

Fleet Medical Centre



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3rd May 2010

Dear Marie,

Please find enclosed the Fleet Medical Centre response to your Severe Weather Review. Apologies for the late reply.

I have answered each of the questions individually and I am also happy to inform you that currently, I am available on either of the dates suggested for meetings.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely,

James Perrin MA, PgDip, BSc (hons)
Practice & Business Manager

What impact did the recent winter weather have on the services provided by Fleet Medical Centre?

The heavy snowfall caused serious problems for the practice. On the first day, we started to communicate with other practices to see how we could support each other. All of the other practices in town either closed (certainly on the first day) or went on to minimum staffing and changed or reduced their opening hours.

We decided to keep the practice fully open. We changed the shift patterns so that instead of a morning and afternoon shift, we just had one set of staff in all day on a day-on and day-off rota. We used 4x4 vehicles to collect any staff that couldn't walk to the practice, and likewise with the doctors and nurses. We used these vehicles to also ensure we continued with home visits when safe to do so and to collect essential supplies. The Lloyds Pharmacy also stayed open and we kept the building running with emergency voicemail systems in place when we closed at normal times.

What information was provided to the public about how to access your services during the winter weather and in what format?

We communicated with patients via a special automated voicemail service, daily updates on our website and signs on our front entrance.

Looking at the period 1st December 2009 – 31st January 2010, what aspects of service delivery worked well for Fleet Medical Centre?

We continued to deliver all of our services. We were very disappointed that Church Road was not cleared of snow by the council as the bends and hill half way down was not passable at all on foot or by car. Considering that Fleet Community Hospital and Fleet Medical Centre can require emergency access, this was not good enough. These two sites are also emergency care centres and have been "buddies" for urgent care as part of Swine Flu and Pandemic Planning over the past 6 months and the situation caused by the snow should have been executed in a similar if not the same emergency plan – but the lack of access meant that this was impossible to enforce fully.

We were also concerned that after several days, a small JCB did attend Fleet Hospital to clear paths and the car park and yet the driver would not do the same for our medical centre – strange, as we too are an NHS service.

We had to spend in excess of £500 getting independent contractors to clear snow by hand and we gritted all paths and half of the car park and cleared it of snow on a daily basis. We then had staff escorting patients into the building and the local neighbours also helped us daily to clear the snow from our main entrance.

We tried to contact the Highways Agency and the council and nobody was willing to help us. Strange considering our annual £55,000 council tax bill...?

Have you made changes (or do you intend to make changes) to the way you plan for severe weather as a result of this experience and if so, how?

We have made a couple of changes. All staff are now aware of operational changes that would come into effect should such an event occur again and the Practice Manager and Deputy Manager carry all phone numbers of all staff so that changes can be made overnight if required.

We have ordered large stocks of grit which are in a secure and accessible location to ensure we can clear access when required. We also have contact details for contractors who will prioritise clearing our premises when we contact them as we are a medical facility.

We have contacted other local practices to see how we can improve supporting each other better and at least have emergency contact details for both home and work for practice managers. This has been discussed at the local forums.

Reflecting back on the period in question what would be your 3 priorities for action and how could these be implemented?

- a) Maintain patient appointments and home visits where possible. We would at least try and have more telephone appointments if required. Staff safety would also be our priority.
- b) To meet with Hampshire County Council to ensure that in such circumstances that the medical centre is viewed in the same line as Fleet Community Hospital, so that we have gritters attend on Church Road and clear our entrance and car parks.
- c) Request more information from Hampshire County Council in advance to check on severe weather warnings and see how we can help the local community if other surgeries close

Please provide an analysis of the complaints, comments and feedback Fleet Medical Centre received from the public between 1st December and 31st January 2010, identifying the key issues raised.

We received 2 items of correspondence during this period regarding the problem in question. Both were compliments about helping people get into the building and what a relief it was to them that we remained open during this time.

Report ends...