

Why getting your child's flu vaccination is a game changer

Blog post by Natalie Westmacott, nurse and lead for the school immunisation team across the whole of Dorset.

With winter upon us, I want to tell you why now is the perfect time for your child to get protected from flu.

Why is the flu vaccination so important?

We all know how quickly little ones can catch colds and bugs, but flu is a whole different ball game. When children catch the flu virus, it can make them feel very poorly for days, sometimes even weeks.

Fevers, aches, coughs – it's the kind of thing no parent wants to see their child go through. And flu season can be unpredictable. Once it's here, it spreads fast, especially among kids in schools and nurseries.

That's where the flu vaccine comes in. Think of it as armour for your child's immune system. It helps prepare their body to fight off the flu before it even has a chance to take hold. Early protection means fewer sick days and less worry for you.

By vaccinating your child now, you're helping ensure they are protected for the whole flu season, which means less chance of last minute sick days, and more time for them to be doing the things they love.

It protects more than just your child

When you get your child vaccinated, you're not just protecting them—you're also helping protect others around them. That means grandparents, younger siblings, and anyone else in your family or community who might be more vulnerable to the flu. It's a team effort that helps keep everyone healthier.

What about needles?

Your child might be worried about it being a needle that will hurt, but for younger children, the flu vaccination is quick and easy—just a squirt in each nostril, and you're done. A small moment of discomfort can mean a whole season of protection.

You can visit our new child friendly webpage, <http://www.staywelldorset.nhs.uk/flufighters/> to watch videos about the flu vaccination and show your child that the vaccination is just a tickle up the nose. It might help put your mind at rest too.

Let's stay ahead of flu

By getting your child vaccinated now, you're setting them up for a strong, healthy flu season. It's one less thing to worry about, and you're giving them the best chance to avoid the flu altogether, as well as protecting your family.

Children age 2/3 can have their flu vaccination at the general practice surgery. School age children can have their flu vaccination with me and my team during school time – please remember to sign that [school consent form!](#)

If you do miss the school vaccination service, you will be contacted by the NHS to rebook at a local location.

For more information about all the vaccinations visit www.staywelldorset.nhs.uk/vaccinations



Natalie Westmacott: Nurse and lead for the teams give flu vaccinations in schools

Sherborne ~ Unity in the Community

Sherborne's history covers more than 1300 years, it is an historic town that predates the Magna Carta, mentioned in the Domesday book, travelled through the Reformation, Cromwell's civil war, Waterloo, 2 world wars and numerous social revolutions – don't forget the 60s – Mick, Keith, Paul, John, George, Ringo, Cilla and Lulu.

Here we are 1320 plus years later, and our beloved Sherborne continues to survive, thrive and expand today.

It is said of Sherborne, if you don't know the answer to the question, you will know someone who does no matter what the question. Sherborne, a centre of education, agricultural excellence and peaceful living.

Talking, sharing and responding to the needs of its people is an important part of living in Sherborne. Three of the town's major institutions, the Town Council, healthcare and education services are central to the town's ability to function. They do so together by keeping each other informed of current and future challenges, by regularly sharing information and working to identify, agree and deliver solutions. Despite having to adapt and change to national and local political demands and serious budget cutbacks, the town and its communities continue to succeed.

Sherborne Primary Care Network- Several years ago the NHS recognised there were serious benefits to be achieved by talking to patients. Not about their personal health, but more importantly – their health care. In 2015 this led to a requirement for each General Practice across the country to have a dedicated Patient Participation Group.

The phrase, "knowledge is power," attributed to Frances Bacon – 1597, is practised every day by Roger Marsh, Chairman of the Grove Patient Participation Group. Roger is our PPG link with Sherborne Town Council and support for the Primary Care Networks in their areas.

Each month he attends the meeting of Sherborne Town Council at which he submits a comprehensive report on the general health of Sherborne residents. His reports, often exceeding 5-7 pages, informs the councillors on a range of healthcare issues, from clinical challenges, Cancer and Cardiovascular care, Flu and Covid vaccinations to domestic matters such a patient waiting time and increased NHS workloads. This is to ensure we can respond to any emergency, the next health crisis in the town and surrounding areas.



No matter if you have lived here for years, or recently moved to Sherborne you will quickly realise the town, and its surrounding villages, all have generous hearts. A true example is the Friends of the Yeatman Hospital. The Friends is a charity support group which works across the town to help finance and enable community projects become realities. The Friends help all of us, you, me, and those you work with. We may not realise it but we all face many community and social challenges.

So how does Unity in our Community work?



Here is one example of its generosity and a perfect example of "unity in its community." Together, with Sherborne Primary School, the Friends gave a £10,000 gift to build a new Community Hub building in its grounds. The hub, opened in 2023 and facilitates a comprehensive range of community focused meetings.

Ian Bartle, headmaster of Sherborne Primary School and Jill Warburton, Deputy Mayor and councillor, applaud the town's community spirit commented.

"Since it opened in August 2023 the multi-purpose facility has achieved its purpose. To date we have hosted meetings to bring together different parts of our community."

Sherborne ~ Unity in the Community (continued)

Our proposed future schedule will be as wide ranging as before, we plan to offer the following sessions:

- *Cooking on a budget – engaging with parents with TV Chef Michaela Chiappa-Patching*
- *Skills for life - numeracy for parents and pupils*
- *Police drop in - online safety and social media session- mental health bullying*
- *Social prescribing – Grove Medical Centre providing advice on social benefits and housing for any age self-help well-being in the community*
- *Other aspect of Social prescribing include - Benefit support –Dorset pain management service dealing with living pain*

My staff, my parents, all the meeting groups, and myself, are grateful to the Sherborne community for their support.”

Sherborne’s Harbour Vale school offers insight into a different challenge. There is a marked increase, across all ages and pupils, facing and adjusting to mental and psychological challenges. These lead to increased numbers requiring special needs support. We are talking about pupils as young as five and upwards. In addition, the impact of today’s social and economic attacks on their parents, resulting in deprivation and school avoidance. Primary school statistic, millions of children across the UK, with their parent’s awareness, deliberately avoid their right to education.

Primary Care Network – Social Prescribing and Befriending

A recent initiative by Sherborne Town Deputy Mayor Jill Warburton, a lead Social Prescriber and member of The Apples Patient Group, Cllr. Warburton recently requested, and received, a copy the most recent population survey. Cllr. Warburton said.

“Together with the Sherborne Primary Care Network we have a responsibility to ensure all of our residents receive the best healthcare. To do so, the Council must be informed and prepared for any future challenges, Roger Marsh’s monthly reports and recommendations keeps the Council informed and up to date – including monthly reports from Health and inequalities lead for Sherborne’s Primary Care Network across the 3 surgeries, the Apples, the Grove and Yetminster.



Social prescribing is a relatively new NHS service. It focuses on what matters to you – not what is the matter with you. Connectivity within the patient’s community is another term which explains its purpose. In simple terms Social Prescribers support the health and well-being of patients, connecting them to community groups, other government agencies for both practical and emotional support. Examples include introductions to gardening groups, healthier eating, exercising, debt management, and befriending.

Sherborne Town Council



Sherborne Town Council – the impact of Covid placed on the town council new burdens on staff, services and budgets. Since then, a new item has appeared on its agenda from the town’s Primary Health Care Health Network team that reports and informs Council Members and Officials.

As with everything in life, nothing is ever what it seems to be at first glance. There are two sides to every story, and despite its apparent affluence and prosperity, there are many social challenges Sherborne has to address.

IF YOU CAN'T MAKE YOUR APPOINTMENT PLEASE PHONE THE SURGERY TO CANCEL

Sherborne ~ Unity in the Community (continued)

- Health inequality reaches far and wide and unsurprisingly includes the ability to buy or rent houses or flats at affordable prices.
- Housing – house prices in Sherborne are above national averages- with a limited stock available – In Sherborne 38.4% of homes are rented, either privately or through a social landlord, a much higher proportion than the rest of Dorset.
- In the spring there were 284 families on the Social Housing Register with Dorset Council waiting for a property in Sherborne, but in the last year(to April 2023) only 93 homes became available.
- Healthy and affordable homes lead to healthy lives and healthy families.
- In Sherborne there is MAGNA and other Housing associations who are responsible to provide affordable housing at the last count there were 22 families waiting for housing
- Integrated care – health and social services

Voluntary Community, Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector is essential to delivery and achieving these objectives.

Dorset Council integrates Healthcare overview

The Integrated Care Board, Dorset Council Health & Wellbeing Board is a coalition of a wide range of health-related subjects. The primary objective is to create an awareness and understanding within local town councils of the current and future health challenges facing their communities.

In addition to providing healthcare housing plays an important part in the health of a community. Sherborne Town Council meet with MAGNA, the housing association to establish the interrelationship between housing and health. For example, Dorset Council's housing strategy is a key partner is attracting and the retention of NHS staff.

Food Bank and FareShare Community Larders. The image, and reputation of the historic Sherborne, one doesn't expect to find, food banks or FareShare Community Larders. Like most towns and cities in the UK, a percentage of Sherborne residents are living with deprivation

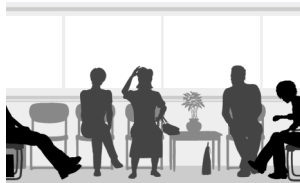


For those of you who are unfamiliar with the term Fareshare Community Larders, the supermarkets in the town donate their overstocks to the charity groups to distribute and share with those less fortunate in the town to eat. Yet another example of Sherborne's sharing heart.



Alex Kimber, Managing Partner, supported Cllr Warburton comments.

"While Sherborne is one of the "historic gems" of the West Country - for many people it is a new experience, while they enjoy its history, they expect all of the benefits and support of the 21st Century. The reach of our Patient Participation Group is a perfect example of our 'Unity in our Community' at work.



A View from the Waiting Room *Keeping Up Appearances*



(An article from Joan a while ago)

It's was a hot summer! That suited some but I found the heat quite draining.

However we were at last able to visit family in distant places so that three year itch has been 'scratched' so to speak.

But I now feel, and I sense that many others do, that the world has become more than a little out of control, that there is not much to look forward to, and that quite a few friends and family members are also feeling ... not quite depressed ... but certainly joyless.

What to do?

Everyone must be aware of the psychological benefit of keeping ourselves as fresh and attractive as possible, even in these depressing times, if only just to please ourselves because perhaps we see very few people.

Never very interested in my appearance, though clean and tidy, I wore a drab sort of uniform of the most recent tops and trousers that hung over the chair in the bedroom. That changed quite suddenly when we moved here seven years ago. Walking happily down Cheap Street for the first time, I couldn't help noticing and admiring both men and women my age who looked wonderful.

It was time for me to change. Having always home-coloured my prematurely grey hair, I decided to give up and just go white.

I found the local charity shops a gold mine of fabrics and vibrant colours I'd never before dreamed of wearing. I discovered the joy of costume jewellery. Since then I've felt happier, more confident and the routine has stuck. I now actually choose my clothes in the morning. Then the earrings ... tasteful drop earrings are so pleasing.

I'll never forget a dear friend who in middle age got a life threatening cancer which left him with weakness and a permanent colostomy. To keep going financially he was obliged to start up a new business from his home. The dining room became his workplace. But the thing that struck me most forcefully was that he 'Dressed for Work', putting on a clean shirt and tie before walking into his 'office'. He didn't need to, there was no such thing then as Zoom meetings or face to face calls. How many people in his situation would have bothered. It was a life lesson for me, but took a while to sink in!

Joan Cooper, Patient

Ps. I may be going too far, I now even apply lipstick before walking the dog. Who on earth cares. I care!

(Sadly, this is the last of Joan's regular pieces for our newsletter, as due to health reasons she has had to leave us. We'll miss your regular contributions Joan, but a big thank you for all the stories over the past years)

Roger Marsh—Chair, The Grove Patient Participation Group

Sherborne Military Veterans Support Group

As a regular reader of the Grove Patients' Group newsletter, you will know the surgery has a strong bond and clinical links with its military veteran community, through its Military Veterans Support Group. There are 90 plus regular members which includes representatives of all services and all ranks, both commissioned and non-commissioned officers, from Sergeants to Generals.

The brainchild of Tony Gordon, a former veteran and PPG member, with the support of Roger Marsh and Vicky Morland, the group was established in September 2021. Its primary purpose was, and remains, a regular monthly meeting place for veterans to feel supported, informed, and to maintain contact with fellow veterans, and importantly to have access to appropriate and effective healthcare services. The Clinical Lead for veterans in the practice is Dr Sally Dangerfield.



When asked about the benefits, Dr Dangerfield said.

“The transition challenge from military to civilian life is an obvious one, and we must remember each of our veterans has an individual journey. Our role is to identify and accommodate their clinical and healthcare needs. Many of our members left the military years ago, therefore the importance to them in befriending, establishing new companionships and learning opportunities cannot be underestimated or ignored.”



Sherborne Military Veterans Support Group meets on the third Saturday of every month 10:00-12:00 at The Community Room, Manor Court, Newland, Sherborne, DT9 3JX. If you haven't been before, this is a friendly and informal gathering, open to all serving or veterans, widows/widowers and families.

PPG Chairman, Roger Marsh commented,

“First of all, it is a self-help group, open to all military vets across Sherborne, irrespective of the GP practice. The group meets once a month. Regular meetings are important for the practices and the members. The meetings provide opportunities of signposting and support for the veteran cohort, any negative outcomes are linked to our specialist practitioner and also the wider Military Service charities and support organisations as appropriate.”

Dr Dangerfield concluded.

“Loneliness in later life can and must be avoided, our military veterans, as all of our patients deserve to be treated with respect. At the Grove we recognise our responsibility to ensure they are never forgotten.”

If you know of a military veteran who you think would benefit by joining our group of special “hero’s” go to our website for more information — <https://www.thegrovemedcentre.co.uk/armed-forces-care>

For more information please email vicky.morland@dorsetgp.nhs.uk

Send any comments regarding the newsletter to: grovesherborneppg@gmail.com

Grove patients participate in clinical research

For all the history buffs reading this I admit Leonardo da Vinci is better known for his portrait of Mona Lisa, as opposed to finding his way around the human body. However, he was the first to record the macroscopic anatomy of the human body, precisely and in minute detail, from your hair follicles to your toenails, between 1490 – 1507. Since Leonardo's time, clinical research has come a long way, in fact you could say, all the way to the Grove clinic in Sherborne.

What, clinical research at the Grove?

Dr Ruth Lawes, research partner at the Grove, explained the research projects are developed through the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), the research partner of the NHS, public health and social care. The aim is to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research.

“The partners agreed 10 years ago to participate in this national programme of patient clinical research to enable us to be part of current development to improve health and wellbeing.

Patient participation is selection by medical history. Each study has its own protocol and very clear instruction on the group(s) of patients that should be invited or excluded. Searches are performed by our in-house team and then reviewed by me before invites go out. We invite the patients, so their data is only shared with the Wessex Clinical Research Network. If they chose to reply to the invitation i.e. at their instigation.



“We are supported by the Wessex Clinical Research Network, (CRN) who send us studies that we can invite our patients to be involved in. Over the past ten years these have included studies such as TIME which looked to see if it was better to take blood pressure medication in the morning or evening to reduce the risk of heart attacks or strokes. The results showed timing didn't matter but consistency of taking did.

NHS - University of Southampton is the host centre for the Wessex CRN but studies are often open to recruitment nationwide. There are pharmaceutical companies that some GP practices will get involved in, but this is not something we entertain!!

“The results of the recent IMMUNE DEFENCE study was recently published in the Lancet. The study found that advice to use commonly available nasal sprays, either Vicks first defence or a saltwater spray at the first sign of a cold, cough or flu reduced days of illness. The study also showed that both the sprays and a website designed to help people get more active and manage stress led to less severe illness and less antibiotic use.

Our current study RELOAD, is looking to see if an app can be developed to monitor progression of respiratory infections and the potential to guide decisions on patient management such as are antibiotics really needed or is this person at higher risk of coughing for longer.”

Without Leonardo's initial research on the human body, who knows where we would be today.

JOIN OUR PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP – THE GROVE PPG – ONLINE INFORMATION

Record number of GP appointments

General practice is here for you, with a record number of appointments this year:

New data reveals that general practice surgeries in Dorset are now delivering nearly 4.7 million appointments a year, an impressive 14.5% increase from just two years ago.

Dr Forbes Watson, a GP from Lyme Regis and Chair of the Dorset General Practice Alliance puts this record high in productivity down to the dedication of his colleagues and the growth of general practice surgery teams.

“The increase of 600,000 extra appointments reflects the tireless hard work of my colleagues - from GPs, nurses, and healthcare assistants to our receptionists and all the practice staff who are at the frontline of our healthcare system.

“We understand that face-to-face appointments are important for many patients. It’s great to see that 78% of all appointments are conducted in person. For people who need urgent medical attention, data shows that that 37% of all appointments are same-day or urgent, reflecting the commitment of general practice to timely and responsive care.

“Surgeries are having to change and grow to better meet the needs of our community in Dorset. We want to thank our patients who are embracing this change and being understanding. We want to provide accessible, timely, and compassionate care for all.”

The data shows that local practices are here for people, ready to meet their health needs. Dr Paul Johnson, Chief Medical Officer from NHS Dorset said, “As we enter the colder seasons, with the increased risk of flu, respiratory illnesses, and other seasonal health concerns, general practice surgeries will continue to be extremely busy.

“We want to encourage everyone to take advantage of the many services available that can help you to stay well this winter —whether it’s through vaccinations, using digital tools to manage long term conditions or taking advice on staying healthy during winter.

“As winter pressures continue to build, patients should also consider a wide range of other available NHS services as an alternative to visiting a GP surgery or emergency department. You can use NHS111 online at 111.nhs.uk, via the NHS App or by calling 111, if you have an urgent medical problem and you are not sure what to do.”

Pharmacists can also give treatment advice for a range of minor illnesses and can tell you if you still need to see a doctor. If you are in a life-threatening emergency, you should call 999 or go to A&E.

For more advice on how to stay well this winter, visit www.staywelldorset.nhs.uk

GP Surgeries becoming more eco-friendly

General practice surgeries becoming more eco-friendly to help public health:

General practice surgeries in Dorset are working with the Dorset General Practice Alliance to become more environmentally friendly in a bid to not only help the environment but the health of the public too.

The World Health Organisation has said that climate change is a health emergency. Air pollution is the biggest environmental threat to health in the UK, with between 28,000 and 36,000 deaths a year attributed to long-term exposure, according to Public Health England. It is linked to strokes, heart disease, lower lung diseases and cancer.

In line with the NHS who have committed to becoming the world's first carbon net zero health provider by 2040, the Alliance have created a practical guide for surgeries to use to help them lower their energy usage and carbon footprint.

The [Dorset Green Practice Guide](#) was launched recently at an event attended by practice managers and general practice staff across the county. Organised by the Alliance, the event had inspirational speakers from the Village Practice in London, Frome Medical Practice in Somerset, and the University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust who have all taken big steps to improve their carbon footprint and encouraged practices to look at ways in which they can reduce theirs and work in more sustainable ways.

Celia Canter, project lead for the green guide for the Alliance said, *"Making general practice surgeries more environmentally friendly benefits our local communities and people's health.*

"This project has been a voyage of discovery of just how many green groups, communities and organisations there are across the county who support green and sustainable changes which will have a significant positive impact on both our climate and our health.

"We know that even small changes like putting plants in practices, having garden areas outside the practice and changing lightbulbs to LED can have a big impact over time.

"General practice staff are extremely busy caring for people, so the Alliance have produced this guide to make it easier for practices to start making change quickly."

The public are being asked to help too, such as only ordering the medicines that they need from repeat prescriptions and handing unwanted medicines back to your pharmacy to dispose of. This way you are helping to make sure that waste medicines do not pollute our rivers and seas.

Surgeries across Dorset now have the opportunity to use the guide to make changes and the Alliance is encouraging practices to start their green journey to a sustainable future.

You can read more information about the green guide for practices at:

www.dorsetgpalliance.co.uk/greener.



Tel. 01935 810900 or 01935 813438
www.thegrovemedcentre.co.uk

The Grove Medical Centre
Wootton Grove
SHERBORNE
Dorset
DT9 4DL

Ways to contact us:

You can book an appointment by:

Opening Times

Monday	08:00 - 18:30
Tuesday	08:00 - 18:30
Wednesday	08:00 - 18:30
Thursday	08:00 - 18:30
Friday	08:00 - 18:30
Weekend	closed

Calling the practice to speak to a Patient Services Adviser between 08:00 and 18:30 Monday to Friday.

Online booking is available for routine appointments with your GP using the **NHS App** or your current online login. If you don't have a login or have forgotten your login details, then please speak to the patient services team.

Using the '**Accurx**' service for advice, administration queries or to have an online conversation with your GP.

If you need to contact a doctor outside these hours then you should ring the Out of Hours Service on 111, unless it is a medical emergency then dial 999.

Dispensary is open for prescription collections between 08:30 - 18:30.

If you want to order repeat medication by telephone please ONLY call between 08:30 - 12:00 daily.

You can also order by dropping the paper slip into the box in the foyer at The Grove Medical Centre.

Alternatively, repeat prescriptions can be ordered 24 hours a day by using the **NHS App**, **SystemOnline** or **Accurx**.

The Practice Team

Dr Aimee Barnes

Dr Lucius Covell

Dr Sally Dangerfield

Dr Ruth Lawes

Dr Liz Long

Dr Rebecca Lye

Dr Charlie Middle

Dr Matt Phelan

Dr Ruth Spedding

Dr Jonathan Tham

Dr Katie Thomas

Dr Adam Wood

Mrs Lisa Considine (Advanced Nurse Practitioner)

Mrs Alex Kimber (Managing Partner)

Mrs Debbie Ryalls (Operations Manager)

Do we have your correct details?

You can update you details (including email address and mobile phone number) on the Grove Medical Centre website

<https://www.thegrovemedcentre.co.uk/>



Your Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Interested in finding out how your GP practice works and about the health services it delivers? Your practice Patient Participation Group (PPG) could be for you. See: <https://nhsdorset.nhs.uk/voice/ppg/>