

## **Walk-In Centres in Harrow – Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Are there plans to close Walk-in Centres in Harrow?**

Harrow CCG is reviewing walk-in and wait services provided at Belmont Health Centre and Pinn Medical Centre, following the successful transition of the Alexandra Avenue Walk-In Centre to a GP Access Centre.

Last year, the walk-in service at Alexandra Avenue changed from a walk-in and wait service to an appointment only service for Harrow residents. This change followed national NHS guidance to develop GP Access Centres.

Since the change at Alexandra Avenue we have spoken to service users to gather their feedback and reviewed usage data for the service. We are confident that the change from a walk-in and wait service to an appointment only service for Harrow residents has been beneficial. We are now looking at the possibility of making the same change at the Belmont Health Centre and Pinn Medical Centre.

Currently there is inequality across Harrow for access to GP services and we want to reduce variation as part of our review.

### **What current walk-in services are available at the Pinn Medical Centre?**

The Pinn Medical Centre currently operates two walk-in services, one for patients registered with the Pinn Medical Centre only and a general walk-in service for anyone from anywhere.

We don't think having two separate walk-in services provides fair access for all Harrow residents, and does not make best use of our limited resources.

Of the patients using the general walk-in at Pinn Medical Centre only 1 out of 3 live in Harrow.

This is why we are looking at ways of providing services and appointments that are exclusively for patients in Harrow.

We are therefore proposing a GP Access Centre/appointment service at the Pinn Medical Centre so services are provided to Harrow patients only. This will give greater access for our local population offering a dedicated GP appointment time.

At the same time as reviewing the Pinn Medical Centre we will also be looking at a similar model for the Belmont Medical Centre, to ensure all our GP access services provide the service to residents.

**Is Harrow CCG experiencing funding issues and is this why they are making this cut?**

Our decisions are always based on the best interest of the patient. This is not a cut of a service or a closure - the current Walk-in Centres are being reviewed to ensure that we can better manage demand by offering dedicated appointment slots at a time that is convenient for the patient and ensure equity across the Harrow borough for our patients.

Residents in these areas have more opportunities for access to healthcare compared to other more deprived parts of Harrow. Harrow CCG need to ensure inequity of care is addressed within the existing limited resources we have.

**Will you be engaging with patients if any changes are made?**

Yes, if Harrow CCG do decide to make changes to these services we will engage with the local community and our stakeholders to obtain their views.

**Are you only going to have two GP Access Centres and close the Pinn Walk-in Centre entirely?**

No, we are looking at all three sites. 39% of patients attending the Pinn Walk-in Centre are from Harrow. The remainder, 61%, are registered with GPs from outside Harrow.

**What is the timescale for making these proposed changes?**

We are looking into changing the Belmont Walk-In Centre to a GP Access Centre in November 2019. We do not have a timescale for changing the Pinn Walk-In Centre as we are currently awaiting a review of Personal Medical Services in our borough.

**What about people who live nearby but live or are with a Hillingdon GP?**

The Pinn Medical Centre borders Hillingdon (28% of attendances) and the Belmont Health Centre borders Brent (4% of attendances)

Both Hillingdon CCG and Brent CCG implemented GP Access Centres during 2018–19 for their patients. Available appointments would be offered to the residents from these boroughs via their own GP or NHS 111.

## **Why change a Walk-in Centre to a GP Access Centre?**

GP Access Centres offer improved access to GP services for local residents, who don't need to spend long periods of time in the waiting room; they can simply call their GP practice or NHS 111 to book an appointment.

Doctors seeing patients at a GP Access Centre will, with the patient's consent, have access to the patient's full set of medical records held with their regular GP, including details of any significant illnesses, medication and investigations. This is currently the case for Harrow residents accessing the Walk-In Centre, but not for non-Harrow residents. The proposed change to a GP Access Centre means every patient will see this benefit as the service is for Harrow patients only.

Likewise, the clinical notes made by the GP in the Access Centre will immediately be accessible by the patient's own GP. This mutual access to records clearly enhances both patient care and continuity of care. This means being seen in a GP Access Centre is no different to being seen by a new doctor at one's own GP's surgery.

## **Why do patients need to book ahead?**

By asking that patients call ahead and book we can make sure that they get to the right place at the right time. That might mean we advise that you need to see a GP or nurse at a GP Access Centre or that you require treatment at the A&E, Urgent Care Centre or pharmacy etc.

Pre-booking an appointment prevents needless waiting times for the patient and helps staff to manage daily demand better.

## **How long are the average waits at a Walk-in Centre?**

Throughout the day we have times that we do not see enough patients and other times when we are seeing too many, meaning sometimes we can see patients within 30 minutes and other times up to 2 hours. By offering appointment slots throughout the day we can ensure that we are fully using the service at all times and manage the flow of patient demand better.

### **How do you know that an appointment-based system works?**

[Our recent survey](#) showed that 8 out of 10 patients rated their experience at the Alexandra Avenue GP Access Centre as very good or excellent. GP Access Centres offer improved access to GP services for local residents, who don't need to spend long periods of time in the waiting room; they can simply call their GP practice or NHS 111 to book an appointment.

### **Would the hours of service change?**

We would review the level of demand on the service, and any changes to opening hours would reflect the number of residents accessing appointments at the GP Access Centre. The opening times for the Walk-in Centres are 8am-8pm, seven days a week.

### **If I call NHS 111 could I be booked into any of the three GP Access Centres if the CCG decide to change them?**

Yes, Harrow patients who call NHS 111 will be offered a GP appointment at any one of the three GP Access Centres in the borough, should the changes go ahead.

### **What will be the impact to services at Northwick Park Hospital?**

Harrow CCG has monitored on a weekly basis the change at Alexandra Avenue and will do the same again if these proposed changes go ahead. There has been an increase in attendances at our Urgent Treatment Centre; however this trend was from all areas in North West London so cannot be directly attributed to the change at Alexandra Avenue.

The Urgent Treatment Centre provider has systems in place to re-direct patients to our GP Access Centres and Walk-In Centres and this process will continue.

We also provide information packs to all GP Practices. This monitors the usage of patients across the borough, including the Urgent Treatment Centre, Walk-In Centres and GP Access Centres.

## **What happens if there's an emergency i.e. my child stops breathing or is bleeding?**

Patients are always advised to go to the A&E or call 999 in an emergency. The walk-in service treats minor illnesses such as stomach aches, minor cuts and bruises and insect/animal bites. A GP Access Centre will continue to treat minor illnesses in the same way as a Walk-in Centre does at present, but through an appointment service.

Minor illnesses include issues such as:

- infections and rashes
- emergency contraception
- stomach aches
- vomiting and diarrhoea
- hay fever
- insect and animal bites
- dressing care (not routinely)
- minor cuts and bruises
- minor burns and strains