



SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2026

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New GPs start at the Village Surgeries

Following the semi-retirement of Dr. Rawles, 2 new GPs have joined.

Dr. Devaraj works on Monday, Thursday, Friday and a half day on Wednesday and Dr. Neame works on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday half day.



Dr. Devaraj

Measles

Measles is very infectious and can make you very ill. Measles symptoms include:

- High fever
- Sore, red, watery eyes
- Coughing
- Aching and feeling generally unwell
- Blotchy, red/brown rash, which usually appears after the initial symptoms

If you or your child have symptoms of measles, contact NHS 111 or speak to your GP Practice.

You can catch measles at any age. If you are unvaccinated and get measles you can easily spread the illness. You need 2 doses of MMR at least one month apart to be fully protected against measles, mumps and rubella.



Total Triage Changes

Patient Access and Triage Changes

Total Triage is the process that governs how patients get appointments and healthcare through GP surgeries. NHS England has introduced strict regulatory updates regarding how practices manage patient requests:

- Triage Expectations: For non-urgent requests, practices must provide a response with clear next steps by the end of the next working day. For clinically urgent requests, a same-day response/assessment is legally required.
- Uncapped Online Consultations: Practices are prohibited from capping the number of online consultation requests patients can submit during core operational hours, preventing systems from being shut down early in the day.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/changes-to-the-gp-contract-in-2026-27/>

Removing the Digital Divide

Our recent patient survey had several responses raising the issue of potentially more difficult access to the NHS particularly for patients without access to a smartphone or the internet.

The Surgery has confirmed that you can still get an appointment by telephone or by asking reception to help you complete a total triage form, if you are unable to complete it yourself. It is better for the patient to complete the form themselves as often the information is clearer and more detailed which ensures the triage GP has all the necessary information to make a triage decision.

The PPG are interested in finding out how big an issue this is and what can be done to help. If you know anyone who might feel that the process is difficult, please ask them to contact us so that we can talk through their options.

We will only discuss the process of contacting the NHS not any medical issues. Please use our contact form on the website at <https://fotvs.org/get-in-touch/>

Results of Patient Survey – Part 1

Thank you to all the respondents to the survey. There were 49 responses in total, with some very useful comments. The questions (listed below) covered all the main areas of the Surgeries operation. Those marked with an * asked for a quantitative score between 1 and 5 and then asked for a comment as to why that rating had been given.

*How well does the appointment booking process work? Score 3.27/5 or 65.4%

*How well is the surgery reception working for you? Score 3.27/5 or 65.4%

*How would you rate the clinical care provided by non GP staff? e.g. nurses and pharmacists Score 4.12/5 or 82.4%

*How would you rate the clinical care provided by GPs? Score 4.00/5 or 80%

Do you have any suggestions for the Patient Participation Group to improve representing the views of patients to the Village Surgeries Practice?

Do you use the NHS app? Yes 83.7% using the app

Issues raised from respondents' comments:

Appointment Booking: perceived difficulties included long waits, limited GP availability, inconsistent access between Wheathampstead and Harpenden, and not always being able to see a preferred GP.

Surgery Reception: the main issues raised were that the online system was difficult to use for some, that telephone wait times were too long, and that there was not always a consistent approach. Responses were overwhelmingly positive about reception staff.

Clinical care by non GP staff: Comments were overwhelmingly positive with comments stating very good or similar. Future surveys should change this survey to emphasize that this relates to surgery-based pharmacists rather than retail pharmacies which are outside the scope of the Surgery.

Clinical care by GP staff: Most people thought that the service was good once you got an appointment but the process of getting and time waiting for an appointment diminished the overall quality of service.

Surgery response: "Thank you for sharing the survey findings. It is encouraging to see that our reception team was described as friendly, helpful, and caring, reflecting the values we strive to uphold. While the survey represents a very small proportion of the Wheathampstead population, all feedback is valuable and provides an opportunity to better understand patients' experiences and concerns.

A key theme raised was the accessibility of our digital systems. Although the survey itself was conducted online, we recognise that not all patients are comfortable using digital tools. Patients can access our triage system through several routes, including our website, the NHS App, or a direct link, while non-digital options remain available. Patients may contact the practice by telephone or attend in person, and our reception team can assist with completing forms where needed.

The triage system helps us prioritise patients according to clinical need and supports continuity of care for those with ongoing conditions by enabling them to see their usual GP whenever possible. However, demand for appointments continues to exceed capacity across Primary Care. As a result, patients requesting a specific GP may experience longer waits, which may explain some of the concerns highlighted in the survey.

While some suggestions raised, such as additional local services or transport options, fall outside the practice's remit, we appreciate patients sharing their views. Overall, the survey has been a valuable exercise for both the practice and the Patient Participation Group, helping to promote greater understanding and engagement within the community."

A more comprehensive summary of the patient survey will shortly be available on the website at <https://fotvs.org/survey/>.

Membership is now free.

Please note: Membership of the Patient Participation Group was £5 per annum by standing order but is now free.

We have no control over payments made to us by standing order, which were made on 1st April each year. If your standing order is still operating, please contact your bank to cancel it.

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