

Public Consultation and Proposal to close Pilsley Surgery

Summary of Proposal

Background

Staffa Health is a GP Practice in Derbyshire with 16,850 registered patients. It comprises the primary site in Tibshelf and three branch surgeries in Holmewood, Pilsley and Stonebroom.

In common with other Practices throughout the country Staffa Health has experienced a reduction in the number of GPs working for the Practice and recruitment to vacant GP posts has been challenging for over 3 years. Alongside this the Practice has experienced an increase in its registered population due to new housing developments in its the catchment area.

While the lack of recruitment of GPs has caused the Practice to consider how it is operating over multiple sites, the Practice also has aspirations to redesign the way it delivers care to its patients in line with the new longer term NHS Strategy.

A reduction in the number of sites would lead to the longer term sustainability of the Practice because it would allow a redesign of some aspects of care delivery by co-locating staff on fewer sites.

Examples of the benefits that a reduction in the number of sites would bring include:

- Ability to improve access to same day urgent care through a re-designed urgent care model that puts the GP at the centre of the process and involves a range of multi-disciplinary team members seeing and treating patients. The GP would triage the majority of patients and be responsible for the supervision and debrief of the team involved with providing the direct care.
- Greater ability to skill-mix and develop a high quality workforce.
- Greater ability for the Practice to maintain and expand its Training Practice commitments of supporting doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other clinical practitioners in training, by having a GP responsible for the supervision of more than one trainee on a larger site. This increases appointments for patients and also supports the training and development of a future Primary Care workforce.
- Fewer sites makes the Practice a more attractive place to work as a GP due to a more supportive and less isolated working environment which is likely to improve recruitment and retention.
- Fewer sites makes the Practice a more attractive Practice to join as a Partner due to a more supportive and less isolated working environment and reduced capital investments costs.
- Ability to review timing of GP and nurse sessions which could enable appointments during lunch times and/or earlier in the morning benefiting both patients and staff.
- Improved continuity of care for patients as staff are stretched less thinly across fewer sites.

- Arrangements for call answering, administration and reception staffing can be reviewed leading to improvements and reduced waiting times on the telephone for patients making enquiries and bookings.

The Practice therefore submitted an application to the Hardwick Clinical Commissioning Group Primary Care Co-commissioning Committee in March 2019 to close the Pilsley Surgery to allow it to operate from fewer sites. The Primary Care Co-Commissioning Committee considered the application on Wednesday the 20th March 2019. The Committee confirmed that the branch closure was agreed 'in principle' subject to patient, staff and stakeholder engagement taking place. The Committee suggested an engagement period of 60 days due to the work involved in a full engagement process.

The Committee requested a follow up report with the results and feedback received from the patients, staff and stakeholder engagement. This is to include evidence of the Practice acting on any reasonable recommendations made during the engagement process.

Consultation Process

The 60 day consultation ran from 24th June 2019 to 23rd August 2019. A robust range of feedback approaches was utilised during the Consultation period. These included meetings with staff, stakeholders and the Patient Participation Group. A letter was to all patients explaining the reasoning behind the proposal, with a Frequently Asked Questions sheet and a Questionnaire to allow them to feedback their views. A text message was sent to all Staffa Health patients to raise awareness of the Consultation and give them information about how they could get involved. Three face-to-face drop-in sessions were held at Pilsley Surgery for patients and stakeholders to discuss the proposal and offer their views.

Consultation Response

A total of 951 responses were received by the Practice during the Consultation period. These include:

- 879 responses to the survey
- 51 people attending public drop-in meetings
- 21 letters or email correspondences.
- A petition containing 592 signatures

Feedback from patients and stakeholders has been summarised and a full analysis is presented in the Consultation Report.

The main concerns about the proposal that were raised were:

- Travel and transport - accessing alternative Staffa Health locations
- Car parking pressures

- Access and capacity
- Loss of local Pharmacy
- Loss of other, non-appointment based Primary Care services
- Impact on vulnerable people
- Negative impact on the village
- Increasing village population
- Inappropriate use of other services or not accessing services
- Conflict of interest / the process
- Rationale / information provided in the Consultation
- Carbon footprint
- Availability of other GP services

Patients and Stakeholders also suggested ways that their concerns could be mitigated, for example:

- Workforce – e.g. recruit more GPs or nurses, staff to increase their hours and not retire early, offer better incentives to GPs to join or to stay, train more GPs
- Share reduction in hours across all 4 sites or close a different site
- Transport – e.g. more frequent direct bus service, free transport
- Service redesign – e.g. nurse led service, pop up/mobile surgeries, provide more home visits, video consultations, later Surgery opening times or Saturdays, automatic repeat prescriptions, reduce waiting time for appointments, ensure appointments at other sites fit round bus timetable, co-ordinate appointments so patients don't have to make multiple trips
- Improve facilities at the remaining 3 sites - invest in a new modern facility for Tibshelf, increase car parking provision at other sites, staff to park off-site
- Keep the Surgery open
- Other – e.g. reduce the number of patients who do not turn up for appointments, less paperwork for GPs, increase NHS funding, do not take on new patients, another Practice to take over Pilsley Surgery, community to run the Surgery, enhance the Pharmacy or ensure it stays open, reassurance other surgeries won't close, have a box at Pilsley for dropping prescriptions off
- No solution - not concerned, can't think of a solution, nothing can be done

Practice Decision and Next Steps

The Practice have listened to the feedback raised during the Consultation and heard a number of alternative suggestions that either avoided a closure or reduced the risks associated with the closure.

The Practice has decided to continue the application process to close the Pilsley Surgery as we believe continuing to staff 4 surgeries would mean the sustainability of the overall service would remain at risk. Moving all staff to other sites will make the service more sustainable and allow the Practice to manage patient demand more effectively by implementing new ways of working.

The Practice seeks agreement from the Primary Care Co-Commissioning Committee to close Pilsley Surgery, but to postpone the overall closure for 1 year from the date agreement is given. This time-period will allow us to undertake some work on our premises to increase the number of clinical rooms at Tibshelf and continue to seek solutions to the car parking issues.

During this year-long period we propose to reduce the sessions at Pilsley Surgery to three half days per week or one full day and one half day, depending on staffing availability. We will endeavour to reserve the appointments provided at the Pilsley Surgery for Pilsley patients who would find it difficult to travel to other sites.

Having considered the suggestions that were made in the Public Consultation the Practice will offer the following mitigations to reduce the risks to patients at the point the Surgery closes in full:

- Redesign the service to help the Practice provide an increase in capacity overall e.g. relocating a GP to provide additional capacity to triage demand for same day urgent care
- Work with the Pharmacy to look at ways we could provide some services to patients from the Pharmacy site
- Implement more telephone consultations, on-line and video consultations
- Support patients to access online consultations
- Streamline routine reviews for patients with long term conditions so that the majority of patients will only need to attend for a review once a year for all of their long term conditions and medications
- Ensure appointment timings take into consideration availability of bus travel and transport, and the reliability of the service is accepted as a reason patients may be late to appointments
- Continue to push for improved car parking arrangements at other Practice sites
- Identify new ways of providing supportive and proactive care to our most vulnerable patients such as the frail elderly, mentally ill and those with long term illness
- Continue to invest in an appropriate amount of home visiting capacity to support the housebound and frail elderly and any increase that may arise
- We will not reduce clinical resources. Staff that are currently employed will remain in post, but they will be relocated
- We will continue to try to recruit quality staff to our vacancies
- Continue to review operational models, timing of appointments, appointment types and methods and administration systems to make systems and processes as efficient and effective as possible for patients, improving access wherever possible and reducing the requirement to travel to Surgery
- We will continually monitor the impact of the closure and implement new mitigations or supportive solutions to our Pilsley patients wherever possible.

The report will be presented to Primary Care Co-Commissioning Committee of NHS Derby and Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group in January 2020.

A full copy of the Consultation report can be found here:

<https://www.staffahealth.co.uk/files/2020/01/Pilsley-Surgery-Consultation-Report-Final-30.12.19.pdf>