

# The planned merger between Hanway Medical Practice and Portsdown Group Practice

## – *your* top questions answered

### 1) Why are our practices planning to merge?

Two of the five GP partners at Hanway Medical Practice (Dr Berry and Dr Morris) will be retiring this year which will leave the Practice in a position where it will struggle to cope with the existing number of registered patients on its books (more than 14,000) at a time of national problems with GP recruitment.

The Partners at Hanway, after reviewing a number of options, strongly believe that a formal partnership with the Portsdown Group Practice (a group of six surgeries located across the city with a consistently high track record of providing excellent care to patients) offers the best solution moving forward so that they can continue to serve you at the heart of the community.

Mergers between GP practices are becoming increasingly common around the country as practices recognise that, in some cases, the traditional model of GP care provision is no longer sustainable in an environment where we are all living longer, with increasing healthcare demands whilst facing a national shortage of GPs.

Portsdown Group Practice has been involved in a number of successful mergers and is a recognised leader in the development of new and innovative ways of working with patient care being at the core of everything it does.

The Hanway Partners have not taken this decision lightly and considered a number of options before coming to the conclusion that a merger with Portsdown provides the most sustainable and best option for you, our patients - and our hard-earned national accreditation as a Veteran Friendly, Dementia Friendly and Learning Disability Friendly practice would be just as important to us as ever before.

### 2) What will this mean for patients?

For the Hanway and Stubbington patients, you will continue to be seen by familiar clinicians. The majority of staff will transfer from the Hanway Practice to Portsdown Group Practice.

Due to Portsdown's size, it is able to offer a more comprehensive range of services than that provided by a smaller practice. Portsdown runs a 'Gold standard' award-winning Diabetes and Respiratory service for patients suffering from these long term conditions. Portsdown also has a large team of clinicians including GPs, Nurse Practitioners, Paramedic Practitioners, Clinical Pharmacists and Physician Associates. This means that patients are able to be seen more quickly by a clinician according to their specific health needs. The new arrangements would, of course, mean that Hanway patients would continue to benefit from access to our terrific team of healthcare assistants.

Portsdown also offers a comprehensive telephone triage service, which is overseen by GP consultants, which allows patients to get same day advice for urgent problems. They also offer e-consults, which gives patients the option to have an online consultation with a clinician. Routine appointments at the surgery have now increased in length to 15 minutes.

Portsmouth also offers extended access appointments (early morning and evenings) every weekday and on Saturday mornings.

Portsmouth has surgeries situated across the city and Hanway patients may, ultimately, be able to be seen at the surgery closest to you. The surgery locations are:

- Somerstown Hub
- Heyward Road
- Kingston Crescent
- Cosham
- Paulsgrove
- Crookhorn Lane.

For the vast majority of the 44,000 patients registered with Portsmouth, the merger will have little impact. We do plan to extend the site at Kingston Crescent, which will cause some disruption, but we will, of course, plan to keep this to a minimum.

### **3) What will happen to Hanway's two sites in Buckland and North End?**

No final decisions over the future of the buildings can be made until NHS Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has approved our plans. See the answer to question (6) below. There are currently three existing Hanway partners who own the two buildings from which the surgery currently operates. With two of these partners now retiring, the ownership (and risk) would then pass to just one partner - which is simply not a financially viable option.

Relocating into one existing site – at Kingston Crescent - will save the local NHS a considerable amount of money – money which can then be reinvested back into improving the level of care we are able to offer you, our patients.

The Kingston Crescent site is in close proximity, almost equidistant, to both Hanway sites and on similar transport links. Additionally, as highlighted above, Portsmouth operates from surgeries across the city, potentially giving patients more choice as to where it is most convenient for them to receive their care.

### **4) This is going to mean many Hanway patients have much further to travel, which doesn't sound as if it's an improvement in our service?**

Portsmouth's Kingston Crescent surgery is situated equidistant between the Stubbington Avenue Surgery and the Hanway Road surgery (half a mile from each). Some patients will therefore have to travel a little further than they currently do, but others will have considerably less far to travel. Kingston Crescent is, of course, well served by local transport and has the additional advantage of having a large Car Park for patients' use which it shares with Aldi Supermarket.

The improvement to your service isn't just about travel, of course, it's much more about the quality of care that you receive as a patient and the convenience of access to a clinician, which has been outlined in more detail above (question 2).

### **5) When is the merger planned to happen?**

The merger is planned for 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020.

### **6) Is this a 'done deal'?**

No. As outlined above, it is a proposal that has been considered very carefully by both practices and which is in the best interests of the patients. Our plan will need to be approved by NHS Portsmouth CCG, the body responsible for planning and commissioning (buying)

GP services across the city. We have not yet even submitted our application, but expect to do so in the next few weeks. We expect the CCG's Primary Care Commissioning Committee to consider the proposal at its meeting in March 2020.

### **7) What is going to happen to the staff at Hanway Road and Stubbington Avenue?**

Most Hanway staff will transfer over to the new merged practice.

### **8) Will we be able to see the same GPs we see now?**

As stated above, two of the Hanway GPs are retiring in 2020. However, the other GPs will be staying with the merged practice. It is often easier for you to book appointments if you are happy to see any GP or associated health practitioner as they all have access to your medical records. With the new models of care being introduced locally and nationally, other trained healthcare professionals as outlined above are increasingly undertaking roles traditionally only carried out by GPs.

### **9) What are the advantages/benefits to Hanway patients of the merger?**

Please see answer to question 2 above.

### **10) What should we as patients be doing now?**

There is no need for patients to do anything at this stage – or in the future if the merger is approved.

### **11) Do patients have to stay with the newly-merged practice?**

All patients have the right to change their GP practice. If you do wish to move surgery, we suggest that you check out its online reviews ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and click on 'Find a GP') before committing. You will then need to visit the GP surgery you want to join and ask them to register you as a patient. You don't have to explain your reasons. You'll need to fill in a registration form. A request will then be made to your current GP for your medical records to be transferred to the new GP surgery. But, as our valued patients, we obviously hope that you will stay with us.

### **12) Can the new merged practice cope with all the extra patients?**

Absolutely, in terms of building space, Kingston Crescent Surgery was originally built to accommodate considerably more patients than are currently being cared for there and, if the merger is approved, Portsdown Group Practice has developed plans to reconfigure the building internally to create more clinical rooms and to change the way that appointments are delivered, offering patients 15 minute appointments throughout the day, from 8am to 6pm, rather than limiting appointments to the traditional morning and afternoon sessions.

Excitingly, and as outlined in Question 2 above, Portsdown has recently invested heavily in expanding its clinical team to assist with the same day demand. This will also mean that we are able to offer more routine appointments, which will also increase in duration to 15 minutes, meaning that the clinician will have longer to spend with you.

### **13) How will you keep me informed of progress on the merger?**

We are currently developing our broader communications to all interested parties but every household with a patient registered at Hanway Road and Stubbington Avenue has been sent a letter from the Practice, and both practices will keep their websites updated with information. The CCG has begun its liaison work with the local media to keep them informed of the process, and will keep them informed during the merger process. It will also update its own website and undertake some social media work to help keep patients informed.

We have also organised two public meetings for patients registered at Hanway Road and Stubbington Avenue. These are on:

\* Wednesday January 8, at St Wilfred's Church, George Street, PO1 5RT starting at 4pm

\* Friday January 17 at Buckland Community Centre, Malins Road, PO2 7BT starting at 6.30pm.

#### **14) Why were we only being told about these plans after some people heard about them?**

We are really sorry that word 'got out' in social media and the local newspaper about our merger plans before we sent out letter to patients. This was absolutely not our intention patients are at the heart of our planning for the merger, in terms of the services that we can provide you in future. There are very strong national NHS guidelines about information, activities and announcements that can be made publically during the period (known as purdah) before a General Election is held. But the advice we received and followed was to delay our communications to you and also the staging to the public meetings.

Events dictated a change of plan. Again we can only apologise – we wanted you to hear this news from us first, so you understand what is happening and why.

#### **15) Who can I contact to about this?**

We have put up 'comment boxes' in the receptions at Hanway Road, Stubbington Avenue and Kingston Crescent where you can make comments on the proposal. Please note that you will need to provide contact details if you want a direct response. There is also a designated email address [handp.merger.nhs.net](mailto:handp.merger.nhs.net). If you do not wish to contact either of the practices directly, you can contact Siobhain McCurrach at 'Healthwatch Portsmouth' via the following email address [siobhain.mccurrach@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](mailto:siobhain.mccurrach@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)

#### **16) Will our voices be heard?**

Can we be very clear that standing still is not an option for us – our practice cannot cope, and with fewer GP partners the finances needed to maintain the way we currently do things – and where we do them from – is not sustainable either.

But a major part of the reason for us staging the public meetings is to listen to your concerns, so that we can try to re-assure you or put plans in place to address any reoccurring issues or themes that crop up. We are listening to what you tell us, but we may not be able to act on everything you say.