

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health)	Date of Meeting	23 January 2024
Subject:	Update: Melling Surgery Closure		
Report of:	NHS Cheshire and Merseyside	Wards Affected:	Molyneux
This Report Contains Exempt / Confidential Information	No		
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Update: Closure of Melling surgery

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Sefton Overview and Scrutiny Committee members with a further update on the steps taken by NHS Cheshire & Merseyside to manage and mitigate the impact of the closure of the Melling branch site of Dr Maassarani and Partners based on Waddicar Lane.
- 1.2 The Adult Social Care and Health Committee is requested to:
- Review the content of this report and any additional information during the committee discussion.

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

3. Melling branch surgery

3.1 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.

Melling branch was open three days per week 8am – 6.30pm on the following days and times.

- Monday
- Wednesday
- Thursday

The branch was closed on Tuesdays and Fridays.

3.2 Since 2017, patients from Melling have been able to access a free transport service to Tower Hill provided by the practice to ensure they could access clinical services on the two days the branch surgery was closed.

3.3 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 fully closed in April 2020**.

3.4 During this time, the practice Patient Participation Group (PPG) was actively involved with the discussions and the requirement to relocate all clinical services to the main site at Tower Hill.

3.5 Trentham Medical Centre merged with Dr Maassarani & Partners in July 2023 to become a new branch site and is situated in St Chad's Health Centre building, Kirkby. This site is available to all registered patients to attend in addition to Tower Hill.

4. Change Event

4.1 In July 2023, a letter was received from the current owner (Landlord) of the building informing Dr Maassarani & Partners that he wishes to repurpose the current building and has no intention to make the building fit to resume clinical services.

4.2 There is no compliant lease in place for the premises and this issue has remained unresolved between the practice, property owner and NHSE since 2017.

4.3 In August 2023, a further request was made by the property owner to the practice to expedite the vacation of the building to enable preparation work for commercial/residential use.

5. Timeline of events

	Action	Outcome
April 2020	<p>Melling surgery fully closed (due to COVID social distancing restrictions)</p> <p><i>N.B Melling surgery - open 3 days a week since 2017</i></p>	<p>All registered patients informed to attend Towerhill site for all face-to-face consultations.</p> <p>Patients from Melling reminded that they have access to a free taxi service to Tower Hill for clinical consultations, provided by the practice.</p>
July 2022	<p>A 6 Facet Premises Survey (comprising: Physical, Functional stability, Space utilisation, Quality, Fire and Health & Safety and environmental management) was undertaken by independent surveyors commissioned by NHS Cheshire & Merseyside funded by NHSE.</p>	<p>The survey for the Melling site concluded that the overall site rating for Functionality was scored as an “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.</p>
October 2022	<p>The practice submitted a request to NHS Cheshire & Merseyside to permanently close the Melling branch surgery.</p>	<p>NHS Cheshire & Merseyside acknowledged receipt and requested further information to support the request.</p>
January 2023	<p>NHS Cheshire & Merseyside and the practice agreed to set up a formal programme of work to ensure the appropriate governance was followed for proposed changes.</p>	<p>To support the practice to appropriately plan the patient consultation and engagement. This would help inform the decision to be made by NHS Cheshire & Merseyside to accept or decline the proposal to formally close the Melling branch site.</p>
April 2023	<p>In April 2023, Dr Maassarani & 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.</p>	<p>The practice was requested to set out new proposals that would demonstrate how they will meet their contractual obligations to open the site whilst awaiting the outcome of the required patient consultation and engagement.</p>

	Action	Outcome
June 2023	The practice responded to the breach notice issued by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside	<p>The practice confirmed 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.</p> <p>NHS Cheshire & Merseyside requested that this intention needs to be shared in writing from the Landlord.</p>
July 2023	NHS Cheshire & Merseyside completed a Pre-Consultation QIA in preparation for full consultation with the registered patients.	Information obtained from the practice regarding their vulnerable patients
July 2023	NHS Cheshire & Merseyside were informed that a letter was received by Dr Maassarani from the current property owner (Landlord).	The property owner confirmed in writing that there is an intent to repurpose the current building and that there is no intention to make the building fit to resume clinical services nor make the current lease compliant for NHS use.
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.	Practice partners advised to speak to the property owner to request that no amendments/building work is to be started prior to patient communication.
September 2023	All Dr Maassarani & Partners patients were informed of the decision to close the Melling surgery on 8 th September 2023 and that this would be effective from 30 th September 2023	All registered patients received a text message, letter and in addition a phone call for all vulnerable patients to explain the change and circumstances surrounding this.

	Action	Outcome
September 2023	All Melling registered patients were invited to attend an information event held on 21 st September 2023.	5 residents from Melling attended the drop-in patient information event on 21st September 2023, where they were able to discuss any queries or concerns with the practice management team and patient forum reps.

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 As a result of the property owner's decision, several options have been considered by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside:-
1. Do nothing.
 2. Re-negotiate the Lease.
 3. Purchase/build new premises.
 4. Lease suitable alternative accommodation.
 5. Permanently vacate premises and close the branch.

The only viable option was **No. 5 – Permanently vacate the premises and contractually close the branch site.** (See Appendix 6 for more details on each option)

7. Impact Assessments (EIA and QIA) Summary

- 7.1 An Equality and Quality Impact Assessment (see Appendix 1 and 2) has been undertaken on the option to close the Melling branch surgery.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) identified key areas that needed to be managed during the transition period to ensure that section 149 Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty) is satisfied and met. The specific areas of concern and mitigating actions are listed below:

Communication	Mitigating actions
<p>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.</p>	<p>In addition to sending a letter and text message out, <u>all vulnerable patients</u> were contacted by telephone by the practice to ensure that they understood the changes and to listen to any specific concerns.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>All registered patients received a letter with an explanation of the change and how they can engage further with the practice including a FAQ.</p> <p>A patient information event was set up for the registered patients to ensure that they have an opportunity to discuss any concerns with the practice and PPG in person.</p> <p>5 residents from Melling attended the drop-in patient information event on 21st September 2023.</p> <p>The key issues raised were:-</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

Accessibility	Mitigating actions
<p>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.</p>	<p>The practice continues to promote and provide transport for any Melling registered patients who require assistance to attend clinical appointments.</p> <p>The Telephone system has been altered to remind patients of this transport service whilst in the queue for booking an appointment.</p> <p>The practice website is in the process of being updated by an external supplier and the communication regarding the transport will be included once amended.</p>

8. Actions taken by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside

- 8.1 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside has responsibility for meeting the health needs and arranging the provision of health services for the population of Knowsley.
- 8.2 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside understands that it has not been able to undertake the required patient engagement and consultation regarding the closure of the Melling branch site due to extenuating circumstances outside of NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's control.
- 8.3 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside had conducted a Pre-consultation Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to help understand the potential impact and start to inform the content of the required consultation and engagement with the registered patients.
- 8.4 Following the property owner's notification, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside then conducted a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and Quality Impact Assessment (QIA) of the branch closure (See Appendix 1 & 2).

8.5 Due to the immediacy of the property owners request to obtain the building, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside were unable to meet the required engagement and consultation with patients and wider stakeholders around the permanent branch closure. However, the following actions/communications were undertaken as a priority:-

Patients/Carers:

- Text messages sent out on 8th 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.
- A posted letter with FAQ was sent to all Melling residents who reside in the L31 postcode area which also included information on translation services (See Appendix 3)
- In addition to the above, all vulnerable patients and those with disabilities were contacted by Telephone by the practice to offer further support.
- Display of posters and information regarding the drop-in patient information event at the main practice.
- NHS Cheshire & Merseyside email contact provided for further support for registered patients.

Key Stakeholders: (See Appendix 5)

An email with the attached Key Stakeholder letter had been sent out to the following:

- NHS Cheshire & Merseyside ICB -Sefton team
- Local Councillors & MP's – Knowsley & Sefton
- Local Acute & Community Health Providers
- Healthwatch Knowsley & Healthwatch Sefton
- Local Medical Committee (LMC) Rep
- Local Community Pharmacies
- Primary Care Network Managers and Clinical Directors for onward circulation to member GP's/practices

8.6 The above communication had been undertaken in advance of the relevant scrutiny committee meetings, however a stakeholder briefing (Appendix 4) was circulated on 12th September 2023.

8.7 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside approved the contract variation to formally close the branch on the 30th September 2023.

9. Summary

- 9.1 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside believe that the overall provision to meet the health needs is sufficient for the patients impacted by this change.
- 9.2 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside acknowledge the public transport links are not as flexible as other areas and therefore 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 because of the branch closure.
- 9.3 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside can confirm that the usage/uptake of the “free” transport service for Melling residents has been as follows; despite the addition of the message to the telephone system:-

September 23 = 0 journeys booked

October 23 = 0 journeys booked

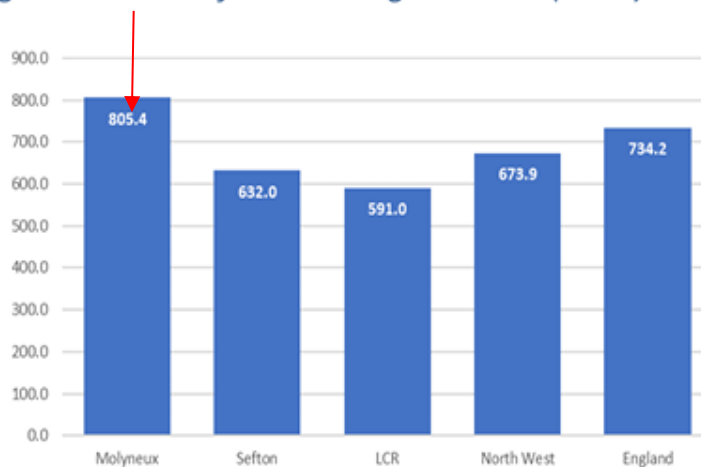
November 23 = 1 journey booked from Melling to Towerhill

December 23 = 0 journeys booked to date

- 9.4 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside considered the car ownership within the Molyneux ward and after review of the Molyneux ward profile updated in 2022, it is evident that this ward area has a higher rate of car ownership than in other comparator areas.

There are approximately 805 vehicles per 1,000 driving age people in the ward (those aged 17 and over). This is considerably higher than the comparator areas (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Rate of Vehicle Registrations (2019)



Source: *Molyneux Ward Profile*

9.5 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside can confirm that the overall list size has remained stable since the closure of the branch with a small monthly increase in the Melling (L31) residents registered with Dr Maassarani & Partners:-

August 23 = 2,426 patients

September 23 = 2,427 patients

October 23 = 2,433 patients

November 23 = 2,437 patients

December 23 = 2,439 patients

9.6 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside can confirm that there have been no complaints received either at the ICB or at the practice since the closure.

9.7 In summary, based on the information provided throughout the report and including the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside conclude that:

- The branch site has been closed for over 3 years (Apr 2020) and patients have been accessing services from Tower Hill since 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 appointment and will continue to be made available.
- The numbers of patient complaints have been minimal since the Melling branch site closed in 2020.
- The total number of registered patients from Melling has increased during this time of change.
- The main site at Towerhill hosts the full range of GP services in a fit for purpose building and has provided adequate capacity to all patients since 2020.
- There are suitable alternative GP practices available for Melling residents should they choose to re-register with an alternative practice across Knowsley and Sefton.

10. Scrutiny Action

10.1 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.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment



Melling Surgery
Closure EIA v3-1708

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

Appendix 5: Stakeholders



Appendix 5 -
Stakeholder Informati

Appendix 6: Options Appraisal



Appendix 6 - Options
appraisal - Melling Cl