

Podiatry Service (Foster Street, Maidstone) – proposal to change location

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**Aim:**

To provide accessible Podiatry and Podiatry Surgery Services from an improved location in Kent for both patient care and a working environment for staff.

**Background:**

The building at Foster Street is owned by KCHFT and located in the middle of Maidstone.

Services from the building include Podiatry and community nursing. Community nursing was moved as part of a project to relocate community services to benefit patient delivery and improved working conditions for teams. This particular service moved to an existing KCHFT property in Hermitage Lane. No patient care was delivered from the building by this team, it was used as a base for the service.

The Podiatry and Podiatric Surgery Service has run clinics at Foster Street for many years and the building is showing its age and does not meet accessibility requirements needed making it easy for everyone to access our services. 11 staff currently work at this site.

There is a lack of parking at the site (limited to 30 minutes only) and the building cannot be made accessible without considerable financial investment. The working conditions for staff are not optimum including heating in the winter, keeping cool in the summer, access and safety. With other services moving from Foster Street, it leaves minimal staff at the site which not only creates risk of lone working but also is not using the building for its full purpose creating additional problems with heating and utilities for one service.

Access to the Podiatry Service at Foster Street is via a steep slope, nearest parking limited to 30 minutes and only one disabled parking space or patient parking on site. The clinic is near a bus route but requires a walk up or down hill on a busy road to get to the nearest bus stop.

**KCHFT staff**

The move impacts 11 members of staff who have previously voiced their concerns in relation to the Foster Street Clinic including access to the building for their patients and lone working. All 11 staff have been consulted with in relation to the proposed move and are happy with the suggested new premises.

**Client demographics**

Demographics of those accessing services during 2021/22 was reviewed and showed:

Monthly contacts

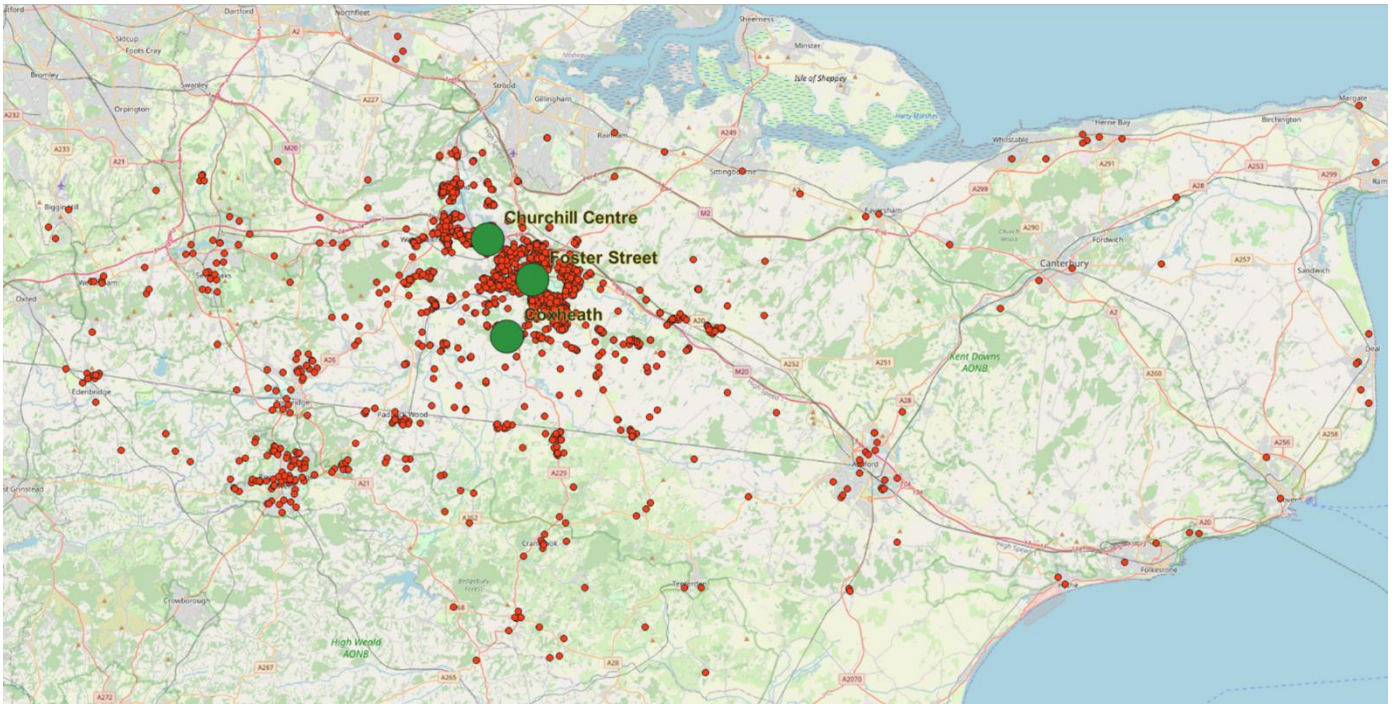
Row Labels	2021				2022				Grand Total				
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Podiatric Surgery	51	43	73	53	37	54	53	47	12	34	42	49	548
Podiatry	317	371	433	382	448	527	431	403	433	345	360	428	4878
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>5426</b>

Current caseloads (as at May 2022)

Podiatric surgery: 548

Podiatry: 1895

The map shows current caseload by geographical area in relation to the current clinic and proposed new sites.



A scoping project was carried out to determine if alternative existing NHS sites, in the Maidstone area, with improved amenities was available.

Two sites were identified as Coxheath Clinic and The Churchill Centre at the Royal British Legion Village, Preston Hall. Both locations remain in the Maidstone area.

#### **Advantages of new sites:**

- Reduces the risk of lone working at Foster Street.
- The proposed clinic rooms at Coxheath and Churchill were created in 2021/22 and have been designed and built to HBN guidance.
- The podiatry team will be the first to use these rooms, so will be of a much better quality and condition than those at Foster Street.
- The rooms will be a more comfortable environment to work and provide patient care and will be fully equipped specifically for the service.
- The overall condition of the two buildings that will be used is of a much higher quality than Foster Street and can be more easily adapted should it be required.
- Patients can choose which podiatry clinic they wish to attend.
- Operating from two sites increases the resilience of the service if there was to be an unforeseen issue at a site, compared to all the clinic rooms being in one location.
- The Churchill Centre can be reached via bus from Snodland to Maidstone (No 71/71a) running every 15 minutes which stops at Preston hall and the bus stop is approximately 10 minutes' walk to the clinic.

- The Coxheath Clinic can be reached by a direct bus from Maidstone (No 89), running every 30 minutes and the bus stop is approximately five minutes' walk away. There is more parking for staff and the centre is all on one level with no slopes impacting access. It also includes charging for electric vehicles.
- The Podiatric Surgery Service will be provided at The Churchill Centre with easy access to x-ray facilities at Maidstone Hospital.
- The sites are closer to the current caseloads and reduces the need to travel to the town centre and for many people would reduce travel time and distance.

#### **Disadvantages of sites:**

- The Churchill Centre can be reached via bus, however the bus stop is approximately 10 minutes' walk to the clinic.
- Parking at the Churchill Centre has the same capacity as Foster Street. This is mitigated with patients having a choice of clinic to attend.
- Change of location for ongoing clients. Mitigated by engagement programme and continued assistance on site for first visit.

#### **Proposal:**

Staff have already expressed their desire to move to the two sites after seeing the benefits of their working environment and the benefits for patient care. The team providing patient care, will not change therefore offer continuity of care to existing clients.

The Podiatric Surgery will move to the Churchill Centre however the Podiatric Service will be available at both the Churchill Centre and the Coxheath Clinic. Patients who require the Podiatry Service will be able to choose which site they wish to attend.

Foster Street will be disposed of in conjunction with DHSC guidance, and KCHFT is working with DHSC regarding the return of Capital monies which could be used to further enhance clinic capacity and capabilities in the Maidstone area.

#### **Recommendation**

A six-week engagement period with existing patients and potential patients with an option to contact a dedicated email address with any concerns, to include:

- Information shared with HOSC
- Information shared with all MPs (all areas affected)
- Letter to patients giving them the option of which clinic they would like to attend
- Letter to referrers to advise of the change and list options available
- Letter to all other stakeholders (local authorities, KCC)
- Information shared via CCG bulletins (GPs, community health)
- Information shared via KCHFT bulletins (stakeholders)
- Information on KCHFT website
- Information on CCG website
- Information shared via Healthwatch

A press release (or paid advertising) will also be issued highlighting the changes for our local news outlets.

Any concerns raised during the six-week period will be addressed as appropriate.

A volunteer will be recruited to help guide patients on site for their first visit during the first two months of the transition to help and reassure patients who are cautious about the change.

## **Summary**

Upon approval of the recommendation by HOSC, KCHFT will implement the engagement plan with a proposed move to be planned post 29 August. Any comments or questions will be answered through the engagement period with appropriate mitigations established for concerns raised.