




Benfleet PCN

Primary Care Network

January 2025 Newsletter

Benfleet  Primary Care Network is a collaboration of seven GP practices serving approximately 48,000 patients, from the Benfleet, Hadleigh and Thundersley areas in Essex.

Our PCN also includes:

Pharmacies, Community health services, Mental health services, Adult social care, Voluntary organisations, and our surgeries' Patient Participation Groups.

Introduction

Welcome to our first edition of our 2025 Benfleet PCN patient group newsletter. We hope you all enjoyed a few days rest during Christmas and New Year.

In this edition, our focus is on **new beginnings** and advising you of a few **available primary care support** areas. Even if you don't need them, please share this newsletter and/or join the "Benfleet Primary Care Network" Facebook community group, to stay updated, see <https://www.facebook.com/share/18Bmu3g1Ln/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

Topics covered this month

- Improve your local surgery patient experience
- 2024 Achievements
- New Year, New Start
- Patients Know Best (PKB) Application
- Money worries?
- Accessible Information Standard (AIS)

Finally, If you would like to recommend future articles, or comment on any of the current ones, please email us on benfleetpcn@nhs.net

Thank you

Rachel and Joanna - Editors.

Become a local PPG Member

We'd like more Patient Participation Group (PPG) members in our Benfleet surgeries, so if you know of anyone who would also be interested, please encourage them to email us to join. We have all been to our surgery as a patient, carer, parent or support a friend. Each experience matters and **PPG** members can make a difference either in person or online contact. Just email BenfleetPCN@nhs.net with your name and surgery name and we will contact you direct.

With staff and patients pulling together, we can create **health care that works for us all.**



2024 Achievements

These are just some of our Benfleet PCN PPG **achievements** in 2024:

- PCN PPG representatives from 6 of our 7 Benfleet surgeries in place, 1 pending.
- Exhibited at two community fayres and one community hub event. These resulted in:
 - Patient blood pressure monitoring offered on site.
 - Registered 95 patients interested in joining their surgery PPG or receiving regular PCN PPG newsletter.
 - Raised awareness of the PCN and its role in our local community healthcare environment.
- The Benfleet PCN PPG newsletter developed and published across many local medias including email.
- 7 community guest speakers presented at individual PCN PPGs.
- Regular contact with Canvey Island PCN PPG established.

With the new year now underway, the PCN PPG has defined their 2025 plan following our success in a very busy 2024. Keep an eye out for us at **local community events**, visit our stand and give us feedback about your local surgery experiences.

New Year, New Start - here we go!

Isn't it always the same in the New Year, pushing yourself to try and lose weight, exercise more, give up everything that you enjoy whilst watching all the holiday adverts! We all know the health benefits of 'less is more' but more importantly, we also know how hard it is, so no lectures from us, just where to go for NHS support when tackling your goals.



Weight Loss – download the [NHS Weight Loss App](#) or visit the [NHS website](#) for [advice and tools to help get you started](#) or if you prefer the human approach, book an appointment with your surgery.

Quitting Smoking – the [NHS local stop smoking services](#) are free, friendly and can massively boost your chances of quitting for good. You can also call the free Smokefree National Helpline on 0300 123 1044 or for those app lovers among us...the new 2025 **NHS Quit Smoking app** could help you quit smoking and start breathing more easily. **Once you reach 28 days smoke-free, you're much more likely to quit for good!**



Get active - It's the perfect time to get active. No matter how much you do, physical activity is good for your body and mind. Adults should aim to be active every day. Some is good – more is better still.

We know that not everyone has access to a computer or smart phone with apps, so if you are interested in any of the above, telephone CAVS (Castlepoint Association of Voluntary Services) on 01268 214000 for more information.

Your health in your hands

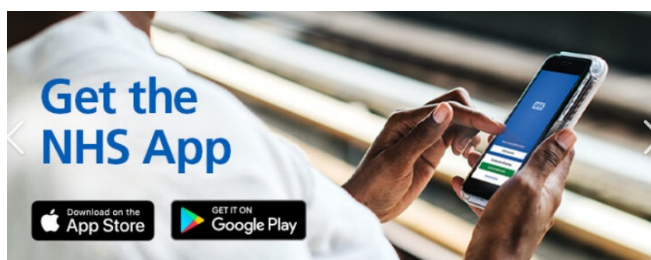
Patients Know Best (Essex)

is a patient record system on which you can currently access your hospital patient records **in one place** enabling a

direct communication

system between healthcare providers and yourself. Once it is more established, then **PKB** may be used by GPs and Community Services.

PKB can be accessed by a web portal and via the NHS App. Patients who do not sign up to receive communication via NHS App or PKB portal will still receive communication by paper.



There is a gradual roll out of features, once signed up you can:

- access future hospital appointments and be able to cancel and rebook them.
- access Hospital radiology results 35 days after the test is carried out. The 35 days allowing the clinician time to review and discuss with the patient, if necessary.
- send/receive messages to/from Health care providers enabling both clinician and patient to monitor/manage their health. e.g. patient blood pressure readings.

Pathology results due to go live on PKB Essex early 2025.

<https://patientsknowbest.com/faq/>

Money worries?



Would you welcome some advice and support?

In the current climate, money worries exist for many of us. With so much information, it is hard to know where to start to get help. We recently found out that you can get FREE unbiased information about money, debts, budgets and planning for the future from [Money Helper](https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/), which brings together advice from many respected organisations.

It is a really helpful site and lots of down to earth sensible guidance about managing your own budget. <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/> or call 0800 138 7777

Foodbanks

No one wants to be in a situation where they need a foodbank, but we live in an expensive country and with over 600,000 food parcels distributed in 2023, the 2024 volume is expected to have been higher. If you don't have enough food and cannot afford to buy food, you may be able to seek support from the Trussell Trust, a national foodbank organisation. There are also independent foodbanks in Benfleet, so for more information, check your local libraries, Castle Point Council or call CAVS (Castle Point Association of Voluntary Services) on 01268 214 000.

<https://www.trussell.org.uk/>

<https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/food-banks-in-castle-point/>

Are you eligible to claim Attendance Allowance?

Those who are 66 or older and need help with personal care due to a medical condition may be eligible for Attendance Allowance. You do not have to have someone caring for you in order to claim. You could get extra Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction if you get Attendance Allowance, but you cannot claim Attendance Allowance if you are under the age of 66 or already claiming PIP, DLA or ADP.

You could get £72.65 or £108.55 (at the time of publishing) a week to help with personal support, if both of the following apply:

- You have a physical disability, a mental disability, or a health condition
- You are State Pension age or older

<https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance>

The Accessible Information Standard (AIS)

What on earth is AIS?

At our November PPG we had a guest speaker to tell us exactly what AIS means. The speaker is totally blind and explained how difficult, frustrating and isolating it can be when medical premises have not made adjustments to ensure the practise environment is fit for purpose for those patients who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss. The AIS is the NHS England **official guidelines** which should be adhered to in every NHS England environment. Unfortunately, her experience is often a negative one where these have not been implemented.

What an informative session it was and made us all question ourselves about how we can all be **more adaptive** in our approach, to ensure **equality for all**. The question we will all be asking at our next Surgery PPG's is "Do you have someone who is responsible for AIS within the practice?".

If you have had any type of experience in your local surgery in this regard, please email us on BenfleetPCN@nhs.net so we can raise this directly at our next surgery PPG meetings.



How to contact us

If you have any queries or further feedback, please contact us by email to benfleetpcn@nhs.net or visit our Facebook page, Benfleet Primary Care Network for all up-to-date information and support. see <https://www.facebook.com/share/18Bmu3g1Ln/?mibextid=wwXlfr>