

## Barnabas Patient Voices

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From: Barnabas Patient Voices <[keith@barnabasvoices.org.uk](mailto:keith@barnabasvoices.org.uk)>  
Sent: 05 February 2024 09:50  
To: Barnabas Patient Voices  
Subject: Barnabas Patient Voices Monthly Update, February  
Attachments: BPV\_Minutes\_20240117.pdf; NHS App waiting times feature briefing.pdf; PA\_Weekly\_News.pdf

Email to All **Barnabas Patient Voices** Members ...  
Printed copies to members without email

A copy will also be posted on our Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/barnabas.ppg>, and website, <https://barnabasvoices.org.uk/>.

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 the February update for **Barnabas Patient Voices** members.

**Please share healthcare news!** (But not anything about your personal care.) Please be brief – just a link to a news item is fine. Email to me at [keith@barnabasvoices.org.uk](mailto:keith@barnabasvoices.org.uk), or leave me a note with reception at the medical centre.

**We need your help! See “Patient Engagement ...” below.**

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### Coronavirus

It isn't entirely clear at the moment where Covid is heading. The rise in cases reported last month seems to have peaked, but then recent data suggests this may have been reversed. The latest ONS Winter Infection Survey published on 24 January indicated that 1 in 50 people (that's 2% of the population) were infected, with the prevalence being highest in the southern regions of the country; highest amongst the 18-44 year olds; and lowest in the over 65s.

The Covid JN.1 “Juno” variant is currently predominant, and responsible for around 80% of all sequenced samples. It does seem that this variant is causing less severe illness. But keep in mind that it is still causing cases of Long Covid, and that your likelihood of getting Long Covid increases each time you're infected – and I have seen estimates that 1 in 30 people have, or have had, Long Covid..

However the data is showing there is currently more flu around than Covid, with the rate of flu infections being almost twice that for Covid.

We'll know more when the next ONS survey is published in a couple of weeks.

[Data from “Covid Situation Report”, 1 February 2024, <https://bhawkins3.substack.com/p/covid-situation-report-february-1>]

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### Barnabas Patient Voices News

#### January Open Meeting – Minutes

The minutes from our Open Meeting on 17 January are attached. Please read them.

The meeting included a useful and interesting talk on Asthma by Practice Nurse Karen Collett. Karen's slides are attached to the minutes. Many thanks to Karen for giving up her time.

### **March Open Meeting**

Our next Open Meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday 20 March at 13:00**. Again it will be over Zoom – unless we manage to get some sense from the church before then. Agenda to follow in my next update. Please put the date in your diary.

### **Links to *Barnabas Bulletin* & *What's Where near Barnabas***

You will also see in the minutes there are new links to the current issues of both *Barnabas Bulletin* and *What's Where near Barnabas*. The links are:

- *Barnabas Bulletin*: [https://barnabasvoices.org.uk/docs/Barnabas\\_Bulletin.pdf](https://barnabasvoices.org.uk/docs/Barnabas_Bulletin.pdf)
- *What's Where near Barnabas*: [https://barnabasvoices.org.uk/docs/Whats\\_Where\\_near\\_Barnabas.pdf](https://barnabasvoices.org.uk/docs/Whats_Where_near_Barnabas.pdf).

These links should be permanent and always take you to the latest issue.

Reception should also have QR codes for these links, and we hope shortly to be putting them on the waiting area noticeboards.

### **Waiting Area Notice Boards**

In the next week or so I hope that we will be able to return the waiting area noticeboards to their former vibrant selves – and that we can resume their management; it's a small piece of work we can take off the overloaded reception staff.

### **Patient Engagement, Access, etc.**

Our November Open Meeting suggested that we should meet with the Practice to work on how we can improve patient engagement, awareness, access etc. Purminder Gandhu and I recently had an initial meeting with Practice Manager, Matt Edwards. So far we have brain dumped all our ideas (however far they are off into the blue sky). Once we've grouped and analysed our thoughts we can decide how we proceed and what we should attack first.

We already know one of the top priorities is likely to be to improve the Practice website (and also possibly our BPV website) – so **we need your help!**

**We would like to run a focus group for those interested in influencing the shape of the Practice website. If you are able to help with this, please get in touch (contact details below).** More information when available – watch this space.

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## **Barnabas Practice News**

### **Staffing**

We reported last month that the Practice had recruited an additional receptionist. They still want to recruit another receptionist and are also on the lookout for an additional salaried GP.

### **Phones**

I'm told the stats are showing that the phone queues are generally improving. Nevertheless work continues to find further – affordable! – improvements to the service.

At the end of the day this all comes down to money and, like everywhere else, the Practice's funding is reducing in real terms. Watching the news there are reports of practices elsewhere closing and handing back their contracts because they cannot afford to keep operating. And we don't want to join them!

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## **General NHS & Healthcare News**

### **Measles**

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has declared a **national health incident** due to the rising number of cases of measles.

The increase is brought about by the low take-up of MMR vaccination with a country average of only 85% (and as low as 75% in London) of children starting school being fully vaccinated – far below the required 95% to keep measles away. Measles is the most infectious of diseases (way, way more than Covid or flu) and can be an incredibly serious illness with up to 40% of sick children needing to be hospitalised.

**Parents are advised to check the vaccination status of their children** and ensure they have catch-up vaccination if required.

There is also a suggestion that adults (including older adults who had measles before vaccination started) should consider a booster jab as although immunity is long-lasting it can decline. We don't know if such boosters are, or will be, available on the NHS as currently all we've seen is a suggestion in the media.

There's a *Guardian* report on the UKHSA position at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/jan/19/surge-in-measles-cases-prompts-uk-to-declare-national-health-incident>, and a BBC report at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-68028530>.

The report suggesting an adult measles booster is at <https://theconversation.com/measles-is-the-most-infectious-disease-known-to-science-adults-should-consider-getting-another-mmr-vaccine-221291>.

## NHS App

There are a lot of things happening to the smartphone NHS App at the moment.

1. NHS App users should now be able to see information about all their prescriptions.
2. Users who don't have a nominated pharmacy (the one the doctor sends your prescriptions to electronically) can now get a barcode they can show at any pharmacy to authorise them to dispense a specific prescription.

There's an NHS Digital article on how to do the above: <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/nhs-app/nhs-app-guidance-for-gp-practices/guidance-on-nhs-app-features/digital-prescriptions>.

There's also an article in *Pulse Today* at <https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/technology/nhs-app-to-enable-barcode-prescriptions-later-this-month/>.

3. Another new feature in the NHS App is the ability to see average waiting times, by hospital, for initial consultations following a referral. This is designed to help patients choose where they are treated and know roughly how long they are likely to wait. There's an NHS briefing document attached.

## Monitoring Waiting Lists

Following on from waiting times, the Patients Association have a useful article on how the care regulator CQC monitor (mostly hospital) waiting lists at <https://www.patients-association.org.uk/blog/how-the-regulator-monitors-waiting-lists>.

## GP Numbers

According to data from the British Medical Association (BMA), whilst the GP workforce is declining, the number of patients is increasing. In December 2023, a record high of almost 63.08 million patients were registered with GP practices in England. As a result, the average number of patients each full-time equivalent GP is responsible for is now 2,295. That is an increase of 357 patients per GP, or 18%, since 2015, which demonstrates just one aspect of the ever-mounting workload in general practice. Full BMA report at <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/nhs-delivery-and-workforce/pressures/pressures-in-general-practice-data-analysis#:~:text=Whilst%20the%20GP%20workforce%20is,responsible%20now%20stands%20at%202%2C295>.

## GP Receptionist Recruitment

As we know from our Practice's experience GP Receptionists are hard to recruit – and this is country-wide. There's a BBC report of Derbyshire's Director of Primary Care comments on this at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-68194274>.

## General Election Manifestos

This is likely to be an election year, so here are two recent items where groups setting out what they believe should be the next government's priorities for the NHS.

1. Firstly a group of senior doctors and NHS leaders has said they believe the next government should declare the NHS a national emergency. *Guardian* report at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/jan/31/next-government-should-declare-nhs-a-national-emergency-experts-warn>.
  2. And the Patients Association have published their manifesto for the NHS. Find it at <https://www.patients-association.org.uk/the-patients-association-manifesto-patients-cant-wait>.
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## Newsletters

And finally our usual round-up of potentially interesting newsletters received since the last update.

- **Patients Association Weekly News** for 19/01 & 26/01 – both attached in a single PDF – sorry no printed copies for postal members as it is just too large, but contact me if you really want a copy!
  - **NIHR Be Part of Research**, Winter 2024 – available online at <https://us14.campaign-archive.com/?u=299dc02111e8a68172029095f&id=5dbd974bb9>
  - **CQC News**, January 2024 – available online at <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCQC/bulletins/38674df>
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That's it for this month, hopefully by next time Spring will be in full swing.

Keith

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