

STATEMENT

Ref: 010.09

5 May 2009

Temporary suspension of Minor Injuries Service at Buckingham Hospital

A minor injuries service has been provided at Buckingham Hospital for a number of years, however, the nature of the service has changed over the years in terms of its throughput and hours of operation. In recent years, the service has operated during GP surgery opening hours (8am-6pm, Monday-Friday) with staffing provided from the in-patient ward nursing establishment. During 2008 the average number of attendances per month was 20.

Buckinghamshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) has a number of concerns about the viability of the minor injuries service into the future.

The service does not have its own dedicated nursing or medical staff. Medical cover is provided by GPs from three surrounding practices and nursing cover comes from the in-patient ward.

Many patients attending the minor injuries service have to be redirected to other more appropriate services. An audit conducted over a four month period last year showed that on average more than half of patients attending the minor injuries service were redirected to A&E, while another 25% were redirected to their GP, leaving extremely small numbers of patients actually treated by the minor injuries service.

The service does not operate out of hours and does not deliver improved patient access outside core GP hours. In Buckingham the service is closed on weekday evenings from 6pm to 8am and it is closed all weekend. During this time patients access alternative local services.

The service has had to close in exceptional circumstances. The staffing on the in-patient ward is adequate if the bed occupancy remains at 12 beds, however when there are severe staff shortages on the ward (for whatever reason), provision of the minor injuries service has been compromised.

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The low level of attendances and the number of patients who have to be redirected to other services calls into question the viability and effectiveness of the minor injuries service.

In light of these issues, it is the considered opinion of the PCT that the minor injuries service is not viable and should temporarily suspend the service. With three GP practices in the very local vicinity, Milton Keynes and Stoke Mandeville hospitals to the north and south of Buckingham, the PCT considers that there is good access to safe and effective services for the very small numbers of patients who may have used the minor injuries service. Therefore with effect from 8 May this service will be temporarily suspended at Buckingham Community Hospital, until the long-term future of service is considered in more detail by the Buckinghamshire County Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July. When a decision has been made we will publicise this widely.

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