



Practice Merger FAQ- Patients

As you now know the **The Cloisters Practice** are looking to merge and join **The Westgate Practice**.

Historically, The Westgate Practice and Cloisters Practice have worked alongside each other sharing the Greenhill Health Centre.

I am sure you are aware the NHS is under constant pressure to meet the needs of local communities at both a Primary (GP Practice) and Secondary levels (Hospitals).

As Lichfield is a rapidly growing city, both practices feel they need to combine their teams and other resources to respond to this growth.

In June 2017, our local commissioners and NHS England agreed to allow us to merge into one new partnership.

We have discussed this within our own practices with staff and have consulted with our Patient Participation Groups.

This document aims to provide you with information on some key areas of the merger.

Background to Practices:

The Westgate Practice is currently an 8 GP Partner practice with a patient list size currently of 20,500. In addition to the GP Partners, the clinical staff team includes 4 further GPs, 4 ANPs and a team of 8 Practice Nurses and 2 Health Care Assistants.

Cloisters Practice is a 3 GP Partner practice with a current list size of 8,145. In addition, to the GP Partners, the clinical staff team includes 4 additional GPs, 3 Practice Nurses and 2 Health Care Assistants and a Phlebotomist.

Both Practices provide a varied range of services to patients and the local community. We both work locally with Samuel Johnson hospital, local Nursing Homes and other local Practices.

We feel the merger has opportunity to improve the service level to our patients with potentially longer opening times, new services and making the most of the array of skills across the combined staff base.

Patient Engagement:

As Practice we have a commitment to ensure we meet the needs of the local community and listen to the views of our Patients. We do this generally by a number of means through:

- Surveys
- Patient Participation Groups
- Ad hoc feedback – Compliments and Comments, Friends & Family Slips

The Westgate Practice has a virtual Patient Participation Group which reaches some 300+ patients, whereby we actively seek feedback from our Patients on our services. Similarly, the Cloisters Practice has a Patient Participation Group with around 10 representatives.

Through these various means, we have gathered information about what is important to patients.

Some of the things patients commonly tell us are:

The most important things to maintain from our current services are:

- Maintaining continuity of care with your GP or nurse
- Telephone consultations
- The quality of what we currently provide
- Confidentiality and data security
- Remaining patient focused
- Flexibility and accessibility to clinical staff
- Availability of appointments

New services or ways of delivering services.

- Outpatient clinics in practices rather than hospital.
- Better after care service including district nursing and community care
- More preventative care
- Being able to email for advice or support
- Better use of IT and other technology to improve access for patients

As we work towards joining the Practices, of utmost importance to us is understanding your views and providing you with opportunity to feedback to us.

We will therefore make sure we keep patients informed of changes about the merger/services through the following ways:

- Via the Patient Participation Groups
- Use messages on repeat prescriptions
- Updating websites
- Posters in waiting rooms
- Newsletter/updates for patients
- SMS text alerts – with links to more info on website/in practice.

We understand you may have some initial concerns; however we hope some of the information below will alleviate these.

What will be the name?

The new partnership will be **The Westgate Practice**, which will be owned and run by 11 GP partners. They will be assisted by 9 other GPs, 5 Advanced Nurses and 10 Practice Nurses.

When will the merger take place?

The merger is proposed to take place in the New Year.

Will everything change?

You will probably experience little change to your service however there will be changes behind the scenes with regard to IT, finance and other internal systems. Implementation of any changes to how we deliver services, which we will look for ideas and feedback from patients, will be phased in over the first two years after the merger in a gradual, planned way. Retaining the quality of our services is really important to us all.

Will I still be able to attend the same premises?

You can attend the same premises as you visit now but in the future Cloister's patients will be able to choose to go to the branch surgery at Shenstone.

Will I still be able to contact you on the same telephone number?

You will still be able to use the same telephone number. We would over time hope to have a single telephone system which would allow centralization of services but also keep the ability to speak to your usual branch when you need to. We are keen to keep any system simple to use for patients.

Will I still be able to book the same appointments?

Our systems for booking appointments or being seen or spoken to on the phone for same day urgent problems will continue from the day we merge. Over time we will review our services to see

if we can provide these in a better way. We are committed to ensuring that continuity of care is retained for patients with on-going health care issues as we know that this is important to you and good for patient care.

We know that access by telephone (either by telephone triage for urgent problems or pre-booking a telephone consultation) is a good option for patients and is a good way for our team to manage some patients. Again these will continue.

Will I still be able to book appointments and order repeat prescriptions online?

We will continue with online booking of appointments and ordering of repeat prescriptions. For Westgate patients there will be no interruption to this facility. However we are aware that Cloisters' patients who are registered for this facility will be required to re-enrol once the two clinical systems have merged. As soon as possible after this merger we will send affected patients a letter containing the instructions for re-enrolling online to ensure they experience little or no break to their access.

Will I be able to request my repeat prescription the same way as now?

You will be able to request and collect your repeat prescription in the same way as you do now.

Will I still be registered at my current practice?

You will still be registered with The Westgate Practice, and you can still see your usual GP, ANP or nurse as appropriate – or choose to see one of the Cloister's clinicians.

We will continue to register new patients at all our sites as we are required to do **What will happen with our Patient Participation Groups?**

This will be the opportunity to strengthen and combine the PPGs. We shall look at ways of retaining both the online PPG which Westgate has and the PPG that physically meets that the Cloisters Practice currently has.

Car Parking

We understand the frustration that the small car park at Greenhill causes to our patients. Unfortunately at the current time there is nothing we can do to alleviate this although we do frequently raise this issue with our Building Provider. However the merger itself will not cause an increase in the number of patients using the car park. We would urge all patients who are able to, to park over the road at Tesco's where free parking is available for two hours.