

Dear The Grove Surgery family,

Thank you so much for all the support you have given to both me and my colleagues during the 20 years I have had the honour of working at The Grove Surgery. It has been a tremendous privilege to be responsible for the health and wellbeing of so many people who, over the years, became friends and valued members of the wonderfully inspiring Grove Surgery Family. Being part of such a team caring for you all for so long has been a massively important part of my life.

In recent years I put a great deal of passion and energy into moving us from our old, 'quirky' chalet bungalow base and onto the Christchurch hospital site. The motivation for this move was clear –the old building was not fit for purpose and with increasingly stringent CQC guidelines to comply with the continued existence of the practice at the old site would not have been possible. In short the surgery would have been forced to close.

The move to the new premises successfully enabled us to consolidate a firm foundation for the practice to move into the future and I had every intention of continuing to work there until my eventual retirement. However things rarely go to plan do they? Once the move was accomplished everything suddenly changed. I was not looking for an alternative occupation, but was approached to do a part-time senior job for the Dorset Clinical Care Commission. After great deal of deliberation I felt this was a mechanism via which I could influence and improve the delivery of medical care across the wider population of Dorset, whilst continuing to carry out some clinical sessions at a local rest home. It was an opportunity to do a great deal of good and much has been achieved over the last year, which has led to my recent appointment as Medical Director of Dorset HealthCare Trust, which will allow me to pursue my goal to improve care within the NHS across the whole of Dorset.

Dr Gregson and I deliberated at great length over the best way to protect the future of everyone in The Grove Family, including all our staff and our patients. You are all very important to us. After weighing up all the options available we agreed to hand the practice over to Dr Ni'man and his staff because they are a team who have consistently achieved a CQC rating of 'Outstanding' for patient care which is not an inconsiderable achievement in the modern day NHS. It should be remembered that we at the Grove had previously only been awarded a 'Good' rating. Some teething problems during the hand over process is unfortunately inevitable and we hope you will continue to support Dr Ni'man's team during the transition.

While I still have regrets about moving on from The Grove, I do hope you will forgive me. I hope you will appreciate that I now have an opportunity to help a great many more people and I feel that it is my duty to do that to the very best of my abilities.

Dr Gregson and I, and the whole team at The Grove, appreciate your support over the last 20 years, not only your friendship but also your willingness to accept our rather low-tech and old fashioned 'family based' approach to general practice. Thank you for your continued support of The Grove Surgery team going forward and I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

*Dr Stephen Tomkins*