

GP Primary Choice Newsletter

Welcoming Our New Team Members

Our team has been growing steadily, and with that growth comes some brilliant new people we're delighted to introduce. Over the last few months, a couple of new colleagues have joined us across the organisation.

You may already have met some of them in your day-to-day work, each brings valuable skills, experience and perspectives that strengthen our team as we continue to move forward.

Take a moment to read their introductions below and help us give them a very warm welcome. We're thrilled to have them on board and look forward to all they'll contribute.

Chief Nursing Officer – Claire Greason

I joined GPPC as the Chief Nursing Officer in 2025, I have previously worked within the ICB, leading programmes across planned care, cancer, and long-term conditions. My career spans acute and community settings, including cardiology and the Emergency Assessment Unit, as well as Lead for Health Visiting and School Nursing. I am passionate about innovation and digital tools to transform and reduce health inequalities, with a commitment to improving health outcomes for communities across North East Essex.



Claire



Julie

Hi, my name is Julie, and I joined GPPC in October 2025 as the GP Support Services Administrator, working alongside Di Balcombe and Helen Mouncher providing support to the GP surgeries in our area. I have worked within healthcare, in both primary and secondary care, for over 30 years in a range of administrative and clinical roles and am looking forward to using my knowledge and experience in my new role.

A busy family life keeps me on my toes, with 4 children and an assortment of animals!



Ground Floor, Block A, University of Essex, Knowledge Gateway, Parkside Office
Village, Nesfield Road, Colchester, Essex, CO4 3ZL
E: admin@gpprimarychoice.co.uk T: 01206 484101

New Service Launch: Heartburn Health

We are introducing a new case-finding service designed to improve the early diagnosis of upper gastrointestinal (UGI) cancers, including oesophageal and gastric cancer. A small number of patients will be invited to the service, as we have a supply of 700 sponges.

These cancers are often diagnosed late, when treatment options are limited and outcomes are poorer. This new service uses embedded case-finding technology to proactively identify people who may have early-stage disease or high-risk precancerous conditions—before symptoms become severe.

Where appropriate, patients can be offered the capsule sponge, a new minimally invasive test that reduces the need for traditional endoscopy. Patients identified as high risk can also be enrolled into surveillance programmes, ensuring timely follow-up and intervention.

What this service aims to achieve

- Earlier diagnosis of UGI cancers, when treatment is more effective
- Identification of high-risk precursors, such as Barrett's oesophagus
- Reduced pressure on endoscopy services by targeting procedures to those most likely to need them
- Improved patient outcomes, including better survival rates and fewer late-stage diagnoses

This proactive approach supports earlier intervention, more efficient use of resources, and better outcomes for patients across our system.



Staff training
commences in
March

New Cervical Screening Service for Non-Responders

We've launched a new pilot service to support people who haven't yet taken up their NHS Cervical Screening invitation. The aim is simple: to make screening more accessible, reduce health inequalities, and help detect cervical changes early — when treatment is most effective.

This service focuses on reaching women who are registered at participating GP practices across North East Essex ICB, particularly those who:

- Have never attended cervical screening
- Are overdue for screening and live in areas of higher deprivation
- Are aged 25–29 and overdue their screening appointment



By proactively identifying and engaging with these groups, the service offers tailored support and encouragement to help more people attend screening at a time and place that works for them.

Update on Services

SKIN LESION CLINIC

The 2nd read within Skin Analytics has now been turned off, making thorough triage more important than ever. Please ensure anyone signposting patients carefully works through all triage questions. Incomplete triage may result in patients being deemed inappropriate by the clinician on the day, causing frustration and wasted appointments.

We're pleased to share that in January, we noticed a decrease in Urgent Suspected Cancer referral outcomes, which is a positive development.

Since August 2025, we've processed over 1,600 USCs on behalf of practices! This shows just how popular and important the service is to patients. While demand has dipped slightly over the colder months, we expect it to start picking up again as spring approaches.

SPIROMETRY/NTIDAL

Both the COPD and asthma pathways have been updated in line with the latest NICE guidelines. As a result, the referral process has changed, and two new referral forms are now live: Suspected COPD and Suspected Asthma.

Referring clinicians must decide which respiratory condition is suspected and complete the corresponding referral form. All required pre-investigations must be completed before the form is filled in and submitted.

When completed correctly, the new forms will automatically pull through most investigation results. Where information cannot be auto-populated, clear fields are provided for manual entry. Please note that if the required information is not completed, the referral will be rejected, which may result in delays to patient care.

Thanks to the introduction of N-Tidal, patients referred for suspected COPD can now book a 15-minute appointment instead of the previous full spirometry test, which took an hour. This means we can see more patients in our clinics, and patients experience shorter waiting times for their appointments.

LUNG CANCER SCREENING

The Appt Health programme used to invite patients for lung screening has recently gone live with NHS App and NHS email invitations, with excellent uptake so far. This enhancement means patients who previously had no phone number recorded are now receiving more opportunities to book their screening. For those who were booking via SMS, it also provides a more secure and trusted method of communication, with invitations delivered through official NHS channels and signed off on behalf of their GP practice.

Since November, this approach has driven uptake of up to 61%, significantly higher than the national average, with most patients choosing to book via email.

We'll shortly be going live in Colchester, expanding access to the Lung Cancer Screening programme and supporting better outcomes for patients across the area.

ADHD

We are pleased to announce that we now offer regular ADHD BP clinics at our Clacton site, held fortnightly on Thursday afternoons, as well as at the Colchester Health and Wellbeing Hub, running fortnightly on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Patients are now able to book their appointments directly using a self-booking link sent via text, which has not only made booking more convenient for patients but has also helped to reduce the administrative workload for our team. These clinics aim to provide easier access and more consistent support for those managing ADHD.

BLOOD CLINICS

Following a recent review of phlebotomy services at Colchester and Harwich, blood appointment timings were updated from 19th January 2026 to align with the Clacton site. This means all three sites are now operating with the same appointment time of 7.5 minutes.

This change reflects the strong processes already in place, and your continued commitment has ensured clinics run smoothly and safely. It has also been instrumental in enabling us to increase overall capacity.

Despite this increase, appointment availability remains limited and bookings are currently being made well in advance across all three sites. Please ensure patients are encouraged to book their blood test appointments in good time and avoid leaving bookings until the last minute. As previously advised, unless a test is marked as urgent, patients will need to wait for the next available appointment, which may be 7+ days depending on what site the patient is attending.

NEWS AND UPDATES...

March 2026



BLUESTREAM TRAINING

Please ensure all your Bluestream training is up to date. It's important that all courses are completed to remain compliant and to keep your knowledge current. We've begun allocating dedicated time to staff with a high level of overdue training. If you feel you need time allocated to complete any outstanding training, please raise this with your manager.

ANNUAL LEAVE REMINDER

Please remember to book your annual leave throughout the year to avoid it building up. Only the equivalent of one working week can be carried over, so any additional unused leave may be lost.

Annual leave requests are approved on a first-come, first-served basis and must be submitted at least four weeks in advance. If, for any reason, you need to request annual leave with less than four weeks' notice, you must email your manager explaining the reason for the short notice.



BLOOD TESTS FORM REMINDER

Since the launch of EPIC, the same rule applies: no forms, no bloods. Going forward, very few paper consultant forms will circulate, as most will be sent electronically via EPIC. Please note that our blood clinics do not have access to EPIC and can therefore only print blood forms from ICE.

ABTRACE

Abtrace is software integrated with S1 and EMIS that supports practices to improve processes for long term conditions, enhance patient access, save time by optimising resources, and utilise automated recalls. It has now been rolled out to all 32 GP practices across NEE. While some practices are making greater use of the system than others, training sessions are ongoing to ensure all teams feel confident in maximising its benefits. The Abtrace production team continues to work closely with us, enabling the addition of local enhanced services to the already extensive range of resources. Feedback from practices that are fully up and running has been very positive, with many highlighting that automated recalls have significantly reduced administrative time and that the patient view is far more user-friendly, helping staff to easily identify and respond to patients' needs.

We also recently held an Abtrace hazard workshop attended by our CSO and a multidisciplinary team to discuss clinical risk management and support DCB0160 sign-off. Further communications regarding governance arrangements for Abtrace will be circulated to all practices by GPPC in due course.

WMCOS

GPPC are supporting the ICB, ESNEFT and Big Picture Medical Group, with the new WMCOS (Weight Management and Complex Obesity Service). This service provides a digitally enabled single point of access for patients across Suffolk and North East Essex bringing specialist dietary advice, access to obesity management medications, and bariatric surgery within a single, coordinated service.

We will be referring the patients that are triaged to National Weight Management Programmes to prevent practices from having to refer patients twice for the same service. This is currently only in place until the end of March when the service pathway will be reviewed to support ICB boundary changes.

After a successful and award winning 2025, we're excited about the opportunities ahead and look forward to showcasing our organisation at many events throughout 2026. As our business continues to grow, we're keen to build on this momentum by attending and exhibiting at even more local events in the year ahead. These opportunities allow us to strengthen partnerships, share our work with the wider community, and continue raising our profile as we expand.

If you're aware of any events where you feel we would benefit from having a stall or presence, please do share them with us. We're open to considering all opportunities and would welcome any suggestions that help us connect with new audiences and communities.



UPCOMING EVENTS 2026



HSJ Cancer Forum – Wednesday 11th March 2026

The HSJ Cancer Forum brings together senior leaders from across the NHS, policy, and the wider health and care system to explore the latest developments in cancer services. Laura Cook and Claire Greason will be in attendance, leading roundtable discussions on transitioning AI applications from secondary care to community care. The day will also feature keynote presentations, panel discussions, and case studies focused on improving early diagnosis, reducing inequalities, enhancing patient experience, and driving innovation in cancer pathways.

PCN Event – Wednesday 29th April 2026

A free community health and wellbeing drop-in fair will be held next month in Clacton, featuring dozens of local organisations ready to provide guidance on maintaining good health.

The Community Health and Wellbeing Event, organised by the Tendring Primary Care Network (PCN) and St James Surgery, aims to raise awareness of local services, initiatives, and resources available throughout the town and surrounding areas.

WHAT IS COMING UP?

- International Women's Day – 8th March
- World Sleep Day – 13th March
- World Down Syndrome Day – 21st March
- Stress Awareness Month – April

CURRENT VACANCIES

We currently have no vacancies, but stay tuned for future opportunities!

NEXT EDITION?

We value your input and would like to hear from you! As we plan our future newsletters, we are eager to know what you would like to see included. Do you have any suggestions for how we can make our newsletters more informative, entertaining, or user-friendly? Share your thoughts with us and help us create a newsletter that resonates with everyone!