

**Billericay Medical Practice**  
**Patient Participation Group (PPG) Newsletter**  
**Edition 37 - Spring 2021**

**IT WAS A FIRST FOR US!**

The PPG held it's AGM this year on 17 March on ZOOM and it worked!

Thirteen people attended (more than the number at last year's live event.) We accepted the minutes of last year and the Treasurer's report together with the very brief Secretary's report explaining how we had not been able to do much this year because of the lockdown.

It was agreed that the current committee and officers would continue for the coming year



**The PPG COMMITTEE**

The Practice Report was presented by Peter Tyrrell standing in for Dr. John Cockcroft.

What a year. Who would have thought that when we all met at last year's AGM that this would be the last face to face meeting we would all have together for over a year and that this year we would be meeting virtually by ZOOM.

It has been an especially challenging year with the practice having to adjust to the way that it cares for its patients due to COVID-19.

## COVID-19

As the practice has a duty of care to keep its staff and patients safe the practice has introduced new safety measures since the start of the pandemic to reduce the flow of patients into the surgery.

All of the GP appointments are now in the first instance a telephone consultation. If any patient needs to be seen face to face, then the patient will be pre-screened for any signs of COVID-19 before being invited into the surgery for their face to face appointment.

Any patient that needs to be seen face to face but have possible signs of COVID-19 will be booked an appointment at the local respiratory HUB instead of attending the surgery.

Every patient that attends the surgery will on arrival be escorted into the building and then have their temperature taken and asked to wash their hands. A face covering is also mandatory for everyone entering the building.

Once the consultation has ended the patient will be escorted out of the building and then the consultation room cleaned before the next patient is seen.

Every member of staff has their temperature taken before they start work every day and if their temperature is over 37.5 they are then immediately sent home and asked to arrange a COVID-19 test. They also perform a COVID-19 lateral flow test twice a week and are also required to wear a face mask at all times when in public areas of the building to ensure that we keep the surgery as COVID safe as possible. Finally, there is also a cleaning rota where all areas of the building are regularly cleaned by a member of staff every day.

### COVID-19 Vaccinations

In December 2020 the first batch of COVID-19 vaccinations were delivered to the Billericay Primary Care Network (all practices in Billericay) to start vaccinating all patients 80 years of age or over. Due to the storage problems with the Pfizer vaccine, it was not possible to vaccinate patients at individual surgeries and the PCN decided to use the Emmanuel church as the local HUB. *(Editor This worked very well).*

In addition to performing their normal day to day roles within the practice the reception staff has been tasked with contacting all of the patients who are entitled to attend Emmanuel Church for their vaccination and to date the practice has made more than 3K telephone calls to patients to book them into one of the vaccination clinics.

## Electronic Repeat Dispensing

The practice has recently started to prescribe certain patients prescriptions through a process called Electronic Repeat Dispensing or as it is sometimes called “Batch processing”.

Electronic Repeat Dispensing is an alternative way to receive your medications, based on an agreement between the patient, your GP and your nominated pharmacy. A number of prescriptions are issued by your doctor at the same time, to cover an agreed period of up to six months and are sent electronically to your nominated pharmacy.

Patients who have their repeat medications on Electronic Repeat Dispensing will only need to request their medication once every six months rather than every month. They will need to phone the pharmacy a week before their next supply is due.

### Questions re the report included :

1. After we go back to ‘normal’ times will the practice stick mainly to telephone consultations?

**Answer:** Telephone triage has become normal in general practice and the number of face to face consultations has decreased significantly due to the pandemic and as a practice we do not see this changing anytime soon.

It is important for patients to know that the practice is not closed and if the clinician believes that it is more appropriate for a patient to attend the surgery for a face to face appointment during the telephone call then they will be invited into the surgery by the clinician.

2. I was contacted by a firm purporting to be acting for the practice asking about my medication

**Answer:** This is a Pharmaceutical company called Firza who are performing structured medication reviews on behalf of several GP practices in Billericay.

Details of this service can be found on the practice website:

[www.gps-billericayhealthcentre.co.uk](http://www.gps-billericayhealthcentre.co.uk)

## Effect of the COVID Pandemic on the people of Billericay

Ron Capes JP - Governor,  
Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust

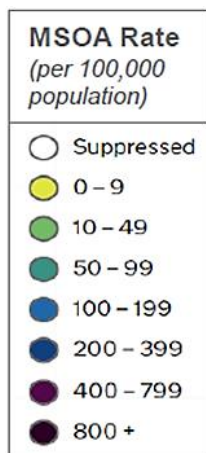
COVID-19 has had a serious effect on everyone over the past year. Thankfully, it appears that there is at last some better news.

Over the last few months, COVID patients presenting at the hospitals from the Billericay area rose to a rate of about 200 per 100,000 population in October 2020, then to nearer 300 per 100,000 in November 2020. By the end of December 2020, the figure was over 800 per 100,000.

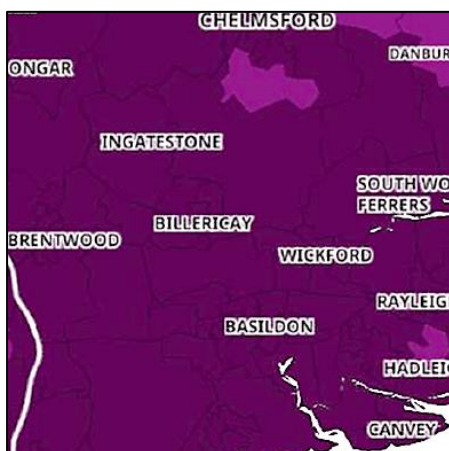
Thankfully, measures taken then resulted in a significant reduction and figures showed a reduction to around 400 per 100,000 in January 2021. The rate of improvement continued through February.

Figures as of 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021 show a rate generally below 50 per 100,000, with some parts of Billericay now less than 10 per 100,000. This appears to indicate that the measures undertaken, both 'lockdown' and vaccination, have successfully suppressed the disease in the Billericay area at the present time although the disease is by no means beaten and everyone must remain cautious.

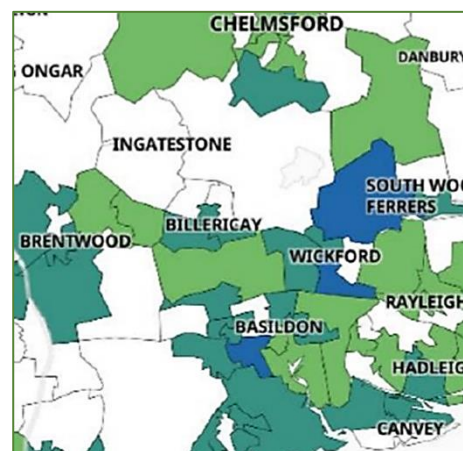
### Adjacent areas of Essex and beyond into London, Suffolk etc., are showing similar trends



Covid Community Prevalence October 30<sup>th</sup> 2020



Covid Community Prevalence December 30<sup>th</sup> 2020



Covid Community Prevalence March 9<sup>th</sup> 2021

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*Effect of COVID Pandemic on the people of Billericay – Ron Capes*

As governor of the Mid and South Essex NHS Hospitals I attended the latest Board of Directors meeting and learned from Chief Executive, Claire Panniker, that numbers of patients being admitted with COVID appear to be steadily declining, both overall and in terms of patients suffering the more serious symptoms.

Current bed occupancy figures in the hospitals are nearing levels not seen since last October. This has wider impact than just on the COVID patients in that this will now enable nurses and clinicians to become more available to begin to make elective surgery possible on all three main hospital sites.

This work is now progressing, taking account of the seriousness of each case and the length of time for which patients have been waiting.

To maintain the improvements achieved so far we must all continue to be vigilant in precautionary measures. Not all of the population have yet been vaccinated and the risk presently remains significant.

However, a great deal has been achieved in a very short time and I congratulate all the staff working in the hospitals on the exceptional work they have done and continue to do, to begin to get us back to normality, albeit possibly a new form of 'normal'.