

Primary Care Networks – Patient Information





Overview: Primary Care Networks (PCNs)

PCNs are groups of GP practices working closely together, alongside other primary and community care staff and health and care organisations to provide integrated services to their local populations. Since April 2019, individual GP practices have joined PCNs to cover populations of between 30,000 to 50,000 patients.

The practices and community services involved in your Primary Care Network are:

Gillingham Medical Practice

Blackmore Vale Partnership

Dorset Healthcare

Aim of PCNs

The main aim of PCNs is to focus the services available around local communities, and to help rebuild and reconnect the primary healthcare teams to provide workload support for practices at the same time. PCN's will help GPs and primary care practitioners to deliver a new model of care for their patients and communities.

Since the NHS was created in 1948, the population has grown and people are living longer. Many people are living with long term conditions such as diabetes and heart disease, or suffer with mental health issues and may need to access their local health services more often.

To meet these needs, practices have begun working together and with community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital and voluntary services in their local areas in primary care networks.

Primary Care Networks build on the core of current primary care services and enable greater provision of proactive, personalised, coordinated and more integrated health and social care. Clinicians describe this as a change from reactively providing appointments to proactively caring for the people and communities they serve. Where emerging primary care networks are in place in parts of the country, there are clear benefits for patients and clinicians.

Each area is different, and its population will have different needs. Instead of a blanket offer of care across Dorset, PCNs will be able to individualise their services to best meet the needs of their population. The larger size of the PCN will provide resources and finance to provide a wider range of services for the patient.

The PCNs may also help the GP practice provide alternative appointment at a nearby practices or health centres if they are fully booked.

Each PCN will have the ability to employ staff to work across all practices. For example, each PCN may be able to employ a clinical Pharmacist who will support all practices in their network. They are highly qualified experts in medicines and can help people in a range of ways, including carrying out structured medication reviews for patients with ongoing health problems. PCN's could also employ a qualified Paramedic to provide services to the patient that do not need be provided by a GP. Having clinical Pharmacists and Paramedics in practices means that GPs can focus their skills where they are most needed, for example on diagnosing and treating patients with more complex conditions and in managing the demands on their time.

Each PCN may also be able to have a dedicated Social Prescribing Lead which will ultimately help patients live fitter, healthier lives and combat anxiety, loneliness and depression.

Your local PCN has the flexibility to offer a wide range of services to suite your own population's health needs and the examples given above are just a few of the available options. The practice will communicate any new services or options to you all in due course.

Data Sharing Implications

PCN networks will be very closely integrated with your local practices. As such you may be seen by clinicians from anywhere in your local PCN. In effect they are working together as part of the overall service offered by your practice. In order that they can give you the best possible care they will have access to your health data.

If you would prefer not to take advantage of the services offered by the wider PCN you need to contact your practice so that they can set your record to be opted out of sharing.

You should be aware that your care may be adversely affected and some of the services may not be available to you if you do opt out of sharing.