

Newark Hospital's Urgent Treatment Centre Opening Hours

Briefing for Nottinghamshire Health Scrutiny Committee

April 2024

1 Introduction

Since March 2020, the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) within Newark Hospital has been operating between 9am to 10pm (last patient admitted at 9.30pm). These hours have been in place on a temporary basis since March 2020, when the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic made issues with safely and sustainably staffing the UTC worse than they had previously been.

It is acknowledged that the continued temporary arrangements do not provide the certainty that Newark residents expect. At the meeting which took place on 20 June 2023, the Nottinghamshire Health Scrutiny Committee reiterated the importance of arriving at a sustainable solution at the earliest opportunity.

NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (SFH) have overseen a comprehensive programme of work develop a sustainable solution for the opening hours of the UTC at Newark Hospital.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the process to date, confirm the ICB's decision on the future opening hours of the UTC and describe the next steps.

2 Urgent care provision in Newark

Urgent care involves any non-life-threatening illness or injury needing urgent' attention. These are usually dealt with by phone or online consultation to NHS 111, pharmacy advice, out-of-hours or 'same day' GP appointments, or care at an Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC).

It is important to reiterate that *urgent care* is distinct and different to *emergency care*.

Emergency care involves life-threatening illnesses or accidents which require immediate treatment from the ambulance service (via 999) and must be co-located with appropriate life-sustaining support infrastructure e.g. high dependency and critical care and specialist diagnostics. In Nottinghamshire our Emergency Care (Accident & Emergency or A & E) Departments are based at Kings Mill Hospital and Queen's Medical Centre.

The Newark UTC is and will continue to be a key element of urgent and emergency care available to local people – alongside NHS 111, community pharmacies, out of hours and 'same day' GP appointments, 999 and A&E. It delivers everything that the national NHS specification for UTCs¹ requires.

3 The process

This section describes the outcomes of the Listening Exercise, Clinical Senate review, and Options Appraisal process which were considered by the ICB Board in their decision making process. The first two elements have already been reported to the Health Scrutiny Committee on 12 December 2023.

¹ [NHS England » Urgent treatment centres – principles and standards](#)

3.1 Listening exercise

The ICB undertook an extensive listening exercise to help shape thinking on the future UTC opening hours. The overarching aim of the listening exercise was to gather the perspectives of both citizens and stakeholders in relation to urgent care services currently provided and accessed in Newark and surrounding areas. This can be broken down into the following objectives:

- To understand whether the current opening hours of the Newark UTC were appropriate to meet local need, or if there could be a different way to spread the opening hours over the day.
- To check that the other ways to access urgent care overnight are working as expected.

The listening exercise began on 4th September 2023 and concluded on 17th October 2023. A range of different methods were used to listen to citizens and stakeholders, to understand their views. This included:

- Briefings with elected members
- Community group visits
- Six public events (four face to face and two virtual)
- Survey (online/paper)
- Social media

In total, 1,932 individuals participated.

Key findings of the listening exercise were:

- 70.5% of survey respondents disagreed that the current opening hours of the service are suitable. A similar view was heard in public meetings and when visiting community groups.
- The majority of people we heard from through our various methods told us that they would like Newark UTC to be open 24 hours and/or an Accident and Emergency Department.
- If the UTC was to remain open 13 hours a day, there was no consensus to whether the opening hours should stay as they are, open earlier in the morning and close later in the evening, or open later in the morning and close later in the evening.
- Some people suggested extending the opening hours beyond the current 13 hours.

3.2 Feedback from the East Midlands Clinical Senate

An independent review by the East Midlands Clinical Senate took place on 18th October 2023. Clinical Senates are a source of independent and objective clinical advice and guidance to local health and care systems, to assist them to make the best decisions about healthcare for the populations they represent. The review was based on an evidence pack of relevant data along with a panel discussion with representatives from both the ICB and SFH. The preliminary findings of the listening exercise were also shared as part of the panel discussion. Panel members supplemented their evidence gathering on the day with a site visit to the UTC and met with UTC staff.

The panel recommended that the UTC at Newark Hospital should not operate 24 hours per day, and that Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB and SFH should decide what times they must be available based on activity levels and available staffing to ensure good use of resources. This should include consideration of an appropriate amount of time for staff at the end of their shift after the UTC has closed.

3.3 Options appraisal

In line with NHS England guidance², an independently convened and run Options Appraisal process was undertaken on 29 and 30 November, and 21 December. As part of the Options Appraisal, a structured approach to identifying and filtering a broad range of options was completed. The Options Appraisal process initially assesses a comprehensive range of possible configurations for delivering the agreed model of care against a set of evaluation criteria before ultimately identifying a preferred option or options.

The Options Appraisal Panel included members representing clinical, public health, primary care, commissioning, operational, communications and engagement expertise. It also included advocates representing patients, public and the voluntary and community sector

These independently facilitated workshops ensure process rigor and avoidance of bias. The format of each workshop was shaped by the guiding principles from the HM Treasury Green Book³.

4 Future opening hours of Newark UTC

On 14 March 2024, the ICB Board considered this evidence and made a decision to extend the opening hours at Newark Hospital's UTC. The UTC will open between 8am – 10.30pm (last patient admitted 9.30pm) seven days a week. The UTC will be open for 14.5 hours, exceeding the 12-hour minimum national standard for UTCs set by NHS England and the current temporary arrangements.

Staff working at the Urgent Treatment Centre have been actively engaged as part of the conversations about the service. They have welcomed the clarity and certainty that the decision on the Centre's permanent opening hours has brought.

5 Next steps

It is anticipated that the new hours will be mobilised from Summer 2024.

The findings from the listening exercise indicate that there is some confusion with citizens in Newark around understanding how and when to access services for emergency care and also urgent care needs. In line with the implementation of the improved hours, a communications campaign will be launched to inform citizens about the permanent opening hours of Newark UTC and about local urgent and emergency care services, with details about which should be accessed based on health need. This will include the following online and offline methods:

- Door to door leaflet drop
- Bus stop advertising
- Print and digital adverts (Newark Advertiser)
- Digital screens in GP practices
- ICB and SFH websites
- Facebook advertising
- Via partners and stakeholders

As per the recommendations from the Clinical Senate, further work will be undertaken in 2024/25 to ensure the name 'Urgent Treatment Centre' is fully adopted across the Newark Hospital site, road signs on the approach to the hospital, as well as on relevant websites, the directory of services and all other communications (both for internal and external stakeholders) about the service.

² NHS England. 2018. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/planning-assuring-delivering-service-change-v6-1.pdf>

³ [The Green Book \(2022\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60222/green-book-2022.pdf) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The ICB will continue to assess the impact of the extended operating hours, monitoring usage and reviewing patient feedback to ensure a responsive service to local people.