Autumn & Winter Quay Points

The Patient Newsletter for East Quay Medical Centre 2025/26



NHS information on Winter vaccinations and winter health

There are some things you can do to help yourself stay well in winter. This includes getting your flu and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Flu vaccine

Getting your flu vaccine every year, if you're eligible, tops up your protection and reduces your risk of getting severe symptoms.

Who should have the flu vaccine

Adults at higher risk of getting seriously ill from flu, and most children are eligible for the flu vaccine.

Adults who should have the flu vaccine

You can get the free NHS flu vaccine if you:

- are aged 65 or over (including those who will be 65 by 31 March 2026)
- have certain long-term health conditions
- are pregnant
- live in a care home
- are the main carer for an older or disabled person, or receive a carer's allowance
- live with someone who has a weakened immune system

Frontline health and social care workers can also get a flu vaccine through their employer.

Health conditions that mean you're eligible for the flu vaccine

The flu vaccine is recommended for people with certain long-term health conditions, including:

- conditions that affect your breathing, such as asthma (needing a steroid inhaler or tablets), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or cystic fibrosis

- heart conditions, such as coronary heart disease or heart failure
- chronic kidney disease
- liver disease, such as cirrhosis or hepatitis
- some conditions that affect your brain or nerves, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy
- diabetes or Addison's disease
- a weakened immune system due to a condition such as HIV or AIDS, or due to a treatment such as chemotherapy or steroid medicine
- problems with your spleen, such as sickle cell disease, or if you've had your spleen removed
- a learning disability
- being very overweight – a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above

Speak to your GP surgery or specialist if you have a health condition and you're not sure if you're eligible for the flu vaccine.

Children who should have the flu vaccine

The children's flu vaccine is recommended for:

- children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2025 (born between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2023)
- school-aged children (Reception to Year 11)
- children aged 6 months to 17 years with certain long-term health conditions

Health conditions that mean your child is eligible for the children's flu vaccine

It's important for children with certain long-term health conditions to have the flu vaccine every year.

This includes children aged 6 months to 17 years who have:

- conditions that affect their breathing, such as asthma (needing a steroid inhaler or tablets) or cystic fibrosis
- had a lung or airways infection in the past that meant they needed to stay overnight in hospital
- serious heart conditions
- kidney or liver disease
- some conditions that affect their brain or nerves, such as cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- a weakened immune system due to a condition or treatment, such as HIV or AIDS, chemotherapy or steroid medicine
- problems with their spleen, such as sickle cell disease, or if they've had their spleen removed
- a learning disability

When your child turns 18, they will be eligible for the injected flu vaccine for adults.

If your child has a health condition and you're not sure if they're eligible for the flu vaccine, speak to their GP surgery or specialist.

How to get the flu vaccine

If you're eligible for an NHS flu vaccine, contact us to book an appointment

Some people may be able to get vaccinated through their maternity service or care home, or through their employer if they're a frontline health or social care worker.

Most school-aged children (Reception to Year 11) get their flu vaccine at school. However if at risk, we can do this.

The last date you will be able to get your flu vaccine is 31 March 2026 – but this depends on stock levels too. It's best to get vaccinated sooner to protect yourself during winter.

Frontline health or social care workers

Frontline health and social care workers should get the flu vaccine through their employer.

If you cannot get a flu vaccine through your employer, you can get it at a pharmacy or your GP surgery if you're employed:

- by a registered residential care or nursing home
- by a registered domiciliary care provider
- by a voluntary managed hospice provider
- through direct payments or personal health budgets

COVID-19 vaccine

Getting your COVID-19 vaccine every year, if you're eligible, tops up your protection and reduces your risk of getting severe symptoms.

Who should have the COVID-19 vaccine

You can get the winter COVID-19 vaccine if you:

- are aged 75 or over (including those who will be 75 by 31 January 2026)
- are aged 6 months to 74 years and have a weakened immune system because of a health condition or treatment
- live in a care home for older adults

Health conditions and treatments that mean you're eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine

You may be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine if you have a weakened immune system because of a health condition or treatment.

This can include if you:

- have or had blood cancer, such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma
- have had an organ transplant, bone marrow transplant or stem cell transplant
- have HIV
- have a genetic disorder that affects your immune system, such as severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID)
- are having or recently had chemotherapy, biological therapy or radiotherapy
- are taking steroid medicine (depending on the dose)
- are having long-term immunosuppressive treatment for a condition such as lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), scleroderma or psoriasis

This list is a summary and does not include everything. Speak to your local pharmacy, GP surgery or specialist if you're not sure if you're eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

How to get the COVID-19 vaccine

If you're eligible for the winter COVID-19 vaccine, you can:

- book a COVID-19 vaccination appointment online or in the NHS App (if you're aged 5 years or over)
- find a walk-in COVID-19 vaccination site to get vaccinated without an appointment (if you're aged 5 years or over)

Some people may be able to get vaccinated at a local service, such as a community pharmacy or a GP surgery, or at a care home if they live in a care home.

You do not need to wait for an invitation before booking an appointment.

The last date you will be able to get your COVID-19 vaccine is 31 January 2026. Online booking will close on 30 January 2026.

Information:

Other vaccinations

You may also be eligible for other vaccinations, including the:

- pneumococcal vaccine (if you're aged 65 or over)
- RSV vaccine (if you're pregnant, aged 75 to 79, or turned 80 after 1 September 2024)

These vaccinations help protect against serious illnesses that are more common in the winter, including pneumonia.

Who's most at risk from cold weather?

Some people are more vulnerable to the effects of cold weather. This includes:

- people aged 65 and older
- babies and children under the age of 5
- people on a low income (so cannot afford heating)
- people who have a long-term health condition
- people with a disability
- pregnant women
- people who have a mental health condition

Get advice if you feel unwell

If you're 65 or over, or in one of the other at-risk groups, it's important to get medical help as soon as you feel unwell.

You can get help and advice from:

- NHS 111 – go to 111.nhs.uk or call 111 if you have an urgent medical problem and you are not sure what to do
- a pharmacy – pharmacists can give treatment advice for a range of minor illnesses and can tell you if you need to see a doctor
- your GP – you may be able to speak to a GP online or over the phone, or go in for an appointment if they think you need to

The sooner you get advice, the sooner you're likely to get better.

In an emergency, go to A&E immediately or call 999.

Keep warm and get help with heating

Keeping warm over the winter months can help to prevent colds, flu and more serious health problems such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression.

Heat your home to a temperature that's comfortable for you. If you can, this should be at least 18°C in the rooms that you regularly use, such as your living room and bedroom. This is particularly important if you have a health condition. It's best to keep your bedroom windows closed at night.

Check your heating and cooking appliances are safe. Contact a Gas Safe registered engineer to make sure they're working properly. You can find an engineer from the Gas Safe Register website.

Make sure your home is fire safe. For fire safety advice specific to you and your home, visit the online home fire safety check website to complete a safety check for your home.

Make sure you're getting all the help that you're entitled to. There are grants, benefits and advice available to make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating or help with bills.

Find out more about ways to save energy in your home from GOV.UK, or call the government helpline on 0800 444 202.

You can also find out more from GOV.UK about benefits and financial support if you're on a low income.

Look in on vulnerable neighbours and relatives

Remember that other people, such as older neighbours, friends and family members, may need some extra help over the winter. There's a lot you can do to help people who need support.

Icy pavements and roads can be very slippery, and cold weather can stop people from going out. Keep in touch with your friends, neighbours and family and ask if they need any practical help, or if they're feeling unwell.

Make sure they're stocked up with enough food supplies for a few days, in case they cannot go out.

If they do need to go out in the cold, encourage them to wear shoes with a good grip and a scarf around the mouth to protect them from cold air, and to reduce their risk of chest infections.

Make sure they get any prescription medicines before the holiday period starts and if bad weather is forecast.
If they need help over the holiday period when the GP surgery or pharmacy is closed or they're not sure what to do, go to 111.nhs.uk or call 111.
If you're worried about a relative or elderly neighbour, contact your local council or call the Age UK helpline on 0800 678 1602 (8am to 7pm every day). You can find your local council on GOV.UK.
If you're concerned the person may have hypothermia, go to 111.nhs.uk or call 111.



NHS England article about the winter blues

Dr Lowri Kew, who is a GP from Corner Place Surgery in Devon, talks about why 'winter blues are a real thing and offers some tips that could help, you, your family or friends, if things are becoming a bit much.

Why do I get the 'winter blues?

Many people find their mood is worse in winter, for some this worsens and becomes depression which recurs every winter – this is called Seasonal Affective Disorder.
The reduction in sunlight can affect our body's internal clock and lower our mood and can also affect the chemicals in our body that impact our mood.
Stress can also increase in the winter due to many reasons- colder temperatures can make doing everything harder, increased time indoors can cause stressful interactions with others, and for many the run up to Christmas heightens that stress and anxiety. With the current cost of living issues this winter may be particularly stressful for many.

How can I help myself?

Self-care can have a positive effect on your mood, stress and anxiety. Make sure you are eating well, getting enough rest and sleep whenever possible. Get outside and doing some activity- there is no need for the gym if you don't like it. A walk outside means you'll be exposed to sunlight which helps, but also the activity itself will improve mood, stress and anxiety. Alcohol and caffeine is known to have an impact on some people's mood and anxiety so keep your intake within recommended limits.
Light levels are less in winter with dark mornings and evenings, ensuring you get as much sunlight as possible in the day can help. Some people, and particularly those who get depression every winter find lights that simulate sunlight (SAD lights) help.
Get enough vitamin D- a lot of people in the UK do not have enough vitamin D. The national recommendation is to consider taking over the counter vitamin D (10 micrograms or 400 iU for those age 4+) during autumn and winter. Considering foods sources of vitamin D is also worthwhile, and you can find out more about this on the NHS webpage – vitamin and minerals.

Doing something we enjoy can also help. When our mood worsens, we tend to withdraw from interacting with others and doing things we enjoy, and this worsens the mood. Ultimately it becomes a vicious circle as the worse we feel the less we want to do.
Remember what is good in your life-as odd as it sounds remembering what is good improves our mood. Evidence shows that people who write down things they are grateful for daily or weekly see and feel their mood improve. Something as simple as writing three things a week that are good can improve your mental health.
Try not to worry, using breathing exercises for anxiety or stress and trying not to worry about the future but instead focussing on what is happening now can reduce stress and anxiety. Apps such as headspace can support you in doing this.
Most of us find music can instantly impact our mood. Create a playlist of music that makes you feel happy and listen to it when feeling low. If you're feeling anxious, try music that makes you feel calm or safe.
Reach out to close friends, family, or support lines – talking to someone you trust helps us when we are struggling. For more details see Every Mind Matters

Where else can I get support?

For confidential support from trained volunteers 24/7 you can contact:
The Samaritans – call 116123 to talk to someone or email jo@samaritans.org for a reply within 24 hours.
If you can't face speaking to someone the charity Mental Health Innovations provides text support which is free and available 24/7 text "Shout" to 85258 or if you are under 19 text "YM".
If you are under 19 you can also call Childline on 08001111.

What if things are getting really bad?

If your mood or anxiety are persistently bad or worsening contact your GP practice for advice and help.
You can also self-refer for NHS counselling to find your local service
If you are worried about hurting yourself, seek urgent medical help.
The First Response helpline is open 24/7 and you can find a number local to you.



Please remember we all have mental health and at different points of our lives and the year it's better than at other points. Make the time to look out for yourself and others, and know however you are feeling you're not alone.

Date published: 9 January, 2023
Date last updated: 9 January, 2023

Bridgwater Bay
PRIMARY CARE NETWORK

You can now have your bloods done at Victoria Park Health and Wellbeing Hub

As long as you have the forms/labels or we have added them at the practice, the team at Victoria Park Health and Wellbeing Hub can take your blood.
The service is now Monday to Friday 8.45-12.45.
This is a walk in service (so there may be a slight delay)
Call 01278 720270

Bridgwater Bay PCN have produced a fantastic set of podcasts on womens health issues.

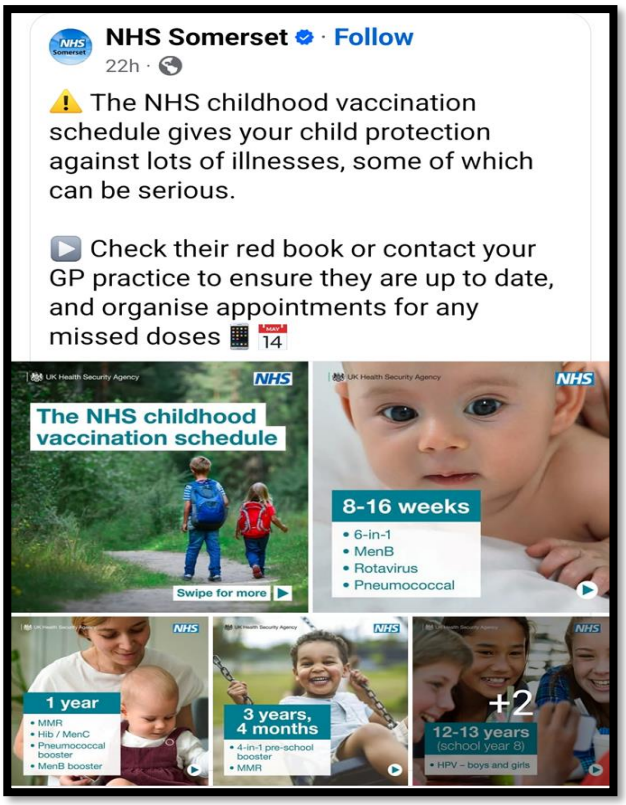
They are on Spotify but you can access them through any internet browser

They are 15 minutes long and provide a really helpful overview of various topics, from cancer screening to menopause to heavy menstrual bleeding

If you are a woman or have a woman in your life – please have a listen

https://open.spotify.co./episode/4Z1s1AbbWAcwscCUozI8SF







Think Pharmacy First" is a UK-wide NHS initiative encouraging people to visit their local pharmacy for minor health concerns and some prescription-only conditions, rather than their GP. Launched in January 2024, the Pharmacy First service allows pharmacists to provide advice, treatment, and even prescription-only medication for conditions like UTIs, shingles, impetigo, infected insect bites, sinusitis, sore throats, and ear infections, without the need for a GP appointment or referral.

How it Works

- **Self-referral:**

  You can walk into a pharmacy and speak to a pharmacist about your symptoms.
- **Free consultations:**

  The consultations are free of charge.
- **Treatment:**

  The pharmacist can offer advice and treatment, and if clinically appropriate, prescribe and supply medication, including antibiotics and antivirals, for certain conditions.
- **Cost of medication:**

  If you are prescribed medication, standard prescription charges will apply.

Conditions Covered by Pharmacy First

- Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) in women aged 16-64
- Shingles (for those aged 18 and over)
- Impetigo (a bacterial skin infection, for those aged 1 year and over)
- Infected Insect Bites (for those aged 1 year and over)
- Sinusitis (for those aged 12 and over)
- Sore Throat (for those aged 5 and over)
- Earache / Otitis Media (Middle ear infections, for those aged 1 to 17 years)

Why Use Pharmacy First?

- **Accessibility:**

  It provides easy and prompt access to advice and treatment from a healthcare professional without the need to see a GP or make an appointment.
- **Convenience:**

  Local pharmacies are often more accessible, allowing you to get the care you need quickly.
- **Reduced GP workload:**

  By managing minor ailments, pharmacies help free up GP appointments for more serious conditions.

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) is dedicated to increasing the health and happiness of residents in Somerset through physical activity and sport.

SASP is a charitable trust and a member of the nation-wide network of 43 Active Partnership's, sharing a mission of transforming lives through sport and physical activity. Each Active Partnership is independent, governed by a Board of Trustees and funded through Sport England, and grant giving bodies, companies and individuals whom share their mission.

Our vision is to...

"Achieve healthier and happier communities in Somerset through physical activity and sport"

We inspire and enable positive life choices through sport and physical activity and we do this by:

- Providing accessible opportunities locally for all ages and abilities, prioritising those who are least active.
- Addressing inequalities and removing barriers to physical activity and sport.
- Supporting clubs, communities, schools and the workforce to embrace physical activity.
- Bringing together organisations and partners to create positive change to enable active lives for all.

SASP health coaches are available at your GP surgery, so please enquire within, or call 01823 653990

What is a health walk?

It's a walk done on a regular basis for your wellbeing, ranging right from beginner through to gentle, moderate and advanced. It can help you to feel good, to have more energy, to sleep better and to manage your weight. There are so many benefits from health walking - we're sure you will see a difference in yourself even after your first walk!

Somerset Health Walks are for everyone. Our Walk Leaders cannot be responsible for individuals. If you need support on a walk, please bring along a trusted friend, family member, support worker or carer.

See which walk is right for you and find your local health walk

- **Beginner Walks:** Under 1 mile, flat and even ground, no stiles, gentle pace and frequent stops. Ideal for those new to walking or living with health conditions that impact fitness or mobility.
- **Level 1:** 1 to 1.5 miles, flat or gentle slopes, no stiles and ideal for those able to complete 30-40 mins with minimal stops.
- **Level 2:** 2 - 2.5 miles, tracks and some hills or moderate pace. Ideal for those looking to develop their walking fitness and able to complete 45-60 mins with minimal stops.
- **Level 3:** 3-4 miles, fields and hills, quicker pace and possible stiles. Intermediate walks, ideal for those with good walking fitness and able to complete 60-90mins with minimal stops.
- **Level 4:** 3-5 miles, fields and steep hills, quicker pace and stiles. Advanced walks, ideal for those with very good mobility and fitness and able to complete 90mins + with minimal stops.
-

To Register for FREE Health Walks across Somerset please complete our registration form here.
https://www.sasp.co.uk/health-walks

HYPERTENSION

Think you may have a high blood pressure?

Leaving hypertension undiagnosed can lead to serious health conditions. It is vital to get your blood pressure checked.



Hypertension can cause:

- Kidney Disease
- Strokes
- Aortic Aneurysms
- Vascular Dementia
- Heart Disease
- Heart Failure
- Heart Attacks

Even the smallest change will reduce your risk

BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKS

You are eligible for a free NHS blood pressure check if :

- You are over the age of 40
- Live in England
- Are not already diagnosed with a high blood pressure
- Have not had a blood pressure check within the last 6 months

Local Pharmacies to check your Blood Pressure At:

- Rowlands
- Stockmoor
- Cranleigh Gardens
- Asda
- Superdrug

Grab a leaflet to find out more

HYPERTENSION

Learn more about high blood pressure

About Hypertension

Hypertension is the medical term to describe those that suffer from having a high blood pressure. This would be anything over a reading of 135/85 for under 80 year olds or 145/85 for anyone aged 80 and over.

It is said that in every 1 in 9 people have hypertension but aren't aware they have it. By having undiagnosed hypertension, you are at a higher risk of life-changing medical conditions. These consist of:

- **Kidney Disease**
- **Strokes**
- **Aortic Aneurysms**
- **Vascular Dementia**
- **Heart Disease**
- **Heart Failure**
- **Heart Attacks**

A diagnosis of hypertension will help you to monitor and manage your blood pressure. Even the slightest change can significantly reduce your risk of the above conditions.

Local Pharmacies

- Many pharmacies now offer NHS blood pressure checks to help diagnose those suffering from a high blood pressure. This service is free to those that are eligible. You are eligible if :
- **You are aged 40 and over**
- **Live in England**
- **Have not had a blood pressure check in the last 6 months**

If you are already diagnosed with a high blood pressure then you are not eligible for a free pharmacy test however it can be monitored at your GP surgery. You can also purchase your own blood pressure monitor or loan one from the library. Local pharmacies that offer this service are:

- **Rowlands**
- **Stockmoor**
- **Cranleigh Gardens**
- **Asda**
- **Superdrug**

To find out more about having your blood pressure checked at a pharmacy, find information on the NHS website, **https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/pharmacies/find-a-pharmacy-that-offers-free-blood-pressure-checks/**

Rowlands Pharmacy
TA6 4GP
MONDAY-FRIDAY: 9am-6pm

Stockmoor Pharmacy
TA6 6WU
MONDAY-FRIDAY: 8:45am-6:15pm
SATURDAY: 9am-1pm

Cranleigh Gardens Pharmacy
TA6 5JS
MONDAY-FRIDAY: 8am-7pm
SATURDAY: 9am-1pm
SUNDAY: 3pm-8pm

Asda Pharmacy
TA6 5AZ
MONDAY-SATURDAY: 9am-9pm
SUNDAY: 10am-4pm

Superdrug Pharmacy
TA6 4AB
MONDAY-FRIDAY: 9am-7pm
SATURDAY: 9am-6pm
SUNDAY: 10am4pm

Boots Pharmacy
MONDAY-FRIDAY: 9am-5:30pm
SATURDAY: 8:30am-5:30pm
Sunday: 10am-4pm

Receiving Help at the Practice

If you are concerned that you have a high blood pressure you should contact your GP practice.

After contacting the surgery, you will be put in the care of the clinical team who will carry out any further investigations – this is often 7 days of blood pressure readings, and then, if needed blood tests and ECGs if needed.

Your GP surgery will discuss lifestyle changes and offer medication if you need this.

Preventing Hypertension

Although it is not always possible, hypertension can some times be prevented. This can be done by living a healthy lifestyle; this involves:

- **Having a healthy diet**
- **Limiting or not drinking caffeine**
- **Limiting or not drinking alcohol**
- **Stopping smoking**
- **Getting active**

Although these can be hard sacrifices and changes to make, it is will benefit your health and well being.

If you are struggling with the above lifestyle changes. There is lots of information online on the NHS website: **https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-blood-pressure-hypertension/**

For support to improve your Health and Wellbeing, book with our NHS Health and Wellbeing coaches – refer yourself here: **https://www.sasp.co.uk/forms/view/hwc**

East Quay Medical Centre
2d ·

What if I'm too embarrassed to attend my cervical screening? Will it be painful? Do I need to shave, down there?

Perhaps you have some questions about smear tests that you might not be comfortable asking yourself?

Meet Liz, a Practice Nurse based in Somerset. Liz sees hundreds of women each year and understands why some people feel nervous about attending their cervical screening.

In this video, she answers some of the questions you might be worried about asking. If you have more questions that aren't answered here, don't rely on google - please contact your practice nurse who will be happy to help.

#CervicalScreeningAwarenessWeek
#dontfearthesmear



youtube.com
Don't fear the smear: What happens when you attend a cervical screening?



01823 331222 info@somersetrcc.org.uk https://somersetagents.org

Medicine Sick Day Rules

NHS Somerset

When you are unwell with any of the following:

- Vomiting or diarrhoea (unless only minor)
- Dehydration e.g., from fever and sweats

Restart when you are well (after 24-48 hours of eating and drinking normally)

Then STOP taking the medicines listed below on SICK DAYS

ACE or ARBs:	e.g. *lisinopril, perindopril, ramipril or losartan, candesartan, valsartan*
NSAIDs:	e.g. *ibuprofen, diclofenac, naproxen*
Diuretics:	e.g. *furosemide, spironolactone, indapamide, bendroflumethiazide*
Certain medicines for diabetes:	e.g. *metformin or 'flozins:*
Other medicines:	

If you are in any doubt, contact your pharmacist, GP or nurse.

somicb.medicinesmanagementteam@nhs.net

our SOMERSET Together we can

SURGERY

CAR PARKING

Wickes

Wickes have been in touch. The Store Manager has confirmed that he is happy for East Quay patients to park in the customer car park whilst having an appointment at East Quay etc.

It is important to avoid parking near the Wickes loading bay - also opposite our exit - as large lorries need to park up and unload. So for safety of the road users and vehicles, avoid parking near our exit and the Wickes loading bay please.

Of course, we encourage those who use the car park to visit the store and support them too.

The Store Manager said:

"I fully appreciate what a vital service East Quay provides for the community…I just wanted to make you aware that the patrons of East Quay are welcome to park in our carpark and have a full 90 minutes if they wish, I know a few do already but I am hoping if you make them aware this might take the pressure off the Symonds Way and prevent any incidents / accidents in the future. There have been new signs put up by G24 but nothing has changed. This was due to a complaint that the signs were not clear when someone had stayed overnight"

We at East Quay really appreciate Wickes being such a good neighbour and thank the Store Manager for reaching out.

Disabled parking bays are located at the front of the surgery

Please remember when parking in the surgery car park that the yellow disabled parking bays are only to be used by blue badge holders.

The bays are **NOT** for dropping off, or to be parked in without displaying a blue badge.

Not all disabilities are visible, but please respect the people who do park in these parking bays who are blue badge holders.
Thank you





TEXT MESSAGES

We have been using text messaging more – for general messages, as well as reminders.

- We also now use them for messages from the GP like links and test results, there are of course systems for those who don't have or use their mobiles phones.
- You can use your NHS app to check the number we have for you. Or when you next call or have an appointment, you can check the number we have for you.
- We also now send out links to allow appointments like vaccinations to booked via your surgery.
- If you do not want us to text you at all, please let us know by calling or emailing the surgery.

