**PRACTICE LETTERHEAD**

**Letter to Patients - "Working together to protect us all"**

Dear xxxxx,

With the present high risk of coronavirus infection the NHS is making many changes to how we deliver care. As you practice we want to reassure you that we will do all that we can to keep you safe and well, and we will continue to provide medical care to everyone but we need to prioritise those who need our care most. To make sure that we can carry on doing that and in order to protect the most vulnerable we need to ask for your help.

The whole system is under new and rising pressure. Before asking for an appointment there are other resources you could use <https://www.nhs.uk/> for many conditions. To allow us to focus our efforts on providing care we must ask that you do not request sick notes for periods of self isolation. These should be available online using NHS 111. We must also ask you not to come to the surgery to collect prescriptions or try to book walk in appointments. To keep everyone safe we need you to telephone us first if you wish to be seen. Please be prepared to tell our care navigators the reason for your call so we can direct it to the best person in our team to address your request as quickly as we can.

Please direct any queries relating to coronavirus or COVID-19 to NHS111 online initially as per the guidance rather than to the practice. <https://111.nhs.uk/>. They will be able to advise you how you can safely manage the illness at home and self isolate. They can also arrange urgent care or transport to hospital if symptoms are very severe. If needed they can redirect you to call us to advise if they are uncertain what treatment you may need to support the illness, particularly if you also have other conditions. This service is set up to manage suspected coronavirus infection as quickly and safely as possible.

By bringing only patients who are not showing symptoms of coronavirus in to the practice we are trying to keep our surgery safe and clean for patients who have any other significant medical needs and this will also help to ensure that our team don't become ill and will be there for you when and if you need us.

The way we consult with you will be different and that may feel a bit strange, but we are learning there is much that we can do differently that will keep everybody safer for longer. So, please don't be offended that we are asking to have a conversation with you first to make sure that you are not showing signs of the virus. In following current NHS England guidance we will not take "walk in " appointments while the risk of coronavirus infection remains, so please always call the practice first. We may try to consult with you online or by video link if possible and can only see you in the surgery if absolutely necessary at the moment.

In the coming weeks if the government contacts you because you are in a high risk group for COVID-19 we would strongly advise you to follow their advice whether that is self isolation or social distancing. The importance of this cannot and should not be underestimated in order to protect those most at risk. This sacrifice on your part will help keep us all safe. It will not be easy but it is necessary. The guidance is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response> .

Yours sincerely