

March/April 2026

TOPSHAM SURGERY NEWSLETTER

Keeping You Informed, Connected & Cared For.





Welcome to Your March/April Update

As we head into spring, this issue includes important updates about what's been happening across the practice and what's coming up over the next few months.

In this edition, we share a snapshot of the work delivered in January alongside updates on our new consulting rooms at Topsham and the continued building works at Glasshouse. You'll also find information about the COVID Spring Booster clinics in April, our Annual Patient Survey, reminders about our GP-led triage system, and guidance on hospital referral requests, as well as news about new members of the team.

We're also pleased to let you know that **the next edition of our newsletter will be sent via the Gov Notify service.** Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

What We Delivered in January

Our team worked hard behind the scenes to keep everything running smoothly - **here's a snapshot of what we handled:**



7,608 appointments. That's more than 346 appointments every working day.



Issued 25,103 medications. That's more than two items every minute during opening hours.



Answered 5,516 online phone calls. That's roughly 251 calls every working day.

Patient Voices

A big thank you to everyone who completed the Friends & Family Test in January. 525 responses were submitted, and we're really pleased to share that **96.8%** of you rated your experience as **'Good'** or **'Very Good'**.

We've seen some fantastic feedback, including comments like:

"Dr Pitchford was very sympathetic and caring during the consultation. She was able to deal with several health matters for me during the consultation."

"Topsham Surgery has always been ready to Provide a Very High Professional Standard of Medical Care & Support to Me & My Family over the past Many Years including the years 2024/25, Thank You for your Wonderful Service in Topsham and beyond."

"I felt listened too and understood. Felt happy with the care planning and follow up arrangements made together."



A Message From Your Practice Manager



Will Moyle, Management Partner

I'd like to thank you for your continued patience and support so far this year. Demand for appointments remains high, and alongside this we've been progressing important building works at both sites. I'm pleased to share that the three new consulting rooms at Topsham are now nearing completion, which will increase our clinical capacity and help improve access to care. Work at Glasshouse is continuing due to unforeseen delays, and we're working closely with contractors to reduce noise and disruption wherever possible.

Behind the scenes, our Medical Administrators continue to manage a significant volume of calls and online requests each day, ensuring patients are directed to the most appropriate clinician. I'd encourage everyone to read the excellent piece from our PPG member in this edition, which gives a helpful insight into the vital role they play. Completing triage forms promptly and clearly also makes a real difference, allowing our GPs to prioritise safely and keep clinics running smoothly.

As always, our team remains committed to providing safe, high-quality care for our community, and we truly appreciate your ongoing understanding and cooperation.

Long COVID, ME/CFS & Fibromyalgia Recovery Group

Do you or someone you know live with Long COVID, ME/CFS or fibromyalgia? Join a free monthly support group at Nancy Potter House in Topsham, held on the first Friday of every month at 11:30am.

Led by retired NHS occupational therapist Clare Berrington, the group offers small-group sessions designed to help participants understand why they may be getting symptoms, and explore a range of clinically proven strategies to aid reduction in symptoms and recovery.



Medical Administrators

By Peter, PPG Member

Throughout my adult life, the Medical Receptionist (MR) has been the point of contact to see my doctor or other medical staff in my local surgery. This is still true today though the role (and name) of the Receptionist has changed. I wanted to discover what this new role is, and visited the Surgery at Topsham, to find out.

I spoke to Beth, who has been a Medical Administrator (MA) for five years. Although this is the modern and more appropriate job description for her and her colleagues' work, they seem comfortable that most people still refer to them as Receptionists.

Much has changed in the role of the MA in the last ten to fifteen years. Before, we all remember the MR sitting at the front desk of the surgery or answering our phone calls, often perceived, usually unfairly, as the gatekeeper and protector to the precious overworked GP. This has all changed. The GPs still work very hard, but the role of the MA is different.

Ideally a new MA will have had previous experience in medical reception work. If not, they receive training on the job with a shadow supervising their work until they are confident.

Every morning, and Monday is the busiest, there will be seven or more MAs sitting in the nerve centre of the surgery at Topsham, fielding up to 200 calls in the first couple of hours. The room is full of screens with a large central screen displaying the status of each MA; how many calls have been answered, how many are waiting, how long each call is taking, what is the average length of call. When I was there, on a Wednesday, by 3:30 pm, this central screen told me that the practice had received 258 calls of which 212 had been dealt with by MAs and 42 referred to another person in the practice, and 4 callers who left the line before it could be answered.

As we arrive at the surgery as patients, little do we know of this hive of activity as we sign into the screen in the reception area (I still call it the reception area!) and sit in the waiting room. The analogy comes to mind of the swan gracefully sailing along the river whilst its legs paddle hard under the water.

I'd like to describe more of the Medical Administrator's role in a further article in the next newsletter.

Call volume insight w/c 23rd February 2026:

Monday: 365 inbound, 300 answered (MA), 54 other, 11 missed, 3min 35s wait

Wednesday: 293 inbound, 230 answered (MA), 59 other, 4 missed, 1min 13s wait



New Consulting Rooms

We're pleased to share photos of the three new consulting rooms that form our Duty Suite at Topsham, which are now completed!

Thank you to everyone for bearing with us during the building works.

Work at Glasshouse will continue throughout the remainder March and is due to complete at the end of the month. We appreciate your understanding while this important work is finished.



Missed Appointments

In January, we saw 128 missed appointments including for vaccination appointments. That's approx 15 hours of clinical time wasted. That's roughly £450 wasted.

128

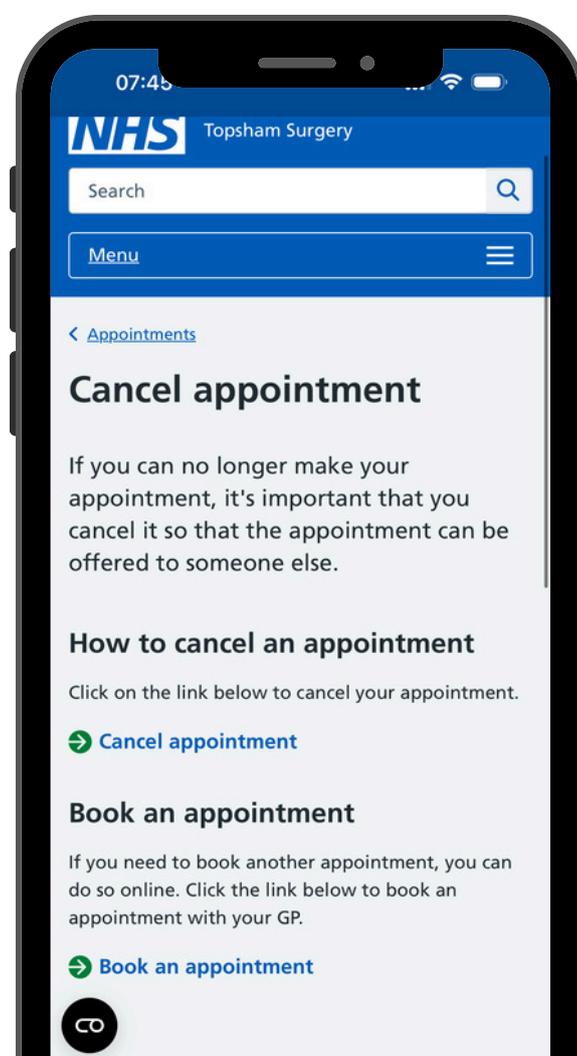
Appointments
missed

15

Hours of
clinical time

If you can't make your appointment, please let us know as soon as possible so we can offer it to someone else.

You can either cancel by calling the surgery on 01392 874646 or through the [cancellation page on our website](#).





COVID Spring Booster Vaccinations

The COVID Spring Booster programme is now approaching, helping to protect those most vulnerable from serious illness. This booster is being offered to:

- Adults aged 75 years and over
- Residents in care homes for older adults
- Individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed

We will be holding dedicated vaccination clinics on Saturdays during April, with further dates to be confirmed. Eligible patients will be contacted directly once we are ready to begin taking bookings. Please wait for your invitation before contacting the practice.

Annual Patient Survey

We're inviting all patients aged 16+ with a valid mobile number to take part in our annual Patient Survey. Your feedback helps us understand what we're doing well and where we can improve.

The survey is based on the National Patient Survey, which is sent by post each year to around 250 randomly selected patients. In addition to this, we carry out our own in-house survey to reach a much larger group - around 9,500 patients (approximately 80% of our practice population).

The survey takes just 5-10 minutes to complete and can be filled in [here](#).

At the end of the survey, you'll have the option to enter a prize draw (via a separate form) for the chance to win one of two £25 Love2Shop vouchers.

All responses are anonymous, and we'll share the results later in the year on our website and social media.

Staff News - New Starters

We're delighted to welcome several new members to the team over the coming months as we continue to strengthen and expand our services for patients.

Camilla will be joining us in April as a Practice Nurse, bringing valuable clinical experience to support our nursing services.

In February, we welcomed Dr Akpoarebe and Dr Maharjan, who have joined us as GP Registrars.

Tommy will also be joining us in March as a Medical Administrator, supporting our reception and back-office functions to help keep the practice running smoothly.

Finally, in April, Joe will be joining our Duty Team as a Paramedic, helping to provide urgent and same-day care for our patients.

If you see them around the practice, please do say hello and join us in giving them a warm welcome.



Expediting Referrals to The Hospital

We are seeing an increase in requests from patients to contact their GP to have their hospital referral expedited, which in most cases is not the correct process.

The agreed policy by NHS Devon with local Hospitals is that patients should only contact their GP to have their referral expedited if there has been a "significant deterioration" in their condition, prior to their first appointment with the hospital.

If your condition has significantly deteriorated since your referral then it may be appropriate for the practice to contact the hospital to attempt to expedite your referral, please note that we have no control over waiting times and that any letter will still be subject to review and triage by the hospital.

If you are awaiting a procedure or diagnostic test or scan at the hospital, and feel that your condition has significantly deteriorated, these requests to be expedited should be reviewed and managed by the hospital clinicians and booking team, not the GP.

More information on waiting times, the referrals process and FAQs relating to referrals can be found [here](#).

**Are you living with hip or knee pain?
You're not alone!**

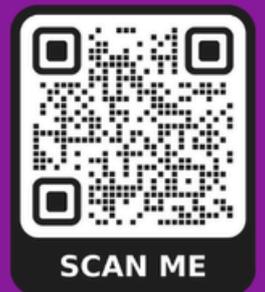
NHS
Devon



Help Overcome Problems Effectively

"HOPE has given me the information to feel more in control of my osteoarthritis."

The Hope Programme is for anyone living with osteoarthritis and hip or knee pain, who maybe waiting for assessment, treatment, or surgery. You can connect with others in similar situation and find new ways to cope better.



Try it now!

COURSE STARTS 25th MARCH 2026

Your Hope, your choice - join a group course with trained facilitators by scanning the QR code or use the link bit.ly/HOPE-MOVE to start right away and learn on your own.

DELIVERED BY HOPE 4 THE COMMUNITY CIC
EMAIL CONTACT@H4C.ORG.UK
CALL 024 7736 0153





Reminder About Our Appointment & Triage System

At Topsham Surgery and Glasshouse Medical Centre, a number of our GPs use the Doctor First appointment system - a GP-led triage model used widely across the country. This system allows us to ensure patients are seen by the right clinician, at the right time, based on their needs.

When you request an appointment, we'll ask for a brief description of your medical concern. You'll then receive a text message with a secure link to complete a short pre-appointment questionnaire.

Please fill this in as soon as possible - it gives our GPs the information they need to review and prioritise patients fairly and safely. If you don't have access to the internet or a smart device, just let our team know when you call and they'll happily go through the questions with you over the phone - or you can pick up a paper copy in reception.

All information is kept confidential and is used only to help us direct you to the most appropriate care, whether that's a GP, Paramedic, Nurse Practitioner, or another member of the clinical team. All members of the team are trained in and are bound by confidentiality.

By completing the questionnaire promptly and with clear information, you help us, help you.

Our Community

Each month, we'll shine a light on local events, initiatives and activities in our community. **In March and April, you can look out for:**

Friday 20th March - Soft Play at Nancy Potter House

Bring the little ones along for an afternoon of Soft Play at Nancy Potter House, running from 11.30am-4.00pm. A great opportunity for children to play, explore and burn off some energy in a safe indoor space. £2.00 per child, with tickets available to purchase from the Reception Desk.

Friday 10th - Sunday 12th April - Topsham Music Festival

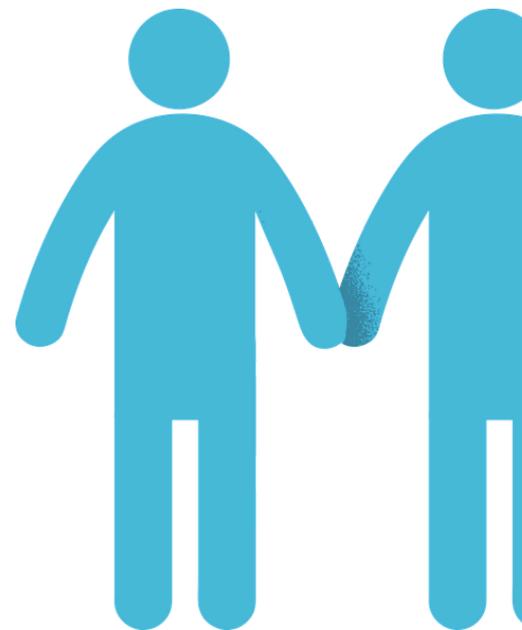
Topsham Music Festival returns for 2026, bringing a weekend of high-quality live music to the heart of the community. Founded in 2023 to support talented young musicians and create performance opportunities following the challenges faced by the arts sector, the Festival continues to bring people together from Topsham and beyond. Six concerts will take place across the weekend. For programme updates and to book tickets, visit <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/topsham-music-festival>.

Tuesday 21st April - Goat Walk Trust Field Sessions

Join the Goat Walk Trust Field for free, family-friendly outdoor sessions running from 10.30am-11.30am. Aimed at under 5s but open to all children with an accompanying adult. Free to attend (donations welcome). To book or let them know you're coming, please email sara.grimshaw62@gmail.com.

Tuesday 28th April - Friendship Group Lunch

Pop along to the Friendship Group at Nancy Potter House from 12.00pm-2.00pm and enjoy a home-cooked two-course lunch in friendly company. It's a lovely opportunity to meet new people, catch up with familiar faces and share a relaxed afternoon together. Free to attend and no membership required. To book your meal and reserve your place, please call 01392 879009.





Thank You for Being A Part of Our Community

Thank you for taking the time to read our March/April newsletter. We hope you found it helpful and informative.

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook too - it's a great way to stay up to date with practice news and health advice:
<https://www.facebook.com/topshamandglasshousesurgery>

We'll be back with more updates in next month's edition - see you then!



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www.topshamsurgery.nhs.uk