

GP Partners

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Dr Shraddha Karkare
Dr Sonia Khanna

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Monday 25th November 2024

Dear Sidcup Medical Centre Patients

Proposed contractual merger between Sidcup Medical Centre and Station Road Surgery

I am writing to seek your views, as a patient of Sidcup Medical Centre, on a proposal to contractually merge Sidcup Medical Centre with the neighbouring Station Road Surgery.

This proposal means that the contracts that both practices hold with NHS South East London Integrated Care Board (the commissioner of NHS medical services in SE London) would be merged, and the GP partners at both practices would become a single partnership. By pooling staff and resources, this would mean you would have better access to clinicians and improved availability of appointments.

What would this mean for you as a patient?

If this merger goes ahead:

- **You would still be a patient of Sidcup Medical Centre** and you would still be able to access GP appointments and services at your preferred practice site of Sidcup Medical Centre with your usual clinicians.
- You would also be able to access appointments at Station Road Surgery and see their clinicians, if that is more convenient to you.
- **There is no intention to close or relocate Sidcup Medical Centre or Station Road Surgery**
- **There would be no reduction in opening hours or appointments.**

The GP Partners at both Practices are confident that patients would **not** be negatively impacted in any way by this merger, but are keen to gather feedback from patients.

More information

Please do not call the practice reception for further information on this proposal: our receptionists are extremely busy dealing with appointments. You can find out more about this proposal, including why it is being considered, in the following ways:

- The Question & Answer sheet attached to this letter (which will also be available at the practice reception).

- A Question & Answer presentation by myself and Dr Knigge (the lead GP at Station Road Surgery), will be held at **Sidcup Rugby Club, 49 Sydney Road, Sidcup, DA14 6RA, on 4th December 2024 at 6.30pm**, which you are invited to attend. A recording of the presentation will be available on the practice website from 5th December.

We will also be inviting patients to complete a [short survey](#) to offer their views. Copies of this survey will be available on 4th December, on the practice website or at reception of our Church Avenue and Burnt Oak Lane sites from 5th December 2024. You can also provide feedback by emailing us at sidcupmerger.feedback@nhs.net.

I believe that this proposal is in the long-term interest of patients and staff of both Sidcup Medical Centre and Station Road Surgery, and I hope you will support the proposal.

Kind regards
Dr Deshmukh

Sidcup Medical Centre Merger Question and Answers

Please see below detailed information on this proposal.

1. Would Sidcup Medical Centre close or be relocated?

NO. There is absolutely no intention to close or relocate any of Sidcup Medical Centre sites or Station Road Surgery.

2. What is a contractual merger?

Every NHS GP practice is required to hold a contract with its local commissioner of services, which, in this case, is South East London Integrated Care Board. In some cases, a GP practice contract covers a main site and multiple 'branch' sites (e.g. Sidcup Medical Centre's contract currently has four practice sites). This means that the staff working at each one of those locations are under a single contract, which creates greater ability to share staff across the practice sites. Under this proposal, Station Road Surgery's contract would simply be merged with Sidcup Medical Centre's existing contract. A contractual merger should not negatively impact patients in any way but would provide you with greater access to clinicians and appointments by being able to access appointments at the Station Road Surgery site in addition to our existing Sidcup Medical Centre sites, if you wished.

3. Would this affect my registration as a patient of Sidcup Medical Centre?

NO. The proposed merger would not impact your registration in any way – you would still be a patient of Sidcup Medical Centre and would continue to access services in the normal way.

4. Would I still be able to make an appointment to see my usual GP or nurse at my preferred Sidcup Medical Centre practice site?

Yes. The relationship our patients have with our GPs and nurses is very important and you would still be able to see your normal GPs and nurses at your preferred Sidcup Medical Centre practice site.

5. Would I still be able to make appointments at my preferred Sidcup Medical Centre practice site?

Yes. You would also be able to request appointments with a GP and/or nurse at Station Road Surgery, if you wished, therefore improving your access to services and appointments.

6. Would Sidcup Medical Centre's opening times stay the same?

Yes. There would be no change to the opening hours at any of Sidcup Medical Centre's practice sites.

7. Would there be changes to the way I book appointments?

No. You would be able to book appointments in the same way. The contractual merger would also allow you to book an appointment at Station Road Surgery, if that is more convenient for you.

We would also continue to contact all of our patients who require scheduled vaccinations, chronic disease reviews or routine screening e.g. cervical screening tests, etc.

8. Would I have to go to Station Road Surgery for consultations and/or treatments?

Only if you wish. If you have a particular condition – for example COPD or diabetes – your clinician may suggest that you make an appointment at Station Road Surgery if that surgery has a clinician that specialises in your condition. However, this would be your choice.

9. Would any service currently offered by Sidcup Medical Centre be removed or stopped?

No. We do not anticipate any of Sidcup Medical Centre's services being removed or stopped.

We do however intend to offer additional services at Station Road Surgery, including Long Acting Reversible Contraception, which you would be able to access.

10. What would happen to my medical records?

GP practices hold their patients on a 'list'. In a contractual merger, the lists of both practices are merged into a single list. Our list of patients would automatically merge into a single list with the Station Road Surgery list. Your medical records would consequently reside in a single patient database. This means that, whether you have an appointment at one of your usual Sidcup Medical Centre sites or at Station Road, your GP/nurse would be able to access your medical record, as is normally done during a consultation.

The NHS safeguards in relation to patient confidentiality would of course remain in place.

11. Would my current arrangements for getting my medicines stay the same?

Yes. There would be no change to the way you get your medicines.

12. Would the proposed merger affect the GP care provided by Sidcup Medical Centre to care homes?

No. If you are a relative/carer of a patient in a care home to which Sidcup Medical Centre provides GP care, please be assured that there would be **no change** to the continuity of care for care home residents.

13. Would there be any changes to how I access the GP out of hours service?

No. In order to access a GP when the practice is closed, you could still call the NHS 111 service and they would either signpost you to the most appropriate service or arrange for you to access a GP.

14. Why is this contractual merger being considered?

Station Road Surgery has faced significant challenges over the last 2 years, including the death of their senior GP partner. The intense workload on Dr Knigge (lead GP) and their management team is not sustainable. Dr Siddharth Deshmukh, the lead GP and senior partner of Sidcup Medical Centre, joined Station Road Surgery in December 2023 as a managing partner with responsibility for strategy, planning and finances, and whilst this has been

beneficial, there remains significant challenges to the day-to-day operation of Station Road Surgery.

An advantage of a contractual merger is the 'pooling' of staff. This means greater ability for staff to provide cover for unexpected absences, and greater access for patients to clinicians with specialist knowledge or an interest in a particular condition; for example, one of the Station Road Surgery clinicians has a particular interest in Dermatology, and therefore Sidcup Medical Centre patients would have the opportunity to have a consultation with that clinician, if they wished. The merger would also create a larger reception team to answer the phones across all practice sites, improving the service to patients.

We believe that this proposal would ensure higher quality of care and convenience for both Sidcup Medical Centre and Station Road Surgery patients.

15. Who is responsible for making the decision as to whether this contractual merger goes ahead?

Ultimately, the decision whether to proceed with the merger is the responsibility of South East London Integrated Care Board, the commissioner of the current contracts held by the two practices. Responsibility for the commissioning of Primary Care services (including GP Practices) is delegated to 'Place' teams, operating within individual borough boundaries. In Bexley 'Place', the Bexley Wellbeing Partnership (BWP) brings together the NHS, local authority, service providers, charities and voluntary sector organisations to design health and care services around the needs of residents. The BWP will be responsible for considering any recommendation of commissioners at a future meeting held in public. You will be able to find further information about future meetings at [Bexley Wellbeing Partnership](#).

16. If I want to register at a different practice, how do I do this?

We hope that you will be happy to remain a patient with Sidcup Medical Centre, but if you wish or need to change GP practice at any time, you should contact the new practice of your choice and ask them to register you. Once the new practice has registered you, you will automatically be deregistered from your existing one.

You can find a practice near you at www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp