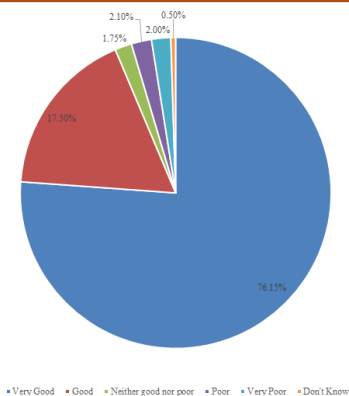


# WEALDEN RIDGE MEDICAL PARTNERSHIP PPG

June 2026

## FRIENDS AND FAMILY RESULTS FOR MAY 2026



## MESSAGE FROM JACKIE, THE PPG CHAIR

Supporting our Medical Partnership through our active involvement in the Patient Participation Group, continues to feel positive and rewarding. Being able to review the continued hard work of the partnership and all the staff, enables us to ensure that everyone is valued and feels part of an active and committed team.

As previously highlighted, if you have any queries about the PPG, please let the Practice Manager know and we will be happy to give you information about this group of patients. We continue to meet quarterly and produce newsletters about different areas of interest. Please feel free to look on the Partnership website for previous meeting's minutes and newsletters.

At this month's meeting, we talked about the NHS Healthwatch for East Sussex and their GP Practice scheme. I will be meeting with their communications and marketing manager about this very soon. Information about the scheme will be in the next quarterly newsletter.

Again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the PPG members for their involvement in making our group supportive and helpful.

*Jackie Wood, PPG Chair*

*"No one can do everything, but everyone can do something to make our community healthier."*

## SUMMER ADVICE

Some tips to stay as healthy as possible this summer.

### 1. Beat the Heat

- **Avoid peak sun:** Keep out of the direct sun between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm.
- **Cool your home:** Close blinds and curtains facing the sun during the day, and open windows in the evening when it's cooler.
- **Vulnerable groups:** Look out for children, the elderly, and those with underlying health conditions.
- **Know the symptoms:** Learn the signs of heat exhaustion and heatstroke on the [NHS Heatwave Advice](#) page.



## 2. Hydrate & Eat Safely

- **Drink fluids:** Sip water regularly and limit excess alcohol and caffeine, which can lead to dehydration.
- **Eat water-rich foods:** Incorporate fresh fruits and salads (like cucumbers, melon, and strawberries) into your diet.
- **BBQ food safety:** Make sure meat is cooked thoroughly and keep raw and cooked foods strictly separate to prevent food poisoning.

## 3. Sun & Skin Protection

- **Sunscreen:** Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, and reapply every two hours (or after swimming/sweating).
- **Cover up:** Wear light, loose-fitting cotton clothing, a wide-brimmed hat, and UV-rated sunglasses.

## 4. Medications & Minor Ailments

- **Check medicines:** Some medications (e.g., for blood pressure or mental health) can affect how your body responds to the heat. Ask a pharmacist if unsure.
- **Use local pharmacies:** Community pharmacies can provide over-the-counter advice and treatments for hay fever, bites, and stings without needing a GP appointment.

When hot weather arrives, remember that open water remains dangerously cold, drastically increasing the risk of cold water shock. Always swim in lifeguarded areas, supervise children constantly, and avoid alcohol or inflatables. If you get into trouble, remember to **Float to Live:** tilt your head back, relax, and float.

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## NEWS FROM THE PRACTICE

Welcome to the June edition of the Newsletter from the Patient Participation Group.

Myself and the practice partners would like to extend our thanks to our Patient Participation Group for their continued support, commitment, and valuable contributions to our practice.

Your willingness to share ideas, provide feedback, and represent the views of our patients plays an important role in helping us improve the services we provide. The time and effort you give voluntarily is greatly appreciated by both the practice team and the wider patient community.

We look forward to continuing to work together in the future.

**Julie Acey**  
Practice Manager

### Long Term Condition Reviews

Attending your appointment for a review of a long-term condition is essential to prevent complications, review any medication and update your personal care plan.

The practice will invite you for this review on or around your birthday month, we ask that you make every effort to attend.

### NHS Health Checks

The NHS Health Check is a free check-up for adults aged 40-74, they are designed to spot early signs of a stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, dementia or type 2 diabetes.

We will be inviting eligible patients in to assess their personal risk factors and provide advice on how to lower them.

### National Flu Immunisation Programme

Free NHS flu vaccine eligibility for 2026/27 is as follows:

From 1 September 2026:

- pregnant women
- all children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2026



From 1 October 2026:

- those aged 65 years and over · those aged 18 years to under 65 years in clinical risk groups (as defined by the Green Book, Influenza Chapter)
- those in long-stay residential care homes
- carers in receipt of carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person
- close contacts of immunocompromised individuals

Once our clinics are agreed and set up, around mid August, we will commence inviting patients to book for their appointment.

### **Protected Learning Time**

**Please note the practice will be closed for staff training on Thursday 9th July from 12.30pm.**

**Should patients require urgent medical advice that cannot wait until we reopen, we ask that you contact 01323 402710. NHS Sussex request that patients do not contact 111 during this time but instead use the telephone number provided.**

**For any non-urgent assistance with medication or minor illness, please contact your local pharmacist.**

**The practice will re-open at 8am on Friday 10th July.**

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## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Did you know? Regular physical activity can lower your risk of depression by up to 30%, acting as a powerful natural mood booster.

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## **AI TRIAGE PILOT: IMPACT REVIEW**

### **AI triage pilot: Impact review**

Since December 2025, our practice has been piloting an exciting new service for same-day GP medical assessments using Visiba Care and the NHS App. Available Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm, this service is designed to make requesting an urgent appointment quicker and easier for everyone.

NHS England recently undertook an assessment of the project, and Dr Rajan shared the key findings regarding appointment data and patient feedback at our latest Patient Participation Group meeting.

### **Background & Goals**

The aim of this review was to understand how AI triage through the NHS App impacts daily appointment demand and phone call volumes, while gathering vital feedback from both patients and staff.

**How it works:** Every single request is reviewed by a doctor. The AI simply helps by making intelligent suggestions, ensuring that clinical decisions always remain in human hands.

### **The Results: What the Data Shows**

The assessment highlighted several incredibly positive shifts in how the practice operates:

- **Better Appointment Availability:** Triage doesn't mean fewer appointments — it means we use the demand more intelligently. Request volumes are high (Mondays especially), and by sorting every request according to clinical need, we can identify who genuinely needs to be seen the same day and safely offer others a suitable slot later in the week. Patients placed in a non-urgent slot often benefit from more proactive, planned care, as the clinician has time to address the issue properly rather than firefighting on the day.
- **Fairer Access:** Same-day slots are now given to patients with the *most* urgent medical needs, rather than simply going to whoever manages to get through on the phones first.

- **Clearer Phone Lines:** With more patients booking digitally, time spent on hold to speak to a receptionist has reduced, freeing up the lines for those who need them most.
- **GP Workload:** Our GPs reported that the AI triage suggestions were highly accurate. While a doctor's expertise is always required to see the full clinical picture, the system successfully reduced overall administrative workload.
- **Out-of-Hours Demand:** The practice noticed a higher-than-expected demand from patients trying to access the system outside of standard hours. This reflects a strong appetite for digital flexibility, and this has been fed back to NHS England.

### Room for Growth

Patient experience feedback was mixed but incredibly valuable. It highlighted a few key areas where we need to improve our communication—particularly in reassuring patients about the options available if they cannot use the app or go online.

### Conclusion

Overall, the pilot has proven to be **safe, effective, and efficient** at reducing pressure on GPs. Most importantly, it ensures that urgent medical care is directed to those who need it most, when they need it, giving all patients reassurance that their request is being handled appropriately.

### 💡 Important Note: Access for Everyone

We want to reassure all our patients that digital tools are an *addition* to our services, not a replacement.

- **No App? No problem.** If you are unable to use the NHS App, you can still request appointments via the **Practice website** or by calling our **reception team** exactly as before.
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- **Help from family or friends:** If you have a family member or carer who uses the NHS App, the system allows them to securely request an appointment on your behalf.

## DON'T MISS YOUR APPOINTMENT

**DO YOU FEEL FRUSTRATION WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING AN APPOINTMENT?**

**841** appointments were missed in the period March 2026 to May 2026

These are broken down as follows:

**310 GP Appointments.**

**531 Nursing & HCA appointments.**

**This loss equates to around £15,000 per quarter / £60,000 per year**

**Please help us to help you – if you no longer need your appointment, please let us know.**

## INTERESTING INFORMATION

**Care Without Carbon:** The 90 minute focus group Zoom session (on Friday 19 June 2026) for Sussex PPGs run by Sonia Mangan of the NHS Climate Panel made the following points:

1. **Travel and access** were the strongest concerns, especially for people in rural Sussex who may have to travel long distances for appointments e.g. a 26 mile round car trip is the norm. Volunteer hospital car services (such as the one run by Age Concern) help defray this.

2. **Healthcare closer to home** was seen as central to sustainability, because it would reduce both patient burden and carbon emissions.
3. **Participants supported practical changes**, such as grouping appointments together, offering community clinics, outreach services and using digital consultations where appropriate.
4. **Digital access** was welcomed but needs to be inclusive and with clear instruction, particularly for older people, rural communities and those with lower digital confidence.
5. **Waste reduction** needed improvement, especially around NHS equipment, sharps containers, medicines and unclear return or recycling routes.
6. Participants wanted **NHS buildings to be greener**, with renewable energy, green roofs, gardens and access to nature built into new healthcare developments (such as the Sussex Cancer Centre, though this is apparently not considering a 'green' approach).
7. Prevention was recognised as a sustainability issue, because **preventing illness** could improve health, reduce demand on NHS services and lower environmental impact.
8. **Sustainability** could be enhanced by PPGs who could help practices understand patient views if given practical examples, evidence and clear links to patient experience.

The meeting had a PowerPoint presentation by Jacqueline Gordon on the impact of climate change on health and the NHS which revealed that:

- the **NHS accounts for 5% of the UK carbon footprint**, compared with 3.5% for UK flights and 2% for UK shipping
- There are allegedly **9.5 billion miles travelled by NHS users** each year, and NHS teams travel 155 million miles a year on non-emergency business. One in 20 vehicles on the road relate in some form to the NHS. Some communities run a volunteer hospital car service (at cost).
- The biggest cause of paediatric surgery and thus paediatric bed occupancy is..... **tooth decay!**
- Dispensing with **plastic gloves** for all but operating might save a hospital up to £100K a year. This can be done without risking infection and avoids staff allergies to glove material.
- **Solar panel** electricity can save a hospital several million pounds a year
- Most important of all, each Trust is supposed to have a '**Sustainability**' (Green) plan and be able to demonstrate **resilience**. PPG members can reasonably ask how this is done locally.

Summary by Tim Williams