

# The Avenue Surgery Practice Closure



## **Involvement Report**

Involvement dates: 14 January - 25 February 2021

Published May 2021

## Executive summary

The Avenue Surgery GP Practice in Alwoodley, north Leeds, was a single-handed GP practice. There were around 3,700 patients registered with the practice. In 2020, the GP handed in her resignation, which outlined that she would be retiring at the end of March 2021.

NHS Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is responsible for planning and paying for local health services. As commissioners we are responsible for GP contracts. NHS Leeds CCG accepted the resignation of the GP at The Avenue Surgery and looked at alternative arrangements for the practice population. As the building was owned by the GP, and was not deemed suitable to deliver high quality, modern healthcare services in the longer term, it was agreed that the practice would close on 31 March 2021.

Although patients were not able to influence the decision to close the practice, they were able to choose which new GP practice they registered with. This engagement ran from 14 January to 25 February 2021 and:

- Informed registered patients about the change, including the reasons for the closure
- Supported patients to move to a new GP practice
- Gave people an opportunity to share their views on the change and tell us what was important to them about GP services

The Avenue Surgery wrote to all registered households to tell them about the change and to explain how they could register with a new GP practice. We also worked with our partners to carry out a number of involvement activities to support the change including:

- An online survey, which was also available as a paper version
- Two online events where people could find out more about the change and ask questions
- Provided a telephone service to answer questions about the change and support people to register with a new practice
- Held a Facebook Live event
- Organised two meetings with The Avenue Patient Participation Group (PPG)

**207** people were engaged in our involvement activities.

The involvement identified a number of key themes, including:

- The importance of:
  - Getting an appointment with the right healthcare professional
  - Having friendly practice staff
  - Being able to make an appointment on the same day
- General sadness about the closure the practice
- Concerns about accessing online services during the change and in the future
- Concerns about local practices' ability to provide services and personalised care to increased numbers of people

This report gives a background to the change and outlines how we involved people in the closure. The report details what people told us during the involvement and outlines how we have responded to their feedback.

This report will be shared with all those involved in the involvement and will be made available on the CCG website Involvement pages. It will also support the general development of local health and care services in Leeds.

# 1. Background information

## a. NHS Leeds CCG

NHS Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is responsible for planning and buying (commissioning) the majority of health services for people in Leeds.

The CCG commissions a range of services for adults and children including planned care, urgent care, NHS continuing care, mental health and learning disability services and community health services.

The CCG co-commissions GP primary care services with NHS England. We do not commission other primary care services such as dental care, pharmacy or optometry (opticians) which is done by NHS England through their local area team, more commonly referred to as NHS England (West Yorkshire).

The most recent census (2011) indicates that Leeds has a population of 751,500 people living in 320,600 households, representing a 5% growth since the previous census of 2001. Leeds has a relatively young and dynamic population and is an increasingly diverse city with over 140 ethnic groups including black, Asian and other ethnic-minority populations representing almost 19% of the total population compared to 11% in 2001. There are 95 GP practices in Leeds.

Involving people and the public in developing and evaluating health services is essential if we want to have excellent services that meet local people's needs. It is our responsibility, and one that we take very seriously, to ensure that our local communities have the opportunity to be fully engaged in the decisions we take.

## b. Background to the involvement

NHS Leeds CCG accepted the resignation of the single-handed GP at The Avenue Surgery, in Alwoodley, towards the end of 2020, and looked at alternative arrangements for the practice population. As the building was owned by the GP, and was not deemed suitable to deliver high quality, modern healthcare services in the longer term, it was agreed that the practice will close on 31 March 2021.

There were approximately 3700 patients registered at The Avenue (approximately 2000 households). The CCG assigned patients to a new practice through a 'managed allocation'. This meant that the majority (approx. 3000) were transferred to Alwoodley Medical Centre and the remainder were transferred to Meanwood Heath Centre. Patients living outside the catchment area of these practices were asked to register themselves with a local GP.

This involvement:

- Informed registered patients about the change, including the reasons for the closure
- Supported patients to move to a new GP practice
- Gave people an opportunity to share their views on the change and tell us what was important to them about GP services

## 2. How did we identify and involve patients and wider stakeholders?

We identified a number of key stakeholders that we needed to engage with through this involvement:

- We developed a range of ways to involve **registered patients** in the change. These are outlined in detail below.
- We held two meetings with The Avenue **Patient Participation Group (PPG)** so that they could support the wider involvement. Four PPG members came to both meetings and notes from the meeting can be seen on the website. <https://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/your-views/the-avenue-practice-closure-2021/>
- We shared our plans with **Local councillors and MPs**, and they were given an opportunity to ask questions about the change during a zoom meeting in Dec 2020
- We liaised with **local GP practices** to ensure that they have the capacity to take on new patients. All local GP practices confirmed that they could receive new patients.

### Letters to registered households

The Avenue surgery sent an initial letter to all 3700 registered households registered on 17 December 2020. This letter explained that that the practice would close, and we would be in touch in January with information about registering with another practice.

In early January we sent a follow up letter to all registered households which:

- Gave information about the change
- Outlined how people could register with a new GP practice
- Outlined how people could share their views on the change and ask questions

### Patient survey

Our letter to patients provided a link to an online survey where patients could share their views about the change. **26** people shared their views using the survey. The survey was also available in paper format on request and we sent out paper copies of the survey to 5 people.

### Online zoom event

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions we were unable to hold face-to-face events. We held two online zoom events where people could find out more about the change and share their views. The events were held at different times of the day on 8 and 9 February 2021. A BSL interpreter was available for the second event to ensure people who are deaf or hard of hearing could get involved. These public events were also attended by a GP from Alwoodley Medical Practice. **28** people attended our online zoom meetings.

### Telephone

We are aware that some people are not able to use digital technology, so provided a telephone line for people to find out about the change, share their views, request copies of the survey in a paper format and access support to register with a new practice. **16** people used the telephone line to get involved.

### Online Facebook Live event

In response to comments about the closure we also supported an online Facebook event for people to find out more about the change and share their views. The event was led by local councillor Dan Cohen and involved two GPs from Alwoodley Medical Centre. **130** people attended the Facebook Live event

**Patient assurance**

NHS Leeds CCG hosts an assurance group made up of public representatives and members of Healthwatch Leeds. The group is chaired by the CCG's Lay Member for Patient and Public Involvement. The Patient Assurance Group (PAG) reviews involvement plans to ensure that adequate patient involvement takes place when we make changes to services. The plan for The Avenue public involvement was taken to the PAG on 6 January, where the plan was given assurance by those present. You can read the minutes of the meeting on our CCG webpage here: <https://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/pag/>

### 3. Who took part in our involvement?

We provided a range of different ways for people to share their views. **207** people were involved in this service change. This included:

- **26** people filled in our paper and online survey
- **28** people attended our online zoom events
- **16** people called our telephone line for support
- **130** people attended the Facebook Live event
- **8** people attended our PPG meetings
- **3** people emailed the CCG for support

#### **Information about people who were involved in this work**

We collect equality monitoring information for some of our involvement activities. This allows us to understand who is sharing their views and, more importantly, where the gaps in feedback are. For this involvement we only collected equality monitoring information through our survey.

#### **a. Response by postcode**

Not all respondents completed the equality monitoring section, but of those that did, three told us they lived in LS6, two in LS7 and 18 in LS17.

#### **b. Response by age**

- 36% of respondents (9) were aged between 56 and 65
- 32% of respondents (8) were aged between 66 and 75
- 24% of respondents (6) were aged between 76 and 85
- 4% of respondents (1) were aged between 36 and 45

#### **c. Response by ethnicity**

25 respondents stated they were White British

#### **d. Response by religion and belief**

- 60% (15) of respondents chose Christianity
- 24% (6) of respondents chose Judaism
- 8% (2) of respondents chose no religion
- 8% (2) of respondents chose prefer not to say

#### **e. Response by disability**

12% (3) of respondents told us they were disabled.

## 4. What did people tell us?

### a. Questions and comments about the change

The survey, public events and telephone line enabled people to ask questions and share their views about the change. People made a number of comments and asked a variety of questions.

- **How will my new practice cope with taking on lots of new patients?**

“Not happy but ..... as long as Alwoodley Medical Centre can cope with the extra patients. I have already been told that you can't get anyone to answer the phone.”

“I am concerned that there will be too many patients assigned to the Alwoodley Medical Centre and they will not have the capacity to cope with the influx of new patients.”

- **Will a bigger practice be able to offer personalised care?**

“The new practice appears to be so large that it is impersonal. I am very concerned about being able to see the same GP as necessary with there being so many especially part time GP's employed there. Big is not always beautiful!”

“I never wanted to join a practice with a large amount of GPs. I chose the Avenue because of the 2 or 3 regular GPs and friendly receptionists and the excellent practice nurse and HCA whom I saw each time I attended. I feel large practices are very impersonal. Besides the clinical services, a friendly approachable and familiar face goes a long way to feeling better.”

- **I'm disappointed that The Avenue is closing!**

“Disappointed to have to leave my current surgery after 50 years of excellent care by all the staff. I agree it needed to be bigger. Yet all the doctors and staff have been brilliant to me.”

“Just wish it wasn't closing. I have been with the practice for 45 years. The staff + doc have all been very good. Thank you to all.”

- **I'd like to join my Patient participation group (PPG)!**

Seven people asked about how they could join the PPG at their new practice.

- **I would like information about my new practice in a paper format!**

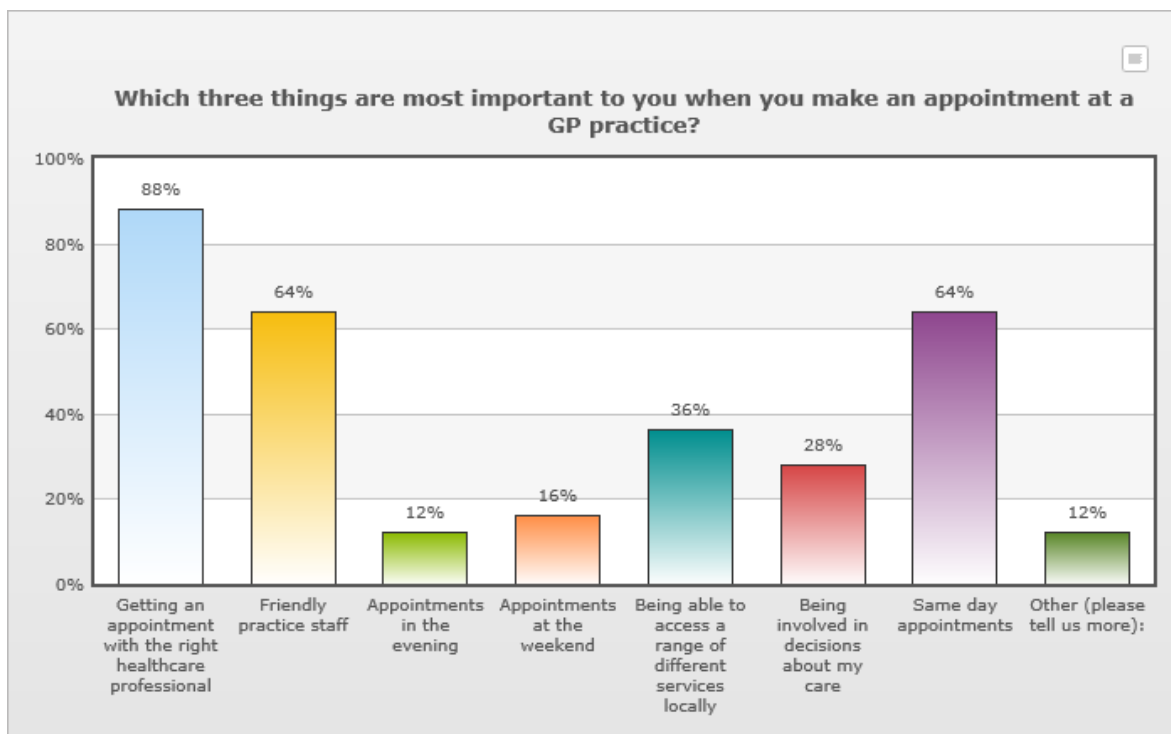
Some patients struggled to get hold of information about their new practice in a paper format.

- **People asked a number of other questions**

We received a wide range of other questions about the impact of the change on people's care. You can read all the questions in our frequently asked questions section on our website:

## b. What matters to people when they use their GP practice?

We also asked people to tell us what is important to them when they use their GP practice. This helps us to understand what matters to local people when they use our services. We use this feedback to shape our decisions about other health services in the future.



- 88% (22) of respondents stated that **getting an appointment with the right healthcare professional** was important to them.
- 64% (16) of respondents stated that having **friendly practice staff** was important to them.
- 64% (16) of respondents stated that being able to get **same day appointments** was important to them.

Full responses to the survey can be seen in Appendix A



## 5. Key themes and recommendations

Theme/issue	Recommendations/actions	How you can help
Some people were concerned about local practices' ability to <b>provide services to more people</b>	All admin and nursing staff from The Avenue will transfer to Alwoodley (who are accepting the majority of patients). Alwoodley MP are also recruiting 2.5 additional GPs create capacity and manage all new patient registrations.	You can support your local NHS by using the right service at the right time. Find out which is the most appropriate service for you here: <a href="https://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/health/services/feeling-unwell/">https://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/health/services/feeling-unwell/</a>
Some people were concerned about moving to bigger practices and were worried that they would not receive <b>personalised care</b>	We have shared this with our primary care team and local practices. We are committed to personalised care and you can read more about this here: <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/">https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/</a>	If you have a specific information or communication need due to a disability, make sure you inform your GP. Find out more about this here: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJngMo37WvA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJngMo37WvA</a>
Some people expressed <b>sadness about the closure</b> of a small, local family surgery from which patients had received a service for many years.	The CCG acknowledges that people were sad and disappointed about the closure of this small, local Practice. Unfortunately, the resignation of the single-handed GP in conjunction with the premises meant that the surgery was not sustainable to deliver high quality, modern accessible services in the longer term. The CCG is committed to ensure that all practices deliver a high quality service which is valued by patients and we will continue to listen to patients and work with local practices to support a positive patient experience.	Find out about how health and care services are changing in Leeds by joining the NHS Leeds Patient Network: <a href="https://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/stay-in-touch-stay-informed/join/">https://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/stay-in-touch-stay-informed/join/</a>
Some people want to join the <b>Patient Participation Group (PPG)</b> at their new practice	People who wanted to join their PPG were advised to contact their new practice for more information. They were also informed about the PPG page on our website.	Join your local PPG. Call your practice to find out more and read about PPGs on our website here: <a href="https://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/getting-more-involved/patient-participation-group/">https://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/getting-more-involved/patient-participation-group/</a>
People told us they struggled to access practice <b>information in a paper format</b>	We organised for the practice to print off information about the surgery and share this with the patients.	Please use digital literature if you can. This reduces the risk of Covid-19 transmission and helps the environment
People asked <b>a number of different questions</b> about the change and how it would affect them	We developed a frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on our website: <a href="https://71633548c5390f9d8a76-11ea5efadf29c8f7bdcc6a216b02560a.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/content/uploads/2021/01/2021.04.01_The_Avenue_FAQs.pdf">https://71633548c5390f9d8a76-11ea5efadf29c8f7bdcc6a216b02560a.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/content/uploads/2021/01/2021.04.01_The_Avenue_FAQs.pdf</a>	Keep talking to us. You can share your views on our services here: <a href="https://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/feedback/comments/">https://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/feedback/comments/</a>
Getting an <b>appointment with the right healthcare professional</b> was very important to most people.	We are training our reception staff to be care navigators. By asking a few questions to patients they will make sure that people get to see the right healthcare professional. You can read more about care navigation here: <a href="https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/care-navigation">https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/care-navigation</a>	When you call your GP for an appointment please give the reception the information they need to get you an appointment with the right healthcare professional
Having <b>friendly practice</b> staff was important to most people	We are working with health and care staff across the city to support 'better conversations' with patients and the	75,000 NHS staff a year experience violence or abuse from patients. Our practice staff are working hard to answer

	public. You can read more about this here: <a href="http://inspiringchangeleeds.org/approach/better-conversations/">http://inspiringchangeleeds.org/approach/better-conversations/</a>	calls as quickly as possible. Please be patient and polite with our staff.
Being able to make an <b>appointment on the same day</b> was very important to most people	Your practice is committed to providing you an appointment on the same day if you have an urgent care need. If your problem is not urgent, you may be asked to wait a few days to see a healthcare professional	Please cancel your appointment if you don't need it. This means we can use your appointment for someone else with an urgent healthcare need.

## 6. What will we do with the information?

This report will be shared with all the people involved in the project. It will also be included in our next e-newsletter (We-Engage), which is sent out to patients, carers, the public and voluntary, community and faith sector services. The report will also be available on the NHS Leeds CCG website here: [www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/your-views/the-avenue-practice-closure-2021/](http://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/your-views/the-avenue-practice-closure-2021/) and will be included in our annual report on involvement (Involving You). You can sign up to receive our e-newsletter and updates on our involvement work here: <https://www.leedsccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/stay-in-touch-stay-informed/join/>

The information gathered through this involvement will be used to inform priorities for our work and ongoing improvements to communications, access and the quality of services.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this engagement.

## Appendix A

Feedback from the survey:

### Do you have any comments about moving to a new GP practice?

- I am happy to move to the Meanwood Group Practice as it is much closer to my home address and is only a 10 minute walk away.
- It won't be as easy to get to, long walk or bus ride.
- Very concerned. Keep hearing more tales of ringing for appointments. Already reported and MUST be addressed at the meeting on Monday Even something as simple as repeat prescriptions and obtaining the new online ordering app.
- I have been with the present practice for more than 40 years. I liked having a good relationship with the doctors in this small surgery. I always got an appointment when appropriate in less than 2 days.
- Disappointed to have to leave my current surgery after 50 years of excellent care by all the staff. I agree it needed to be bigger. Yet all the doctors and staff have been brilliant to me.
- I was always very satisfied with the treatment I received at the Avenue. I just hope that I am as well treated at the new surgery.
- I am astounded that a practice can be allowed to close down during a pandemic. I trust that the provision of prescriptions and appointments will continue smoothly. I do not wish to be allocated to a GP who has no better than basic understanding of the conditions that I suffer from. Some input would be preferred.
- Just wish it wasn't closing. I have been with the practice for 45 years. The staff + doc have all been very good. Thank you to all.
- I am concerned that there will be too many patients assigned to the Alwoodley Medical Centre and they will not have the capacity to cope with the influx of new patients. It was difficult to get an appointment at the Avenue Surgery and I am worried that it will be more difficult now. As my family only normally need same day appointments as we endeavour to deal with issues ourselves first, I worry that these may be even more limited.
- It is a shame that there will no longer be a GP surgery within walking distance for elderly, infirm or ill residents in the centre of Alwoodley. We have always been able to get same day appointments when necessary and have heard bad reports regarding appointments at Alwoodley Medical Centre. Will more GPs be employed to deal with the increased demand?
- The new practice appears to be so large that it is impersonal. I am very concerned about being able to see the same GP as necessary with there being so many especially part time GP's employed there. Big is not always beautiful!
- Will I still be able to get my repeat prescription each month?

- Further to travel than the Avenue surgery plus King Lane is a very busy road and delays are common at busy times ie school and works traffic I can walk there but this is dependent on my health and the weather.
- Not happy but ..... as long as Alwoodley Medical Centre can cope with the extra patients. I have already been told that you can't get anyone to answer the phone. But I have seen Martin Sutcliffe on a Q&A session with our councillor and he seems very organised with covid jabs, so we'll have to see.
- Very sad to see my Dr retire whilst fully understanding her reasons- but also very sad that the practice itself is having to close rather than appointing a new GP.
- We hope that the transfer of all my documents, medical history, and repeat prescriptions details are all transferred in a timely manner, and confirmation of same at the time of transfer would be appreciated.
- Very concerned. We hear lots of complaints and problems from patients at the Alwoodley centre about getting same day appointments. Also, with the additional patents that takes the centre up to nearly 20,000 between 10 or 11 doctors. That will make appointments even harder to get and very impersonal.
- I never wanted to join a practice with a large amount of GPs. I chose the Avenue because of the 2 or 3 regular GPs and friendly receptionists and the excellent practice nurse and HCA whom I saw each time I attended I feel large practices are very impersonal Besides the clinical services, a friendly approachable and familiar face goes a long way to feeling better.
- At The Avenue I know which Dr. is responsible for my care and to whom other professionals can write to. Do I have a named doctor in the Alwoodley Practice?

## Alternative formats

An electronic version of this report is available on our website at: [www.leedscgg.nhs.uk/get-involved/your-views/the-avenue-practice-closure-2021/](http://www.leedscgg.nhs.uk/get-involved/your-views/the-avenue-practice-closure-2021/) or please contact us direct if you would like to receive a printed version.

If you need this information in another language or format please contact us by telephone: **0113 843 5470** or by email: [leedscgg.comms@nhs.net](mailto:leedscgg.comms@nhs.net)

'Jeśli w celu zrozumienia tych informacji potrzebuje Pan(i) pomocy w innym języku lub innej formie, prosimy o kontakt pod numerem tel: **0113 843 5470** lub poprzez email na adres: [leedscgg.comms@nhs.net](mailto:leedscgg.comms@nhs.net)

اگر آپ کو ان معلومات کو سمجھنے کے لیے یہ کسی اور زبان یا صورت میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی سے اس نمبر پر فون کر کے رابطہ کریں: 84354700113 یا اس پتہ پر ای میل لکھیں: [leedscgg.comms@nhs.net](mailto:leedscgg.comms@nhs.net)



## Further information

If you would like any more information about this project, please contact:  
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<https://www.leedscgg.nhs.uk/get-involved/your-views/the-avenue-practice-closure-2021/>