

Welcome to our first Patient Participation Group (PPG) Meeting

Welcome, and thank you for joining the first Patient Participation Group meeting at The Family Surgery this year. We are delighted to have you with us as we begin this important partnership between patients and the practice. Your views, experiences and feedback are invaluable in helping us understand what we do well and where we can improve. We look forward to working together to support the continued development of our services and to ensure we provide the best possible care for our patient community.

Thank you for taking the time to be here.

Digital Triage-First (Patches)

As you will be aware, The Family Surgery moved away from 8 o'clock telephone appointment bookings to **Digital Triage-First (Patches)** in July last year, following a full review of capacity and demand to ensure patients receive timely and appropriate care.

This review revealed the following:

- Many calls were coming in at the same time, especially Monday, Tuesday and Friday mornings which created delays.
- Not all appointment requests needed a GP or required face to face, some could have been handled by other highly trained healthcare professionals, and some could have been managed by a phone call or a digital response.
- Patients had shared that it was often hard to get through to us at 8 o'clock on the phone or to get an appointment.

Patches Data Update

We have taken the time to review our data after 12 months of digital triage. Here are the findings:

Alongside our usual clinician appointments, our triaging clinicians have assessed and actioned **2,123 additional digital appointment requests** over the past year and **phoned or seen a further 1,041 patients face-to-face**. This combined workload, averaged across July 2025 to July 2026, reflects the impact of our move to **Digital Triage-First (Patches)**. Prior to this change, our data showed that we were unable to accommodate **134 patients in a single week** at the end of March last year.

- A total of **5,562 patients** have now signed up to Patches, with **72.2%** of requests submitted directly by patients, **13.7%** submitted by **carers**, and **14.1%** completed through our **non-digital routes**.
- During a randomly selected week in June last year, our reception team handled 684 calls. In the equivalent period this year, that figure fell to 533 calls – a reduction of 151 calls, representing a decrease of approximately 22%.

This reduction has had a positive impact on the reception team by easing workload pressures, allowing staff more time to focus on in-person queries, administrative duties, and providing a higher quality service. The lower call volume has helped improve efficiency, reduce interruptions, and create a more manageable and productive working environment for the team.

Feedback

As part of our commitment to continually improve our services, we regularly review feedback from patients about our digital triage system, Patches. We are grateful to everyone who takes the time to share their experiences, as this helps us understand what is working well and where improvements may be needed. Here are some examples of what patients like and dislike about Patches.

Positive Feedback

- Patients appreciate the convenience of submitting requests online at a time that suits them.
- Many prefer that they no longer have to contact the surgery by phone to request an appointment at 8 o'clock in the morning.
- Patients have commented positively on the speed and efficiency of receiving a response through Patches.

Constructive Feedback

- Some patients have found the forms too lengthy or complex.
- Others have experienced difficulties accessing or navigation the system.
- Some of our non-digital patients expressed concern they would not receive help in accessing and requesting appointments.

Our Response

We recognise that digital services do not suit everyone, and we take all feedback, both positive and negative, seriously. Patient comments are regularly reviewed and help inform discussions about how we can improve access and the overall patient experience. While Patches has brought many benefits, we remain committed to listening to concerns and making adjustments wherever possible to ensure our services are accessible, effective, and patient-centred.

Our reception team are always happy to support patients with any Patches related queries, including guiding patients through the system and helping them become more confident in using it. We also understand that some patients may not be digitally enabled, and we are committed to ensuring they can access our services equitably. Our staff will continue to assist these patients so that they can receive the same level of access and care as those who use digital services independently.

Reduction of SMS communication

From 1 April, GP Practices were asked to reduce their use of text messaging. We contacted patients to encourage them to sign up for the NHS App and switch **ON** notifications so they can receive messages directly through the App.

Call Back

To improve the experience for patients contacting the surgery by telephone, we have introduced a call-back option. This allows patients to keep their place in the queue without having to remain on the line, reducing wait times and frustration during busy periods. Patients can choose to receive a call back from our team when they reach the front of the queue, helping to make access to our services more convenient and efficient.

Suggestions/Comments

Thank you for attending our first Patient Participation Group meeting of 2026. We greatly appreciate you taking the time to share your views and help shape the future of services at The Family Surgery.

We would welcome any comments, suggestions or feedback you may have, particularly around:

- How we communicate with patients and whether there are areas where we could improve.
- Whether you would find a patient newsletter useful, and if so, would you prefer this to be issued quarterly or at a different frequency?
- How often you feel Patient Participation Group meetings should be held.
- Your experience of using Patches, including what works well and any challenges you have experienced.
- Whether you have used our telephone call-back option and, if so, how found the experience.

All feedback is valuable and will help us continue to improve our services and ensure they meet the needs of our patient population.