

<b>Report to:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health)	<b>Date of Meeting</b>	17 October 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Melling Surgery Closure		
<b>Report of:</b>	NHS Cheshire and Merseyside – Sefton Place	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Molyneux
<b>This Report Contains Exempt / Confidential Information</b>	No		
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# Closure of Melling surgery

## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee with an overview and options appraisal report regarding the decision to close the Melling branch site of Dr Maassarani and Partners based on Waddicar Lane.
- 1.2 The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee is requested to:
- Review the content of this report and any additional information during the committee discussion
  - Consider and determine the impact of the closure on Sefton residents and if this constitutes a substantial change

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Dr Maassarani and Partners is a practice located in Kirkby with a current combined list size of approximately 16,700 patients spread across 3 sites (see Table 1 below).

**Table 1:** Dr Maassarani and Partners practice locations

Site	Location	Ward	Type	Approx registered population
<b>Dr Maassarani and Partners</b>	Tower Hill, Kirkby, L33 1XT	Shevington	Main	8,400
<b>Trentham Medical Practice</b> <i>(Merged July 23)</i>	St Chads Centre, Kirkby, L32 8RE	Whitefield	Branch	5,900
<b>Melling</b>	<b>Waddicar Lane, Sefton, L31 1DY</b>	<b>Molyneux (South Sefton)</b>	<b>Branch</b>	<b>2,425</b>

2.2 The Melling branch site sits in Sefton within the Molyneux ward boundary.



Figure 1: Dr Maassarani & Partners – Melling branch site

2.3 Dr Maassarani and Partners is the main GP practice and is situated in Tower Hill PCRC, Kirkby within the Shevington ward boundary.



Figure 2: Dr Maassarani & Partners - Tower Hill main site

- 2.4 The newly merged branch site of Dr Maassarani & Partners is Trentham Medical Centre, which is situated in St Chad's Health Centre building, Kirkby within the Whitefield ward boundary.



Figure 3: Dr Maassarani & Partners – Trentham branch site (July 23)

## Melling Surgery

- 2.5 In 2017, Dr Maassarani and Partners Melling site provision was reduced to operating on 3 days a week, with the offer to all Melling residents to attend the main Tower Hill site as required.
- 2.6 Since this time, patients from Melling have been able to access a free taxi service to Tower Hill provided by the practice to ensure they could access clinical services on the two days the branch surgery was closed.

## 3. Impact of COVID-19

- 3.1 As a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the requirements on general practice to change the way that they safely operated and delivered services, the **Melling surgery site was fully closed in April 2020.**
- 3.2 During this time, the practice PPG (Patient Participation Group) were actively involved with the discussions and the requirement to relocate all clinical services to the main site at Tower Hill.
- 3.3 This decision was made to ensure effective, safe compliance with COVID standards, stabilise and support the workforce and improve resilience to ensure they were able to maintain high quality and safety of the services provided to all patients.

## **4. Premises/Lease arrangements**

- 4.1 The lease for the premises is not compliant with NHS regulations and this issue has remained unresolved between the practice, property owner and NHSE since 2017.
- 4.2 A 6 Facet Premises Survey (comprising: Physical, Functional stability, Space utilisation, Quality, Fire and Health and Safety and environmental management) was undertaken in July 2022 by independent surveyors commissioned by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside funded by NHSE.
- 4.3 The survey for Melling surgery site concluded that the overall site rating for Functionality was “A – Can be expected to perform adequately over its design life;” however, a maintenance cost of approx. £8600 to bring the fabric/condition of the building back would be required.
- 4.4 Whilst the practice could have sought support from NHSE via the capital improvement grant process to make these changes, the absence of a compliant lease has meant that this would be prohibitive, and the property owner was not willing to enter into a new lease.
- 4.5 In July 2023 during the period of review by the practice and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside, a letter was received from the current owner (Landlord) of the building informing Dr Maassarani that he wishes to repurpose the current building and has no intention to make the building fit to resume clinical services nor make the lease compliant for NHS use.
- 4.6 In August 2023, a further request was made by the property owner to the practice to expedite the vacation of the building to enable work to the site in preparation for commercial/residential use.

## **5. Contractual**

- 5.1 In April 2023, Dr Maassarani and Partners were issued with a breach notice due to the Melling branch site failing to re-open following the withdrawal of the COVID-19 restrictions in July 2021.
- 5.2 The practice was requested to set out new proposals that would demonstrate how they will meet their contractual obligations whilst awaiting the outcome of the required patient consultation and engagement.
- 5.3 In June 2023, the practice responded to the breach notice issued by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside outlining that a meeting had taken place with the property owner to discuss the lease renewal for the Melling site. However, the property owner outlined

that they have decided not to renew the lease and their intention is to repurpose the estate for other opportunities that have been presented to them.

## 6. Options Appraisal

- 6.1 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside has responsibility for meeting the health needs and arranging the provision of health services for the population of Knowsley.
- 6.2 There are several options that have been considered by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside: -

No.	Option	Accept	Reject	Pro's	Cons/Risks
1	Do nothing –  Melling remains a contractual practice premises for the Personal Medical Services (PMS) contract held by the practice		✓	NHS Cheshire and Merseyside can continue to require that the practice offer GP practice service from the site.	<p>The Property owner has confirmed to the practice that they are not willing to enter into a new lease for the premises. As they wish to enter the building and commence work immediately.</p> <p>The practice is likely to remain in breach of its contract as it has no lease in place to occupy the premises.</p> <p>Even if the practice were able to occupy the site as there is no lease is currently in place the practice would not be eligible for reimbursement of any costs associated with the premises.</p>

2	Re-negotiate the lease on the existing building.		✓	Patients access services Melling	could GP in	Not Feasible. Property owner does not wish to retain the building for NHS purposes and not willing to enter in to lease negotiations.
<b>No.</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Accept</b>	<b>Reject</b>	<b>Pro's</b>		<b>Cons/Risks</b>
3	Purchase / build new premises.		✓	Patients access services Melling	could GP in	No NHS capital. Third Party Development would require significant investment c£10m and purchase of land – not aware of any land available within vicinity.  Not VFM given there is sufficient capacity and open lists available within a close radius of Melling.  Unlikely to secure capital funds given the proximity of suitable alternative premises provision in Tower Hill
4	Lease suitable alternative clinical space		✓	Patients access services Melling	could GP in	Approach made to local community pharmacist on

					<p>same row of shops to determine if any space is available – no response received.</p> <p>Likely to be cost prohibitive due to the cost of conversion to clinical treatment room that will meet the required NHS standards.</p>
5	Permanently vacate premises and contractually close the branch	✓		<p>Approx £16k saving for NHS Cheshire and Merseyside for rent reimbursements.</p> <p>Practice no longer in breach of contract.</p> <p>Patients continue to access full clinical services from Tower Hill PCRC and Trentham MC</p>	<p>Patients will have further to travel but this has been the case for the last 3 years and a taxi service is offered to melling residents who may require assistance.</p> <p>Mitigations: Practice/ NHS Cheshire and Merseyside to continue to fund taxi's for Melling residents</p>

The preferred option as indicated in the table above is:

**6.3 No. 5 – Permanently vacate the premises and contractually close the branch site.**

**7. Overall impact on patients**

7.1 There are approx. 16,700 patients in total registered with Dr Maassarani & Partners.

7.2 Approx 2,425 patients will be directly affected by the permanent closure of the Melling branch site located in the Molyneux ward area of Sefton.



## **8. Impact Assessments (EIA and QIA) Summary**

- 8.1 An Equality and Quality Impact Assessment (see Appendix 1 and 2) has been undertaken on the preferred option to close the Melling branch surgery due to external factors beyond NHS Cheshire and Merseyside commissioner's control. This decision has been taken considering the property owners request to repurpose the current building for commercial usage and in addition, the property owner not wishing to make the building fit to resume clinical services nor make the lease compliant for NHS usage.
- 8.2 The EIA has identified a few key areas that will need to be managed during the transition period to ensure that section 149 Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty) is satisfied and met. These include:
- No patients 'slip through the net' and that all patients, including: vulnerable patients and patients with information, communication and language needs (Disability, age, sex, race, people who experience health inequalities/ poverty) are targeted in the communication exercise, encouraged to air their views and offered choice and support if appropriate to secure alternative GP provision.
  - Removing a GP service from a community can be a disheartening process for the people who live there and there may be some heightened anxiety amongst patients, specifically those who live near the Melling branch site. It is essential that Dr Maassarani and Partners and Knowsley Place ensure that all patients receive a full explanation of why the practice is closing. Explain to patients how the existing services can absorb Melling branch patients and not cause a restriction in appointments.
  - Since April 2020, many patients will have adapted to travelling to the Tower Hill site. For those who have no personal transport and/or are unable to drive and/ or access public transport, a taxi service has been provided at no cost to the patient. It is important that service continues and is promoted to accommodate patients who are unable to access face to face appointments due to their inability to pay, personal circumstances, disability / impairment.
- 8.3 Knowsley Place Primary Care team will work closely with Dr Maassarani and Partners to ensure these conditions are implemented and evidenced.

## 9. Impact on patients from Sefton

- 9.1 The 2019 population estimates indicate that there are approximately 12,200 people in total living in Molyneux of which 2,425 patients (19%) are registered with Dr Maassarani & Partners.

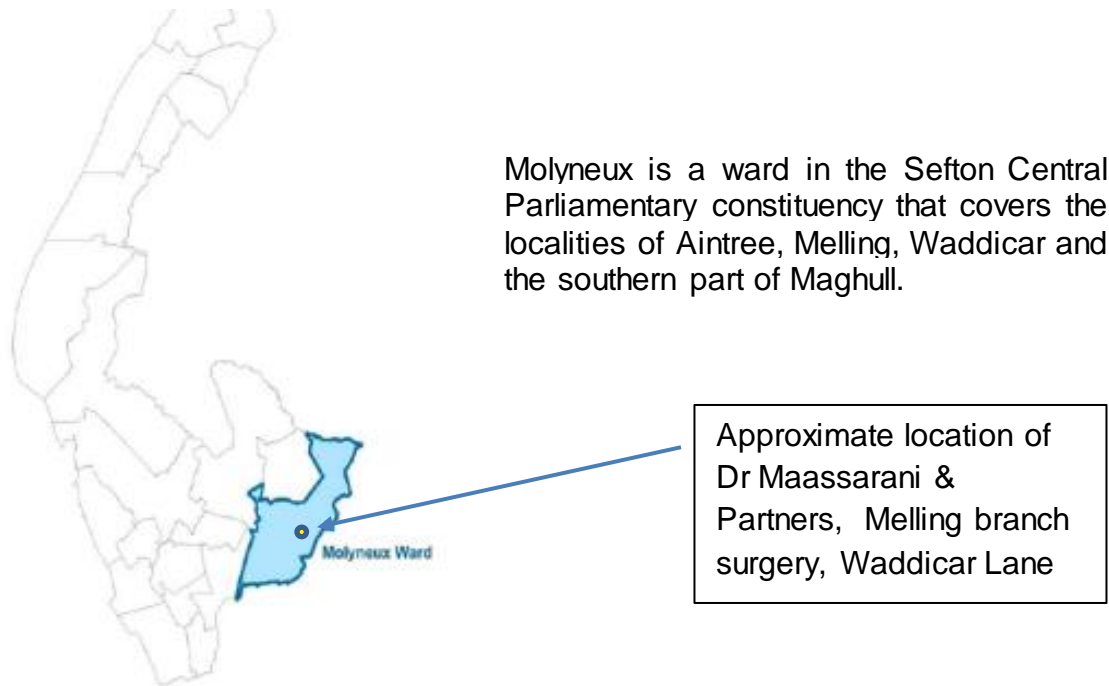


Figure 4: Molyneux ward boundary

## 10. Changes in accessibility

- 10.1 As a result of the Melling branch closure, the predominant impact for the registered Melling patients is the changes in accessibility. This specifically relates to the distance to obtain access to face-to-face clinical services for the patients who live within the L31 postcode area.
- 10.2 Melling branch site patients have been accessing GP practice face to face clinical services at Tower Hill Primary Care Community and Resource Centre since 2017 with all face to face delivered from this site since April 2020. All patients have throughout and will continue to be registered as Dr Maassarani & Partners patients.
- 10.3 The information in Figure 2 shows the location of the Melling branch surgery and the driving routes from this location to the closest alternative GP Practices for those patients who have access to a vehicle.

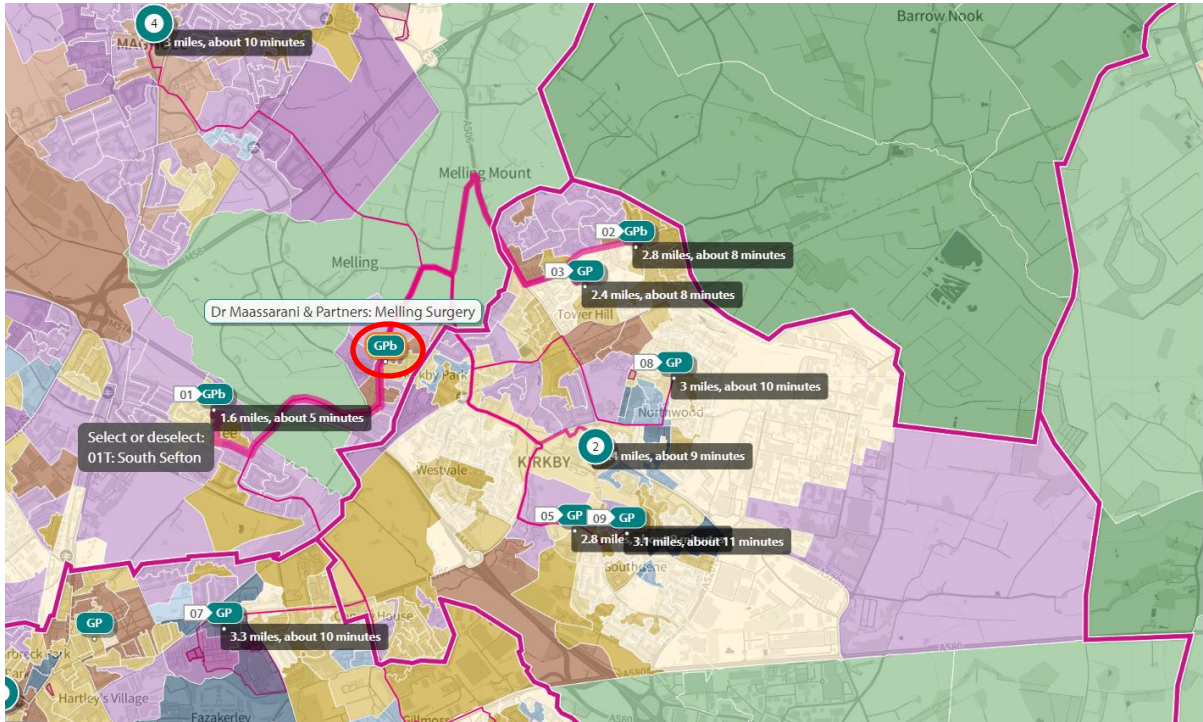


Figure 5: Map of the driving routes to the closest GP practices to Melling

The nearest GP practices to Melling surgery (**driving distance**) are\*:

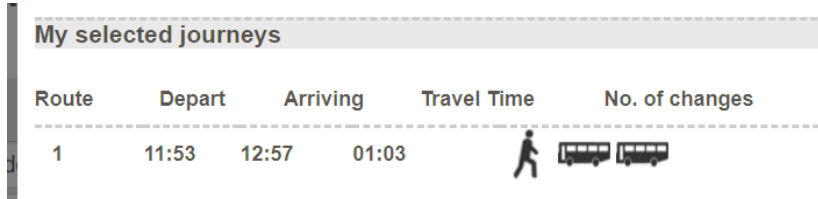
Name	NEW patient registration status	Driving distance/time	Walk	Bus
Aintree Park Group Practice: Oriel Drive Surgery	CLOSED to new registrations	1.6 miles, about 5 minutes	34 mins	14 mins
Dr Maassarani & Partners	OPEN - all patients already registered	2.4 miles, about 8 minutes	34 mins	23-30 mins
Trentham Medical Centre	OPEN - all patients already registered as part of Dr M&P	2.4 miles, about 9 minutes	32 mins	22 mins
Millbrook Medical Centre	OPEN	2.8 miles, about 9 minutes	40 mins	29 mins
Millbrook Medical Centre: Tower Hill Surgery	OPEN	2.8 miles, about 8 minutes	40 mins	29 mins
Wingate Medical Centre	OPEN	3 miles, about 10 minutes	41 mins	30 mins

Figure 6: Driving route data taken from the SHAPE Tool

## 11. Bus Routes

11.1 Merseytravel buses are available to take patients from Waddicar Lane to Kirkby bus station at 48 minutes past the hour taking 30 mins and then at 53 minutes past the hour which takes 1hr 3 mins. Both routes require a change in buses during the journey.

11.2



Route	Depart	Arriving	Travel Time	No. of changes
1	11:53	12:57	01:03	

Figure 7: Example Merseytravel timetable from Waddicar Lane to Kirkby Bus Station

11.3 The bus routes available to take patients from Melling to Kirkby are an issue that some residents have been raising with the Sefton MP and local councillors. The practice has agreed to support the residents to discuss this issue further with the MP and local transport companies.

## 12. Patient Transport

12.1 Patients from Melling have been able to access a free taxi service to the Tower Hill site since approximately 2017 as clinical services at Melling were only provided on 3 out of the 5 days during the week. The practice offered a taxi service (free of charge) to the patients to ensure they could access clinical services on the two days the branch surgery was closed.

12.2 The practice continues to support access to those patients who require assistance to attend Tower Hill PCRC or did not have a support network around them.

12.3 This service is requested by the patient when making a booking and the reception will provide the details to the patient, if the patient is unable to book directly then the reception staff will complete the booking on the patients' behalf.

12.4 The latest figures on the number of journeys booked shows:

- 25 patient journeys booked by the practice between the periods Feb-Dec 2022
- 17 patient journeys booked by the practice between the periods Jan-June 2023

### **13. Community Pharmacy Support**

- 13.1 Patients can nominate a chosen community pharmacy so they will not need to travel to the surgery to collect prescriptions as these will be sent direct to the pharmacy.
- 13.2 The Rowlands community pharmacy based in Waddicar lane will remain open and accessible to residents.
- 13.3 The pharmacy is equipped with fully qualified pharmacists who can advise and answer any queries or concerns about medicines. The team offer a range of services without the need for an appointment, from quitting smoking to weight management and a seasonal flu jab service. The pharmacy also provides a text message service to inform patients when prescriptions are ready to collect.

### **14. Home Visit Support**

- 14.1 Any Melling residents registered with Dr Maassarani & Partners who may require a home visit as deemed necessary by the clinical team will continue to receive this. There is no change to clinical service provision or impact on clinical care as all patients will continue to have access to all routine GP services including ordering repeat prescriptions online and home visits as required.

### **15. Complaints received during the closure**

- 15.1 Since April 2020 there have been no complaints received by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside from the Melling residents regarding difficulties in accessing appointments at the main site in Tower Hill.
- 15.2 During the period from April 2020 to date there have been three complaints received regarding the closure of the Melling surgery. Two of the complaints were in relation to the ongoing closure of the branch surgery and the third complaint was in relation to the structural integrity of the building.
- 15.3 The registered list size for Dr Maassarani & Partners Tower Hill site has remained stable over the past three year period.

### **16. Patient communication**

- 16.1 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside has not been able to engage fully with patients and wider stakeholders around the permanent branch closure, given the decisions made by the property owner. To mitigate this, the practice has committed to undertake the following:
  - MJOG text messages sent 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023 with a link to a letter which **informed all registered patients** of the changes and the services offered at Tower Hill and Trentham Medical Centre and the reasons for the closure

- In addition, a posted letter with FAQ was sent to all Melling residents who reside in the L31 postcode area which also includes information on translation services (See Appendix 3)
- Notify the nearest Pharmacies
- Inform all Primary Care Network Managers and Clinical Directors for onward circulation to member practices
- Communicate the permanent changes to key stakeholders (See Appendix 4)
- Display posters and information at each site regarding the drop-in patient information event
- Ensure vulnerable patients and those with disabilities are informed in an appropriate way

16.2 This communication has been undertaken in advance of the scrutiny committee meetings, however a stakeholder briefing (Appendix 4) was circulated on 12th September 2023.

### **Patient Information Event**

16.3 Dr Maassarani & Partners has confirmed that there were 5 residents from Melling that attended the drop-in patient information event on 21st September 2023.

16.4 The key issues raised were:-

- Transport service – The practice emphasised the provision of the taxi service and agreed to add a message on the telephone and website about the availability of the service for patients who had no transport and may need to attend the practice for a face-to-face appointment.
- Lack of public transport – The bus service was discussed, and the practice highlighted that although they had no control over this, they agreed to write a letter of support to enable further discussions on improving the bus service.

16.5 The practice encouraged attendance at the Practice Participation Group (PPG) as those who attended the meeting had some useful feedback regarding service improvement, the patients agreed.

16.6 The parish council have agreed to help increase representation from Melling patients at the PPG through their local newsletter.

## **17. Actions taken by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside**

17.1 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside has responsibility for meeting the health needs and arranging the provision of health services for the population of Knowsley.

- 17.2 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside recognises that it has not been able to undertake the required patient engagement and consultation regarding this closure due to circumstances outside of our control. However, we are satisfied that the overall provision to meet the health needs is sufficient for the patients impacted by this change.
- 17.3 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside can evidence that since April 2020 the number of complaints and concerns received regarding the change in clinical service provision has been low and therefore the level of public interest and likely impact should be low.
- 17.4 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside will ensure that the transport provision for Melling residents remains in place to make certain that no patients are disadvantaged with access to clinical appointments as a result of the branch closure.
- 17.5 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside has conducted an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and Quality Impact Assessment (QIA) to fully understand the impact of the branch closure.
- 17.6 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's initial analysis, based on the conclusions drawn throughout the report and in summary below is that the impact on patients arising from the proposed branch site closure is unlikely to represent a substantial variation to services. It fully recognises however that such a determination is for the committee to reach and seeks its views in this regard:
- The branch site has been closed for over 3 years and patients have been accessing services from Tower Hill during this time.
  - The transport provision for Melling residents has been fully established and in place since 2017 to support vulnerable patients and those who require assistance to visit the main site for a face-to-face appointments and will continue to be made available.
  - The numbers of patient complaints have been minimal since the Melling branch site closed in 2020 and the total number of registered patients has slightly increased during this time.
  - The main site premises hosts the full range of GP services in a fit for purpose building and has provided adequate capacity since 2020 to accommodate all registered patients.
  - There are suitable alternative GP practices available for Melling residents should they choose to re-register with an alternative practice
- 17.7 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside acknowledge there is no option available to continue to provide primary medical services from the Melling branch site and therefore approved the contract variation to formally close the branch on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

## 18. Scrutiny Action

18.1 Members of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee are requested to: -

- Review the content of this report and any additional information during the committee discussion
- Consider and determine the impact of the closure for Sefton residents and if this constitutes a substantial change

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment



Melling Surgery  
Closure EIA v3-170€

### Appendix 2: Quality Impact Assessment



QIA-MellingClosure-  
Phase2-2023.08.23v3

### Appendix 3: Patient communication



Melling Pt-Briefing  
Letter+FAQ-Aug23-v!

### Appendix 4: Stakeholder briefing



MellingClosure-Stake  
holderLetter-Aug23-v