

## **STATEMENT ON OUR OPEN LETTER ABOUT PATIENT DEMAND**

We can see that significant interest has been generated as a result of our open letter to our patients.

Prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, we had a fully working same day and routine service, with high rates of satisfaction amongst patients and staff and with zero complaints regarding access. The pandemic meant we had to change this arrangement to predominantly remote working, in line with NHS England guidance.

The move toward online consultations has been underway for some time, and became a GP contractual requirement from April, 2020, as the pressures of the pandemic accelerated this process.

Unfortunately, adopting an online consultation service has fuelled demand to unsustainable levels, whilst also remaining deeply unpopular with a cohort of our population. Therefore, we have adapted our service to return to a more traditional model because we feel this provides greater safety for our patients. Patients ring us with their issue, we book them an appointment and see them face-to-face as clinically necessary. These changes ensure our patients continue to receive the time they need for their concerns.

Throughout this entire time, we have not stopped our patients from contacting us, nor have we stopped delivering the care that they need.

Rather than simply switching off the online consultation service without warning, we decided to explain to our patients the complex reasons for increased demand and the consequence of such, so that they understood the reasons for the change. We have kept our patients informed of what is happening at the surgery, and even throughout the pandemic we have provided regular news updates, which have all been well received.

We are aware of the stir our letter has caused, but have also been overwhelmed by the kind feedback from our own patients, and the many encouraging messages of support we have received from GP surgeries all around the country. We therefore know that many of our GP colleagues are experiencing the same issues, but they may be fearful of articulating what is happening.

We are passionate about delivering excellent care to our patients. However, it must be recognised that GPs are a limited resource. We feel that open and honest debate about demand and workload in General Practice is vital. If this letter goes even a little way towards sparking some much-needed discussion then it will have been a good thing.

*Ivy Grove Surgery*

*May 3, 2021*