

## **WINTER ASSESSMENT CENTRE**

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Partnership of Clinical Commissioning Groups has informed us about changes being made to the way GP surgeries operate across north Hampshire to ensure GPs can continue to operate safely during the coming winter months.

During the first wave of COVID-19, a COVID Assessment Centre was set up at the St Andrews site in South Ham. Any patient with potential COVID-19 infection needing assessment was seen at this site, allowing other GP surgeries to continue to see non-COVID patients safely.

This worked well and enabled normal general practice to continue – allowing GPs to continue to support patients with chronic conditions, needing antenatal and postnatal care, or cancer screening and immunisations, among other key services which are essential for the long term health of our population.

Building on this, the CCG has announced that Old Basing Surgery will operate as a Winter Assessment Centre between 2 November 2020 and 31 March 2021. The centre will see patients from across the north Hampshire GP practices who have contacted their own GP practice with symptoms of a winter virus or infection, and who need a face-to-face appointment. They will ensure that appointments are staggered throughout the day and avoid the beginning and end of the school day.

This approach will mean GPs can see patients with illnesses they commonly see in general practice over the winter, plus patients with potential COVID-19 infection, in a way that is safe for all – and also continue to provide other services for everyone else.

Any in-person appointments for any other issue will take place at the patient's normal surgery. All patients wanting to contact their surgery, no matter what their concern, are still being asked to telephone, or use the eConsult system on the practice website, in the first instance. Staff can then assess whether the issue can be dealt with virtually, or whether a face-to-face appointment is needed.