

Our team had that busy, September back-to-school feeling over the past month, with lots of events, meetings and outreach with local people.

## ELECTRONIC PRESCRIBING SURVEY LAUNCHED

During the month, two of our Healthwatch Reading staff members visited five GP surgeries across Reading to survey patients in waiting rooms as we launched a project to understand the public's awareness of electronic prescribing. We will also be going out to high street pharmacies and smaller local chemists, to talk to people collecting medicines.

At the same time, we are also running an online survey - which can be filled in here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/eprescription-survey> - for anyone in Reading to tell us their experience in this area. When the NHS launched electronic prescribing, it was claimed this could save patients' time and make processes paperless. Is this the case locally?

We will reveal all in November.



## LOCAL SERVICE CHANGES

We heard about lots of changes to various local services on 7 September when we attended the South Reading Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) governing body meeting. The CCG governing body is made up mostly of GP representatives who make decisions about how the NHS budget should be spent in our area.

These are the main decisions and issues they discussed:

### CUTS TO THE NUMBER OF PATIENT BEDS AT OAKWOOD

The Oakwood Unit at Prospect Park Hospital, which provides nurse-led rehabilitation for people who are frail, elderly or who have long-term physical conditions, is cutting the maximum number of patients it will take, from 35 to 24.

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT), which runs Oakwood, said the high numbers of agency staff on the unit were posing a safety risk and by cutting the beds, it can ensure mostly permanent staff care for patients. The measure is in place until end of March 2017.

### VASECTOMIES NO LONGER AVAILABLE ON THE NHS FOR LOCAL MEN

Men in Reading who want vasectomies will have to pay for it themselves after a local decision to stop funding it on the NHS.

The move is designed to save up to £82,000. However there is some concern the move could place more pressure on women to be responsible for long-term contraception.





## NEW ORGANISATION SET TO TAKE OVER 111 HELPLINE

The NHS 111 helpline rung by Reading people could be taken over by the private company, Care UK, from April 2017.

The helpline is supposed to be a first port of call for people seeking health advice or when their GP is closed. Currently it is provided by South Central Ambulance Service across the Thames Valley, under five separate area contracts. However, these are now merging into one single Thames Valley 111 contract that aims to provide a better designed service for patients.

A report to the CCG governing body said that Care UK had been named the preferred provider to run the new contract, with a formal decision set to be made in October. Care UK currently runs 12 111 services across England.

Find out more about the South Reading CCG governing body meetings at <http://www.southreadingccg.nhs.uk/board-meetings> and North And West Reading CCG governing body, at <http://www.nwreadingccg.nhs.uk/governing-body-meetings>.

## 'HOME FIRST' SCHEME AIMS TO AVOID HOSPITAL

Did you know that 10 days in hospital can equate to 10 years of muscle wasting, particularly for the elderly? We heard that alarming fact when we attended a workshop on 8 September to help design a new local service called 'Home First'. It will be run by Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust with the aim of treating patients with urgent care needs in the community, rather than in hospital. The trust invited Healthwatch Reading and other organisations to the workshop to help contribute patient feedback and ideas on how the new service should run.

## RBH CHIEF TELLS HEALTHWATCH THAT A&E IS UNDER PRESSURE

On 13 September we met Jean O'Callaghan, chief executive of the Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. We were joined by our colleagues from Healthwatch West Berkshire and Healthwatch Wokingham, as part of a regular meeting held with the chief executive to share latest patient feedback or concerns. Ms O'Callaghan told us that quality of care at the hospital is better, and long-standing admin problems affecting patient letters and calls were now being turned around. However, the hospital was seriously worried about coping with winter - it is struggling to cope with numbers of people arriving at the emergency department, and the hospital has put out a public message urging patients to only attend for 'serious and life-threatening' emergencies.

## OUR REPORT HIGHLIGHTS ISSUES ON GP ACCESS

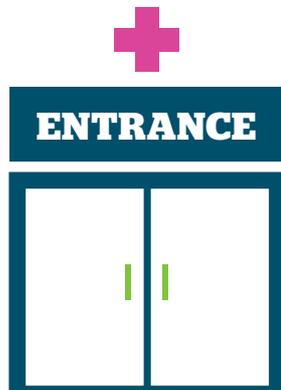
On 21 September we presented findings of our report into how Reading people experience GP services to the Primary Care Commissioning Committee - the NHS group that makes major decisions about primary care across Berkshire West. In our presentation we highlighted that while people told us they received good care, there was a wide variation in appointments available outside of normal hours, and only low awareness, and use of, online appointment booking. The full report is available here <http://bit.ly/2dlklnp>. Berkshire West CCG chief officer Cathy Winfield thanked us for providing useful patient evidence.





## OUR A&E REPORT BEING LAUNCHED IN OCTOBER

As we come to the end of the month we are also preparing to present findings of our week in A&E at the Royal Berks, to local councillors and others who make up Reading's Health and Wellbeing Board on 7 October.



## TILEHURST MEDICAL CENTRE SET TO CLOSE IN NOVEMBER DUE TO DOCTOR SHORTAGES

A branch surgery in Tilehurst covering nearly 2,500 patients is planning to close due to difficulties recruiting doctors and nurses.

Dr Kumar and partners have written to patients to inform them they are proposing to close Tilehurst Medical Centre after 18 years, and just keep its main practice running in Milman Road.

'As many of you know, we have found it increasingly difficult to find enough doctors and nurses to provide the service that you deserve and need, and have therefore we are proposing to consolidate our service in our practice's main building in Milman Road, central Reading,' the doctors say in their letter to patients.

A six-week consultation on the plans runs from 26 September until 8 November 2016, and patients are being invited to fill in a questionnaire stating where they would like to go for GP services in the future.

Explaining their reasons in detail, the doctors write: 'There is a shortage of GPs across the whole NHS and we have been having difficulties in filling existing vacancies. To replace the partners who have already left we needed two full time doctors who are able to work at both Milman Health Centre and Tilehurst Medical Centre and most new doctors are looking for part time clinical posts in general practice. As we have not been able to recruit new doctors it is increasingly difficult to maintain a service at Tilehurst Medical Centre.' Shortages of practice nurses were also having an impact and the building at Tilehurst was becoming inadequate.

The letter adds that doctors hope the Tilehurst patients will move to Milman Road's larger facilities, which already cater for around 4,250 patients. But if not, patients could choose to approach other Tilehurst practices, such as:

Tilehurst Surgery Partnership (Tylers Place, Pottery Road, RG30 6BW. 0118 9427528 [www.tilehurstsurgery.co.uk](http://www.tilehurstsurgery.co.uk))

Tilehurst Village Surgery (92 Westwood Road, RG31 5PP 0118 9452612 [www.tilehurstvillagesurgery.co.uk](http://www.tilehurstvillagesurgery.co.uk))

The Westwood Road Practice (66 Westwood Road, RG31 5PP 0118 9427421 [www.thewestwoodroadpractice.co.uk](http://www.thewestwoodroadpractice.co.uk))

Western Elms Surgery (317 Oxford Road, RG30 1AT 0118 9590257 [www.westernelms.com](http://www.westernelms.com))





## LATEST QUALITY RATINGS FOR LOCAL SERVICES

Here are the latest ratings for Reading services from the Care Quality Commission (CQC):

### **Circuit Lane Surgery rated 'Good'**

Following a re-inspection the surgery has shown considerable improvement, however there is still more work to do in improving repeat prescriptions and continuity of care: <http://bit.ly/2dwvyNX>

**South Central Ambulance Service rated 'Good'** The CQC inspected the ambulance service and found several areas of outstanding practice but the response times to emergency calls were below the national average: <http://bit.ly/2duNbtn>

**The Disabilities Trust, rated 'Good'** is a care home in Caverham for three people with learning disabilities or autism: <http://bit.ly/2d7XpS7>

**Navara Lodge, rated 'Good'** is a residential care home for 18 older people on the Oxford Road: <http://bit.ly/2dtGLiS>

**The Shared Lives Scheme, rated 'Good'** is run from 188 Whitley Wood Lane by Reading Borough Council, giving people a home with other adults who will support them: <http://bit.ly/2dcayKv>

The CQC is the national body that checks how NHS and social care services are performing.

All health and social care providers must be registered with the CQC.

The commission has powers to put under-performing organisations into 'special measures' or even close them.



## UPCOMING EVENTS IN OCTOBER

### **Friday 7<sup>th</sup>**

Health and Wellbeing Board meeting at 2pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU.

### **Monday 10<sup>th</sup>**

South Central Ambulance Service is running its next Berkshire Patient Forum - for all people that use its services, including Reading residents, from 2.30pm to 4pm, at St Joseph's Parish Centre, 36 Cookham Road, Maidenhead SL6 7EG. The session will focus on dementia care. To attend, please email: [monica.moro@scas.nhs.uk](mailto:monica.moro@scas.nhs.uk) or telephone 01869 365126.

### **Friday 14<sup>th</sup>**

Older Peoples Day, 1:30 pm - 4:30 pm at Rivermead Leisure Complex, Richfield Ave, Reading RG1 8EQ. There will be a wide range of voluntary organisations providing information and activities including singing, dancing and exercise. Telephone 0118 937 2383 or email [opwg@reading.gov.uk](mailto:opwg@reading.gov.uk). A free bus will run from bus stop FH on Friar Street from 12:15pm.

### **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup>**

Royal Berkshire Hospital - Board of Directors Meeting in Public, 11:00am at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, Craven Road, Reading RG1 5AN. Telephone 0118 322 5335 or email [caroline.lynch@royalberkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:caroline.lynch@royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

*If you would like to publicise an upcoming event via our newsletter or website, please contact us on 0118 937 2295 or email [info@healthwatchreading.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchreading.co.uk)*

