

Health Scrutiny and Performance Panel

24 July 2012

Agenda
Item No. 7

Proposed Merger of Wharf Medical Practice WS2 9ES With the Sai Medical Practice WS2 9PL

Ward(s) Pleck

Councillors: Councillor D Anson, Councillor H Sarohi and Councillor Hussain

Introduction

The Primary Care Trust is currently out to public consultation on a proposal to merge the Wharf Family Practice (Pleck Road) with Sai Medical Practice (Forrester Street), Pleck Ward, Walsall. As the statutory body for commissioning GP services across the Black Country, the PCT is responsible for planning, securing and monitoring GP contractor services. The proposal which is the merger of 2 practices to become one large family doctor practice has come about arising from a GP contract vacancy at the Sai Medical Practice, significant underperformance of the Wharfe Family Practice Contract in relation to the contracted patient list trajectory and the desire of the PCT to use its contractual powers to secure a permanent long term service provision solution that will deliver higher quality and improved Value for Money (VFM) family doctor services in a more deprived area of Walsall.

A wide range of stakeholders are being invited to share their views on the proposed merger. 5,200 patients have been sent a copy of the consultation document and the PCT has met with Patient Representative Groups at both practices. The consultation document is available in Urdu, Gujarat and Polish and English and the PCT has paid for translators to support discussions with the Practice Representative groups.

The consultation is running for 12 weeks from 30 May 2012 to 21 August 2012.

The proposal

The proposal is to merge the two practices creating a larger list of approximately 5,200 patients. The staff or posts deployed under the Wharf contract would transfer to the Sai Medical Practice forming a larger primary care team that would deliver services to the newly merged list under one roof from the Sai Medical Practice, in Forrester Street.

The advantages and disadvantages of the proposal are detailed in the full consultation document. However in summary the commissioning case for the merging the 2 practices is: higher quality of service in terms of the greater range and access to services that are available to the whole of the merged

list; there will be a greater range of clinical expertise available within the merged practice; patient safety and continuity of care can be enhanced as for example the larger team will make coverage of leave easier and without necessarily relying on external locums who may not be familiar with the practice and lastly if the proposal is agreed and proceeded to open procurement, improved Value for Money is possible.

Under the proposal the main impact will be on the Wharf Practice list and staff working there, but because this will be a minor relocation of 0.3 miles, it is not thought that the transfer will seriously inconvenience patients and we hope that the benefits analysis in the consultation document shows that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages of merging the two practices.

As part of the consultation process the views of the Walsall Scrutiny and Performance Panel on the proposal are sought.

Questions and Answers

Q Why does NHS Walsall (the PCT) want to merge these two GP practices?

A Our duty is to provide the highest quality, best value for money family doctor services for the people of Walsall. We believe that patients and staff at both practices would benefit from this merger.

Q How many GP's are there in each practice at present?

A There are 2 GPs in each Practice at the present time.

Q How many would there be in a merger of the two practices?

A If the merger goes ahead we will maintain the same number of GPs so there will be a total of 4 GPs working for the merged practice.

Q How will the PCT ensure that the tender process is run in such a way as to make sure that it does not favour any particular GP or group of GP's?

A The tendering process is run based on strict NHS procurement policy and procedure and operates under the direction of a PCT specialist procurement management team. All providers are assessed and consensus scored by a tender evaluation team against agreed weighted criteria with the contract award to the tenderer with the highest score. The PCTs processes have built in patient engagement at all stages of the procurement process from specification development to being involved right through to the contract award. A report is completed at the end of the process and the contract award is usually approved by a senior PCT Cluster Executive who has delegated authority to sign off the contract award decision.

Q What will be done to take account of anticipated extra traffic along Forrester Street?

A The merged practice may not necessarily provide surgeries in the way that the Sai does currently and the accommodation that will be used could be different. The permanent provider when appointed will need to consider staggering doctor-patient consulting surgeries throughout the day so that there is a constant turnover of car parking spaces .

Q What will be done to take account of the anticipated need for extra car parking?

A We recognise this is an issue of concern, and if the merger was to go ahead we would look for ways to address it. If additional car parking is required then the PCT will need to work with the council to explore ways in which this could be facilitated in the short to medium term

Q How and when will local people be consulted?

A The PCT has invited local councillors to comment on the proposals representing the views of the local people living in the immediate area on the proposal

Q What has been/will be the involvement of the Patient Participation Group's for the two practices?

A The PCT is consulting the Patient representative groups at both practices on the proposal

Q Why now?

A The Sai practice has been managed under a caretaker arrangement by another practice for the past few months, following the retirement of Dr Ray. We have a legal duty to offer other practices an opportunity to bid for the right to take over the running of this practice on a long term basis.

At the same time, the nearby Wharf practice has not signed up as many patients as expected since it first opened. The PCT acting as a strategic commissioner of GP contractor services and wishing to use the contractual powers it has to deliver strategic change to primary care provision is proposing the merger of the patient list at the Wharf with the Sai practice. This means we have an opportunity to bring together the doctors and other staff from the two practices, at the Sai premises, to create a bigger practice which could offer a wider range of services and more flexibility for its patients thus improving quality of care for all on the merged list and could achieve better VFM. If we don't take this opportunity now, we may not get another chance for many years.

Q Why not just leave things as they are?

A For the Sai practice, we would be acting unlawfully if we simply handed over the permanent contract to the caretaking practice - Lichfield Street (although there is nothing to stop them bidding for the permanent contract) For the Wharf, if we allow that contract to continue running, but with fewer patients than there should be, we are not getting best value for public money – and with the pressure on all public service spending that is more important than ever.

Q Isn't the Sai building too small to fit in all the extra doctors, staff and patients from the Wharf?

A We think we can accommodate everyone in the space that's available – especially if flexible and improved use of the surgery accommodation is implemented.

Q Won't the merger put staff jobs at risk?

A The position for staff would be no different if there was a merger. GP practices are businesses and it is for them to decide how many staff they employ and on what terms and conditions. If there was a merger, staff could transfer to the new employer (the successful bidder) under TUPE regulations which would protect their terms and conditions. The new employer would have the same rights and responsibilities as the existing employers when it came to staffing.

Q How can patients at both practices have their say?

A We have produced a consultation document which has been widely circulated and translated into a number of other languages. We have also met the Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) from both practices and each been invited to give their formal responses. Anyone with an interest in what is being proposed can: Write to Free Post RRLU-CSTS-ERUZ, Wharf and Sai Consultation, Jubilee House, Bloxwich Lane, Walsall WS2 7JL, Email to ***Customer.Care@walsall.nhs.uk*** or Phone Customer Services representatives on 01922 618358.

A Isn't this all a done deal?

A No – the PCT will listen carefully to what patients and staff have to say and take their views into account before making a final decision.

Recommendations:

That:

The Scrutiny and Performance Panel formally receive the PCT's consultation document (attached)

That members comment on the proposal

That members note that comments will be taken into account by the PCT cluster before a final decision is made

Contact Officer:

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**Proposed Merger of
Wharf Medical Practice WS2 9ES
With the
Sai Medical Practice WS2 9PL**

Public Consultation document

A chance to have your say

**Do you want this in another format or language,
or do you want someone to go through it with
you?**

**Ring us on 01922 618358. We will do our best to
get it into a format or language that suits you
and that you can understand as quickly as
possible.**

Of course, this is free of charge.

Why is NHS Walsall consulting you?

We have published this consultation document to tell you about the proposal to merge the Wharf Medical Practice WS2 9ES with the Sai Medical Practice, WS2 9PL so that you can give us your views on this.

The consultation is running for 12 weeks from 30 May 2012 to 21 August 2012. Any views you pass back to us during this time will be recorded by us and used with other relevant facts to shape the proposal and ensure that this responds effectively to any issues or concerns raised by patients being consulted. At the end of the consultation we'll let you know about comments received and how the PCT has acted on these in taking the proposal forward.

Sometimes, decisions are difficult to make because, as well as what you tell us, there are certain factors that we have to consider, for example cost and affordability. In addition we want to know if the proposal to merge the two practices is acceptable to patients, staff and the public but that is also clinically safe and effective. We'll consider each of these factors in making our final decision.

How you can have your say

The easiest way to let us know what you think is to simply write it on the document and send the whole thing back to us. Just fold the back cover over so that the FREEPOST address is showing, fold it into three, and sellotape down the ends. You can then pop it into the post, and no stamp is necessary.

You can email customer.care@walsall.nhs.uk with your views. You can ring one of our Customer Services representatives on 01922 618358 and we will write down what you tell us over the phone.

You can also send us a letter free of charge, by writing:
FREEPOST RRLU-CSTS-ERUZ

above the address.

If you are writing your comments on this document and posting it back to us, you can put your contact details here.

You can also leave it anonymous if you prefer

Name

Address

Postcode

Email

- I am responding for myself
- I am responding on behalf of a group or organisation

Name of group:

To find out more about the consultation, have a look at the information over the page.

Free Post RRLU-CSTS-ERUZ
Wharf and Sai Consultation
Jubilee House
Bloxwich Lane
Walsall WS2 7JL

1. Who have we consulted with so far?

This is the start of the process for NHS Walsall. We haven't yet consulted with local people about the proposal set out in this document.

2. Why we're consulting on the proposal and what it means for local services

We are consulting on the proposal to merge the Wharf Medical Practice with the Sai Medical Practice. Both practices are in very close proximity to one another approximately 0.3 miles door to door and some patients transferring to the Sai Medical Practice for their GP care will have slightly longer travelling times of between 5 to 10 minutes depending on whether they come by private or public transport. We want to invite patients from both practices to comment and through our response to demonstrate that the merger proposals take account of any concerns and issues they have so that when implemented the proposal continues to deliver high quality care

3. The Proposal

The proposal to merge the two practices has come about because of the recent retirement of the long standing GP and contract holder at Sai Medical Centre, creating a practice vacancy and a decision by the PCT to combine the Wharf Medical Practice List with the Sai List to form a larger Medical Practice of approximately 5,200 patients, operating from the Sai surgery premises. The intention is to then seek a new contract holder for the combined list by way of an open tender exercise. Current staff employed at both the Wharf and the Sai Practice will transfer under the Transfer of Undertakings regulations to the new contract holder when appointed, so you will continue to get your care from the same nurses and doctors as now.

Under the proposal the main impact will be on the Wharf Practice list and staff working there, but because this will be a minor relocation, it is not thought that the transfer will seriously inconvenience patients and we hope that the benefits analysis below shows that the advantages of transfer outweigh the disadvantages of merging the two lists.

Because the Sai Surgery accommodation can accommodate the increased numbers of patients from the Wharf site, the PCT does not consider that the Sai Surgery site or potential impact that the merger on the neighbouring but completely separate practice, being significant to prevent such a merger taking place and the subsequent relocation to Sai Medical Centre.

4. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal

Because the proposal means a much larger workforce, working under one roof ie the Sai Medical Centre, many of the advantages result derived from the two separate primary care tams coming together and the flexibilities this will give in delivering improved access and access to a broader range of services under the contract, to patients

Advantages	Disadvantages
<u>For Patients</u>	<u>For Patients</u>
Greater responsiveness to patient needs e.g. surgery opening times unaffected	For the Wharf patients slightly longer travelling times i.e. 0.3 miles or 5 minutes extra.
Advance booking and booking with a GP of choice thus strengthening continuity of care	Initial teething problems while the new contractor establishes itself but disruption will be minimised, as all the Wharf staff would be transferring to new site
Improved telephone access	
Improved access to GP and Practice Nurse appointments	New patient administration systems will be required to support merged list way of working and patients and staff may need time to adjust and become familiar with these
Improvements in patient consultation times ie patients able to spend more time with GP and/or Practice Nurse	
Space – Functional analysis of space available at Sai Medical centre for the additional patients transferring, suggests that there will be more than adequate	Impact on neighbouring practice – practice is completely separate. It has its own entrance and separate waiting area

consulting rooms and other accommodation to accommodate merger and increased footfall

Services are better coordinated

Extra services can be provided to meet the particular needs of the patient list

Car parking – car parking for patients attending the Wharf has always been challenging. The relocation to the Sai Medical Centre will see an improvement in car parking but the rise in numbers of patients attending the Sai Medical Centre it is felt can be accommodated by the existing car park arrangements and on street car parking

Relationship with staff currently providing the services at Wharf maintained as these will transfer and work at the Sai

For staff working at the Wharf and Sai Medical centres

Improved opportunities to cover for all types of staff leave/absence by other members of the team and i.e. continuity of patient care not relying on temporary locums or agency staff.

Larger clinical and non clinical workforce working under one roof

For Staff

Marginal increase in home to work travelling distance of 0.3 miles.

The team is able to meet regularly and share problems and discuss options for resolution

Improved communication and cooperation between team members

Improved organisation of task allocation conducted within the team

Higher levels of multi-skilling is facilitated and organised

Improved work methods and time management more possible

Improved prospects of filling vacancies arising from attraction of working for a larger practice and employer of staff

For the commissioning PCT

Able to market test and secure a provider who can deliver the contractual standards required and the health outcomes expected for an investment that is comparable with other Walsall Primary Care providers

Better value for money

Able to establish the merged practice as a training provider in one of the most deprived areas of Walsall

5. How to get more information

If you want an electronic or paper copy of any other supporting information just telephone 01922 618358 and speak to the Customer Care Team.

6. How decisions will be made and what will happen after the consultation

It is important that you as local people and other interested parties have the opportunity to have your say about the proposal we are consulting on which will ensure continued access to GP services at Sai Medical Centre.

What you tell us will be given to the PCT Black Country Cluster Board of Directors to help them make a final decision.

7. What are the timescales?

We expect the consultation exercise to be finished by late July 2012 and the PCT to make a final decision by the end of September 2012. We'll let all of you who took part know our decision and the reasons for it by 30 September 2012.

8. Some useful questions and answers

Q How far is the Wharf Medical Practice from Sai Medical Centre?

A Approximately 0.3 miles

Q Is the Sai Surgery big enough to accommodate the extra patients and the services they will require?

A Yes we have checked this and the accommodation is more than adequate to accommodate the services that will be required for the combined list

Q Is there a patient car park?

A There are a limited number of spaces on the surgery site itself but a further car park within a short walking distance from the surgery entrance is available for parking.

Q Can I expect to receive the same level of services as I do now at the Wharf Practice when I transfer to the Sai Medical Centre?

A Yes as a minimum access will be the same but could improve. The people delivering the services will be the same but the location will be different.

Q Will I be able to access other primary care services at the Sai Medical Centre (i.e. community based health services) services?

A No, only GP services. Other community health services will continue to be accessed off site as at present

Q Will I continue to have choice of GP who I see?

A Yes, this choice will remain, but there might be occasions when this may not always be possible, for example when the GP is on holiday, on study leave or on some other form of leave of absence.

Q Are the Wharf patients mostly from the nearby area to the Sai?

A Yes the patients who are registered at the Wharf and who would transfer are mainly from the same geographical area as the Sai Medical Centre registered list.

Other questions you may want to think about

Q What Practice Nursing Services will I be able to access?

Q Would I be able to get a home visit when I needed one?

These are just some examples of questions you may want to ask. If you have any others, please let us know them so that we can give you an answer.

Finally, thank you for taking the time to tell us your views. Our Board will take these into account in the decision they make and we'll let you know once we know the result.