



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Jo Churchill MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Prevention,
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Edward Timpson CBE MP

By email to: edward.timpson.mp@parliament.uk

12 April 2021

Dear Edward,

Thank you for your further correspondence of 4 March on behalf of a number of your constituents about the proposed closure of Sandiway Surgery. I apologise for the delay in replying.

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised the need for the primary care sector to continue to improve its ways of working, building on the successful introduction of primary care networks, which are helping to deliver economies of scale, boost capacity, and improve access.

We have committed to at least an additional £1.5 billion cash for general practice over the next four years in addition to the £4.5 billion real terms annual increase by 2023/24 announced for primary and community care in the *NHS Long Term Plan*.

It is important to stress that a reduction in practice numbers does not mean a reduction in the quality of care. When a GP practice does close, patients are informed of the closure and advised to register at other local practices of their choice within the catchment area in which they live. Any application to close a practice will ultimately be considered by the primary care commissioning committee (PCCC) of the local clinical commissioning group (CCG).

On 5 November, Cheshire CCG's PCCC considered the application by Danebridge Medical Practice (DMP) to close its surgery in Sandiway. This meeting concluded with members agreeing to defer to a future meeting the decision on whether to accept or decline the application.

The PCCC also requested that DMP undertake further actions to address areas of concern raised by committee members, ahead of a future meeting. This includes asking DMP to:

- clarify why it plans to upscale services at Kingsmead rather than keeping Sandiway open;
- provide a more detailed explanation of how closing the Sandiway surgery would lead to increased capacity in the Kingsmead and Danebridge surgeries;

- describe the practice's expected future delivery model, post-COVID; and
- explain how, if the Sandiway surgery were to close, the practice would support patients living in Sandiway and Cuddington, including in relation to repeat prescriptions, appointment booking, medicines monitoring, and liaison with the Central Cheshire Integrated Care Partnership and other community-based health and care providers.

Owing to the pressures of the second wave of COVID and the practice's involvement in delivering the national vaccination programme, the PCCC agreed with DMP to defer this further engagement. This is expected to resume now, with the support of the Cheshire West Integrated Care Partnership. Further support has also been sought from Healthwatch Cheshire.

It is anticipated that the PCCC will convene in late May or early June to consider further the application from DMP, and members of the public will have the opportunity to contribute to the discussions and deliberations of the committee.

Alongside this, DMP has submitted an action plan to the CCG to address areas of improvement highlighted by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). To address management and recruitment issues, a new recruitment model using a local training pool has been introduced by DMP, along with change of practice manager, introduction of new human-resources, nurse and patient-services managers and an agreed recruitment plan to replace partners who are due to leave in the next year. In view of the pandemic, the CQC's next assessment is yet to be scheduled.

The Government wants everyone to be able to access a primary care professional when they need to. As part of the GP contract 2020/21, a new GP Access Improvement Programme was introduced, seeking to cut the longest waits for routine appointments. The Department of Health and Social Care will continue to work closely with other government departments and local government to deliver this programme.

Meanwhile, I would encourage all interested parties to continue to work with the practice and the consultation process.

I hope this reply is helpful.



JO CHURCHILL