



Independent Deal Phlebotomy service review

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Author: Laura Jones

Designation: Head of Nursing Quality and Professional Standards BHNC BSc, Dip HE, Adv Cert Ed, RGN, RSCN

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Contents Page

Contents	Page Number
Introduction	3
Executive Summary	3
Independent Review	4
Timeframe.....	5
Deal: Local geographical and service provision information	5
Deal Blood Action Team Consultation	9
Description of model and activity pre-cessation of QVH Deal hospital phlebotomy services.....	10
Description of new model post ceasing of the QVH Deal hospital phlebotomy services.....	12
Patient satisfaction.....	14
Independent Review Findings.....	15
Learning.....	19
Conclusion.....	19
Recommendations.....	20
Additional information received February 2023.....	20



Independent review of Deal Phlebotomy Service

Introduction

Bexley Health Neighbourhood Care C.I.C (BHNC) have been commissioned to conduct an independent review of Phlebotomy services in Deal

This is to inform a response to a petition presented from local Deal residents and community campaigners and a community engagement exercise with regard to the closure of the Phlebotomy service provided from the Queen Victoria Community Hospital (QVH) in Deal. The documents presented within the petition demanded reinstatement of the Phlebotomy services at the QVH hospital. A presentation recommending the initiation of a pilot scheme was supported by community campaigners, Natalie Elphicke MP for Dover and the local councillors and presented to Members of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Governing body

Executive summary

The Community Phlebotomy service for Deal residents historically have been provided by Kent Community Health Foundation Trust (KCHFT) and delivered from QVH, Deal.

The service was a non-commissioned legacy arrangement that arose from an historic agreement between KCHFT outpatient service and East Kent Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) hospital. In 2020, KCHFT informed the historic East Kent Clinical Commissioning Groups (EKCCGs) that they wished to end the service provision of community phlebotomy services provided from the QVH Deal based on the following:

- The absence of a pathway for reporting
- The absence of clear clinical responsibility for the patients
- A service that no longer aligned with KCHFT core business
- Administrative issues with the Local Referral Unit (LRU)

Within Kent, General practices are already commissioned to provide Phlebotomy service at practice level, within Deal there are four practices all of



which have agreed contracts in place and have set up the infrastructure including sample collection service.

With KCHFT serving notice, it was decided that the four directly impacted existing practices in Deal would be up scaled to enable them to deliver sufficient capacity for all phlebotomy needs of their patients.

As blood testing remained available from all general practices in Deal and now with the extended offer to accommodate the reduction in activity at QVH, Deal. It was therefore deemed there was no formal requirement for a public consultation as there were very small changes with the delivery model rather than a service being decommissioned. Engagement with the public was undertaken to inform them of the changes.

To ensure that there was no gap in the provision of services, The KCHFT Phlebotomy Service at QVH, Deal ceased on 31 October 2021 and the new phlebotomy arrangements from GP practices commenced 1 November 2021.

Independent review

BHNC have been selected to undertake this independent review for a number of reasons:

1. BHNC have experience in setting up and delivering Phlebotomy services therefore have knowledge and expertise in the area.
2. BHNC provide services outside of Kent and Medway and therefore have no conflict of interest.

The review is undertaken by Laura Jones Head of Nursing Quality and Professional Standards BHNC. BSc, Dip HE, Adv Cert Ed, RGN, RSCN and supported by Abi Mogridge COO BHNC, BSc (HoNs).

Undertaking the review involved chronologically analysing the events by reviewing all available information including;

- Service related complaints and ICB responses
- Deal Hospital Blood Action Team Report published by the office of Natalie Elphicke, MP

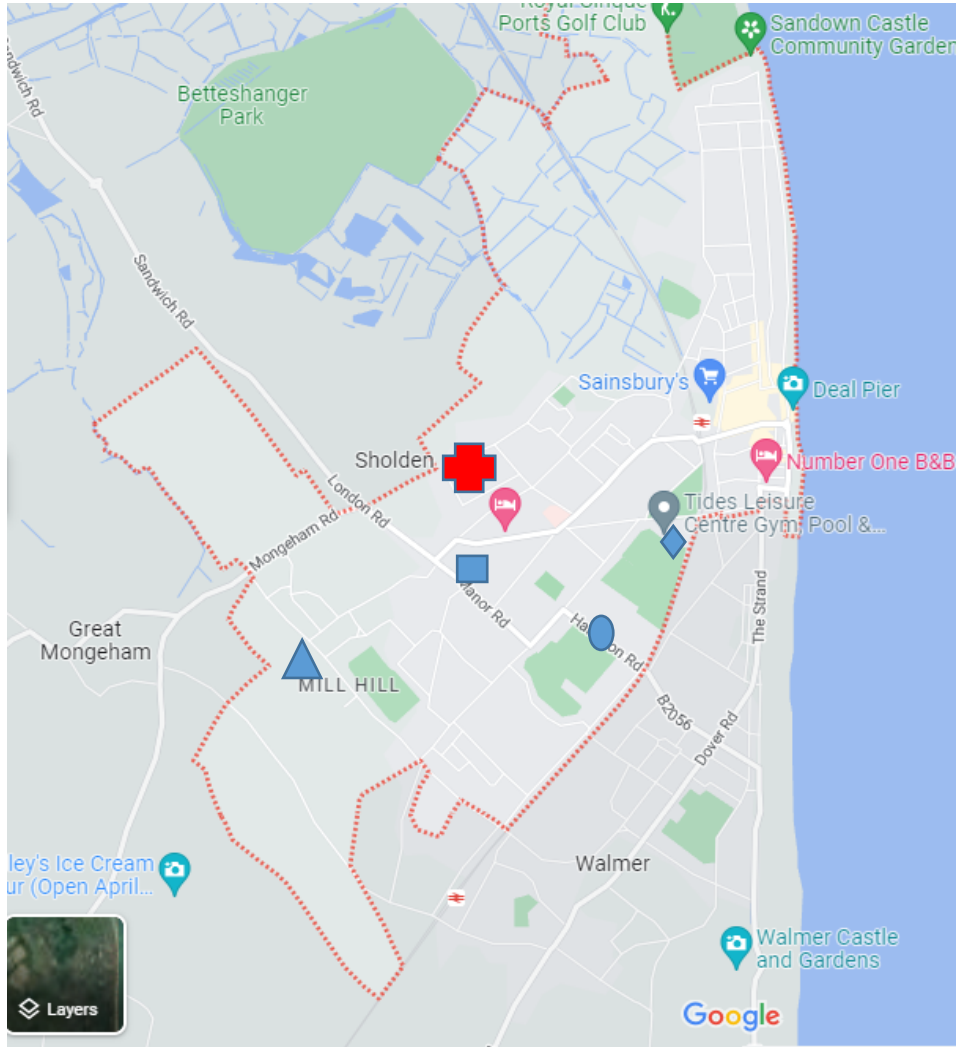
- Deal Hospital Blood Action Team Proposal presented by the Deal Hospital Blood Action Team
- Health Overview Scrutiny Committee recording and minutes
- Deal Overview Scrutiny Committee correspondence
- Phlebotomy activity - EKHUFT correspondence and reported secondary care activity
- National Patient Survey
- K&M Patient Phlebotomy Survey
- All public K&M ICB communications and engagement
- All obtained media and social media coverage
- Where appropriate, stakeholder engagement/interviews

Timeframe

BHNC has committed to reviewing all papers and will provide the report and the recommendations by 31/12/22 extended to 13/02/23 to take into account meetings with Natalie Elphike and Deal Blood Action Team

Deal: Local geographical and service provision information

Map of Deal showing location of GP surgeries and Deal Hospital



-  Balmoral Surgery
-  Manor Rd surgery
-  St Richards Rd surgery
-  The Cedars surgery
-  Deal Hospital

Distance from practices to QVH Deal

The Cedars Surgery	0.9 miles	QVH Deal
St Richards Rd Surgery	1.2 miles	QVH Deal
Manor Rd Surgery	0.4 miles	QVH Deal
Balmoral Surgery	0.9 miles	QVH Deal

Deal population statistics

Deal has a population of 48,096 registered with a GP (NHS digital 01 May 2022)

The PCN cohort size is 51,066 (Jan 2022)

Age profile for Deal and Sandwich is shown in the graph below

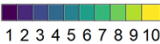
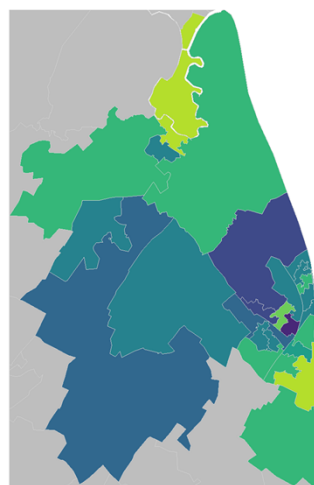


Source: NHS Digital. Patients Registered at a GP Practice. 01May2022

Two wards in Deal; Middle Deal and Sholden represent 7.4% of the total population of the Dover district and have the largest population of the total resident population of the wards in the Dover and district area

Deprivation of wards is demonstrated on the graph below

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019
 LSOAs in the PCN
 National decile
 (1 = most deprived)

Contains National Statistics data © Crown copyright and database right 2019
 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2019
 Medway Public Health Intelligence Team, Medway Council 2022-05-25

Deal & Sandwich Primary Care Network (PCN) is made up of four practices in Deal and one in Sandwich in East Kent.

Other EKUFT phlebotomy service in the surrounding areas

Phlebotomy services are available to adults and children 5 years of age and older. Patients can be referred for a blood test by their GP. Clinics are bookable via the telephone or patient electronic booking in portal.

Venues and times:

Kent & Canterbury Hospital, Canterbury (Monday – Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm)

William Harvey, Ashford (Monday - Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm) Queen Elizabeth

The Queen Mother Hospital, Margate (Monday – Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm)

Buckland Hospital, Dover (Monday – Friday 8.00am – 3.45pm)

Royal Victoria, Folkestone (Monday - Friday 8.30am - 4pm and Saturday 9am – 12 midday)

Deal Blood Action Team Consultation

A community consultation was carried out by Natalie Elphicke MP, Deal Blood Action Team, Deal County and District councillor Trevor Bond and Deal County Councillor Tony Grist and health campaigners Anne Matthews and Marsha Horne. It opened between 25/02/22- 25/04/22. The consultation was sent in paper format by post to all householders in Deal wards Deal, Sholden and Walmer and also made available at various community locations. The consultation consisted of 6 specific questions. More than 3220 responses were received. The number is not known regarding the total number of surveys sent out or households in Deal

Key findings as reported by Deal blood Action team and Natalie Elphicke

- 97% want blood service restored to QVH Deal
- 77% wanted blood tests at both the GP surgery and QVH Deal
- 2% supported the GP only phlebotomy (there is no information as to whether these responders had used the new service)

Those that had used the new service

72% said that the new service was not working well for them due to residents having to travel for a blood test and therefore reported:

- 72% stated that this was not what they wanted to do
- 30% reported travel costs between £10 and £30
- 3% reported costs in excess of £30
- 35% reported round trip travel time between 2 and 4 hours with 5% more than 4 hours

There is no information regarding costs as to whether they are per visit or weekly or monthly

Key reported experiences of the new phlebotomy services

- 55% reported delays in obtaining a blood test from their GP
- 41% reported problems in contacting their surgery for a blood test
- 37% reported not being able to book a blood test at their surgery when they felt it was necessary

(See below for consultations findings)

Description of model and activity pre-cessation of QVH Deal hospital phlebotomy services

Prior to the closure, the QVH Phlebotomy service operated Monday- Friday 07:30-13:00; providing **25 hours** of phlebotomy per week. This was staffed by a KCHFT band 2 phlebotomist, 0.67 WTE. Patients were able to book an appointment via telephone 08:00-16:00 Patients were also able to book blood test appointments with their GP.

Service overview:

INDICATORS	QVH DEAL
OPERATIONAL HOURS OF SERVICE	Monday to Friday, 07:30 to 13:00. A total of 25 hours per week.
ACCESSING APPOINTMENTS	Patients were able to book blood tests via the telephone Monday to Friday, 08:00 to 16:00
WORKFORCE	The KCHFT workforce consisted of a 0.67 whole time equivalent (WTE) at Agenda for Change Band 2

Deal GP practices were already providing some level of practice-based phlebotomy via the Primary Care Quality Standard (PCQS) Contract. No information has been provided regarding the amount of hours that were being provided however, the provision of phlebotomy differed for each practice with two practices actively referring more than 50% of their phlebotomy patients to the KCHFT phlebotomy service at QVH, Deal. At the time of writing we do not have information as to which two practices were referring more than 50% of their patients or reason why

Information taken from the activity data shows that the numbers of patients accessing their GP pre the ceasing of the QVH service are fairly consistent month on month with Manor Rd Surgery showing the fewest number

Numbers of blood tests taken at practices pre ceasing of service at Deal Hospital

GP PRACTICE	LIST SIZE	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21
BALMORAL SURGERY	12156	349	336	333	367	228	18	354
ST RICHARDS ROAD SURGERY	10295	532	503	487	658	457	323	456
THE CEDARS SURGERY	10794	610	586	640	656	386	566	500
MANOR ROAD SURGERY	2397	10	NR	NR	16	14	14	18

Numbers of blood tests taken at Deal Hospital pre ceasing of the service

The table below details the activity numbers per practice, it is not clear of this activity was patient led or due to practice actively directing patients to QVH, Deal due to greater demand.

GP PRACTICE	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20
BALMORAL SURGERY	275	264	296
ST RICHARDS ROAD SURGERY	129	115	152
THE CEDARS SURGERY	73	101	78
MANOR ROAD SURGERY	113	33	145

Percentage of patients bled at an EKUFT site from affected GP surgeries pre ceasing of Deal Hospital service

GP PRACTICE	Aug 21	Sept 21	Oct 21
BALMORAL SURGERY	23%	43%	28%
ST RICHARDS ROAD SURGERY	8%	7%	55
THE CEDARS SURGERY	20%	8%	8%
MANOR ROAD SURGERY	61%	73%	58%
TOTAL	23%	24%	18%

Patient satisfaction

As part of the review, information was requested regarding any complaints pre ceasing of the phlebotomy service at QVH Deal however no complaint data was available

The GP Patient Survey (GPPS) published in July 2021 reveals that patient satisfaction at the impacted practices was **above** the Kent and Medway average in all indicators and exceeded the national average in many areas.

There is no “wait time” data available for when the service was provided at QVH Deal

Description of new model post ceasing of the QVH Deal hospital phlebotomy services

All four practices within Deal deliver a five-day phlebotomy service morning and afternoon service with hours ranging from 12.5 to 32.5 hours per week (dependent on the list size of the practice). The minimum number of days a practice offers phlebotomy is three per week. Collectively the four practices deliver 83.5 hours of blood tests per week.

The wait for routine bloods ranges from same day up to 10 days. We are not aware of wait times for ECUFT phlebotomy appointments

Blood test appointments at the GP practice range from 5 minutes to 15 minutes. The 10-15minute appointments are inclusive of other clinical intervention (i.e., diabetic foot check or ECG) therefore providing more holistic care.

Blood tests are available to book up to 4 weeks ahead. For some practices this is up to 6 weeks ahead. Three out of the four practices have also confirmed that arrangements can be made in advance for chemotherapy patients to ensure that all blood tests are taken according to their schedule.

Patients can book a blood test via the telephone or, in three practices, via an electronic booking service. The other practice has expressed an interest in developing an electronic booking service.



Three of the four practices currently use an advanced cloud-based telephony system. The other practice, Manor Road moved to a similar system in September 2022.

Summary of Primary Care provision:

INDICATORS	GP PRACTICES
OPERATIONAL HOURS OF SERVICE	<p>Monday to Friday, AM and PM with hours ranging from 12.5 to 32.5 hours per week.</p> <p>Collectively the four practices deliver 83.5 hours of blood tests per week.</p> <p>All hours are subject to change based on demand and capacity. Workforce is undertaken in line with +/- activity growth.</p>
ACCESSING APPOINTMENTS	<p>Patients can book a blood test via the telephone or, in three practices, via an electronic booking service. The 4th practice has expressed an interest in developing an electronic booking service.</p>
WORKFORCE	<p>The workforce consists of phlebotomists, practice nurses and, on occasion, General Practitioners who all take blood samples. Due to the varied nature of clinical activity a WTE count cannot be quantified but far exceeds 0.67.</p>

Numbers of patients accessing blood tests from GP practices post ceasing of

GP PRACTICE	LIST SIZE	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan22	Feb22	Mar-22	Apr22	May22	Jun22	Jul22	Aug-22
BALMORAL SURGERY	12156	589	518	528	592	570	651	641	626	531	697
ST RICHARDS RD SURGERY	10295	440	705	660	519	736	575	659	753	814	509
THE CEDERS SURGERY	10794	782	497	568	731	614	637	685	781		
MANOR RD SURGERY	2397	65	110	104	120	179	162	145	165	155	178

service at Deal Hospital

This data demonstrates that there have been additional blood tests appointments at the four GP practices since the cessation of the QVH deal service with an addition 739 blood test taken in the period Jan - March 2022 showing a 60% increase and demonstrates an absorption of the appointments no longer offered at QVH Deal

Percentage of patients bled at an EKUFT site from affected GP surgeries post ceasing of Deal Hospital service

GP PRACTICE	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22
BALMORAL SURGERY	10%	14%	12%	7%	11%
ST RICHARDS ROAD SURGERY	8%	5%	7%	8%	8%
THE CEDARS SURGERY	2%	5%	7%	4%	8%
MANOR ROAD SURGERY	46%	17%	22%	21%	14%
TOTAL	10%	9%	10%	8%	10%

Data also shows that from August 21 - April 22, the percentage of patients bled at an EKHUFT site from the impacted Deal practices reduced from 23% to 8% therefore reducing the demand on EKHUFT.

Patient satisfaction

Public response to change in the service - themes of complaints and concerns

All complaints information received was reviewed in detail as part of this review. BHNC were informed of 35 complaints received between October 2021 to November 2022, these complaints were directly received by CCG. BHNC reviewed all complaints in detail and the findings were as follows:

The nature of the 35 complaints were concerns raised in relation to:

- Withdrawing of the phlebotomy service at QVH, Deal without a suitable alternative and without public consultation. All complaints were responded to on an individual basis.
- Complaint themes described situations where patients had been unable to access timely appointments at their practice or had been referred to other EKUFT phlebotomy services that were not in Deal town, therefore

incorporating costly and timely travel implications with concerns re the distance being asked to travel to other EKHUFT sites.

- 41% of respondents to the consultation stated comments/ complaints regarding the wait times when contacting surgeries by phone.
- Other themes included a mixture of concerns re the closure of the QVH phlebotomy service and the potential implications of such including the assumed limited accessibility of timely phlebotomy appointments and the potential travel implications
- There were concerns raised regarding the elderly, immobile and unwell patients in accessing urgent phlebotomy appointments at surgeries
- There is no “wait time” data available for when the service was provided at QVH Deal

Patient surveys were conducted by all four practices asking patients to score their experience of the blood testing service “in house” at the surgeries. Responses were recorded in different ways however the feedback to the questions posed was generally positive. There were further two complaints/concerns of similar themes registered in February and April 2022 directly to GP surgeries.

Independent Review Findings

Consultation results

The six questions poses on the consultation questionnaire (by Deal Blood Action Team) posed to Deal resident’s, demonstrated some response bias where responses were based on the structure and language of the questions posed, leading to residents having to answer in a particular way. Its suggested that questions 2,4,5 and 6 in the consultation led the respondent to answer in a way potentially leading to a potential compromise in the validity of the study’s responses; see below

Q2 “Should we the community have been consulted about the changes to Deal Hospital”

This question did not relate specifically to the phlebotomy service and did not provide a “no” answer option

Q4 *“Which of the statements applies to your experience”*

All of the offered responses were statements related to a negative experience. There were no options available to respond to a positive experience

Q5 *“if you travelled outside Deal and Walmer for a blood test was this what you **wanted** to do”*

By underlining and putting in bold the word “wanted” this may have influenced responses

Q6 *“ As a round trip, how long did it take you and how much did it cost you to go for a blood test elsewhere”*

There are no options for response in this question to state that the journey took 0-1 hour

Appointments

Phlebotomy services provided at GP practices in comparison to that provided pre ceasing of the services at QVH Deal, shows patients now have access to phlebotomy five days a week morning and afternoon. Increasing appointment time to 83.5 hours of appointments per week compared to 25 hours per week when services were run from QVH Deal

All of the impacted practices have a late pathology blood collection via courier to enable them to extend their offering of phlebotomy to morning and afternoon.

Data from GP practices show that all practices have increased the amount of blood tests being taken since the cessation of the QVH Deal service. There were an additional 739 blood tests across the four impacted practices over the period of Jan-March (Q4) 2022 compared to the period of July-Sept (Q2) 2021, which equates to a 60% increase in blood tests. It is acknowledged however that the provision of phlebotomy prior to the cessation of the QVH Deal service



differed for each practice with two practices actively referring more than 50% of their phlebotomy patients to the KCHFT phlebotomy service at QVH Deal.

Referral to other phlebotomy services

From the period of August 21 - April 22, the percentage of patients bled at an EKHUFT site from the impacted Deal practices reduced from 23% to 8%. This evidences the increase in blood tests at general practice and challenges the perception that more patients are being directed outside of Deal to an acute hospital for their blood tests

With the exception of one general practice, fewer registered patients from the impacted Deal practices are being bled at other EKHUFT phlebotomy services. The practice who is the exception maintained the number of registered patients being bled at EKHUFT sites but has always shown considerably lower when compared to the other practices.

Wait times

The wait for routine blood tests at GP practices ranges from same day up to 10 days however it is acknowledged that complaints data shows that there is general patient dissatisfaction with wait times for appointments especially for assumed “urgent” blood tests. There is no “wait time” data available for when the service was provided at QVH Deal

There is reported patient dissatisfaction with wait times to get through to practices via telephone for appointments. In the “new model” Although patients can book blood test appointments via the telephone, in person or online, as opposed to just via the telephone, It’s acknowledged that the assumed patient cohort may be digitally excluded and therefore prefer to book appointments via telephone with the GP practice rather than online

Accessibility

Blood tests are now available at four sites as opposed to one however it’s recognised that those living near the QVH Deal may now have to travel further to their GP practice to obtain their blood test. There had been no complaints registered in relation patients accessing other healthcare services at their registered practice



All surgeries are on a bus route and bus stops are typically between a 3 – 5 minute walk from the surgeries

Distance from practices to QVH Deal

The Cedars Surgery	0.9 miles	QVH Deal
St Richards Rd Surgery	1.2 miles	QVH Deal
Manor Rd Surgery	0.4 miles	QVH Deal
Balmoral Surgery	0.9 miles	QVH Deal

The reported long travel times may relate to EKHUFT sites, however the data shows decrease use of EKHUFT service.

Workforce

The new model sees the workforce taking blood samples extending beyond a phlebotomist, and includes practice nurses and GPs. It's noted that some consultation responses state that they can't use the GP service as they have difficulty in staff obtaining a sample as they require a "skilled" phlebotomist. However it's noted that in some cases, blood tests are combined with another medical appointment to minimise the number of appointments required and disruption to the patient. One practice reported that General Practice phlebotomy provided opportunistic scope for weight/ height/ blood pressures which minimises the amount of time the patient needs to come into surgery and gives the patient the opportunity to discuss anything of concern with a clinician

Due to the nature of the work a whole time equivalent (WTE) staffing count WTE was not provided however the QVH Deal service provided 0.67 of a phlebotomist as its entire workforce

Communication and public engagement

It is acknowledged that given that general practice was already contracted to provide blood tests via the Primary Care Quality Standard (PCQS) contract and that all affected practices had sufficient capacity to meet the needs of their patients, the change in provision did not reach the threshold for a change which required a formal public consultation

The CCG communications team published updates to provide reassurance to patients and service users impacted by relocation of phlebotomy to General Practice. It is recognised that the CCG did work with local practices to plan communications to explain the changes. Acknowledgment is made to the fact that despite the intention for a seamless transition of phlebotomy service to GP practice, final agreements did take longer than planned to confirm, and as a result the timing of communications about the changes took place close to the transition from KCHFT to local practice provision at the end of October.

Learning

- Lack of timely engagement with public and stakeholders
- Difficulty in getting through to GP practices
- Accessibility to timely appointments

Conclusion

In conclusion the **positives** to the cessation of the QVH Deal phlebotomy service are as follows:

- The number of appointments being offered is greater than previously
- Some of the practices have extended the appointments to provide more holistic care
- The demands on the acute trust have reduced considerably
- The number of actual complaints relating to the GP service are very low
- Logistics such as collections of samples and reporting of results are formally in place and have not caused any disruption to patient care (i.e. missed sample collections / delayed reporting..) which can often be seen when service changes are implemented.
- Practice information states that blood tests are available to book up to 4 weeks ahead. For some practices this is up to 6 weeks ahead. Three out of the four practices have also confirmed that arrangements can be

made in advance for chemotherapy patients to ensure that all blood tests are taken according to their schedule

The **negatives** in the cessation of the phlebotomy service QVH Deal are as follows:

- Ongoing issues with patients unable to contact practice to book an appointment
- Accessibility to timely appointments
- The reported particular difficulties by the consultation exercise with accessing timely phlebotomy appointments for specific medical, or long term conditions that require booking ahead or appointment times linked with the requesting service appointment. (This conflicts with information provided by practices as stated above)

Recommendations

We recognise there are a number of positive outcomes following the service changes however further consideration can be given to the following:

- All practices to consider ways to improve access to reception / appointment booking administrators, one option to consider could be for an at-scale solution for patients to call and book an appointment, delivered at PCN level.
- Practices to consider a number of protected urgent slots to address the need for urgent appointments
- Practices to work together to support any practice which is not offering 5 day service to be booked at another Deal practice for any urgent requests therefore reducing the need to attend EKHUFT further.
- Practices and their Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) to work with community leaders, stakeholders and campaigners to co-design patient feedback surveys to identify any ongoing issues and collectively consider and agree any future improvements.



- To increase public engagement by using this report as a catalyst to re-engage, present the data and findings and highlighting the positive but also the areas of possible improvements.
- Any further changes to services are communicated either by consultation or discussion to better understand the community needs and communicated in a more timely manner

Bexley Health Neighbourhood Care CIC

BHNC

62, Battle Road,

Erith

Kent,

DA8 1BJ

www.bhnc.org.uk

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