

Our Proposed Merger - Your Top Questions

As many of you know the NHS, and in particular Primary Care (the services provided by your Practice) is facing increasing demands for its services both locally and nationally, as well as challenges on GP recruitment and retention.

We are planning how best we can continue to provide all of our patients with the best possible care and the highest-quality services that you rightfully expect from us.

As a result, the Partners of Ventnor Medical Centre and Grove House Surgery are proactively planning to merge with effect from April 2020.

This will also help us achieve objectives set out in The NHS Long Term Plan. This requires practices to form Primary Care Networks to support each other and work together to offer improved patient services and build stronger primary healthcare teams. These teams will be better able to respond to the needs of their populations and tackle the serious workforce issues that many are experiencing.

We hope you find this QA (questions/answers) fact sheet helpful in understanding what our merger plans will mean for you as patients.

1) What is happening?

Grove House Surgery and Ventnor Medical Centre are planning to merge from 1 April 2020.

2) Has the decision already been taken?

Yes, the two Practices are committed to merging as we believe that is in the best interests of our patients and for long-term sustainability of services. The NHS Isle of Wight Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), as the commissioning organisation for Primary Care Services on the island, has agreed to the proposal that it believes is in the best interests of all the patients in the area. We have informed our staff, and your representatives on the Grove House Patient Participation Group that will invite patients from Ventnor Medical Centre to join them.

3) Why do you want to merge?

As you probably know from the national media, GP Practices are under more pressure now than ever before, with increasing workloads and a growing elderly population. There is unprecedented demand for NHS services and, in order to provide long-term sustainability, many GP Practices nationally have already merged. A formal merger has significant potential benefits for all concerned. The NHS Long Term Plan also requires GP Practices to work closer together in Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and build stronger healthcare teams involving other skilled health professionals. Our merged Practice will be part of the same PCN, when these are established across the Island in July 2019.

Together we will be stronger and better placed to further improve our services to you.

4) Have there been other GP Practice mergers on the Island?

Not until now although the CCG has also approved another merger on the Island. Mergers are happening regularly on the mainland as practices pool their skills and resources not only for long-term sustainability but also to help recruit and retain GPs and, where possible, extended and expanded services to their patients.

5) What are the benefits to us as patients?

The main benefit is the long-term sustainability of both Practices. We strongly believe that by merging, and pooling our clinical skills and staff, we will be able to offer improved high-quality services and access. It will also help us provide more robust cover for staff holiday leave and sickness.

Grove House Surgery is a single-handed Practice and, like many Island Practices, faces issues of recruitment when GPs leave or retire.

Patients will see the most appropriate member of the new clinical team which will speed up appointment bookings and there will also be the opportunity to make appointments outside of the existing Monday to Friday hours.

Patients will soon be able to get an online consultation from a GP via the new eConsult scheme, reducing the need for face-to-face appointments. This will be in addition to the advice already available by phoning the NHS111 service or visiting your local pharmacy for minor ailments.

6) Is this merger just a way of saving money?

The merger will help us make the best use of our resources by putting our staff where they are most needed and it may offer us efficiency savings, but this is NOT about saving money. It is to ensure that we work together to continue to offer Primary Care Services to you. Both buildings will remain open and there are no threats to any jobs at either practice.

7) Will both sites remain open?

Yes. As mentioned above, we have no plans to close either site. They are both needed for us to continue to offer the services that we want to deliver to you and that you would expect from us. As our Practices are only about 200 metres apart there may be opportunities for you to access services from either site for your convenience.

8) Will I be able to see the same doctor?

Not necessarily but your medical records will be available to all the clinical staff of the new practice. You may be asked a few brief questions when you make an appointment to ensure that you see the most appropriate member of staff to help you.

As many of you know, we have been sharing the services of an Advanced Nurse Practitioner, and this has been working really well for the Practices and patients.

The way the NHS is doing things is changing, nationally and locally, including the delivery of GP services. Some services previously performed by GPs can now be done, just as effectively, by other trained health professionals freeing time for our GPs to see those patients who would most benefit from their expertise. Also some GPs have different specialisms so we will be increasing the range of skills we can offer you.

9) Will there be changes to the Practice opening hours?

Initially the opening hours will remain the same but there might be potential to extend these in the future.

10) Will things change for me as a patient?

One thing that will change is the name of the merged Practice. We will be called

Ventnor Medical Practice and the name will signify a new start for us both.

In many respects you will not notice any difference but Primary Care needs to change the way it delivers services. This means that some appointments traditionally handled by a GP will be undertaken by another specialist healthcare professional.

11) How will you keep me informed about any developments in this process?

We will post information on our website and keep the Patient Participation Group (PPG) fully informed. Apart from our staff, your PPG was the first to know about our proposals because patient views are important to us.

12) Who can I speak to about this?

We would like to keep our staff as free as possible to help the smooth-running of our practices. However, if you have any other questions, you can leave them with the receptionists at both sites. Please leave us your contact details so that we can respond to you. Thank you.