

## **Windrush Branch Surgery, Banbury (June 2020)**

Windrush Surgery in Banbury has recently informed its patients that it proposes to close its branch surgery in Bradley Arcade. Windrush Surgery serves more than 8,400 registered patients in Banbury – smaller than the Oxfordshire average of around 11,500. It has a main surgery in West Bar owned by the partners, and a branch surgery 1.2 miles away in Bradley Arcade, leased from Cherwell District Council. In recent years the branch generally offered appointments four mornings per week, while the main surgery offers a full Monday to Friday service.

GP practices in Banbury and elsewhere have struggled with recruiting sufficient GPs for some years. Windrush Surgery has taken successful and innovative approaches to making the best use of a wider range of clinical staff – for example pioneering use of paramedics to provide primary care; this includes assessing, triaging and advising patients. They also carry out some diagnostic procedures, carry out home visits where required and run minor illness clinics and play a key part in the primary care clinical team.

The pressure on GP practices running branch surgeries has increased in recent years, with fewer GPs to work in them and fewer resources to pay for them. Operating on two sites is particularly challenging with limited GP staffing; it also stretches other staff resources and tends to be more costly due to the commitment of maintaining an additional building.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and following national guidance, Windrush Surgery has changed the way it cares for patients. This has included a telephone triage-first approach and maximising use of telephone, video and online consultations. This is in line with the way other GP practices are operating across Oxfordshire and the rest of the country.

The practice has an opportunity this year to break from its tenancy agreement for the branch building due to a tenancy clause. Given the changes in the way it works it believes it can provide sufficient appointments and access from the main building in West Bar. The better use of technology, including video and telephone consultations, that has increased during the current COVID-19 pandemic, has shown how working in different ways is effective, safe and benefits patients.

Any closure of the branch is subject to decision by OCCG – the practice has indicated that it intends to apply to close the branch and is currently seeking views from its patients on the impact of the proposed closure. This engagement process seeks to understand the impact the closure would have on patients and how the practice could mitigate any impact.

In making the decision we will use the primary care decision tool that was developed in partnership with local councillors and patient representatives and will take into account the views of patients and the impact that closing the branch surgery may have.