

A brief written report on the difficulties patients are experiencing contacting Unity Health

On Monday 19th March 2018 Unity Health opened a new surgery at Kimberlow Hill, near Heslington. The Practice has a branch surgery on Wenlock Terrace in Fulford.

This NHS General Medical Services (GMS) Practice has existed in York for over 60 years, operating from three surgeries and more recently two, following the relocation of the York Campus Health Centre and Hull Road surgery to the purpose built Kimberlow Hill Surgery. Unity Health has 23,000 patients, with approx. 60% being students at the University of York. We are part of the Vale of York CCG registering patients from the Fulford, Heslington, Osbaldwick, Dunnington and Heworth areas of York.

Like the majority of York Practices the telephony system the Practice used was provided by York Hospital. When we relocated to the new surgery we worked with VOY CCG to source a new telephony system. On 19th April 2018 the Practice went live with a system provided by BT at the Kimberlow Hill surgery. We acknowledge that there has been teething problems with the telephones which have resulted in patients experiencing difficulties contacting the surgery. This is not acceptable and we apologise for these difficulties.

Unity Health is working closely with BT and VOYCCG to rectify the problems patients have been experiencing. BT engineers are onsite on 12th June. The Practice is looking to simplify the phone system, making it easier for patients to get through to the reception team. The Practice has recently employed four new members of staff as call handlers and we are open to increasing this number if required.

Like every other GP practice in the country, we're experiencing unprecedented levels of demand and are constantly exploring new ways to continue to provide the best care to our patients in the face of this pressure on services.

One of these measures was the introduction of an 'online triage' system 18 months ago, designed to provide an improved point of access for our patients. While this system has proved popular with some patients, feedback from other patients, stakeholders and practice staff is that more work needs to be done on the model before it can be adopted permanently. Therefore, after much thought and consideration, we will be withdrawing online triage system on 15th June and re-instating a simple telephone-based system.

We do encourage patients to book and manage their appointments and prescriptions online. This will free up our telephones. Online access is quick and easy, just visit our website www.unityhealth.info

We are working closely with our local Healthwatch team (<https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk>), Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group and the University of York to ensure we keep listening to what our patients and partners are telling us. We'll also be providing regular updates in our practice newsletter.

To enable these changes to embed, we will not be registering new patients to the practice until further notice.

Once again we would like to apologise to our patients for the difficulties they have experienced contacting the surgery and would like to offer our assurance that we working on solutions so that it is easier to contact the surgery by telephone.

