

Briefing on future of Cogges Surgery, Witney

Cogges GP Surgery, a small practice in Witney, has two partner GPs who have been under pressure and facing increasing difficulties in maintaining services at the practice. The practice has a patient register of approximately 7,700 people. Following the loss of two other partners (one retired and the other left the practice), attempts were made to recruit new GP partners for the practice but with no success. Despite employing locum and salaried GPs to support direct patient care, the pressure on the partner GPs has reached breaking point.

Patient Participation:

The Practice arranged a meeting with its PPG on Wednesday 18 July that was attended by circa 200 patients and local representatives. Patients were informed of the difficulties being faced by Cogges Surgery and its possible future. The CCG attended the meeting to support Cogges and to answer any questions about future opportunities and outcomes.

Action by the CCG:

OCCG have been made aware of the pressures at Cogges Surgery and therefore the vulnerability of the practice and are sympathetic to their situation. Whilst we had been supporting the Practice to look at possible options, the CCG were unable to take any direct action until the Practice, as contract holders, made a decision about their future, including the future of the premises being available.

Since the meeting on 18 July the partners have now provided written notice of their intention to hand back their contract on or around 31 January 2019.

OCCG is now undertaking background work preparing a thorough options appraisal, looking at the commercial case, strategic vision, service needs assessment, new models of care, state of the workforce and patients/public feedback. There are two clear options for us to consider:

- Develop a local solution which may include a merger with another GP Practice
- Go out for procurement.

To Procure or to Merge?

Merger with another practice fits with the CCG and National GP Forward View strategic direction for commissioning larger practices that are less at risk of financial vulnerability. Merger would also enable a smoother transition to an already known provider. However, merger means a limited number of providers in the area so there could be limited capacity for future population growth.

Procuring through a tender process may introduce more provider capacity into the area, however provider interest may be limited given the size of the list and possible lack of estate. Any new provider may be more expensive (APMS contract) and we may end up with no interested parties.

Overall risks to any option

Estates

As the registered list is small, the costs of the Cogges estate are relatively high and any new provider (from procurement or a merger) could elect not to use the existing buildings. The building is owned by some current and ex partners and they are able to dispose of the Cogges estate as they see fit – the CCG can hope to influence this but is not in a position to prevent any decision.

Population Growth

There is population growth expected in the area which must be taken into account in terms of future proofing any proposed service going forwards. The CCG will ensure any proposed provider demonstrates future capacity planning for future patients' needs.

Summary

We continue to work with Cogges and local providers to seek a resolution to the issues and support Cogges Surgery patients.

Work continues to develop the two options, including a procurement process to find a new provider or look to local practice willing to provide primary care to the registered patients running Cogges as a branch surgery whilst also addressing the population growth over the next 10 years.

Along with Cogges Surgery staff, we will continue to meet with the practice participation group and keep them up to date with developments. We will provide regular updates through the practice and CCG website.

Louise Patten CEO, Oxfordshire CCG
23rd July 2018