



Commissioning Alliance

Brighton and Hove CCG
Crawley CCG
East Surrey CCG
High Weald Lewes Havens CCG
Horsham and Mid Sussex CCG

Councillor Sue John

BY EMAIL ONLY

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19 July 2018

Dear Cllr John,

Proposed Closure of Rottingdean Branch Site

Thank you for your letter of 11 July 2018 regarding the proposed closure of the Rottingdean Branch site. My response is laid out below under subheadings that I hope is helpful.

October 2017 Correspondence

Your letter refers to a previous letter that you wrote to me in October last year regarding the above. Having checked my files, I am unable to find any record of receiving a letter from you. Please accept my apologies for this.

However, the CCG did receive a request for information regarding the Rottingdean Branch site from Rob Persey, Director of Adult Social Care that was in response to a query from you. We provided Mr Persey with the information requested on the 5 January 2018, which we understand he subsequently provided to you.

Background Contractual Information

By way of background, you will be aware that GPs are not employees of the NHS and General Practices are independent businesses that run themselves and work under a national contract that regulates the services they provide to NHS patients. This contract is silent on the subject of the closure of branch surgeries. Therefore, in the case of the proposed Rottingdean Branch closure, there is no national regulatory framework that either the CCG or the practice is obliged to follow.



The CCG is currently providing financial support to all practices in the city to help with recruitment and retention of staff and is liaising with the Medical School and University on how we can encourage clinicians who train here to come and work here. The CCG is also part of an international recruitment scheme being run across Sussex.

With regards to proposed Rottingdean Branch closure, as explained below, this has added an additional challenge to an already difficult situation and the CCG is working on setting out the local process to manage the situation.

Practice Situation

As you will be aware, the Saltdean/ Rottingdean Branch practice has been struggling for some time with a large patient list and a constrained clinical workforce. This has not been aided by the national shortage of GPs and nurses and, despite considerable recruitment efforts, the practice has only been able to recruit a small amount of additional GP resource. Compounding this is a practice nurse recently decided to leave the practice, resulting in the remaining nurses needing to be centralised in Saltdean, to provide adequate cover to the whole registered population.

The closure of two practices in Peacehaven and the decision by the Ridgeway practice to terminate its contract increased the Saltdean/ Rottingdean practices list size. This impact of this is that a large number of patients are receiving their care from a group of GPs and nurses that has not managed to increase resource by the same proportion.

The practice has stated that being stretched across two sites is operationally inefficient – a situation that is replicated in many services up and down the country. The Rottingdean site is of poor quality that can only offer a very limited range of services with staff working in isolation.

Working in isolation brings two kinds of risk. The first is staff security (you may be aware that one of the GPs was recently assaulted at the practice, with only one receptionist on hand to assist); the second is clinical risk in that, if a serious illness presents (as happens increasingly frequently now as a result of complex patients being seen in community settings), the presence of only one clinician on site makes a safe response more difficult. A recent example of this was that of a serious incident at the practice involving an asthmatic child – the child could have been cared for more quickly and safely at the main surgery, with more clinicians and equipment to hand.

Locum doctors are refusing to work at the branch surgery, not just in Rottingdean but nationally and the doctor recently assaulted at the site is now refusing to work there.

Practice-Initiated Change

As a culmination of these factors, the practice wrote to us in May 2018, indicating its intention to close the branch site on 29 June 2018. The CCG met with the practice partners and informed them of the steps they needed to follow. This included engaging the public/patients to gain their views and concerns so that, should the closure go ahead, any negative impact could be mitigated in some way. The practice agreed with this approach and a discussion was held on 12 June at the CCG's Primary Care Commissioning Committee (PCCC), which is the group that makes decisions governing primary care in the city.

Patient/Public Engagement

PCCC supported the proposed public engagement approach and a pre-prepared letter was sent for printing and posting on the following day, 13 June 2018. The letter contained details of the two proposed engagement events on 28 June and 3 July 2018.

Due to the confidentiality of patient information involved, we are obliged to use a nationally mandated company to send these kinds of letters. We undertook all the preparatory work required for these letters enabling them to be sent as soon as possible after the PCCC meeting. Regrettably, , despite our efforts, delays within the company meant that the letters did not actually reach patients until 27 June 2018 resulting in short notice for the first meeting. I am very sorry happened and hope you will accept my assurance that we did everything possible to avoid such a situation.

Despite the short notice, the two events were each attended by c. 30 people and the table based discussions provided the opportunity for in-depth discussion and ensured that all those who attended had a voice in the process. The points that were made will be considered when the PCCC makes its final decision on the branch surgery.

In addition to the two meetings, we have also:

- Spent a morning in the practice itself, listening to patients who use the service
- Liaised with the chair of the Patient Participation Group at the practice
- Set up a dedicated phone line for people to make their comments
- Provided an email address for further comments
- Ensured that issues raised directly with the practice are taken into account.

Further, in response to a request for another meeting in Rottingdean itself, I am pleased to confirm that a third engagement event took place earlier today.

Timescales/Next Steps

During the PCCC on 14 August 2018, the CCG will consider the outputs of the patient engagement and will formulate its final response to the practice's proposal to close the branch. Please note that we had originally planned for this meeting to take

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place on the 31st July 2018. However, to facilitate next weeks engagement event, the PCCC meeting was delayed against the original timescale.

However, we need to be careful not to prolong the decision making process too far, as in doing so the practice could unilaterally close the branch or, choose to cease operating both the Rottingdean and the Saltdean sites altogether – this would be a very negative outcome for all concerned.

In summary:

- The engagement process to date has been detailed and open and provided the public with an opportunity to share their views with Practice Partner GPs / Manager and the CCG.
- However, the process has hampered by the patient letter being delayed and the original venue choice not being located centrally in Rottingdean.
- The focus of our work has been on supporting the Practice to ensure safety and quality of service.
- The distance from the branch to the main surgery is 1.6 miles. For most people, this does not present a great difficulty.
- For those patients with mobility issues and/or no car, this distance is more of a problem, especially given the relative complexity of the bus journey from Rottingdean to Saltdean. This will be taken into account in our response to the practice's request in the Equalities Impact Assessment that will accompany the papers that go to the CCG's PCCC meeting in July 2018.

Wendy Carberry (Managing Director, South) or I would be happy to meet with you if you would feel this would be helpful. To organise this meeting, please contact my Executive Assistant, Emma Greaves, via email at emma.greaves1@nhs.net.

Thank you again for your letter and I trust my response clearly addresses the matters you have raised.

Yours sincerely



Adam Doyle
Chief Accountable Officer
Central Sussex and East Surrey Commissioning Alliance

c.c. Wendy Carberry, Managing Director, South