

League of Friends for Sittingbourne Memorial and Community
Registered Charity Number 1076269

Attend



Partnering the
Leagues of Friends
since 1949.

Thank you for inviting us to contribute towards your consideration of the future provision of health services in the community. Whilst we do not have any specific ideas to propose for future provision it is important that existing services are not reduced and should, if possible, be improved and it is very important that community health service should as far as possible be provided locally, be it through GP services or hospital based clinics.

The proposed Governmental changes to NHS provision will of course affect future provision but to provide a starting point for your consideration I would outline the current position in Swale.

Generally a patient's access to services is through their GP unless they are unfortunate in having to be admitted as an emergency to an Acute Hospital. For the majority of people in Swale this means admittance to The Medway Maritime Hospital and, on discharge back to the community, follow-up clinic appointments are through our Community Hospitals at Sittingbourne, Isle of Sheppey and Faversham. The Community Hospitals currently provide excellent services locally and patients can attend clinics quite easily with little stress other than that of attending a doctor's appointment. If patients were required to travel across Kent for routine clinic appointments the adverse health affects would be readily apparent. The lack of frequent public transport would make travelling to, say, Maidstone Hospital a nightmare for most elderly people from Swale.

Our Community Hospitals provide Minor Injuries Units that deal with many patients who otherwise would be waiting at Accident & Emergency at the acute hospitals. Locally based midwives and district nurses are vital in a community where new housing estates are being built at the same time as there is an ageing population with attendant problems.

Whilst it is appreciated there are financial constraints in providing services it is important that those currently in place should not be downgraded. Within Swale there has for many years been a shortage of health professionals and it is to be hoped that in future these shortages would be addressed in any major change in service provision.

How can first class community health services be provided for the people of Kent?

It could be suggested that rationalisation/centralisation of services is the way forward. This would no doubt "save money" but at the expense of the patient's health, which would then cost more money to put right. Efficient local service provision would seem to provide a solution and if all areas of Kent worked to the same "model" cost savings could be made. Acute Hospitals and Specialist Units (e.g. Oncology) would continue to provide the necessary "emergency" services as at present.

What are the challenges to realising this provision?

The need for change has to be accepted throughout the NHS and recognition that there is a cost element to even the smallest change in procedures.

Pan-Kent Community Services NHS Trust

Until the outcome of the Government proposals for the NHS/PCT structure come to fruition it is difficult to see how a Pan-Kent organisation can operate. If a GP Consortia in Swale decides it would be better or more cost effective to purchase services from Medway, rather than from within Kent, it is difficult to see what influence a Pan-Kent Trust would have on that decision.