

## Barnabas Patient Voices

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From: Barnabas Patient Voices <keith@barnabasvoices.org.uk>  
Sent: 04 September 2022 12:37  
To: Barnabas Patient Voices  
Subject: Barnabas Patient Voices Monthly Update, September  
Attachments: BPV\_Minutes\_20220720.pdf; In\_Touch\_131.pdf; Imperial\_PERC.pdf

To All [Barnabas Patient Voices](#) Members ...  
[Printed copies to those members without email]  
[A copy will also be posted on our Facebook group and website]

[If you can't read any of the attached documents, or want printed copies of anything mentioned, please contact me and I'll try to send you a copy.]

Welcome to a busy September update for [Barnabas Patient Voices](#) members.

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### Coronavirus

At last the Omicron BA.5 peak seems to be over and infection rates have fallen considerably. The latest figures as at 2 September are:

- The ONS estimate 1.64% of people (1 in 60) in England are currently infected; that's about 1.1 million. However the Zoe Health Study are estimating slightly higher infection rates with around 103,000 new cases daily and 1.5 million (1 in 45) currently infected. That may just be an indication of levelling off, and differences in timing between the ONS and Zoe data.
- Rates are continuing to fall in all age groups and all regions, although there are signs that this may be levelling off.
- Around 2 million people (3.1% or about 1 in 30) are reporting as having Long Covid.

Data from ONS

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/coronavirus/covid19latestinsights/infections>) and Zoe Health Study (<https://health-study.joinzoe.com/data>).

### UK Approves Dual-Strain Vaccines

On 16 August the UK was the first country to approve Moderna's updated vaccine which targets both the original Wuhan strain and the Omicron BA.1 variant. This vaccine will be part of the programme of booster jabs being offered to those eligible starting any time now. And on 3 September the NHS announced approval of a Pfizer/BioNTech "bivalent" vaccine, adding a second option. However there may not be sufficient "bivalent" vaccine supply for everyone eligible, and people are being advised to take whatever booster is available when they're invited. Those eligible for the Autumn booster include over 50s, those with a weakened immune system, health and social care workers, care home residents, and the housebound. If you are eligible, in the next few weeks you will be invited to book your jab through the National Booking Service. More information at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-62548336>, <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2022/08/nhs-to-roll-out-variant-busting-booster-jab-from-september-ahead-of-winter/>, and <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2022/09/nhs-invites-more-than-four-million-people-for-autumn-booster-as-care-homes-set-to-get-first-jabs/>.

### Mask Policies

Many hospitals – and indeed other healthcare providers – have recently reintroduced the mandatory wearing of masks in their buildings. This is in line with the government's current guidance that such policy is a local decision based on local risk assessment. However it is being reported in *BMJ* that some providers are insisting **everyone** wear a single-use disposable (surgical) mask which they provide. Even if the person arrives wearing a high-filtration FFP2 or FFP3 mask they are being required to downgrade to the provider's supplied mask before being allowed entry. This is clearly a nonsense, especially considering that many wearing the FFP2/FFP3 masks will be (or be visiting) the immunosuppressed undergoing, for example, chemotherapy. I'm not aware that this is the practice at any of our local hospitals, although I'd be interested if it is. More in the *BMJ* article at <https://www.bmj.com/content/378/bmj.o1929>.

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### Polio

Due to the detection of polio virus in the sewerage from several north and east London boroughs (not Ealing) all children aged 1 to 9 years in London are being offered a polio vaccine booster. Parents of eligible children will be

contacted over the coming weeks and it is important that all children receive the booster, even if they are up to date on their vaccinations. More on the background to this at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-children-aged-1-to-9-in-london-to-be-offered-a-dose-of-polio-vaccine>, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/aug/10/900000-london-children-to-be-offered-polio-vaccine-booster-after-sewage-findings> and this Twitter thread from top epidemiologist Dr Deepti Gurdasani <https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1557349114458914818.html>.

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### Monkeypox

The outbreak of Monkeypox seems to have stabilised over the last few weeks. As of 29 August there were 3413 confirmed and suspected cases reported, with almost 70% being in London. Government overview report at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/monkeypox-outbreak-epidemiological-overview/monkeypox-outbreak-epidemiological-overview-30-august-2022>. However a lack of vaccine supply has caused a hiccup in the vaccination programme, see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-62551821>.

A second strain of the disease has also been identified in UK in the last few days. So far there is little information on the strain, although there is press report at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/02/second-monkeypox-strain-found-in-the-uk>.

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## Barnabas Patient Voices News

### September Meeting

Our next full meeting is on **Wednesday 28 September, 13:30** on Zoom.

**\*\*\* Please note this is a changed date! \*\*\*** Because of conflicting important NHS meetings, the Practice cannot support the original date.

The agenda for the meeting should be:

1. Introductions & Apologies
2. Approve Minutes of July Meeting [attached]
3. Covid-19 Update and Roundtable
4. Members Feedback
5. Practice Updates
6. Other PPG Updates
7. Matters Arising, AOB

We had hoped to have Nurse Henny attend the meeting to discuss respiratory issues, however I have been advised that the Practice will need all hands on deck to cope with the various booster vaccination programmes (see above) and flu jabs. We will try again for the November meeting.

The Zoom information for the call is:

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84214030722?pwd=RnE4bStnQ1FHbjlrBkFQ4ZE9KWEISZz09>  
Meeting ID: 842 1403 0722  
Passcode: 652353

Remember that even if you don't do online, you can join by phone by calling one of: 020 3481 5240, 020 3901 7895, or 020 3481 5237 and using the ID and passcode above. (Do be aware though that if joining by phone you will pay for the call at your normal rate.)

### Informal Calls

Our remaining informal calls for this year are on: **Wednesday 7 September, 16:00; Thursday 6 October, 18:00; Tuesday 1 November, 10:00; and Monday 5 December, 12:00.**

As always the Zoom information for these calls is:

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7279594414?pwd=VmYwODdoWGg2eTFvTlVlVlZyRmhSQT09>  
Meeting ID: 727 959 4414  
Passcode: 149417

Do drop in for some chat, and any recent stories and updates. Again you should be able to join by phone by dialling the numbers above with these codes.

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## Practice News

### Barnabas Bulletin

We expect to publish the September issue of the Practice's newsletter *Barnabas Bulletin* during the week beginning 19 September. Watch this space for your copy.

## GP Patient Survey

Early each year Ipsos/MORI run the GP Patient Survey for the NHS. They invite a large sample of patients to provide feedback on GP services; this year about 2.47 million questionnaires were sent out and there was a 29% response rate. The results were published earlier in the summer.

Two numbers stood out. First, 71% of Barnabas patients reported a good overall experience of the Practice, which is in line with the national average – although both numbers have fallen dramatically over the last couple of years. Secondly Barnabas's result of only 42% saying it is easy to get through on the phone is significantly below the national average. Given the level of dissatisfaction I hear this is not a surprise, and I continue to discuss this with the Practice.

Possibly as a result of the problems phoning the Practice we have a higher than average rate of patients avoiding making an appointment as it is too difficult, and we're ahead on the use of online services (eg. requesting repeat prescriptions). The latter is good, but the former isn't.

As if this wasn't bad enough, we've been knocked off our top spot amongst the practices in the local area. Part of our role in [Barnabas Patient Voices](#) is to help the Practice regain that top spot – something that would be good for us all.

There is so much more in the GP Patient Survey, including various analytical tools and a selection of reports. For anyone interested the survey results are online at <https://www.gp-patient.co.uk>.

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## Local Healthcare News

### Ealing Primary Care Sector Jobs Fair

Ealing Council, in partnership with West London College and North West London Integrated Care Board (ICB), is inviting Ealing residents to a free jobs fair to explore training and career opportunities in the primary care sector. The jobs fair is on Monday 19 September at Victoria Hall, Ealing Town Hall, New Broadway, London W5 2BY from 10:00 to 14:00. More information at <https://www.aroundealing.com/jobs/ealing-primary-care-sector-jobs-fair/>.

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## General NHS & Healthcare News

### Overcoming Barriers to GP registration

NHS Digital is launching an application to allow patients to register with a GP online, rather than having to fill out (often multiple) paper forms. It may come as a surprise to learn that anyone in England can register with a GP surgery. It's free. You do not need proof of address. You do not need to give details of your immigration status and it's not necessary to have an NHS number to hand. Consequently the team building the new service had to be sure not to put barriers in the way of people registering, and indeed removing existing barriers where possible. There are two articles looking at how this was done at <https://digital.nhs.uk/blog/design-matters/2022/overcoming-barriers-to-gp-registration> and <https://digital.nhs.uk/blog/design-matters/2022/why-creating-an-online-service-is-more-than-just-digitising-a-form>.

### More NHS Beds this Winter

The NHS is to create an additional 7000 beds to help cope over the coming winter. That sounds good, but works out at an average of 8 beds per hospital – and looked at like that they'll not go very far. *BBC News* item at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-62519613>.

### Bowel Cancer Screening

The NHS is expanding the availability of home testing kits for bowel cancer. The tests will now be available to those aged 58 and over. This is part of the gradual roll-out to make the tests available to everyone over 50 by 2025. Bowel cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the UK with over 800 people newly diagnosed each week; it can be much easier to treat if caught early. More information at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2022/08/nhs-expands-lifesaving-home-testing-kits-for-bowel-cancer/>.

### Kidney Transplant Hope

Researchers at the University of Cambridge have been able to change the blood type of donated kidneys, a development which could increase the supply of kidneys available for transplant, particularly within minority ethnic groups who are less likely to find a match. A kidney from someone with blood type A cannot be transplanted to someone with blood type B, nor the other way around. But changing the blood type to the universal O would allow more transplants to take place as this can be used for people with any blood type. The researchers flushed blood infused with an enzyme through the donor kidneys. The enzyme removed the blood type markers that line the blood vessels of the kidney, which converted the organ to the most common type O. There's a long way to go even before clinical trials are contemplated, but if ultimately successful this would be really good news. *Guardian* news report at

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/aug/15/researchers-change-blood-type-of-kidney-in-transplant-breakthrough>.

### Knee Replacement Surgery

A study has found that policies put in place by NHS CCGs to change access to knee replacement surgery based on a patient's weight/BMI are linked with a decrease in surgery. It highlighted that the rules may be worsening health inequalities as policy introduction can be linked to a rise in patients having private surgery, and amongst the most economically deprived patients not having surgery at all. A likely unintended consequence was that rates of surgery fell in all patient groups, and not just the overweight or obese at whom the policy was targeted. NHS news item at <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/knee-replacement-surgery-decreased-after-nhs-policies-on-patients-weight-were-introduced-worsening-health-inequalities/30913>.

### Weight-Shaming

In another research study it has been found that doctors and nurses often "weight-shame" people who are overweight or obese, leaving them feeling anxious, depressed and wrongly blaming themselves for their condition – and that this is a world-wide problem. Such behaviour, although usually the result of "unconscious weight bias", ultimately leads to people not attending medical appointments, feeling humiliated, and being more likely to put on more weight. *Guardian* report at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/aug/10/obese-patients-weight-shamed-doctors-nurses>. [No, I'm not saying this is a problem at Barnabas; it is not something I've personally experienced.]

### New Emergency Alert System

Following successful trials, a new emergency warning system, allowing alerts about severe weather and other life-threatening events to be sent to mobile phones, will go live in October in England, Scotland and Wales. It will potentially alert up to 85% of the population. The messages will be sent automatically to any smartphone which is switched on, although it will be possible to opt out. The alerts, which will look and sound different to standard messages, will be able to give localised warnings of flooding, fires, extreme weather and public health emergencies; other warnings may be added later. The system will work by sending messages to mobiles directly via cell towers, rather than accessing a list of mobile numbers. Consequently an alert can be sent to a single tower, meaning anyone in the vicinity could pick it up, even if just travelling through the area. *BBC News* report at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-62549122>.

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## Newsletters

This month's newsletters which may be of interest:

- **Patients Association *Patient Voice***, Summer 2022 – can be downloaded at <https://www.patients-association.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=521b054f-398f-44c4-a79d-ddc16951625a>.
  - **NHS *In Touch* #131** – attached
  - **Patient Experience Research Centre** newsletter – attached
  - **NHS Vaccine Update #331** – can be downloaded at <https://www.healthpublications.gov.uk/ViewArticle.html?sp=Spv331vaccineupdateissue331august2022>.
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Phew! That's a lot this month. More next month, meanwhile stay safe and enjoy what remains of the summer.

Keith

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