

# Willows Medical Centre

## Joint Health Scrutiny Committee: 12 July 2016

*Sam Walters, Chief Officer, and Racheal Rees, Head of Primary Care,  
Nottingham North and East Clinical Commissioning Group*

### 1) Purpose of the report

Following an inspection carried out by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on Monday 6 June 2016, The Willows Medical Centre in Carlton was temporarily closed from 7pm on Friday 10 June, until further notice.

The purpose of this report is to provide reassurance to the Joint Health and Scrutiny Committee regarding the availability and quality of primary care following the closure.

This paper will summarise:

- Background to the closure
- Plans to ensure continuity of care for Willows patients
- Communications to patients and the public
- Activation of the continuity plan
- Findings and future plans

**Please note, the CQC is unable to release full details of the findings of the CQC inspections until it has completed the legal process and appeal period. It is expected that the CQC report of the inspection will be available by the end of July.**

### 2) Background information

#### **The Willows Medical Centre**

The Willows Medical Centre is a small general practice in Carlton, Gedling. It has a list size of around 3,500 patients and is located in a purpose built primary care medical centre.

The practice is open from 8am to 6.30pm Monday and Friday, Tuesday 7.30am - 6.30pm, Wednesday 8am - 7.30pm and Thursday 8am - 1pm.

The practice provides a range of medical services, including reviews for asthma, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). It also offers child immunisations, contraception advice and travel health vaccines.

### **The Care Quality Commission**

The CQC is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. Its objective is to ensure that health and social care services provide people with safe effective, compassionate, high-quality care. It monitors, inspects and regulates services to ensure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety, and publishes its findings.

The CQC has been tasked with inspecting all practices in England by the end of 2016. Following this period, it will inspect GP Practices every 3-5 years if a practice has been previously rated good or outstanding. The CQC will visit more frequently if a practice is rated below this or in response to emerging concerns.

Where practices fall short of the expected standards, the CCG/NHS England and Local Medical Committee (LMC) will then work with the practice to offer advice and support to ensure quality improvements.

If the CQC find that care has fallen short of standards, it has an Enforcement Policy which sets out in full the approach taken to address breaches of regulations which may result in several outcomes. Possible enforcement outcomes include:

- Requirement notices
- Warning notices
- Conditions on registrations
- Suspension of registration
- Cancellation of registrations.

### **The CQC and the Willows Medical Centre**

At its last inspection by the CQC in January 2015, the Willows Medical Centre was rated 'Good' across all categories (safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led) and rated 'Good' overall.

However, on Monday 6 June 2016 the CQC conducted an unannounced inspection of the practice in response to a number of concerns that had been raised. After the inspection, CQC inspectors alerted the CCG and NHS England that during the course of the inspection significant quality and safety concerns had been identified.

As a result, and following a period of investigation and internal legal processes, the practice was closed by the CQC at 7pm on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June having been issued a temporary suspension notice for three months.

### **Statement from the CQC regarding the Willows Medical Centre**

*“CQC is taking action to protect the safety and welfare of patients at The Willows Medical Centre, on Church Street, Carlton, Nottingham, following an inspection on Monday (6<sup>th</sup> June). Inspectors visited the surgery following concerns that had been raised and, as a result, urgent enforcement action is being taken.*

*“CQC is working closely with Nottingham North and East CCG and NHS England to ensure any patients of the surgery have access to GP services. While our legal processes do not allow us to go into further detail at this time, we will publish a full report of our findings in due course. Any action CQC takes is open to appeal.”*

**Statement issued by the CCG is added as Appendix 1**

## **3) The CCG's contingency plan**

Where a contract for the provision of GP services is to be temporarily suspended, the CCG's priority is always to ensure that affected patients have ongoing access to good quality care from another provider. The CCG therefore identified practices within a geographical radius and reviewed their suitability in terms of patient choice, capacity and capability to accept additional patients, and compatibility with local clinical systems and pathways.

Three practices (Park House Medical Centre, Peacock Healthcare and Trentside Medical Group) confirmed that they had capacity.. More recently a number of other GP practices have also offered to take on additional patients, including Unity Surgery, Westdale Lane Surgery and Plains View Surgery. Patients are free to choose with which practice they wish to temporarily register.

### **Distance for patients to travel to alternative surgeries**

Park House	(NG4 3DQ)	0.4 miles
Westdale Lane	(NG4 3JA)	0.8 miles
Trentside	(NG4 2NJ)	1 mile
Peacock	(NG4 1HQ)	1.1 miles

## **4) Communication**

A contract suspension requires action to make sure both patients and other local stakeholders are regularly updated about how patient care will be provided during a temporary GP practice closure. There are challenges in managing communications when a GP contract is suspended. For reasons of confidentiality, commissioners are unable to alert other local GP practices and patients about this prior to notice being served (either by the contractor or by the commissioners).

This therefore means that there is a restricted period of time during which the commissioner can alert patients and mobilise other local GP practices to ensure patients continue to be able to access primary care services. Moreover, nothing can be communicated until the suspension order is handed to the practice which in this case was 7pm on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

The CCG prepared its strategy in respect of communication in advance of the decision on 10<sup>th</sup> June and this was amended as appropriate in response to updates from the CQC. The CCG's approach included:

- door posters
- patient letter
- patient Q&A available online and in the temporary practices
- media statement
- stakeholder briefing
- web articles for CCG website and practice website
- social media posts

Information was released to the media on Friday evening to ensure the CCG communicated clear and consistent messages, and to protect patients, stakeholders and the receiving practices should the news break before Monday. Plans were put in place to ensure that any patients who heard the news over the weekend had a helpline number to call for information if required.

Further communication went out on Monday morning to GP Practices, partner CCGs, Local Authorities etc. The CCG also ensured key councillors and the Gedling MP were informed about the situation.

The CCG's communications team received calls from BBC Radio Nottingham and East Midlands Today (EMT) over the weekend and the Nottingham Post ran the story on its website on the Monday.

On Monday morning Radio Nottingham interviewed Sam Walters on the breakfast show. EMT ran the story on the local morning news. EMT and Notts TV both visited the Willows Medical Centre on Monday morning where they interviewed Director of Operations, Hazel Buchanan, about what patients should do. They then spoke to patients and headed to Park House where interviews were arranged with Park House GP Dr Ian Campbell.

## 5) The activation of the contingency plan

Immediately following the announcement of the temporary closure of the Willows Medical Practice the CCG activated its contingency management plan. All patients who had appointments booked for the following week were contacted directly from 7pm on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June to cancel their appointments and inform them of the new arrangements for their care. Posters were placed on the front doors of the surgery in the event that a patient arrived at the practice premises.

On Monday morning (13<sup>th</sup> June) CCG staff were deployed to both the Willows Medical Centre and all three receiving practices (Park House, Peacock and Trentside) to provide support and manage patient queries. Patients began responding on Monday morning, attending local practices to temporarily register.

The CCG team at the Willows Medical Centre ensured answerphone messages were changed, checked the administration, post etc and made sure that any outstanding treatments, prescriptions awaiting collection and appointments were dealt with. Patients who were due at clinics, had received letters from the hospital etc were contacted to ensure they knew about the alternative arrangements and could book appointments at one of the other practices.

A CCG helpline was established and phone calls to the Willows Medical Centre were diverted to this line which was then open from 8am to 7pm throughout the first week. The helpline is staffed by members of the CCG's Patient Experience Team and will continue to operate during office hours over the next few weeks/months.

High risk patients were identified – those nearing the end of life, those with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, those with significant mental health issues, and those in local care homes. Additional clinical support to register temporarily at an alternative practice was provided to these patients as required by a range of stakeholders e.g. learning disabilities lead nurse, community nursing teams and carer agencies.

The response of the receiving practices has been extremely positive and additional staff has been recruited to support the increase in demand and workload. All practices have been welcoming of the new patients. Peacock Practice Patient Participation Group members for example helped out on the door welcoming Willows patients to their practice.

The CCG remains in daily contact with the practices who are taking the majority of the Willows Medical Centre patients. The process to review patient records and data continues to ensure nothing is missed. Any concerns identified are reported to the CQC as part of their ongoing processes.

The CCG has identified funding to support the receiving practices to ensure they have access to the resources they require in order to be able to manage the sudden increase in demand.

### **Helpline Calls**

The CCG helpline has handled approximately 165 contacts from 7pm on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016 to date. The main telephone for Willows Medical Practice continues to be diverted to the helpline to enable callers contacting the practice to be dealt with and signposted on accordingly.

The main themes identified by patients are:

- Access to repeat prescriptions – those already in the system and those imminently required.
- How to access alternative practices – is registration necessary? Which practices are taking on patients?
- Requests for additional information – how long closed for, do I need to register elsewhere etc.
- General concerns and administration queries.

It should be noted that for the main part patients have been extremely accommodating and understanding of the situation.

## **6) Findings and future plans**

GP practices in Carlton and Netherfield have successfully mobilised to meet the primary healthcare needs of local people following the temporary closure of the Willows Medical Centre. Patients from the Willows Medical Centre benefit from a good choice of GP practices with whom to temporarily register. Some practices offer extended opening times and there are no 'closed' lists.

The outcome of the CQC inspection is not yet known. The practice will be re-inspected by the CQC prior to the end of the three month temporary suspension period. At this time there are a number of potential outcomes as follows. The practice may:

- re-open in special measures to monitor sustainability of improvements made;
  - have the suspension extended to enable the required improvements to be achieved;
- or
- registration will be cancelled leading to permanent closure.

The CCG's Quality Team is currently working with the Willows Medical Centre to support the development and implementation of an improvement action plan.

In the event of the practice re-opening, patients who wish to return to the Willows Medical Centre will be supported to do so. However, patients who choose to remain permanently registered at an alternative practice will not be required to return to the care of the Willows Medical Centre.

In the event of a permanent practice closure, the CCG will consider all available options in order to determine the most appropriate course of action to ensure the on-going provision of high quality primary care services for patients previously registered at the Willows Medical Centre.

Currently, the CCG's priority is to ensure that Willows Medical Centre patients are being looked after and receiving high quality, safe and compassionate care. We await the CQC report and final decision.

## Appendix 1

Patients registered with The Willows Medical Centre in Carlton are being advised to contact one of four other local practices if they need an appointment with a GP or practice nurse.

Following a recent inspection by the Care Quality Commission, **The Willows Medical Centre in Carlton temporarily closed from 7pm on Friday 10 June**, until further notice. During this time the surgery cannot provide any appointments or repeat prescriptions.

As the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) responsible for planning and commissioning health care services in the area, NHS Nottingham North and East CCG's key priority is to ensure that all the patients registered with The Willows Medical Centre continue to have access to local, high quality GP services during this time.

From Monday 13 June, patients who need an appointment with a GP or practice nurse, or a prescription, can contact one of the following neighbouring practices:

**Park House Medical Centre**

61 Burton Road  
Carlton  
Nottingham  
NG4 3DQ  
Tel: 0115 940 4333

**Peacock Healthcare**

428 Carlton Hill  
Carlton  
Nottingham  
NG4 1HQ  
Tel: 0115 958 0415

**Netherfield Medical Centre**

2a Forester Street  
Netherfield  
Nottingham  
NG4 2NJ  
Tel: 0115 961 4583

**Westdale Lane Surgery**

20-22 Westdale Lane  
Gedling  
Nottingham  
NG4 3JA  
Tel: 0115 961 3968 (2 lines)

All patients registered with The Willows Medical Centre will be sent a letter advising them of the temporary closure and signposting them to the alternative practices. A Question and Answer sheet is available on the Nottingham North and East website - [www.nottinghamnortheastccg.nhs.uk](http://www.nottinghamnortheastccg.nhs.uk)

Patients with appointments booked within the next week are also being contacted by telephone.

Sam Walters, Chief Officer, Nottingham North and East CCG, says: "As commissioners of GP services in Gedling, our priority is ensuring patients affected by this closure have



access to high quality, safe and compassionate care. To enable this, we will support Park House, Peacock and Netherfield to ensure they have the capacity and GP provision to meet patients' needs.

"We are working closely the CQC and NHS England team to address the issues highlighted in the CQC inspection. If patients wish to discuss any concerns regarding the surgery closure they should contact our Patient Experience Team."

Patients with queries or concerns can contact the Patient Experience Team at Nottingham North and East CCG by email: [pet@nottinghamnortheastccg.nhs.uk](mailto:pet@nottinghamnortheastccg.nhs.uk) or calling 0800 028 3693 (Option 2).