

# Sonning Common Health Centre Newsletter

February 2025



## Spring Booster Covid Vaccination Clinics: for over 75s and severely immunosuppressed patients

Covid remains a significant public health concern, with the potential to cause serious illness and long-term complications.

To support our patients, we will be holding two spring booster Covid vaccination clinics:

**From 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM on:**

**Thursday 3rd April**

**Thursday 24th April**

Eligible patients can book an appointment by calling reception from 1st March onwards. Additionally, we will be sending text message reminders closer to the clinic dates.

**Want to head straight to our website?**



**SCAN ME**

Sonning Common Health Centre  
39 Wood Lane, Reading, RG4 9SW  
Telephone: 0118 972 2188  
[www.sonningcommonhealthcentre.co.uk](http://www.sonningcommonhealthcentre.co.uk)  
Page | 1

## NHS Health Checks

As we get older, we have a higher risk of developing conditions like high blood pressure, heart disease or type 2 diabetes. Your free NHS Health Check can spot early signs and help prevent these happening to you, which means you'll be more likely to enjoy life for longer. You are eligible for a free health check if you are between the ages of 40-74 and do not have a pre-existing condition. If you fit this category we will contact you and if you would like to book please call reception.

Your NHS Health Check will be done by a healthcare professional. This will usually be a nurse, but it could also be a doctor, pharmacist or healthcare assistant.

The check takes about 20 to 30 minutes and usually includes:

- measuring your height and weight
- a blood pressure test
- a cholesterol and blood sugar blood test

You'll also be asked some questions about your health including:

- whether any of your close relatives have had any medical conditions
- if you smoke, and how much
- if you drink alcohol, and how much
- how much physical activity you do

You'll usually be told your NHS Health Check results during or after the appointment.

You'll be given your cardiovascular risk score of developing a heart or circulation problem, such as heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes or kidney disease, over the next 10 years.

The healthcare professional may describe this risk score as low, moderate or high.

Everybody's cardiovascular risk rises with age, so the next time you have an NHS Health Check your risk score may be higher, even if your test results are the same.

There are some things about your risk which you cannot change, such as your age, ethnicity and family history. But the most important factors in your risk score (such as smoking, your cholesterol level and blood pressure) can be changed.

## NHS App

If you're a patient at our practice, you can use the NHS App and is also now available via a website: [www.nhsapp.service.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsapp.service.nhs.uk) to access a range of NHS services on your smartphone or tablet. It doesn't replace existing services. You can still contact us in the usual ways. But, once you have verified your identity in the app, you will have easy, 24/7 access to a growing range of health services and information. You can:

- order repeat prescriptions
- access NHS 111 online
- find NHS services
- check your test results
- view your health records
- book appointments
- lots more...

## Website

Our website is a great resource for a huge variety of information. Did you know there are several fantastic services that you can self-refer to without the need for a GP appointment. Please see below the services on offer:

- Activity/exercise support
  - Alcohol and substance support services
  - Ear syringing
  - Hearing Aids
  - Physiotherapy
  - Sexual health services
  - Fit Notes
  - Smoking cessation help
  - Talking Therapies for Anxiety, Depression and PTSD
  - Weight loss help
- 
- Please follow the link to our website to see how you can do this:  
<https://sonningcommonhealthcentre.co.uk/self-referrals/>

## **Doctors**

Since April 2024, Dr Thomas Rockell and Dr Peter Mennear have joined the partnership alongside Dr Michael Weeks and Senior Partner Dr Nicholas Smith with Dr Kim Emerson and Dr Ralph Drury stepping down. Dr Emerson has continued in a supportive management role to facilitate a smooth transition, and we are deeply grateful for her invaluable knowledge, experience, and expertise during this period.

Dr Emerson will be taking a well-deserved five-week sabbatical from 24th February to 1st April, marking the conclusion of her year supporting the management transition. Following this, her clinical sessions will be reduced from six to four per week, though she will continue to supervise trainee GPs.

Additionally, Dr Corrie Bruce, who previously trained with us as a registrar from August 2023 to 2024, has been covering Dr Sarah Baker's maternity leave. He has now also taken on Monday and Tuesday sessions to help accommodate Dr Emerson's reduced workload.

## **GP Registrars**

GP registrars are doctors who have completed several years of medical training and are now specialising in general practice. At Sonning Common Health Centre, we take pride in providing high-quality training to the next generation of GPs.

- Dr Anuja Challishazar is in the final year of training, and Dr Faiza Zahir is in the second year, supervised by Dr Nick Smith and Dr Sam Muncey, respectively.
- In February 2025, we welcomed Dr Akanksha Subramanian and Dr Samuel Waters, who are supervised by Dr Emerson and Dr Webster, respectively. Dr Shona Nagaroor and Dr Joshua Rencher have been outstanding registrars and have now left to continue their rotational training. We extend our best wishes for their upcoming exams and future placements.

## **Reception & Administration teams**

We are pleased to welcome Stephanie and Nathalie to our exceptional reception team.

Additionally, Terri has transitioned from her role in reception to join the administration team, where she is a valuable addition.

## **Medical Students**

Throughout the year, we host medical students from various universities across the UK, including Oxford, Sheffield and King's College London. Any patient seen by a medical student will always be reviewed by a qualified GP. While these appointments may take slightly longer, they provide an invaluable learning experience for the students, and we greatly appreciate our patients' support in their training.

## Healthy activities to try out as the weather improves

### **Walking Football**

A slower version of the beautiful game. Regardless of age, fitness or ability, walking football maybe for you. The main rules are no running and minimal contact. Our local football club, Rotherfield United, are very supportive of walking football, including use of their facilities. They meet every Wednesday at Bishopswood Sports Ground for an hour – a gentle warm up followed by 10 minute games with lots of fun and enjoyment!

For further information about the wide range of health and social benefits that Walking Football offers contact Andy Tidswell, Chairman of Rotherfield United FC, on 07710 875728 or by email [andytidswell@gmail.com](mailto:andytidswell@gmail.com).

### **On Your Bike**

An annual bike ride around Sonning Common and the surrounding areas, starting and finishing from Sonning Common Primary School. Visit [www.onyourbikesonningcommon.co.uk](http://www.onyourbikesonningcommon.co.uk) for further information.

### **Sonning Common Green Gym**

The Sonning Common Green Gym is a great way to be active, stay fit and combine this with giving a helping hand in your community! Visit [www.sonningcommon.tcv.org.uk](http://www.sonningcommon.tcv.org.uk) for further information.

### **Health Walks**

Health Walks, set up by Dr William Bird, aim to improve people's fitness, both in body and mind, by encouraging them to use their local countryside for walking.

Visit [www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk](http://www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk) for further information.

### **GO Active!**

GO Active, Get Healthy, a free project that aims to help people do more physical activity and exercise, getting more activity into their everyday lives. Visit the Oxfordshire page [www.getoxfordshireactive.org](http://www.getoxfordshireactive.org) for further information on lots of activities in our area and it is searchable by postcode.

**Stopping smoking is hard, but with the support of Stop for Life Oxon, you're 3x more likely to quit for good.**

Stop for Life Oxon, commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council, provides free smoking cessation support and awareness for residents and people working across Oxfordshire.

The new service is based on the three-tiered Stop Smoking Plus model and is a step-change from previous service provision in that it is a flexible, people-centred approach providing supported triage to assess need and capability.

**Level 1:** If you want to stop smoking on your own, you can, Being clear on why you want to quit and with strong willpower, there is no reason why you can't succeed on your own and quit for good. Using Best-You app on your phone supports you to quit smoking with tips, advice and encouragement when you need them most.

**Level 2:** One of the best ways to quit smoking for good is to combine different types of support. You are more likely to quit smoking by mixing and matching personal support like motivational support from a health coach, through our Best-You mobile app and NRT. So don't put it off, put it out.

**Level 3:** You don't have to quit smoking on your own if you don't want to. At Stop for Life Oxon there is lots of support available to give you information, advice and encouragement you need to give up cigarettes completely.

You will find expert help to support you along every step of your journey – on the phone, via email or face-to-face. You can also get support with prescription medication too.

Stop for Life Oxon has the support tools to help you quit and with our help you are up to 3 times more likely to quit.

**Stop for Life are hosting clinics at Sonning Common Health Centre. To book a slot, open the link below:**

**[Book a slot at the health centre](#)**

# General Information



## **Social Prescribing – For things affecting your health that medicine can't fix.**

Abbie Crook and Rachel Downey are your Social Prescribers from Age UK Oxfordshire.

The Social Prescriber Team at SCHC help with a wide range of issues, including financial support, living standards, and health and wellbeing. They can provide support and guidance to help you, or someone you know, access services and resources that can improve your overall quality of life. We want to promote Abbie and Rachel's services, so that those who require assistance know this service exists. This can be especially beneficial for those who may feel isolated, or those who are unsure of where to turn to get help.

Contact the surgery for more information: 0118 927 2188 or email directly:

[Communitylink.schc@nhs.net](mailto:Communitylink.schc@nhs.net)

**More information also available on our website here:**

<https://sonningcommonhealthcentre.co.uk/community-link-worker/>

## **Ordering your prescriptions**

If you have the NHS App, you can use their website to order repeat medication. If you have not yet registered to order your prescription online, or would prefer not to, you can also make a request in any of the following ways:

- Email our admin team at: **[schc.admin@nhs.net](mailto:schc.admin@nhs.net)** – please include your name, DOB, medication required and which pharmacy you would like your prescription to be sent to. (Dispensing patients can collect from the health centre)
- Put a written request into the box in our foyer.
- Ask your preferred pharmacy to request medication on your behalf.
- Complete the online form on our website: <https://sonningcommonhealthcentre.co.uk/order-your-prescriptions/>

## **Dispensary patients**

Thank you so much for your patience and understanding whilst we have been short staffed. We would like to apologise for the delays in processing prescriptions. We have employed temporary staff and have been doing everything we can to reduce the impact on you. As a temporary measure for routine repeat prescriptions, please consider allowing 5 rather than 3, working days from request, to ensure the medication is ready to collect.



# Seasonal Illness and Self Care - Flu



You have probably seen on the news the large amount of flu cases this winter and we have witnessed a large number of cases this winter in the practice as well. Flu will often get better on its own, but it can make some people seriously ill.

Flu symptoms come on very quickly and can include:

- a sudden high temperature
- an aching body
- feeling tired or exhausted
- a dry cough
- a sore throat
- a headache
- difficulty sleeping
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea or tummy pain
- feeling sick and being sick

If you have flu, there are some things you can do to help get better more quickly:

- rest and sleep
- keep warm
- take [paracetamol](#) or [ibuprofen](#) to lower your temperature and treat aches and pains
- drink plenty of water to avoid [dehydration](#) (your pee should be light yellow or clear)

## How to avoid spreading the flu

Flu is very infectious and easily spread to other people. You're more likely to give it to others in the first 5 days.

Flu is spread by germs from coughs and sneezes, which can live on hands and surfaces for 24 hours.

To reduce the risk of spreading flu:

- wash your hands often with warm water and soap
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze (if you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow, not into your hand)
- bin used tissues as quickly as possible

Try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people if you have a high temperature or you do not feel well enough to do your normal activities.

Considering the effect it can have on people it is strongly advised to have the flu vaccine. If you are querying whether you are eligible, please call reception.



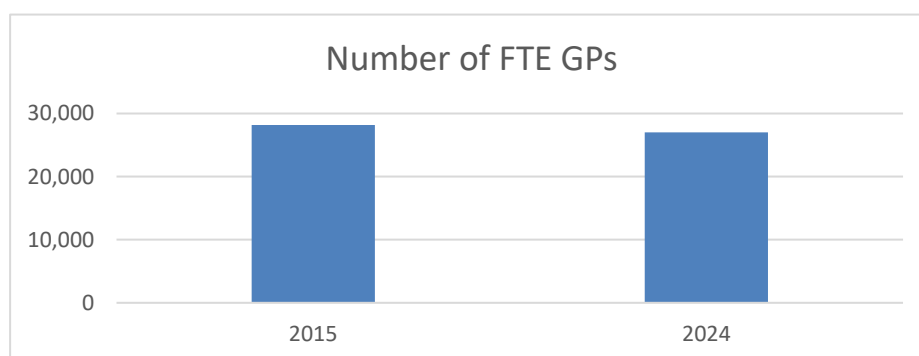
# Current National Challenges Facing General Practice



Since the election of the new government, there has been widespread hope for improvements in the NHS and general practice. However, these hopes have yet to lead to changes. In recent years, successive governments have looked to shift patient care away from hospitals to community settings closer to home. However, this transition has not been supported by a proportional reallocation of NHS funding to general practice, despite the increasing workload placed on primary care services.

Currently, more than 90% of patient interactions with the NHS occur within primary care and GP practices, yet primary care receives less than 10% of England's NHS budget whilst also being hit with having to cover the increase of national insurance for employees from April 2025. This funding disparity places significant strain on general practice, particularly in light of ongoing workforce shortages.

As of 2024, there were 1,167 fewer fully qualified full-time equivalent (FTE) GPs than in 2015. Additionally, 1,396 GP practices have closed since 2015, often due to partner retirements, recruitment challenges, or the inability to secure new GP partners.



At the same time, patient numbers continue to rise, further exacerbating these pressures. In England, GP practices now serve a record 63.72 million registered patients—an increase of 6.82 million since 2015. As a result, the average number of patients per FTE GP has risen to 2,260, representing a 17% increase (322 additional patients per GP) over the same period.

While social media and newspapers often create the perception that GP practices offer a limited number of appointments, the reality is that appointment availability has increased nationally. In December 2024 alone, GP practices provided an average of 1.42 million appointments per working day, highlighting the continued dedication of general practice teams to meeting the growing demand for primary care services.

Despite these current national challenges, Sonning Common Health Centre has successfully retained GP staff and recruited new GP partners. Additionally, we have deliberately maintained a significantly lower patient-to-GP ratio than the national average. This approach enables us to continue delivering the highest standard of care, ensuring continuity for our patients while striving to reduce GP appointment wait times to a more manageable and suitable timeframe. We are doing our very best to provide as good a service as we can—in very challenging circumstances within the NHS and we'd like to thank all our patients for sticking with us through this period.

# Pharmacy First- Great for weekends or when we are closed



The Pharmacy First service allows community pharmacies to see, assess and prescribe (if necessary) treatment for 7 common conditions (as listed below). To access this service, head directly to your local pharmacy, there is no need for a referral.

The idea of this service is to reduce urgent demand on GPs to aid in increasing patient access. This is especially useful at weekends.

Your local pharmacy can also help with emergency supplies of prescriptions, as well as support with health eating, exercise, stopping smoking, monitoring your blood pressure, contraception, flu and covid vaccinations.

For more information about this service please see the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/primary-care/pharmacy/pharmacy-services/pharmacy-first/>

## Accessing Pharmacy First services

The following table shows the 7 conditions pharmacists can manage across various age ranges.

Clinical pathway	Age range
Acute otitis media-middle ear infection	1 to 17 years
Impetigo	1 year and over
Infected insect bites	1 year and over
Shingles	18 years and over
Sinusitis	12 years and over
Sore throat	5 years and over
Uncomplicated urinary tract infections	Women 16-64 years (not pregnant)

## Emergency Prescriptions

Your local pharmacy can also provide an emergency supply of your regular medication if you have run out.

The Sonning Common Health Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a fantastic group of patients and GP practice staff who meet to discuss practice issues and patient experiences to help improve the service, to provide practical support to the health centre team when required and to organise health events of interest to our local community.

They aim to be representative and welcome patients' views, feedback and ideas for improvements to the healthcare services provided. The PPG patient members cannot provide any medical advice, discuss medical issues or concerns about treatment. These should all be addressed directly with the Health Centre staff.

If you are interested in joining or have any queries please contact the PPG email [schcppg@gmail.com](mailto:schcppg@gmail.com) or fill in a PPG Contact form available from the Health Centre reception.

## Your feedback

We turn up every day to try and do a good job for our patients. It's really useful to know when we have managed this, as well as when we may have fallen short and need to improve. Unless we get told, we don't know how you feel we are doing. So please use <https://sonningcommonhealthcentre.co.uk/friends-family-test/> to give us confidential feedback, or email [schcreception@nhs.net](mailto:schcreception@nhs.net) if you want to give feedback that we can reply to. Or you can leave a review on google: <https://search.google.com/local/writereview?placeid=ChIJ32g8SHeQdkgRbpgzINq7iMg>

Thank you from the SCHC Team



SCAN ME