

13 November 2017

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Dear Simon

### Temporary Closure of Walk In Centre service at Eastham Clinic

I am writing in response to your letter dated 8<sup>th</sup> November 2017, which was put into the public domain and which has already attracted great attention and requests for more detail from me, personally and the organisation.

Given the significant general public interest that your letter has generated, my Chairman and I take the view that we should respond immediately to provide assurance and clarity to you and the general reader on the position to date especially as a general reader or indeed the CCG Governing Body might misinterpret some of the remarks.

Your letter states *"On behalf of NHS Wirral CCG's Governing Body, I am therefore writing to you to ask that the Trust submits a plan to reinstate the Eastham Walk-in Centre service to NHS Wirral CCG by 5.00pm on Friday 17 November 2017"*

I am concerned that a general reader may conclude that Wirral Community NHS Foundation Trust (WCFT) has no plans, has had no discussions with you and has no ambition to reopen at Walk in Centre at Eastham. None of this is true and I am sure that you did not intend this to be communicated.

Further, it could also be interpreted from your letter that the decision to temporarily close the Walk in Centre at Eastham was a unilateral decision on the part of the Trust. Again, this is not true. Indeed, as you know the decision was made in the company of the senior health and social care leaders for Wirral which included yourself from NHS Wirral CCG.

You also in your letter advise me that *"NHS Wirral CCG has a 2 year block contract ....in place with the Trust that includes the delivery of Walk-in Centres at 3 sites including the Eastham Walk-in Centre service."* This is, of course true, notwithstanding your request in August to WCFT to transfer the Eastham staff to Arrowe Park Hospital and which the senior leaders for Wirral agreed to. Again, your letter could be interpreted as a change in priority for the CCG from Arrowe Park to Eastham and we suspect that this is not your position.

As you are aware we are working to resolve the significant issues relating to the availability of appropriately qualified nurses to safely and effectively work in an urgent care setting. Nursing staff with these required skills and training are scarce and very difficult to recruit. Indeed, they are at such a premium that even integrated systems across NHS England are turning to agencies for support.

In the medium term and as you are aware we have taken proactive action and are already in the process of 'training our own' to meet this demand and help contribute to the further development of urgent care in Wirral. However this will take time. The first cohort of nurses will complete their training in May 2018.

A short term option to meet your demands would be simply to remove staff from Arrowe Park Hospital and operate to our contract as before to reopen Eastham. However, this would present system leaders an unwelcome dilemma which we at WCFT are very reluctant to do. Therefore, we are constantly seeking innovative and safe solutions to address the challenges relating to recruitment and retention of this scarce staff group.

A more realistic solution would be to recruit additional nursing staff with the high-level skills required, but finding such staff would be challenging, would probably need an agency solution for a period of up to six months, and would certainly require additional resources from the CCG.

Clearly, as always WCFT will respond positively to your formal and public request for a plan by the given deadline.

Further WCFT welcomes the NHS Wirral CCG's intention to consult on the future provision of urgent care for Wirral. We welcome the opportunity to respond positively building on the established services at Eastham to provide a fully integrated health and social care service.

You can be assured that our position is to provide the best services for the residents of all of Wirral within the available resources. We look forward to receiving your response to our proposals on the options for the return of the Walk-in Centre at Eastham.

Yours sincerely



**Karen Howell**  
Chief Executive

