

To: Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
From: NHS Kent and Medway
Subject: Medway and Swale urgent treatment centres
Date: 13 March 2024

This paper aims to brief members of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees of Kent County Council and the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Medway Council on the re-procurement of urgent treatment centre (UTC) provision in the Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership area.

UTC redesign programme

The NHS in England is establishing urgent treatment centres (UTCs) across the country. This is intended to reduce the confusing mix of urgent care services, including walk-in centres, minor injury units and urgent care centres.

UTCs, wherever they are located, should be able to treat patients of all ages for minor ailments and injury, with senior clinical leadership, in line with a set of national standards.

During recent months, NHS Kent and Medway has reviewed our UTC provision across the ICB footprint to make sure services are meeting the national standards outlined by NHS England ([NHS England » Urgent treatment centres – principles and standards](#)). The objectives of the urgent treatment centre redesign programme are as follows:

- Ensure all our UTCs meet national standards and to create a standardised service offer for co-located and for standalone/community UTCs, creating equity in provision and access.
- Ensure that UTCs can effectively divert activity from emergency departments (ED).
- Optimise sites from which services are delivered.
- Ensure patients are seen and treated in the right service as part of the integrated urgent care system at place-level.
- Listen to the views and experiences of local people and of staff to find out how they think improvements can be made.
- Ensure value for money through more efficient contracting and delivery models.
- Improve ICB oversight and performance monitoring.
- Encourage more sustainable, robust, and flexible services to meet system pressures.



Medway and Swale UTC re-procurement

To meet the above objectives, NHS Kent and Medway, acting on guidance from procurement and legal experts, is following a competitive procurement exercise for a new model of UTC provision in Medway and Swale.

This includes:

- elements of ED and Medway on Call Care (MedOCC), provided by Medway Community Healthcare at Medway Maritime Hospital
- Minor Injury Unit (MIU) at Sheppey Community Hospital (currently provided by Kent Community Health Foundation Trust)
- MIU at Sittingbourne Memorial Hospital (currently provided by KCHFT)
- the GP Walk-in Centre at Sheppey.

The aim is to create a new networked model of UTC provision across the three sites:

- A co-located UTC at Medway Maritime (sitting alongside the ED and acting as the ‘front door’).
- A stand-alone/community UTC at Sheppey.
- A stand-alone/community UTC at Sittingbourne.

Please note the walk-in centre at Sheppey was always planned as a temporary measure. In the new model, this activity will be part of the networked UTC model outlined above.

Improvements

We expect local communities will see the following benefits:

- Consistent treatment at all three sites for
 - minor illness (a medical condition that is not urgent or life-threatening but requires medical attention, such as colds/sore throat that can improve with or without over-the counter remedies)
 - minor injury (cuts and wounds - including those that may need stitches, minor burns and scalds, sprains, broken bones - x-ray and plaster application).
- GP/medically led services across all three sites.
- Urgent treatment services for children, as well as adults at all three sites.
- Consistent opening hours (in line with national standards) – the co-located UTC operating 24-hours-a-day, and standalone UTCs operating 12-hours-a-day.
- An improved ‘front door’ to urgent and emergency care at Medway Maritime Hospital that streams patients to the right service, first time and reduces pressure on the Emergency Department.
- A networked model with a sole/lead provider - improving workforce resilience, more joined up operations, shared data, and improved reporting.

Changes to services

We are confident the new service will enhance provision across the existing sites. There is no intention to withdraw or reduce services in Medway or Swale.

We have identified the following areas for improvement:

- Ensuring operating hours are in line with local need and national principles.
- Increasing clinical provision at Sheppey and Sittingbourne.
- Simplifying access to urgent care services and ensuring consistent access to clinicians thereby reducing ED attendances.
- NHSE guidance is that minor injury units should be phased out. Sittingbourne and Sheppey are currently designated as MIUs:
 - MIUs are not medically led and do not treat minor illness
 - They have limited access to diagnostics due to diagnostics services closing earlier than the MIU at certain times of the week
 - Issues with staffing resilience has sometimes meant services are temporarily reduced.
 - Patients in Swale have to travel to Medway Maritime Hospital or other urgent treatment centres more often than they should have to
 - Not all MIUs treat children of all ages – meaning families often have to travel further
 - The GP walk-in centre and the MIU at Sheppey do not operate as an integrated service.
- Improved data sharing and accurate performance reporting
- Service specifications are required to be refreshed to meet the current national standards as part of the procurement developing.

We are engaging with patients, communities, and staff to make sure their views are heard and taken into account as the UTC network is established.

NHS Kent and Medway is in the pre-procurement phase of the process, which includes:

- notifying current providers (letters sent w/c 19 February 2024)
- completing the service specification, being written to ensure compliance with latest national standards and with clinical input including learning from others across Kent and Medway ICB.
- working with our Medway and Swale health and care partners, carrying out local engagement to:
 - understand how people find current urgent treatment services in Medway, Sittingbourne, and Swale
 - find out how staff think services could be improved
 - engage with local leaders and representatives to increase awareness of the changes and the reasons behind them.
- finalising contract value and activity plans.

We intend to advertise to the market, and launch the tender process in April 2024, with the contract awarded in late summer 2024. The mobilisation period is yet to be finalised but a go-live in the 2024/25 financial year is expected.