

Northdown Surgery and Bethesda Medical Centre frequently asked questions

Why is Bethesda Medical Centre proposing to expand?

Since NHS Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group was formed in 2013, we have been talking to you, our local residents, about what you want from health services in the future.

We have held public meetings, sent out surveys, and worked with the patient participation groups at your GP practices. Since June 2017, we have been running regular “Esther Cafés” to hear what people who use our services think is important and how you want services to change so they work better for you.

The main things you told us you want are:

- a one stop shop, where you can go to access the vast majority of the health and social care services you need in one place
- joined-up teams to look after people with more complicated needs, so you get care for all your needs and you only have to tell your story once
- more effort on keeping people healthy – prevention is better than cure.

Based on this, we are working really hard to make sure we deliver the “community hubs” you asked for, where you can be treated by health and social care professionals working individually and together, and where you can improve your own health.

We are delighted to have been allocated £6.5million NHS funding for an extension to Bethesda Medical Centre to kick off this new approach in Margate.

At Bethesda, we propose to create a state of the art health facility which will allow everyone to get all the medical and nursing services they expect in much more modern and accessible space, with:

- enough consulting rooms for GPs and nurses to provide care for up to 32,000 patients
- clinics for physiotherapy, audiology, ophthalmology, ultrasound and minor surgery for patients from Margate and beyond
- space for integrated teams of GPs, nurses, community and mental health professionals and voluntary organisations to work together, coordinating treatment and support for individual patients with complicated health problems
- education and training space for medical staff during the week, which can be used by patient groups in the evenings and at weekends
- a café, community kitchen, gym, allotment, and more, to help you lead a healthier lifestyle

- a bigger pharmacy.

This will allow us to do much more to help you stay well, make sure everyone is seen by the right person when they need medical advice or treatment, and offer a team of professionals with different skills and knowledge to care for people whose health is more complicated.

This is particularly important in a place like Margate, where the number of people is growing rapidly, and there is a higher than average number of older people and some of the most deprived communities in Kent.

Why is Bethesda the proposed base?

A feasibility study in 2016 identified Bethesda Medical Centre, Palm Bay Avenue, Cliftonville, as the best location for a Margate health and care hub, because it has space to expand and potential to acquire further land next door. We at the CCG and Bethesda Medical Centre are currently applying for planning permission from the local council for the extension.

Is Northdown practice closing?

No. It is proposed the building would close, and staff from Northdown Surgery would move to Bethesda Medical Centre, where they would form a single new GP practice with staff from Bethesda.

This would not be a takeover. The practices would be merging and working as one practice, and there would be no redundancies - everyone would keep their job.

Why has Northdown Surgery agreed to move and merge?

No decision has been made as yet. Northdown practice is proposing to merge with the Bethesda Medical Centre and to relocate to the state of the art facility proposed at Bethesda.

Patients would greatly benefit from a larger team who cover a bigger range of services and who are working closely together under one roof.

Both teams currently do their best to provide their patients with an excellent service but could do even better by working together, and with others such as community nurses, health visitors, social care, mental health workers, voluntary organisations, and community groups.

What do the proposed changes mean for patients?

At this stage, there is no immediate impact on patients at either practice and there is no need for patients to do anything.

Should these proposals progress as we hope they will, patients at Northdown would automatically join the Bethesda practice list on completion of the build.

Staff from Northdown would move across to Bethesda so patients would still be able to see their existing GP if they wish plus they would have access to a wider range of healthcare professionals all operating under one roof

For existing patients at Bethesda, there would be no impact on the service they receive as the planned extension to the building and infrastructure and additional funding is aimed at increasing the capacity of the current practice.

When is this expected to happen?

An application for planning permission was submitted to Thanet District Council in February 2018. The money has already been allocated by NHS England. If approved, it is proposed that the build would start around July this year and would be completed around March 2020.

Gradually over the next two years, the practices would start to merge protocols, procedures, teams and services ready for full integration by March 2020.

Even now, the practices already work closely together, so this merger would build on the current partnership.

Will patients be left without a GP?

No. Patients at Northdown would all be served by the extended and improved Medical Centre and would still be able to see the same team of medical staff as they did at Northdown should they wish.

In addition, patients would have access to a much broader range of health and social care services as well as the other facilities planned at Bethesda such as a café, gym, and meeting rooms.

Will Northdown patients be guaranteed a place at the new Medical Centre at Bethesda?

Yes they would. The proposed new extended building will have the capacity to deal with up to 32,000 patients.

What if patients want to choose a different GP practice?

Patients can choose which practice they wish to register with though acceptance is based on capacity and geographical proximity.

Do patients need to do anything now?

No. Patients do not need to do anything now.

How do I find out more?

The websites for both surgeries will be updated on a regular basis with any news.

<http://www.bethesdamc.co.uk/>

<http://www.northdownsurgery.org.uk/>

The new surgery is much further from where some patients live. How will they get there?

We are looking at transport routes and options as part of the planning of the new building extension. We appreciate that many of our patients do not have cars and rely on walking and public transport and this is being considered as an important factor that will need addressing. We are discussing our plans with a local bus company.

We are aiming to minimise any disruption to patients.

Have patients been consulted on this?

Patient Participation Groups from both practices have been engaged in discussions about the new building and will continue to be involved throughout the process.

There was a public event at Bethesda in January this year for people who would be affected by the new building to view the proposed plans.

Northdown staff are planning drop-in sessions at the practice in May or June for you to ask any questions and will run a short survey to capture your views and any concerns about this proposal.

Once the plans have been formally approved, they will be shared with patients and the wider public.

Can the building at Bethesda cope with all the extra patients?

The planned extension is being designed so that, if the extension is approved, the medical centre would be able to deal with the extra patients and would have the space, facilities and staff to support up to 32,000 patients.

How will staff working at Bethesda and Northdown be affected by the proposals?

There are no planned redundancies as part of these proposals. Staff from Northdown would move over to the Bethesda practice.

Prepared by NHS Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group, Bethesda Medical Centre and Northdown Surgery.

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