

Frequently Asked Questions – Proposed Permanent Closure of Sheppey Healthy Living Centre (SHLC)

1. Why is the practice proposing to close the SHLC site permanently?

The SHLC site has been temporarily closed for renovations since December 2024. During this time, services have successfully operated from Minster Medical Centre.

Following a full review, we believe that consolidating services onto one site allows us to provide more coordinated care, improve patient access to appointments, and maintain staff safety and efficiency.

2. Are SHLC and Minster Medical Centre separate practices?

No. Sheppey Healthy Living Centre and Minster Medical Centre are part of the same GP practice, operating under one contract.

If SHLC closes, the practice will continue to operate from one site (Minster Medical Centre). There will still be five GP practices on the Island.

3. What benefits will patients experience from this change?

- **Better access to appointments:** All clinicians are now based at Minster Medical Centre and fully utilised. Historically, some SHLC clinics were underused due to lower demand in that locality.
- **Patient population distribution:** We have reviewed patient postcodes and found that of our total registered list of **14,268 patients**:
 - Approximately **856 patients (around 6%)** live within 1.5 miles of the SHLC site
 - Approximately **94% of patients live closer to, or within 1.5 miles of, Minster Medical Centre**

As the two sites are just under 3 miles apart, this means the vast majority of patients are naturally closer to Minster and already choose to attend there. This was reflected in appointment usage, with significantly lower demand at SHLC compared to Minster.

- **More coordinated care:** All staff and services in one location improves communication, continuity of care, and allows patients to access multiple services in one visit where appropriate.
- **Improved patient experience:** Better use of appointments, improved clinical capacity, and a more consistent service for patients.
- **Improved accessibility:** Minster Medical Centre is located on a hospital site with a bus stop directly outside and significantly better public transport links compared to SHLC. It also benefits from a large, free on-site car park. While this can be busy at peak times, it still provides substantially greater capacity than SHLC. NHS Property Services have also advised

plans to further expand parking capacity on the hospital site, which will further improve access in the future.

- **Optimised use of resources:** Appointments and clinical space at Minster are now fully utilised, reducing previously underused clinics. This ensures clinical time and expertise are focused more effectively on patient care, rather than being split across two sites with uneven demand.
- **Enhanced patient experience and facilities:** Minster Medical Centre provides a modern, fully accessible healthcare environment with improved facilities. Being located on the hospital site also enables closer working with wider NHS services, including the Medway Maritime Hospital Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC), which provides access to investigations such as imaging (including X-ray where required) and enhanced phlebotomy services.
- **Safer working environment for staff and patients:** Operating from a hospital-based site provides a more supported clinical environment, including immediate access to emergency response teams and wider clinical infrastructure in the event of a medical emergency.

In contrast, SHLC operated as a more isolated GP setting. This required additional staffing arrangements to ensure safe clinical cover, including additional staff on site to support emergency situations and maintain safe working practices.

There were also occasions where staff experienced challenging behaviour, including incidents of verbal aggression and intimidation. As a result, additional staffing and security measures were sometimes required to help ensure staff safety.

Bringing services together at Minster Medical Centre reduces these risks by providing a more secure and supported healthcare environment within a wider clinical hospital setting.

4. Will there be fewer appointments or staff?

No. We will continue to have the same number of registered patients, staff, and appointments.

Appointments are now better utilised, as demand at SHLC was historically lower and required staff to be split across two sites.

5. What about patients who live closer to SHLC?

We understand this may affect some patients. However, as shown above, only around **6% of patients live within 1.5 miles of SHLC**, while the vast majority already live closer to Minster Medical Centre.

Many patients already travel to Minster as their preferred or most convenient site.

For those who may find this more difficult, we will provide support such as advice on transport options or information about alternative local GP practices if patients wish to register elsewhere.

6. Will all services previously available at SHLC still be provided?

Yes. All essential primary care services are available at Minster Medical Centre.

We also offer daily virtual GP appointments for patients who prefer or need remote consultations.

7. Will the telephone lines be able to cope with demand?

Yes. Calls for both sites have always been answered at Minster Medical Centre, and the same team will continue to manage calls.

We are introducing a new telephone system with call queuing and call-back functionality, expected summer 2026.

8. What about parking and access at Minster Medical Centre?

Minster Medical Centre has a large, free on-site car park and is located on a hospital site with improved access.

NHS Property Services have confirmed plans to further expand parking capacity on the hospital site, which will improve future access.

9. How will future housing developments affect GP services?

Planning for GP capacity sits with the local Integrated Care Board (ICB), not individual practices.

Closing SHLC does not reduce clinical capacity. We will continue to provide the same number of appointments.

10. Transport and accessibility

- **Public transport:** Bus routes including the 360 serve Minster Medical Centre
 - **Community transport:** Miles and Smiles (Sheppey Matters) provides volunteer transport for eligible patients
 - **Support:** The practice can help discuss individual travel needs where required
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11. How can patients provide their feedback?

- Patient survey (online, paper, or postal)
- Drop-in / listening sessions at Minster Medical Centre
- Email: swccg.yourvoice@nhs.net

- Phone: 01795 877714 (11:00am–3:00pm, Mon–Fri, option “general queries”)
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12. How long is the consultation period?

12 weeks, closing on **10 June 2026**.

13. How will feedback be used?

All feedback from patients, staff, PPG, and stakeholders will be reviewed before a final decision is made.

14. How will the outcome be shared?

A summary report will be published after the consultation outlining feedback and next steps.

15. Will there be any impact on staff?

No negative impact is expected. Staff are already working from Minster Medical Centre.

This supports better coordination, safety, and efficiency.

16. Who can I contact if I have questions or need support?

Website: <https://www.sheppeyhealthylivingcentre.co.uk>

Phone: 01795 877714 (11:00am–3:00pm, Mon–Fri)

17. What if my question hasn't been answered?

We will continue to update this FAQ based on patient feedback.