

Sutton Coldfield Group Practice Merger

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. If we didn't merge what would the future be like?

General practice is seeing a substantial increase in demand coupled with fewer doctors choosing a career in general practice. In order to ensure that we continue to provide a high standard of care that is sustainable for the future the current partners all feel that this merger will put us in a strong position.

Q. Will I have to travel to other surgeries or see other doctors / nurses I don't know?

One of the reasons for the merger is to improve patient access so if your problem is relatively urgent you might be offered an appointment at another centre, or with a different clinician, so that you are seen quicker. For routine appointments you will continue to see your regular GP.

Q. Will appointments and availability be centralised?

To provide a more efficient service we intend to centralise our telephone system and online booking services but we will maintain local management of local issues.

Q. Is the main reason to merge so you can recruit more GPs?

As you may have seen in the media, GP recruitment is a national issue. Merging our practices will widen the pool of GPs, nurses and other health professionals available to our patients, improve access and broaden the services we can offer.

Q. Will there be economies of scale and if so what will the savings be used for?

Our merger is about ensuring sustainability, not saving money. There will be some cost savings by centralising certain functions and any money saved from this will be reinvested into patient services.

Q. If the merged group intends to provide new services, can patients still choose to use a hospital of their choice for the same procedure?

Whilst we hope that being able to offer services more locally will be preferable to the majority of our patients, individual choice is paramount so those that wish to go to hospital instead will be able to do so.

Q. If the practice takes services from the local hospital, will that make that hospital less efficient and will the NHS (and patients) benefit overall?

By moving certain services out of hospital and into the local community, hospitals will be able to focus on more serious and complex cases.

Q. Will the opening hours and emergency appointment times change?

There will be no immediate change to opening hours, however as things progress we will look at opening hours to ensure that they reflect the needs of all of our patients.

Q. My practice recently joined “Our Health Partnership” - what is the difference?

Our Health Partnership is a large organisation which was formed to bring GPs together for peer support, sharing of ideas and new initiatives, increasing influence across the city in terms of health planning and generating efficiencies through economies of scale by sharing back office functions. It exists to support practices but not to impinge on local autonomy which is so important. The Sutton Coldfield Group practices are coming together to offer a greater range of services to our patients and ensure a consistent, sustainable, high quality level of local care.

Q. Will there be specialists at specific surgeries to deal with common medical conditions?

Working as a larger group means that we will be able to develop and invest in specialist areas which will include services such as minor surgery.

Q. Will sessions such as ‘flu jabs be held at all surgeries or held centrally?

Currently the “flu jab” service is conducted at all sites and we have no current plans to change this.

Q. Which methods of communication will be used to keep patients informed of changes and developments as the merger progresses?

We will continue to talk to our patients using our established Patient Participation Groups and by producing informative updates as and when appropriate.