

Please ask for: Councillor George Adamson or
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18th September, 2014

Mr Andrew Donald,
Chief Officer,
Cannock Chase CCG,
Greyfriars Therapy Centre,
Unit 12, Greyfriars Business Park,
Stafford.
ST16 2ST

Dear Mr. Donald,

Cannock Minor Injuries Unit Consultation

This is the formal response of Cannock Chase Council's Cabinet to the public consultation on the redesign of Cannock Minor Injuries Unit based at Cannock hospital.

The option which the CCG is consulting on is to reduce the hours of opening of the MIU from 8am to midnight (365 days per annum) to 11am to 7pm (365 days per annum). The overall impact is a reduction of 50% in the availability of the current service, i.e. from 16 hours per day to 8 hours per day.

In summary, this Council's Cabinet does not support this reduction in service for the following reasons:-

ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE

1. There is a fundamental problem in Cannock, Chadsmoor and other parts of the District with timely access to primary care services at GP practice level. Time and again, our constituents raise this as a problem and this is particularly so for people who work. This problem explains the majority of the inappropriate use of MIU for minor illnesses by people registered with seven specific GP practices in the Cannock / Chadsmoor area. There are no parallel proposals to increase access to GP practice services in the Cannock area or elsewhere in the District. The proposed reduction of 50% in the MIU service will exacerbate the current problem of access to primary care services in the District. It is not sufficient to focus on the issue of inappropriate use of the MIU whilst ignoring the core problem that many of our residents struggle to secure appointments within a reasonable timescale at many of the GP practices in the District.

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The Cabinet understands from the consultation material that a primary care access pilot is due to commence from January 2015. If that is the case, no reduction in MIU should take place until this pilot has been evaluated and demonstrated to have improved access for people with minor illnesses. Otherwise, people with a minor illness who are turned away from the MIU in the future who are not able to access a timely appointment with their GP practice will ultimately have no option but to present at an A&E department. Until and unless the CCG/NHS England produces an overall plan and timetable to improve access to primary care services at GP practice level, no support or agreement will be given to a reduction in the current level of service provided by the Minor Injuries Unit at Cannock hospital.

THE SYSTEM FOR OUT OF HOURS / URGENT CARE

2. The current proposal to reduce the hours of the MIU service is not part of an overall review and redesign of the system for out of hours / urgent care in Cannock Chase District. There is a lack of clarity at the current time about how the current out of hours services co-ordinate and work cohesively in the best interests of residents and visitors to the District. In that sense, an informed decision cannot be taken on the level of service provided by the MIU without being clear and confident about the overall strategic context for out of hours / urgent care. It is not appropriate to promise that the review of urgent care will be done in the future – it needs to be done now and any decisions about the level of service provided by the MIU should occur within this wider context. The intention to establish an Emergency and Urgent Care Centre in the Cannock area needs to be expedited now.

By way of example, East Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Group has established an Urgent Care centre in Burton (Cross Street health centre) which is open 18-30hrs to 08-00hrs Monday to Friday and 18-30hrs to 08-00hrs Saturday to Monday. In addition to this, there is 24 hour access to A&E services at Queens Hospital, Burton. The CCG also funds two Minor Injuries Units (Sir Robert Peel, Tamworth & Samuel Johnson Community Hospital, Lichfield) which are available 24 hours per day. When you contrast this with no access to A&E services at Stafford Hospital between 22-00hrs – 08-00hrs and the CCG proposal to provide only 8 hours of MIU service per day, you can perhaps see how this Council has concerns that this level of service leaves the population of Cannock Chase poorly served.

Whilst you will no doubt take issue with the comparison above, it seems to us that the CCG is proposing to reduce health services for the District population with some of the worst health status indicators in Staffordshire without any recognition of the current problems of access to GP practices or what the overall system for out of hours / urgent care should be in Cannock Chase. The Francis Report should provide sufficient context for avoiding decisions that are based purely on financial grounds.

The Council's Cabinet will vigorously oppose the implementation of any decisions to reduce the level of service (including hours of opening) at the Minor Injuries Unit at Cannock Hospital unless and until the two issues identified above are addressed in a meaningful and strategic manner by Cannock Chase Clinical Commissioning Group.

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Signed on behalf of Cannock Chase Council Cabinet:

Councillor George Adamson
Leader of the Council

Ward Member for Hednesford Green Heath

Councillor Mike Holder
Deputy Leader of the Council

Ward Member for Norton Canes

Councillor Muriel Davis
Health & Wellbeing Portfolio Leader

Ward Member for Cannock East

Councillor Gordon Alcott
Economic Development Portfolio Leader

Ward Member for Cannock North

Councillor Frank Allen
Housing Portfolio Leader

Ward Member for Cannock North

Councillor Carl Bennett
Environment Portfolio Leader

Ward Member for Western Springs

Councillor Andy Lovell
Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader

Ward Member for Hagley

Councillor Diane Todd
Town Centres Portfolio Leader

Ward Member for Heath Hayes & Wimblebury

Councillor Christine Mitchell
Culture & Sport Portfolio Leader

Ward Member for Cannock East