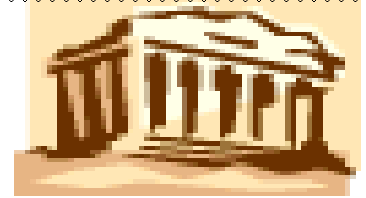




INVESTORS IN PEOPLE



THE VILLA MEDICAL CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



Spring 2026

Welcome to our spring newsletter! As we enjoy the lighter mornings and some sunshine, we want to keep you up to date with the latest news from the surgery. Inside, you'll find updates on our services, important reminders, and information about upcoming seasonal campaigns. As always, we're here to support your health and wellbeing—so whether you're planning a holiday or staying local, we hope you have a safe and healthy spring!

Included in this newsletter is information on:

- BLINX new online system replacing PATCHS
- Protected Learning Time (PLT)
- Spring booster COVID vaccinations
- PCN Frailty Service
- NHS App
- Medicines waste
- Medicines shortages
- Sexual safety charter
- 5 Rights
- Travel Vaccinations
- Childhood immunisations
- Meningitis outbreak
- Cervical Smears
- Community Information

BLINX

Introducing Our New Digital Front Door – BLINX

We're pleased to let you know that we have moved from PATCHS to **BLINX (Paco)** as our new digital front door service on our website.

BLINX makes it easier and more convenient for you to access support from the practice. Through the new system, you can:

- Submit requests for medical help
- Find a local pharmacy who can treat minor ailments
- Find services you can refer yourself to
- Update your contact details

All you need to get started is your NHS number and date of birth – no need for any log in details! Your NHS number can be accessed via the NHS website, hospital letters or the NHS app.

This is the fastest way to access medical care at the surgery. Your request goes directly to our triage team, who will direct you to the right care.

We also welcome your feedback — if there is anything you would like to access online, please let us know. Your input will help us improve the service for everyone.

Further details on how to access BLINX are available on our website. We look forward to supporting you through this improved digital service.

Update your email address

We will soon be moving away from SMS (text message) communications and will begin contacting patients via email where possible.

This change will allow us to share more detailed information with you and improve how we communicate important updates about your care and practice news.

Please ensure we have your **up-to-date contact details** on record. If your details have changed, please update them via BLINX as soon as possible so you don't miss important information.

Protected Learning Time (Practice closures)

The Practice will be closed for training at the following times. Please contact NHS 111 if you require medical assistance during this time.

- Tuesday 14th April 2026 (1pm – 6:30pm)
- Wednesday 13th May 2026 (1pm – 6:30pm)
- Thursday 18th June 2026 (1pm – 6:30pm)

Spring COVID Boosters

We will be offering the spring covid booster vaccinations from 13th April 2026. Please contact us to book in now!

Eligible patients include:

- adults aged 75 years and over
- residents in a care home for older adults
- individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed

Ageing Well / Frailty Service



We're pleased to share that a new Frailty Service has been set up in partnership between our Primary Care Network (PCN) and the Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust.

This service is designed to support patients living with frailty to access the right help at the right time, with the aim of helping people remain safe, well, and independent in their own homes for as long as possible.

The team works closely with GP practices and community services to provide coordinated support tailored to individual needs.

Patients can be referred into the service by healthcare professionals, including hospital teams when patients are being discharged from hospital. This helps ensure the right support is in place when returning home.

NHS App

Using the NHS App is the best way to manage your healthcare efficiently and securely. It allows you to book appointments, order repeat prescriptions, access your medical records, and receive important health updates all in one place.



The app saves time, reduces the need for waiting in phone call queues or visiting reception, and gives you more control over your health, anytime and anywhere. If you experience problems when registering with the NHS App, or do not have photo ID, please let us know.

Please do not contact the GP surgery by telephone to order repeat prescriptions. To help us process requests efficiently and reduce phone line congestion, please use the NHS app or designated prescription ordering services. If you need assistance, feel free to ask at reception or via email. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Help Reduce Medication Waste

Only order the medicines that you need

- Unless arranged with us directly, we do not permit pharmacies to order on your behalf, only you know what you need
- Please let us know if you've stopped taking any of your medicines
- Check what medicines you still have at home before re-ordering
- Discuss your medication with your GP or Pharmacist on a regular basis
- Think carefully before ticking all the boxes on your repeat prescription forms and only tick those you really need
- If you don't need the medicine, please don't order it! If you need the medicine in the future, you can still request it
- If you need to go into hospital, please remember to take all your medicines with you in a clearly marked bag
- Please also remember that your medicines are prescribed only for you; it's not safe to share them with anyone else

Remember that unused medicines cannot be recycled

- Even if you never open them, once medicines have left the Pharmacy, they cannot be recycled or used by anyone else.
- Please bring your unused medicines to the Pharmacy for safe disposal.
- NEVER dispose of your unused or unwanted medicines down the toilet

Unused medicines are a safety risk

- Return out of date medicines to your pharmacy or dispensary for safe disposal
- If your medicines change - return your old medicines to the pharmacy for safe disposal to avoid mixing them up with your new medicines
- Don't stockpile medication - it is a safety risk for children and others who might take them
- Store medicines in an appropriate place out of reach of children

Medicines Shortages

Due to a national shortage, **Co-codamol 30/500mg** and **Zapain 30/500mg** may not be available at all pharmacies. These tablets contain 30mg of codeine and 500mg of paracetamol and are only available on prescription.

The shortage is expected to last until June 2026. This is due to supply problems affecting the manufacturer.

Please continue to **order your prescriptions as normal**. These items will be issued separately from your regular prescription, as you may need to try several pharmacies to find out who currently has stock.

We appreciate your patience and understanding during this shortage. If you have any concerns about your medication, please contact the practice for advice.

Sexual Safety Charter

We are proud to announce that our practice has signed up to the **Sexual Safety Charter**. This demonstrates our commitment to creating a safe and respectful environment for all patients and staff.

The Charter commits to a zero-tolerance approach to unwanted, inappropriate and harmful sexual behaviours. It guides our policies and procedures to prevent such incidents and ensure that everyone feels supported and protected when accessing care.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team — your safety and well-being are our priority.

If you would like a chaperone during your appointment, please inform our reception staff at the earliest opportunity, preferably on booking your appointment.

5 Rights

Do you know your patient rights?

Do you, or a family member or someone you care for, have any communication difficulties or needs?

As part of our commitment to providing safe care for patients, all NHS services must follow these 5 steps to help support you:

- 1) Ask if you have any communication needs.
- 2) Record those needs on your health records.
- 3) Ensure that those needs are easily visible on your records.
- 4) Share those needs with other services if you are being referred.
- 5) Make sure those needs are met as part of your care.

This means that you can tell us what your communication needs are – and expect our full support in meeting them.

This includes getting help from staff with things like requesting an interpreter for your medical appointments (BSL or another language), translating a patient letter for you, or being able to request information in a format that meets your needs (such as braille, large print or easy read).

Travel Vaccinations

With the summer holidays fast approaching we are receiving more requests for Travel Vaccinations.

Travel Vaccination Forms are available from reception and must be returned to us **at least 8 weeks before travel**. Our Practice Nursing Team will determine what vaccinations are required depending upon which countries and areas you are visiting.

Alternatively, private travel clinics also offer travel vaccinations.

Not all travel vaccinations are included in the services provided by the NHS such as Malaria tablets and Yellow Fever vaccinations.

We are unable to issue prescriptions for Diazepam or any other sedatives due to fear of flying.

For further information please see our website:

<https://villamedicalcentrewirral.nhs.uk/diazepam-for-a-fear-of-flying/>



Childhood Immunisations

Vaccination is the most important thing we can do to protect ourselves and our children against ill health. They prevent millions of deaths worldwide every year. If people stop having vaccines, it's possible for infectious diseases to quickly spread again.

Childhood vaccinations are usually given at 8 weeks, 12 weeks, 16 weeks, 1 year and 18 months old.

Please contact the surgery to book an appointment with our Practice Nurse if your child is due or has missed any vaccinations.

For more information about immunisations and when to have them, please visit the NHS website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them/>

Meningitis outbreak

There is currently an outbreak of meningococcal disease (MenB) in Kent. Meningococcal disease is a serious but uncommon illness caused by meningococcal bacteria. It can lead to meningitis - inflammation of the lining of the brain - and sepsis. The onset can be sudden, which is why knowing the signs and symptoms, and acting quickly, is so important.

Meningitis has many causes. Transmission of MenB requires close and prolonged contact to spread including living in the same household and intimate contact such as kissing or sharing drinks or vapes. The bacteria are not as contagious as other infections such as measles and COVID-19.

Meningitis B vaccinations are usually given as part of the childhood immunisation programme. They are given at 8 weeks, 12 weeks and 1 year old.

If you are not eligible for a vaccine, you should not be concerned: the risk to the wider public remains low. You should still make sure you are up to date with the MMR and MenACWY vaccines, which help protect against future outbreaks of meningitis.

The MenACWY vaccine is offered in school, usually in Year 9. If you have missed it in school, please contact the surgery.

For further information, please see the UK Health Security Agency website:

<https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2026/03/18/meningitis-b-outbreak-what-you-need-to-know/>

Cervical Smears

Cervical screening is not a test for cancer; it's a test to help prevent cancer.

It is important you attend for your screening when invited. You'll get an invitation through the NHS App, by text or by letter asking you to make an appointment.

Appointments for smear tests are available at:

- **Pre-booked appointments at the surgery with our Practice Nurse.**
- **Pre-booked appointments via Sexual Health Wirral (online booking).**
- **Brighter Birkenhead PCN smear drop-in clinics (see below).**

SMEAR TEST DROP-IN CLINIC

at St Catherine's Surgery, 2nd floor St
Catherine's Health Centre
every Wednesday 2pm-6pm

We can provide advice and support for you to have
your smear test.

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED.

Cervical Screening Saves Lives #DontFearThe Smear



This clinic is provided by Brighter Birkenhead PCN and is for Devaney MC, Hamilton MC, St Catherine's Surgery, Riverside Surgery, The Villa MC and Whetstone MC patients only

Community Information

We are proud to support the Prenton Tenants and Residential Association (PTRA) request for food bank donations. You can help by **leaving non-perishable food donations at our reception in the nominated basket**, every contribution makes a difference to local families in need.

‘Prenton Community Walks’ start from the Community Centre at 1:30pm each Wednesday. Come along for a relaxed walk around the local area, enjoying nature and the many wellbeing benefits it brings. It’s a great opportunity to get some fresh air, connect with others, and boost both physical and mental health. Our staff regularly attend these walks, everyone is welcome!



Our Patient Participation Group (PPG) is helping raise funds for a new defibrillator at the surgery. Defibrillators are life-saving machines which can correct dangerous heart rhythms. **You can help support this cause by browsing the books for sale on the bookshelf in reception.**

Reading regularly can reduce stress, boost your memory, and improve your concentration. It can also inspire creativity, expand your knowledge, and even support your emotional wellbeing. Pick up a book today — your mind will thank you and even small contributions help keep our community safe!

