

Vale Medical Group

Long Clawson Medical Practice

Long Clawson Pharmacy

Stackyard Surgery

Thank you for bearing with us during these stressful times for everyone. We have been touched by the many kind messages of support whilst we have strived to provide you with the best service we can.

As many of you know, General Practice has seen unprecedented demand over the last 18 months and this demand continues to increase.

We have continually had to review how we operate the surgery. We have offered new innovations such as online consultation. This was in a bid to reduce pressure on phone systems thus freeing up our staff to help other patients in need, especially those that are unable to access an IT based service. We also wanted to provide a way of providing better access to those that have work and other commitments.

We did worry about how online consultations would be accepted, as change can be challenging and sometimes is considered unwelcome, but we saw that the more people who used it, the more satisfied they were from it. However we are finding that many patients are contacting us online in the very earliest stages of their condition, with the expectation that we will immediately cure them, without trying any form of self-care whatsoever.

With self-care and due attention, most cases of minor illness do resolve without ever needing treatment from the GP. We have found that many patients actively choose to ignore all forms of self-care and that their first port of call is always the GP, often requesting urgent attention.

Why do we try to address this? Well, the problem with such behaviour is that it means that our ability to prioritise work is adversely affected, and it means that we cannot devote the time needed to treat *clinically* urgent patients appropriately and in a timely manner, because our time is being taken up with much less serious conditions.

We always make our decisions on the basis of clinical need and urgency based on what you have told us, either on the telephone, or within an online consultation and not because we want to be awkward or dismissive. We have to be fair to all our patients. If someone pushes in, it means someone else has been pushed out, someone who could be quite vulnerable and in need, and the next time this happens, that person might be you.

Over the next few days we will be providing details of our new appointment and telephone system. We are hoping that this will reduce call waiting times and frustration for patients. We will also be informing you about the different roles available within our healthcare team, to make sure your problem is dealt with by the most appropriate person. In addition, we will give you details of the self-referrals which are available which can help reduce pressure on surgery staff.