly believe that health provision needs to be high on the agenda when plans are being made to ensure there is sufficient access to primary care for everyone in the community. This includes GPs and Community Health Care Teams.
- As you are very aware, our current buildings are far from ideal and both sites are officially less than half the size that they should be under current NHS guidance. We are having positive discussions with local professionals, organisations and stakeholders who are supporting us with the aim of having a new building that is fit for the future health and wellbeing of our local population.
- If you want to help, please actively lobby local politicians, planners, the NHS CCG and NHS England on our behalf. We need to have your support to help us unblock access to any funding that may be available.
- There are currently no clear options available to us. There are no plans in place for any changes to our buildings in the short-term, despite any rumours that may be circulating in the area. We will not be able to make any improvements without significant financial support. Any changes that we consider, will only be after consultation with the community and will be in partnership and collaboration with all the other health and care providers in the area.



# TEAM BALL TREE

## Welcomes

- Clare, Holly and Sophie have joined the reception team. They have 'learned the ropes' extremely quickly and slotted right in.
- Alison Chowdhury has been back working with the Nursing team over the last few months. She has worked extremely hard carrying us through a very pressured time and brings a smile to everyone's faces.
- Dr Sam Hall is currently away for a while but will be on our GP registrar at Ball Tree for the next year.
- Dr Jhuma Limbu is currently working with us as GP registrar for the next 2 months when she will move on to the next part of her training.
- Dr Polly Brown returns from maternity leave in the Spring to continue her training as a GP registrar for the next year.
- Dr Rebecca Williams has joined us as a fulltime GP working across both sites. Rebecca has moved with her partner from Oxford and she has already proved herself a hugely competent, enthusiastic and caring member of the team.
- Clare Hearn has re-joined us having worked previously at Kingfisher. We are lucky to have Clare here as she is an extremely experienced nurse who is also working at the local NHS CCG as Nurse Education Lead.  
Clare will be taking on a new role looking after those with complex combinations of conditions or who are more frail and are housebound. Clare will also be supporting us by seeing people with minor illnesses during clinics as well as home visiting. As a specialist in diabetes, Clare will also be able to start and monitor people needing insulin.
- We are very excited that Kim Maynard will be re-joining us in March as a Health Care Assistant. Working full-time across both sites, Kim will provide extra capacity in our stretched service for blood tests. Kim will also provide smoking advice along with many other skills.
- While not a new member of staff, we welcome Lucy Harwood into her new role as reception manager across both sites.

## Farewells

- Alison Best has left Kingfisher branch where she worked as an HCA. Alison has taken a post nearer to her home in Burgess Hill. We wish her well and thank her for her hard work.
- Dr Kate Callcutt has been a GP Registrar at Kingfisher surgery for over a year but has now successfully completed her GP training. Dr Callcutt will be travelling for a while and we wish her well. She will be missed.

## Thank you

- The Partners at Ball Tree would like to publicly thank all of the members of the surgery for all their hard work in bringing the two practices together. It never fails to impress how everyone is able to work through the adversity, keep positive and embrace the changes especially during this extremely hard winter.
- The doctors have shared the workload when it has been busy. The nurses have continued to smile and be caring whilst our services are stretched. The administration team have been beavering away diligently in the background (our silent heroes). The management team have provided us with a steady base while fulfilling double their roles, rebuilding our systems and keeping the usual services working.
- The Reception team have been invaluable, taking a substantial number of extra calls and queries during this busy time. We thank our patients who show them the consideration and respect they are due and who recognise the pressures they are under.
- The Nursing team have shown us the benefits of cross-site team-working and flexibility. During severe unavoidable staff shortages at both branches the nurses have pulled together, worked overtime and ensured that core nursing services have been maintained. We thank the nurses for this and also for the support they provide for each other and for those that need their care.