

## Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board

**Date: 22 March 2022**

Agenda item:

Wards: All

## **Subject: Primary Care Access in Merton**

Lead officer: Mark Creelman, Locality Executive Director, Merton and Wandsworth

Forward Plan reference number:

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### **Recommendations:**

A. The HWBB are asked to note the contents of this report.

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### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report sets out the current position around access to primary care in Merton, focused on general practice, and some of the challenges being faced.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. Merton has 22 GP practices spread across the borough, serving a registered population of 230,795 patient, which is continuing to grow. The last two years has seen changes in the way in which general practice is delivered and accessed, as well as continued development of new services. Primary Care is evolving from the traditional GP led model with multiple new roles being introduced to support patients in a more holistic way, as well as practices working together in new ways through the introduction of Primary Care Networks.
- 2.2. Primary Care also includes wider services such as community pharmacy and dentistry. These services are currently commissioned by NHSE England but may transfer to the ICS.

### **3 DETAILS**

- 3.1. Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic primary care continued to operate and offer care and treatment to its patients. This involved rapidly changing how services were delivered to ensure patients and staff were kept safe. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic General Practice followed NHS England guidance and moved to a total triage model. Through this model all patients were triaged (via telephone/video). In many cases patients could be safely managed remotely but where it was clinically necessary for patients to be seen face to face they would be invited into the practice, or an alternative hub site, to be seen. To ensure the safety of staff and patients, practices were adhering to strict infection prevention and control policies, including cleaning, wearing PPE and social distancing.

- 3.2. Practices are continuing to offer a blended approach with a mix of remote and in person consultations. Patients can request face to face consultations, however practices will continue to assess patients ahead of these to ensure they have no covid symptoms/have not tested positive to ensure that care can be provided in a safe environment for both patients and staff.
- 3.3. As well as delivering on their core services primary care in Merton also came together, through the GP Federation to deliver the Covid-19 vaccination programme to its population.

### **Social Prescribing**

- 3.4. Merton has one of the longest established Social Prescribing services in the UK. In October 2022 Merton will celebrate the 5th anniversary of its service. The service provides non-clinical support and offers holistic solutions for patients. In 2020 the Merton service was awarded the most highly commended service by the National Association of Link Workers. The service continues to grow and develop with plans for Green Social Prescribing, Children and young Peoples' services as well as specific support for patients with cancer.

### **Community pharmacy**

- 3.5. Community Pharmacy has been a most valued partner during the pandemic and we continue to explore future opportunities to work the contractors. Responsibility for community pharmacy contracts currently sits with NHSE and will be transferred to the ICS soon which will provide the opportunity to work closer with our pharmacy contractor colleagues. Two community pharmacies AP Chemist Colliers Wood and Hilton pharmacy, Raynes Park have been instrumental in providing covid vaccination services in Merton with support from the borough medicines optimisation teams demonstrating the value community pharmacy can provide and this will be built on in future relevant clinical service provision.

A NHSE funded pilot of an ear wax service is currently being developed for delivery in a small number of interested community pharmacies in 2022/23 with the opportunity to offer it to more community pharmacies and other providers if the pilot is successful.

## **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1. N/A

## **5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 5.1. N/A

## **6 TIMETABLE**

N/A

## **7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. N/A

- 8**            **LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**
- 8.1.        N/A
- 9**            **HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1.        N/A
- 10**          **CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
- 10.1.       N/A
- 11**          **RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- 11.1.       N/A
- 12**          **APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- 13**          **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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