



## Keeping you up to date with Bishop's Castle Patients Group (BCPG)

### BCPG

#### *Foreword from the chair*

BCPG has decided to focus this newsletter on the resolution of the problems at the surgery, the plans for the surgery into the future and the context of major NHS changes over the next few years. We have asked Karen Bavastock to look at working together to mend the divide in the community; Dr Ken Deacon, Medical Director of NHS England in Shropshire and Staffordshire (the body responsible for awarding GP contracts) to address questions about the partners' resolution and the practice now; Dr Caron Morton, Accountable Officer for Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group (the body responsible for local healthcare, other than GP Practices) to look at forthcoming choices to be made; and Dr Adrian Penney to share his vision for the Medical Practice.

BCPG has maintained a strict policy of impartiality over the partnership, and this continues. However, we would like to thank Dr Fairbanks, Dr Lambert and Nurse Eleri Fairbanks for their hard work and commitment and wish them well for the future. We also welcome back Dr Penney.

The issue of the doctors' partnership in Bishop's Castle Medical Practice has split the town for the past three years. We would like to hope that with the partners having reached a mutually satisfactory agreement between *themselves*, we the patients can between *ourselves* start to mend the rifts caused by the situation at the practice. It is in everyone's interest to have a successful and thriving Medical Practice in Bishop's Castle and whilst the outcome (or its opposite) could not hope to fully satisfy everyone, we believe that the likely alternative of the practice being taken over by a large commercial enterprise would have satisfied no-one.

*Nick Hutchins, chair BCPG*

### Karen Bavastock

#### Mayor of Bishop's Castle

#### *Introduction from the Mayor*

Firstly I would like to pay tribute to the staff who have been working extremely hard at the surgery during the past three years as well as to Drs Fairbanks and Lambert who have been very popular doctors and I know that many patients are very sad that they have departed. I am sure I join in with everyone in wishing them well for their future.

To the future – we need to move forward and work with the Medical Practice to ensure that we have the best quality of treatment which is available to us. There are many changes coming in the following months and years to healthcare provision and we need to make sure that we have the very best of what is available.

Please support your medical practice – there is a wide choice of doctors and nurses available with excellent support from the administrative team in place and I would ask you all to ensure we maintain this invaluable local service.

I know that we are all passionate about this town and its services and it is my sincere hope that we can work together to ensure that we continue to have a quality medical service to be proud of. I am sure I, like many, look forward to hearing of the plans for the practice in the future.

I wish all at Bishop's Castle Medical Practice the best and feel sure that they will do their very best for us all.

*Karen Bavastock, Mayor of Bishop's Castle*

## **Dr Ken Deacon**

Medical Director of NHS England in Shropshire and Staffordshire

### ***An open letter addressing questions about the partners' resolution and the practice now.***

Dear BCPG,

Thank you for inviting me to share the NHS England view of the recent events at Bishop's Castle Medical Practice for your next newsletter.

Dr Fairbanks and Dr Lambert recently announced their retirement from the practice, leaving Dr Penney as the sole partner holding the NHS contract for the practice. After such a protracted period of difficulties in the practice, it is good that a resolution has finally been reached. Clearly some local residents are delighted by the outcome, while others have reservations and questions.

Some of the questions I have been asked are set out below:

#### ***I don't like the outcome, can it be changed?***

No. Dr Penney now holds the contract for the practice. The rules around GP partnerships are straightforward: if a number of partners leave a practice, the contract passes to any remaining partner or partners.

#### ***Have Dr Fairbanks and Dr Lambert been forced out?***

The three partners have reached an agreement, as a result of which two doctors have retired from the practice. They were all parties and signatories to the agreement, and it was not imposed upon them. NHS England do not have all of the specific details of the agreement.

#### ***What is the worst that could have happened?***

There was a real risk that the partners might not reach an agreement. In this case ultimately the partnership would have been dissolved, the NHS contract terminated, and commercial companies would have been invited to bid to provide GP services to Bishop's Castle.

#### ***Do NHS England support the outcome?***

All three partners have signed a legally binding agreement, of their own free will. Therefore NHS England has no grounds to oppose or contest this. We are pleased that this agreement should allow the practice to return to a more 'normal' state, and

concentrate on caring for the residents of Bishop's Castle.

#### ***What about the rumours of doctors not being paid?***

The division of profits within a partnership is a matter for the partners, and is governed by the partnership agreement. Such decisions are an entirely private matter between the partners (and their accountant). NHS England do not have the right to see the practice agreement, bank statements or the accounts. The partnership received their full funding allocation throughout the period of difficulties. Therefore, to our knowledge, none of the doctors has been left unpaid for work they performed at the practice.

#### ***Has funding for BCMP been cut as a result?***

There has been no reduction in funding of the practice as a consequence of these changes.

#### ***Is there any possibility of a second GP practice in Bishops Castle?***

No.

#### ***Will the practice be recruiting new GPs?***

We understand that Dr Penney will be recruiting in due course, but has arranged a number of locum doctors to cover while the recruiting is ongoing.

#### ***Are there any concerns about Dr Penney's fitness to practise?***

The GMC conducted an investigation into Dr Penney's practice. During the investigation (as is often the case) the GMC applied some conditions to Dr Penney's practice. When the investigation was concluded, the GMC decided that there was no need to take any action against Dr Penney, or to apply any conditions to his practice. This means that the GMC have ruled that Dr Penney is fit to practise; and that they believe he is a safe and competent doctor.

Clearly events of the last three years have been difficult for everyone involved, and stressful for doctors, staff and patients alike. We are pleased that a solution has finally been reached, and look forward to BCMP being able to return to normality. I would reiterate that the agreement reached by the three former partners is both final and binding; there is absolutely no possibility of it being challenged or reversed.

Yours sincerely,

*Ken Deacon*

## Dr Caron Morton

Accountable Officer for Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group

### *Health provision in Shropshire and throughout the UK is set to change*

Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is aware that the Bishop's Castle community has faced a lot of uncertainty with regard to its GP services over the last few years. We are pleased that a resolution has now been reached.

We fully support the practice and wish Adrian Penney all the best going forward.

These are times of great change for all of us, not least for our health service. As demand and expectations rise, with people living longer and with an increasing number of long term conditions, resources are ever more stretched. This brings great challenges, however we must try and focus on the opportunities this also presents.

During the autumn the two local CCGs ran a major discussion with the public and clinicians as part of the 'Call to Action' led by NHS England. This Call to Action opened up the largest ever public debate on health care in England, and sought to gather views and experiences which would inform the best ways of moving forward. Locally, the Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) were a driving force in gathering people's experiences and feedback, and we are very grateful for the huge amount of work done by Bishop's Castle Patients Group in engaging your community in this exercise.

There were some clear messages from the Call to Action locally, including an acceptance that some changes are needed to improve health outcomes, experience and safety for patients, and that any changes should be led by clinicians with full involvement of patients and local communities.

The Call to Action launched the Clinical Services Review, which has since been renamed NHS Future Fit.

The Future Fit programme is looking at how we design services so that we can meet the needs of our population and provide excellent healthcare services for the next 20 years. It focuses on our acute and community hospital services.

It is clear that clinicians, and many members of the public who responded to the Call to Action can see the opportunity for:

- Better health outcomes through bringing specialist doctors together, who are able to treat a higher number of cases regularly so as to maintain and grow specialist skills
- Improved patient outcomes which are linked to consultant-led services and to aspire to offer these seven days a week in the future
- A range of services that are 'future fit' and which will offer the highest quality and, in turn, attract and retain the best workforce and allow for the rebuilding of staff morale
- Better joining up between services through better planning and bringing them together
- Improved environments for care
- A better match between need and levels of care through planned moves towards greater care in the community and in the home, enabling greater independence
- A reduced dependence on hospitals as a safety net for inadequate care provision elsewhere and instead hospitals doing what they are really there to do (greater need care and technological care) at the highest standards
- A far more coordinated and integrated service of care across the NHS and across other sectors such as social care and the voluntary sector, with less repetition and putting the patient at the centre of care.

There is a need and the potential to do this in ways which recognise the differing needs and issues facing our most spread out rural populations and our urban populations too.

Adrian Penney has been doing some really good work with the CCG over the last six months – he is involved in the community hospitals work stream of Future Fit and is also involved in the urgent and emergency care network across Shropshire, chaired by myself. All of this work will impact on how our local health service develops in the coming years. We hope that the end result will see a more integrated service, a more innovative service and one that is sustainable for future generations.

We are well aware of how difficult it can be to face change, but hope the residents in Bishop's Castle can now move forward and embrace the opportunities that developments locally and further afield will bring.

## Dr Adrian Penney

Sole partner, Bishop's Castle Medical Practice

### *Looking to the future*

At last Bishop's Castle Medical Practice can move forward positively in the knowledge that the dispute of the last three years is resolved. This has clearly had a damaging effect on the community, affecting doctors, staff and all our patients and wider families. As a partner I can only apologise for the distress and uncertainty of the last few years and hope now to be able to build a positive way forward for everyone.

We have a fantastically dedicated and talented group of staff who have borne the brunt of everybody's anxieties and uncertainties. As a consequence they have on many occasions been subject to unacceptable abuse. In future please remember that if there is a problem, let me know directly and not use the staff as a proxy.

Bishop's Castle Medical Practice is fundamental to the well-being of the wider community and in association with the community hospital can provide not just the basic medical services but, in the future, a more comprehensive health and social care hub. The community hospital was refurbished and redeveloped with new outpatient clinic rooms and outpatient treatment rooms specifically aimed at providing blood transfusions, chemotherapy and osteoporosis treatment; it has the flexibility to offer services which have only previously been offered in secondary or tertiary care. Alongside a large community training room, there are also offices which could be used by community staff, social services, citizen's advice and complementary therapists. These facilities have hardly been used and I hope to be able to drive forward services delivered locally; in the first instance bringing an ultrasound service out of Shrewsbury.

Staff in the surgery are developing extended roles with added responsibilities to support the clinicians. Currently, the two established locums – Dr Patterson and Dr Srikanth – are continuing. In addition three female doctors (Drs Winter, Williams and Morton) have already started doing regular surgeries. We intend in the longer term to have a mixture of associates and partners with broad experience to expand the services available from the surgery. Our advanced nurse practitioner, Isobel Sawyer, has returned and is qualified to diagnose, treat and prescribe. We hope to recruit another advanced nurse

practitioner who will be supported by our practice nurse Caroline Griffin. Sam Bavastock has returned as healthcare assistant with added skills in health education and assessment. Richard Appleby remains as a phlebotomist with added skills. Recruiting GPs to rural practices is a challenge, but we intend to have a team that delivers a wide range of skills backed by experience. Our GPs need vision and enthusiasm to develop traditional family practice in the context of modern health care where so much can be devolved from hospital and delivered in the community.

We hope to bring back community nursing and health visiting to Bishop's Castle and, indeed, the community hospital would be an ideal base for them to work in harmony with the community hospital nursing team. Within the practice, staff had already identified issues with repeat prescribing, telephone access to a clinician, and appointment availability. We have begun to put in measures to simplify and speed up processes to reduce unnecessary tasks, focusing on delivering a top-class service.

We now employ a pharmacy technician to help streamline repeat prescriptions and are applying to have electronic delivery of prescriptions direct to the chemist of your choice. It has at times been difficult for doctors to speak on the phone to patients after a morning surgery in a short space of time. We are considering offering telephone consultations by appointment. It may be possible to confirm test results by text message; we are also looking at the increased use of e-mail.

There is a move towards seven-day working within the NHS and this will include general practice. Whilst it won't mean going back to the good old days in which doctors worked 24/7, it will provide opportunities to work more closely and share skills with neighbouring practices, perhaps focused around the community hospital. This will give you, the patients, far more choice, which we recognise is significantly restricted in a rural community.

After three years of uncertainty there are bridges to be built. I know there is good will and a desire to make things work here at the practice. This will need to be a team effort between the community and the practice. I look forward to working with the community to provide an excellent and sustainable centre for health for Bishop's Castle, the surrounding villages and local communities.

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### Contact details

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