

Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**19th January 2023****Primary Care Access****1. Purpose**

This report is provided to the Social Care and Health Overview Scrutiny Committee in response to specific issues raised by the Chair in a letter dated 13th December 2022 and from the discussion at the meeting on 15th December 2022.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee note the additional GP capacity commissioned over winter 2022/23 in Walsall
- 2.2 That the Committee invite Modality to the February meeting to discuss potential changes to the Harden Practice
- 2.3 That the Committee note the contractual issues relating to Walsall APMS practices and consider any views that they would wish to communicate to the ICB in its decision making process

3. Issues raised by the Committee***3.1. What has been commissioned over winter 2022/23 in order to ensure that patients can access a GP?***

- 3.1.1.** On 1 October 2022, as part of the contractual requirements of Primary Care Networks (PCNs), a new service “enhanced access” was introduced. This service pulls together two previous schemes into one coherent approach to provide additional capacity for patients. For the first time the principle of “network standard hours” was introduced. This provides additional capacity outside of the Monday – Friday 8:00am - 18:30 hours provided by individual GP practices. PCN practices collaborate to ensure that additional appointments are available and that all patients will be able to access from 18:30 until 20:00hrs every day and from 9:00hrs – 17:00hrs on Saturdays.
- 3.1.2.** In Walsall, Ournet, a local GP collaborative, is providing these additional appointments for five of the PCNs, with two other PCNs delivering for their own combined registered patients.
- 3.1.3.** The service is commissioned on the basis of an additional 60 minutes worth of appointments per thousand patients registered. If we assume every GP appointment is 15 minutes, then this created approx. 30,000 additional appointments up to the end of March 2023.
- 3.1.4.** As part of the preparation for winter, NHS England (NHSE) wrote to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) on 26 September 2022. The letter set out a

range of interventions to support primary care to continue to meet the challenging demands they are facing, that will be amplified over winter.

3.1.5. The letter set out that some of the standards that apply to PCNs will be relaxed and the associated payments can be used to create additional capacity in primary care. This has released £187,000 for Walsall. In addition, the ICB has provided some additional funds to increase the available resource to £404, 833. In totality, this has created an additional 9,000 appointments.

3.1.6. In light of the recent increase in Strep A related sickness, NHSE has released £196,000 to Walsall to create additional capacity to support speedy access for patients, specifically children with acute respiratory symptoms. Notification of this resource was received on 13/12/22.

3.1.7. Walsall had already created an urgent primary care paediatric service in response to the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and the additional funding has allowed us to extend this service to March 2023.

3.1.8. Despite this additional capacity service demand has been exceptionally high during December and January exacerbated by both flu and covid outbreaks. This has caused pressure on all elements of the NHS, both locally and nationally. To partially mitigate this, additional capacity has also been commissioned in the urgent care centre which provides GP appointments as an alternative to A&E. The urgent care centre has seen very high attendances throughout the Christmas and New Year period and this additional capacity has been extended to the end of January 2023.

3.2. *Committee members have been engaged in discussions about potential changes to services in Harden, with reports of the surgery being closed permanently. Given the concerns of the local population can you outline what plans are being proposed and how scrutiny will be involved in what could be a significant service change.*

3.2.1. The ICB has been in extensive dialogue with the Harden and Blakenall practice on this issue and has conveyed the concerns of the OSC and local Councillors on this issue. Having reflected on this discussion the practice are no longer considering permanent closure of the Harden site and would wish to discuss with the committee the options for future services to be provided on the Harden site.

3.2.2. If acceptable to the committee, Modality, the GP organisation holding the contract for this practice, would like to attend the February meeting of the committee with the ICB to share the options they are developing and seek OSC views on potential service models and public and patient consultation

3.3. *Based on previous discussions at both Social Care and Health Scrutiny and Overview Scrutiny, the committee understands that some GP services are based on fixed length contracts. When are these contracts due to end and when will scrutiny have the opportunity to comment on any planned changes?*

3.3.1. All GPs in Walsall are independent contractors. This means that they are not directly employed by the NHS. Practices can range from single handed practices where 1 GP owns and runs a single practice with a team they

employ, to large multi-practices, also known as super practices, where one organisation can run multiple sites either within a defined geography or nationally. Walsall has 52 GP practice sites, including 2 super practices Umbrella Group (a Walsall based group) and Modality (a national GP company with a Walsall sub-division)

3.3.2. Every GP practice holds a contract with the NHS to deliver services. These contracts state the mandatory services a GP practice must provide to all of their patients, as well as making provision for services which they choose to provide.

3.3.3. There are 2 types of GP contract in Walsall; The General Medical Services (GMS) contract and the Alternative Provider Medical Services (APMS) contract. The Care Quality Commission assesses the quality of care under both contract types and provides an independent rating and assessment of practices.

3.3.4. The GMS contract is the national standard contract, held by 46 of the Walsall practices. The contract is negotiated nationally between NHS England and the General Practice Committee of the British Medical Association (BMA). This contract is then used locally by the NHS to commission care. This contract is not time limited and continues until the practice wishes to relinquish, for example when a single handed practitioner retires, or the NHS determines that the quality of care being delivered does not meet the standard requires and takes enforcement action.

3.3.5. The APMS contract allows contracts with private companies or third sector providers as well as GPs to provide primary care services. They can also be used to commission services outside the GMS contract in areas where there are particular needs, e.g. services to the homeless or asylum seekers. APMS contract are time limited, usually 5 years, and will usually contain an option to extend for a further 5 years. There are currently 6 APMS contracts in Walsall.

Practice Code	Practice Name	PCN	Contract GMS/PMS	Contract Term	Extension
M91032	Collingwood Family Practice, Collingwood Drive, Great Barr, B43 7NF (Modality Group)	East 2	APMS	01.09.2018 - 31.08.2023	Option to extend - 5 years 31.08.2028
M91613	Forrester Street Surgery, 1 Forrester Street, Walsall, WS2 9PL (Modality Group)	South 1	APMS	01.09.2018 - 31.08.2023	Option to extend - 5 years 31.08.2028
Y02626	Keys Family Practice, Willenhall Health Centre, Field Street, Willenhall, WV132NY (Modality Group)	West 2	APMS	01.09.2018 - 31.08.2023	Option to extend - 5 years 31.08.2028
Y02627	Harden Blakenall, Blakenall Village, 79 Thames Road, Blakenall, Walsall, WS3 1LZ (Modality Group)	North	APMS	01.09.2018 - 31.08.2023	Option to extend - 5 years 31.08.2028
M91626	Holland Park, Parkview Centre, Chester Road North, Brownhills, WS8 7JB (Umbrella Group)	East 1	APMS	01.02.2009 - 31.01.2019	5 year extension enacted from 01.02.2019 to 31.01.2024
M91016	New Invention Health Centre, 66 Cannock Road, Willenhall, WV12 5RZ (Modality Group)	West 1	APMS	01.04.2016 - 31.03.2026	Option to extend - 5 years 31.03.2031

3.3.6. At the end of any APMS contract the ICB has 3 options:

- 3.3.6.1. Terminate the contract and disperse the patient list between neighbouring practices. To do this consideration needs to be given to the capacity of other GP lists in the area.
- 3.3.6.2. Re-tender the contract as an APMS contract to consider whether there are alternative providers. This may increase costs if the existing

or new providers tender at a higher price, and is also time consuming from a procurement perspective

3.3.6.3. Enact the extension period, where this has not already been done. A contract that has completed its 10 year period cannot be extended without re-procurement.

3.3.7. The decision on the options is made by the Primary Care Committee within the ICB. The committee is chaired by the Medical Director and supported by the Director of Primary Care. They will consider contract performance on a range of access and quality indicators including any specific to the APMS contract, patient complaints, CQC ratings and any local intelligence available for consideration as well as ensuring that any extended contract continues to meet the needs of the registered population.

3.3.8. Under the national APMS contract the ICB is required to indicate no less than 9 months prior to contract end date which of the 3 options it is minded to pursue (2 options if contract has already been extended). Each party then has an option to terminate the contract no less than 6 months prior to the end of the contract if they do not wish to proceed as indicated.

3.3.9. Therefore, in the current year for Walsall there are 4 Modality contracts which required a decision and an Umbrella contract which requires a decision by the end of July 2023. The Primary Care Committee have decided that they are minded to extend the 4 Modality contracts due to expire in August 2023 until August 2028. A decision on Holland Park will be made in the next few months.

3.3.10. The ICB would welcome views from the OSC, or local Councillors affected by the changes, and will incorporate these views into their process. This view can be conveyed in writing from the committee or members, or a meeting can be arranged with the Primary Care Commissioning Committee. The views held by local Councillors were considered by the Committee in making a decision on the Modality extension.

4. Conclusion

The current winter period has been extremely challenging for both the NHS and partners, including Walsall Council. Significant extra capacity has been commissioned, both prior to winter and during the run up to Christmas as demand increased. All available workforce has been utilised and partnership working has reduced the impact of flu and covid in Walsall on service access compared to other areas but has remained a significant concern.

The Harden practice wishes to work with the Committee to agree a service model for the local population and will present options to the Committee, if this is acceptable

The contractual status of GP practices has been outlined in the paper, and the ICB would wish to work with the OSC to ensure that its views are fully considered as part of any future contractual discussions.

Author

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