

HASC Update briefing note 05/13

DMC Relocation from Canterbury Street to Balmoral Gardens Community Healthy Living Centre

This briefing note seeks to update councillors on the consultation activity to date for the proposal to relocate healthcare services from Canterbury Street to Balmoral Gardens Community Healthy Living Centre. As part of our three month formal consultation, we have undertaken to use a variety of methods to ensure patients and services users have the opportunity to have their say about the proposal.

All 4,797 DMC patients were contacted via direct mail at the end of November 2012, to notify them of the proposal and of the consultation. They were all given details of how they could have their say and how they could get involved. As well as mailing all patients, we will be running an article in the February/March edition of Medway Matters, to promote the consultation, which goes to every household in Medway.

We have contacted more than 120 voluntary and community organisations, by post, to give them details of the consultation and asked for their help to publicise it. Hard copy information has also been made available at Medway Maritime Hospital, Medway Council contact points, local libraries and children's centres.

Our Health Network of around 300 virtual members and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group's Patient Council were contacted via email alert to ask for their views on the proposals. Medway LINK and CVS Medway ran articles in their December bulletins about the consultation, reaching more than 650 patients and 500 voluntary organisations. It is planned that we will recirculate this information again in mid-January.

Details of the consultation were posted on Medway PCT and DMC's websites, linking to a survey monkey questionnaire, which is one of the ways people are able to respond to the consultation. Details have been tweeted to our followers several times to promote the consultation.

As part of the consultation, there is to be a public meeting on 5 February 2013, giving patients the opportunity to have face to face conversations with NHS Kent and Medway and DMC Healthcare staff.

Patients have also had the chance to give their comments via interactive information boards at Gillingham library, Balmoral Gardens Healthy Living Centre and DMC Canterbury Street where post-it notes have been made available

In December, councillors were invited to visit both sites to give their views on the proposals, this included a tour of the facilities with an opportunity to ask questions and raise issues.

As part of the consultation, Medway Community Estates undertook a car parking audit at Balmoral Gardens. Over three weekends and two weeks, MCE noted down the number of available spaces, three times a day. The audit confirmed that there were always spaces available at Balmoral, even on market day.

All 60 GP practices and 51 pharmacies in Medway have received hard copy documents and posters, with a second mailout planned.

Bulletin items have been circulated to practice managers and GPs, and a link to the consultation has been included on the practitioners' area of the website (as well as the public site).

A news release, circulated to all local media, received positive coverage in the Medway Messenger. Further news releases will be sent before and after the public meeting at the beginning of February.

Feedback

So far, we have received more than fifty responses to the consultation, via online and hard copy questionnaires, as well as by telephone conversations and individual emails.

Patients are largely keen on the proposal, with comments being that the building facilities are much better and having an on-site 100 hours pharmacy is very convenient.

Feedback, however, have been raised about car parking capacity and the element of pay and display. Lighting at night has also been raised as an issue, along with capacity physically within the building to take on extra patient traffic.

Patients felt the service provided by DMC was generally excellent, but could be improved by having additional training for reception staff as well as clear signage within Balmoral to the surgery. They also felt waiting times for walk-in patients were high and suggested that perhaps an initial telephone call could lead to an appointment time being given to patients, as is done at MedOCC.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALs) and Complaints queries are usually a good indicator of how patients are responding to proposals. To date, we have received one complaint and one PALs enquiry relating to the planned relocation.

Following the close of the consultation, we will send a further briefing note to all councillors at the beginning of March detailing the outcome of the consultation, a full summary of feedback and a activity plan explaining timescales for the relocation.

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