Application from Dr O’Hare & Partners to Close the Branch Surgery at Gatelodge, Saintfield Road and continue to provide services at their Main Surgery at Ormeau Road.

April 2013
Background

Dr O’Hare & Partners is a five partner practice operating across three sites. There is a main practice surgery located at 120 Ormeau Road, Belfast and two branch surgeries located at 267 Woodstock Road, Belfast and The Gate lodge, Knockbracken Healthcare Park.

The practice has a total list size of 8,641 (October 2012).

The distance between The Gate lodge Branch surgery at Knockbracken and the main surgery, Ormeau Road is 3.2 miles.

Premises

The main surgery premises at 120 Ormeau Road is a new build and was completed in 2005. Prior to this the surgery was located in Trust premises in the Ormeau Road Health Centre.

The practice has informed the Board (HSCB) that the Branch surgery at Knockbracken Healthcare Park is an old sandstone, single storey building, situated immediately inside the main gates, which was built and used by the Trust for many years as a Gate lodge. The building, which is shared with the Trust, had minor adaptations carried out on the premises prior to the practice moving in 1997. A Board premises survey was carried out in 2000 and it was given a D category indicating that it would require significant investment in order to bring it up to an acceptable standard.

Current Branch Surgery Availability

The practice currently provides the following sessions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>The Gate Lodge (Branch) GP sessions only provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>4.30pm – 6.00pm Dr Claire Diamond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>No Surgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>4.30pm – 6.00pm Dr Deirdre O’Hare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>No surgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>4.30pm – 6.00pm Dr Damien McNally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Patterns of Attendance

The practice informed HSCB that the number of patients attending the Branch surgery over a 6 month period from 1 January 2012 to 30 June 2012 was 182. The practice has also provided the following:

- 314 Face to Face consultations by 182 patients. 35 appointments were booked by 21 patients who live outside the BT8 area.
- The majority of appointments (89%) were taken up by patients living locally in the BT8 area and the remaining (11%) taken up by patients living outside the BT8 area.
- One-third of patients attending the Branch surgery required follow-up treatment at the main surgery due to lack of facilities at the Branch surgery.
- Patients from every age group from 42 weeks to 92 years attended the Branch surgery but none attended the Branch surgery exclusively.

Application for Closure of Premises

Dr O’Hare and Partners submitted a request for closure of The Gatelodge Branch surgery at Saintfield Road on 17 October 2012 citing the Branch surgery, which opened in 1997, to provide a service to over 1,000 of their patients who migrated during the ‘troubles’ from the immediate BT6 and BT7 areas to the developing BT8 district, did not grow in terms of the number of patient attendances as anticipated. Other reasons given by the practice for patients not attending the Branch surgery were that there was no pharmacy nearby, increasing traffic congestion in the immediate area and the perception that patients were still coming to Purdysburn Hospital. In the past five years the Partners have attempted to find alternative premises to overcome some of these difficulties but with no success.

HSCB undertook to conduct a survey of patients as a means of establishing the impact the closure of the Branch surgery.

A mapping exercise (map page 5) was undertaken which identified 1,328, of a total list size of 8,641, patients lived closer to the Branch surgery premises that the main Ormeau Road surgery. A survey and two letters one each from the GP Partners and HSCB, informing patients about the proposed closure, along with a pre-paid envelope for replies were mailed to each household.

The survey was issued to 709 households on 8 March 2013 and a follow-up reminder was issued on 22 March 2013. The number of surveys returned and used in the analysis was 212 (30% response rate). There were 3 households who
requested a new or additional survey and 3 surveys were returned either spoiled or incomplete.

**Age/Sex profile of those patients living closer to The Gatelodge Branch Surgery than the main surgery.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Band</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Age Band as % of total (1,328)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>678</strong></td>
<td><strong>650</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,328</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Analysis

Full analysis of the survey results is attached (Appendix 1) and a breakdown of survey results is as follows:

Section A

Use of Branch Surgery

Of a total of 212 responses, almost half 101 (48%) indicated that they never used the Branch surgery as opposed to 111 (52%) who said they did. In terms of attendance at the Branch surgery in the past year, 23 respondents did not attend, 33 attended once or twice and 55 attended more than three or four times.

With regard to why patients attended the Branch surgery rather than the Ormeau Road surgery, 75 (86%) indicated it was either more convenient or closer to home. 10 (11%) said it was the availability of appointments and 3 (3%) indicated other or no reason given.

82 of 111 patients indicated the Branch surgery met all their requirements. Of the 29 patients indicating that the Branch Surgery did not meet all their requirements, 11 patients said there was a need to make a follow-up appointment at the main surgery, 9 indicated the availability of nurse, 6 said availability of appointments and 3 indicated there was better provision of transport further down the Ormeau Road.

Of the 111 patients who used the Branch surgery, the majority (93) used a car, 14 walked, 2 used a bus and 2 travelled by taxi and bicycle respectively. With regard to patients having any difficulty getting to the Branch surgery, 102 respondents indicated that it was easy or very easy, 6 indicated it was difficult or very difficult and 3 gave no answer.

Use of the Main Surgery

Of the total of 212 responses to the question on how many times they attended the main Ormeau Road surgery in the past year, the vast majority 198 (93%) attended from once to five times or more. The mode of transport used by 173 (88%) of patients was a car, 18 (9%) by bus, 4 (2%) and 2 (1%) by taxi and bicycle. There were 7 other responses and the majority (4) were concerning difficulty getting a parking space. In terms of how easy or difficult the journey was to the main surgery, 125 (62%) of respondents either found it easy or very easy as opposed to 74 (38%) who indicated it was difficult or very difficult.

Responses to how closure of the Branch surgery would affect patients, just over half (53%) patients said it would not affect them, one-third (31%) of patients indicated it would cause inconvenience and 23 (11%) gave no answer. 12 (5%) of respondents indicating other reasons 9 of these commented the Branch was more convenient, 2 said they would change GP and 1 did not know where the Branch surgery was.
The majority of respondents (94%) indicated that they used the main surgery from one to five or more times in the past year and 88% of them travelled by car.

37 of 39 respondents indicated they attended the main surgery at Ormeau Road in the last year. 30 of these patients attended by car, 5 by bus 1 by taxi and 1 walked.

There were 74 responses to the question if patients had any other comments. 54% indicated they thought the Branch surgery was convenient and also offered better car parking facilities than Ormeau Road surgery, 16% did not know the Branch surgery existed, 4% had difficulty getting appointments at Ormeau Road surgery, 4% said the Branch surgery was inconvenient, 4% never use the Branch surgery, 3% thought more money should be spent on the Branch surgery and 15% were other non-generalised reasons.

Section B

There was an optional Section B to the survey which collated patient demographics can be found in Appendix 1.

In terms of demographics, percentage analysis of results is as follows:

- 79% of respondents are aged between 25–64 years old.
- 83% do not have children under the the age of 5 years old.
- 88% do not look after an elderly person in their household.
- 67% do not have a long standing illness or infirmity.
- 73% of respondents indicated their religious belief to be Catholic.
- 98% indicated their racial group to be white.
- 19% indicated they had a disability.

In respect of the issue of disability it was noted that 39 (19%) of the 205 households who completed surveys indicated that they perceive themselves to have a disability. 18 of these patients attended the Branch surgery in the past year of which 15 attended by car, 2 walked and 1 travelled by bus.

Given the response rate to the survey (30%), and bearing in mind that mail survey response rates in general are low, this demonstrates a sufficient mechanism of consultation and therefore no further consultation is deemed necessary.

HSCB has considered the Human Rights Act 1998 and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1995 and there is no evidence of any negative impact of a closure in respect of any particular group of patients.

Alternative Provision Should the Closure Proceed

The map above plots the patients currently registered with Dr O’Hare & Partners who live closer to the Branch surgery than the main surgery at Ormeau Road and
illustrates there are 7 potential alternative GP practices which are closer to the Branch surgery than to the Ormeau Road surgery. These are as follows:

Between 1 – 2 miles: 3 GP main practice surgeries.

Between 2 – 3 miles: 4 GP main practice surgeries.

This demonstrates that should the closure of the Branch proceed that those patients who choose not to remain registered with Dr O’Hare & Partners would have a choice of 7 practices to register with.

The lists of all practices including the 7 practices closest in proximity to the Branch surgery are open. There is also a choice of male/female doctors and a comprehensive range of enhanced services provided in each of these practices.

**Conclusion**

The recommended way forward is to agree to the closure. As highlighted earlier in the application the majority of respondents (94%) indicated that they used the main surgery from one to five or more times in the past year and 88% of them travelled by car. Patients will not only have access to the new build premises at 120 Ormeau Road, but will also have a wider range of practitioners and services to avail of at the main surgery.

The findings of the survey will be discussed with the Director of Integrated Care, Assistant Director of Integrated Care, Patient Client Council, and at the next Local Medical Committee meeting.

In compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998, an equality impact assessment, in conjunction with the Equality Manager, BSO will be carried out (see Appendix 2).

On the basis of the number of the patients involved in the proposed Branch closure it was deemed that a public meeting would not be required.

When the consultation process is finalised and if approval is given for the closure to proceed, HSCB will write to the practice informing them of the decision and will request the following.

1. The practice will write to the patients giving them 3 months notice.

2. The letter will also inform the patients of their right to transfer to another practice.