

**AVISFORD MEDICAL GROUP
PRACTICE NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2026**

**Sponsored by The Friends of Avisford
Patient Participation Group**

Charity Number: 1074882

Chairperson's Welcome

Welcome to the Autumn 2026 edition of the Avisford Medical Group newsletter.



Most of you will know by now that the Avisford Medical Group won an **iWantGreatCare** award. As the world's largest independent patient-experience platform, **iWantGreatCare** hosts more than six million patient reviews across 28 countries. The Certificate of Excellence is presented **only** to clinicians, practices, and healthcare teams who receive exceptionally positive and consistent patient feedback over the course of a year. This makes the award especially meaningful, as it reflects

the real experiences of the people we care for every day.

Also the practice did well in the **2026 GP Survey**: if invited please do take part in these surveys.

As the Patient Participation Group we get a monthly report on both the **iWantGreatCare** results and the **Friends and Family Test** that can be completed by patients attending either surgery: not that many are which is a shame as it is your opportunity to have your say.



We are delighted to have been able to donate a Dermatoscope to the practice – this is used to help identify, measure and record moles and other skin conditions. Donations like this are funded mainly from the 50:50 Club and from the sale of books and cards. A huge thank you as always to Marie and Pauline who donate the beautiful handmade cards.

Looking forward Dr Helen Brockhurst has offered to talk to us about Prostate/Urology and Breast Checks on Monday, 12th October in the St Nicholas Church Hall in Middleton at 6.00pm. As with the talk on Cholesterol, clinicians will identify patients who might benefit from this event and draw their attention to it. So we can manage numbers, it would help if you let us know if you plan to attend by leaving your name at our email address **avisford.friends@gmail.com**.

Like many voluntary groups, both local and national, we are struggling for support. Your help through telling us about your experiences of care and ideas about how services might be improved are always welcome; buying books and cards; attending our events and supporting the 50:50 club will all help.

We have a couple of vacancies on the Friends Committee. Meeting every couple of months we look after the communication with the practice; run the charity and website, and keep an eye on the books. We plan events for patients and run the 50:50 Club.

If you are interested, please do contact us through our email address at **avisford.friends@gmail.com**

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Thompson".

John Thompson MBE

Chair, Friends of the Avisford Medical Group and Patient Participation Group

Unwell? Choose the right service:

Help us
help you
make
the right
choice

NHS
Sussex



SELF-CARE

stock up your medicine
cabinet to treat minor
issues at home



PHARMACY

for treatment and advice
on minor illnesses



GP SURGERY

your first contact for
ongoing health concerns



NHS 111

Visit 111.nhs.uk or call 111
if you don't know what to do
or where to go



UTC/MIU

Visit Urgent Treatment
centres / Minor injuries units
for urgent, but not life
threatening issues



A&E OR 999

for serious or life-
threatening emergencies like
chest pain or breathing
difficulties



Surgery Update

Improving Access Through SystmConnect

Over recent months, we have continued to improve how patients access our services, with SystmConnect now becoming the main route for many non-urgent medical and administrative requests. This is our online consultation tool and has replaced Accurx.

SystmConnect enables patients to contact the practice online at a time that suits them, without having to wait on the telephone. Requests are reviewed by our clinical and administrative teams and directed to the most appropriate person, helping us provide patients with the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

The benefits of SystmConnect include:

- Reduced telephone waiting times.
- Faster processing of routine requests.
- Improved triage of medical concerns.
- Easier access to practice

Patients who are unable to access online services can still contact us by telephone or in person, and our reception team remains available to support those who need assistance.

[Ideas, Concerns and Expectations - a guide to filling in your GP's online form](#)

Patient Feedback – Friends & Family Test and i Want Great Care

Patient feedback is extremely important to us and helps us understand what we are doing well and where we can continue to improve. We are delighted to continue receiving highly positive feedback through both the NHS Friends & Family Test and i Want Great Care. Patients regularly tell us about the excellent care they receive from our clinical and administrative teams, highlighting our staffs professionalism, kindness, compassion and willingness to go the extra mile.

Many patients have also shared positive experiences of using SystmConnect, appreciating the convenience of being able to contact the practice online and have their requests directed quickly to the most appropriate member of the team.

We encourage patients to continue sharing their experiences through both i Want Great Care and the Friends and Family Test. Your feedback helps improve where we can do better and celebrate what you say we are doing well. Your voice matters to us.

Yapton Surgery Building Work

Many patients will have noticed the ongoing building work taking place at our Yapton site. We are pleased to say that this project will provide two additional clinical rooms, helping us increase capacity and create more opportunities for patient appointments and clinical services.

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As our patient population continues to grow, these additional consulting rooms will support our teams in delivering care more effectively and improve the availability of appointments across the practice.

We are excited about the benefits these improvements will bring and look forward to welcoming patients into the enhanced facilities once the project is finished. Meanwhile, we appreciate the patience and understanding shown by patients while the work is being completed. Thank you.

NHS App and Pharmacy First

We would also encourage patients to make use of the NHS App, which allows you to:

- Order repeat prescriptions.
- View appointments.
- Access parts of your medical record.
- Manage your healthcare online.

Additionally, many common conditions can now be assessed and treated through the Pharmacy First service, helping patients access advice and treatment quickly without needing a GP appointment.

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 (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

* Distance selling pharmacies will not complete consultations for acute otitis media.

Patients will be able to access the 7 clinical pathways above via referrals from referring organisations including general practice, urgent and emergency care settings, and NHS 111 (online and via telephone). In addition, for the 7 common conditions clinical pathway consultations only, patients can access the service by attending or contacting the pharmacy directly without the need for referral.

Cancelling Appointments

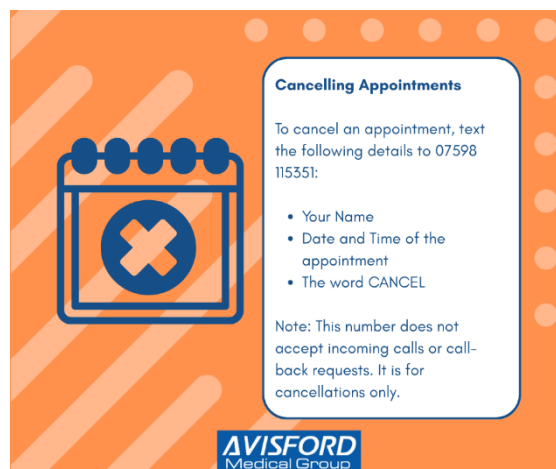
We know that sometimes you need to cancel an appointment. Please do tell us, even at short notice, so we can give the appointment to another patient.

Thank You

'Flu and Covid Inoculation Clinics

Patients aged over 65 will be invited to make appointments for one or both of these jobs.

Anyone not invited can apply to have these jobs at the local chemist.



Finally, we would like to thank you our patients for your continued support, patience and understanding. Demand for NHS services remains high, but our teams remain committed to delivering safe, effective and compassionate care every day.

Your feedback and support help us continue to improve the services we provide, and we look forward to sharing further updates with you in future newsletters.

Would you be interested in:

- Help setting up the NHS App on you mobile 'phone?
- Help with using the NHS App?
- Learning how to access your Patient Knows Best records so you can see results of blood tests, scans etc and correspondence about your care?
- Learning how to do Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and how to use Defibrillator?

Let us know and we will arrange help and training. Email us at avisford.friends@gmail.com.

Working with the wider NHS

The Government and the NHS are becoming less keen on hearing the patient voice, and currently, there is legislation before Parliament to abolish Healthwatch. Each area of the country has a Healthwatch team whose primary role has been to listen to patients and take up issues to improve medical and social care. The plan is that the Healthwatch role will be shared between the NHS and Local Authority's Social Care: they will now be marking their own homework!!

Also, within the next couple of years it is likely that Hospital Foundation Trusts' Councils of Governors will be disbanded. This will remove the direct channel that the patients have with their hospitals' leadership.

Besides being the Chair of our Friends and Patient Participation Group, I am the Chair of the West Sussex and Surrey Heartlands PPG Network. The Network (comprising West Sussex and now Surrey Heartlands plus Brighton and East Sussex) is supported by the Surrey and

Sussex Integrated Care Board. Three months ago we were informed that this support was being withdrawn as The Working with Communities Team was being disbanded. The three Chairs wrote to the Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board asking that the support (half a day a month) be reinstated. The network provides an invaluable link into the NHS along with the opportunity to get independent advice and share ideas about improving services as well as improving patient engagement. I am happy to report that the ICB have relented and agreed that support will be provided although on a reduced scale.

How the NHS looks after its patients

At the top of the tree is the Department of Health and Social Care.

NHS England is responsible for all healthcare and although it is due to be abolished, its role is to provide strategic direction and deliver the NHS 10 Year Plan. After abolition this will be shared between the DHSC and the Integrated Care Boards.

The ICB is responsible for the delivery of all healthcare and, in association with local authorities, the delivery of some aspects of social care.

At the local level, each of the Integrated Care Boards (ICB) commission services for patients and are responsible for all the health and care in their area (around 2 million people). Our area covers all of Sussex and Surrey Heartlands.

Healthcare is delivered through hospitals. Tertiary care dealt with by the Royal Sussex in Brighton and secondary care at all local general hospitals, whilst primary care (your first point of contact) is provided through GP contracts. In addition to these, other care is delivered through the Sussex Partnership Trust (mental health) and Sussex Community Trust (community support to patients), Pharmacists and Dentists.

GP surgeries are private businesses run by the Partners. They have a contract with the ICB and are paid by them: partly a flat rate per patient and partly based on services provided for which there is a tariff e.g. 'flu injections.

In addition, there are dental and pharmacy services that run independently but are funded through the ICB. Private companies run most pharmacies even if they share a GP surgery whereas, pharmacies in hospitals are the responsibility of the hospital. Dentists are similar to GP surgeries with the exception that they can charge for their services and have both NHS and private patients.

There are at least 3 other groups involved in our part of West Sussex

- **Primary Care Networks** – where a group of surgeries share services. Examples include cancer support, physiotherapy and counselling.
- **Local Wellbeing Groups** – tend to be run by local authorities and, as the name suggests, support healthier living.
- **Neighbourhood Integrated Community Teams (ICT)** – these are made up of representatives from all the above organisations. Our neighbourhood area is the same as the Arun District Council and covers 15 GP surgeries. The ICT is new and have been tasked with directly supporting the delivery of key elements of the NHS 10 Year Plan. For example, encouraging healthier lifestyles, keeping people out of hospital, and delivering the right care at the right time in the right place.

A development linked to the Neighbourhood Integrated Community Team is the creation of locally based integrated care centres. Ours will be the Tech Park at the University of Chichester Bognor Regis campus opposite Butlins. The Community Diagnostic Centre is

there already and will move from the van next year to be in the building to be alongside other health services which will be developed over time to meet local needs.

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HELP US TO HELP YOU

1. I would like to receive regular Friends updates via my email address:

My Name is:

My Email address is.....

Please note that email addresses will only be used by the Friends and not shared with third parties. They are held on one secure computer and will not be shared without your permission.

2. I would like to have details about becoming a member of the 50:50 Club.

These are available on our website: **avisfordfriends.co.uk** OR we can send them by email or post:

Email address:

Name & address:

3. I would like to make a donation to The Friends of the Avisford Medical Group.

Please make your cheque payable to ***The Friends of Avisford Medical Group*** and deliver or send to:

The Friends of the Avisford Medical Group, c/o Middleton-on-Sea Surgery, Elmer Road, Bognor Regis PO22 7SR **OR** c/o Yapton Surgery, North End Road, Yapton BN18 0DU

4. Gift-Aid

If you are a UK taxpayer, The Friends as a registered charity can claim back the basic tax you pay to HMRC. So if you are eligible and would like any donations to be increased by 25%, we will claim the Gift Aid on your donations from HMRC. Please sign and add your details below.

Name:

Signature:

My Address is

If you have completed **any part** of this form, please either place it in one of the honesty boxes or put it in an envelope marked "**Friends**" or it hand into reception in either surgery. Alternatively, you can email us at avisford.friends@gmail.com and we will send you the forms you need.