
Closure of Stockton Health Centre [Tithebarn] Update for Stockton Adults Health Select Committee Tuesday 10 October 2017

1. Background

- 1.1. Stockton Health Centre [SHC] is a GP practice with a registered list size of approximately 2,000 patients, delivering core general practice services under an emergency APMS contract until 31 October 2017.
- 1.2. The original APMS contract, which included an unregistered element, was commissioned under the Equitable Access to Primary Medical Care Scheme with the contract running from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2014.
- 1.3. Responsibility for the management and commissioning of the unregistered element of the contract transferred to the CCG on 1 April 2013, with the registered element remaining the responsibility of NHS England.
- 1.4. The CCG determined that the unregistered element would form part of the newly commissioned integrated urgent care service, and the contract was therefore extended to 31 March 2016; with a view to the new service commencing on 1 April 2016.
- 1.5. In July 2015 all out of hours procurements nationally were suspended; which resulted in the commencement of the integrated urgent care service being postponed until 1 April 2017. The CCG extended the contract to 31 March 2017.
- 1.6. The NHSE review of the registered element and option appraisal of the service was considered by the Primary Care Co-Commissioning Joint Committee at its meeting on 18 August 2015; who agreed the importance of retaining a surgery in the area. However, NHSE and the CCGs previous experience of procuring services with such small list sizes through full open market procurements resulted in no successful bids, and it was therefore agreed that a list size of approximately 2,000 patients was not viable as a stand-alone service. The recommendation to procure as a full-time branch surgery of an existing GMS/PMS contract within Stockton was therefore agreed. In addition, and in recognition of the importance of synchronising the unregistered and registered elements of the service, it was also agreed to extend the registered element of the contract to 31 March 2017, in line with that of the unregistered element.

2. Procurement – Full-time branch surgery

- 2.1 An engagement exercise with stakeholders and patients at SHC was undertaken in August 2016 to advise them that from 1 April 2017:-
 - Services for registered and walk-in patients would be separated;
 - Services to registered patients would be retained in the area via a branch surgery of an existing GP practice;
 - The opening hours of the surgery would be 8.00am – 6.30pm Monday to Friday

- 2.2 At their meeting on 13 September 2016, the Stockton Adults Health Select Committee supported and welcomed the proposals to offer the practice as a branch surgery of an existing practice and extend the boundary to the whole of Stockton.
- 2.3 A procurement exercise was undertaken in early January 2017, which resulted in no bids being received. This was followed by a further offer made in early February, which also resulted in no bids being received.
- 2.4 Informal discussions with a number of practices at that time indicated that they did not bid for the practice because it was [a] not considered viable as a full-time branch surgery and [b] they were concerned that it would not be possible to recruit clinical staff to operate from the site full time.
- 2.5 At its meeting on 14 February 2017 the Primary Care Co-commissioning Committee [PCCC] considered two further options – to procure as a part-time branch surgery; or close the practice at the end of the contract [31 March 2017] and disperse the list.
- 2.6 The PCCC remained committed to retaining GP services at SHC and therefore agreed to endeavour to procure a local provider to run a part-time branch surgery. An emergency contract was therefore secured with Elm Tree Surgery, to provide services from 1st April to 30th June 2017; to allow time for further patient engagement to gain their views on the times and days that a part-time branch surgery would best meet their needs.

3. Procurement – Part-time branch surgery

- 3.1. Patient engagement was undertaken in April, following which it was determined that the part-time branch surgery would be delivered 18 hours per week, Monday – Friday as follows;
Monday – afternoon session (12:00 – 18:00) = 6 hours
Tuesday – mid-day session (10:00 – 16:00) = 6 hours
Friday – morning session (08:00-14:00) = 6 hours
- 3.3 The procurement exercise commenced in May; however, as a result of the commencement of Purdah for the General Election on 8 June 2017, the contract with Elm Tree Surgery was extended to 31 August 2017 to allow for the procurement exercise to be completed. This exercise resulted in no successful bids being received.
- 3.4 At its meeting on 11 July 2017 the PCCC considered the three failed procurement exercises, together with the significant implications to patients and practices in Stockton in the event of the practice closure. Following much debate, it was agreed that one further procurement exercise should be undertaken.
- 3.5 The fourth procurement exercise was undertaken immediately with no bids received. The PCCC agreed that the practice should close; and that to ensure a smooth transition for patients and practices, the contract should be extended to 31 October 2017.

4. Closure of the Practice

- 4.1 Patients have been notified of the closure, with advice on registering with alternative practices in Stockton, and some patients have now started registering with these practices;

- 4.2 Seven practices have SHC within their practice boundary, and we are therefore working very closely with them, NHS England and Cleveland LMC to find solutions which ensure a smooth transition for the patients of SHC whilst safeguarding continuity for the practices and their existing patients;
- 4.3 At a meeting on 28 September with representatives from the practices, Cleveland LMC and NHSE a number of operational issues were discussed together with potential solutions, including
- The CCG is arranging additional medicines management resource to support practices with repeat prescriptions and medication reviews;
 - Elm Tree Surgery is working hard to ensure the majority of flu vaccinations are undertaken before 31 October, to relieve pressure on practices taking new patients;
 - The CCG is exploring options for amending the existing payment process, to ensure practices receive funding as early as possible to support their operational plans;
 - Vulnerable patients who remain registered with SHC on 31 October will be allocated a practice. The CCG and practices are exploring options to ensure stability for practices;
 - The CCG, CLMC and practices will work together throughout this period to ensure
- 4.4 A further letter will be sent during week commencing 16 October to those patients still registered at SHC, reiterating the practice closure and the need for them to register with another practice.
- 4.5 In addition, and in order to ensure continuity of care, all vulnerable patients still registered at SHC on 1 November will be advised that they have been allocated to an alternative practice. We are currently discussing options for this allocation process with the practices.