

4 November 2011

Dear Colleague

Changes to emergency services at Central Middlesex Hospital

The accident and emergency department (A&E) at Central Middlesex Hospital is moving to an 11-hour service between 8am and 7pm from 14 November. However, the Urgent Care Centre at the front of the hospital will continue to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This is a temporary measure that is subject to external review and has been prompted by a need to provide a safe and reliable service to patients.

The temporary closure also reflects the work of the GP-led Urgent Care Centre in assisting patients who do not need hospital services. The centre opened at the hospital in March 2011, when A&E was seeing 200 patients a day on average. Now it sees about **70 patients a day** and normally only **one or two people an hour** go to A&E between 7pm and 8am.

As a result, A&E staff are no longer seeing enough patients to maintain their clinical skills and expertise, and when doctors leave, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit permanent replacements. The onset of winter means this situation is likely to become even more challenging, as we predict a shortage of A&E doctors available during the night.

While this change will affect very few patients, I realise that local people may be concerned, but as the Urgent Care Centre cares for seven out of ten people who come through the front door, most people will not notice any difference.

Safety is our number one priority, which is why we have taken this decision, which we believe is in the best interest of patients. It is wiser to make planned closures at night, rather than risk having sporadic, unanticipated closures over the winter, which could cause major inconvenience to patients.

The North West London Hospitals Trust has also discussed the situation with the Strategic Health Authority for London and invited it to carry out a review of its A&E services.

This change will affect very few patients, but I realise that you may be concerned about it and hope this letter goes some way towards alleviating any misgivings you might have.

Yours sincerely



David Astley
Interim Acting Chief Executive