

SAVE ST HELIER: AN UPDATE



A briefing by Siobhain McDonagh MP

Member of Parliament for Mitcham and Morden

5 September 2013

St Helier Hospital: Where are we now?

In 2011 the local NHS in South West London was told to find £370m savings a year. As a result, officials looked at the future of four hospitals: St Helier, St George's, Kingston and Croydon. One would lose its A&E and other services. When it became obvious any decision would also hit Epsom Hospital, the four became five – and officials decided to run down two hospitals instead of just one.

Earlier this year, they published their preferred options. St Helier is the hospital most under threat. If the cuts go ahead, St Helier will lose its intensive care unit, neonatal unit, children's unit, renal unit and about half its 390 in-patient beds, as well as the A&E and maternity units. Epsom will also lose services, although it will keep a care centre.

For the plans to be given the go-ahead, they need the agreement of GPs and clinicians in 6 areas: Merton, Sutton, Kingston, Croydon, Wandsworth and Surrey Downs (the area around Epsom).

In May, Merton's GPs met and agreed that plans to shut services at St Helier should move to the next stage: a public consultation exercise. This was endorsed by the local health body, the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group.

The CCG had wanted to consult over the summer holidays, but after the Labour Leader of Merton Council, Stephen Alambritis, threatened to go to Judicial Review, the consultation was delayed.

In July, campaigners won a High Court case against the Government about the closure of Lewisham Hospital due to the opposition of GPs there. Following this, the plans to shut services at St Helier and Epsom hospitals were put on hold until October in order to get further views from Epsom's GPs.

Once that has taken place, there will need to be a public consultation about the plans. These usually last 12-14 weeks. The consultation is not a referendum and will not be binding.

If officials still wish to press ahead, the plans will be firmed up – unless there is a Judicial Review, which could delay the process by around 6 months while the courts adjudicate.

The only other obstacle is if a Council objects by "calling in" the decision (Merton Council has said it opposes the plans). That would mean another delay, and the final decision will have to be made by the Government's Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt MP.

Hospital closures and the importance of GPs

When the High Court ruled that the Government's decision to shut the A&E at Lewisham Hospital was unlawful the judge said his ruling was because GPs wanted to keep it open, and the Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt had ignored them.

So GPs have a key role in the decision about whether or not to keep St Helier open. According to the records of a meeting of Merton's GPs that took place in May, "all members present agreed" that closure plans should go to the next stage. However, GPs in Epsom are being re-consulted, which suggests there are doubts about their support.

If you think Merton's GPs were wrong to agree, please contact your GP to ask them to reconsider.

The Lewisham decision was a fantastic victory for campaigners who want to save the NHS, and shows how important it is to persuade GPs to back the Save St Helier campaign.

Where will all the patients go?

It's projected that the population of South West London will grow more than 3% in the next 10 years. By 2029, the number of people aged 85 or above will rise by two thirds, and by 2016, the number of births will increase by 10%. The very old and very young are most likely to need hospital care. A third of the population has long term medical conditions – and account for two thirds of hospital visits.

Demand for healthcare could also be affected by wide health inequalities. For instance, there is a 12 year difference in men's life expectancy depending on where he lives, and a child in a deprived area is twice as likely to be obese as a child in an affluent area.

The number of babies born in SW London is projected to rise by more than 2,000 a year. If the Maternity units at St Helier and Epsom close, the number of births at the 3 remaining hospitals would increase by more than a third.

Yet St Helier has a brand new Maternity Unit, which received a £3m overhaul in 2009. It is the only maternity unit in SW London to meet rules on safety, and is the only unit with enough capacity to cope with this increase in births. It does not need rebuilding – unlike units at the other 3 hospitals.

Similarly, projections show that the number of visits to St Helier's A&E will rise by more than 10%. If St Helier and Epsom both lose their A&E, the number of emergency visits to St George's, Kingston and Croydon, which already struggle to meet targets, will rise by more than a third.

Five things you can do to Save St Helier

Here are the top 5 things you can do to help make a difference:

1 Contact your GP. GPs are very powerful in the NHS now. After the Lewisham verdict, it is clear they can block any hospital closure. So tell your GP you are against any cuts at St Helier and ask them if they are too. Find out what they are doing to stop the closures.

2 Write to the Secretary of State for Health. Tell him what you think and why you want to keep St Helier open. You can write to him from his website: www.dh.gov.uk/health/contact-dh or by letter to Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, Health Secretary, Richmond House, 79 Whitehall, London SW1A 2NS.

3 Take copies of the Save St Helier petition, and ask your friends, family and neighbours to sign. Ask them to do all the things you are doing to Save St Helier. You could even ask your local newsagent, hairdresser, etc if they will put a petition on display for their customers to sign too.

4 Write a Letter to be published in your local paper. You can write to the Wimbledon Guardian at letters@wimbledonguardian.co.uk. You can also join the facebook group "Save St Helier Maternity and A+E" and follow #savesthelier on Twitter.

5 Volunteer to deliver Save St Helier leaflets. Call my office on 020 8542 4835 or email savesthelier@mmlp.org.uk if you are able to spend an hour leafleting the area where you live.

And finally...

Make sure we have your contact details. It helps us to organise future events if we have your details – mobile numbers and email addresses are especially useful. If you haven't already completed a form, you can email your details to savesthelier@mmlp.org.uk.

Contact your GP

On the next page, you will find a suggested letter to send to your doctor. By all means write what you like – writing a personal letter is usually the most effective thing you can do. **Please send a copy of any reply you receive to Siobhain McDonagh MP, FREEPOST, 1 Crown Road, Morden SM4 1BR. You can also email it to savesthelier@mmlp.org.uk.**

If you do not know the contact details of your GP, here is a list of the addresses and emails of all GPs in Mitcham and Morden.

Local GP Practices

Practice Name	GP Lead	Address 1	Address 2	Postcode	Email address
Cannon Hill Lane Practice	Graham Mason	153 Cannon Hill Lane	London	SW20 9DA	alison.kirk@nhs.net
Central Medical Centre	Elizabeth Higham	42 Central Road	Morden	SM4 5RT	rvivekananda@nhs.net
Church Lane Practice	Shweta Singh	2 Church Lane	Merton Park	SW19 3NY	Vincent.poncia@nhs.net
Colliers Wood Surgery	Saqib Ayub	58 High Street	Colliers Wood	SW19 2BY	pat.hennessy@nhs.net
Lavender fields Surgery	Farooq Ahmad	182 Western Road	Mitcham	CR4 3EB	pat.hennessy@nhs.net
Cricket Green Medical Practice	Andrew Otley	75-79 Miles Road	Mitcham	CR4 3DA	gill.frost@nhs.net
Figges Marsh Surgery	Abdullah Zakaria	182 London Road	Mitcham	CR4 2AD	m.rayit@nhs.net tariqminhas@nhs.net
Graham Road Surgery	Raghu Lall	42 Graham Road	Mitcham	CR4 2HA	savita.lall@nhs.net
Grand Drive Surgery	Sion Gibby	132 Grand Drive	Raynes Park	SW20 9EA	barbara.young2@nhs.net
Ravensbury Park Surgery	Titus Keyamo	161 Wandle Road	Morden	SM4 6AA	ruth.steines@nhs.net
James O'Riordan Medical Centre	Jerome Jephcott	70 Stonecot Hill	Sutton	SM3 8HE	christine.board@nhs.net
Merton Medical Practice	Rafik Taibjee	12-17 Abbey Parade	Wimbledon	SW19 1DG	rita.deoliveira@nhs.net
Mitcham Medical Centre	Naem Khan	81 Haslemere Ave	Mitcham	CR4 3PR	stephen.hartley1@nhs.net
Morden Hall Medical Centre	Naheed Ahmad	256 Morden Road	London	SW19 3DA	linda.bradley2@nhs.net
Riverhouse Medical Practice	Naveed Baing	East Road	Wimbledon	SW19 1YG	chris.newman3@nhs.net
Rowans Surgery	Karen Worthington	1 Windermere Road	Streatham	SW16 5HF	vanessa.dias@nhs.net
Tamworth House Medical Centre	Geoff Hollier	341 Tamworth Lane	Mitcham	CR4 1DL	susan.stansfield@nhs.net smpct.correspondenceH85033@nhs.net
The Wilson Health Centre	Anirban Gupta	Cranmer Road	Mitcham	CR4 4TP	michele.izzo@nhs.net
Wide Way Medical Centre	Sayanthan Ganesaratnam	15 Wide Way	Mitcham	CR4 1BP	louise.aitken@nhs.net
Wimbledon Surgery	Tim Hodgson	35a High Street	Wimbledon	SW19 5BY	laura.bond@nhs.net

Save St Helier Hospital

[Insert GP's name & address here:]

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Dear Dr,

I am writing to you to ask you, as my local GP, what you are doing to support efforts to Save St Helier Hospital. Since the recent changes to the NHS, and the High Court verdict on the closure of Lewisham Hospital, it is clear that no hospital can lose significant services without the support of you and your fellow GPs.

In May, Merton's GP Practices met and agreed that plans to significantly downgrade our two local hospitals, St Helier and Epsom, should go to the next stage. The Chief Officer of the CCG has said that "all members present agreed".

I would appreciate it if you would let me know what discussions you had with patients like me before deciding to vote in favour of downgrading our hospitals. What opportunity will I have to meet with you personally so that you can explain your decision to support the process leading to the closure of St Helier's A&E, Maternity Unit and several other departments, as well as 390 hospital beds?

In particular, the meeting of GPs in May was told that the decision was "based on assumptions to improve care within the community", and BSBV has tweeted that there will be "improved out of hrs GP access". However, the medical director of BSBV has since said they are not drawing up plans for better community services.

As one of the GPs responsible for this decision, can you tell me what if any improved community services and improved out of hours services your practice is scheduled to offer? The decision you and other GPs took is based on improved services, and as one of your patients I need to know exactly what these will be before I can be in a position to participate in any future consultation.

As you are my GP, and GPs like you are now so important in deciding the future of local hospitals, it is extremely important to me that you understand and represent the views of your patients. I therefore look forward to hearing from you. Please also send a copy of your reply by email to savesthelier@mmlp.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Signature: Name:.....

Address:

.....Postcode:

Email: