

## Changes at St Lukes and Greenswood Medical Centre, Brixham

### **Joining forces with Symphony Healthcare Services – strengthening GP services in Brixham...**

#### **What is happening at the medical centre?**

On July 1st, St Lukes and Greenswood Medical Centre joined together with Symphony Healthcare Services (SHS), a new NHS Healthcare provider. St Lukes is the sixth GP practice to join together with SHS, now providing healthcare services for over 48,000 patients across all the practices.

#### **Where are the other practices?**

There are currently five other GP practices in Somerset, based in the following towns; Yeovil, Ilchester, Somerton, Highbridge, and Crewkerne. We are also in discussion with a number of other GP practices, so we are very likely to grow.

#### **What is Symphony Healthcare Services – is it private healthcare?**

No, the healthcare services that we provide our patients is funded by the NHS like any other GP practice and we work very closely with both NHS England, the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to ensure that the care we provide meets the high standards set.

Symphony Healthcare Services was created in 2016 as a subsidiary of Yeovil Hospital and a number of local GP practices. It was set up to help bring together hospital and GP services more closely and to support primary care across Somerset, to be able to meet patient demand both now and into the future.

#### **Why is Symphony Healthcare Services supporting a practice in Devon?**

When SHS was first established last year, we aimed to support practices in south Somerset. However, soon afterwards we were contacted by NHS England to support a practice in North Somerset and this year we were contacted by St Lukes and Greenswood Practice in Brixham, Devon.

We realised that we could support GP practices over a wider geographical area in the south west, if they shared many of the same challenges as our existing practices. These include difficulties in recruiting GPs and specialist healthcare teams, in addition to an ageing population with more complex long-term health conditions.

During the integration process we carried out a very detailed due diligence process, where we look to see if the practice meets our integration criteria – this includes practice stability, opportunities to develop different ways of delivering NHS healthcare services and where the practice and the local CCG share our vision.

#### **Why is it sometimes difficult to get an appointment with a doctor?**

Across the country it is becoming harder to recruit new GPs and many existing GPs and GP partners are retiring, or looking to work in a less pressured environment, this means that sometimes we are unable to provide patients with a same day GP appointment; however we will be able to book patients an appointment with the most suitable person.

In addition, our demographics are changing. With new treatments and medicines now available, we are all living longer and in rural counties in particular like Devon and Somerset, we have a growing population who are over the age of 65. This has also created an additional strain on primary care, with the average number of appointments per patient, per year increasing as we get older.

## **What are Symphony Healthcare Services doing to make sure patients can access the healthcare they need, when they need it?**

Being part of a larger organisation, means that we can help to support GP practices like St Lukes and Greenswood Medical Centre to recruit sufficient GPs as well as looking at different ways of caring for our patients.

In our other practices we have been able to develop roles for new specialist staff, in addition to GPs who can provide the care that you need without adding to the pressure on our GPs – remember you don't always need to see a doctor first!

As well as caring for our patients with the most serious health conditions, we are also focusing on prevention – to enable everyone to live as long a healthy life at home as is possible and avoid unnecessary admission to hospital.

## **Will you be recruiting any new doctors?**

We have just recruited a new full time GP – Dr Ruth Darlow, who will be joining us at the medical centre in the next few months. In addition we are working to recruit an additional Practice Nurse and will shortly be welcoming a new role to the practice, of an Enhanced Care Practitioner (ECP). The ECP is an experienced Paramedic and will be able to support home visits and urgent care at the medical centre.

## **What changes will patients see?**

Initially very few, the aim of Symphony Healthcare Services is to support practices to be able to retain GPs and healthcare staff to provide the care required by patients. You will be able to call and contact the medical centre as before. No phone numbers or contact details will change.

Over time, we hope to look at new ways of increasing the healthcare services available to you in the community at St Lukes and we will continue to work closely with local healthcare partners to help develop the best services that we are able to, for our patients.

## **What should patients do now?**

You don't need to do anything different. Symphony Healthcare Services are committed to supporting all the GP practices that join the organisation. Our aim is to strengthen primary care services as a positive step. As a larger organisation we will be able to provide support from a central team as well as clinical expertise across SHS to help to support and develop teams and provide a high quality healthcare service.

## **How do patients find out more?**

Thank you for your ongoing support, we value the thoughts of all our patients and don't forget if patients would like to get more involved - please encourage them to join the Patient Participation Group.

You can find out more information about Symphony Healthcare Services by visiting: [www.symphonyintegratedhealthcare.com](http://www.symphonyintegratedhealthcare.com), or visit the practice website for the latest information on services and staff [www.stlukesmedicalcentre.co.uk](http://www.stlukesmedicalcentre.co.uk)

If you have a specific question or query, please email [lisa.pyrke@ydh.nhs.uk](mailto:lisa.pyrke@ydh.nhs.uk)

