

Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 July 2019

Skerne Medical Group



Report of Corporate Management Team

Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships

Electoral division(s) affected:

Bishop Middleham and Cornforth; Sedgefield; Trimdon and Thornley

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To update the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on proposals for consultation/engagement by Skerne Medical Practice in respect of the development of options for future service provision across the practice locality.

Executive summary

- 2 The Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has previously met to consider plans and proposals by Skerne Medical Group regarding problems facing the group in respect of the recruitment and retention of GPs as well as existing GP staffing capacity.
- 3 The Committee met and considered consultation and engagement plans for the aforementioned proposals and also made representations to the North Durham and DDES CCG Primary Care Committee in respect of plans to close branch services at Fishburn and Trimdon Village.
- 4 The Primary Care Commissioning Committee met on 18 December 2018 and agreed that:
 - (i) The proposal for the closure of Trimdon Village be supported on the grounds that:
 - The premises are in a poor state of repair.
 - Clinicians working there are more isolated than they are in other premises.

- The impact on the population has to be weighed against the risk of the entire practice failing.
 - The practice will continue to offer general medical services to the population including home visiting where appropriate.
- (ii) That the proposal to close Fishburn Village surgery be rejected on the grounds that this was not included in the original letter and so we do not consider all patients were adequately consulted.
- (iii) That the Practice (Skerne Medical Group) conduct an urgent review regarding the medium to long term future of the surgery sites. Their patients must be engaged in this process and the process should be completed within 6 to 12 months of this meeting. Any future emergency branch closure will involve an engagement exercise with their patients. Any future service delivery model options appraisal process must include Trimdon Village.
- 5 The decision of the Primary Care Committee was reported to the Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC at a special meeting held on 14 January 2019.
- 6 Following consideration of the decision of the Primary Care Committee and following concerns at the lack of availability of appointments at the Fishburn Branch, the Committee wrote to Skerne Medical Group and DDES CCG.
- 7 In noting the decision of the Primary Care Committee, Councillors remained concerned about the continued provision of GP services in the locality. The committee noted the third recommendation of the Primary Care Commissioning Committee in Common that “the Practice (Skerne Medical Group) conduct an urgent review regarding the medium to long term future of the surgery sites. Their patients must be engaged in this process and the process should be completed within 6 to 12 months of this meeting. Any future emergency branch closure will involve an engagement exercise with their patients. Any future service delivery model options appraisal process must include Trimdon Village.”
- 8 In view of this third recommendation, the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee sought assurances that as part of the aforementioned review, any future service model options developed and to be subject to patient and stakeholder engagement be brought back to the Committee for consideration and that local County Councillors are engaged in this consultation process at an early stage also.

- 9 The Committee also asked that any service model options that are developed be brought back to the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee together with the communications and consultation plans and associated timescales.
- 10 Representatives of Skerne Medical Group will be in attendance to provide members with a presentation setting out the proposed plans for patient and stakeholder consultation together with the options for future service model that are planned to be consulted upon.

Recommendations

- 11 The Committee is asked to receive this report and presentation and comment on proposals for consultation/engagement by Skerne Medical Practice in respect of the development of options for future service provision across the practice locality.

Background

- 12 At its meeting held on 15 November 2018 the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted recent press coverage of plans to reduce service provision across the Skerne Medical Group, specifically the potential reduction in the number of branch sites served by the practice.
- 13 The Committee receive a report from representatives of the Skerne Medical Group detailing problems facing the group in respect of the recruitment, retention and current GP staffing capacity.
- 14 The Committee were advised by Dr Hearmon, one of the practice GPs, that despite the practice's best efforts in respect of the recruitment of GPs, it faces a reduction of 35% in GP manpower compared to October 2016 due to resignations, retirements and sickness which will reduce GP available appointment time by 40% in February 2019.
- 15 The practice commenced a patient and stakeholder engagement process on 5 November 2018 and have written to all patients advising them of the problems facing Skerne Medical Group and have held a series of public meetings to enable patients to discuss these issues.
- 16 The Committee heard representations from a number of local Councillors who expressed concerns at the public engagement process, especially the lack of detail in respect of the dates, times and locations of the public meetings in the letter sent to patients.

- 17 The practice explained that it had initiated a review of all four surgeries from which they currently provide services; Sedgefield, Fishburn, Trimdon Village and Trimdon Colliery, commencing with a review of whether Trimdon Village surgery and one additional site, to be determined after the engagement period, can remain open from 2019 on the current and projected staffing levels.
- 18 In view of this the Committee at its meeting on 15 November 2018 recommended that the potential for continued GP provision within Trimdon Village should form a key part of this proposed review and any option for future services developed as part of the review.
- 19 Representatives of the practice attended a special meeting of the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 December 2018 when a verbal update was provided to members of the Committee regarding the key findings of the patient and stakeholder consultation and engagement exercise undertaken in respect of the proposed closure of practice branch sites.
- 20 Key considerations and comments noted by members at the meeting included:
- The difficulties experienced by the practice in terms of the dramatic shortage of GPs the practice faces and that by February 2019 the practice will have 40% fewer doctors than 2½ years ago and feels unable to safely staff four separate sites.
 - The response rates and levels of engagement in the process with over 400 people attending the engagement events and the 70 comments received via the practice website.
 - The generic issues raised during the engagement process as well as specific issues regarding each individual site.
 - The GP resource now available at the Skerne Medical Group has reduced since the initial report to Committee on 15 November from 5 GPs to 3 which has compounded the problems.
 - Following consideration of the engagement feedback and responses, members are aware that the practice are proposing to close the Fishburn and Trimdon Village sites and retain the Sedgefield and Trimdon Colliery sites.
 - The Committee are concerned that one of the sites proposed to close had the second largest practice list (Fishburn) and included half of the registered patients from Trimdon Village who had previously been encouraged to use the Fishburn site.

- The limited evidence to explain the rationale for closing the two sites from a patient perspective.
 - The absence of any detailed medical needs assessment having been carried out across the 4 sites based upon patient contacts and any associated risk assessments regarding the proposed change including accessibility, car parking and availability of public transport as part of the options appraisal process.
- 21 The Committee reaffirmed its previous recommendation to the Skerne Medical Group that the potential for continued GP provision within Trimdon Village should form a key part of the practice's proposed review and any option for future services developed as part of the review.
- 22 The Committee also contested the adequacy of the consultation as the letter sent to all patients on the practice lists contained conflicting information regarding lack of mention of a second potential site closure which was publicised on the Practice website and provided at the engagement meetings.
- 23 The concerns raised by the Committee were communicated to the Practice by letter. Durham Dales Easington and Sedgefield CCG were copied into this correspondence to ensure that the views of the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee were communicated to the Primary Care Commissioning Committee when it met on 18 December 2018.
- 24 The Primary Care Commissioning Committee met on 18 December 2018 to consider applications from Skerne Medical Group to close the Branch sites at Trimdon Village and Fishburn. Following representations made by the practice, local Councillors, patients and stakeholders including the County Council's Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Primary Care Commissioning Committee agreed that:-
- (i) That the proposal for the closure of Trimdon Village be supported on the grounds that:
- The premises are in a poor state of repair.
 - Clinicians working there are more isolated than they are in other premises.
 - The impact of the population has to be weighed against the risk of the entire practice failing.

- The practice will continue to offer general medical services to the population including home visiting where appropriate.
- (ii) That the proposal to close Fishburn Village surgery be rejected in the grounds that this was not included in the original letter and so we do not consider all patients were adequately consulted.
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- 25 The decision of the Primary Care Committee was reported to the Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC at a special meeting held on 14 January 2019.
- 26 Following consideration of the decision of the Primary Care Committee and following concerns at the lack of availability of appointments at the Fishburn Branch, the Committee wrote to Skerne Medical Group and DDES CCG.
- 27 In noting the decision of the Primary Care Committee, Councillors remained concerned about the continued provision of GP services in the locality. The committee noted the third recommendation of the Primary Care Commissioning Committee in Common that “the Practice (Skerne Medical Group) conduct an urgent review regarding the medium to long term future of the surgery sites. Their patients must be engaged in this process and the process should be completed within 6 to 12 months of this meeting. Any future emergency branch closure will involve an engagement exercise with their patients. Any future service delivery model options appraisal process must include Trimdon Village.”
- 28 In view of this third recommendation, the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee sought assurances that as part of the aforementioned review, any future service model options developed and to be subject to patient and stakeholder engagement be brought back to the Committee for consideration and that local County Councillors are engaged in this consultation process at an early stage also.
- 29 The Committee also asked that any service model options that are developed be brought back to the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee together with the communications and consultation plans and associated timescales.

- 30 Representatives of Skerne Medical Group will be in attendance to provide members with a presentation setting out the proposed plans for patient and stakeholder consultation together with the options for future service model that are to be consulted upon.

Considerations

- 31 Members are asked to consider the Skerne Medical Group's consultation and engagement proposals, including the proposed dates, times and locations for consultation and engagement events.
- 32 The Committee is also asked to consider the future service model options set out in the presentation.

Main implications

Consultation

- 62 Skerne Medical Group will report upon their proposals for formal patient and stakeholder engagement on the future service model options.

Legal

- 63 This report has been produced in accordance with the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and wellbeing boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 as they relate to the National Health Service Act 2006 governing the local authority health scrutiny function.

Conclusion

- 64 The initial media articles and subsequent patient and stakeholder consultation and engagement have raised concerns amongst local residents and Durham County Councillors regarding the future of GP services across the Skerne Group locality.
- 65 The Committee has previously considered the Skerne Medical Group proposals alongside the initial findings of the patient and stakeholder consultation and engagement. The concerns of the Committee have been reported to the DDES CCG Primary Care Commissioning Committee whose decision on the issue is set out in paragraph 25 of this report.
- 66 In light of the decision of the DDES CCG Primary Care Commissioning Committee held on 18 December 2018 and the subsequent representations made by the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to receive this report and consider the Skerne Medical Group proposals for patient and stakeholder consultation and engagement as well as the future service model options being consulted upon.

Background papers

- Agenda, Minutes and Reports to the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 15 November 2018, 4 December 2018 and the special meeting held on 14 January 2019.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

This report has been produced in accordance with the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and wellbeing boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 as they relate to the National Health Service Act 2006 governing the local authority health scrutiny function.

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

The proposals for patient and stakeholder engagement by Skerne Medical Group are detailed within the attached presentation.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

An Equality Impact Assessment has previously been carried out by the practice and was reported to the Primary Care Commissioning Committee.

Human Rights

Not applicable

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

Not applicable

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

Not applicable