

Our ref: 22565

1 September 2022

Private & Confidential

Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP
Member of Parliament for Surrey Heath
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Michael

Provision for General Practice in Surrey Heath - Case Ref: MG25407

Thank you for your email dated 8 August 2022, in which you share your constituents' concerns about the availability of GP appointments in Surrey Heath, and the subsequent impact on the number of people visiting urgent care facilities. I am sorry your constituents have found there to be difficulties with accessing GP appointments and I welcome the opportunity to answer your request for an update on the new local patient/partner strategy.

NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board's (ICB) Associate Director for Primary Care and Primary care Network Development – Surrey Heath, has reviewed your email and I can now confirm the following:

Access to GP Services in Surrey Heath

- All GP Practices in Surrey Heath are open for all patients and are seeing a significant proportion of patients face-to-face. None of the GP practices in Surrey Heath are closed for appointments, and the doors of all ten sites are open between 8:30am and 6:30pm each weekday. In addition to this, on a rota basis, four out of the seven practices are open every evening between 6:30pm and 8pm weekdays, Saturdays 9-1pm, and Sundays 9-12pm. All patients can access these additional appointments.
- Practices do continue to triage the appointments with clinical and reception navigators; to screen for the most appropriate clinician and appointment type, timeframe and continuity of clinician where required.
- New telephony systems are now in place across six of seven practices in Surrey Heath. The new system went live during the summer and provides patients with up-to-date information on where they are in a queue, provides a queue call-back functionality, and allows the practice to monitor the number of incoming calls and assign staff to the lines in highest demand quickly. This reduces call waiting, and means calls are answered efficiently. We have already seen positive feedback from patients on local social media.
- Healthwatch has recently undertaken reviews at several locations across Surrey Heath to listen to concerns from patients. Themes from this review are currently underway, but involve wait times for secondary services, pharmacy and dental access, as well as challenges accessing GP services. Access to general practice appointments has increased by approximately 54% in Surrey Heath post-pandemic compared to prior.

- Data on appointments in Frimley suggest that 49% of patients are seen on the same day as the appointment request, 8% the following day, and 20% between two to seven days after the initial call. Of these appointments, 54% are face to face, with 44% on the telephone, and 3% are video or online consultations. We are in the process of validating this data for Surrey Heath specifically and will share this with you as soon as it is available.

Relaunched Patient Participation Groups – all practices in Surrey Heath

Frimley ICB has been working with all practices in the area to relaunch face-to-face meetings and improved patient engagement. All practices recognise the benefits that patient engagement can bring, especially considering the impact of the pandemic over the past two years.

Feedback from these groups so far has been helpful, and the opportunity to share with patients the work and improvements behind the scenes has been well received. The groups will actively review changes at the practices, provide feedback on current services, as well as acting as community champions for the practice services. The GP practices are excited to rekindle this work and to have a regular forum once again for engaging with their registered population – and welcome new patients joining these groups at all times.

Patient Engagement Event – 1 October 2022, Camberley Theatre

In our meetings with practices during July and August, it has become clear that they require some more support with patient engagement – and that there is lots of scope to further educate patients on the services available locally. In response to this, we are organising a patient engagement event on Saturday 1st October 2022 at Camberley Theatre. This is a listening event, which will be focussed on access to services. There will be several stands to provide other information, including educating patients on the various roles in primary care, and what they can offer. We will also share information on the improvements taking place and the estates work we are planning locally. It is hoped the dialogue at these events will help to provide an opportunity for further listening but also a way to address the very negative national headlines that continue to cause local challenges.

People that attend will be invited to continue the conversations if they are interested, by becoming part of their local GP practice Patient Participation Group or by joining the Primary Care Network level Patient Participation Group that is being launched.

Thank you once again for contacting me with this matter, and I hope I have addressed the key points raised by your constituents. If I can be of any further assistance then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Fiona Edwards
Chief Executive Officer
NHS Frimley ICB