

Covid-19 response: Extension of temporary overnight closure of Newark Urgent Care Centre

23 December 2020

Dear colleague,

I want to take this opportunity to update you on the latest position regarding the current overnight closure of Newark Hospital's Urgent Care Centre (UCC) as part of our response to the Covid-19 pandemic. I also want to update you on some of the new services that we have introduced, or have plans to introduce, at Newark this year.

Earlier this year, in conjunction with our commissioners, we took a decision to close the Newark UCC overnight between the hours of 9.30pm and 9am. The huge on-going challenge we face in responding to the pandemic includes making careful decisions about how we manage our workforce and services to ensure we provide care where it will be needed the most.

As a result, we have now agreed with our commissioners to extend the overnight closure for a further six month period from January.

The principle reasons for the initial change were due to workforce pressures and patient care. We did not believe we would have been able to guarantee we could safely continue to staff Newark UCC overnight, whilst also providing the level of staff required to care for Covid patients across the Trust.

Since that time we have experienced a second wave of Covid patients, peaking at higher than the initial wave, whilst also caring for more non-Covid patients, recovering services and entering into a winter plan for 2020/21.

The level of uncertainty these challenges provide, along with the impact of wider testing for all frontline colleagues makes it difficult to plan staffing levels with confidence. With agreement of clinical colleagues this decision is viewed as the safest way for us to continue to give the best possible care for patients that need it most.

We know the number of patients seeking care overnight at Newark has continued to be low and we thank partners and colleagues for safely helping us continue to safely deliver these measures. The changes have been well supported, and we are not aware of any patient harm as a result of the current overnight closure.

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Patient Experience Team
01623 672222

sfh-tr.det@nhs.net



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As before, the alternative to this planned approach would have been to attempt to continue to open the UCC overnight in the knowledge we may have to close it overnight at short notice on a regular basis depending on staffing levels. This would naturally be a very unstable model and would be confusing for patients and colleagues alike.

Anyone who needs urgent care between 9.30pm and 9am is asked to attend their next nearest Urgent Care facility or to access NHS111 online or over the phone for advice. The 111 service will be able to provide advice about whether patients need an overnight consultation and get clinical advice where required. In an emergency, you should phone 999.

Newark Hospital remains a key part of the overall emergency care service at Sherwood Forest Hospitals, and we have also introduced a number of new services at Newark this year:

- We restarted elective surgery at Newark Hospital on 10 June ahead of when we did so at King's Mill Hospital
- In September we reintroduced orthopaedic surgery, such as hip and knee replacements to Newark Hospital for the first time since 2013
- We have also approved a plan to introduce further procedures at Newark in the coming months, including hernia repairs, gallbladder removals and some bladder and prostate surgery.

Thank you for your continued support.



Richard Mitchell
Chief Executive
Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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