

## CHANGING CARE: THE NEW GP TEAM

# New roles are a shot in the arm for surgeries

For generations our GPs have been the backbone of local communities, but increasing pressures mean our doctors' surgeries must adapt to better meet the needs of modern communities. In our series, *Changing Care: The new GP team*, we'll be looking at what patients can expect

THERE'S no doubt the pandemic sharpened our appreciation of the NHS and the incredible efforts of its many practitioners to keep us safe and well.

As populations age and treatments become more complex, our GP services have come under pressure like never before and consequently they're having to adapt to cope.

Groups of GP practices now work in clusters called Primary Care Networks (PCN). The eight PCNs in North Cumbria work closely with community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital and voluntary services. They build on existing services to enable provision of proactive, personalised and more integrated health and social care for people.

PCNs typically serve communities of between 30,000 to 50,000 people. That's small enough to provide the personal care patients value, but large enough to have impact and economies of scale through better collaboration.

In addition, PCNs can now directly appoint health and care staff to complement the traditional general practice team including clinical pharmacists, paramedics, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, mental health workers, care coordinators and social prescribers.

When a patient calls their GP practice it means they may be directed to other specialists who



Dr Robert Westgate, Carlisle Healthcare, is Chair of North Cumbria's Primary Care Networks  
All pictures: Stuart Walker Photography



Dr Richard Massey from Caldbeck Surgery, part of Keswick and Solway Integrated Care Community

can give the most appropriate help.

Dr Robert Westgate is a GP in Carlisle and Chair of North Cumbria's Primary Care Networks.

He said: "There are huge demands on primary care now – in my GP practice in Carlisle we receive close on 4,000 calls a week, around 15% above pre-Covid levels. Alongside this increase

in demand, we are seeing some patients with very complex problems that need expert medical support, and a reducing number of GPs.

"Over the last couple of years, we have been growing our primary care workforce, with new roles bringing different expertise into our practices to help our patients.

"When our reception team

ask for more information, it is because they are trained to help patients get the support that will help them most effectively and appropriately – sometimes signposting to other services. This allows us to best match the needs of our patients to the skills of our team to deliver the right care."

The national Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) aims to build the alternative

teams to begin addressing the workforce shortage in general practice. It is forecasted to create 26,000 new roles in primary care by 2024.

Practices across North Cumbria, from Copeland, up the West Coast and across to Keswick, Carlisle and Eden, are using these new roles in different ways to add to their traditional services.

Dr Richard Massey, Caldbeck Surgery GP and Clinical Director for Keswick and Solway Primary Care Network, added: "It's natural that when people ring us with a concern they may want to be seen by a GP, because that has been the traditional route. But the GP may not always be the most appropriate person to help.

"Patients may benefit from seeing one of our clinical pharmacists, a primary care mental health worker or first contact physiotherapist.

"The great benefit is that we can refer people to a wider range of specialist help. We aim to ensure that patients receive support from the right specialist."

● Tomorrow: The key role of the receptionist and why their questions aren't someone just being 'nosy'.

### Why are GP practices still working differently?

COVID is still here and that means taking additional precautions to try to keep everyone safe.

Receptionists are a vital part of the healthcare team and are trained to ask questions to direct you to the best support. They treat all information confidentially.

The following may be offered to you:

- A face-to-face appointment
  - Phone consultation
  - Online consultation
  - Help from a community pharmacy
- Remember, always dial 999 in a life-threatening emergency.



Dr Boris Angelov taking a patient's blood pressure