



THE HALFWAY SURGERY
ST MARY'S MEDICAL CENTRE

October 2020

Notice to all patients registered at The Halfway Surgery and St Mary's Medical Centre

Dear patient,

We are writing to let you know that the **Halfway Surgery, Chatham** and **St Mary's Medical Centre, Strood** have recently merged to become one GP Practice.

We have been working with NHS Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), who are responsible for planning and buying all local NHS services, to ensure patients will continue to receive the best possible care.

The two well established local surgeries will now form one larger GP Practice that will continue to provide GP services at both locations. Patients will retain their right to see their normal GP and the staff teams at both surgeries will continue in their respective roles and work for the new practice. Patients can still make contact in the normal way but will now have more choice as to where they are seen and when.

In addition, patients can also now benefit from access to the combined expertise of a wider clinical team and support network including; GP, Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Physicians Associate, Clinical Pharmacist, Practice Nurse, Healthcare Assistant, Specialist Diabetes, Specialist Respiratory and Mental Health Nurses, Musculoskeletal Physio, Phlebotomist and Social Prescriber.

Rest assured, patients do not need to take any action, the process is automated and there will be no interruption to your care.

Having access to the extended clinical team at both Halfway Surgery and St Mary's Medical Centre will provide enhanced availability to an appropriate and experienced clinician and we are hopeful that patients will embrace the change.

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me via your normal surgery.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Hogarth
MANAGING PARTNER

Partners: Dr Protichi Mallik, Dr Chris Olukanni and Mrs Sharon Hogarth
The Halfway Surgery, 68 New Road, Chatham, ME4 4QR
Branch Surgery: St Marys Medical Centre, Vicarage Road, Strood, ME2 4DG

Our Practice Merger - Your Top Questions

As many of you know the NHS, and in particular Primary Care (the services provided by your Practice) is facing increasing demands for its services both locally and nationally, as well as challenges of GP recruitment and retention.

We are planning how best we can continue to provide all of our patients with the best possible care and the highest-quality services that you rightfully expect from us.

Merging the services of the two surgeries will help us achieve objectives set out in the NHS Long Term Plan which requires practices to work together in Primary Care Networks in order to support each other and collaborate to offer improved patient services and build stronger primary healthcare teams. These teams will be better able to respond to the needs of their respective populations and tackle the serious workforce issues that many are experiencing.

The following Q&A (questions and answers) fact sheet has been prepared to support patients and provide further information regarding the recent merger of our two GP surgeries to become a single practice working over two locations.

- The Halfway Surgery
- St Mary's Medical Centre

We hope that you will find this helpful in understanding what our merger will mean for you as patients.

Q1 **When will the merge to the new practice take place?**

The merger took place on 20th October 2020.

Q2 **What are the benefits of merging for Patients?**

We will be able to maintain long-term provision of high quality care to our patients, invest in innovation and create a stable and sustainable GP Practice fit for the future. The new structure will provide greater flexibility for patients and, over time, we hope to be able to provide new and additional patient services and offer access to services normally only available in secondary care, here in your GP Practice, closer to home.

We strongly believe that by merging, and pooling our clinical skills and staff, we will be able to offer improved access. It will also help us provide more robust cover for staff holiday leave and sickness.

Patients will see the most appropriate member of the new clinical team which will speed up appointment bookings and there will also be the opportunity to make appointments outside of the normal Monday to Friday hours.

Patients will continue to have access to a range of appointments including telephone consultation, video consultation, online consultation from a GP via the new Doctorlink / eConsult service, reducing the need for face-to-face appointments. This will be in addition to the advice already available by phoning the NHS111 service or visiting your local pharmacy for minor ailments.

Q3 Will I still be able to make an appointment to see my usual doctor or nurse?

Yes. We very much value all of the one-to-one relationships our patients have with their doctors and nurses. It is therefore expected that the merger will further increase our ability to provide you with continuity of care and access to your usual doctor and/or nurse.

We employ a wide clinical workforce to ensure that you are seen by the most appropriate practitioner and this reduces reliance on locum doctors and provides you with a greater number of highly skilled local doctors, nurses and allied health professionals in the event that your usual doctor or nurse is absent from work.

Q4 Will I still be able to contact my usual surgery in the same way?

Yes. Please continue to contact the surgery using the normal telephone number. We will continue to provide daily appointments to see doctors, nurses and other healthcare support workers.

Q5 Will my usual surgery opening times stay the same?

Yes. We are not currently anticipating any changes to our core opening times. We also offer extended access opening times daily from 07:30 and have clinics early evening and on a Saturday.

Q6 Will there be changes made to the way I book appointments?

No. We are not currently anticipating any changes to the way you book appointments and you will therefore continue to be able to book these in the same way as you do now.

We will continue to review the availability of appointments regularly to ensure patients have access to the care they need.

We will continue to offer early morning appointments and later evening appointments through extended hours.

We will also continue to contact all of our patients who require scheduled vaccinations, chronic disease reviews or routine screening e.g. cervical screening tests, etc.

Q7 Will I have to go to the other GP practice site for consultations and/or treatments?

No. However, you will often be offered access to the first available appointment to meet your clinical need which on occasions could be at the sister location. This gives you the choice to take the first appointment or request an appointment at your normal or preferred surgery location or with your normal GP.

We are offering specialist clinics and services including Respiratory/COPD clinics, Diabetes management clinics, Joint Injections, Minor surgery, Family Planning clinics etc.

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therefore you may be asked if you would like to attend there in order to access more specialised care if this is appropriate and you choose this option.

Q8 Will any service that is currently offered by my usual surgery be removed or stopped?

No. We do not anticipate services being removed or stopped. If anything, we anticipate that this merger will bring about a greater choice of services.

Q9 Will there be any changes to how I access the GP out of hours service?

No. In order to access a GP when the new practice is closed, you will still continue to telephone the NHS 111 service and they will either signpost you to the most appropriate service or arrange for you to access a GP.

Q10 Will the current arrangements that I have in place for getting my medicines stay the same?

Yes.

Q11 Will the merger of the Halfway Surgery and St Mary's Medical Centre affect any treatment or medication I am currently receiving either at my usual surgery or any hospital?

No. Any current treatments, medications or investigations will not be affected by the merger.

Q12 Will I need to re-register to become a patient of the single GP Practice? What will happen to my health records?

No, you will not need to re-register and we also anticipate that you will remain registered with the same GP as you are now. All of our patients will automatically be merged into a single GP Practice and your health records will reside within our single patient database. The NHS safeguards in relation to patient confidentiality of information and GDPR continue to remain in place.

Q13 What will happen to my medical records?

When practices merge, the clinical systems in each practice also merge into a single system. This is an automated process and patient information will be transferred automatically. The new single system allows the merged practice to work as a single organisation, providing you with safe and effective care from a wider team.

Q15 Will the new single GP Practice be able to provide new services to patients?

One of the main reasons to merge and form a larger practice, is for us to be able to expand the services that we are able to provide locally. For example, we can now offer access to see other healthcare professionals e.g. pharmacists for medication reviews, physiotherapists etc.

Q16 How will the new arrangement benefit GPs and nurses at the practice?

Our GPs, nurses and healthcare support workers will all have access to a wider pool of clinical knowledge and organisational expertise to draw upon and we will have far greater opportunities to specialise in areas such as diabetes, care of the elderly, palliative care

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and urgent care access. We anticipate that the current level of administrative tasks that our clinical staff perform will be shared across a wider workforce, therefore allowing them more time to spend on responding to and delivering the clinical care our patients need.

We will be able to better cover any planned or unplanned absences which we hope will alleviate the resulting pressures felt by remaining staff. In addition, we should also be able to reduce our reliance on expensive locum and bank staff.

We also anticipate that all of our staff will be provided with greater opportunities for enhanced training and career development.

Q17 I am concerned that the practices will be taken over by a private provider

On the contrary, we are joining forces to sustain and preserve local provision of local healthcare for the foreseeable future.

Q18 I am concerned that my local practice will lose its identity as part of a bigger organisation.

We are keen to preserve the local face of each surgery under the umbrella of the newly merged contract, retaining their individuality where practicable, sharing the resources of the combined team to establish a stable workforce in each site. Being part of a bigger organisation will give the practice a stronger voice in the community and the wider Medway Central Primary Care Network (PCN).

Q19 Do you have an idea for service improvement?

The merger gives us opportunity to further develop and improve the clinical services we deliver. With that in mind, we would be most grateful for your feedback on the following two questions:

1. What is the most important aspect of your GP surgery service that you would most like to preserve?
2. What would be the one thing you would like to improve the most?

Q20 How can I be involved?

You are invited to join the Patient Participation Group (PPG). PPGs can bring significant benefits to a GP practice: improving services, allowing resources to be used more efficiently and, most importantly, developing mutually supportive networks. You would be most welcome to join, please contact the practice manager for more information.

Q21 I have further questions I would like to ask and / or comments I would like to make. How do I do this?

Our Managing Partner (Sharon Hogarth) will be holding weekly 'Speak Up' sessions, providing a booked appointment to raise any questions, queries or concerns. Please contact the surgery and ask for a 'Speak Up' appointment. Appointments can be made in person or by telephone.

Alternatively, please provide your feedback or email your enquiry to:

kmccg.stmarysmedicalcentre-pm@nhs.net

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