

Business Case - Proposed Closure of Byers Green Surgery St. Andrew's Medical Practice

Introduction

The practice has operated a branch surgery at Byers Green for many years now. The service was originally four mornings per week but in latter years this has reduced to two mornings per week.

The branch surgery is rented from Living and is a small building with one consulting room, a waiting area and toilets. It is not staffed and there is no IT. Patients book an appointment slot for a Tuesday or Friday morning. The patient's details (recent results and consultations) are printed at the main surgery and taken to the branch by the attending GP. A maximum of 6 patients can be seen.

The branch has no facilities for investigations or treatment and only a basic consultation can be carried out. For any further investigations, e.g. examination, blood tests, ECG, spirometry, immunisations etc. the patient must attend the main surgery.

The use of the surgery has dwindled over recent years despite attempts by the practice to promote it to Byers Green patients via posters, prescriptions messages and website.

The practice proposes to close the surgery at the end of March 2018.

Process

The practice will engage with stakeholders over the next two to three months. Stakeholders will include:

- Patients
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- DDES CCG
- Helen Goodman, MP
- Heathwatch
- LMC
- Local GP practices
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- PPGs

- NHS England
- Spennymoor Town Council
- Spennymoor Area Action Partnership
- Local pharmacists

The practice will contact each household in Byers Green that is registered at St. Andrew's by letter to inform them of the proposal and allow them to voice any concerns regarding the closure.

The proposal will be discussed at a meeting of the Patient Participation Group and the wider CCG PPG.

Posters will be put up in both the branch surgery and the main surgery. Information will be provided on the practice website and newsletter. A list of FAQs will be maintained on the website.

Should significant concerns be raised a public meeting will be held to answer questions and explain the proposal and actions that will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts.

Proposals

In recent years (2011 – 2017) the overall practice list size has increased by 13% (1275 patients), however, the population of Byers Green has decreased slightly (-0.47% between 2011-2016).

The number of patients registered with the practice at Byers Green is 525 compared to a total list size of 11025, i.e. 4.8% of the total practice population.

Byers Green was historically felt to be an elderly population but the 65+ age group now comprises 26% of the population (138 patients) compared to 30% of the overall list size (3352 patients).

The GP partners feel that the service provided at Byers Green is inadequate due to the fact that there are no examination facilities, no investigations and no IT. If patients require investigation, examination or the GP needs to access their full medical record then a further appointment is required at the main surgery.

To provide the maximum of six appointments at the branch surgery reduces the number that can be offered at the main site by nine, i.e. eighteen appointments per week at the main site.

Attendance at the Byers Green surgery has averaged 3 patients per week over the past year (160 attendances in the past year). Only 84 patients have used the branch surgery in the past 12 months, i.e. 16% of the registered list size of Byers Green or 0.8% of the total list size.

The practice now feels that providing the branch surgery service to such a small number of patients is impacting unfairly on the service that can be provided to the increasing list size at the main site.

The building rents and rates cost the CCG £3453 per year. The practice pays for the heating, lighting and cleaning costs.

Impact of the Proposal

The practice acknowledges that a very small proportion of our overall patient list size will be inconvenienced by the closure of the branch surgery and a smaller number still, those who use public transport, may find it more difficult to access the main site.

The public transport service in Byers Green starts at 08:54 and runs hourly throughout the day (with the exception of a two hour gap between 13:54 and 15:54. The bus journey takes approximately 15 minutes each way.

The practice aims to minimize the impact of the closure by ring fencing two appointments per day (one in the morning and one after 15:30) that can be offered to patients from Byers Green and that will fit in with bus service times. If these appointments are not used they can be converted to on the day appointments for the general practice population to ensure that we offer maximum capacity to meet demand.

The practice will continue to dispense and deliver medication to all Byers Green patients so access to repeat and acute medication will be unaffected by the closure.

Whilst acknowledging the inconvenience patients may experience by the closure of the branch surgery the practice feels that the service offered at the main site is more effective, safer and more efficient for the practice, patient and wider population.

Involving Local People

The practice sent letters to all registered patients in Byers Green (letters sent last week of November 2017) informing them of the proposed closure and asking them to contact the Practice Manager with any queries or comments. To date there has been no contact from any patient.

The following people and agencies were notified of the proposed closure by e-mail on 27 November 2017:

Helen Goodman MP
Healthwatch

Dr David Robertson, LMC
Lucy Hovvells, Councillor, DCC
DDES CCG
NHS England
Kevin Thompson, Councillor for Byers Green
County Durham Partnership
Patient Reference Group

To date I have not received any comments or queries regarding the closure. The practice planned to hold a public meeting to address comments and concerns but as none have been made that meeting will not go ahead as planned.

On behalf of the partners, Dr Neil Middleton, Dr Johnathan Walker, Dr Victoria Oliphant and Dr Matthew Shield we now propose to close the surgery at Byers Green officially on 31st March 2018 with the last clinic being on Tuesday 27th March 2018.

We would be grateful if this business case could be put forward for review at the next meeting of the committee.

Tracey Martin
Practice Manager