



Maldon & Witham Primary Care Network Newsletter Summer 2025

Welcome to the first of our Maldon & Witham Primary Care Network newsletter. Primary Care Networks (PCNs) are a national initiative set up in July 2019 to create groups of GP practices in local areas, so they work more closely together and with the other health, social care and community groups in that area. It is hoped that this collaborative working will produce care that is more pro-active and accessible, reduce duplication and address gaps in services. It is also hoped that this integrated working will increase the resilience and long-term sustainability of local services that face challenges with workload and workforce. Maldon & Witham PCN is made up of the 6 local practices covering the areas of Witham, Maldon & Tollesbury. The practices are Fern House Surgery, Witham Health Centre, Collingwood Rd Surgery, Blackwater Medical Central, Longfield Medical Centre and Tollesbury Surgery serving approximately 60,000 patients. So, what have we been doing since July 1st when the PCN was set up? Representatives from the practices have been meeting monthly and so far, we have elected the leadership team, chosen a logo worked together to provide extra appointments at weekends, appointed pharmacists, social prescriber, Care Coordinators, GPA's (General Practice Assistants) Nurses and Mental Health Nurses to work across the area and decided on some of our priorities for the coming year. The Primary Care Network (PCN) has invested approximately £2,760,000 to improve local healthcare, significantly enhancing clinical and non-clinical support. This funding has enabled Practices to recruit additional skilled professionals and implement innovative treatment protocols. As a result, patients receive more comprehensive and timely care, with improved diagnoses and treatments. This initiative reflects the PCN's dedication to providing high-quality healthcare. We hope you will support us in our efforts to improve local services and if you have any ideas or feedback, we would be keen to have them – contact details at the bottom of the newsletter.

How can we improve the health of local people?

Residents in our part of Essex have been shown to have on average, shorter lives and develop long term health conditions sooner than people in more affluent areas of the city. What determines health is much broader than medicine, so we want to work with Braintree & Maldon District Councils and others on housing, debt, employment issues, loneliness, and social support services all of which impact on health. To link patients to these services we have employed two "social prescribers" to work across all 6 practices. Appointments will be available through the GP practices. The PCN Board also meet monthly to look at the greatest health challenges in our area and are concentrating on – diabetes, cancer, lung diseases (COPD), mental health problems, and frailty. In particular we want to look at prevention of these problems as well as how clinical staff can provide the best medical and nursing care.

How can we increase the resilience and sustainability of local services?

Nationally there is a shortage of GPs and practice nurses, and this is true of our area too. There is some extra funding for staff to work across the PCN, but we also want to make our existing services as efficient as possible, so we use our limited workforce in the best way. This may mean receptionists asking more questions so they can signpost patients to the most appropriate services first time, encouraging uptake of the extra weekend appointments we have provided and promoting the use of online services to book appointments or order prescriptions - to take pressure off the phone lines and reception staff. We have recruited a clinical pharmacist to work across the 6 practices. They will be available to undertake medication reviews across the 6 practices as well as providing links to community pharmacies and supporting with prescribing issues within practices

This year, our key focus is improving patient access. This includes better access to: appointments, medical records and to secure messaging platforms to improve communication between health professionals to ensure that patients receive timely and effective care.

We are also working to improve patient experience using metrics such as patient surveys, the Friends and Family Test and Patient Participation Groups (PPGs). PPGs for practices and for PCNs as a whole can be an amazing vehicle for meaningful improvements for our patients. However, for this initiative to be successful, we absolutely need your wholehearted engagement. Please email GWR.PCN@NHS.NET with your details to take part and provide your invaluable insight into how the services can improve further. Please help us so we can help everyone better!

If you have any queries or further feedback, please contact us at f.patientgroup@nhs.net

FERN HOUSE GARDEN PROJECT

The Fern House Gardening Project started in 2020 with volunteers making a start on clearing various sections of the garden which were overgrown with weeds

The project aims to support patients of the Maldon & Witham PCN with:

- **Loneliness and social isolation**
- **Depression and other mental health issues**
- **You want something to do or are in need of company**
- **Need getting out for a little exercise**
- **Are grieving a loss**
- **Are recovering from illness**

The volunteers managing the project will offer both a supportive and encouraging role, as we want to ensure everyone feels happy and confident to take part, whatever their abilities or experiences are.

You don't need previous gardening experience, just enthusiasm to meet others, enjoy some fresh air and undertake a little bit of work

For more information, or to get involved, please speak to our reception team.

