

Dear Sirs,

Re: Complaint by 3Well Medical against NHS Peterborough

My name is John Peach and I am an elected councillor representing the Park Ward of Peterborough in which Alma Road Primary Care Centre is located.

On behalf of the residents of the ward, I have taken a keen interest in the practice and walk-in centre at Alma Road. I have attended most of the meetings of Peterborough council's Scrutiny Panel for Health, either as a substitute member of the panel or as a ward councillor. I have also attended most of the community meetings about the future of the surgery and some of their Patient group meetings.

The opening of the Alma Road surgery in 2009 was very timely. Many residents have spoken of the difficulties they have in getting to their doctor during normal opening times or in getting an appointment at all. Alma Road has been very popular and highly valued because it provides a service that no one else is offering. Indeed it is next to an Extra Care Home and sits behind a new large housing association development, which has many of its own health problems.

I was shocked when I learned that the PCT was planning to close the practice again barely a year after it was opened. It seems to me that the decision was solely financially motivated and yet the PCT has not proposed alternative ways to make savings. It is difficult to see why Alma Road has been singled out for proposed closure. Alma Road is located in one of the most deprived areas of the City and one which has a history of health inequality compared to the more affluent wards. It was a key part of the PCT's 2009 five year strategic plan to address these issues.

The latest consultation makes some sensible high level proposals but the Business Case supplied by the PCT seems to revolve around the need to close Alma Road in order to pay for new buildings for other practices. Once again, other candidates for closure or major cost-saving reconfigurations have not been publicly consulted on. After questioning the PCT in the Scrutiny Panel meetings, it is far from certain that the cost savings assumed by the PCT will materialise, because they depend on patients behaving the way the PCT want them to behave. Some expect A&E attendances to increase further if Alma Road is closed, which will worsen the PCT's finances rather than improve them. The PCT has been particularly resistant to providing further information and evidence which would convincingly persuade me that they can achieve all the changes they are proposing.

I have spoken to 3Well Medical and their patient groups many times and there is evidence that this practice is being unfairly treated by the PCT. I know that 3Well has been reluctant to bring its complaint to your panel, but has felt it has been left no alternative.

It is clear to me that the interests of the patients and taxpayers in this part of the City are best served by retaining all of the current services provided by 3Well at Alma Road. I hope that your panel will agree with that conclusion.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor John Peach.

Park Ward.