



## NEWSLETTER

January 2026

### Welcome to our January Newsletter

It has been another busy time for the PPG and our volunteers. We have been working with the Practice to support the flu vaccination clinics, promoting the NHS App and raising awareness of the PPG amongst patients we do not usually meet. We also took part in The Community Organisations Day at the MICA Centre in October: thank you to everyone who dropped by to say hello. As a result of our activities, we have increased our membership and look forward to welcoming new members who have joined.

### Practice News

It has been a very busy time for the practice over the last couple of months with increased demand due to flu season and other winter illnesses and staff sickness levels. Despite these pressures it has been helpful that so many patients are now using the NHS App for things like repeat prescription requests.

Flu vaccines – the practice continues to provide flu vaccination for eligible patients in the 18 - 50 year age range – contact the practice for information or to book an appointment.

The next practice shut-down will be on Tuesday 24th February for a training afternoon. The practice will close at 12 o'clock for the afternoon. Anyone needing urgent advice during the afternoon should call 111 for assistance.

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### You and your General Practice

New guidance clarifies what patients and practices can expect from each other. Including information about opening hours, how a practice may be contacted and what to do when the practice is closed.

<https://westmerseasurgery.co.uk/you-and-your-general-practice-yygp>

**Please remember to update the practice with your current mobile phone number and email address if you have not already done so.**

## Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board changes

In our last newsletter we explained about the clustering arrangements our Integrated Care Board are entering into from April 2026 with Norfolk and Waveney. The longer term plan is that the North East Essex element will become part of an Essex wide ICB aligned with the new Local Authority Boundaries currently under discussion.

There is a longer timescale for the local authority reorganization, hence this staggered approach. We will keep you updated as we hear more.

Go to <https://www.nhsconfed.org/publications/icb-clusters-and-mergers> for more information.

(Source : Suffolk and North East Essex ICB and the NHS Confederation)

## New Hospital Patient Record System

East Suffolk and North East Essex NHS Foundation Trust have moved to a new single patient health record system called EpicEPR, this will not replace systems used in Primary Care.

EpicEPR will replace three other hospital systems and will enable patients access their hospital health records through an app or website called MyChart.

Work is under way to integrate this with the NHS App, which is the planned single gateway into the NHS as announced in the NHS 10 year plan. The latest update from NHS Digital has confirmed this work is underway.

## Healthy Living for people with Type 2 Diabetes

GP practices that provide care to people living with Type 2 diabetes can start referring into *Healthy Living* – a free, online NHS structured education programme.

*Healthy Living* is a web-based, self-led platform that helps people feel confident in managing their type 2 diabetes. It helps them to make and maintain healthy lifestyle choices to improve their health and wellbeing.

Go to <https://healthyliving.nhs.uk/> for more information.

## Jess's Rule

The Department for Health and Social Care and NHS England recently announced the implantation of Jess's Rule: *Jess's Rule: Three strikes and we rethink.*

Under Jess's Rule, GP teams are encouraged to critically re-evaluate a diagnosis if a patient presents three times with the same concerns and their condition remains unexpectedly unresolved, their symptoms are escalating and/or they have no substantiated diagnosis.

(Source NHS England:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/jesss-rule-three-strikes-and-we-rethink/> )

## Lifestyle Medicine

For those of you who missed the excellent presentation on Lifestyle Medicine from one of our Mersea GPs at the September 2025 PPG meeting. The talk gave much detail about the six pillars, namely Nutrition; Physical Activity; Sleep; Mental wellbeing; Reducing risky behaviours; and Maintaining Social connection.

You can download the PPG minutes from <https://westmerseasurgery.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/PPG-Minutes-September-2025.pdf>

## Letter from Practice to Patients

*The Practice has published the following letter to all Patients...*

Dear Patients,

We would like to inform you that after 12 and a half years at Mersea Surgery Dr Patel has made the decision to step away from GP Partnership.

She will be leaving the practice on Tuesday 31st March 2026.

Dr Patel has been a valued member of our team we are incredibly grateful for the care, commitment and relationships Dr Patel has provided to our patients and the wider practice community during her time here.

We wish Dr Patel every success for the future

Please be advised that we have taken steps to ensure your care continues smoothly as Dr Heng Fah Lee who currently works on a Friday will take over Dr Patel's Patients. Patients will continue to be able to access any surgery clinician depending on availability on the day.

We appreciate your trust and understanding during this transition.

## Blood Pressure Monitor Library Loan Scheme

All Essex Libraries are taking part in this free loan scheme. It is estimated that one in four people have high blood pressure and many are not aware of it. Left untreated high blood pressure can cause strokes, heart attacks and other health problems. Just pop into your library and ask about the free loan scheme.

## NHS APP

**The Integrated Care Board have updated their pages on the NHS to support patients.**

There is also guidance for those who use a desktop device to access the internet (i.e. not a mobile phone or tablet) and therefore cannot use the NHS App, you can still take control of your healthcare by logging in to your NHS account. Getting started with the NHS App and NHS account at NHS Suffolk and North East Essex ICB –

go online to <https://suffolkandnortheastessex.icb.nhs.uk/your-health-and-services/primary-care-gps/your-health-and-services/accesssubg-services-digitally/getting-started-with-the-nhs-app/>

A range of digital support is available online and in person from the Digital Access Support Team (DAST) from the Colchester Council. In addition to advice about online banking and online shopping etc., they can also help with the NHS App. They offer an NHS App support drop-in service at the Kingsland Road Mersea GP Surgery on the last Friday of the month from 2pm to 4pm. Ask at reception for more information.

**PPG Support Sessions for the NHS App :** a new series of support sessions will be available for patients of the Mersea Practice which we hope to start in February. We are currently organising training for PPG volunteers who may wish to be involved in supporting other patients. We are also very aware that some patients have reservations about using the NHS App, or may not have access to the technology needed. However, for those who do want to learn to use the NHS App for things like ordering repeat medication, it will free up administrative time at the surgery for the reception team to help patients who are unable to use the NHS App.

**NHS App Family Access :** A pilot with 68 GP practices is transforming proxy access (also known as linked profiles) by enabling online applications through the NHS App. At present this is only available where patients are registered at the same practice, but it is understood there are plans to develop this further so that eventually patients will be able to manage the healthcare of someone registered at a different practice to their own.

Parents, carers and trusted individuals can now manage appointments, prescriptions and health records for someone else more easily. More than 12,000 applications have been processed, with GP practices reporting improved efficiency and better care coordination for patients. Automated identity verification through national NHS systems replaces paper forms and manual checks, saving admin time and reducing practice visits. Following the pilot's success this service will begin expanding nationally during 2026. (source : NHSE)

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**The PPG is open to patients (and their carers) who are registered with the Mersea Island Medical Practice. There is more information on the Practice Website at [www.westmerseasurgery.co.uk](http://www.westmerseasurgery.co.uk) or you can contact Maureen at [Mersea PPG@hotmail.com](mailto:MerseaPPG@hotmail.com) to find out more. Not all members can or want to attend meetings, but will receive copies of the regular newsletter and minutes of meetings and other health related information.**

### Next PPG Meeting

Tuesday 10th March 2026 :  
5.30pm at the Community Support Hall. Melrose Road