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NHS Kernow calls MIU Report ‘scaremongering’ – Dr Levin responds

Yesterday, Cornish Stuff published Dr Peter Levin’s report [NHS in Cornwall poised to close Minor Injury Units](#) which laid out plans by Cornwall’s NHS for the closure of some MIU to be replaced by fewer Urgent Treatment Centres ‘along the spine of Cornwall’.

And now, in response, NHS Kernow has issued a statement this afternoon, calling Dr Levin’s report ‘scaremongering’ and saying it is full of inaccuracies.

Statement from Jackie Pendleton, NHS Kernow’s Chief Officer, speaking on behalf of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly health and care system: (in full):

“At a time when our urgent care system is under such pressure, we would expect to be able to rely on our local stakeholders and media partners to support us in encouraging the public to use services, like minor injury units, as an alternative to the emergency department.

It is therefore really disappointing that Mr Levin has published a report that has so many factual inaccuracies and suggests to the public that their local minor injury unit is under threat of imminent closure. This is simply not true and this scaremongering could cause unnecessary confusion amongst the public at a time when we are encouraging people to use the right service.

We strongly refute Mr Levin’s claims that we are pursuing a policy to close Cornwall’s MIUs and would like to reiterate the factual statements we have made previously:

NHS England has asked us to indicate which of our current health facilities were closest to the national specification for an urgent treatment centre and have the potential to be designated by March 2018. NHS England understand, and my briefing to Governing Body was explicit that the identification of these sites in no way pre-determines the decision about the number and location of future treatment sites in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. We shared this information with the public, via our board papers, to ensure maximum transparency.

Absolutely no decisions have been made about the number and future locations of urgent treatment centres (formerly referred to nationally as urgent care centres) and any other community alternatives to the emergency department.

We have a statutory duty to consult with the public before making any decision about a significant change to the delivery of a service. We are still in the process of working

with clinicians, stakeholders, and people who use services on the re-design of our urgent care system and we intend to begin the third round of co-production workshops next month.

Details of any consultation will be promoted via the press, our partners and online to ensure people are able to have their say. No decision will be made before this process has ended and the evidence collected during any consultation has been examined.

We continue to encourage anyone who needs medical help to contact their own GP or pharmacy in the first instance; ensure anyone with a long-term condition, is pregnant or cares for someone has had their flu jab, and encourage friends and relatives to have theirs; continue to use our minor injury units and urgent care centre at West Cornwall Hospital, wherever possible instead of the emergency department; and phone NHS 111 when your GP surgery is closed and you need advice that can't wait until it re-opens.

Details of all the services, including opening times, contact numbers and live waiting times for MIUs and the emergency departments at Treliske and Derriford, are available online here.

We would like to thank everyone who is helping us by using the right service and keeping the emergency department free for life threatening emergencies.”

Dr Levin told us in response

“Ms Pendleton accuses me of ‘many factual inaccuracies’ but does not cite a single one. This is perhaps not surprising since all the factual statements that I set out are taken from official publications, with full references given.

My report both gives a complete list of MIUs and includes the authoritative statement: ‘From the data, MIUs play a significant part in the treatment of patients seeking emergency care and substantially reduced the pressure on RCH Emergency Department.’ I would have thought this provides a good advertisement for them rather than scaremongering.

This is not the time for repetition or semantic quibbles. It would be very good, at this moment when the ‘urgent care system is under such pressure’, to hear from Ms Pendleton what she is doing to ensure that the Minor Injury Units are pulling their weight. Here are two suggestions:

(1) Two of the MIUs, at Fowey and Saltash, are ‘temporarily closed’ – at this busiest time of the year! What is she doing to get them reopened?

(2) As I showed, there are three (!) different lists of MIUs in existence. Moreover, it appears that the call handlers manning the 111 NHS enquiry phone line don't have access to all of them. One consequence is that callers from the Land's End area with a minor injury can find themselves referred to the Camborne-Redruth MIU rather than the Urgent Care Centre at

West Cornwall Hospital. What is Ms Pendleton doing to check out how the 111 system is working and put this right?"

No rejoinder from Ms Pendleton to the above response has been received.