

## Frequently asked questions

Throughout our work on reviewing the walk-in service a number of queries have been raised. Here we include the most frequently asked questions about the proposed changes and we will continue to update these on our website.

### **Q. Is this not just about cutting back on services and saving money?**

No. Our proposal is about changing the way we spend money. We have finite resources and can only spend our money once so need to ensure that all services avoid duplication and address local health needs.

The resources allocated to the walk-in service would be used to improve services for people with long-term conditions – a health issue affecting a significant proportion of our city.

### **Q. Will any of the other services in Bitterne Health Centre be affected?**

No, all other services in the health centre will remain open as usual.

### **Q. What will happen to staff who work at the walk-in service?**

The walk-in service is run by Solent NHS Trust who also provide community nursing and community-based care in Southampton. There will be no compulsory redundancies and the Trust will look to redeploy staff within Solent services under normal HR procedures.

### **Q. Has the decision already been made?**

No, the final decision will be made by Southampton City CCG Governing Body once they have had time to consider the consultation feedback and responses.

During the consultation all the feedback and responses, along with notes of the public meetings, will be collated and analysed.

At the end of the consultation, a report will be produced by Southampton City CCG identifying the themes and issues raised. The report will be presented to the Governing Body of the CCG to inform their decision on how to proceed.

### **Q. What are community based nursing services that the additional funding would be used to support?**

Some of the community nursing and community-based services that could benefit from this increased funding include, but are not limited to, the following:

- District nurses – nurses who visit people in their own homes or in residential care homes, providing care for patients and supporting family members. District nurses also have a teaching and support role, working with patients to enable them to care for themselves or with family members teaching them how to give care to their relatives.

- Community matrons - highly experienced senior nurses who work closely with patients in the community to provide, plan and organise their care. They mainly work with those with serious long term or complex range of conditions in their own home or community settings.
- Community rapid response teams – multi-disciplinary teams who work to reduce hospital admissions and assist with hospital discharge by assessing patients in their own homes or a care home, particularly where the persons need for care and support is urgent.
- Over 75 nurses – nurses who provide care and support at home and in GP practices to people over 75 to support making the best of their health and where needed support planning for current and future health and care needs.

Below are some examples of how the money currently spent on the walk-in service could be redeployed through community based services:

Service	Approx. cost	Equivalent of 1 walk-in service (WIS) attendance
Dementia assessment	£291	4 WIS attendances = 1 assessment
Diabetes check up	£134	2 WIS attendances = 1 consultant led check up
Asthma nurse appointment	£67	1 WIS attendance = 1 asthma nurse appointment
District nurse home visit	£45	2 WIS attendances = 3 district nurse home visits
Health visitor appointment	£45	2 WIS attendances = 3 health visitor appointments
Blood test	£0.61	1 WIS attendance = 110 blood tests

**Q. I have heard the NHS is getting a further £8bn - can't you use your share of this to keep the walk-in service open?**

Southampton City CCG is deemed to be over its' target funding' which means we will receive a far smaller share of any additional funding and may not receive any extra money at all.

**Q. Can't you make cuts elsewhere in the NHS?**

As part of our ongoing commissioning process we continually review health services in the city to ensure we are meeting patients' needs whilst making the best use of the available money we are allocated by the Government.

The walk-in service was identified, as part of our ongoing review of services, as not providing value for money and duplicating other services now available to local people. Any proposed reduction in services would be subject to public consultation just like we are doing here with the walk-in service. To make investments in one area can often require difficult decisions regarding the removal of another.

We need to spend tax payers money as wisely as we can, if the NHS nationally or locally received the level of funding to meet the rising pressures, then investments into additional community services would be easy, however with funding not rising with demand the CCG needs to ensure it spends its budget as effectively as we can. This is why we are consulting on the difficult decision of closing the walk-in service to release funds to deploy into our community services, the services that look after the most vulnerable in our city.

**Q. Can the walk-in service be run more cheaply? Previously you quoted £1.4M now it is 1.2M, can you provide some clarity?**

The current cost of the walk-in service is £1.289m with each attendance costing approximately £67 per patient.

As with all NHS services, we are constantly working to ensure the greatest value for money and over the last few years Solent NHS Trust, who runs the walk-in service, has been able to identify savings to reduce the overall cost of their services, for example through reducing the cost of their building costs. Even with these reductions in cost the service still does not provide good value for money when compared with the costs of visiting an alternative service (see page 10 of the consultation).

A full breakdown of the annual costs of running the walk-in service is also available on our website.

**Q. If people are already finding it hard to get to see their GP, won't closing the walk-in service make this even harder as they will be even busier?**

We know that many people using the walk-in service are still using their GP surgery. Much work has already taken place to improve access to GPs and we are looking at ways of further improving this. Extended opening of GP practices at weekends, early mornings and early evenings are helping improve access.

There are 32 GP practices in the city with 10 in the east, closest to the walk in centre. All practices on the east side of the city offer extended opening times with every practice opening on Saturday morning (the walk-in service's busiest time) and eight out of 10 offering extended Monday evening surgery – full opening time details are available in the supporting information on our website.

Southampton Primary Care Limited, a federation of 29 GP practices in the city, has also been allocated £3m of Prime Minister's Challenge Fund money to establish a pilot to extend and improve access to GP practice care in the city. This project is in the very early planning stages but aims to further improve access to GP services and thus better meet the needs of all patients.

**Q. Won't the closure mean more people go to the Emergency Department?**

Whilst the walk-in service was originally set up in 2003 to reduce pressure on the Emergency Department and GP practices, evidence suggests that the way the service is used has changed and it now duplicates other services available to local residents.

Today, the walk-in service operates mainly as a treatment option for minor conditions that do not require specialist or urgent treatment and which could have been dealt with by a local pharmacist, the NHS 111 telephone helpline or self-care (treatment at home).

During the lifetime of the walk-in service the range and type of urgent care options in Southampton has changed – services like the expanded Minor Injuries Unit and NHS 111 have been introduced along with extended hours at GP surgeries and pharmacies (including pharmacies that are open 100 hours per week).

Evidence also suggests that increasing numbers of people are now using these services and, as a result, the Emergency Department at Southampton General Hospital has seen a reduction in attendances.

**Q. People living on the east side of the city have complained of difficulty in accessing public transport services to get to the Minor Injuries Unit and General Hospital . What should they do if the walk-in service closes?**

We recognise the concerns over transport. However, many of the alternative service options do *not* need any transport at all, for example NHS 111 is a free telephone service that can be reached from anywhere in the city, there is an extended hours pharmacy in Bitterne town centre and all GP practices in the area offer extended hours services (details of practice and pharmacy opening times can be found in the supporting information on our website).

There are also a number of bus routes into the city centre from the east of the city, one of which goes to the Royal South Hants Hospital (where the Minor Injuries Unit is located) and two which go to Southampton General Hospital. These run frequently, 7 days a week. Route 7 (operated by First in Hampshire) stops

directly outside the Royal South Hants Hospital and Southampton General Hospital is serviced by routes 3 and 12 (operated by First in Hampshire).

For information on buses in the city visit [www.discoversouthampton.co.uk/visit/travelling-to-southampton/bus-services](http://www.discoversouthampton.co.uk/visit/travelling-to-southampton/bus-services).

### **Q. What happens to people who aren't registered with a GP?**

It is very important that we get as many people to register with a GP as possible, this would encourage them to use their GP as their first point of contact which is essential if we are to help patients better manage their health and wellbeing. However, if someone hasn't registered, they can call NHS 111 service who will respond to anyone who needs medical help fast. Patients with a minor injury can attend the Minor Injuries Unit at the Royal South Hants Hospital and for minor ailments patients can contact their local pharmacy.

### **Q. The city is being given £3 million from the Prime Minister's Challenge Fund, can't you use this?**

In order to run the NHS the Government apportions funding to different parts of the health service so that they can manage and pay for the areas for which they are responsible. The Prime Minister's Challenge Fund is new national money which is separate from the money the CCG receives to commission health services for the population. The funding has been allocated to Southampton Primary Care Ltd, a group made up of 29 GP practices in the city to provide extended and enhanced GP services. Although the CCG supported the bid, Southampton Primary Care Ltd will be delivering the services.

The additional funding is excellent news for improving GP access in the city and we have been working with Southampton Primary Care Ltd as they implement these plans.

### **Q. What alternatives are you proposing, and how will we know where else to go?**

There are a number of alternatives to visiting the walk-in service.

Many of the symptoms with which people attend the service can be treated at home with advice from your local pharmacist. Pharmacists have at least five years training, have private consultation rooms and you don't need to make an appointment.

People can also visit their GP practice. All the practices in the east of the city now offer extended opening hours (see supporting document for further information) with opening hours due to increase further due to the Prime Minister's Challenge Fund.

For all minor injuries such as sprains, strains, minor burns, cuts and grazes people can visit the Minor Injuries Unit at the Royal South Hants Hospital <http://www.royalsouthhantsmiu.nhs.uk/> which also has x-ray facilities for people over two years of age.

If you need urgent medical help or advice and aren't sure where to go then you can call 111. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. A team of fully trained call handlers, supported by nurses and paramedics, will assess your symptoms, offer advice and direct you straightaway to the local service that can best help. They can arrange an out of hours GP or dentist appointment or even send an ambulance if necessary.

NHS111 is provided by our local ambulance service, South Central Ambulance Service, from their call centre based near Winchester.

For more information regarding the alternatives to the walk-in service including addresses, opening hours and services offered please see our supporting documents.

### **Q. Don't you just get sent back to your GP if you call 111?**

Figures show that from August 2013 – March 2015 the NHS 111 team (covering Southampton, Hampshire, and Portsmouth) answered an average of 38,176 calls per month, with 54% of these callers recommended to contact or visit primary or community care. This includes visiting an out of hours GP or being advised to contact your own GP but also pharmacists, dentists and sexual health clinics etc.

### **Q. How long will I need to wait for someone to answer when I call 111? Are clinicians available for advice?**

The NHS 111 service has targets for calls to be answered within 60 seconds (this should be 95%) – in May 2015 the local 111 service answered 97% of calls within 60 seconds.

NHS 111 call handlers include medically trained staff, such as qualified nurses and paramedics. They take calls when an assessment requires their skills and experience. Call handlers are highly trained in symptom recognition. If it is felt that a medical professional is needed, then a caller will either be transferred to them for a more in-depth assessment or will be called back within a timeframe according to clinical need.

### **Q. Won't there be an increased pressure on emergency vehicles?**

As the walk-in service is primarily used for minor illnesses, and not emergencies, we do not foresee an impact on emergency vehicles being called out.

Ambulance services in Southampton are provided by South Central Ambulance Service who also have community/staff first responders that are trained to respond to calls in the local community.

For a medical emergency, if someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk, always call 999 immediately. For example if someone has:

- lost consciousness
- fits that are not stopping and is in an acute confused state
- persistent, severe crushing chest pain
- breathing difficulties
- severe bleeding that can't be stopped

If you or someone else is having a heart attack or stroke, call 999 immediately. Every second counts with these conditions.

### **Q. Walk-in services are convenient for those who work full time and can't take time off during the day, what alternatives will be available in the city?**

Over the last two years we have invested substantial resources in providing services to support people with urgent and emergency health issues. We have commissioned new and alternative services for everyone in Southampton who needs something "right now" whether that be for cough and cold remedies right through to emergencies such as heart attacks. We have:

- reshaped urgent care services by implementing NHS 111 as the number to call when an urgent (but not emergency) situation arises
- re-commissioned GP out of hours services to include a primary care centre as well as home visits
- commissioned a minor injuries unit at the Royal South Hants Hospital with x-ray facilities for adults and children over the age of two
- worked with pharmacies to offer more access for drop-in advice and support
- supported ambulance crews to treat more people where they find them
- supported our GP practices to offer more flexible access with all practices in east Southampton now offer evening and weekend appointments and this is likely to extend even further with the new Prime Minister's Challenge Fund
- provided better information services so people can quickly understand signs and symptoms and know when and where to seek help.

With common problems, such as coughs and colds, aches, pains and rashes, a pharmacist can suggest the best remedies or treatments to suit you, so there is no need to book a GP appointment.

There are currently four pharmacies in Southampton that are open 100 hours a week, two in the city centre, one at the Adelaide Centre in Millbrook, and one in Bitterne (Bitterne Pharmacy, West End Road, open 7am to 10.30pm Monday to Saturday and 10am to 5pm on Sunday).

#### **Q. Will more out of hour GP appointments be made available?**

All the practices in the east of the city now offer extended opening hours (see supporting document on our website for full details) with access to GPs due to increase with the introduction of the Prime Minister's Challenge Fund.

Urgent GP appointments out of hours can also be accessed by calling 111. If you have an urgent health issue between 6.30pm and 8.00am on a weekday or over a weekend or bank holiday, you can ring NHS 111 who can arrange an out of hours GP appointment if necessary.

#### **Q. Do pharmacies have a patient confidentiality agreement?**

Pharmacies are required to comply with a set of legal requirements, which includes assessment on confidentiality, data protection and information security. More information can be found online at <http://psnc.org.uk/contract-it/essential-service-clinical-governance/>

You can talk to your pharmacist in confidence, even about the most personal symptoms, and you don't need to make an appointment. Most pharmacists now have private consultation areas and it's possible to walk into any community pharmacy and ask to speak with the pharmacist. They may be able to spend some time with you straight away or offer you an appointment for a consultation. Discussions with your pharmacist can take place either in person or by phone.

#### **Q. Can the Minor Injuries Unit be expanded to help with minor ailments?**

The best place to go for advice and treatment for a minor ailment, such as a cough, cold or sore throat, is to a local pharmacy which may even be closer to home. Many pharmacies in the city are also open on evenings and weekends, with four in Southampton that are open 100 hours a week, two in the city centre, one at the Adelaide Centre in Millbrook, and one in Bitterne (Bitterne Pharmacy, West End Road, open 7am to 10.30pm Monday to Saturday and 10am to 5pm on Sunday). Each has a qualified pharmacist on hand to advise on minor illness, medication queries and other medical problems.

If you are unsure and need some extra support, you can call 111 for advice 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

#### **Q. Will you increase education to support people on the alternative services in the city and to treat minor ailments at home?**

A number of people have told us that they don't know where else to go if they need medical help. We are taking steps to address this and to ensure awareness of the alternatives, launching our **Think First** campaign in December 2014. The campaign highlighted the full range of urgent and self-care options available across the city and included a door-drop of booklets to every home in Southampton as well as city-wide health roadshows. It is our intention to continue with education and awareness campaigns.

Our work has proved to be successful and we have seen an increase in the use of the Minor Injuries Unit and NHS 111 service throughout Southampton, Hampshire and Portsmouth.

**Q. I use the walk-in service for emergency contraception. Where should I go if it closes?**

Emergency contraception (the morning after pill) can be purchased from any pharmacy for £23 or obtained free of charge from the following pharmacies in Southampton (and free Chlamydia screening packs). Full details of the pharmacies are available in the supporting documents on our website - you are advised to contact the pharmacy first to ensure a trained pharmacist is available.

- Bassil Chemist, Bedford Place, City Centre
- Boots, Above Bar Street, City Centre
- Boots, West Quay Retail Park, City Centre
- Boots, High Street, Shirley
- Boots, The Broadway, Midanbury
- Boots, Burgess Road, Swaythling
- Day Lewis, Portswood Road, Portswood
- Highfield Pharmacy, University Road, Swaythling
- Lloyds Pharmacy, Dean Road, Bitterne
- Pharmacy Direct, Weston Lane, Weston
- Pharmacy Direct, Shirley Road, Shirley
- Regents Park Pharmacy, Regents Park Road, Shirley
- Sangha Pharmacy, Thornhill Park Road, Thornhill
- Spiralstone, Brintons Road, St Mary's
- Sunak Pharmacy, Burgess Road, Bassett
- Superdrug, Bitterne Road, Bitterne
- Superdrug, Victoria Road, Woolston
- Telephone House, High Street, City Centre

**Q. I use the walk-in service for wound dressing. Where should I go if it closes?**

Wound dressing management should be undertaken at the patient's registered GP practice. Each practice has a practice nurse who can do this during surgery hours. If it is essential that a dressing is changed over the weekend, Southampton GPs can book their patients into the wound dressing clinic at the Minor Injuries Unit at the Royal South Hants Hospital. In an out of hours emergency, patients may attend the Minor Injuries Unit for wound dressing.

**Q. Where will I go for my blood tests?**

Blood tests are not currently available at the walk-in service but can be arranged at your GP practice

**Q. Will the closure increase pressure on the health visiting service, as the majority of contacts are under 5 years old?**

Health visitors work with families of young children to help increase understanding of how to manage minor illnesses, and are in an ideal position to respond to common health concerns and discuss management of conditions. This includes helping parents to understand the services available in the city and those available in the evening and on the weekend.

**Q. What options will be available for parents of young children who currently use the centre?**

Many of the symptoms with which people attend the service can be treated at home with advice from your local pharmacy. Pharmacists can offer expert advice and treatment for illnesses such as coughs and colds, aches, pains and rashes.

Most pharmacies now have a private consultation room and you don't need to make an appointment. A pharmacist can also advise if you need to need to visit your GP.

For minor injuries such as sprains, strains, minor burns, cuts and grazes, the Minor Injuries Unit at the Royal South Hants Hospital is open from 7.30am – 10pm Monday – Friday and 8.00am – 10.00pm on weekends and bank holidays. There are also x-ray facilities for adults and children over two years of age - <http://www.royalsouthhantsmiu.nhs.uk>.

If you need urgent medical help or advice and aren't sure where to go, or need some reassurance then you can call 111.

**Q. Is this consultation relevant to me if I live in the west or central areas of the city?**

This is a city-wide consultation. Our proposal is to close the Bitterne walk-in service and to re-distribute the current funding to community nursing and community-based care across Southampton, so we want all city residents to have the opportunity to have their say.

**Q. Who wrote this consultation?**

The consultation document has been produced by NHS Southampton City Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in consultation with a number of key partners and stakeholders.

Contributors include Healthwatch Southampton, Solent NHS Trust, GPs and service users.

**Q. How much has running this consultation cost?**

The cost of running the consultation is less than £5,000. This has been spent on producing consultation materials, postage and venue hire for the public events etc. to make sure we can reach as many local people as possible and that we provide a number of ways for people to have their say.

**Q. Who did you survey during your pre-engagement?**

Our local health services survey started at our winter health roadshows in the city in January. The survey was answered by over 600 local residents and was promoted on our website, through our social media channels (Twitter and Facebook), shared at engagement events with the community and some responses came via the [People's Panel](#) which is a joint initiative between Southampton City Council and the CCG.

In addition to the survey we ran a number of focus groups and held meetings with local service users.

**Q. Do you have any information on usage of the walk-in service before the opening hours were reduced in 2010?**

Since the CCG formed in April 2013, the walk-in centre has operated from 6.30pm – 9.30pm on weekday evenings and from 8.30am – 9.30pm on weekends and bank holidays. The decision to reduce the hours was made by the preceding organisation, Southampton City Primary Care Trust, so unfortunately we do not hold this data.

CCGs were unable to hold or have any data prior to 1 April 2013, due to legal restrictions on data ownership.

**Q. Do you charge patients from other CCG areas who use the walk-in service?**

64% of attendances to the walk-in service are patients registered with a Southampton GP, 34% are registered with Hampshire GPs and 2% have no registered GP. NHS services are taxpayer funded and free at the point of use. We do not charge patients to use these services nor are we able to under the rules we operate within.



**Q. Can you move the walk-in service to another building, perhaps the building at Moorgreen Hospital or a local library?**

This consultation is not focused on the location of the service but the fact that the service itself does not represent good value for money and duplicates other existing services. These facts would be the same wherever the service was located.

**Q. Can savings be made by fining patients for misuse of services, for example not attending a GP appointment?**

There are a variety of reasons why people are unable to attend a pre-booked appointment but there are a number of ways that GP practices are working to make cancelling appointments easier, such as reminder text messages and the option to cancel online, so these can be freed for those needing to urgently see a doctor.

Although we have seen comments made by Jeremy Hunt, the Secretary of State for Health, around the possibilities of charging for patients for not attending appointments this would require a change in law to be implemented.

**Q. Could local GPs help fund the walk-in service?**

During our review of the walk-in service, we found that that many people are not using either the walk-in service *or* a GP surgery, but actually *both* and for the same condition. We are therefore duplicating more cost-effective services and this extra cost is hampering our ability to further improve community based nursing, now and in the future.

Following a survey of Southampton GPs, one of the most notable themes was the number of family doctors who felt that the walk-in service had no discernible impact on their workload. When we asked GPs if they felt that the service reduced demand for appointments at their practice, 82% said no.

**Q. Are you liaising with West Hampshire CCG to ensure that their GP surgeries offer extended opening hours in the areas close to the walk-in service?**

Throughout the consultation we have worked with local CCGs, who have patients who use the service, and they have plans in place to support their patients.

Contact details for our neighbouring CCGs are available as part of the supporting documents on our website.