

OCTOBER 2025

Surgery News

Vaccine Clinics – A Huge Success!

We'd like to say a big *thank you* to all our patients who attended our Autumn Vaccine Clinics this year. For 2025, we chose to do things a little differently. Rather than offering vaccination alone, we brought the whole Leatside Surgery team together to provide a more proactive health service – combining vaccinations with heart health and long-term condition reviews for those most at risk. With the fantastic support of our Patient Participation Group, we ran three community clinic days on **8th, 15th and 22nd October**. Eligible patients were invited and able to book via our dedicated Reception booking line.

Across the three clinic days, together we achieved:

Vaccinations Delivered

- COVID-19: **1,250**
- Flu: **2,433**
- Shingles: **236**
- Pneumococcal: **120**

Total vaccinations: 3,803

Proactive Health Checks & Reviews

- Blood Pressure Checks: **301**
- Cholesterol Blood Tests: **139**
- High Blood Pressure/Cholesterol of GP Reviews: **166**
- Asthma/COPD Reviews: **22**
- Diabetic Foot Checks: **20**

Total preventative interventions: 648

The Leat is distributed for the patients of Leatside Surgery by the patient group to provide information and news about what is happening at Leatside and also in the wider NHS.

The Leat is edited by Mike Mintrum, Graphics by Jill Lawrence.

From the Chair

GREETINGS TO ALL LEATSIDE SURGERY PATIENTS AND CARERS.

REMINDER the half yearly General Meeting, this will be held at the United Free Church 56 Fore Street Totnes TQ9 5RU on Tuesday 4th November, starting at 1800. I encourage as many of you as possible to attend the meeting at which important changes to the appointment booking system will be discussed. As with previous general meetings we will ask for a small donation to cover the cost of hiring the hall, as the Patient Group has no funds. Any surplus will be donated to Totnes Caring.

I had hoped that we might have had some good news about the pharmacy problems after all the action taken by so many of you, but that hope was dashed by the reply Caroline Voaden received from Stephen Kinnock, the Minister of State for Social Care, to our petition and detailed submission about the problems in the Totnes area. His reply failed to deal with the important points in our submission and only repeated that the NHS Resolution decision could not be overturned as it was made on behalf of the Secretary of State.

It seems quite absurd to us that a Minister of the Crown cannot overrule a decision made by an NHS body when it is clearly wrong and based on incorrect information and we will continue to pursue this illogicality with Caroline Voaden in the context of NHS reforms.

However, we have not given up, and we await the publication of the 2025 Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) carried out by Devon County Council which must, we believe, identify the need for action to be taken to deal with the problems patients are experiencing in Totnes.

Our campaign, and especially the number of complaints you sent to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) has clearly rattled the powers that be, in the area as myself, Martin Randall and Doctor Hossack were invited recently to a discussion about pharmacy problems in Totnes, with representatives from Well and Morrisons pharmacies. The meeting was organised by Community Pharmacy Devon (another part of the NHS of which we have never heard!)

Although the meeting had no major outcomes, it did provide some information of which we were not aware. I will give a report of the meeting at the General Meeting on 4th November, but we did obtain commitments from the area managers of both pharmacies to do their best to improve the service they are currently providing for patients.

Congratulations to the surgery team on the success of the enhanced vaccination clinics. In addition to the work done mentioned in the sidebar more than **100 follow-up appointments** were arranged as a direct result of clinical conversations during the clinics, helping the team support patients early and prevent future health issues. Well done everyone, this is the kind of high-quality care we expect from all the staff at Leatside.

This edition of the Leat contains further articles from surgery staff talking about what they do. We hope you find them interesting but if there is something about the surgery that you would like to know more about, please let me know.

Thought for the day

You cannot know who will bring your future.

You cannot seek to qualify them by race, colour, religion, orientation, or academic qualifications.

You can only listen.

J A Barker- Futurist

Surgery News from the Practice Manager

Changes Ahead for Accessing Care at Leatside Surgery

Leatside Surgery will be making some important changes early next year to the way patients book appointments and access care. These changes are part of our ongoing commitment to improving how we meet the needs of our patients and our community.

There are several reasons why we're looking at doing things differently:

- **National changes:** The new GP contract and NHS plan focusses on improving online access and ensuring patients who most need continuity of care are identified and supported.
- **Increasing demand:** Like many GP practices across the country, we're seeing a steady rise in the number of people needing our help, without a similar increase in staff or resources. This has affected how quickly we can offer routine appointments.
- **Patient feedback:** Our recent patient survey highlighted that shorter waiting times and better continuity with preferred clinicians are top priorities for our patients.

Considering these factors, we are reviewing the way patients contact and access the surgery so that we can deliver care more efficiently, fairly, and safely while improving the experience for both patients and staff.

We'll be sharing more details about these upcoming changes and how they'll work in practice at the Leatside Patient Group Annual Meeting; GPs and members of the management team will be there to talk through the plans and answer any questions.

A Doctor Writes

How technology helps us care for you

General practice has changed over the past few years. Much of what happens behind the scenes now relies on digital systems that help us work more efficiently and keep your care safe and better connected.

At our practice, we use System One, the main clinical system across Devon and much of the NHS. Every appointment, referral, and prescription is recorded securely here. When you see one of our GPs, nurses, paramedics, or pharmacists, we can access your full record straightaway. That includes recent hospital letters, test results, and your medication history. It means we don't need to ask you the same questions repeatedly, and there's less chance of missing something important.

In the future, we hope this kind of system will work seamlessly when you're seen elsewhere in the NHS, so your information can be shared safely and instantly wherever you receive care. You'll always remain in control of your health information.

We also use Microsoft Teams for day-to-day teamwork within the surgery. Our clinicians and admin staff use it for urgent same-day communication about emerging issues within the practice and to keep in touch during a busy day. It's quick and keeps everyone connected. This helps us make faster, safer decisions without disrupting patient consultations.

AI in healthcare is not about replacing doctors; it's about supporting them. In general practice, AI will increasingly help in useful ways: highlighting areas of care that need clinician attention, identifying patients who might benefit from proactive health checks, and supporting earlier intervention to help keep people well and out of hospital.

We are currently trialling a tool called Heidi AI Scribe. It's a secure digital assistant that can automatically summarise consultations and draft notes directly into System One. We'll always let you know when it's being used, and you can decline if you prefer. It processes conversations securely within the UK, and no recordings are stored. This means we can spend more time listening to you and less time typing, without losing any accuracy or detail in your records.

We're keen to use technology where it genuinely improves care, not as a gimmick, but as a practical tool to make things run more smoothly. You can still phone or visit us as you always have, but behind the scenes your healthcare team is now more digitally connected than before.

The aim is straightforward: spend less time on administration and more time caring for you.

Dr. Tristan Michell

A Practice Pharmacist Writes

Leatside Surgery employs four clinical pharmacists as a part of its multidisciplinary team: Kevin, Jeanne, Soheel and Andrew.

Pharmacists in general practice are healthcare professionals who work alongside GPs to provide medication expertise, manage long-term conditions, and improve patient safety and health outcomes.

Specifically, our roles include conducting face to face and telephone consultations as well as home visits (including residential care) to maximise patient access to healthcare advice.

We advise on:

- Annual medication reviews: Ensuring that ongoing treatments are required, monitored and evaluated to maximise the benefit to patients, and minimise harm.
- Managing long-term conditions: Advising on blood pressure management, cholesterol and lipid treatments and mental health advice amongst other long-term conditions.
- Repeat and acute prescriptions: Ensuring timely access to medications for patients, whilst minimising the risk of overuse or wastage.

- De-prescribing: Safely weaning and stopping unnecessary medications.
- Managing and reducing adverse effects of medications
- Stock shortages: Appropriate switches of medications during periods of stock shortage or discontinuation.
- Reviewing hospital discharges and clinic letters: Ensuring the patient record is up to date within primary care.
- Answering medication queries including doses, side effects and interactions.

Jeanne Smith

Totnes Caring Corner

Totnes Caring: Helping People Stay Independent, Connected and Well

Totnes Caring is entering the final quarter of 2025 with energy and momentum, having experienced an incredibly busy and rewarding year so far. We're thrilled to have welcomed several new team members who bring fresh perspectives and expertise to our organisation.

Jasmine has joined us as our new Operations Manager, bringing strong leadership and coordination to our growing services. Caroline, our new Fundraiser, is already making strides in building support for our mission, and Adi, our Health and Wellbeing Coach, is enhancing the holistic care we offer to our clients.

As we look ahead, we're excited to expand our Home Help service and are actively seeking new clients who could benefit from compassionate, practical support. Liz, our dedicated Home Help Manager, is eager to connect with individuals in the local community who may need assistance with enabling activities such as shopping trips or afternoon outings, meal preparation, sitting services to give carers a well-earned break, or help with household cleaning. Liz is happy to guide people through the various options we offer, ensuring that each service is tailored to meet individual needs. Totnes Caring remains committed to enriching lives and fostering independence with warmth, dignity, and respect.

Totnes Caring can be contacted on 01803 865684

Endpiece

The Leat is intended to keep patients informed about developments at Leatside Surgery and the wider NHS. If you wish to contribute to the Leat or would like to see more particular information, please contact me at chairpgleatside@gmail.com.

Committee Members

Mike Mintrum (Chair), Katie Porkess (Vice-Chair), Janice Balch (Secretary), Sue Barry-Campbell, Rod Hewett, Sally Lougher, Jack Patterson, Julie Spinks.