

Patient Participation Group Perspective on the Closure of Priory Avenue Surgery, Caversham on 30 June 2018

The Priory Avenue Patients Group (PPG) notes that The Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has decided to close Priory Avenue Surgery from the 30 June 2018 and we understand the reasons for their decision.

We have been very conscious that an inadequate service at Priory Avenue has put great pressure on neighbouring practices. We are grateful that those practices have now agreed to accept a share of our patients. We also understand that their capacity is limited.

The 4500 Patients living north of the river Thames can express a preference for the Balmore Park surgery (up to 3000 patients) or Emmer Green surgery (up to 1500 patients). They can also apply to 4 other surgeries providing GP services in parts of the area north of the Thames. It remains to be seen how many patients get their preferred choice. The allocation of places at Balmore Park and Emmer Green will be on a "first come first served" basis.

The 1500 patients living south of the river Thames are outside the Balmore Park and Emmer Green catchment areas. They will have to re-register with one of the 11 surgeries providing GP services in their area. There is no facility to express a preference. Most will have to travel further than previously. The smaller nearby surgeries will not have the capacity for all of the 1500 patients.

We have asked for vulnerable and terminally ill patients to be given priority in the choice of surgeries. Registration is described as on a "first come first served" basis with a cut off on 8 June. We are concerned that this puts these groups at a disadvantage.

Patients who miss the cut off date will be allocated a surgery. Patient choice will be severely limited by the capacity of the receiving surgeries. One small surgery with a catchment area covering areas to the north and south of the Thames has recently been granted permission to close its books following a surge in numbers. Other small surgeries may have to do the same.

We would have preferred an arrangement that avoided the need for patients to complete new registration forms with many personal details already contained in the Priory Avenue's records. For patients south of the river we would have preferred a transfer without the need to visit their new surgery for the sole purpose of registration and ID confirmation. We asked for a facility so that these patients could rank their surgery preferences as this would have reduced the risk of overloading some of the smaller surgeries.

We have been assured by the CCG that the many receiving practices and the central office set up to assist Balmore Park, Emmer Green and the Patient Advice and Liaison Service office will be staffed sufficiently to cope with all the extra paperwork and phone enquiries.

As a PPG we shall do our best to assist any patients who ask for help with the transfer process. Arrangements are in hand for helpers to be in the surgery waiting area on many days prior to the cut off. See notice boards and surgery website for details. In conjunction with Healthwatch we have produced a comparative guide to local surgeries.

Help is also promised from Berkshire West's Patient Advice & Liaison Service on 0118 982 2720 and Healthwatch 0118 937 2295.

The PPG are grateful to Dr Vishal Mittal, all the local staff and the 2 High Street pharmacies who have worked hard to provide care through difficult times. We recognise the national shortage of GPs and have worked with OMG and our local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to support the alternative model of care, which seeks to make best use of the skills of the wider clinical team (pharmacists, nurse practitioners and others), and also to promote patient access online.

We have encouraged patient feedback (particularly through the 'Friends and Family Test' returns) and open debate. We have tried to express patient concerns as they have arisen in a constructive manner, seeking resolution not confrontation.

For comparative information about local surgeries whose boundaries overlap the Priory Avenue area see the Healthwatch help sheets at

<http://healthwatchreading.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/NorthBoundaryComparisonTable.pdf>

<http://healthwatchreading.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SouthBoundaryComparisonTable.pdf>

paper copies are available at the surgery. Email prioryavenuePPG@gmail.com for electronic copies.