

St. Damian's Proposed Closure – Further Update as at 28.12.18

Further to recent patient consultation meetings, on the 10th December 2018, Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group issued Bradford on Avon & Melksham Health Partnership with further advice.

If the proposed closure of St Damian's Surgery and practice boundary changes go ahead in March 2019, then all patients currently registered with St Damian's Surgery can remain with the Practice. These patients will continue to access the full range of clinical services, even if considered 'out of area' and will be entitled to home visits as they currently do now.

Please note for face to face appointments you will be expected to travel to one of our Practice sites - Bradford on Avon Health Centre, St Margaret's Surgery or Winsley Health Centre.

Bradford on Avon & Melksham Health Partnership

Proposal to close St Damian's Surgery, Melksham

Frequently Asked Questions:

Increased demands on primary care and the national shortage of GPs are having an impact across the UK and in Wiltshire. The Bradford on Avon and Melksham Health Partnership (BoAMHP) have found it difficult to fill vacancies following the retirement of three full-time GP partners and have made the very difficult decision to seek approval to close St Damian's Surgery in Melksham.

On 7th November a formal consultation period on the proposed closure of St Damian's surgery in Melksham began, this ends on 2nd January 2019. The practice has submitted a further proposal to change the practice boundary, which was inherited when the practice merged with St Margaret's in 2011. The consultation period for the practice boundary change will run alongside the proposed closure consultation. As part of these consultation processes, we are listening to the concerns of patients and stakeholders and have gathered these questions/concerns, as well as the answers in this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document, to help those patients who may not have been able to make one of the drop-in sessions;

1. Why can't we have definite answers now?

- We are in what is known as a consultation period, during which we are keen to hear feedback from a wide audience of people, as a consultation period is a time to engage with our patients, staff, and local practices who will be affected, as well as the Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), NHS England and Town Councillors, the outcome of these meetings may inform changes to our final proposal. We are just at the beginning of this process, at the end of which we will have definite answers to your questions. The care provision for our patients remains unchanged until a decision has been made by CCG/NHS England.

2. Spa Medical Centre aren't taking on new registrations, so if Gifford's Surgery stop accepting new registrations we'll have no-where to go?
 - Patients will not be left without a GP. The CCG will work with BoAMHP and the other local service providers to develop a plan for a smooth transition of care, should the proposal be accepted. Giffords have recruited clinical staff including doctors to accommodate patients.
 - Patients who are currently registered at St Damian's can remain so and continue to see their own Doctor, but will need to travel to Bradford on Avon or Winsley Health Centre. If you are unable to travel, or prefer to see a clinician in Melksham, then you can register with Giffords.

3. How can the closure of one of only three existing GP Practices in Melksham possibly be in the best interests of 3,500 registered patients, with further new housing developments due to be built in the coming years ?
 - Patients will not be left without a GP. The CCG will work with us and the other local services to develop a plan for smooth transition of care, should the proposal be accepted.
 - There are many towns such as Warminster, Westbury and Bradford on Avon where there is only one GP Practice.

4. We moved from Gifford's Surgery because we weren't happy, now we don't have a choice?
 - We are sorry to hear that you were not happy at Gifford's, it has been a very challenging time for all GP Practices over the last few years. Giffords have successfully addressed recruitment issues and are providing a comprehensive, well doctored service to any patient wishing to register. We cannot guarantee that if the proposal close St Damian's is approved, Spa Medical Centre will have room for as many patients as wish to move to their practice. We will do our best over the coming weeks to identify what options might be available to you should the proposal be accepted by the CCG/NHS England.

5. We moved from Spa Medical Centre because we weren't happy now we don't have a choice?
 - We are sorry to hear that you were not happy at Spa Medical Centre, it has been a very challenging time for all GP Practices over the last few years. Gifford's Surgery is currently taking on new patients. We will do our best over the coming weeks to identify what options might be available to you should the proposal be accepted by the CCG/NHS England.

6. We want to stay with BoAMHP, how do we know if we are inside or outside of the boundary? What does that mean?
 - BoAMHP submitted a request to alter the practice boundary to Wiltshire CCG on 30th November 2018, there will now be a 4 week consultation period ending on 28th December 2018, prior to Wiltshire CCG making a formal decision prior to any decision being made by Wiltshire CCG/ NHS England. We are working closely with all practices whose practice boundary cover the same area as our current BoAMHP practice boundary, and will ensure that every patient who will be outside of the proposed new BoAMHP boundary will be inside the practice boundary of at least one other GP Practice.

- Should you be outside any future boundary and wish to stay with BoAMHP, you are able to do so. However, you will need to travel to an appointment in Bradford on Avon Health Centre or Winsley Health Centre.
7. What does this mean for the Melksham Hub, where plans are in the final stages?
- BoAMHP were concerned about the significant resource the Melksham Hub project required in the summer and agreed with Wiltshire Council that any health provision would be out of a separate building on the campus site, in order to not delay the proposed project. The CCG will continue to work with the Council on the proposal for a health facility on the site and they will communicate plans for the future of the Melksham Hub project as and when they have details appropriate to share.
8. When it says that the CCG is supporting this, does it mean that the decision has already been made?
- The CCG is impartial and no decision has been made. It is supporting Bradford on Avon & Melksham Health Partnership through the process of consultation in the same way they have supported other practices in similar situations such as the closure of Smallbrook Surgery in Warminster.
9. As a Gifford's patient I am not able to get a routine blood test done for three weeks, my partner hasn't had the same issue at St Damian's, won't this waiting time get even longer as new patients transfer to Gifford's?
- This is one of the reasons a consultation period is so important. This consultation period allows the other practices to assess the impact and address staffing levels accordingly, therefore avoiding additional waiting times for patients. It is one of the reasons that the CCG have suggested that patients do not move practices until a formal decision has been made by the CCG/NHS England.
10. I am going to register at Gifford's Surgery so that I am not left without a GP – will there be enough GP's for all of the patients that will need to move?
- Patients will not be left without a GP. The CCG have suggested that patients should not move surgeries until a decision had been made on the proposal to close St Damian's Surgery. This will allow the practices time to manage the process ensuring the continued provision of care for those affected patients. However, it is your choice where you register and if and when you decide to change practices, we will be sorry to see you go and will support you in your choice.
11. Will new patients from the new developments be able to register with Spa Medical Centre?
- Spa Medical Centre is not currently accepting new patients until 31st March 2019. If the proposal is accepted we will continue to work closely together with Spa Medical Centre, Giffords Surgery and the CCG to develop the options for our patients who want to see a GP in Melksham.
 - Patients will not be left without a GP. The CCG will work with us and the other local services to develop a plan for smooth transition of care, should the proposal be accepted.
 - There are many towns, such as Warminster, Westbury and Bradford on Avon where there is only one GP Practice.

12. Have you considered the parking and more cars on the road in Bradford on Avon?
 - We have engaged with the Bradford on Avon Town Council, this will continue throughout the consultation process and beyond. Parking and more cars on the road form part of this discussion.
13. How will this affect elderly patients who don't want to start making new relationships, with new GPs?
 - We recognise that continuity of care is important to all of our patients and patients can continue to stay with their current GP, but will need to travel to Bradford on Avon or Winsley to see a clinician.
14. If we are so short of GPs why are sabbaticals allowed?
 - A sabbatical is an arrangement made between GP partners in the respective practice. Generally GP's taking a sabbatical would arrange for their own cover for this period, which prevents there being an impact on practice resources. Sabbaticals are one of the ways to preventing GP burnout and retain GPs.
15. BoAMHP practice boundary is massive, why didn't you write to patients during the merger in 2011 and make the changes to your practice boundary then?
 - This was an inherited practice boundary and at the time of the merger in 2011 BoAMHP felt there were enough resources in place to support the practice boundary as it was.
16. A lot of the work is carried out by the Nurse. Could we have an outpost where nurse- led care delivers a reduced service?
 - We are looking at all options available to us, during this consultation period. A lot of Primary Care work is carried out by other clinicians such as Practice Nurses, Health Care Assistants, Emergency Nurses, Clinical Pharmacists and Extended Care Practitioner, but all of these clinicians work under the supervision of a GP.
17. What is going to happen to the Melksham Hospital Site if St Damian's closes?
 - The hospital is owned by NHS Property Services and it will be their decision what happens next in this space if St Damian's Surgery closes.
18. Will the Leg Club Service at Spencers Hall in Melksham still be provided by BoAMHP?
 - BoAMHP are committed to continuing to run the Melksham Leg Club and we will shortly be introducing a social café to the club, which is something that has worked well at the Bradford on Avon Leg Club.
19. Why can't the CCG pay to upgrade the facilities at the hospital so that they would meet the appropriate standards?
 - Practices with aging buildings have to invest more funding in property maintenance in order to maintain their buildings to appropriate standards.

- The CCG offers improvement grants to practices wishing to make improvements to their properties, but there are strict criteria as to what can/cannot be funded and the practice has co-fund any project which receives a successful bid. The facilities at the hospital site are only one of the factors being considered in the proposal to close St Damian's Surgery.
20. Now that there is a pharmacy at Asda, why can't we go back to Leekes?
- We have not approached Leekes. It is likely that any proposal of development at Leekes would still require the partners to sign a 25 year lease for the premises and this coupled with the resources constraints would mean we would be facing similar challenges as we currently have with our St Damian's Surgery.
21. Why can Spa Medical Centre and Gifford's Surgery recruit doctors and nurses and St Damian's can't?
- BoAMHP have recruited staff over the last year, but we have sadly not been able to fully replace the number of sessions required following retirement of 3 full time GPs.
 - Working across multiple sites is difficult – it is increasingly challenging to manage the rotation of staff across four sites, lone site working, the requirement for educational learning and supervision and meetings. Spa Medical Centre and Gifford's Surgery both operate from one purpose built site which is more attractive to new staff.
22. What needs to happen to keep St Damian's Surgery in Melksham?
- During the consultation period we will have discussions with the CCG as to whether any additional resources might be available to BoAMHP and other Melksham practices. This is one of the many reasons that the consultation period is so important.
 - However the proposed closure has occurred due to various factors coming together at the same time and not as a result of one resource constraint alone. BoAMHP have been classed as a vulnerable practice for over a year and the practice needs to consolidate in order to rebuild strength and resilience at its core site in Bradford on Avon where its list size is 18,000 patients. This proposal has not been an easy decision for the partners of Bradford on Avon & Melksham Health Partnership to make.
 - Dr Nigel Watson, Local Medical Committee (LMC) Chairman and Chief Executive, is in the process of conducting a GP Partnership Review, which seeks to identify new models of working in key areas cited by the practice as reasons for their proposed closure, however this review will not be complete prior to the formal decision on the proposed closure of St Damian's Surgery.
23. What about GP provision for the 1,000 new homes (2,500-3,000 patients) due to be built across the next 3-5 years?
- Gifford's Surgery has capacity for approximately 18,000 patients and they currently have 13,500 patients, so there is room for growth in patient numbers. The challenge will be timely recruitment as numbers increases to ensure safe delivery of patient services for all patients.
 - The health space contained within the Melksham Hub development will allow for further expansion of health provision.

- NHS property services would decide what services to provide from this space in the future.
- Spa Medical Centre will continue to look at ways they might be able to increase patient numbers, however have absorbed much of the town's growth over the last three years.
- The impact of new housing developments is a national concern for the NHS, with national recruitment problems the only solution is to look at new ways of working.

24. Would a rural weighting for GPs encourage more GPs to the town?

- A shortage of GPs is a familiar challenge which towns, villages and cities up and down the country have been facing for a couple of years. GPs are looking for different career models, such as portfolio careers, challenges abroad and better work/life balances at the expense of traditional GP partnerships.
- Dr Nigel Watson, LMC Chairman and Chief Executive, is in the process of conducting a GP Partnership Review, workforce and workload are key areas which are being addressed within this review.

25. What do I do if I want to raise my concerns/questions to the practice and/or Wiltshire CCG?

- During this consultation period, we welcome all feedback from those people who will be affected and have concerns about the proposal to close St Damian's.
- Please write down your concerns regarding the proposed closure of St Damian's and either post them to the Bradford on Avon & Melksham Health Partnership:

The Health Centre
Station Approach
Bradford on Avon
Wiltshire, BA15 1DQ

Or email them to WCCG.boasecretaries@nhs.net

- If you would rather send your concerns to Wiltshire CCG then please write to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Marking the letter for the Attention of;
Complaints and PALS Manager
NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group
Southgate House
Pans Lane
Devizes
Wiltshire SN10 5EQ
- WCCG.complaintsandpals@nhs.net
- If you would rather speak to someone then please call 0300 1232103

26. Will there be any more drop-in/consultation meetings at St Damian's/public venues?

- We do not have any further drop in sessions planned at this stage.
- The next public consultation meeting is on Monday 10th December 7pm at Melksham Town Hall.
- The next Patient Participation Group will be held on Tuesday 11th December 7pm at the Health Centre in Bradford on Avon.

- If you visit or call St Damian's Surgery (01225 898490) the reception will take your details and arrange for a call back if you have specific, individual concerns which you'd like to discuss on a one on one basis.
27. What should I do if I did not receive a letter notifying me of the proposal?
- We apologise if you are a St Damian's patient who did not receive a letter from the Partnership, it was absolutely the practice's intention to inform staff and patients first.
 - We sent out 3,500 letters to patients across the week commencing 11th November 2018.
 - A copy of the letter can be obtained either on our website: www.boamhp.co.uk or by visiting St Damian's Surgery and letting staff know.
28. There is a very poor bus service to BoA, are there any plans to put more buses put on to improve links between the 2 towns?
- There are no plans to introduce more frequent busses that we are aware of at this stage. We have engaged with the Bradford on Avon and Melksham Town Councils, this will continue throughout the consultation process and beyond, we will pass on concerns raised during the consultation process.
29. If a patient wants to stay with Bradford on Avon & Melksham Health Partnership will they have to de-register with St Damian's and then re-register with Bradford on Avon Health Centre?
- Wiltshire CCG has now advised us (10/12/18) that all current patients registered with St Damain's are able to stay with the Practice and receive the full range of services. However, if St Damian's closes, then patients will need to travel to either Bradford on Avon or Winsley Health Centre.
 - Since 2015 all GP practices in England have been free to register new patients who live outside their practice boundary area. This means you can register with a GP practice somewhere that's more convenient for you, such as a practice near your work or closer to your children's schools. This will give you greater choice and aims to improve the quality of access to GP services.
30. What happens to any patient who is fit and healthy when they register as an 'Out of Area Registration' who then becomes unwell, unable to travel or requires frequent home visits?
- Wiltshire CCG has advised us that all current patients registered at St Damian's are able to stay a patient with BoAMHP, but will need to travel to Bradford on Avon or Winsley to see their doctor or nurse. If a patient needs a home visit, then this will be provided by clinicians travelling from the BoA surgery.
 - We have been advised by Wiltshire CCG that the 'Out of Area Registration' application does now not apply, as all current patients can remain registered with BoAMHP and receive the full range of services.
31. Why is the practice closing St Damian's Surgery and not Winsley Health Centre or St Margaret's Surgery?
- Winsley Health Centre is 2.4 miles/8 min drive from Bradford on Avon Health Centre and St Margaret's Surgery is 0.2 miles 2 min drive, they are both branch sites, which do not require us to deliver a full range of services and closure of these sites would not reduce our list size. Reducing the list size by closing our St Damian's would reduce the number of Nurses and GPs that we would require, therefore solving our recruitment issue.

- We are reliant on the room capacity for our clinicians at both Winsley Health Centre and St Margaret's Surgery, to service as well as giving us resilience in times of bad weather, enabling us to reach patients without staff or patients having to travel down the steep hill through the town centre.
- St Damian's Surgery is 6.7 miles/17 minute drive from Bradford Health Centre.
- The current practice boundary, due to the historic St Damians Surgery Practice Boundary, extends to a 40 min drive to the far side of Calne, this represents a 80 minute return journey for our clinicians, without any consultation time included.

32. Has a decision already been made?

- No a decision has not already been made. The formal decision will be made by Wiltshire CCG once the consultation period has finished.

33. Why is Bradford on Avon & Melksham Health Partnership described as a business, this is people's health services for which many have contributed to for years?

- General Practices in Primary Care are made of independent contractors, GP Partners, who either run these businesses on their own or in partnership with others. As with all other independent NHS contractors, GP Partners are responsible for running the business affairs of the practice, providing adequate premises and infrastructure to provide safe patient services and employ and train practice staff, as per their NHS Contract.
- Losing a potential 3,500 patients is a significant risk to the business and this decision has not been taken lightly.
- The decision was made on trying to make Bradford on Avon & Melksham Health Partnership more resilient in challenging times.
- BoAMHP want to provide the best of care, however being stretched over such a large practice boundary is no longer sustainable.