

Extended opening hours in general practice

Your GP practice is planning to open longer hours

National and local surveys have shown that the number of GP appointments has risen considerably, increasing the workload and stretching capacity in primary care. As a result, some patients have said that they experience difficulty in accessing primary care services.

Our practice is a member of NHS Leeds West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and in response to what patients have said, the CCG is investing in a voluntary scheme over the next 18 months to increase access and capacity in all its member GP practices. This would benefit patients by making it more convenient to attend GP appointments in the evenings and / or at weekends.

The CCG and member practices also want to test out new ways of working as NHS England has said that eventually it wants to see seven day opening in the NHS and we want to be ready to do this.

GP practices want to work with the local population and with adjoining practices to develop services that suit our local communities. The aim is that all patients in our area will have access to more convenient GP appointments from 2015.

Under the scheme, practices may choose to open at different times based on the needs of their practice population. For the majority of practices this should ensure that patients can access services 12 hours a day over five or seven days a week. Some may operate in a 'hub and spoke' model with other practices in local communities to offer services. 'Hub and spoke' means you would be able to have a doctor's appointment for routine primary care outside 'normal' practice opening times at evenings or weekends, but it might be at another local practice in your community. Practices are working through the detail of this and how they might work together to deliver primary care in particular communities.

To begin with it will not be possible for every practice to be open 12 hours a day, 7 days a week as initially it will be difficult to identify enough new staff to cover the additional hours. It is also possible that there will not be enough demand from patients to warrant it. Demand and staffing will be monitored closely in the first phases of the project and changes can be made accordingly as it develops.

The existing out of hours doctor service will not be affected by this development in the practice and will continue to operate as normal.

Your views

Practices have already asked their practice reference groups what they feel about these proposals to help develop some questions and answers. Our practice would now like to ask as many people as we can what they think about extending access to routine primary care.

Please would you complete the questionnaire and leave in the comments box in the GP reception, or post it to the Freepost address on the back page Alternatively you can complete this survey online at: www.snapsurveys.com/wh/s.asp?k=140611571183

Your GP Practice:

Please would you let us have your views on the five questions below :

1 Do you agree with the proposals to extend access to general practices into the evenings and weekends?

2 Is it more important to have extended access to primary care in the evenings or at weekends?

3 Why?

4 'Hub and spoke' means you would be able to see a doctor outside 'normal' practice opening times at evenings or weekends, but it might be at another local practice in your community. What are your views about a 'hub and spoke' model in your local community?

5 There are different ways that practices could use this additional resource; for example:

- extra routine appointments at the surgery either GP, nurse or other staff member
- extra visits to care homes to prevent people being admitted to hospital
- a GP service that would support people being discharged earlier from hospital back to their own home

What are your views about practices prioritising this additional investment in this way?

Questions and answers

Will there be a full range of services available, such as nurse, blood tests, smear tests etc?)

Yes we would expect the additional hours to provide an extension of existing services offered.

Saturday mornings were just for emergencies at my practice but it would be good for normal appointments. Could this be up to at least 1pm?

Not all practices will be able to open seven days a week, 12 hours a day to begin with, so they are asking their patients views about what is best for their practice. In some practices depending on need these will be Saturday morning openings, in others working in hubs a service will be available all weekend.

Is this the correct thing to do? Wouldn't it be better to make most efficient use of existing opening hours such as addressing missed appointments?

Practices will be also working on reducing missed appointments. However, the NHS nationally has said that ultimately it wants to see seven day working and so we are choosing to voluntarily begin this work so that we are ready for the future.

I think evenings may be good but not sure about weekends. When do GPs get any 'me' time or family time?

GPs, other clinical staff and administrators would work on a rota basis. Some practices will look at employing additional staff. Many GPs are now part time and new GPs will be employed to allow practices to expand to cover these extra hours. This service will not be delivered by just stretching existing staff resource.

This would be a good idea, but first will they be thinking about how many more patients they are taking on when they are already full?

All practices are looking to have some form of extended hours services, so this should ease pressure on all appointments systems. The existing registered patient list size at the practice will not change, we are not intending taking on more patients. This service is for our existing patients.

Could they trial early morning and weekend appointments first and see if there is any demand before trying weekends?

This is possible and up to practices to decide.

How will this work? Will there be a system where one doctor is present to deal with any emergencies in the practice so that people don't need to go to A&E?

Each practice will set up their own arrangements, but yes one aim of this development is to reduce patients attending A&E when their issue could be dealt with in primary care.

Will they be offering the ring back service like they do during the normal week?

Practices want to be flexible about how they use these extended hours, and using a ring back service is an option that they may wish to use. Please use the comments form to let your practice know if this is an option you would like them to consider.

Is it possible to give priority to those who work to book extended hours appointments?

If this is something that you would like to see, please let the practice know at Question 5 on the survey.

Will the doctor be bringing back their own evening visits?

This is not planned as we already contract for the out of hours GP service. However, some GPs may choose to offer more home visits during the day and put care packages in place to help avoid people with long term conditions being admitted to hospital unnecessarily.

What about the cost and will there be a need to recruit additional staff?

Yes more staff will need to be employed, and this will cost more, But we believe that if fewer people attend hospital and get their care in primary care then this is good for patients and communities.

I think it's a good idea to take it in turns with other local doctors, but how far would I be expected to travel?

We can't say exactly, it would depend on which practices proposed to join together, but it would remain within a local community.

My practice is only a small practice so how could they provide any extra appointments?

Practices can choose to work with other practices or they could choose to increase their staff.

I think the 'hub' is a good idea as long as the doctor has access to my medical records. Will this be the case?

Yes

Won't there be data protection issues around medical records?

No this would be an extension to your normal GP practice arrangements, (such as when a temporary doctor is employed).

I'm not keen on the 'hub' idea, I'd rather see my own doctor. Don't you think that this might drive more people to A&E?

The practices and the CCG hope that by offering a range of primary care services, and an opportunity to see a GP in their own local area on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays, this offers greater convenience for patients. A&E is there for patients with an urgent care need.

Equality Monitoring Form (optional)

By filling in this equality monitoring section you will help us ensure that we get feedback from all the different communities in our area. Filling in this section is optional. Any information is kept in strict confidence.

Gender				
<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female			
Sexual orientation				
<input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual / Straight	<input type="checkbox"/> Gay man	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian / gay woman	<input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual	
Age				
<input type="checkbox"/> Under 16	<input type="checkbox"/> 17 - 24	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 34	<input type="checkbox"/> 35 - 44	<input type="checkbox"/> 45 - 54
<input type="checkbox"/> 55 - 64	<input type="checkbox"/> 65 - 74	<input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 84	<input type="checkbox"/> 84+	
Relationship status				
<input type="checkbox"/> Married	<input type="checkbox"/> Cohabiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Single	<input type="checkbox"/> Civil Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Disability				
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory impairment		
<input type="checkbox"/> Long standing illness	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental health condition			
Religion or belief				
<input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist	<input type="checkbox"/> Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/> Muslim	<input type="checkbox"/> Christian	<input type="checkbox"/> Jewish
<input type="checkbox"/> Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/> No religion	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):		
		<input type="text"/>		
Religion or belief				
<input type="checkbox"/> White British	<input type="checkbox"/> White Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy or Irish traveller		
<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed White & Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed White & Black African	<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed White and Asian		
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian / Asian British Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian / Asian British Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian / Asian British Bangladeshi		
<input type="checkbox"/> Black / Black British Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/> Black / Black British African	<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arab	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):			
		<input type="text"/>		

Contact details (optional)

Name	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
Tel	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>

Sending us your comments

You can place this completed form in the comment box in the GP practice, or post free of charge to:

Primary Care Team,
FREEPOST RTEG-JRZR-CLZG,
NHS Leeds West Clinical Commissioning Group,
Suites 2-4, WIRA House, Ring Road,
West Park, LEEDS LS16 6EB

Alternatively you can complete this survey online at: www.snapsurveys.com/wh/s.asp?k=140611571183

For more information call (0113) 8435470

Please return by Friday 17 October 2014