

## Minehead Minor Injury Unit Change of Opening Times

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### **1 Summary**

- 1.1 Somerset NHS Foundation Trust (SFT) temporarily closed Minehead Minor Injury Unit (MIU) overnight in July 2021 in response to concerns about the safety of the service. During this time the Trust reviewed the MIU service and worked with partners, patients, and public representatives to look at how we address these safety concerns, quantify, and meet the overnight needs of the local area within our available resources, and propose a way forward that is safe, sustainable, and operationally robust.
- 1.2 This paper provides the outcome of this review, the recommendation SFT will be taking to its Trust Board in March 2022, Somerset CCGs support for this recommendation and the next steps to strengthen Same Day Urgent Care (SDUC) services in West Somerset.

### **2 Issues for Consideration / Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note:
  - the recommendation to Somerset NHS Foundation Trust Board to permanently reduce the service provision from 24 hours to a new opening time of 8 am – 9 pm, so that this change will align Minehead MIU with all similar and larger sized MIUs provided by SFT.
  - the decision that the MIU service is required as a daytime service 7 days a week, where there is a significant demand for the treatment of minor injuries and common minor illness from both the local population and holidaymakers.

- that the proposed changes to reduce the hours of Minehead MIU overnight does not constitute a substantial development or variation in the provision of health services in the Somerset County Council area

2.2 Members are asked to support the development to strengthen Same Day Urgent Care (SDUC) services in West Somerset.

### **3. Review of Minehead Minor Injuries Unit**

3.1 Somerset NHS Foundation Trust (SFT) temporarily closed Minehead Minor Injury Unit (MIU) overnight in July 2021 in response to concerns about the safety of the service.

3.2 During this time the Trust reviewed the MIU service and worked with partners, patients, and public representatives to look at how we address these safety concerns, quantify, and meet the overnight needs of the local area within our available resources, and propose a way forward that is safe, sustainable, and operationally robust.

3.3 SFT produced a report outlining the findings of the review and the engagement that was undertaken and this was presented to the SFT Trust board in November 2021. The report concluded that there were no significant safety risks identified from the temporary closure of the MIU and no discernible impact on the surrounding healthcare services. The SFT Trust Board agreed to extend the temporary overnight closure of the unit for a further six months until 1 May 2022.

3.3 The SFT report highlighted that the local public had concerns about access to same day urgent and emergency care as a whole system across both Minehead and the West Somerset area. With concerns identified in Primary Care provision, 999 ambulance and 111 responsiveness. The engagement exercise found that the MIU acted as a perceived 'safety net' for the local population in the event of urgent and emergency healthcare need. However, the MIU could not deliver the level of urgent and emergency care as described by the local population and would attribute further safety concerns for Same Day Urgent Care (SDUC) if used in that way.

### **4 The MIU Overnight Service Model**

4.1 Somerset CCG commissions seven Minor Injury Units (MIU) sited across Somerset, all of which are managed and run by SFT. Minehead Community Hospital is the only location which provides an overnight MIU service in the county. The standard MIU core operating hours within Somerset are 08:00 to 21:00, 365 days a year. During these core hours, the senior clinical decision makers staffing the service are emergency nurse practitioners (ENP). The workforce model has developed and now includes specialist physiotherapists and paramedic practitioners supporting service delivery across the MIUs. A key supporting function for MIUs is radiology x-ray which is available each weekday from 9:00 -17:00 in 5 of the MIU's including Minehead.

- 4.2 The Minehead MIU overnight provision consists of one paramedic supported by one health care assistant, with the night service operating between 21:00hrs and 08:00. The paramedic model is limited to providing triage, assessment and first aid treatment. All patients are required to return after 8am for investigations, definitive diagnosis, and treatment by a senior clinical decision maker (ENP) or where the paramedic identifies that the patient's condition needs specialist or emergency interventions, they may directly refer the patient to the Emergency Department or use 999 services.

## 5 Clinical Safety

- 5.1 Clinical safety remains a significant concern for the service. This has been reinforced following the responses received from the public engagement undertaken by SFT which indicated that they would attend the MIU where they had an emergency health care need. Attendances for emergency healthcare needs requires MIU staff to refer patients to the Emergency Department via 999 ambulances for acute medical and major trauma management. Attendance to the MIU can often add to the delays in essential time critical specialist interventions that the person may require. Data shows approximately 10% of overnight MIU attendees required transfer to acute care
- 5.2 SFT have concerns about the safety of this overnight service because it can delay potentially life-saving treatment if patients with serious conditions like heart attacks, strokes and asthma go to the MIU overnight. There have been three examples over the past 3 years where patient outcomes have been compromised as a result of delayed treatment because the patients attended the overnight service at Minehead MIU. The findings of the incident reviews identified that attending the night service had caused a delay in reaching definitive expert care in an acute facility.
- 5.3 At night the minor injury unit and out-patient waiting area is unsupervised which represents a safety concern for anyone waiting to be seen. In addition the main hospital entrance and the ambulance entrance are controlled by an intercom system. This has given rise to at least one incident when a patient who was waiting was not in the waiting area when called and had not been let out by staff, resulting in a full search of the hospital to check the patient had not managed to get into another part of the hospital.
- 5.4 Other safety concerns noted for the overnight activity were:
- **Activity Levels:** Only 0.9 patients seen per shift. The majority of this activity is between 21.00 and Midnight. This activity utilises less than 1% of the potential clinical capacity and will likely impact on ongoing competency.
  - **Skill Mix:** The rationale for introducing paramedics was to maintain an overnight responsive first aid capability for any 'casual walk-in' attendances. The service does not provide a senior clinical decision maker and therefore is unable to assess, treat and discharge patients independently or manage acute illness.

- **Diagnostics:** No x-ray service available after 17:00, any patient requiring urgent diagnostic imaging must be directed to the Emergency Department.
- **Life threatening illness:** There are clinical conditions which are considered to be time critical. Examples include: heart attack, stroke, major trauma, asthma, sepsis and wounds (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Guidelines 185, 40 128 and 176). A total of 79 patients required onward transfer to ED from the Minehead overnight service in 2019/20. this included 9 cardiac patients and 7 with serious infections, all of which should have gone through the 999 route on safety grounds.
- **Recruitment:** there was 1 WTE paramedic working permanent nights, and a 1.6 WTE vacancy. This meant that there were 7 nights out of 14 (50%) that could not be covered over each two-week rota. This increases when annual leave or study leave is taken

## 6 Impact on NHS Services

6.1 The review undertaken by SFT demonstrates that no impact has been seen during the temporary overnight closure to other service provision:

6.2 Minehead MIU Core service hours:

- attendance data at Minehead MIU during the period of 20:00 – 21:00 hrs has shown no increased activity despite the temporary closure of the MIU at 21:00, and demonstrates that activity after 20:00 remains less than one attendance per night within this hour time frame
- attendance has increased in the morning but correlates with the increase in overall activity in daytime hours and corresponds with high level of holidaymaker activity at that time.

6.3 999 activity impact:

- no adverse incidences have been raised by South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT)
- the data provided to the CCG and within the SFT report has shown no discernible impact on SWASFT in the Minehead and West Somerset area (Appendix One and Two).

5.4 Devon Doctors Ltd, who provide the Somerset GP out of hours (OOH) service, reported the following impact:

- no report of any adverse incidents because of the temporary closure of Minehead MIU overnight
- the data provided to the CCG and SFT continues to show no discernible impact on the Devon Doctors OOHs service

5.5 Musgrove Park Emergency Department activity impact:

- Musgrove Park hospital Emergency Department (ED) have not reported any adverse incidence in relation to the temporary closure of Minehead at night.
- the impact of activity as evidenced by the SFT report has had minimal impact in the overall attendances to ED
- of the adults who attended ED almost 50% required admission to a specialist bed, whilst a proportion of those discharged will have required Emergency or specialist intervention not suitable to be delivered in an MIU setting, especially the Minehead overnight service

## 6 Engagement

6.1 Somerset FT, at the point they communicated the temporary closure of the overnight service, committed to engage with the local community to understand the experiences and expectations of the overnight service and concerns arising from the temporary closure.

6.2 SFT led the engagement programme and this included:

- a survey for the public publicised through local press, trust website, social media groups and on site at Minehead hospital
- meeting with local politicians
- SFT Patient Liaison Team in the hospital speaking to the public directly every Thursday at a drop in session over five weeks
- SFT Patient Liaison Team visiting Minehead town and asking the public directly their opinions on the closure. This was through four sessions over during August and September
- working with community social media groups to get feedback and opinions
- an email feedback route: [myvoice@somersetft.nhs.uk](mailto:myvoice@somersetft.nhs.uk)
- meeting with the Minehead hospital league of Friends

6.3 The engagement exercises identified some clear themes and issues in relation to the MIU and wider urgent care services in Minehead and West Somerset. The MIU service in Minehead Community Hospital is widely respected and valued by those in the local community. The daytime service is well used and there is no doubt that this should be fully maintained.

6.4 The key themes identified from the engagement were:

- The overnight service is significantly under-utilised and rarely used, but often cited as a necessary 'safety net' for local people because of the perceived limited availability, access, and responses from other health care services
- This position is compounded by the travel distance to the nearest Accident and Emergency department which for many will be at Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton. For those who do not have ready

access to private transport, access to urgent care can only be via ambulance or taxi – which can be prohibitively expensive

- Of those who had concerns with the temporary overnight closure, few had indicated that they had required the service at night during the period of closure. Night-time usage was mainly linked to emergency conditions or unwell children
- There was a common and strong perception that by attending the MIU for serious health events, such as heart attacks, strokes or with acutely ill children, especially at night, those patients would have better survival outcomes, despite a clinical evidence base around small units and low activity levels linking to poor outcomes as well as clinical reality showing otherwise
- The highest level of concern over access to same day urgent care was for the very elderly, in line with the West Somerset demographics, and for parents with young children who do not have ready access to private transport

## 6.5 Key findings from the engagement found:

- **ATTENDANCE:** Of those who responded to the survey 89% had attended the MIU during daytime hours. However, 36% had never attended the MIU overnight and 31% said they had used the overnight service once in the last year. The majority of those who attended had used the service for acute, emergency care or for unwell children.

Although many had not used the service at night, they said they received reassurance in the knowledge that the MIU was open overnight if they had a need for urgent or emergency health care.

The majority of respondents who had attended, said they had decided themselves to attend the MIU overnight. 31% said they had been directed there by NHS 111 and 8% said they had been directed there by a pharmacy or GP. 15% said they had attended because they could not get a GP appointment.

- **WHAT I LIKE:** When asked what they liked about the MIU service, the most common reasons given were that it was “close to where I live” (85%) and that it was a “walk-in service” (72%).
- **ALTERNATIVE SERVICES:** If the overnight MIU was unavailable, half of respondents (50%) said they would have gone to A&E instead. 48% said they would contact NHS 111. 9% said they would see a GP or pharmacist in the morning and 12% would return when the MIU was open.
- **TRAVEL:** 86% of those who had attended the overnight MIU said they had travelled fewer than 10 miles.

- **EQUALITY:** When asked which people in their community a closure might affect most, the main answer given was the elderly. We did not receive any responses to the survey from people over 85. People also identified those who did not have access to a car, as public transport is very limited.
- **CONCERNS:** The overwhelming majority expressed concerns about the long distance to travel to Musgrove Park Hospital for urgent or emergency health care, with very limited public transport available in the evenings and none overnight. People also cited challenges and delays in accessing alternative services generally, including NHS 111, GP appointments and delays in ambulance responses to 999 calls.

## 7. Responding to the Feedback

- 7.1 The Minehead MIU service is not resourced and equipped under its current model to address the issues and concerns raised and any solution to the sustainability of urgent care services in West Somerset needs a system level response.
- 7.2 Somerset CCG will continue to progress the development of a same day urgent care model that best addresses the urgent and emergency care needs of the local population of Minehead and West Somerset, working in partnership across all health care providers. A task and finish group has been established from December 2021 which includes representation from SFT, Local GP, Ambulance Service, Devon Doctors, Somerset County Council Transport Lead and Somerset CCG. The group will support the engagement and development work required to present a plan for a Neighbourhood based Integrated Urgent Care Service that provides the population of West Somerset with safe, high quality and sustainable same day urgent care.
- 7.3 The development of this model will be informed by a further programme of patient and public engagement to ensure it takes into account the widest possible range of views on the needs of the local population.
- 7.4 Somerset CCG has commissioned Health Watch a wider engagement exercise to look at the whole of Same Day Urgent Care, including its design and delivery. This will include:
- Engagement over a five-week period 14 February to 18 March and carry out the analysis and reporting between 21 March to 1 April
  - The engagement will target young families, older people and those who are more isolated, working across the whole geographical area as well as coastal towns. We are aiming to work within existing local groups and organisations, for example, Homestart, YMCA, Maternity Voices, Age UK and residential and supported living homes.
  - A mixture of group discussions with existing groups, 1:1 interviews (in person and telephone), online and hard copy survey.

- . 7.5 This engagement will help to strengthen how we address the concerns raised regarding same day urgent care in West Somerset.

## **8 Somerset CCG Governing Body support for SFT Board Decision **This is expected – will be able to confirm on 17 Feb****

- 8.1 Somerset CCG Governing Body endorsed SFT's recommendation to permanently reduce the service provision from 24 hours to a new opening time of 8 am – 9 pm, so that this change will align Minehead MIU with all similar and larger sized MIUs provided by SFT.

- The MIU service is required as a daytime service 7 days a week, where there is a significant demand for the treatment of minor injuries and common minor illness from both the local population and holidaymakers. Resources will be aligned to support daytime need.
- Somerset CCG will continue to progress the development of a same day urgent care model that best addresses the urgent and emergency care needs of the local population of Minehead and West Somerset with partnership working across all health care providers. The development of this model will be informed by a further programme of patient and public engagement to ensure it takes into account the widest possible range of views on the needs of the local population.

- 8.2 The Governing Body is satisfied that it has met its statutory duties to involve the public in decision making. The proposed changes to reduce the hours of Minehead MIU overnight does not constitute a substantial development or variation and does not require formal consultation by the CCG. This is because:

- a) We are not withdrawing a service, but seeking to provide a safe service and make more efficient and effective use of resources
- b) Overnight activity at Minehead MIU accounts for 0.5% of all Somerset MIU activity (average since April 2019)
- c) Somerset NHS Foundation Trust have engaged with partners and patient and public representatives to understand the impact of the temporary closure. This has led to a number of recommendations which we are able to act on and address. This has met our statutory obligation to involve the public in changes within the healthcare system.
- d) An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken which identified there was a neutral outcome for most groups, with two areas where a negative outcome was identified which were Age and Other (eg Carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation etc). A number of mitigations have been identified which will be implemented.



- e) The view from NHSE/I that we have made a case for it not being substantial. They do not wish to apply an assurance process to this decision
- f) We have also sought independent advice from the Consultation Institute who determined that formal consultation would not be required given the nature of the change

8.3 The Governing Body has made a number of additional recommendations which were:

- The CCG and SWAST undertake further review of Ambulance response times is undertaken in West Somerset to understand how these compare with other similar areas across the South West
- SFT will continue to monitor the impact of the overnight closure, particularly in relation to understanding if people are putting off accessing healthcare overnight
- For the communication programme planned to be strengthened to ensure people understand the difference in terms of what an MIU and ED provides

## **9 Next steps**

9.1 SFT Trust Board will meet on 1 March to make a decision on the recommendation to permanently reduce the service provision from 24 hours to a new opening time of 8am – 9pm.

## **10 Background papers**

9.1 The Somerset NHS Foundation Trust paper is available on their Trust website as part of their trust board papers. **NEED TO INSERT LINK**