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Re: An update on work to support practices affected by the withdrawal of IMH

It has now been several weeks since it was announced that the Integral Medical Holdings (IMH) Group would be withdrawing from primary care in Swindon, and I would like to take this opportunity to reassure local people that resolving the current situation, while maintaining normal service at each of the practices affected, remains the CCG's number one priority at this time.

I understand that many, especially those registered at Moredon Medical Centre, Taw Hill Medical Practice, Abbey Meads Medical Group, Eldene Surgery and Phoenix Surgery, continue to feel anxious by what they are reading about their practice in the local press, but I hope this update will alleviate some of those worries and show that things are starting to move in the right direction.

However, I will be honest in saying that the situation the CCG inherited from IMH is extremely complicated and, although we are doing everything in our power to reach a positive ending, there is unfortunately no magic wand that will fix things overnight.

Instead, we are – alongside the work we are doing to secure permanent future arrangements for each of the five practices – focusing on providing the practical support needed to ensure that patients can continue to access advice, care and treatment.

As mentioned previously, GP supporters from the Local Medical Committee (LMC) are spending time reviewing all clinical correspondence – such as test results and hospital letters – from the last 12 months for anything that could have been overlooked.

Fortunately, the number of cases being flagged as in need of review are low, but those patients who do need to be come back are being contacted as a matter of urgency and invited to attend an appointment with the most appropriate healthcare professional.

We're also spending time re-examining complaints for any issues that could have potentially posed a risk to patient safety.

By giving these tasks to the GP supporters, the GPs working in the practices can focus all their attention on seeing patients and providing care to those who need it.

We know the process of booking appointments – particularly with regards to the central telephone hub – is still a major source of frustration for many.

As well as bringing in additional call handlers (there were 11 on site on the morning of Monday 8 July) and enlisting the support of an experienced call centre manager to help review current ways of working, we are also reviewing the call handling data on a daily basis.

And while we're fully aware some people are still experiencing long waits, the data we have is showing that the average waiting time for a call to be answered is starting to decrease.

Of course, it is still a long way from where we would like to be, but it is a marked improvement on the average waiting times that were being recorded at the beginning of the month.

These small improvements, along with other positive steps happening behind the scenes, such as bringing the number of patients waiting for an urgent referral to hospital down to zero, are a sign that things are beginning to change.

As I said earlier, there is unfortunately no quick fix and we would ask local people to continue to be patient with us as we do what is necessary to support the five practices.

Our conversations with local, NHS-based providers who are keen to support the practices going forward are progressing well and we hope to be able to make an announcement on some of the new partnerships soon.

At this time, we would also like to say a heartfelt thank you to the staff at Moredon, Abbey Meads, Taw Hill, Phoenix and Eldene who are working incredibly hard throughout this challenging period.

As always, if any person has questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact us directly by calling 01793 683700 or by sending an email swiccg.enquiries@nhs.net.

Kind regards,

Nicki Millin,
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