



## Autumn Newsletter 2024

Produced by the  
Patient Participation Group (PPG)  
on behalf of, and with the Practice

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## PPG – Who are we and what do we do?

### Message from our Chairman Steven Davies

If you are a patient with Schopwick Surgery I'd be surprised if you weren't already aware of the PPG – if only because you will have been invited to events that we have organised.

*But who are we?*

We are a small group – never more than 15 – of patient volunteers who give our time to influence and help Schopwick maintain and improve the services they provide to you, the patients.

Our events, which include a wide variety of health subjects are just one of the activities designed to be relevant to as many patients as possible. Even though that may be the most visible impact of what we do, it is far from the only one.

We are all lucky that Schopwick are also keen to work collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for all. For instance, whilst we organise the events, Schopwick support the PPG in doing so, providing financial support for our activities and provide speakers for events when relevant.

*So what else do we do?*

You may have participated in the Practice's survey at the beginning of the year. The NHS dictates that the Practice conducts a patient survey but the requirements that have to be met are quite limited. Two of our members, with experience in questionnaire design and analysis, worked with the Practice to produce a more comprehensive survey than that required by the NHS. We then carried out a comprehensive analysis of the results and produced a full report with the findings. That helped to reduce the burden on Admin staff but most importantly provided patient – **your** – feedback to enable the Practice to respond by improving services where you had raised issues. The basic NHS survey requirement would not have provided such feedback.

You will see that the Practice has recently launched a revised and improved website. This took a great deal of effort by the admin team to be delivered as well as their normal duties. The PPG provided resource to check how the site worked (or didn't) on different devices and verify that links worked correctly. This resulted in a number of further improvements and corrections which, we are pleased to report, were taken on by the admin team.

We are constantly listening to your feedback and taking that into account when working with the Practice. You can, of course, provide feedback directly to the Practice but if you have suggestions you would like to discuss, suggestions for events or would like to join our group, please contact us by email at [schopwick.ppg@gmail.com](mailto:schopwick.ppg@gmail.com).

Finally, more information and our Terms of Reference (<https://schopwicksurgery.co.uk/patients-participation-group/>) is available on the Schopwick website at <https://www.schopwicksurgery.co.uk/>.

## Next Event

**Subject:** Long Covid

**When:** Tuesday 12 November at 19:00

**Where:** On-line

More information will be available soon on the Schopwick website. Patients who are most likely to be interested in an event's subject will be notified by text.

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## Practice News

*We remind patients that if they are unable to use electronic devices, they can still call the Practice to make an appointment*

### Flu and Covid Autumn Boosters



Flu and covid vaccinations have been available from 3rd October. Patients 65 years and over and in at risk groups are eligible for flu and covid vaccination.

Appointments are available throughout the day including early, late and weekend appointments.

NHS have provided the Moderna vaccination for this Winter campaign. It's important to top up your protection because viruses change and immunity fades over time. If you are unsure whether to have another Covid vaccination, you may find the article on Covid research on page 6 helpful.

All eligible patients have been contacted by the Practice. If you have not received an invite and are eligible, please contact the Practice.

### Staffing Update

**Dr Kate Gordon** has recently joined our practice as a permanent GP. You will find more information about Dr Gordon in the profile panel below.

**Dr Timmis** has recently returned from maternity leave after giving birth to a baby boy.

**Dr Khattak** is currently on maternity leave after giving birth to a baby girl.

**Dr Raithatha** has recently given birth to a baby girl. Dr Dipali Patel will be covering her maternity leave.

**Anjali Dey** – we welcome Anjali who has recently joined our pharmacy team.

**Sarah Harris** – Sarah has completed 31 years of service with Schopwick. She originally worked three 5 hour shifts a week. She gradually increased her hours moving from reception to admin and has been part of the management team for many years.

**Sarah's Message:** In the time I have worked at Schopwick I have seen all our Partners, with the exception of Raj, join as trainee doctors. I have worked with many wonderful colleagues and am proud to see how Schopwick has grown over the years but has managed to keep Schopwick's 'family' friendly caring feel.



### **PROFILE: Dr Kate Gordon**

I'm thrilled to have joined the Schopwick Team.

I enjoy the variety of general practice, and have particular interests in cardiology, gynaecology, palliative care and paediatrics. I am proud to be a GP, serving our local community.

I am excited to start teaching medical students at the Practice this month. Prior to joining the Practice, I worked as a GP in North West London and Hertfordshire over the past 10 years. I have completed diplomas from the Royal College of Paediatrics, the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and the faculty of sexual and reproductive health.

Prior to my GP training, I was fortunate to spend 6 months working in emergency medicine in New Zealand as well as volunteering on a ship travelling down the Amazon river in Northern Peru providing medical care to isolated communities.

I graduated in medicine from Cardiff University in 2008. In my spare time, I enjoy reading novels and attending a local book club, and spending time with my young family.

### **GP Industrial Action**

There has been lots of speculation surrounding GP industrial action and concerns arising from our patients.

We want to take this opportunity to reassure you that we are committed to providing the best care for our patients, and currently, we are not withdrawing any services or appointments.

For example - our union representatives, the BMA, have suggested reducing to 25 patient contacts per day which they suggest is the safe working number for clinicians to deal with.

We are currently having MORE patient contacts than this per day and are not looking to alter this as we know the impact it will have on our patients.

In principle we support the collective industrial action which is aimed at enabling us to have a sustainable primary care model whilst we continue to try to do our best for our patients to provide the best service possible. We hope you will continue to support us in our efforts to achieve this.

### **New Practice Website**

We have recently changed the look of our Practice Website. We have taken feedback given by the members of our Patient Participation Group on board and made changes where possible.

We are always happy to receive feedback, please do submit this via the feedback form on our website, especially if you spot any errors.

### **Hospital Blood Tests**

Local hospitals no longer offer a walk in service. Blood tests must be booked using an on-line system - Swiftqueue (<https://www.swiftqueue.co.uk>). You can also call 01727 897 376 between 9am and 1pm to book an appointment.

Please ensure you let the clinician know which hospital you would like to go to as they have different forms to take to your appointment.

Blood tests can also be booked at the surgery.

## How are medical services in England organised?

**Integrated Care Systems, (ICSs)** have the responsibility of improving health and care services – with a focus on prevention, better outcomes and reducing health inequalities. There are 42 in England that bring health and care organisations together to develop shared plans and joined-up services. The NHS organisations and upper-tier local authorities in each ICS run a joint committee called an integrated care partnership (ICP). This is a broad alliance of partners who all have a role in improving local health, care and wellbeing. Each ICP must develop a long-term strategy to improve health and social care services and people's health and wellbeing in the area.

**Integrated Care Boards (ICBs)** are NHS organisations responsible for planning health services for their local population. There is one ICB in each ICS area. They manage the NHS budget and work with local providers of NHS services, such as hospitals and GP practices, to agree a joint five-year plan stating how the NHS will contribute to the ICP's integrated care strategy.

**Upper-tier Local Authorities** are responsible for social care and public health services in their ICS area, as well as other vital services that contribute to health and wellbeing such as housing, education, leisure and transport.

*The above text has been abridged from the NHS description of Integrated Care Systems. For a full description please see:*

*<https://www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare/what-is-integrated-care/>*

## Should I have another Covid Vaccination?

Some people are wary of having another Covid vaccination. If you are one of them, this article may help you to decide.

Some people are concerned about the long term effects of multiple vaccinations; some have had a bad reaction to a previous vaccination; some dismiss the vaccination because it isn't guaranteed to prevent infection and others consider that because they have already been vaccinated or have contracted Covid, they are already immune.

Covid continues to evolve and the vaccination is modified to be most effective at protecting against the current strain. Also, the effectiveness of immunisations wanes over time so the last vaccination you had may have limited ability to counteract the current Covid strain.

We also know that the impact of a Covid infection can be significant; can take a long time to recover from and with long Covid can result in long term disability. Importantly, long Covid can also increase your risk of developing other chronic health issues.

Whilst the result of research into the effects of multiple Covid infections varies, one study suggests that multiple infections increase the risk of long Covid, whilst a study, funded by the National Institutes of Health found the opposite, see <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/study-suggests-reinfections-virus-causes-covid-19-likely-have-similar-severity-original-infection>. However, most importantly, it did find that vaccines delivered a protective effect. If you are interested in learning more about Long Covid, see <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/covid-19/long-term-effects-of-covid-19-long-covid/>.

In conclusion, whilst everyone must make their own decision, vaccination reduces the risk of serious impacts of a Covid infection and that is especially important for those who have other health issues.

And finally, if you have any reservations or questions, please discuss with a clinician who knows your medical history.

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## NHS Complaints Procedure

Alan Felt, NHS Complaints Advocate, Vice-Chair, Schopwick PPG

If you are dissatisfied with the treatment that you receive within the NHS, you have a right to complain.

I work for Pohwer, who currently have the contract to do this advocacy work. It is the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS).

If you are unhappy at any aspect of your treatment with any NHS funded treatment including care provided by NHS hospitals, GPs, pharmacies, ambulance services, dentists, district nurses, opticians and mental health services, then ICAS can help you. If the NHS paid for treatment at a private hospital or pays all or part of someone's care home fees, this is also covered by the NHS complaints process.

So firstly, communicate with the facility that you are complaining about; this is called local resolution.

Schopwick for example have their own complaints process. They will acknowledge your complaint within three working days, investigate the concerns you raised and will respond as soon as possible. (see website for full details).

If you need more help, ICAS can support you through this NHS Complaints Procedure. The service is free, independent and confidential.

You can call the Help Hub on 0300 456 2370 for information, advice and signposting to other organisations in your area who may be able to help you.

### **How can an NHS Complaints Advocate help you?**

If you need help to make your complaint you can use our NHS Complaints Advocacy service which is free, independent of the NHS and confidential.

An Advocate provides information about how to complain, helping you write letters, preparing you for complaint meetings, and will attend with you. They will also signpost you to other organisations which can help you if they can't. They will also help you to refer your complaint to the Ombudsman, if you are not happy with the response that you have received so far from the NHS Service.

However, an advocate cannot help you with medical or legal advice, or support you with compensation claims, amongst other things.

The **Ombudsman** is independent of the NHS and free to use. It can help resolve your complaint and tell the NHS how to put things right if it has got them wrong.

The Ombudsman only has legal powers to investigate certain complaints. You must have received a final response from the Practice before the Ombudsman can look at your complaint, and it will generally not investigate your complaint if it happened more than 12 months ago, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Please refer to the NHS England website for more information.

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## Useful Contacts

[Carers in Herts](#) support, information and advice to unpaid carers.  
Telephone 01992-58 69 69.

[Herts Help](#) - a network of community organisations in Hertfordshire working together to listen and help patients find independent support, guidance and information they need to get the most out of life. Telephone 0300 123 4044.

[Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#) – provides mental health and learning disabilities inpatient care and treatment in the community for young people, adults and older people in Hertfordshire.

[Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board \(ICB\)](#) - NHS organisation responsible for developing a plan in collaboration with NHS trusts, etc.

[MIND Hertfordshire Network](#) - support and advice for mental health issues.  
To contact the Crisis helpline please call 020 3727 3600.

[The Patients Association](#) - an independent patient charity campaigning for improvements in health and social care for patients. The Helpline number is 0800 345 7115.

[Communities1st](#) - Communities 1st aims to support local communities to thrive through support, knowledge, voice, infrastructure and innovation.

### Opening Hours

#### **Elstree:**

Monday – Friday: 08:00 – 18:30

#### **Bushey:**

Monday – Thursday: 08:30 – 18:30

Friday: 08:30 – 16:30

**PATCHS On-line Triage Service:** *Opens 08:30*

**Phone:** 0203 667 1850; **Lines:** *Open 08:30 – 18:00*

**Nurse Appointments:** *Opens 10:30*

**Out of hours, call 111 or 999**