

Outcomes of the Public Engagement

Why we had to undertake the review

Skerne Medical Group, like General Practices around the country, is facing a crisis. We are unable to fill our GP vacancies, caused by retirements, sickness and resignations. Our problems have worsened over the last 16 months when we had to temporarily close one of our branches, and ever since then we have had to reduce services across all of our 4 sites. Our situation has deteriorated further as by February 2019 we will have 40% fewer Doctors than 2.5 years ago. We now face the prospect of having too few GP's to man our four sites even with the reductions in opening we currently offer. The remaining partners in charge of the practice have had to face the fact that we cannot continue to offer the safe quality medical care our patients expect and deserve, with our present model of care.

Thematic Feedback from the Engagement Meetings

In the six week engagement period we held 6 separate public engagement events around the practice area when we outlined the dramatic shortage of GPs we are facing and the difficulties this is causing us. More than 400 people attended the events and many questions and opinions were offered on how we should proceed.

The feedback from our patients had some common themes, as well as some specific issues from particular sites.

In general patients recognised the significant issues faced by Skerne Medical Group and that changes are necessary. Patients expressed concern about appointment availability worsening given the lack of GPs and also the current and future housebuilding. At all sites there was concern about accessing surgeries both from public transport availability and the lack of adequate car parking. There was significant interest expressed in looking towards relocating practices given our situation and both Sedgefield Community Hospital and the old school site in Trimdon Village were discussed.

Sedgefield Themes

- Shortage of appointments
- The concern of an increased patient list due to house building
- Practice boundary changes to limit new registrations
- Lack of significant car parking
- Interest in Sedgefield Community Hospital
- Concern over do not attend appointments (DNA's)
- Transport

Fishburn Themes

- Would prefer to maintain Fishburn site, but felt preservation of whole practice was important and would support this
- Car Parking issues
- DNAs
- Impact on local pharmacy
- Transport

Trimdon Colliery Themes

- Transport concerns to alternative site
- Cost of transport
- Appointment availability
- GP to travel rather than patients

Trimdon Village Themes

- Strong feeling of lack of fairness in suggesting closing their site
- Concern over immediacy of changes versus 4 year implementation
- Access to other site especially the elderly/young parents
- Poorest facilities deserved development
- Recruitment issues not understood as nearby practice has full complement of GPs
- Social deprivation

Decisions of CCG

The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) approved the closure of Trimdon Village Surgery; however they did not approve the closure of the Fishburn Village Surgery on the basis that the letter written to patients on the 18th October 2018 did not specify that the Fishburn Village Surgery was being considered for closure at that point. The CCG therefore concluded that the practice should undertake further engagement in respect of the future of Fishburn Village site.

The CCG also confirmed that the practice should undertake a further review of the whole practice's needs, in order to determine the number of sites the practice requires to ensure its long-term sustainability. This review should include the location of the practice site(s), including the potential for a site in Trimdon Village.

We will be coming out to talk to you again in 2019 to engage in this review. We will communicate to you when we are in a position to do this.