



# St Thomas Medical Group

St Thomas Health Centre

Exwick Health Centre

Exeter University Student Health Centre

Dear Patient,

We are writing to provide an important update to our patients living at Pathfinder Village.

Our main site is at St Thomas Health Centre, and we have a branch site at Exwick Health Centre. Before the COVID -19 pandemic, we also ran a limited service at our branch site at Pathfinder Surgery twice a week.

Pathfinder surgery was open for two days per week (Monday and Thursday), between the hours of 08:30 and 17:30. A GP and practice nurse saw on average 40 patients per week, from a temporary structure in the form of a portacabin, and not suitable for long-term, safe and modern healthcare.

We were unable to offer a full range of services from the Pathfinder site and patients would still need to come into our Exeter sites for urgent same-day care, physiotherapy, vaccinations and minor operations.

In March 2020, because of pressures arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, we temporarily closed the Pathfinder Surgery. This was due to workforce challenges, infection control concerns at the site and national changes to the way GP practices should be running, which recommended the increased use of remote consultations, for example telephone or video appointments.

During the temporary closure, we asked patients and our local partners in the community to help us understand the impact of the Pathfinder branch surgery being closed.

Thank you everyone who took part in the survey and shared their views, it was extremely helpful for us.

The main concerns raised in this feedback were:

## Transport

Pathfinder Village is 5 miles from St Thomas Health Centre, which is an 11-minute car or taxi journey. St Thomas Health Centre is on a main bus route - the 6A travels from Pathfinder Village to St Thomas Precinct and provides a 13-minute bus ride. For patients living at Pathfinder Village, we can schedule appointments to fit in around the bus timetable on request.

St Thomas Medical Centre  
70 Cowick Street  
Exeter  
EX4 1HJ  
01392 676676

Exwick Health Centre  
New Valley Road  
Exwick  
EX4 2AD  
01392 676676

Student Health Centre  
University of Exeter  
Reed Mews, Streatham Drive  
EX4 4QP  
01392 676606

[www.stthomasmedicalgroup.co.uk](http://www.stthomasmedicalgroup.co.uk)



## **Parking**

Both St Thomas Health Centre and Exwick Health Centre have dedicated car parks, with disabled bays available near the entrances. We stagger our face-to-face appointment times, so that it is easier for patients to park.

## **Home-visiting**

We have a home visiting team who review all requests for a home visit and arrange a visit when appropriate. Patients living at Pathfinder Village will still be able to get home visits if they need them. District nurse support remains unaffected, and patients already on the community nursing housebound caseload will continue to receive ongoing care at home.

We shared the feedback with the organisation responsible for commissioning (planning, paying for and monitoring) general practice in Devon – NHS Devon. Following a careful review, we applied to NHS Devon to permanently close Pathfinder Surgery and our application was approved. Therefore, Pathfinder Surgery will not reopen.

By focusing our services and resources on the St Thomas and Exwick sites, we were able to expand the range of clinicians patients can see. Our multidisciplinary team are based at our larger premises where the facilities are better and there is additional support on hand from other healthcare colleagues.

We have also improved access to appointments, by using technology to increase the number of remote consultations (e.g. online and telephone consultations). By increasing the number of remote consultations, we were able to increase our face-to-face capacity for those people who really need to be seen.

Patients living at Pathfinder Village will continue to be able to access a wide range of primary care services (doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, paramedics, and the pharmacy team) at St Thomas Health Centre or Exwick Health Centre.

We will not be asking any patients currently registered with us to leave. If you would like to remain a patient at St Thomas Medical Group, you do not need to take any action, and you will not be removed from our list.

We would also like to remind patients that they have patient choice over where they are registered and currently, Pathfinder Village lies within the catchment area of Foxhayes Surgery in Exwick and Redlands Primary Care Practice in Crediton.

We know that some patients will miss the convenience of the location of the Pathfinder branch surgery, and we are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause but offering access to a wider range of medical services at the larger main sites is paramount to safe and effective clinical practice.

We have published the survey findings on our website [www.stthomasmedicalgroup.co.uk](http://www.stthomasmedicalgroup.co.uk). If you have any further questions or concerns, you can contact us on 01392 676676.

Yours sincerely  
GP Partners  
St Thomas Medical Group

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