

Shropshire & Staffordshire Area TeamAnglesey House
Towers Plaza
Wheelhouse Road
Rugeley
WS15 1UL

Tel: 0300 7900 233

Email address – sultan.mahmud1@nhs.net

12th November 2013For attention of GP Principals and Practice Managers

Dear colleague

GP Practice Opening Hours – Christmas and New Year period 2013/14

Several requests have been received by NHS England regarding the Christmas and New Year period asking for clarification on the required opening hours for GP Practices.

NHS England's position is that last year normal opening hours (i.e. those that are already agreed as forming part of the Contractors normal opening hours Mon-Fri) should be maintained over this period. This will ensure that patients will be able to access primary care on at least 7 days out of the 16 days that encompass the 2 week Christmas/New Year holiday period, the remaining 9 days include weekends, bank holidays.

Contractors may want to make arrangements within these hours to run on reduced capacity, this is perfectly reasonable, providing they ensure that patients are able to access an appropriate level of service at the practice during their existing, agreed, opening hours.

The following confirms the dates and opening requirements:

Date	Day	Opening requirement
21/12/13	Saturday **	Practice will be closed
22/12/13	Sunday	Practice will be closed
23/12/13	Monday	Practice will be required to open their normal contracted hours *
24/12/13	Tuesday ** (Christmas Eve)	Practice will be required to open their normal contracted hours *

25/12/13	Wednesday (Christmas Day)	Practice will be closed
26/12/13	Thursday (Boxing Day Bank Holiday)	Practice will be closed
27/12/13	Friday	Practice will be required to open their normal contracted hours *
28/12/13	Saturday **	Practice will be closed
29/12/13	Sunday	Practice will be closed
30/12/13	Monday	Practice will be required to open their normal contracted hours *
31/12/13	Tuesday ** (New Year's Eve)	Practice will required to open their normal contracted hours *
01/01/14	Wednesday (New Year's Day)	Practice will be closed
02/01/14	Thursday	Practice will be required to open their normal contracted hours *
03/01/14	Friday	Practice will be required to open their normal contracted hours *
04/01/14	Saturday **	Practice will be closed
05/01/14	Sunday	Practice will be closed

Note

- * For the avoidance of doubt, normal contracted hours for the purpose of this communication are those hours that have been agreed between the Area Team or its predecessor PCT and the practice as being their normal hours of availability during the 'core hours' of 8am-6.30pm
- ** A practice that normally provides Extended Opening Hours on a Saturday, Tuesday or any of the bank holidays days over the Christmas/New Year period, will be required to make alternative arrangements for re-provision of those hours dependent upon the arrangements described of their contract/SLA to provide extended opening. This discussion should be between the practice and primary care team.
- ** A practice that normally provides Saturday morning services under any other agreed arrangements should discuss these with their primary care commissioning lead and ensure that patients are advised of any changes when advertising their opening times (see below).

Practices will be aware of the possible increase in demand on primary care services when they return to work from Christmas and New Year periods, and we expect they will have taken this into account when making arrangements for the

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collection of prescriptions, organising surgeries and appointment availability across these two weeks.

All practices will be required to advertise their opening times well in advance of the Christmas and New Year period.

All practices will also be required to advertise the primary care services that are available to patients when the practice is closed over the Christmas and New Year period. Information should include for example how patients can contact the Out of Hours Service, any walk-in services and minor injuries services.

We thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully



Sultan Mahmud
Director of Commissioning
Shropshire and Staffordshire Area team