

Covid-19 response: Extension of temporary overnight closure of Newark Urgent Care Centre

24 June 2020

Dear colleague,

I want to take this opportunity to update you on some important news about Newark Hospital and our response to the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19).

You will be aware we continue to face an unprecedented challenge in our response to Covid-19 and we are making careful decisions about how we manage our workforce and services to ensure we provide care where it will be needed the most.

As part of our Trust-wide response to Covid-19, the Urgent Care Centre at Newark Hospital was closed between 10pm and 9am from Monday 6 April for an initial three month period. We have now agreed with our commissioners to extend the overnight closure for a further six month period from Monday 6 July (with the last attendances at 9.30pm).

The principle reasons for the initial change were due to workforce pressures and patient care. We did not believe we would have been able to guarantee we could safely continue to staff Newark UCC overnight, whilst also providing the level of staff required to care for Coronavirus patients across the Trust. Whilst the number of Covid positive patients we are caring for has reduced, we are now addressing the more complicated issue of safely restoring services.

At the time of writing we do not anticipate the current issues around staffing to ease in the near future, with the impact of antibody testing for all colleagues and the potential for groups of colleagues to be required to isolate as part of Test and Trace protocols making it difficult to plan staffing levels with confidence. This decision was taken with the full agreement of clinical colleagues at Sherwood.

These changes will help us to continue to centralise our colleagues out of hours and will ensure we give the best care possible to the patients that need it the most.

We know the number of patients seen overnight at Newark is traditionally low and was reducing further at the start of the pandemic, and we thank partners and colleagues for safely helping us introduce these measures. The changes have been well supported, and we are not aware of any patient harm as a result of the current overnight closure.

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As before, the alternative to this planned approach would have been to attempt to continue to open the UCC overnight in the knowledge we may have to close it overnight at short notice on a regular basis depending on staffing levels. This would naturally be a very unstable model and would be confusing for patients and colleagues alike.

We have always worked closely with CCG colleagues and other health partners regarding our service offer at Newark Hospital and in this instance we are collectively agreed this is in the best interest of patients and the overall health services in our area. Patients can always get urgent support for their health needs through accessing 111 online or over the phone.

Newark Hospital remains a key part of the overall emergency care service at Sherwood Forest Hospitals, and we have also introduced new services at Newark including some elective surgery and outpatient appointments. We restarted elective surgery at Newark Hospital on 10 June which is before we have been able to at King's Mill.

Anyone who needs urgent care between 9.30pm and 9am is asked to attend their next nearest Urgent Care facility or to access NHS111 online or over the phone for advice. The 111 service will be able to provide advice about whether patients need an overnight consultation and get clinical advice where required. In an emergency, you should phone 999.

We continue to face an extremely difficult period of time. I am proud of the response of colleagues at Sherwood and from our wider partners and we will get through this by working together.



Richard Mitchell
Chief Executive
Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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