

TAYVIEW MEDICAL PRACTICE

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Dear Patient

Frequently Asked Questions Re: Changes to Opening Hours of our Tayport Surgery

The practice has been receiving a number of questions from patients regarding the changes to our opening hours at our branch surgery in Tayport. As you will be aware, the opening hours of our Tayport site will be reduced to Monday to Friday 08:00 – 12:00 from Monday 3rd June 2019.

Below you will find answers to frequently raised questions which the practice felt would be helpful.

Why are you reducing the opening hours of the Tayport site?

Although our Tayport site has always been classified as a branch surgery (Newport site being our main surgery), we have been fortunate, over the years, to be able to fully staff Tayport with doctors and make every effort to provide a service during both morning and afternoons. Unfortunately, at this present time, our practice has a reduction in GP coverage which equates to one full time GP. This will be impacted further from September when Dr MacKintosh retires which will mean the practice will have a reduction of two full time GPs. There is currently a GP recruitment crisis at present, which has been reported on numerous occasions through the media, and a large numbers of practices have been unable to fill GP vacancies. There is also a shortage of GP locums available to provide appointments which has resulted in the practice being unable to sustain services from both sites.

Can you not reduce the opening hours of your Newport site?

As mentioned above, our Newport site is our main surgery. The practice has a contractual obligation to provide GP services every weekday between the hours of 08:00 – 18:00. These contractual obligations are met by ensuring our Newport site remains open between these hours. All administrative work is completed at our Newport site which includes handling all incoming calls for appointments, secretarial work, issuing prescriptions etc. Our attached staff also work from our Newport site (district nurses, health visitors, visiting psychiatrists) and our Tayport site does not have the capacity for staff to complete their duties due to space restrictions. Our Tayport site does not receive incoming calls and the facilities required for staff to complete duties, which are relevant to our patient population, are very limited. We simply would not be able to replicate the service provided from our Newport site at our Tayport site.

Can you not employ more doctors?

As per the above, there is currently a national shortage of GPs. This is compounded further due to a national shortage of locum GPs. There are a variety of reasons for this shortage. The practice is currently advertising for a new GP to replace Dr MacKintosh and, at present, also advertises up to 5 months in advance for locum cover. Unfortunately we have had no notes of interest regarding our vacancy, which follows a nationwide trend, and we are only able to secure a minimal amount of locum cover. Over the previous 6 months (October 2018 – March 2019), the practice sought 66 days' worth of locum cover out of 125 days. Of those requests, the practice was able to secure 38 days' worth of locum cover of which 24 were covered internally by our own doctors which is not sustainable. At present, the practice simply does not have the GP capacity to provide consultations from both sites during the afternoons. During last year our Tayport site, on a number of occasions, has only been able to provide one GP during the mornings with no GP coverage during the afternoon. This presents both patient and staff safety concerns. We simply cannot, from a health and safety perspective, have one site open throughout the day with no GP coverage available.

I won't be able to travel to Newport for an appointment

The practice completed a random audit of our 9600 patients which showed that approximately 80% of our patient population have been able to attend either of our surgeries for their appointment with a doctor. Given the change to the opening times of our Tayport site, the practice will be providing more doctor availability each morning at Tayport in order to ensure that there is no reduction in the number of appointments offered each week at Tayport. Currently, when the practice has full GP coverage, we provide, on average, 190 appointments per week at Tayport. The number of appointments per week at Tayport will increase to an average of 225 per week from Monday 3rd June 2019. The practice understands that some patients are simply unable to attend our Newport practice and we will be introducing an appointment system at Tayport whereby patients who are unable to attend Newport will be triaged by the on-call doctor with a clinical decision made by the doctor regarding the most appropriate course of action. Home visits will continue to be provided for those patients who are housebound.

There are a number of available options for patients to travel to Newport from Tayport:

- Car – 6 mile round trip (3 mile distance between both practices).
- Bus – Moffat & Williamson No. 92B
- Flexibus – Telephone 01382 540624 to book a journey for the cost of a normal bus fare.
- Voluntary Services (Continuing Care NE Fife) – Telephone 01334 880743 provides non-emergency transport. A donation for their transport service is requested.
- Taxi services – A search of the internet can provide local taxi companies.

What about other services from Tayport, will they be affected?

All services currently provided from our Tayport practice will continue to be maintained during the hours of 08:00 – 12:00 each day. Prescriptions can still be collected from the practice between these hours. Alternatively, you can request to have your prescription sent to a local pharmacy should you be unable to attend the practice between 08:00 – 12:00.

Can the current doctors not work more hours?

The practice currently has 7 doctors. The total number of hours worked by the doctors each week equates to the practice having 6 full time equivalent doctors. Two of our doctors are also employed by both NHS Fife and NHS Tayside and have additional clinical responsibilities. Where possible, the doctors will try to assist by taking on additional hours but this is not always possible due to the large number of hours they are already working.

This is a cost saving exercise

The reduction in hours to our Tayport practice will not produce any savings. There will be no staff redundancies and the costs involved with maintaining our Tayport site will not change.

The doctors fully understand the concerns currently being raised by our patient population. Unfortunately, we simply do not have the medical resources to provide a safe, sustainable, service from both sites in the afternoon. The doctors will continue to monitor any impact of this change from Monday 3rd June with a view to addressing any challenges which our patients may encounter as reasonably as possible.

Yours faithfully

MR DAVID RAMSAY
Business Manager