SUMMER 2026 | ISSUE 11

FORDINGBRIDGE SURGERY NEWS

The Fordingbridge Surgery Newsletter - Summer 2026

Working in partnership with all our patients, providing high quality care in a professional, safe and friendly manner



🌼 Welcome to the Fordingbridge Surgery Summer Special Edition Newsletter 2026 🌼

This summer special edition of our newsletter is focussed around how general practice and society have changed.

From time to time we see comments suggesting that GP practices "aren't what they used to be." We understand why it can feel that way. Healthcare has changed significantly over the past 10–20 years, but so has the society we serve. Looking at both sides helps explain why things feel different today.

This special edition looks at:

- A changing population and rising demand
- New ways of accessing care
- A broader healthcare team
- Increased pressures on healthcare services
- What hasn't changed
- Looking ahead

We hope you find this special edition interesting and informative, and we thank you for your understanding and for working with us as we navigate these changes together.

As we continue to experience this prolonged period of hot weather, we hope you are keeping as comfortable and well as possible. Please remember to take extra care of yourselves and those around you, particularly older relatives, neighbours, young children, and anyone with long-term health conditions.

For advice on staying safe and well in the heat, please visit our Fordingbridge Surgery Facebook page, where we are regularly sharing Heat-Health guidance and practical tips. You'll also find updates on a range of health topics, local services, and practice news throughout the year.

We encourage you to follow our page to stay informed and connected with the latest information from the Surgery.

from Practice Manager, Michelle Raymond

A changing population and rising demand

General practice is facing unprecedented levels of demand, driven by a growing and increasingly complex patient population. Over the past decade, the number of people registered with GP practices in England has risen significantly, reaching approximately 63.6 million patients in 2026, an increase of almost 14% compared with 2015. This growth reflects both a rising population and greater reliance on primary care services.

At the same time, people are living longer than ever before. While this is a positive achievement, it also means that more patients are living with one or more long-term health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, respiratory illnesses, and frailty. Many patients now require regular monitoring, medication reviews, and coordinated care from multiple healthcare professionals, adding to the complexity of the work carried out within GP practices.

The demand for appointments has increased accordingly. In 2019, GP practices delivered around 300 million appointments across England. By 2025, that figure had risen to more than 380 million appointments, a growth of over 20% in just six years. This increase is not only due to a larger patient population but also because patients are accessing care more frequently than before.

Data shows that the average number of appointments per patient has increased from approximately 5.0 appointments per year in 2019 to 5.8 appointments per year in 2024. This reflects the growing healthcare needs of the population, as well as greater expectations for access to medical advice, treatment, and ongoing support.

For GP teams, these trends represent a significant challenge. Practices are now caring for more patients, seeing them more often, and managing increasingly complex health conditions. Alongside providing traditional face-to-face care, teams are also delivering support through telephone consultations, online services, preventative care programmes, and multidisciplinary working.

What this means: General practice is working harder than ever before. Behind every appointment statistic is a dedicated team adapting to rising demand while continuing to provide safe, effective, and compassionate care for their communities.



New ways of accessing care

Modern Access to General Practice

Over recent years, GP practices have introduced a range of new ways for patients to access care, helping to ensure that support is available when it is needed and in a way that suits different lifestyles and circumstances.

One of the most significant changes has been the introduction of **telephone triage**, which enables patients to be assessed more quickly by a clinician or trained member of the practice team. Rather than waiting for a routine appointment, patients can often receive advice, treatment, or signposting on the same day, ensuring that urgent needs are identified and addressed promptly.

Online consultation services have also transformed access to healthcare. Many patients can now submit queries, request advice, or seek help through online forms, often without needing to telephone the practice. Alongside this, the **NHS App** provides convenient access to a range of services, including viewing health records, ordering repeat prescriptions, managing appointments, and receiving healthcare information. These digital tools allow patients to access support at a time that is convenient for them, reducing the need to visit or contact the practice during busy periods.

Another major advancement has been the widespread use of **electronic prescriptions**. Prescriptions can now be sent directly to a patient's chosen pharmacy, reducing unnecessary journeys to the practice and making the process of obtaining medication quicker and more efficient. For many patients, this has simplified the management of long-term conditions and repeat medications.

These innovations have become increasingly important as demand for general practice continues to grow. Across the UK, more than 30 million GP appointments take place every month, demonstrating the vital role that primary care plays in supporting the health of the population. Practices are continually adapting their services to manage this demand while maintaining safe, high-quality care.

While these modern methods of access offer clear benefits for many patients, GP practices recognise that healthcare is not a one-size-fits-all service. Some patients value the convenience and flexibility of digital and telephone services, while others prefer the reassurance and personal interaction of a traditional face-to-face appointment.

For this reason, practices continue to provide a combination of approaches, balancing digital innovation with in-person care. The aim is to ensure that patients can access the **right support**, in the **right way**, at the **right time**, while maintaining the **personal and compassionate care** that remains at the heart of general practice.

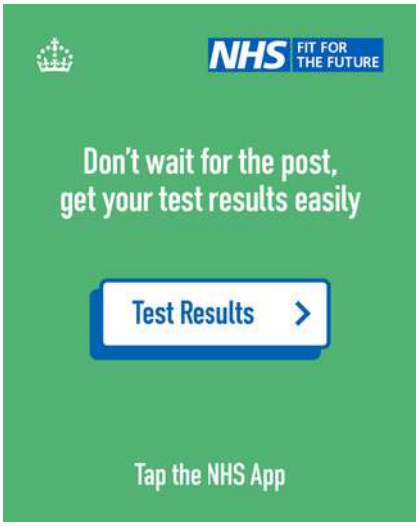
What this means: Modern access routes help practices respond to rising demand and provide greater flexibility for patients, while continuing to offer face-to-face care for those who need or prefer it.

DOWNLOAD THE NHS APP!

You can do more with the NHS App than you realise - Discover what else you can do today, and remember to turn on notifications to receive your messages.







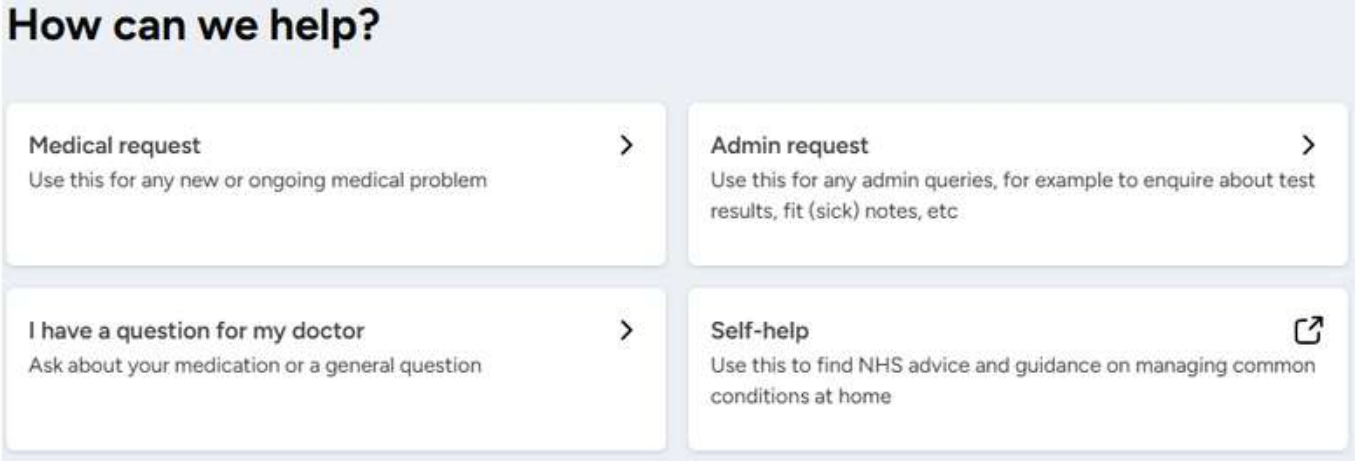
📱 Tap the NHS App

anima

Access Anima direct from the Fordingbridge Surgery website www.fordingbridgegps.co.uk



Sign in, then choose your option. You can submit a medical request: Choose from the extensive list of options, or choose 'my problem is not listed above' . Alternatively, follow up an ongoing issue with the 'I have a question for my doctor' option, or for admin queries, choose Admin request. Please give as much detail as you can so we can accurately prioritise your request.



A broader healthcare team

General practice has evolved significantly in recent years, with patient care now being delivered by a wider range of healthcare professionals than ever before. While GPs remain central to coordinating care and managing complex medical conditions, they are increasingly supported by a multidisciplinary team, each bringing specialist skills and expertise to meet the growing needs of patients.

Today's primary care teams commonly include **practice nurses, clinical pharmacists, physiotherapists, healthcare assistants, and social prescribing link worke**rs, alongside GPs and administrative staff. This team-based approach helps ensure that patients receive care from the professional best suited to their needs.

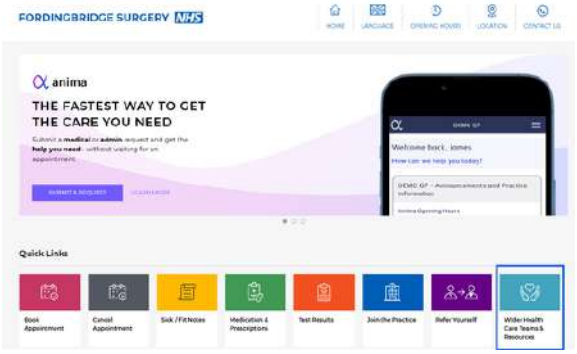
For example, **practice nurses** play a key role in managing long-term conditions, delivering vaccinations, and providing health promotion advice. **Clinical pharmacists** support patients with medication reviews, helping to ensure medicines are used safely and effectively. **First-contact physiotherapists** can assess and manage many musculoskeletal conditions without the need for a GP appointment, while **healthcare assistants** provide a range of routine clinical services such as blood tests, health checks, and monitoring.

In addition, **social prescribers** help patients access non-medical support within their communities. This may include assistance with loneliness, financial concerns, housing issues, physical activity programmes, or local support groups—factors that can have a significant impact on overall health and wellbeing.

The development of these **wider healthcare teams** reflects the increasing demand and complexity facing general practice. As the population grows and more people live with multiple long-term conditions, practices need a broader range of expertise to provide effective and timely care. By sharing responsibility across different professionals, patients can often receive more specialised support while freeing up GP time for those with more complex medical needs.

As a result, more appointments are now delivered by non-GP healthcare professionals. This approach has helped increase capacity within primary care, improve access to services, and ensure patients can receive the right care from the right person at the right time. Importantly, this does not replace the role of the GP. Instead, it strengthens the overall service by making the best use of the skills available across the healthcare team. Patients continue to benefit from GP oversight where needed, while also gaining access to a wider network of professionals able to support their individual health needs.

What this means: Modern general practice is no longer delivered by GPs alone. A broader healthcare team allows practices to respond to rising demand, offer more specialised support, and provide patients with faster access to the care and expertise they need.



More information about our Wider Healthcare team can be found on our website www. fordingbridgegps.co.uk/pcnservices

Increased pressures on healthcare services

The NHS continues to face growing pressures, and general practice is often at the forefront of this challenge. Every year, GP practices are asked to do more for a larger number of patients, while also managing increasingly complex health needs. Despite significant efforts to improve access and introduce new ways of working, demand for healthcare services continues to rise at a pace that creates ongoing challenges for practices across the country.

In recent years, the number of appointments delivered by GP practices has increased substantially. In fact, appointment numbers have risen by nearly 10% in just the last two years, reflecting the continued growth in patient demand for advice, treatment, monitoring, and support. Patients are living longer, often with multiple long-term conditions, and many require ongoing care that involves regular reviews and follow-up appointments.

Alongside increasing demand, healthcare services are also experiencing workforce pressures. While the number of patients registered with GP practices has grown steadily, the number of fully qualified GPs has not increased at the same rate. As a result, the number of patients per GP has risen significantly since 2015. This means clinicians are responsible for caring for larger patient lists while maintaining the high standards of care that patients rightly expect.

The pressure is not limited to face-to-face appointments. On an average day across England, GP services manage millions of patient contacts, including telephone calls, online consultation requests, prescription queries, administrative requests, and appointment bookings. Behind every consultation that takes place, there are countless additional tasks carried out by clinical and administrative teams to ensure patients receive safe and effective care.

These increasing pressures can sometimes affect the patient experience. Patients may notice longer waiting times for routine appointments, reduced availability at certain times of the day, or increased use of telephone and online systems to help manage demand. While practices work hard to minimise delays and provide timely care, balancing rising demand with available resources remains an ongoing challenge.

It is important to remember that urgent medical needs continue to be prioritised, and practice teams are constantly reviewing their services to ensure patients receive care according to clinical need. Many practices have also expanded the range of healthcare professionals available, introduced digital access routes, and adopted new ways of working to improve capacity and efficiency.

Despite the challenges, GP teams remain committed to delivering safe, compassionate, and high-quality care to their communities. Every day, clinicians, reception staff, administrators, and wider healthcare professionals work together to support patients, often under considerable pressure.

What this means: Demand for general practice continues to rise, while workforce and resource pressures remain significant. Although these challenges can impact waiting times and appointment availability, practice teams continue to adapt and innovate to provide the best possible care for patients.

What hasn't changed

While the way patients access healthcare has evolved over time, the **values** at the heart of general practice remain unchanged. New technologies, different appointment systems, and a broader healthcare team may have changed how services are delivered, but the fundamental purpose of general practice is exactly the same as it has always been: providing high-quality care and support to patients when they need it most.

Our commitment continues to be centred on delivering **safe, compassionate, and effective care** for every patient. Every day, our team works to ensure that clinical decisions are made with patient wellbeing at the forefront, maintaining the highest standards of safety and professionalism.

Equally important is our commitment to treating all patients with **dignity, kindness, and respect**. We recognise that every person who contacts the practice is seeking help, reassurance, or support, often during challenging times in their lives. Taking the time to listen, understand concerns, and work together to find the best solutions remains a vital part of the care we provide.

As a practice, we are also proud of our role within the wider community. Beyond treating illness, we are committed to supporting the long-term health and wellbeing of the people we serve. Whether through preventative healthcare, for example our **Healthy Hearts** campaign, management of long-term conditions, health promotion, or connecting patients with community resources, our focus remains on helping people live healthier and more independent lives.

Although healthcare continues to evolve, our dedication to our patients and community remains constant.

What this means: While the healthcare landscape may change, our commitment to providing safe, compassionate care and putting patients at the centre of everything we do remains as strong as ever.

Looking Ahead

Healthcare continues to evolve, and we recognise that some changes may feel unfamiliar or may not suit everyone. However, many of these developments help us care for more patients safely, improve access to services, and offer greater flexibility to fit modern lifestyles and expectations.

As we look to the future, our focus remains on providing high-quality care while continually reviewing and improving the way we work. We will continue to listen to patient feedback, learn from your experiences, and adapt our services to meet the changing needs of our community.

What this means: While healthcare continues to change, our commitment to improving access, listening to patients, and delivering the best possible care remains unchanged.

MENINGITIS B VACCINE

A free two-dose Meningitis B vaccine will be available for a limited time from the end of July 2026.

Who can get it?

All current Year 13s AND anyone either starting university as an undergraduate or moving into further education halls for the first time in autumn 2026, aged under 25.

Where and when can people get vaccinated?

Meningitis B vaccines will be available at community pharmacies only.

The programme starts in July 2026, giving eligible people time to complete both doses before cases typically rise in the autumn.

Students in the age group for Year 13 will be contacted by the NHS and sent a link through which they can book a pharmacy appointment to get the vaccine.
University and residential further education students who are eligible will be able to arrange a vaccination via participating pharmacies.



https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/

MMR/MMRV VACCINE

NHS England urges those children aged 1-11 years, unprotected against measles, to come forward for their vaccinations.

Around a million families are being urged to protect their children against the spread of measles and other potentially deadly childhood illnesses, as part of a new NHS vaccination drive from July 2026.

Children aged from **12-months to 11 years** old who have **missed one or both doses** of the vaccine, will be invited as part of the NHS England's campaign which runs until March next year.

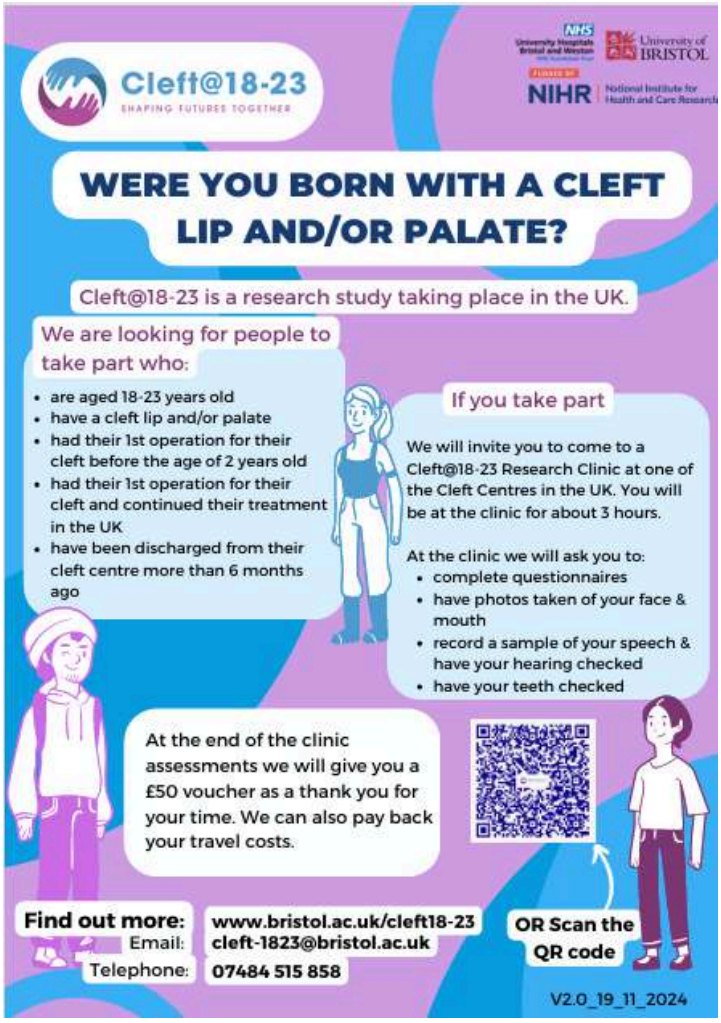
In addition to measles, mumps and rubella, children aged under 6 years old will be offered protection against chickenpox (Varicella) with the MMRV vaccine.
Older children will be invited to catch up on missed MMR vaccines.

Contact us via Anima to check if your child has missed any MMR or MMRV vaccines and to request an appointment to catch up.



Research participation opportunities

Fordingbridge Surgery is involved in health research and from time to time you may be approached to take part. Taking part in research is voluntary: you can freely accept or decline, and this will not affect the care that you receive in any way. Even if you agree to take part, you can still withdraw at any time, without having to provide justification. Participating in or withdrawing from a study will NOT affect the care we provide for you.





Cleft@18-23

If you are aged 18-23 and fulfil the criteria for the Cleft@18-23 study, please do get in touch with them to find out more.

Daisy

The Daisy study is open to parent carers of children with additional development needs.

FRIENDS OF FORDINGBRIDGE SURGERY - PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP

FOFS ARE FUNDRAISING FOR: ECG LEADS

What is an ECG?

An Electrocardiogram (ECG) is a simple, quick, and painless test used to record the electrical activity of the heart. Small sensors called electrodes are placed on the chest, arms, and legs to detect the electrical signals that cause the heart to beat.

An ECG can provide valuable information about:

- Heart rate – how fast the heart is beating.
- Heart rhythm – whether the heartbeat is regular or irregular.
- Signs of heart problems – such as previous heart attacks, reduced blood supply to the heart, or enlargement of the heart.
- Electrical abnormalities – which may affect how the heart functions.

The test usually takes just a few minutes and is commonly used to investigate symptoms such as: chest pain; Palpitations (awareness of your heartbeat); Dizziness or fainting: Shortness of breath.

While an ECG can help identify many heart conditions, the results are often considered alongside a patient's symptoms, medical history, and other tests to provide a complete picture of their heart health.



A set of ECG leads. These are attached to the patient with small sticky pads. The resulting ECG is filed to the patient record for review by the doctor

Nurse Associate Isla demonatrates attaching the ECG leads to Lead Practice Nurse Susie



Friends of Fordingbridge Surgery & Patient Participation Group

Supporting with care, compassion and consideration

Friends of Fordingbridge Surgery

Folds Farm
Charity Open Day

Saturday 15th August 2026
10am - 4pm
Folds Farm
Godshill Wood SP6 2LU

We are delighted to have been invited by Alistair Cutts of Earlcoate to run a stall at his special Charity Day. We will be selling Grand Draw tickets and running a tombola

Raising funds to purchase equipment to benefit the patients of Fordingbridge Surgery

FOFS Patron Mr Ian Newman | fofs.ppg@gmail.com | Registered Charity Number 1094882

Friends of Fordingbridge Surgery

25th Anniversary Supper Evening and Grand Draw

Friday 18th September 2026
6.45pm for 7.15pm
Fordingbridge Town Hall

Our special anniversary celebration will include:
A two-course supper, cooked by Gerald from The Ship
A talk from guest speaker Sally Marsh
The Grand Draw prize draw
Tickets: £25 per person
This promises to be a popular evening, so please reserve your place early by emailing:
fofs.ppg@gmail.com

Raising funds to purchase equipment to benefit the patients of Fordingbridge Surgery

FOFS Patron Mr Ian Newman | fofs.ppg@gmail.com | Registered Charity Number 1094882

Friends of Fordingbridge Surgery & Patient Participation Group

Supporting with care, compassion and consideration

Grand Draw

Tickets £1 each

kindly sponsored by Anna Seymour Beauty Therapy

Available for purchase at FOFS events

Winners to be drawn at the Gala Dinner on Friday 18th September

Prizes

1st Prize £500.00

sponsored by Adrian Dowding Estate Agent and Kiteleys Solicitors

2nd Prize £200.00

sponsored by Earlcoate Construction and Plant Hire

3rd Prize £100.00

sponsored by Jonathan Rust Family Funeral Directors and Herrington Coaches

Other prizes include:

Away Resorts, Sandy Balls £150.00 voucher for food and drink at Sandy Balls
No 1 Shaftesbury Street Pizza meal for 2, with drinks, up to £30
Studio KDF £20 voucher from Tina's
A J Bass Opticians Free Eye Test and £50 voucher towards a pair of glasses
Poole Harbour & Islands Cruise Voucher for 4 people
Haynes Motor Museum Voucher for 2 adults and 2 children
Boulder Shack 2 people
New Forest Cycling £50 voucher for cycling
Mottisfont Estate Tickets for 2 adults and 4 children
Roberts Jewellers, Ringwood £100 voucher
Stewarts Nursery £20 voucher
Bournemouth Aviation Museum Tickets for 2 adults and 2 children
Moors Valley Golf Course Complimentary Round of Golf
Swanage Railway Family Freedom Ticket return between Swanage and Norden
Cholderton Farm Rare Breeds Family Ticket
Paula Bancroft - 60 minute Reflexology
Fordingbridge Post Office Stationery

FOFS Patron:
Mr Ian Newman

fofs.ppg@gmail.com

Registered Charity Number 1094882

THE FORDINGBRIDGE SURGERY – DR P DOWNES & PARTNERS

BANK HOLIDAY

THE SURGERY WILL BE **CLOSED** ON THE

MONDAY
31 AUGUST 2026

When the surgery is closed, and you need urgent medical advice please call

Out of Hours Service - 111

Or

In an emergency please dial - 999

When dropping off or collecting prescriptions please check the collection dates carefully
Please give the dispensary at least 5 working days when reordering medicines

Thank You

NHS THE FORDINGBRIDGE SURGERY

Autumn 2026
'Flu Vaccination Clinic Dates

Saturday 3rd October 2026
Saturday 10th October 2026

If eligible, you will also be offered a covid vaccination

Please use your booking link, or use Telephone Option 5,
Monday - Thursday 9am -12 noon



Appointments available soon!

SbPuRT social blister pack recycling team
www.spurt.uk

FORDINGBRIDGE GREENER LIVING

Blister Pack Recycling Scheme

We are pleased to announce the continuing success of our blister pack collection events!

Our 2026 events will be on

Saturday 18th July 2026
No collection in August
Saturday 19th September
Saturday 17th October
Saturday 21st November
No collection in December
in Avonway Annexe, from 10am - 12 Noon
alongside the Repair Cafe

A reminder that empty, mixed material (plastic and foil) medication blister packs will be accepted, with a donation of £1 per 100 packs.
Your help is much appreciated.

Repair Café

fofs Friends of Fordingbridge Surgery

NHS THE FORDINGBRIDGE SURGERY

TWO BRIDGES

providing transport services for medical appointments

VOLUNTEERS

WE NEED YOU

COORDINATORS WANTED

DRIVERS WANTED

Call: **07391 804222**
E: TwoBridges@fordingbridge.com

AREAS COVERED
ALDERHOLT • DAMERHAM
FORDINGBRIDGE • GODSHILL
MARTIN • SANDLEHEATH