

**The Patient Reference Group
Meeting on Tuesday 7th October
The Abbey View Medical Centre
6.00 pm**

**The Proposed Merger of the Abbey View Medical Practice and the
Sturminster Newton Medical Group**

1. Welcome – Anthony Austin Chair of the Abbey View Patients Group

Anthony Austin, on behalf of the Abbey View Medical Practice and of the Patients group, welcomed 40 people registered with the Practice who had come for the meeting.

He also welcomed Dr Simone Yule, Senior Partner with the Practice and the newly appointed Business Manager, Dan Burnham.

Dr Yule also has a significant role as Deputy Chair of the Clinical Commissioning Group.

2. The purpose of the meeting

Dr Yule and Mr Burnham would explain the status of the proposed merger, its reasons and the timescale for implementing the changes.

It was important to understand that the discussions were at an early stage and that no fundamental decisions had yet been taken.

In addition there would be an opportunity for questions and discussion after the main presentations.

3. The Merger

An outline – Dr Yule

The Sturminster Newton Practice had been devastated by the untimely death of one of their partners. At the same time they were faced with the retirement of two of their senior partners and the combined depletion of GP input caused substantial problems.

Thoughts of a possible merger with another practice opened the opportunity to discuss with the Abbey View Practice as they are very similar in their patient profiles, and discussions began.

Dr Yule explained that there were valid reasons to believe that a merger would be in the interests of both practices but that there were a lot of rigorous details to be agreed and accepted by both the practices and central NHS England.

Comment - Dan Burnham

Mr Burnham gave a brief outline of some of the legal, financial and administrative issues that faced both partnerships

- A new Joint Partnership Agreement
- The formal processes of uniting two groups of people
- the uniting of many financial accounting procedures etc.

The Effect on Patients – Dr Yule

All patients would continue to be registered to the practices to which they presently belonged. There would be no requirement for a Shaftesbury Patient to routinely attend a Sturminster Newton surgery.

- Dan Burnham

One major change should take place as a result of the new partnership – there were already plans to introducing a new “telephone system which should help reduce the long waiting times and mean that making appointments should be easier.

4. Timetable

Both practices are working towards a completion date of 31st March 2015. Inevitably this depends on many administrative matters but there is a fair chance that this could happen.

Dr Yule and Mr Burnham offered to arrange a further open meeting late November early December.

5. Questions

1. Was the total number of doctors going to reflect the Sturminster Newton’s reduction of 3 GP’s?

Answer: The Practice was already advertising for replacements and there were no plans to work with fewer Practitioners.

2. Would patients in this practice retain their allocated GP or would there be changes?

Answer: There are no plans to change the present system for either practices.

3. It is very difficult trying to get an appointment quickly with one’s “own” Doctor. Is this likely to get worse?

Answer: The problem of needing an appointment with your own GP on the day you need to see someone is that a) your own GP may not be on duty or b) all appointments are already allocated.

Dan Burnham:

Both practices have outdated telephone systems and discussions are already underway to sort this out and have a much more user friendly system with either practice receptionists able to take calls and allocate appointments more efficiently. Whilst this does not mean that you would get the GP you wanted on the day of the call, as you can now, you will be able to see a clinician.

4. Is the “Out of Hours” system likely to be affected?

Answer This is unlikely in the short term. The NHS is looking at ways of finding the funding so that GP’s might be available at different times.

5. Would patients be expected to attend an appointment at Sturminster Newton?

Answer: Not for any routine matters. Both Practices have Doctors who have specialised qualifications in addition to their General Practice experience and in the event that it might be appropriate for a patient to be seen by that person, it would be discussed to ensure that the patient concerned was agreeable to take up the appointment.

6. What are the advantages of a merger?

Answers: Both practices believe that they will be able to offer a wider and better total service to the patients they have.
Administering one larger practice will be more cost efficient and enable better use of spare capacity across the four sites.
The combined number of patients means that the “purchasing” power of local and acute facilities is far better.
The increase of availability of GP special qualifications will help reduce the time taken to diagnose and refer more effectively to Specialists. The aim is to undertake as much specialist work as possible at the surgery locations rather than have to travel to hospital.
When the merger has had time to settle down we believe that patients will be able to get a more efficient overall service.

Dr Yule and Mr Burnham took several other questions largely raising points of a particular enquiry for an individual. At the end of the meeting they both thanked all for attending and proposed a further meeting when they should have a much clearer idea of how things were going.

6. Date of Next meeting – an Open Forum – 2nd December 2014 at 7.00 pm
To be held at the Abbey View Medical centre unless numbers required a larger venue.