

UPDATED 13 MARCH 2018

Hightown Village Surgery: Frequently asked questions

Will the GP surgery close?

Unfortunately NHS commissioners have been unable to secure a new provider to deliver services at the practice. The practice will therefore close on 8 June 2018.

Over the next week we will work with local partners to see if there are any services that could be provided within Hightown. We will keep all registered patients and local stakeholders updated.

Will I need a new GP?

We have written to patients to inform them that we are making arrangements for them to transfer care to the GP practice close to where they live. If they do not wish to transfer to the practice allocated to them, they can choose to register with a different GP practice and we will provide details of how to do this.

All medical records will move to the new practice with you so your new GP will have up-to-date information about your care, any treatment you are receiving and any prescribed medicines.

Why can't things just stay as they are?

In February 2016, the contract for primary care medical services at Hightown Village Surgery came to an end. The current contract was an interim arrangement, which was put in place to maintain high quality primary care services whilst NHS commissioners looked at the future delivery of GP services in your area. This contract was due to expire on 31 March 2018; however the current providers have agreed to continue to provide services until 8 June 2018.

We carried out a robust procurement process to find a new provider. Although this was initially successful, the provider has since decided to withdraw their bid. We did not receive any other bids for this contract despite a national advert.

We know this news will be concerning for you and we would like you to know that we have explored all practical options to find a new provider. The current provider has agreed to extend their contract until June to ensure we have enough time to transfer patients to new practices.

Over the next week we will work with local partners to see if there are any services that could be provided within Hightown. We will keep all registered patients and local stakeholders updated.

We told you at the listening events that we wanted our practice to stay open – is this not possible?

We greatly value the time local people took out to tell us their views on the future options for Hightown Village Surgery. Our intention was always to try our utmost to get a new provider in the surgery, which is why we chose to go out to procurement.

We know this news is not what local people wanted to hear, but NHS commissioners have explored all practical options to find a new provider.

NHS Commissioners said the surgery would remain open and they would find a new provider. Why didn't this happen?

It has been our sincere wish to keep the surgery open and we have done everything possible to find a new GP provider. However, we have never been in a position to promise that the surgery would remain open and we have only ever stated our intent to seek a new provider.

We listened to patient feedback and went out to procurement, but we were open and honest from the outset about the risk that a GP provider might not come forward and bid for the contract.

How can the practice close when a new five-year lease has recently been signed for the premises?

It was incorrectly reported within the local community at the time that the signing of a lease had secured the future of the practice. In fact, the leasing of the surgery premises is entirely separate from the procurement of a new provider. NHS England signed a new five-year lease because the previous lease had expired and we were committed to keeping the practice open if we could find a new provider.

By signing the lease, we secured the premises for the existing interim provider so that services could continue while the procurement was underway. This also guaranteed that the premises would continue to be available for a new provider if the procurement process was successful. The lease has a two-year break clause. In the meantime, we will continue to lease the building and consider its future use.

We were told a financial incentive would be offered to potential providers during the procurement process. Did this happen?

Yes, the procurement process included an increased financial offer of 10.49% above standard GMS rates in order to make the contract more attractive to prospective providers. We also stated our intention to make additional funding available to a successful bidder to support the transition.

Why can't you go out to procurement again to find a provider?

There is insufficient time to run a further procurement process as the current interim provider is unable to continue beyond June and a robust procurement process takes at least six months. More importantly, we have already tested the market and this has shown that there is no interest in this contract. Only one bidder came forward and they withdrew. As this

happened in spite of the fact that we spoke to many providers to build interest in this contract and offered additional money to make it more attractive, we do not believe a further procurement would achieve a different outcome.

I am waiting for the results of tests - where will they be sent now? I am worried they are going to be lost.

Procedures around transferring test results and medical records form part of the close down process of the surgery and transfer to your new GP practice.

What happens to the process for repeat prescriptions?

All local pharmacies will be informed about the closure of the practice. Prescriptions issued by Hightown Village Surgery before patients transfer to a new GP Practice would remain valid and could be collected from the pharmacy of your choice in the normal way. Arrangements for repeat prescriptions from your new practice may be different.

What about the elderly and vulnerable patients in Hightown?

The allocation of patients to other practices will be undertaken on a phased basis, with the elderly and vulnerable patients given priority. The dispersal process will be managed in a safe and robust manner. In terms of access to GP services for elderly and vulnerable patients, as is always the case, if patients need to see a GP and are unable to physically make it to the surgery then they can request a home visit. The safe transfer of elderly and vulnerable patients to a new GP provider is and will remain of paramount importance to NHS commissioners.

How will this affect housebound patients?

Patients that are housebound will continue to receive home visits when clinically appropriate. Such patients should see little if any change in these arrangements.

Has the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee been informed?

During the patient listening exercise in April 2017 a range of parties were involved including the Sefton OSC.

It was made clear at all the patient listening events that NHS commissioners believed it would be difficult to secure a long-term GP provider and that a procurement exercise may not result in a provider being found.

However, given the strength of feeling articulated by patients at the events, NHS commissioners listened to patients and undertook a robust and comprehensive exercise to seek a provider. NHS commissioners presented the findings of the patient listening exercise to both the OSC and the Sefton Consultation and Engagement Panel and at that time stressed that if they were unsuccessful in procuring a new provider the only option that would be left to them would be to close the practice and disperse the patients.

As a key stakeholder, the OSC have been informed that sadly we have not been able to find a new provider for the services and there is no other course of action for us to take, other than to allocate the current registered patients to other local GP practices. We have informed them that we will work with local partners to see if there is any other option, which could provide some services at the Hightown Village Surgery.

Can the other local GP practices cope with increased patient numbers?

When a GP practice increases its patient list, the cost to provide access for additional patients is funded by the NHS. Therefore, local GP practices will receive an increased income to enhance their current service to manage the increased demand.

Has the building of new houses in Hightown and the potential impact on patient numbers been considered?

Details about the building of new houses within the locality of Hightown were shared during the procurement exercise with all potential providers. This information was not enough of an incentive to secure a GP provider for the practice as there is no guarantee that the new residents would wish to register at Hightown surgery. Therefore, this would present a risk to any interested provider. This was discussed with patients at the listening events.

It has been suggested that the current caretaker provider, Ashurst Health, felt that it was not financially beneficial for them to bid to continue to provide GP services in Hightown. The reason for this decision was because the procurement process offered no incentive or additional percentage increase to GMS rates?

Please see a statement below from Ashurst Healthcare Ltd:

“During the recent procurement process inviting bids for an APMS contract for Hightown Village Surgery, Ashurst Healthcare Ltd undertook a detailed analysis of the terms and conditions of the contract and considered a range of factors including the available funds and the geography of the practice before deciding not to bid.

“Over the past two years as an interim provider, Ashurst Healthcare Ltd has been heavily subsidised by NHS England to maintain a safe level of service to Hightown residents and we recognise that this is not sustainable. Whilst the available funds included an uplift on the baseline contract value, we did not believe we could provide a safe and effective service at Hightown whilst fulfilling all of the contractual requirements.”

Don't GPs work for the NHS?

No, most GP practices are independent businesses and are contracted by NHS England to provide services for local practice populations.

Is all this just about cut backs to NHS services?

This is not the case at all. NHS commissioners have explored all practical options to find a new provider to deliver services at Hightown Village Surgery.

I want to discuss this decision further, who do I contact?

A dedicated helpline has been established to take queries and comments from patients and members of the public. Please call freephone: 0800 044 8169 or email

Hightownpractice@H2A.Global.

I want to make a complaint – how do I do this?

To make a complaint please contact NHS England on 0300 311 22 33 or email england.contactus@nhs.net To find out more about the complaints process please visit the NHS England website at www.england.nhs.uk.