

Media Release

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Launching weekend health hubs in Thurrock

Local health leaders are delighted to announce the launch of four health hubs located across Thurrock where patients can access GP and nurse appointments on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

The first two health hubs, in Corringham and Tilbury, have already opened, operating out of existing practices, with the third expected to open in Grays, in the next few weeks. Plans for the opening of the final hub in South Ockendon are still being developed.

Each hub will be staffed by a GP and nurse on a Saturday and Sunday from 9.30am to 12.30pm with about 70 GP and nurse appointments at each hub. This means that once all four health hubs are up and running, there could be more than 280 GP and nurse appointments available every weekend.

Patients will need to book appointments at the health hubs through their regular GP practice; it is important to note that the hubs are not a 'drop-in' service.

NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), who supported local primary care (Thurrock GP practices) to put together a bid to win funding for the project from NHS England, believe this is a massive step forward to giving patients better access at the weekend and help to ease pressure on local A&E departments on the weekend.

Dr Anand Deshpande, Chair of NHS Thurrock CCG, said: "As a local GP, I know the frustrations of many of my patients who need GP and nurse appointments on the weekend. By making these appointments available, we'll not only give local people more appropriate care, but potentially be saving them from a long wait in hospital.

The health hubs were launched in direct response to what patients told us they wanted - better access to local GP services. We are proud that we are able to deliver this through the health hub structure."

The Tilbury health hub in particular has proved to be invaluable for local residents.

Dr Deshpande continued: "The Tilbury health hub has come at a time of critical need for Tilbury patients. The last few months has seen a marked decline in the local primary care workforce and patients have struggled to get GP appointments as a

Clinical Commissioning Group

result. The Tilbury health hub has been very responsive to the local need and increased the capacity from one to two GPs, which means that there are currently 36 GP appointments instead of 18 each Saturday and Sunday. This extra resource will remain while the current issues with the Tilbury GP workforce are sorted out.”

The announcement of these health hubs come only a few weeks after the decision was made to close the Thurrock walk-in service, based in Grays. This decision was made following a lengthy engagement process with stakeholders and members of the public, with the clear theme being that people wanted better access to their GP. The money saved from the walk-in service will be used to reinvest in the health hubs and enhance services further.

Dr Deshpande said: “The CCG is in the process of developing primary care plans, which will include a patient involvement group to help guide future development of the health hubs. We want the service to reflect the needs of the people so it is important that we take the time to do it right.”

Where are the health hubs?

Corringham: Neera Medical Centre, Stanford-Le-Hope, SS17 0BY

Tilbury: The Health Centre, London Road, RM18 8EB

Grays: TBC

South Ockendon: TBC

Ends

For further information please contact Joy Joses, Head of Communications Thurrock CCG on 01375 365810 or email: j.joses@nhs.net