

Dunston Health Centre Consultation

14 August 2018

Executive Summary

Glenpark Medical Practice proposes to merge the two existing sites into a single larger purpose-built modern health centre to save money and improve efficiency of patient services.

A consultation was run over a period of 5 weeks, using Facebook and questionnaires within both surgeries.

At least 1854 patients had access to the questionnaires in surgery. 404 responses were received (24 electronically submitted, and 379 in surgery); 365 returns were needed to be statistically significant (allowing for 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval).

86% of patient support the merger of the two premises. 9% did not support the merger into the new building and 5% did not express a preference. Of these 4% of all responses were from patients who normally attend Dunston Health Centre who did not support the merger.

The most common advantages that patients identified were: more efficient to have all services in one place, improved cost efficiency, more modern premises, reduced confusion over which surgery to attend, and a better service.

The most common concerns patients gave were: increased distance to travel for patients who attend the health centre, concerns about whether appointments would be lost, whether the new premises would be busier and parking.

Those who provided additional comments were overwhelmingly supportive stating that they welcomed the merger or that it was an excellent idea; 2 patients stated they objected to the merger because they live near the health centre and would be further to travel.

Introduction

Over the last few years, the practice has seen a significant drop in its budget, including £175,000k with the change from a PMS to GMS contract. Coupled with rising costs, especially with the rental and service costs of Dunston Health Centre that the practice has no control over. This has left the practice in a precarious financial situation unless ways to save money can be found.

The development of a purpose built premises to replace the existing Glenpark, that will have a greater floor area and consultation space than Glenpark and Dunston Health Centre combined, offers an unique opportunity to create part of this financial saving.

In addition, there have been long standing problems with the Health Centre that include poor patient privacy especially at the reception desk, inefficient staff allocation and confusion as patients attend the wrong surgery.

Therefore, the practice consulted patients over the impact of merging the existing practices into the new premises once completed.

This document details the results of that survey

Method of Consultation

A questionnaire was developed (see Appendix A) that encouraged free text responses so that the practice could understand patient's view point.

The consultation period was over 5 weeks with the consultation papers. To encourage responses, papers:

- Were left on seats in the waiting room at the beginning of each morning surgery at Glenpark;
- For the first week, volunteers from the practice Patient Participation Group were available in reception to promote the consultation, and help any patient complete the questionnaire if they requested it;
- Additional questionnaires were left in the waiting room at Glenpark;
- Questionnaires were prominently left at the reception desk at Glenpark and Dunston Health Centre;
- At Glenpark, reception staff highlighted the questionnaires to patients who approached reception;
- At Dunston Health Centre, all patients have to check in at reception, so staff actively promoted the questionnaire;
- The survey was promoted on our FaceBook page;
- At the suggestion of a patient, an online version of the survey was made available during the last week of the survey (using SurveyMonkey)

Response Rate

The practice has a registered population of 9138 patients of whom 7368 are 18 years or over.

Over the 5 weeks, over 1,854 individuals (20%) had an appointment at one of our 2 sites and therefore had access to the consultation. (There will be other patients who attended the surgery, eg for a prescription, who would have had access to the consultation, but we cannot evaluate these numbers)

379 questionnaires were returned, with a further 24 completed using Survey Monkey. This represents 5.5% of the adult population and a return rate of 22% of patients who had attended the surgery.

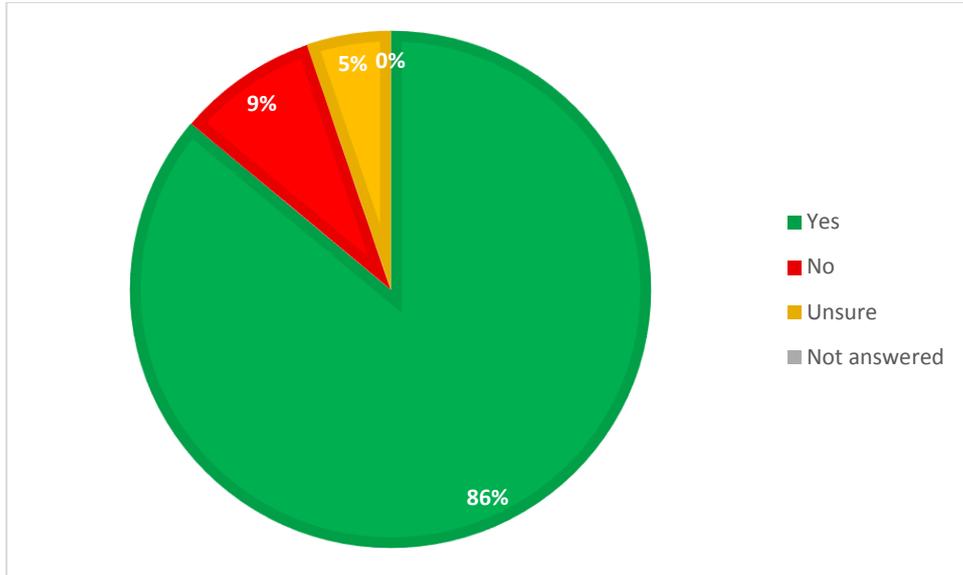
Number of Responses for Statistical Significance

With an adult population of 7368, to create a result with a 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval (or margin of error) would need 365 returns.

Results

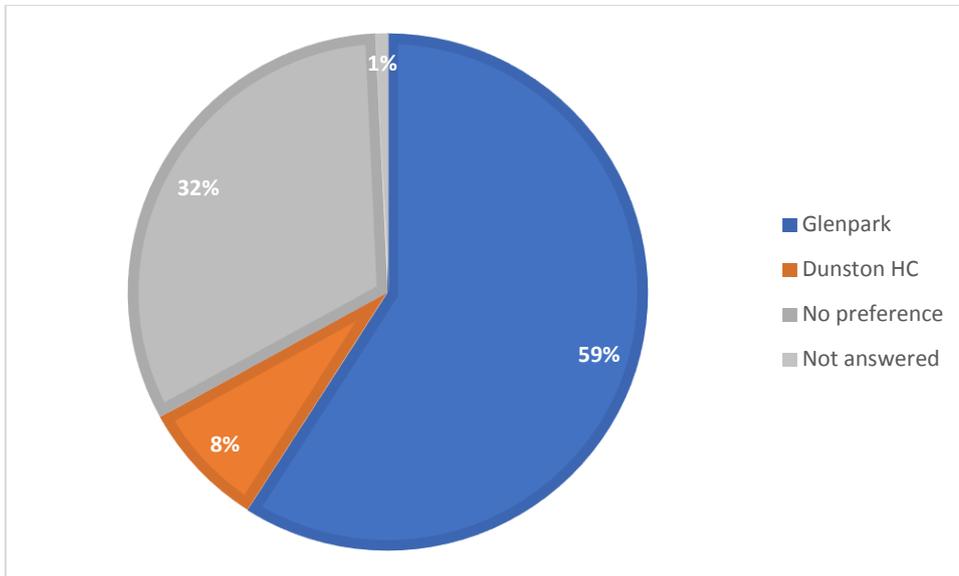
Do you support merging Glenpark Medical Practice and Dunston Health Centre into the new premises?

Yes	86%
No	9%
Unsure	5%
Not answered	0%



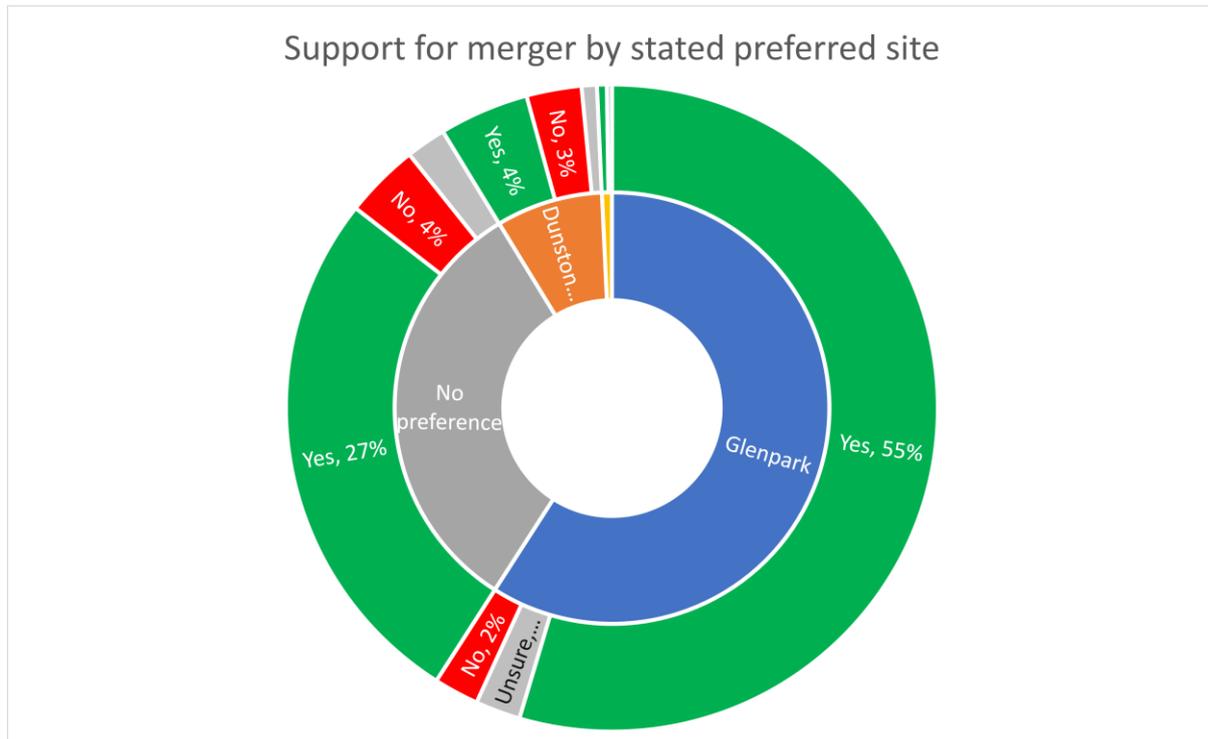
Which of our premises do you normally attend?

Glenpark	59%
Dunston HC	8%
No preference	32%
Not answered	1%



Further analysis was undertaken to understand the proportion of returns that represented patients who identified Dunston Health Centre as their preferred site who did not support the merger:

Glenpark	Yes	55%
	No	2%
	Unsure	2%
	Not answered	0%
Dunston HC	Yes	4%
	No	3%
	Unsure	1%
	Not answered	0%
No preference	Yes	27%
	No	4%
	Unsure	2%
	Not answered	0%
Not answered	Yes	0%
	No	0%
	Unsure	0%
	Not answered	0%



Free Text Comments

Most patients had no specific comments to make or made them in one box only.

In trying to analyse the free text answers, the comments were grouped into themes, counting the number of patients that expressed a similar statement. The numbers below are intended to be indicative of the number of patients expressing that or a similar comment.

Advantages

Comment	Approx number	Glenpark Response
All services in one place / more efficient	75	This is one of our principle reasons for the merger, allowing us to provide a consistent service to patients irrespective of where they attend
Cheaper	53	The reduction in costs associated with running 2 premises will allow investment back into the services we offer from a single site
Reduced Confusion	26	Almost every day we have patients who turn up at the wrong surgery for an appointment. This results in inconvenience to patients, wasted appointments or surgeries running late
Better Service	23	We expect the facilities at a single site, particularly state of the art phone system, and the efficiency in staff deployment will enable us to build on the service we offer

APPENDIX 1

Modern	22	Glenpark was built in 1904 and Dunston Health Centre in 1970. Both are showing their age and limit what we are able to offer our patients
Increased appointments	11	We expect more modern premises will enable us to explore more efficient ways to offer appointments. Newer technologies will allow patients to contact us in alternative ways, freeing up appointments.
Easier access	9	Its position almost at the junction of Ravensworth Road with Ellison Road offers easy access for drivers, cyclists and bus stops.
Privacy	5	A more spacious waiting area, offset from the reception, along with better positioned self check-in desks will reduce conversations being overheard. Phones will be situated away from reception within the administration area to reduce the noise levels in the waiting area. The new premises also includes a separate interview room for reception staff, should patients wish to discuss something in more privacy. As one patient commented, currently Glenpark offers no more privacy than the Health Centre, this will improve the issue at both sites.
Parking	5	The new premises will include 22 parking spaces along including 3 disabled parking spaces.
Increased Space	4	The new premises will be 719m ² – a significant improvement on the current premises
Better phone system	2	We have already commissioned the phone system for the new building, increasing the number of lines into the building and provide a greater degree of flexibility and adaptability to the practice and patient needs.
No benefits	2	We were sorry to see that 2 patients felt that they could see no benefit to the merger. Both these patients stated they preferred the Health Centre and that there was no room at Glenpark for the merger. The comments read as though we had not been sufficiently clear that the merger would not be with the existing premises, but new larger premises
Improved disabled access	1	The new premises has been designed with accessibility as the key principle: for example, wide corridors and doors, improve wheelchair access; high contrast will help those with visual impairments and a lift will enable us to accommodate staff with difficulties managing stairs
Increased flexibility	1	We anticipate having all services and staff in one site will enable us to adapt to changing patient needs more easily.

Potential Problems

Comment	Approx number	Glenpark Response
---------	---------------	-------------------

APPENDIX 1

Increased distance to travel	24	We acknowledge that a few patients living close to Dunston Health Centre may find it difficult to walk to the new premises. However, for most, we anticipate that the fact that Dunston Health Centre will be ½ mile from the new premises will still be in easy walking distance. We also recognise that there are a few patients who could have walked to Dunston Health Centre that we may have to offer a home visit.
Loss of appointments / Increased difficulty getting appointments	23	It would appear from these comments that we had not been sufficiently clear in our consultation document that there would be no loss of appointments. In fact, we hope that the efficiencies created by being on one site will improve patient access to our services.
More busy	10	Patients expressed concern that Glenpark was already busy and this would add pressure to the phone lines. Again for some responses it appeared that we had not been sufficiently clear that the merger would be in to the much larger new premises and the reallocation of staff would enable greater flexibility for staff to meet patient needs (eg more staff answering phone at times of increased demand) The waiting room may be more busy, but we anticipate this will be offset by virtue of it being larger
Parking	6	Whilst there will be more parking than is currently available, there will still be demand on the parking spaces. We will continue to review this. Our transport policy has always been to try to encourage patients and staff to use other transport wherever possible.
Moving into derelict building	1	We would not merge the surgeries until the new premises are fully operational.
Have a blue badge so will now have to use a taxi	1	The new premises have 3 dedicated disabled parking bays
Mixing babies with sick patients	1	The high quality of our baby clinic is important to us. As part of the review of when we offer our surgeries, we are looking at being able to keep the baby clinic at a time that avoids urgent clinics; we will be consulting with the health visitors as we move to the new
Concerns about logistics in the short term	1	This has been identified as a potential risk by us and over the next few months we will be working to minimise this. This is one of the reasons that we would plan to open the new premises (even if only by a few weeks) prior to subsequently merging in order to iron out any teething problems.
Loss of staff jobs	1	The purpose in merging is to make more efficient use of the existing staff to improve the service we offer. We have no plans to reduce staff numbers.

Other comments

Overwhelmingly, patients were supportive, with responses such as “excellent idea”, “welcome the idea”, “sooner the better” being typical.

One patient suggested that we should have solar panels and benefit from the feed-in tariff; these are actually part of the plans for the building.

Another patient expressed concern about what will happen to the old buildings. Glenpark is currently on the market for sale; patients who have concerns about the sale are welcome to speak to the practice manager. Dunston Health Centre is owned by NHS Property Services Ltd – we have no knowledge as to what they may do with the empty space.

There were some other comments that were not related to the building itself but we welcome and will consider:

- “need more GPs” – we anticipate that the increased efficiency of the merge will allow us to improve the access, both through traditional appointments and newer technologies such as online consultations and video consultations. However, the additional space will allow us to host more registrars.
- Quicker prescriptions – we strive to turn around prescriptions as quickly as possible and almost all requests received before 2pm are electronically signed by the end of the day. Unfortunately we cannot control speed at which they are subsequently processed by the pharmacy.

Appendix A : Consultation Questionnaire

Introduction

Over the past few years, changes to the way that practices like ours are funded has meant that we have seen a significant drop in the practice income. To give some perspective, when the NHS restructured a couple of years ago, we had £175,000 per year taken from our budget. On top of this, costs have risen higher than the reimbursements we receive, which the partners have absorbed. Whilst we welcome the recent increase in NHS funding, we do not expect it to make a significant difference to individual practices. This isn't a position we can sustain without significantly affecting the level of service we are able to offer you, our patients.

In addition to other saving opportunities, we are forced to consider whether we can afford to also keep running the health centre.

Why are we considering closing Dunston Health Centre?

In previous surveys about the building, patients have strongly supported merging Glenpark Medical Practice and Dunston Health Centre into a modern, purpose-built medical centre.

Dunston Health Centre was opened in the 1970s. Whilst it has had some renovations in the last few years, it is showing its age. The most obvious of which is the lack of privacy in the waiting room: patient conversations with receptionists (either on the phone or in person) can be heard by everyone else in the waiting room. Conversations between doctors and patients can sometimes be heard by the receptionists. In addition, disabled access to Room 1 is limited and Room 3 is far too small to be used as a modern consulting room.

Dunston Health Centre is isolated from Glenpark Medical Practice. Therefore, we have to have two clinical staff and at least one receptionist in case of medical emergencies – this is very inefficient use of staff. The duplication of equipment that we maintain is expensive and we cannot offer the same level of service at both sites.

The building is not owned by us and we have no control over the costs imposed on us by our landlord, NHS Property Services; these costs are escalating year on year, far more than the increase in reimbursements we receive.

What is the alternative?

The new premises, which are due to be completed in December 2018, offer an exciting opportunity to review the way we work. At 719m², the new building is more than big enough to allow us to merge the existing building and Dunston Health Centre on to one site. There will also be parking on site, again significantly more than the Health Centre and Glenpark combined (when taking into account the Health Centre parking is shared with other users of the building.)

The new premises are only ½ mile from Dunston Health Centre and served by the same bus services. (X30, X97 from Dunston and X49 from Swalwell)

What would stay the same?

The doctors, nurses and administration staff all work between Glenpark and Dunston Health Centre, so they would all work out of one building (which would also save on the hours spent over the year travelling between sites). You would be still looked after by the same team.

The service we offer would not change. In fact, the efficiencies of being on one site would allow us to continue to improve the services we offer.

Our opening hours would be unchanged. Our main site is open for all core hours and is currently funded to open for two early mornings and a late evening. Dunston Health Centre is open for limited hours.

What would be different?

The only difference would be that we would offer all our services out of the new, purpose-built premises.

That said, it would also reduce the confusion of being on two sites: every day we have patients turn up to the wrong site and have the inconvenience of having to travel to the other site or their appointment rearranged.

We would not change our practice boundary and since all patients are actually registered with the practice itself (irrespective of which site they use), there would be no need to re-register.

We recognise that there are one or two patients who are able to walk from neighbouring houses or North Eastern Court to Dunston Health Centre, who would be unable get to the top of Ravensworth Road. These patients would be offered home visits where appropriate.

What would happen if we don't close Dunston Health Centre?

We would have to find other ways to save significant amounts of money. The biggest cost, after premises, is staff. We have no desire to make staff redundant, but we would have to look at not replacing staff. We would be concerned about the potential effect on the service we could offer

The worst case scenario if we cannot save money would be that Glenpark would no longer be financial viable and would have to hand back our contract. Patients would have to be allocated to neighbouring practices. The British Medical Association reported in June 2018 that 166 practices in England closed last year and it is estimated that up to another 777 will close in the next 4 years. We do not think that closing Glenpark is in the best interest of our patients.

If we go ahead with the merger, when would this happen?

At the moment, we are consulting with patients and the CCG on the proposal. Unless particular problems are identified, we would anticipate merging the two once the new building is opened.

We would not close the health centre before the new building is opened.

Your Views

We want to hear your views on the proposal to merge the two surgeries into the new premises once it opens. For this reason, we would be grateful if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to the practice. If completing the questionnaire would be difficult for you, please ring to speak to the practice manager.

Consultation on Closing Dunston Health Centre

Do you support merging Glenpark Medical Practice and Dunston Health Centre into the new premises?

Yes

No

Unsure

What advantages do you see for the merger?

Do you foresee any particular problems with the merger?

Do you have any other comments about this proposal?

About You

We are asking these questions simply to ensure that we have heard from as many different voices as possible

Your Age:

Your Gender:

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Your Ethnicity:

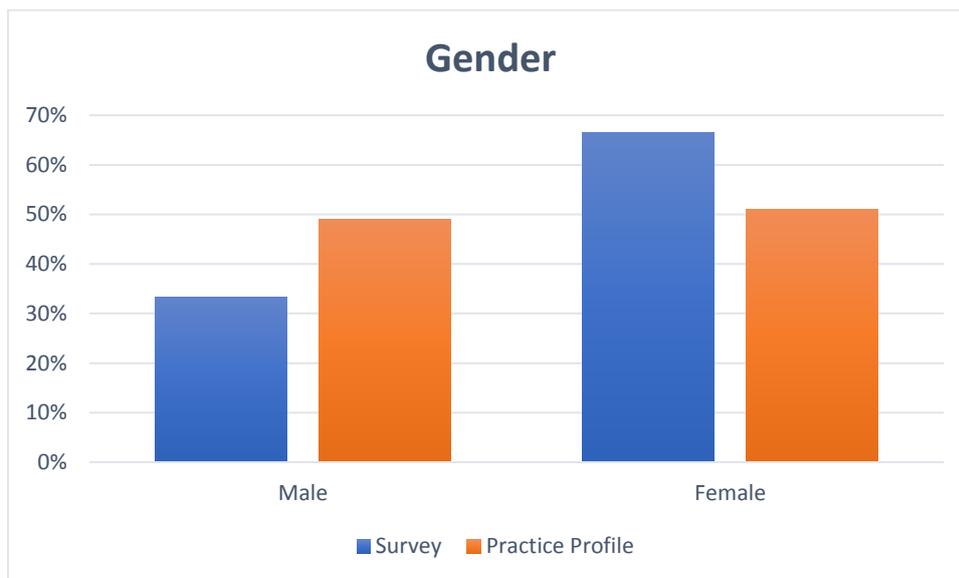
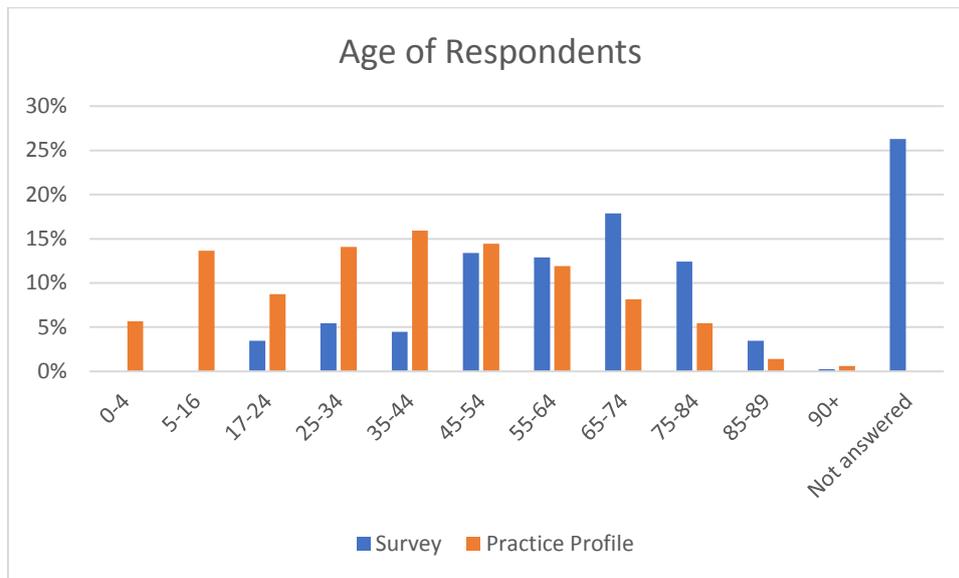
Which of our premises do you normally attend:

Glenpark

Dunston Health Centre

No preference

Appendix E: Demographic Analysis of Respondents



Ethnicity

The practice has a population that predominantly identifies themselves as White British (96%). Of the respondents only 51% provided their ethnic status, all identifying themselves as White British

Potential Bias

This survey would not have been accessible to patients unable to read English.

Volunteers were available for the first week of the consultation to assist patients able to understand English but unable to read eg through blindness. Staff were also available to assist at all times the surgery was open