



APRIL 2025

## SPRING NEWSLETTER

### PRACTICE NEWS

As many of you know already, I am hanging up my stethoscope and retiring at the end of April. About six and half years ago, my wife applied for the position of the Vicar of Holy Island; we were regular visitors to North Northumberland. I recalled that a colleague that I had worked with in Sheffield said that a friend of hers worked in Belford. I rang her up and she rang Sebastian Moss and after a chat on the telephone, and a meeting with the partnership in his garden on a late Autumn Sunday morning, the rest is history. Every retiring GP that I know has written that it's been a privilege



to be a GP and to practise medicine in the community. I have been very lucky to work in three great practices in Sheffield, then Coventry, and now in Belford. Strangely, there are a couple of patients at Belford, who were previously patients of mine in Sheffield! I will not be drawn on which one I consider to be the greatest of the three practices, but it has been a particularly special to practise rural general practice, and particularly in Belford, at the end of my career. It has been an honour and a pleasure to work here in Belford with fantastic colleagues and staff. It is a source of great pride that the practice's stands in the top 100 practices in the UK (out of approximately 6400) and it is credit to all the staff. I have been at medical school or working in the health service for over 40 years. I started out pursuing a career in anaesthetics before deciding that I preferred to talk to my patients. It is the long term relationship that primary care has with its patients that marks this area of the NHS out as special and to reiterate a privilege. General practice has changed hugely over my career, but this remains a corner stone of good general practice. As my wife is not retiring, we will remain on Holy Island, and so I will be supporting her in her role, I am already involved in some community projects on Holy Island and I intend to be sailing my boat and seeing family and friends much more.

So long and fair winds. Thank you for all your support and appreciation over these past 6 years. I will miss you all.

Dr Richard Hills

GP





## **Look in on vulnerable neighbours and relatives**

Remember that other people, such as older neighbours, friends and family members, may need some extra help. There's a lot you can do to help people who need support.

Keep in touch with your friends, neighbours and family and ask if they need any practical help, or if they're feeling unwell. Make sure they're stocked up with enough food supplies. Make sure they keep well hydrated in the summer months especially if it is hot.

If they need help when the GP surgery or pharmacy is closed or they're not sure what to do, go to [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk) or call 111.

If you're worried about a relative or elderly neighbour, contact your local council on 01670536400 or call the Age UK helpline on [0800 678 1602](tel:08006781602) (8am to 7pm every day). You can also report your concerns through the Northumberland County Councils online form on their website.

## **Defibrillators**

There are defibrillators for emergency use in various locations in the immediate area. Please click on the link to find out where the nearest one is to your location. <https://www.defibfinder.uk/>

## **Patient Contact Details**

Please could we ask patients to contact the surgery if any of your contact details have changed. This includes address, phone numbers or email. This is important to keep your records up to date.

# EAR CLINICS

**Northumbria Health**

**Have you heard?**

Microaspiration is now being offered at Northumbria Health.

We are delighted to be offering this safe and pain-free ear wax removal service for only £70.

Our microaspiration expert, based between Morpeth View and Spring Terrace, will provide outstanding care to your patient.

No GP referral needed, please contact us on **0191 203 1253** to book an appointment.

Or for more information, visit our website at [www.northumbria-health.co.uk](http://www.northumbria-health.co.uk)

Scott Bell,  
ENT Nurse Practitioner

Northumbria Health can now offer ear wax removal via microaspiration from our trained specialist ENT nurse – Scott Bell. The service will start on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023.

No GP referral is required – You can contact us by telephone for an appointment - 0191 2031253.

Cost - £70

The clinics will be held at:

**Spring Terrace Health Centre  
Ground Floor North Shields  
NE29 0HQ**

**Morpeth NHS Centre –  
Morpeth  
NE61 1JX**

There are also private ear clinics run by Sarah Tyson who deals with ear irrigation. Sarah runs a session in Berwick every Wednesday and also in Wooler every second Thursday. The cost of an appointment is £30 for both ears. Home visits can also be arranged at a cost of £50.

If you would like more information please contact Sarah on 07368931179 or email [sarahtysonhealthcare@outlook.com](mailto:sarahtysonhealthcare@outlook.com)

**COVID SPRING  
BOOTSERS ARE NOW  
AVAILABLE. PLEASE  
CHECK WITH  
RECEPTION IF YOU  
ARE ELIGIBLE MAKE  
AN APPOINTMENT AT  
RECEPTION.**

**We are still offering  
RSV, Shingles and  
Pneumonia vaccina-  
tions..**

**Please enquire if you  
are ELIGIBLE .**

## CURRENT OPERATING PROCEDURES

### Current Opening Times

#### Belford Surgery

**01668 213738**

8.30-6.00 Monday to Friday

Prescription Ordering

9am–2pm

Blood/X-ray Results

9am-2pm

#### Seahouses Surgery

**01665 720917**

Monday and Tuesday

8.30-6.00

Thursday

8.30 –5.30

Friday

8.30-12.30

**Wednesday**

**Closed**

Prescription Ordering

9am-2pm

Blood/X-Ray Results

9am-2pm

**Website:**

**[www.belfordmedicalpractice.nhs.uk](http://www.belfordmedicalpractice.nhs.uk)**

**Facebook Page:**

**[Belford Medical Practice](#)**

### Appointments

The surgery uses a telephone triage system. This means that patients will initially be phoned by a Doctor or Nurse Practitioner and if they need to be seen the Clinician will organise a surgery time with the patient for a face to face consultation. Staff will ask for a brief summary of your problem so you can be directed to the most appropriate clinician which may not be a GP. Also for any urgent problems the Doctors can then prioritise those calls.

This does have an advantage in that patients with urgent medical symptoms can be seen straightaway. Other patients are usually seen either that day or the day after or if appropriate, triaged to another team member such as the first contact Physio.

We are in fact busier than ever with telephone calls and face to face appointments,

### Home Visits

Home visits by the GP's and District Nurses are still being undertaken as necessary. If you feel you need a home visit we would ask you to contact the surgery as soon as possible in the morning so that you can be added to the visiting list for that day (before 11am). You will be asked your name and address and the reason for the visit. As usual the request will be triaged by the GP's.

### Telephone System

You will hear a message at the start and will be offered three options. Select Number one if requiring a prescription or results, select number two if requiring an appointment and select number three for all other enquiries. Requests for prescriptions and results are only available between the hours of 9-2. If you select this option out with those times then you will hear a message and the phone line will cut off.

### Online Services

You can register for online services

which will enable you to order medication and book certain appointments online. If you are interested in this then please enquire at reception.

### E consult form

This can be found on the practice website. Complete the form and send this into the surgery. This is another way to contact us about health problems, sick notes or requesting a contraception review.

### Annual reviews

At Belford Medical Practice we like to offer safe care to our patients. We prescribe medication on repeat for many of you. So that we can provide the safe issue of this medication we like to have a review with you at least once a year. We prefer to do this in your Birth month as this makes it easier for us to pick up if this has been missed.

You should therefore expect a message from us to invite you to book an appointment with one of our nursing team. We send out invites as this means you can book an appointment on a day that suits you as we have these each day and at both sites (Belford & Seahouses). The receptionist booking this appointment may need to ask a few questions so that you can be booked with the most appropriate nurse.

Once you have had your review and all the information attached to this appointment such as blood results are collated then the repeat medication will be authorised for another year.

We are constantly striving to keep up to date with new guidelines relating to all the long term conditions and medications we monitor so it is another opportunity for us to share this information with you and provide the very best care we can. We may also feel it is appropriate to involve other members of our extended team such as the Pharmacists, Physiotherapist or Health and Wellbeing coach.

## ADDITIONAL STAFF

We are very fortunate at the practice to have access to additional staff to complement our core team of GP's, nurses and healthcare assistant and our administration team. You may have had letters, text messages or seen posts on Facebook offering appointments in addition to the regular service offered. This is a brief introduction to some of these staff members. All of which you can self-refer to, just ask at reception.

**Rebecca Hall**– Is our **Health and Wellbeing coach**. Rebecca offers face to face and telephone appointments to patients who would like to make some lifestyle changes and would like some support with this. This can be anything from help with diabetes care, weight loss, increasing exercise or helping with low mood in conjunction with other health care professionals.

**Jannette Casson and Carol Gunn - Dementia lead social prescriber**. Jan and Carol offer support to anyone diagnosed with dementia or their families.

**David Pearse**- Clinical pharmacist. David see patients either face to face or via telephone to discuss any medication queries and conduct medication reviews, an essential part of ongoing care to ensure your medication is the most suitable for you and that it is working the way it should.

**Judith Sefton**- Mental Health Occupational therapist. Judith offers support and care with Mental health issues which may not be covered by talking matters. Appointments are face to face or telephone.

**Miles Calum**- First contact Physiotherapist. All musculoskeletal conditions and chronic pain.

**Maxine Shell— Bereavement Counsellor**—We are pleased to share that HospiceCare North Northumberland have launched a new pilot service with Well Up North Primary Care Network. Since January, Therapeutic Counsellor, Maxine Shell from HospiceCare has provided anticipatory and post-bereavement counselling in Wooler, Berwick (Well Close and Union Brae) and Belford GP practices.

Referrals are made via a GP or another health professional at these surgeries.

## SUMMER SAFETY

The weather can affect our health, particularly in those who are more vulnerable or have long-term health conditions. If hot weather hits this summer, you can help protect yourself and others by:

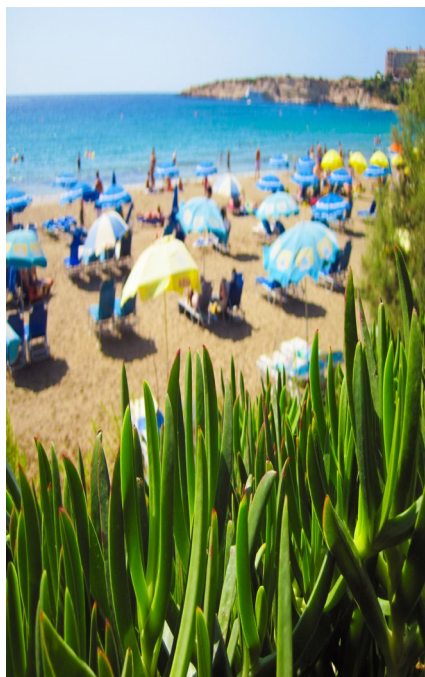
- Looking out for those who may struggle to keep themselves cool and hydrated – older people, those with underlying health conditions and those who live alone are particularly at risk
- Staying cool indoors – closing curtains on rooms that face the sun can keep the temperature lower in indoor spaces
- Drinking plenty of fluids and avoiding excess alcohol
- Never leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle, especially infants, young children or animals
- Try to keep out of the sun between 11am to 3pm, when it's strongest
- Walking in the shade, applying high factor sunscreen regularly can protect your skin, and it's helpful to wear a wide brimmed hat while outside on sunny days

If you feel unwell or feel as if you have heat stroke drink plenty of fluids and stay out of the sun. If there is no improvement dial 111.

## INSECT BITES

- Cover exposed skin – if you're outside at a time of day when insects are particularly active, such as sunrise or sunset, wearing loose clothing and keeping shoes on can help you avoid bites. Apply insect repellent to exposed skin – repellents that contain 50% DEET (diethyltoluamide) are most effective.

Be mindful that some insects such as horseflies are commonly found near water.





## **BANK HOLIDAY DATES**

**Both surgeries will be closed :**

**Good Friday 18th April**

**Easter Monday 21st April**

**Monday 5th May**

**Monday 26th May**