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Re: Update on IMH's withdrawal from primary care in Swindon

At the end of last month, it was announced that the Integral Medical Holdings (IMH) Group would be ending its current partnership with five GP practices – Abbey Meads Medical Centre, Taw Hill Medical Centre, Moredon Medical Centre, Phoenix Surgery and Eldene Surgery – in Swindon.

This decision was made following many lengthy discussions in which representatives from the CCG and IMH, as well as senior doctors from each of the practices, looked at the events of the past nine months and debated the most appropriate action that would ensure patients' best interests were upheld.

Moving forward, it is now our priority to keep local people updated with what is happening and to offer reassurances that patients will not be left disadvantaged by recent events.

Firstly, it has been widely publicised in the local media that the three senior doctors at Moredon Medical Centre will be leaving the practice during June.

I can confirm that this is true, but in no way does this mean that the practice will be closing, nor does this mean there will be less appointments available for patients.

While it is fully understandable that some people may now be looking to register with another practice, I would urge patients to remain where they are while we work to resolve this situation as quickly as possible.

As a CCG, it is important that demand for primary care across Swindon remains balanced and other practices – all of which are equally busy – are not put under added pressure.

A new GP has recently joined the team at Moredon and we are now putting all our attention into developing a robust contingency arrangement that will ensure there is a smooth transition process for both patients and staff at the practice.

As well as this, our other main focus right now is to identify as quickly as possible new providers from the local area to work in partnership with these five practices.

Many reading this letter may ask why GP practices need to operate under a provider at all, or in partnership with other surgeries.

The way in which primary care is delivered in the 21st century – with demand for appointments continually increasing and practices providing more complex services – means that doctors and other healthcare professionals need as much time as possible for their patients.

Working-at-scale and sharing non-clinical activity, such as administration, finance and IT support, not only provides GPs and other practice staff with more capacity for patients, but also allows practices to be more efficient.

Conversations with potential providers are happening all the time and, as soon as there is an update which confirms details, this will be communicated to patients using as many channels as possible.

However, one thing we can share is that from next week, a number of GP supporters will be working in each of the five practices to offer leadership and hands-on support in reviewing clinical correspondence and the subsequent follow-up action, such as hospital referrals.

Patients should be assured that these GP supporters are themselves experienced GPs, who have a wealth of clinical knowledge and possess many years' experience in supporting practices to get where they need to be.

We understand that effective communication has been a continued source of frustration for many throughout IMH's tenure in Swindon, but I would like to make a fresh commitment to keep people regularly updated throughout this period of change.

And for the communication to be truly effective, we as a CCG need to be listening to local people too, which is why we're in regular conversation with Healthwatch Swindon and the Patient Participation Groups at each practice.

The CCG's Annual General Meeting is taking place on Thursday 18 July at the Pilgrim Centre in Swindon town centre and, of course, the subject of IMH will be discussed.

My CCG colleagues and I will also be answering questions from those in attendance, so please feel free to come along and have your say.

As previously shared, there have been plenty of lessons for us to learn over the last year or so, and I'd like to use these experiences in a constructive way to ensure that past mistakes are not repeated.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your local practice in the usual way, or the CCG by sending an email to communications@swindonccg.nhs.uk.

Kind regards,

Nicki Millin

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