

## Have your say on our proposal to close Steeple Bumpstead branch surgery

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the Steeple Bumpstead Surgery building has not been utilised since early 2020. Patients are being supported remotely with consultations at Clements Surgery in Haverhill if they need to be seen face to face, where social distancing and infection control measures are in place to ensure they can be seen safely.

The Steeple Bumpstead building is small and limited in the provision it can offer, and it is felt that patients who were originally registered at the surgery now have access to better quality healthcare at the main Clements Surgery site, approximately four miles away.

With this in mind, we would like to gather the views of our patients and the local community about our proposal to permanently close the Steeple Bumpstead branch surgery and to continue providing a full range of quality healthcare services for all patients from the Clements site.

The engagement exercise will run between August 23 and October 11 and seek views on any possible impact this would have on patients transferred to Unity Healthcare from the Steeple Bumpstead Surgery and other patients in Unity Healthcare's catchment area.

Two online events are being held to provide an opportunity for people to hear more information and the background to the proposal, and to ask questions:

- **Monday September 6 from 6.30pm to 7.30pm**  
Click [HERE](#) to Join Zoom Meeting  
Meeting ID: 828 4581 7966  
Passcode: 243769
- **Thursday September 9 from 10.30am to 11.30am**  
Click [HERE](#) to Join Zoom Meeting  
Meeting ID: 830 1760 5749  
Passcode: 503670

All feedback received during the engagement exercise will be considered by Unity Healthcare prior to a final decision being made on the proposal.

**Feedback closing date: Monday October 11, 2021**

- Please click [HERE](#) to let us know your comments and concerns by filling in our **patient survey**.
- Please click [HERE](#) to view our **Q&As**.
- A limited number of printed information sheets (including Q&As) and our patient survey are available at the Clements Surgery reception desk for anyone without internet access.
- You can also write to Laura Lyons, Service Manager, Unity Healthcare, Greenfields Way, Haverhill, Suffolk CB9 8LU

- Your feedback can also be shared with Healthwatch Suffolk and Healthwatch Essex, independent bodies set up to shape and influence local NHS and social care services:
  - Healthwatch Suffolk: email [info@healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk) or call **01449 703949**
  - Healthwatch Essex: email [info@healthwatchessex.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchessex.org.uk) or call **0300 500 1895**

For more information, please email [info@suffolkfed.co.uk](mailto:info@suffolkfed.co.uk) or [wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net](mailto:wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net)

## **Proposal to close Steeple Bumpstead branch surgery Q&As**

### **Why did Steeple Bumpstead Surgery become a branch of Unity Healthcare?**

The Steeple Bumpstead Surgery became a branch of Unity Healthcare (previously known as Christmas Maltings and Clements), Haverhill and part of Suffolk GP Federation CIC from 31 October 2019.

The change happened because as a small, stand-alone surgery, it had become difficult to attract and retain staff. The surgery was in a very difficult situation with no permanent doctors or nurses at the site.

West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (WECCG) and West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group (WSCCG) looked at the options at the time and felt it was in the best interests of both Steeple Bumpstead and Unity Healthcare patients for Suffolk GP Federation CIC to step-in and provide as orderly a transition as possible.

Without such a move, Steeple Bumpstead patients may have been dispersed with less time for neighbouring practices to plan and adapt. With CCG support, the Federation's aim was to extend Suffolk services to the people in the practice area to help minimise disruption and build a sustainable practice for the future.

The patients registered with Steeple Bumpstead Surgery have since had access to a full range of general medical services provided by Unity Healthcare at the Clements Surgery, four miles by road from Steeple Bumpstead. Parking facilities are available and public transport includes a bus service and Connecting Communities Rural Transport.

### **Why are you now proposing to close the Steeple Bumpstead branch surgery?**

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the Steeple Bumpstead Surgery building has not been utilised since early 2020. Patients are being supported remotely with consultations at Clements Surgery in Haverhill if they need to be seen face to face, where social distancing and infection control measures are in place to ensure they can be seen safely.

The Steeple Bumpstead building is small and limited in the provision it can offer, and it is felt that patients who were originally registered at the surgery now have access to better quality healthcare at the main Clements Surgery site, approximately four miles away.

### **How is the Clements Surgery site providing better quality healthcare for patients?**

Historically, the practice has relied on a 'first come, first served' appointment system which has diverted resources away from patients with potentially concerning symptoms, to patients with minor illness or non-medical concerns that can be self-managed with support by more appropriate health and care professionals.

Since introducing triage that embraces innovations and technology, and a 'demand led' rather than 'capacity led' approach towards service delivery, we have been able to ensure that everyone is able to access the healthcare that they NEED, in a timely fashion. Most contacts with the surgery are dealt with on the same day, and if not, by the end of the next working day.

Part of this has involved centralising services at the Clements Surgery and working together in a 'hub' based environment. This allows clinicians to share best practice, to share ideas about patients with more challenging problems, and to be able to allocate the time needed to patients with more complex needs. We can work as a team to ensure that all patients' needs are met. For example, a doctor who is tied up managing a patient who is dying is no longer forming a queue of frustrated patients in the meantime. It also means that patients do not need to take time off work, wait for hours in the surgery etc. for problems that are straightforward and can be managed remotely. We continue to see patients in person, either at the Clements Surgery or in their homes when appropriate (as we have done throughout the pandemic), if this is needed to safely manage the person's condition.

The Clements Surgery has better facilities, and a range of staff on hand to help. The Steeple Bumpstead Surgery building does not offer facilities that are adequate for 21st century healthcare, and staff working there would be isolated and unsupported.

This innovative approach towards service delivery has helped to turn around both Clements and Steeple Bumpstead surgeries, from surgeries that could not maintain a workforce of regular staff and were failing on almost every regulatory indicator, into a thriving practice that is regularly recruiting to expand the clinical team, and is now involved in training and education to secure services for the future.

We acknowledge that this is not without ongoing challenges but believe that the challenges we now face are no different or more severe than those affecting General Practice as a whole. The people of Haverhill and Steeple Bumpstead now have an excellent team of clinicians dedicated to helping them, which continues to grow and develop to face the new and upcoming challenges.

Figures provided by the GP Patient Survey 2021 (run by Ipsos MORI on behalf of NHS England) indicate that since 2020, patient's overall experience of making an appointment at the practice has improved by 23%, patient satisfaction with the general practice appointment times available has increased by 36.7%, and patients overall experience of Unity Healthcare has improved by 28%.

- All our patients have access to a range of health and care services at the Clements Surgery site which is not possible from a smaller building.
- We have a full complement of staff to support our new model of integrated care including GPs, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physiotherapists, paramedics, and mental health practitioners.

- Mental health specialist practitioners are working within the practice as part of the new mental health services model. They can be accessed via eConsult or referred to by practice staff internally.
- We are working with the Haverhill LifeLink health project for social prescribing support by referring patients who have a non-medical reason for contacting the practice, such as housing issues or debt management.
- Our eConsult system has proved to be a fantastic asset, enabling us to provide accessible and responsive healthcare during the Covid-19 pandemic, despite the restrictions.
- Patients contacting the practice by eConsult will receive a response by the end of the next working day at the latest. Often it is much sooner, particularly if the matter is urgent.
- Initial consultations take place via telephone or video. Patients who then need face-to-face consultations are seen in person by our clinicians, either at the Clements Surgery or in their homes when appropriate.
- The dispensary at the Clements site includes a home delivery service for patients living in surrounding villages which are more than one mile from a pharmacy.
- We are an approved training practice for a wide range of excellent practitioners in varied roles. Some will become the GPs of Haverhill's future, while those already qualified are being supported on their journey towards qualification as specialist GPs. Training a wide range of excellent practitioners in varied roles helps improve patient access and the quality of care we offer.

### **How can I check that I am registered with Unity Healthcare?**

You can contact Unity Healthcare by email [wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net](mailto:wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net) or call **01440 841300**

### **Where can I find information about local transport?**

- You can view, download, and print a full range of timetables for service across Essex and West Suffolk at [stephensonsofessex.com](http://stephensonsofessex.com) or call **01440 704583**
- The Rome2Rio website provides information on how to get from Steeple Bumpstead to Haverhill [www.rome2rio.com/s/Steeple-Bumpstead/Haverhill-England](http://www.rome2rio.com/s/Steeple-Bumpstead/Haverhill-England)
- The Voluntary Network provides Connecting Communities rural transport for when there are no regular bus services to make your journey, or you are unable to get to your nearest bus stop. All journeys are pre-booked.  
More information at [www.thevoluntarynetwork.org/community-transport](http://www.thevoluntarynetwork.org/community-transport) or call **01638 664304** or **01440 712028**

### **How can I help to improve services at Unity Healthcare?**

If you would like to join the **Unity Healthcare Patient Participation Group (PPG)** – please ask at reception or email [wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net](mailto:wsccg.unityhealthcare@nhs.net) for more information.