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Whitehaven Medical Centre will close

Posted on Wednesday 11th July 2018

Whitehaven Medical Centre has reluctantly taken the decision to terminate its contract. This means from 31 July 2018 4,200 patients registered there will no longer be able to be seen by the practice.

A process involving NHS North Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS England is now underway to ensure the safe care of those patients, and a system to ensure each patient is assigned to a new GP practice has started.

Patients will be receiving a letter from NHS England explaining the next steps.

Dr Amanda Boardman, lead GP with NHS North Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "Our first priority is to ensure patients have access to a GP service, and in particular to ensure the right support is given to vulnerable patients. We are working with the practice to ensure the best outcome for patients and to support staff.

"We understand there will be worrying for many people who are concerned about their care and we would reassure them that while this is far from ideal, we are working to put arrangements in place and we will be in touch with everyone as soon as we can.

"This will be a huge piece of work and we are focusing our team on this as a priority. We also know that this will have an impact on neighbouring GP Practices and potentially on other acute and community health services. We are supporting those teams and acknowledge the significant challenges this will create for many of our colleagues."

Patients are encouraged to continue to use the practice as normal until they are contacted individually about their new arrangements.

Many common ailments can be treated following advice from your local pharmacy or by calling NHS 111.

Primary care is facing increasing demand and we know there are challenges recruiting GPs and locums. This highlights the vulnerability of single-handed GP practices, leaving them less resilient.

Patients who are concerned can call 01946 853326.

Q & A

Q - What's going to happen to patients?

A - They will be allocated to another practice, that work is underway and is a priority. We understand that this is a worrying time and we are very sorry that patients are in this situation.

Q – Can patients choose the practice?

A – Because of the number of patients that must be found a new GP practice patients will be allocated a practice by NHS England and every effort is being made to ensure this is done as sensitively as it can be, but we appreciate this might not suit everybody. Once patients have been with a practice for 3 months they will be able to apply to another practice if it will suit them better.

Q: Why is this happening?

A: There are growing demands upon GPs and primary care services, and singlehanded GP practices are

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particularly vulnerable when that clinician is unavailable for work. In this case the GP has reluctantly decided to terminate the contract after along period of trying to keep things going. The CCG has worked with the practice. All parties are now focusing on supporting patients as the main priority and this is the process we are going through along with NHS England and other partners including the Local Medical Committee.

Q – Is there enough room in the other practices?

A – There is no doubt this will be a challenge. The other practices covering the areas where current patients live will be aware and we are offering to work with those practices most affected by any movement of patients to explore any additional temporary support we can give them. We understand this will be a significant challenge for them.

Q: If a patient is ill now or needs a prescription can they still go to their practice?

A: Yes. Patients will continue to be registered with WMC until July 31, if patients are transferred to another practice before 31st July this will be confirmed with them.

Q: How will patient records get transferred?

A: The new practice will receive the records from WMC via a central system. The records will then be sent securely to the new practice to ensure continued care.

Primary Care services are co-commissioned by NHS England and NHS North Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group. The organisations are working together to support patients and practice staff as well as health colleagues affected by this closure.

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