



DR M WOOLLETT. DR L JOSEPH. DR P LEE-ROBICHAUD

Dear Patients,

We wanted to update you with some important news regarding the future of our practice. After thorough evaluation and careful consideration, the partners of Forestside Medical Practice have arrived at the difficult decision to explore the closure of the Marchwood site.

We understand that this news may come as a surprise and may raise concerns, so we want to provide you with a detailed explanation of the reasoning behind this decision and how it supports the long-term future of our practice.

Forestsides Medical Practice has been an integral part of the community for decades, providing healthcare services from the main surgery in Dibden Purlieu and our branch surgery in Marchwood. In January 2023 we also started to provide care at the urgent care centre within the new Hythe hospital. This is staffed by GPs and advance nurse practitioners from Forestside as a cooperative with our neighbouring practices Waterfront and Waterside. This means we currently provide services from three sites – at Marchwood, The Urgent Care Centre, and Dibden Purlieu.

GP recruitment is a national problem and coincides with increasing healthcare needs within the community. Despite being a GP surgery that has long been engaged in training doctors to become GPs we have found it hard to recruit and retain GPs. Given that resources are finite the only way to maintain a service is to improve the efficiency with which we use the GPs that we do have.

We have improved efficiency by working on projects with our neighbouring practices as a Primary Care Network (PCN) because funding is increasingly channelled through PCNs. The covid vaccination clinics are an example of a PCN project that we would have struggled to run by ourselves as just Forestside but was achievable as a group of surgeries in a Primary Care Network.

As part of the PCN we have been able to recruit PCN physiotherapists, pharmacists and paramedics who share their time between Forestside and with our neighbouring GP practices. They are able to see and treat patients with certain conditions thereby freeing up time for the GPs to see other patients.

The Urgent Care Centre at the new Hythe hospital is staffed by Advanced Nurse Practitioners from Forestside and our neighbouring two GP practices, plus PCN funded paramedics. The Advance Nurse Practitioners and paramedics are able to see and treat most urgent conditions for patients from all three practices and are under the supervision of a single GP. We share these GP supervision shifts with our neighbouring PCN practices and this releases GP time back for us to see Forestside patients in routine appointments.

If Forestside chose not to be part of the PCN then we would not have the same access to the extra PCN funded staff, the Urgent Care Centre, nor the efficiencies that they allow. This would lead to a vicious cycle of even greater pressure on staff, which would lead to staff leaving at a time when recruitment and retention is already difficult. Lack of staff would obviously impact upon the level of care we can deliver and the viability of Forestside as a practice.

In order to survive we chose to be part of the PCN and have been pleased to see the benefits mentioned above. These benefits have the potential become a virtuous rather than a vicious circle when it comes to GP partner recruitment from other parts of the county that don't have a PCN as effective as ours.

Being part of the PCN has to involve contributing staff time to seeing patients at the Urgent Care Centre in Hythe.

The role of the Marchwood site as a branch surgery changed during covid. We started to use the Marchwood site for chronic disease management and the Dibden Purlieu site for acutely unwell patients; it made sense to keep people coming for a routine review of a chronic illness in a different waiting room from a patient with an acute contagious infection.

Now, as covid has become endemic and the Urgent Care Centre opened in January 2023 we are spread between three sites rather than the main surgery at Dibden Purlieu and Marchwood. With urgent on the day patients being seen at the Urgent Care Centre at the new Hythe hospital by us and the rest of the PCN the Dibden Purlieu site has become the main site at which chronic disease/non-urgent patients are seen.

As a result we are able to staff the Marchwood site for only a fraction of the time it had been pre-covid/pre-Urgent Care Centre. When it is staffed that clinician is often working alone without the option to ask for a second opinion from another clinician.

The Dibden Purlieu site is bigger and specifically designed to be a GP surgery. It can accommodate the different clinical teams and administration staff together in the same building which helps the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the team.

People will be familiar with our Marchwood site and the challenges the outdated building poses the practice. It does not meet the standards outlined in the Disability Discrimination Act or by the Care Quality Commission.

The practice has tried to refurbish the building to meet these standards, however it is not achievable. This is due to the high financial costs involved. In addition it would also be impossible to refurbish such an outdated building while delivering healthcare services from it.

By consolidating resources and focusing efforts on the purpose-built facility at Dibden Purlieu and the Urgent Care Centre the practice can optimise service delivery, streamline administrative processes, and enhance the overall patient experience.

After careful consideration and thorough evaluation of the practice's operational challenges, the partners have realised that under current circumstances there is no option but to consider closing the branch site in Marchwood.

This decision was not made lightly and we appreciate it will cause difficulties for some of our Marchwood patients. We are committed to continuing to deliver high quality care for all of our patients and feel this decision is the only way to achieve this and for the practice to be sustainable in the long term.

There is no plan to reduce the number of staff employed. In time it is hoped these changes will help the practice recruit a greater breadth of staff.

### **Providing patients with access to modern GP practice services**

The priority remains providing accessible and high-quality healthcare services, and the practice is confident that this decision will ultimately contribute to achieving that goal.

This proposal allows resources to be redirected towards recruiting and retaining clinical staff, investing in modern healthcare technology, and expanding the range of services to better meet the evolving needs of patients.

### **Next steps**

The practice must apply to close the site to the NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (ICB).

As a part of this application, the ICB will require evidence of effective engagement with patients, stakeholders and the wider community including details of views and feedback received in relation to the proposal and the response of the practice to all feedback.

The ICB will support the practice with its patient and public engagement. There will be opportunities to share feedback in a few different ways, including a survey, in-person drop-in sessions and feedback forms placed in surgery sites.

The application is due to be submitted to the ICB's Hampshire Primary Care Operational Group meeting, which takes place on May 23. If approved, it is then due to be submitted to the ICB's Primary Care Committee on June 12.

Once a decision is made the practice and ICB will share the outcomes and next steps.

### **We want to hear from you**

We want to make this clear that our plan is a proposal and not a 'done deal', and we are sharing this news with you directly to get your thoughts on it.

We understand that any change of this magnitude may raise concerns among our patients, and we are committed to providing transparent communication and support throughout this process. We value the trust and confidence you have placed in us, and we remain dedicated to serving you with compassion, integrity, and excellence in healthcare.

If you have any questions or concerns about this proposal, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We are here to support you every step of the way.

We have put together a Frequently Asked Questions document which we hope will answer some questions. This is available on our website and hard copies are available in our practice sites.

You can share your feedback and ask questions in the following ways:

- Email us on [hiowicb-hsi.info.forestsides@nhs.net](mailto:hiowicb-hsi.info.forestsides@nhs.net)
- Complete a feedback slip available from each of the two sites.
- Attend a stakeholder meeting at Marchwood Village Hall on the following dates;
  - 4<sup>th</sup> of April between 5pm and 7pm  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/869045427267?aff=oddtcreator>
  - 8<sup>th</sup> of April between 5pm and 7pm or  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/869125446607?aff=oddtcreator>
  - 13<sup>th</sup> of April between 9:30am and 11:30am  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/869128626117?aff=oddtcreator>
  - 20<sup>th</sup> of April between 9:30am and 11:30am  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/869128886897?aff=oddtcreator>
- Fill in our online survey <https://bit.ly/3TxD0t9>

We know change can bring a level of uncertainty, but we also hope it can bring a level of security by futureproofing our services as we move into modern general practice.

Sincerely,

**The Partners of Forestside Medical Practice.**