

Dear all, please find below further information regarding our plans for reconfiguring over two sites during 2021. This is aimed to serve as an update and to address some misunderstandings which have come to our attention.

The reason to reconfigure clinical services over two sites is to allow improvement to the service we provide to all patients in Nidderdale. Due to various pressures, it has been increasingly difficult to provide timely appointments and sufficient continuity (e.g. access to the healthcare professional of your choice).

The future use of The Grange is still under discussion, but our firm hope is that it will continue to serve local residents in a health-related capacity. As soon as agreement is reached between the relevant parties we will provide details. The other two sites will obviously need to have additional capacity (in terms of time and or space) and we are looking at various options accordingly. We expect to need to extend the car park at Birstwith.

We have had lots of positive feedback about the plans, but are also aware that one or two campaigns have been started in the hope of keeping things as they are. In reality, the status quo is neither desirable nor feasible. Many practices across the UK are signing up with large-scale providers who can run multiple practices in a highly cost-effective way, but we are keen to avoid this as we feel Nidderdale is better served by a more traditional model, with a locally based partnership focussed on the specific needs of the area. Already there have been examples of regional developments being focussed more on Harrogate than Nidderdale. The Department of Health's national plan for general practice is to increase the "scale" at which it is provided. This makes more sense in towns than in rural areas.

We should not forget some very positive aspects too: We are proud to rank highly in external assessments and patients typically compare us well with their previous practices. Reconfiguring is expected to allow us to be open for longer, to provide better continuity, and to improve how we respond to incoming telephone queries. Staff are generally very positive about the plans and look forward to the improvements, especially in terms of cover and working lives. We are not the first institution to have to make unpopular decisions in order to improve the service we provide. The concern expressed is entirely understandable, and the honourable response is to be open and honest about the reasons for change and to ameliorate any downsides, which is what we are doing.

With this in mind, please can we reiterate our invitation for patients to sign up as volunteer drivers, even if only available occasionally.