

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 MARCH 2022

MONUMENT SURGERIES – PENNYWELL BRANCH CCG UPDATE

REPORT OF SUNDERLAND CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Monument Surgeries is a GP Practice run by Sunderland GP Alliance (SGPA) providing GP services to 12,545 patients. The Practice and its branch sites are in Washington (Galleries - main site and Barmston – branch site), and Pennywell (branch site).
- 1.2 In June 2021, NHS Sunderland Commissioning Group (CCG) were made aware of concerns from SGPA regarding the ability to deliver services from Pennywell, citing that they had been unable to find a substantive or a locum GP to work at the Pennywell site, despite implementing different strategies to increase the workforce at the site.
- 1.3 In July 2021 the CCG's Primary Care Commissioning Committee (PCCC) were asked to consider a temporary closure of the Pennywell site and for patients who required an appointment to be seen at South Hylton Surgery. The Committee did not approve a temporary closure as there had been no opportunity to engage with patients, but instead the Committee did approve the ability for patients to be seen temporarily at South Hylton Surgery to ensure they had access to primary medical care. This was a short-term arrangement only (until 5th September) to support the practice over the summer holiday period when it is usually more difficult to get locums. It was also agreed at the Committee that the practice could commence formal engagement with patients and stakeholders about the future of the service.
- 1.4 On 04 October 2021, SGPA commenced a period of engagement with patients and stakeholders (previously brought to H&W Scrutiny Committee) and this engagement period concluded on 26 November 2022. The branch surgery at the commencement of engagement served approximately 2,700 patients.
- 1.5 In December 2021, SGPA submitted an application to the CCG to close the Pennywell branch surgery at the end of March 2022.
- 1.6 The reasons for the application were cited as:
 - Difficulties recruiting and retaining permanent doctors willing to work at the Pennywell branch site in isolation from other staff.
 - Pennywell branch site has been staffed mainly by locums, of which there is a high turnover. This is not good for patients in terms of continuity of care.
 - The cost to run the service has been high due to the use of locums. This was becoming unsustainable for SGPA.

- Nursing time currently covers the other sites, resulting in inadequate and fragmented services at the Pennywell branch surgery and infrequent nurse availability.

2. PRIMARY CARE COMMISSIONING COMMITTEE (PCCC)

- 2.1 In line with our delegated functions, any decision regarding the contracting and commissioning of primary medical care services is taken at the PCCC, which is a statutory committee of the CCG.
- 2.2 The PCCC received a report outlining the options available regarding the application at an extraordinary committee meeting held on 27 January 2022. The report included a copy of the outcome of engagement with patients and stakeholders. The report also included a formal commissioning assessment of the current practice (including access, performance, finance, premises and staffing information) and information about local transport and housing growth and an assessment of capacity within local GP services.
- 2.3 The Committee discussed the impact of the options presented on patients, the SGPA and other local practices and concluded that the only viable option for the practice was to close the Pennywell branch site. The Committee debated the issues that the SGPA had faced getting clinicians to work at the practice and that this is a historical issue which has not improved. The Committee did however agree that the closure would not be able to take place at the end of March as requested, as patients would need time to consider registration options, and local practices would need time to ensure a smooth transition of care for patients. The approved date of closure was therefore agreed to be 31 May 2022.

3. MOBILISATION OF DECISION

- 3.1 The Committee agreed that staff at the practice and patients should be informed of the decision directly prior to the decision being made public. The CCG therefore wrote to patients on 3rd February informing them of the final decision and the next steps to be taken. Stakeholders were also informed of the decision.
- 3.2 A mobilisation group has been set up which meets weekly, and a mobilisation plan has been agreed and is shown in Appendix 1. This is a standard plan that has been used for branch closures throughout the region and follows NHS England and NHS Improvement policy on branch closures. The plan is

assessed at each meeting to ensure all actions are undertaken in line with the plan.

- 3.3 A key component of the plan is the assessment and support for those who are identified as clinically vulnerable. Those identified are being given support to register with an alternative practice to ensure continuity of care. If, by the end of May, those identified individuals have not yet registered with an alternative practice, the CCG will take steps to allocate their care to a local practice, unless they expressly state that they do not wish to be allocated. In those circumstances their care will remain with SGPA and they would need to attend the Galleries or Barmston sites for their care.
- 3.4 As at 28 February 2022, the practice list is now 2170 showing that patients are starting to re-register elsewhere. Re-registrations are being closely monitored so that support can be provided where required. Further letters will be sent to patients over the coming weeks to remind them to register elsewhere. SGPA are holding weekly sessions with patients to support them to complete registration documents. SGPA are also supporting individuals where there are language barriers or who may need support to understand the content of letters.

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