

Letter to all North Gate Medical Centre Patients

You may have noticed recently that it has become increasingly difficult to get a routine appointment to see your doctor. We fully understand it can be very frustrating for our patients and it is for ourselves also. Since the beginning of 2018 one doctor has retired and two doctors have left the practice. Although we have been successful in finding one new doctor to join the practice it has taken many months and we have found the process to be very challenging. We are continuing to seek more doctors to join us here at North Gate.

So we, the staff, want to explain to you why this is happening. You may have read in the press that there is a national shortage of GPs and we are certainly feeling the effects of the shortage here in New Ross and the surrounding area. Many people living in New Ross (urban and rural) do not have access to a GP and rely on emergency services or out of hours services Care-Doc (which we also cover on rotation).

Of course a medical practice needs more than just GPs to provide an efficient service to its patients, other professionals are essential too. This brings us to the second reason why we are experiencing difficulties – increased demands to the service with insufficient funding. GP practices receive a fixed sum each year from the HSE to run the entire practice (**reduced in 2013 by 38%**) and in recent years the sum we receive has simply not kept up with increasing demands on us. For example with the introduction of Doctor Visit Cards for under 6's the demand for appointments for this age group has increased three fold. So we find ourselves in the difficult position of being unable to provide you with the medical services you request in a timely manner.

So what are we doing to ease this situation?

- Staff at the practice are working longer hours
- We have simplified our procedures
- Introduced online services
- Reduced administration
- Doctors have increased the number of patients they see each day.

We have to balance this with ensuring the doctor you see is able to provide you with a good quality, safe level of service.

What can you do to help?

- Be understanding and patient
- Book in advance for administrative appointments i.e. Driving Licence/Social Protection forms etc.
- Ensure you cancel appointments if you can't make it (*so we can offer to another patient*),
- Use online services @ www.northgatemedicalcentre.ie for ordering prescriptions, doctor advice, form downloads etc.,
- In certain cases seek the advice of your pharmacist who can give excellent advice and treatments too
- Talk to your local TD or Councillor to voice your opinion on the lack of health care provisions here in the South East.

We are sorry about this situation. Hopefully we can quickly get through this difficult time and we will of course continue to do all we can to provide the best service with our current resources.

The doctors and all the staff at North Gate Medical Centre.