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# St Luke’s Health Centre: A GP service in need of a permanent home

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# About Healthwatch Southend

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Healthwatch Southend is an independent organisation that helps people of all ages who:

- need information about health or social care services
- want to see services improve
- need help to make a complaint or raise a concern about an NHS funded service

Everything we do is free to people who live in the Southend on Sea area.

For more information, visit [www.healthwatchsouthend.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchsouthend.co.uk)

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## Background

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St Luke's Health Centre is located in a densely-populated residential part of Southend-on-Sea. It is unique within the area, combining a GP practice serving over 6000 registered patients, and a walk-in centre that is available to anyone who requires medical attention. The health centre is open 365 days a year, between the hours of 8am and 8pm.

Since its foundation in 2008 the practice has occupied a large portacabin. This temporary premises has negatively impacted upon the ability of the care providers to develop the GP service according to the original terms of their contract. Currently the patient register is capped at 6,250 - well short of the 10,000 patient target. This cap was set in place with the agreement of NHS England.

Over the years several attempts have been made to secure a permanent setting for St Luke's Health Centre. This drawn-out process has become a source of frustration locally, particularly among those who cannot register with the practice despite living nearby.

As with ongoing problems of this nature, positions have been taken and factions have formed around particular options that might resolve the situation. The debate on how to move forward is coloured by some strong criticism of how the situation has been managed in the past and the mooted reasons why previous attempts to build a permanent health centre have failed.

Recently Healthwatch Southend learned that a decision on the future of St Luke's Health Centre is pending. We considered this an opportunity to gather public opinion on the practice and to write a report that would summarise the key issues.

Our intention is to distribute this report to those who have a say in the future of the health centre and to interested members of the public.

## How we gathered the information for this report

On Tuesday 28th October Healthwatch Southend held a public meeting with the intention of gathering the views and experiences of people who use St Luke's Health Centre. The event took place between 5:30pm and 7:30pm when it was hoped that working people from the local area might be able to attend.

The community centre at St Luke's Church was chosen as a venue for the event. This was selected because it lies within the ward and is known to be a hub for a variety of community-based activities.

The meeting was publicised on the front page of the Healthwatch Southend website and through social media. An email advertising the event was sent to everyone on the Healthwatch Southend list of supporters and to community leaders. Details were sent to local newspapers and other media. Posters were displayed at the health centre. Some of the people who we spoke to at the event informed us that they had heard about it through word of mouth.

Upon our arrival we found that floor plans for a health centre on land owned by the church were on open display on the walls of the community centre and on a table at the front of the hall. During the debate that took place on the possible locations for a permanent health centre, the option of locating it at St Luke's Church was the most widely discussed.

In total 27 people attended the event. A significant proportion of those who turned up were either community leaders or councillors from around Southend. Two of the three independent councillors who represent St Luke's ward were present.

While these public figures undoubtedly represented opinions held within the ward we were disappointed that more unaffiliated members of the public had not come to the meeting.

The purpose of the event was to gain an awareness of the issues affecting St Luke's Health Centre and to gather opinion on the future of the service.

No presentations were given. Jonathan Keay, manager of Healthwatch Southend, explained the rationale for holding the meeting, opened the floor up to discussion and acted as a mediator.

Throughout the two hours allotted to the meeting there was a lively and continuous debate. Some of those in attendance had closely followed the situation at St Luke's Health Centre and demonstrated a very detailed knowledge of the key issues. Towards the end of the event some time was given to those who had not previously spoken. Everyone who wished to voice an opinion was actively encouraged and given the opportunity to do so.

Written notes on the discussion were taken by two members of the Healthwatch Southend team.

Upon reviewing our notes after the event, it became apparent that the situation was more complicated than we had previously thought. There were a number of issues that we did not fully understand and could certainly not write about with any confidence. It was felt that in order to get a full grasp of what had been discussed at the meeting and to place these opinions in proper context, further research would be required.

Much of the story of St Luke's Health Centre exists as an oral history known to residents of the ward who have followed the developing situation. It was felt that the best way of filling the gaps in our understanding would be to contact some of these individuals and take advantage of their local knowledge.

Recognising that there were strong feelings on the subject of St Luke's Health Centre, when contacting these people, Healthwatch Southend made a point of stressing that our intention was to represent public opinion on this issue fairly and without bias.

Healthwatch Southend contacted the following parties by email. In all cases these emails included a list of follow-up questions where we sought clarification on statements that had been made at the public meeting, or further details on topics that had been discussed. Only in one instance did we solicit any further opinion: We asked Lorna Salmon, practice manager at St Luke's Health Centre, what she felt was needed in order to develop the practice and meet the needs of patients.

Those who responded to our emails are highlighted in bold text:

- **Lorna Salmon, practice manager, St Luke's Health Centre**
- **Mr Brian Ayling, independent councillor for St Luke's Ward**
- Mrs Caroline Jane Endersby, independent councillor for St Luke's Ward
- Mr Paul Van Looy, independent councillor for St Luke's Ward
- **Frank Gulley / Father James McCluskey (St Luke's Project)<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Healthwatch Southend received a joint response from Frank Gulley and Father James McCluskey via Jannine Speer, St Luke's Centre & Parish Administrator.

An email was also sent to South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT) requesting some details on the services provided by the Cumberlege Intermediate Care Centre.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> November, Healthwatch Southend visited St Luke's Ward and looked at the parking restrictions near the practice, as this had been raised as an issue.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> November, Healthwatch Southend met with Councillor Ayling. The meeting took place at the community cafe in Cluny Square, within the ward of St Luke's, and was arranged as a direct result of an email that was sent to all three councillors for the ward, following the public event on the 28th October.

At this meeting an attempt was made to establish a chronology of events following the opening of the health centre in 2008. A proposal to move St Luke's Health Centre into buildings that are currently occupied by the Cumberlege Intermediate Care Centre was also discussed.

To gain a basic understanding of the previous attempts to build a permanent health centre in St Luke's Ward, we consulted the archives of the local news website - Southend Standard.

Additional research regarding the quality of the service provided by St Luke's Health Centre was gathered from inspection reports by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), public comments previously made directly to Healthwatch Southend, and through reviews posted by members of the public on the NHS Choices and Patient Opinion websites.

In compiling this report Healthwatch Southend has balanced the need to be thorough and accurate with the awareness that a decision on the future of St Luke's is imminent and that speed is of the essence.

## The scope of this report

The purpose of this report is to document the issues affecting St Luke's Health Centre and to represent the opinions expressed to Healthwatch Southend.

In order to present these opinions in context we have delved into the history of the health centre and have also taken into consideration assessments of the GP service by healthcare regulators.

While carrying out our research Healthwatch Southend encountered frustration from those we spoke to focused on the continuing failure to secure a suitable building for the health centre. We also heard strongly expressed opinions that previous attempts to construct permanent premises were somehow mismanaged by

those involved, and that this should be addressed.

Although a loose chronology of events relating to St Luke's Health Centre does form a part of this report, Healthwatch Southend will not examine in any great depth the unsuccessful attempts to build a permanent health centre in St Luke's Ward, nor will we apportion blame or responsibility.

Although this report does explore some of the proposals for a permanent building in which to house a GP practice/health centre in St Luke's Ward, these should by no means be regarded as a comprehensive list. Healthwatch Southend is not aware of the full range of options available or being considered. The options examined in this report were raised during the public meeting and are included in that spirit.

This report contains links to webpages that have been used as references. These links were checked at the time of publication and were found to be working properly. Healthwatch Southend accepts no responsibility for the content of these websites.

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## St Luke's Ward

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St Luke's Ward is a predominantly residential area located in the central-north part of Southend. According to the results of the 2011 census the population was 11213 <sup>2</sup>. A more recent estimate given by a local councillor pegged the number of residents at around 13,000.

The ward is regarded as one of the more deprived areas of Southend: A report on the local news website - the Southend Standard - dating from Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2008 <sup>3</sup>, spotlighted higher than average levels of long-term illness and disability in comparison with the rest of Southend (8.9% of people aged 16 to 74 compared to 4.9% elsewhere). Levels of unemployment were double what they were in other parts of the town (7.4% of residents aged 16 to 74 compared to 3.7% elsewhere) The ward recorded higher than average death rates related to smoking, cancer and circulatory disease than elsewhere in Essex.

The same article described the paucity of healthcare in the area. In 2008 there was an average of only 2.2 GPs serving what was at the time a population of 10,500. Around 6,000 people living in the ward were thought to be registered with GP practices outside the local area.

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<sup>2</sup> Office of National Statistics: [Link](#)

<sup>3</sup> Southend Standard: Superclinic planned for school site (29<sup>th</sup> May, 2008): [Link](#)

The St Luke's Healthy Living Community Interest Company (which was formed in 2007 and dissolved in Autumn of 2012) was established by community leaders in response to a perceived neglect of the ward by health authorities, concern over the low life expectancy rates in the ward compared with other parts of Southend, and a scarcity of GP and clinical support. The company played a prominent role in the early discussions on the future of St Luke's Health Centre and in an attempt to combine the GP Practice with a centre offering additional healthcare and community services. This will be described in greater detail later in the report.

At the time of writing St Luke's Ward lies within the boundaries of ten GP practices (listed below). Only two of these are located within the ward (St Luke's Health Centre and the Sutton Road branch of the Queensway Surgery). A third practice situated on North Avenue lies on the eastern border of the ward.

Of the GPs practices that accept patients from St Luke's many cover wide areas of Southend and some are located a considerable distance from the ward.

## **A list of GPs that cover all or part of St Luke's Ward within their practice boundaries**

- 1. Carnarvon Medical Centre**  
7 Carnarvon Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6LR
- 2. Central Surgery**  
27 Southchurch Boulevard, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 4UB
- 3. (Dr Malik) Kent Elms Health Centre**  
1 Rayleigh Road, Eastwood, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 5UU
- 4. Dr NK Shah**  
North Avenue 332 North Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS2 4EQ
- 5. The Practice**  
32 Northumberland Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS1 2TH
- 6. Elmsleigh Drive Surgery**  
194 Elmsleigh Drive SS94JQ Leigh-on-Sea, Essex
- 7. Queensway Surgery**  
508 Sutton Road, Southend-On-Sea SS2 5PN  
75 Queensway, Southend-On-Sea SS1 2AB



8. **Dr Siddique**

119 Shaftesbury Avenue, Thorpe Bay, Southend On Sea, Essex, SS1 3AN

9. **St Luke's Health Centre**

Pantile Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 1NX

10. **Dr Vashisht's Surgery**

61 Warrior Square, Southend on Sea, SS1 2JJ

**Dr George & Partners** (Central Surgery, North Road Primary Care Centre, 1st Floor, North Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 7AF) incorporates a tiny corner of St Luke's Ward within its practice boundary.

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## A history of St Luke's Health Centre

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Following a review of primary care by Professor Lord Darzi in 2007, each of the 152 Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in England were directed to open a GP-led health centre. These would be open 365 days a year, from 8am to 8pm, and would offer walk-in appointments for patients who were registered with other practices.

### 2008

In 2008, the South East Essex Primary Care Trust announced that a Darzi health centre would be based within St Luke's ward.<sup>4</sup> The area was chosen because of its large population, low numbers of GPs and poor access to health facilities.

St Luke's Health Centre was conceived as a replacement for a GP practice located at 19 Cluny Square, which lies within the ward. An open letter from the St Luke's Healthy Living Community Interest Company (dated 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012) describes the former Cluny Square practice in unflattering terms as a converted shop "with barred windows, no ramp or space to manoeuvre for wheelchair users, random availability of locums, queuing outside at times in all weathers and poor décor."

Ambitious plans were drawn up for a healthy living centre which was to be located on the grounds of Temple Sutton school on the northern fringes of St Luke's Ward, a short distance from Cluny Square. This would house the new GP practice that

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<sup>4</sup> Southend Standard: Town to get walk-in medical clinic? (27<sup>th</sup> May, 2008): [Link](#)

would register patients in the local area, along with the walk-in centre that would be accessible to people from all over Southend and Rochford. Additionally the building would incorporate a community centre, a café, a library, new adult mental health services, employment advice and a Sure Start Children's centre.<sup>5</sup>

The healthy living centre was a joint venture undertaken by St Luke's Healthy Living Community Interest Company, Southend Borough Council and the local PCT. It was modelled on a similar project in Bromley-by-Bow, in the East End of London. The Bromley by Bow Centre was founded in 1984 and has grown to incorporate a GP practice alongside a wide variety of health and community facilities, all based in one location.<sup>6</sup>

At the time the plans for St Luke's Ward were announced it was expected that the GP practice and walk-in centre would initially occupy temporary premises located in the vicinity of the proposed site of the healthy living centre.

A six week public consultation on the proposal ran between May and June 2008. In a document issued in conjunction with the consultation, April 2009 was earmarked as the date when the new GP practice would open. Autumn 2010 was given as the approximate date when the surgery would move into permanent premises.<sup>7</sup>

In December 2008, Care UK Clinical Services Ltd was selected to provide the GP service.<sup>8</sup> This was based on a five year contract.

## 2009

The GP practice and walk-in centre opened in May 2009 in a large portacabin located behind the Cumberlege Intermediate Care Centre on Pantile Avenue. It inherited 1800 patients from the GP practice on Cluny Square.<sup>9</sup>

It appears that during these early stages the permanent venue for the new GP practice was inextricably linked to the construction of the healthy living centre. Healthwatch Southend was unable to find out whether at this point there were ever any plans for a permanent GP practice separate from the community project.

From the outset there were problems maintaining funding for the healthy living centre, with large sums of money being pledged by various government agencies only to be withdrawn at a later date:

An article on the Southend Standard website dated 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2008, reported that a change in government funding had undercut plans for the healthy living centre.

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<sup>5</sup> Southend Standard: Superclinic planned for School site (29<sup>th</sup> May, 2008): [Link](#)

<sup>6</sup> The Bromley By Bow Centre: [Link](#)

<sup>7</sup> A new GP-led health centre in south east Essex Public Consultation Document (page 5): [Link](#)

<sup>8</sup> Southend Standard: Firm appointed to run new doctors' practice (29<sup>th</sup> December, 2008): [Link](#)

<sup>9</sup> Southend Clinical Commissioning Group – Governing Body Meeting in Public. Agenda Item 8 (3.9) (28<sup>th</sup> November, 2013)

Frank Gulley (who at the time was the Headteacher at Temple Sutton School and a driving force behind the St Luke's Healthy Living Community Interest Company) said:

"We need about £2million to achieve everything. We are disappointed the Government changed its grant to loan-based funding."<sup>10</sup>

In March 2009, the St Luke's Healthy Living Centre Community Interest Company announced that it had been awarded £243,500 from the Department of Health Social Enterprise Fund. The money was to cover staffing and overhead costs for three years, to develop the business, and to provide a variety of community services from existing venues. Mention was made of £300,000 in capital awarded by the Department of Health Social Enterprise Investment Fund (SEIF) Pathfinder programme in 2007 "to progress the vision of a local Healthy Living Centre into a reality". This was to be used to fund the building of a permanent healthy living centre due to open in 2011.<sup>11</sup>

An article on the Southend Standard website dated 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2009, described a range of health services that could potentially be provided at the healthy living centre. These included dentistry, podiatry, and an optician. Additional funding would be obtained from a government grant for the co-location of children's services. It was reported that the council had offered a surplus playing field for free on a 25 year lease and that construction of the health centre could potentially begin there in April 2010.<sup>12</sup>

## 2010

In January 2010, it was announced that plans for eight new health centres in the Southend area were to be delayed and scaled back as a result of government funding cuts. It was reported in the Southend Standard that a permanent health centre for St Luke's was unlikely to open until October 2011.<sup>13</sup>

By June 2010, St Luke's had been listed by NHS South East Essex as fourth in a list of priorities for new primary care centres in the Southend area.<sup>14</sup>

In the same month it was announced that the plans for a £4m healthy living centre in St Luke's had been downsized due to spending cuts. Instead a cheaper centre comprising multiple buildings would be constructed in two stages: The initial phase would provide a permanent setting for community facilities and would include

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<sup>10</sup> Southend Standard: No Government cash for new healthy living centre (5<sup>th</sup> June, 2008): [Link](#)

<sup>11</sup> Newsletter from St Luke's Healthy Living Community Interest Company (March, 2009): [Link](#)

<sup>12</sup> Southend Standard: £5m health centre plans on target (12<sup>th</sup> November, 2009): [Link](#)

<sup>13</sup> Southend Standard: Southend, Rochford and Castle Point health centre plans cut back (29 January, 2010):

[Link](#)

<sup>14</sup> Southend Standard: Recession hits plans for new health centre (1<sup>st</sup> June, 2010): [Link](#)

phlebotomy and children's services. Phase two would establish a permanent home for the St Luke's GP practice and walk-in centre.<sup>15</sup>

In August 2010, £900,000 in funding for St Luke's healthy living centre was withdrawn by the Department of Education as a result of spending cuts.<sup>16</sup>

A few days later NHS South East Essex PCT committed £428,000 towards the development of the GP practice and walk-in centre at St Luke's. A permanent clinic to replace the temporary portacabin was expected to open in December, 2012. This appears to mark the point where the destinies of the healthy living centre and St Luke's Health Centre diverged.<sup>17</sup>

## 2012

In June 2012, an open letter from St Luke's Healthy Living Community Interest Company declared that the company would cease operating in Autumn of that year. The organisation expressed frustration at what it regarded as procrastination by the PCT, and pointed out that health centres had been set up in other parts of Southend while "the needs St. Luke's continue to be overlooked despite the need being as great."

Some of the services that would have been hosted at the healthy living centre were subsequently relocated to the community centre at St Luke's Church. An email from the St Luke's Project, dated 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2014, stated that "the remaining funds at closure [of the Community Interest Company] were transferred to the St Luke's Project to develop the Centre to be applied to provision of consulting rooms built to a clinical standard with an adjacent patient waiting area."

Healthwatch Southend understands that these consulting rooms are currently used by the local midwifery service and by volunteer counsellors. They are described in more detail in the 'St Luke's Church option' section of this report.

## 2013

On April 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, all Primary Care Trusts were formally dissolved. This was a result of changes in healthcare policy brought about by the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Responsibility for St Luke's Health Centre passed to the Essex area team of NHS England. The walk-in centre later became the responsibility of the newly established Southend Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

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<sup>15</sup> Southend Standard: Council drives plans for Southend health care centre (21<sup>st</sup> June, 2010): [Link](#)

<sup>16</sup> Southend Standard: Southend community centre plans dealt blow after £900,000 grant withdrawn (3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2010): [Link](#)

<sup>17</sup> Southend Standard: Health centre will be built – NHS trust (9<sup>th</sup> August, 2010): [Link](#)

At a meeting in November 2013, NHS Southend CCG assured councillors for St Luke's Ward that St Luke's Health Centre would remain open beyond its original five year contract which was due to expire in May 2014, and that the service would be put out to tender for a further five years.

Dr Paul Husselbee, Clinical Chief Officer of NHS Southend CCG emphasised the importance of the Health Centre in taking pressure off the hospital.

Councillor Sally Carr said: "At a time when other centres are having to close, we have assurances that this will remain open and a permanent building will be sought."<sup>18</sup>

## 2014

In February 2014, NHS Property Services applied to Southend Council for planning permission to use the portacabin as a venue for the GP practice for a further five years.<sup>19</sup>

The search for permanent premises continued: In March 2014, Southend councillor Paul van Looy declared: "[NHS England] is looking for a site and has said it wants it open within 24 months."<sup>20</sup>

When Healthwatch Southend met councillor Ayling on the 7<sup>th</sup> November, he said that the council had been assured by NHS England that there were developing plans for a permanent St Luke's. The council had been offered a definitive meeting with a conclusion in November 2014.

Plans for St Luke's Health Centre should be viewed in the context of demands for health centres located elsewhere in Southend. Recently there have been calls by a Southend councillor for a new primary care centre in Westcliff.<sup>21</sup> Across town, members of the Shoebury Residents Association have also been campaigning for a primary care centre with walk-in GP facilities and an after hours service in their area. This would potentially eliminate a 13-mile round trip to Southend hospital in emergencies.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Southend Standard: St Luke's temporary health centre, in Pantile Avenue, to stay put (29<sup>th</sup> November, 2013): [Link](#)

<sup>19</sup> Southend Standard: Five more years for temporary St Luke's health centre in Pantile Avenue, Southend (20<sup>th</sup> February, 2014): [Link](#)

<sup>20</sup> Southend Standard: A permanent home for St Luke's health centre within two years? (28<sup>th</sup> March, 2014): [Link](#)

<sup>21</sup> Southend Standard: Call for new health centre in Westcliff (23<sup>rd</sup> April 2014): [Link](#)

<sup>22</sup> Southend Standard: Campaign for new health centre in Shoebury (29<sup>th</sup> May, 2014): [Link](#)

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## The GP service at St Luke's Health Centre

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St Luke's Health Centre is one of 152 health centres that were established on the recommendation of Professor Lord Darzi, with the purpose of improving access to primary care. It incorporates a GP practice for registered patients and a walk-in centre that is available to anyone who requires medical attention. The centre is open 365 days a year, between 8am and 8pm.

At present new registrations with the GP practice are capped at 6250. This was agreed with NHS England after concerns were raised about whether the small temporary premises occupied by the health centre would be able to meet the needs of the 10,000 registered patients that were specified as a target in the original five year contract for GP services.

The practice currently has a waiting list of 300. At present this waiting list has also been closed.

St Luke's currently employs eight contracted GPs and six long-term self-employed GPs. According to the practice manager, agency staff have not been used for two years.

Originally NHS South East Essex PCT held contracts for both the GP practice and the walk-in centre. Following the formal dissolution of the Primary Care Trusts in April 2013, the Registered Patient Contract was transferred to NHS England. NHS Southend CCG was later made responsible for the walk-in centre. This has resulted in a situation where two different organisations are responsible for overlapping GP-led services within the same building.

In an email to Healthwatch Southend dated 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2013, Lorna Salmon, practice manager for St Luke's said: "I believe they [Southend CCG] are negotiating with Castle Point and Rochford CCG to pay towards it [the health centre] as their patients are using it too."

She also confirmed that "both contracts have been extended to 30.9.15."

Patient numbers at St Luke's Health Centre are split approximately 65% to 35% between the registered GP practice and the walk-in centre.

A percentage breakdown of patients using the walk-in centre has been provided to Healthwatch Southend by the practice manager at St Luke's. The following figures are approximate:

**Fig 1: A percentage breakdown of patients using the walk-in centre at St Luke’s Health Centre:**

Southend patients seen	30%
Castlepoint and Rochford patients seen	11%
Out of area patients seen	25%
Patients with no GP seen	7%
Other	27%

Approximately 100 patients a month who attend the walk-in centre have no registered GP.

## Details of the walk-in service

In the minutes of a public meeting held by the governing body of NHS Southend CCG in 2013, the walk-in service at St Luke’s is summarised as “an alternative to A&E for patients, rather than a service provided for convenience.”<sup>23</sup>

At the same meeting the CCG recognised the role that St Luke’s plays in deflecting patients away from the accident and emergency department at Southend Hospital which is already under strain and is currently subject to regulatory action by Monitor - the body that oversees NHS foundation trusts:

“About 25% of patients say they would have gone to A&E if St Luke’s was not available.”<sup>24</sup>

This is supported by a letter from a resident of St Luke’s Ward, published on the Southend Standard website in January, 2011. Referring to the health centre, the

<sup>23</sup> Southend Clinical Commissioning Group – Governing Body Meeting in Public. Agenda Item 8 (2.4) (28<sup>th</sup> November, 2013)

<sup>24</sup> Southend Clinical Commissioning Group – Governing Body Meeting in Public. Agenda Item 8 (3.13) (28<sup>th</sup> November, 2013)

writer says: “This town has needed this type of service for a long time and when A&E is backed up for seven hours it is very comforting to know St Luke’s is there for us.”<sup>25</sup>

Concerns were raised by the CCG at the number of patients who are registered with other GP practices using the walk-in centre when they could not get appointments. It was noted that 40% of all walk in activity occurred when patients’ registered practices were open. Roughly 42% of walk-in patients said they couldn’t get an appointment with their own practice or it was closed.

The majority of patients attending the walk-in centre were seeking treatment for viral conditions, such as upper respiratory tract/chest infections, sore throats and ear infections.<sup>26</sup>

The CCG recommended that “St Luke’s works with walk in patients to ensure that for clinical reasons patients seek to access their own registered practice during opening hours.”<sup>27</sup>

In an email to Healthwatch Southend, the practice manager at St Luke’s outlined the steps that have been taken to ensure that the walk-in service is used appropriately by patients and GPs:

“Measures have been put in place to try to reduce the inappropriate use of the centre by patients who could see their own GP in normal working hours. We call three surgeries in the area to ask for an appointment for their patient if they are open. This has been agreed with CCG/NHS England and has reduced walk-ins during normal GP hours. We have presented at practice manager’s meetings to try to re-educate surgeries to see their own patients in normal hours. We also report surgeries to NHS England who are sending excessive amounts of patients down due to them not having enough GPs on duty to cover their list for the day.”

In December 2011, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) observed “the walk-in centre was extremely busy and the people attending the surgery were clearly feeling unwell.”<sup>28</sup>

A report produced by the CQC in 2013 recognised the efforts that were being made by St Luke’s Health Centre to confirm that patients were attempting to access their own GP prior to using the walk-in centre:

“Where people attended for walk in, staff checked whether they had attempted to access their regular GP first as they would be able to provide better continuity of

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<sup>25</sup> Southend Standard: Satisfied with health centre (13<sup>th</sup> January, 2011): [Link](#)

<sup>26</sup> Southend Clinical Commissioning Group – Governing Body Meeting in Public. Agenda Item 8 (3.13) (28<sup>th</sup> November, 2013)

<sup>27</sup> Southend Clinical Commissioning Group – Governing Body Meeting in Public. Agenda Item 8 (2.4) (28<sup>th</sup> November, 2013)

<sup>28</sup> CQC inspection 21st December 2011 (page 3) [Link](#)



care. This showed us that before treatment was provided people's needs were assessed to ensure that the treatment provided was given by the most appropriate service."<sup>29</sup>

Despite the sincere effort that has been made to reduce dependency on the walk-in centre it undoubtedly continues to be used by patients who are unable to rapidly secure appointments with their own GP. At the public meeting held by Healthwatch Southend to discuss the future of St Luke's, we heard about a patient who had used the walk-in because he couldn't get an appointment with his registered GP for a fortnight. Another patient who was in severe pain and needed medication couldn't get an appointment with their GP for three days and so used the walk-in centre.

## Opinions of the service

The service provided by St Luke's Health Centre is well thought of by members of the public, community leaders and healthcare regulators. It should be noted that people and organisations passing comment on St Luke's will often refer to the GP practice and the walk-in centre as a single entity, despite these being separate services.

## A summary of comments made about the service by the Care Quality Commission (CQC)

At the time of writing the health and social care regulator, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has inspected St Luke's Health Centre on three occasions, in 2011, 2012, and 2013.<sup>30 31 32</sup>

In all three inspections St Luke's was found to be compliant with the standards imposed by the CQC. Any criticisms levelled were relatively minor in nature.

Taken collectively, the reports produced by the CQC paint a picture of a well-run and well-organised practice.

In November, 2010, the surgery set-up a patient participation group (PPG) that takes into consideration the opinions of patients when reviewing the service. The

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<sup>29</sup> CQC Inspection 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (page 6) [Link](#)

<sup>30</sup> CQC inspection 21st December 2011: [Link](#)

<sup>31</sup> CQC Inspection 3rd December 2012: [Link](#)

<sup>32</sup> CQC Inspection 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013: [Link](#)

PPG is also represented at the patient participation forum which is organised by the Southend Clinical Commissioning Group.

The practice involves itself in local events and makes an effort to raise awareness of its services in the community.<sup>33</sup>

The CQC recognised the diligent and proactive approach taken by St Luke's in identifying areas for improvement:

"We spoke with the service and practice manager who showed us how they compare performance between surgeries in the local area. Areas for improvement were highlighted such as the need to develop depression services, which the surgery could show they were currently actioning."<sup>34</sup>

The service at St Luke's is flexible and responsive to the needs of the community. Staffing levels are based upon historic demand with numbers increased around Christmas, Easter, etc. At the time of the July 2013 inspection, staff requirements were reviewed every three months and there existed the wherewithal to increase or decrease hours depending upon demand.<sup>35</sup>

During all three inspections the CQC found evidence that patients were respected and treated professionally by staff. Care was personalised and support was provided to patients with long-term health conditions.

In the report relating to the December 2012 inspection the CQC noted that "through surveys and comments cards we could see that the vast majority of people rated the service provision highly and felt that care and diagnostics were planned and delivered in a way that ensured their safety and welfare."<sup>36</sup>

One patient told the CQC: "They treat you like an individual and listen to your concerns"<sup>37</sup>

Another said: "When you want an appointment you actually get it."<sup>38</sup>

A letter from a patient who had used St Luke's as both a walk-in and a registered patient reads: "I have seen three different doctors when I have required treatment and each one has been professional and courteous and taken the time and trouble to try and ascertain the cause of the problem rather than just issuing a prescription for the symptoms."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> CQC inspection 21st December 2011 (page 7): [Link](#)

<sup>34</sup> CQC Inspection 3rd December 2012 (page 10): [Link](#)

<sup>35</sup> CQC Inspection 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (page 11): [Link](#)

<sup>36</sup> CQC Inspection 3rd December 2012 (page 6): [Link](#)

<sup>37</sup> CQC Inspection 3rd December 2012 (page 5): [Link](#)

<sup>38</sup> CQC Inspection 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (page 4): [Link](#)

<sup>39</sup> CQC Inspection 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (page 6): [Link](#)

## Opinions of the service gathered from the NHS Choices website

On the NHS Choices website members of the public are able to post reviews of GP practices either under their own names or anonymously. At present, St Luke's is represented by two separate pages, one dedicated to the St Luke's NHS Walk in Centre<sup>40</sup> and another for St. Luke's Health Centre.<sup>41</sup>

At the time of writing there were three five-star reviews on the walk-in page, all complimenting the professional conduct of staff and the convenience of the walk-in centre.

One reviewer, writing in November 2014, said: "We were very impressed with the short time we had to wait to be seen & the treatment we received from all staff. The doctor was very pleasant & respectful & quick to diagnose & treat the problem."

On the page dedicated to St Luke's Health Centre, there were seven reviews of the service, four of which were extremely positive. Three reviews (dated 17<sup>th</sup> May 2013, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2014) described, in varying levels of detail, problems with obtaining prescriptions and repeat prescriptions.

## Opinions of the service gathered at the Healthwatch Southend public meeting

At the public meeting organised by Healthwatch Southend there was universal praise for the service offered by St Luke's Health Centre and, in particular, the accessibility of the walk-in centre.

One resident commented: "You get to see a GP within hours. What a fantastic facility."

Another remarked that "the extended hours are good for those who are working."

Another person said that while "the service is brilliant, the small cramped consultation rooms are not suitable for seeing patients."

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<sup>40</sup> NHS Choices: St Luke's NHS Walk In Centre reviews: [Link](#)

<sup>41</sup> NHS Choices: St. Luke's Health Centre reviews: [Link](#)

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## The premises

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Since opening in mid-2008, St Luke's Health Centre has occupied a large portacabin located behind the Cumberlege Intermediate Care Centre. This was intended as temporary premises while the proposed healthy living centre was constructed on neighbouring playing fields at Temple Sutton School.

The practice is accessible from the street via a wheelchair ramp.

An email to Healthwatch Southend from the practice manager at St Luke's describes the interior layout of the building:

"We have five consulting rooms, waiting room and reception area, two small offices, staff and patient toilet and a small kitchen. We have to use a corridor as an isolation area in busy times. It is in good condition. The waiting area has 24 seats and standing room for about ten people. The rental of the building along with parking is approximately £4.5K per month."

Following an inspection in 2011 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) reported:

"The surgery building is a temporary structure and is very limited in space, particularly in the waiting room area. At busy times, the lack of space creates a cramped and visibly uncomfortable area. On the day of our inspection the surgery was very busy; however, people waiting for their appointments were seen to be treated with respect by staff."<sup>42</sup>

During an inspection at the end of 2012 the CQC again noted the poor car parking facilities and the cramped waiting area, which resulted in people having to stand during busy periods.<sup>43</sup>

In the inspection that took place at the end of July 2013, the CQC expressed concerns that the cramped waiting area would present difficulties for people in wheelchairs or with other mobility problems:

"We saw that the space in the waiting area was limited especially when several families with young children, babies and/or toddlers in pushchairs were waiting. This then became difficult for people using mobility aids to safely pass. Access to the toilet located in the waiting room for wheelchair users would also be problematic at these busy times."

During the same inspection clinical staff commented that when families with more than one child attended appointments it was often difficult to accommodate

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<sup>42</sup> CQC inspection 21st December 2011 (page 7 & 8): [Link](#)

<sup>43</sup> CQC Inspection 3rd December 2012 (pages 4 & 7): [Link](#)

everyone inside consultation rooms.<sup>44</sup>

However the CQC also recognised the efforts made by the practice to assess risks and to make the environment as safe as possible. For example, by installing a non-slip mat in the waiting area to reduce the risk of slips and falls in wet weather.<sup>45</sup>

## The effect of the temporary premises on the provision of the GP service

During an inspection of St Luke's Health Centre undertaken by the CQC in December 2012, concerns were raised about whether the small, cramped premises had the capacity to accommodate increasing numbers of patients. The possibility of a cap on further registrations with the GP practice was suggested.<sup>46</sup>

When the CQC inspected St Luke's in July, 2013, the waiting list had been capped at 6250. This measure had been put in place with the agreement of NHS England and was directly related to concerns that the portacabin was too small to cope with the target of 10,000 patients that had been specified under the terms of the original five year service contract.<sup>47</sup>

The capping of the register has been a point of dissatisfaction for people living within St Luke's Ward:

At the public meeting organised by Healthwatch Southend to discuss the health centre one person commented: "There are people in the area who know the service is good but can't register there."

Another person said: "People are having to register with GPs outside the area because of the capped waiting list at St Lukes. There are no other facilities around here. The last thing you want to do when you're feeling unwell is to have to travel."

## Parking at St Luke's Health Centre

Parking at St Luke's Health Centre presents a significant problem.

In an email to Healthwatch Southend the practice manager described the present situation:

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<sup>44</sup> CQC Inspection 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (page 10): [Link](#)

<sup>45</sup> CQC Inspection 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (page 9): [Link](#)

<sup>46</sup> CQC Inspection 3rd December 2012 (page 10): [Link](#)

<sup>47</sup> CQC Inspection 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (page 9 & 10): [Link](#)

“We have three disabled spaces and seven other spaces. Staff and patients also use the road immediately outside the building which holds approximately five more cars.”

At the public meeting the practice manager said that she had been involved in a struggle with the council to secure two additional parking spaces.

While gathering information for this report Healthwatch Southend visited St Luke’s ward and looked at the parking arrangements in the vicinity of the health centre.

The practice is accessible via a narrow, unnamed service road which branches off from Pantile Avenue and terminates in playing fields belonging to the Temple Sutton School.

Directly adjacent to the health centre there are three disabled parking spaces. These face directly onto the road. Next to the portacabin there is a cramped parking area that could probably accommodate around eight cars, although there did not seem to be a great deal of room to manoeuvre.

The side of the road opposite the practice does not appear to be subject to any parking restrictions. Although there is space here for around eight or nine cars, this road may also be used by the residents of an adjacent block of flats.

On Pantile Avenue, east of the surgery, parking is for permit-holders only. On the same road west of the surgery parking is restricted between 8am and 8pm - corresponding directly to the hours that the practice is open. At the public meeting organised by Healthwatch Southend it was claimed that these parking restrictions came into force around the time that the health centre was opened.

## Public opinion of the premises and parking

At the public meeting organised by Healthwatch Southend to discuss St Luke’s there was widespread dissatisfaction at both the temporary premises and the lack of places to park:

One person said: “I couldn’t park. It’s not a nice centre to go to. Why can’t the people of St Luke’s have a good place to go to?”

A sentiment expressed by many at the meeting was that the portacabin at St Luke’s is a reflection of how they regarded by those in power; that they are not valued or considered deserving of anything better:

“The doctors are brilliant. Premises and parking are poor. It’s a problem especially for disabled people... For a lot of people that are underprivileged going into the portacabin makes them feel that they are not worthy of a doctors surgery.”

The practice manager of St Luke’s stressed that Care UK Clinical Services Ltd was responsible for the GP service but had no control over the building which is the responsibility of NHS England.

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## Moving forward

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At the Healthwatch Southend public meeting, and in subsequent communication, frustration has been expressed at the many setbacks and false starts that have plagued the construction of a permanent health centre, the delays in decisions regarding the GP practice in St Luke’s, and the pervading uncertainty over the future of the service.

One resident said: “For years nothing’s been happening. We’ve been kept in the dark”.

Another complained that he had not seen the options for the possible location of a permanent health centre in the ward and that there was “no transparency.”

Another remarked: “Deadlines were given... We appreciate what we have got but people are starting to get angry about this.”

Frank Gulley, of the St Luke’s Project, said:

“People in St Luke’s feel betrayed by promises made and then broken by the Primary Care Trust regarding a permanent health centre. All the resources went to other areas. Some patients are having to walk miles to a surgery.”

The practice manager at St Luke’s Health Centre said that the situation was complicated as NHS Southend CCG was having to work with NHS England to make decisions.

Healthwatch Southend contacted NHS Property Services and requested details on how they would go about selecting a location for a permanent health centre in St Luke’s Ward.

We were informed that the site options will be explored in detail by a project group, consisting of representatives from NHS England, NHS Property Services, Southend Clinical Commissioning Group and the local authority, with possible input from local councillors. However final approval will lie with NHS England.

The service providers, Care UK, will not be part of the project team as they are on a time limited contract, but will be kept aware of any progress made.

The business case for the preferred option will “outline full details of the project including outcome of feasibility studies, consultation, the reasons why this option was selected and the other options were not (benefits of the selected proposal), costs, details of services to be provided from the facility - including the additional benefits this will bring to the community and a project timeline.”

The consultation process will include all practices within the area.

## Options for the future of St Luke’s Health Centre

Following the public meeting, Healthwatch Southend contacted the practice manager at St Luke’s and asked her what she felt was needed to take the GP service forward.

She responded: “We require more parking spaces, a larger waiting room, at least another two consultation rooms, a larger, or more, staff offices and a room for training & meetings.”

A permanent venue for the service would need to be large enough to accommodate these requirements.

Three options for a permanent St Luke’s Health Centre were discussed at the meeting:

1. A permanent venue at the health centre’s current location either adjacent to the Cumberlege Intermediate Care Centre or inside the buildings that are currently occupied by the Cumberlege Centre.
2. A health centre occupying part of the community centre on the site of St Luke’s Church.
3. A permanent building located on the opposite side of Eastern Avenue, possibly as part of the new stadium development.

## The Cumberlege Intermediate Care Centre option

A permanent home for St Luke’s Health Centre at its present location, on the site of the Cumberlege Intermediate Care Centre, remains a possibility.



This option was favoured by a learning disability nurse who attended the Healthwatch Southend public event on the future of St Luke's. She explained that she helps a lot of people in supported living schemes in the area, and stressed the value of familiarity to people who have learning disabilities.

In a meeting that took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> November, Councillor Ayling (one of three independent councillors who represent the ward of St Luke's) described a proposal to move St Luke's Health Centre into the permanent buildings adjacent to the portacabin.

These buildings are currently occupied by the Cumberlege Intermediate Care Centre. This is a 22 bed rehabilitation centre (eight of which are stroke beds). It is the current base of operations for the community stroke team and the Southend therapy and recovery team (START) - "a joint health and social care domiciliary rehabilitation and reablement team, providing short term rehabilitation programs to patients in their own home to prevent admission or facilitate early discharge from hospital."

The average length of stay at the Cumberlege Centre is 28 days. It performs an important role in providing step-down care in the local community, freeing up beds at Southend Hospital by allowing patients who aren't quite ready to be discharged into their own homes to be looked after.

The site and the buildings are owned by the council and are rented out to South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT) for a small token sum.

Were this option to be pursued the GP practice and walk-in centre would takeover part of the Cumberlege building with the remainder being used for some other unspecified purpose. This would go some way towards resolving the parking issue as there is small car park at the front of the premises.

Councillor Ayling stressed the need for a practice large enough to accommodate the future requirements of St Luke's Ward, taking into account an increasing population over the coming decades. He stated that the refurbishment of the existing buildings would be cheap and that this might make it a viable option against a background of cuts and austerity.

Were this option to be pursued It is not clear which services would be required to vacate the buildings and where these services would be rehomed.

## The St Luke's Church option

The option to develop a permanent health centre at St Luke's Church is being championed by former members of the St Luke's Healthy Living Community

Interest Company - the organisation that was heavily involved in the previous plans for a healthy living centre at Temple Sutton School.

In an email to Healthwatch Southend a representative from St Luke's Church described how, following the closure of the Community Interest Company, the remaining funds "were transferred to the St Luke's Project to develop the Centre."

This money was used to build a pair of consulting rooms, along with an adjacent patient waiting area, located in the community centre behind St Luke's Church.<sup>48</sup> The rooms were finished to a clinical standard and were completed in January 2012.

When Healthwatch Southend visited these rooms we were informed that they are being used on Mondays by the local midwifery service. We were told that this clinic is well-attended and fulfils a need in the community, with the nearest alternative being located a considerable distance away.

The space is offered to fully-qualified volunteer counsellors on Wednesday evenings.

We were notified that "the local authority, PCT (and its subsequent incarnations) are all aware of these facilities."

Healthwatch Southend asked whether any efforts had been made to encourage GPs to use the consulting rooms.

In an email from the St Luke's Project we were informed that the Project Committee "is now considering advertising these facilities [in the British Medical Journal and/or affiliates] with an invitation to view. We may also contact Care UK direct."

At the Healthwatch Southend public meeting to discuss the future of St Luke's Health Centre we were made aware of proposals for a permanent health centre on the site of St Luke's Church.

A subsequent email from the St Luke's Project elaborated on plans to expand the number of consulting rooms at the church:

"Thanks to ongoing support from the Diocesan authorities we have permission and space on which to build a further five consulting rooms on the St Luke's site. We don't, however, have the financial wherewithal - our contention has always been that the health authority would have to pay for GP surgeries wherever they are located on a permanent basis."

Healthwatch Southend has seen floor plans that were produced for a health centre on the site of St Luke's Church community centre. Three options were explored, all of which would require extending pre-existing buildings. All the options included five consulting rooms, a treatment room, a waiting area, reception, admin

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<sup>48</sup> St Luke's Church, St Lukes Road, Southend-On-Sea SS2 4AB

office/reception area, practice manager's office and a staff room.

We wrote to representatives of the project, enquiring how they proposed to manage the parking situation were the health centre to be located at the church. They responded:

“During the past few years there has been much community development at St Luke's. Each phase has had to incorporate sufficient parking spaces to satisfy the planning department. We are mindful of the impact on our neighbours and are confident that these spaces could be provided, together with an alteration for access to and from the site.”

Key figures from the St Luke's Project were present at the Healthwatch Southend public meeting. In discussing the options for a permanent health centre, plans to relocate the St Luke's GP practice and walk-in at St Luke's Church dominated the discussion.

Councillor Ayling said: “There was a well thought-out plan to develop a centre at St Luke's church which we all thought would go ahead.”

He and others at the meeting expressed bafflement as to why nothing had come of these discussions.

One commentator remarked: “Despite the enthusiasm of all those present, there was no further support for these plans and no explanation as to why.”

Representatives from the church claimed that: “NHS England deliberately avoids conversation with us” but did not elaborate any further.

Healthwatch Southend has found it difficult to establish a clear and objective picture of the reasons why discussions on these plans foundered.

Father James McCluskey from St Luke's Church said that, based on 2011 costings, it would have cost £350,000 to build the Health Centre at St Luke's Church. He expressed his dismay that large sums that were being spent on renting the portacabin when this money could have gone a long way towards funding a permanent solution.

In support of a health centre at St Luke's Church, a volunteer worker from the church said: “I see use made of the GP rooms. I also see the rooms empty. They should be used daily. So much could happen here.”

As has been mentioned above, key figures in The St Luke's Project previously ran the St Luke's Healthy Living Community Interest Company and were involved in the plans for a Healthy Living Centre at Temple Sutton School. They remain strong advocates of a health centre incorporating community services. In an email to Healthwatch Southend a representative from the St Luke's Project said:

“Our vision for a health centre at St Luke's is the same as it's always been - to establish an integral health facility based on the Bromley-by-Bow

model.<sup>49</sup> This would provide health, training, social activities and opportunities based around permanent GP provision and would, simply, look after people and enable them to take better care of themselves. It makes social, spiritual and economic sense.”

## The Eastern Avenue option

This option was mentioned in passing at the public meeting and did not appear to be favoured by anyone. It would entail building a new GP surgery on the opposite side of Eastern Avenue as part of the new stadium development.

Eastern Avenue is a busy four-lane dual carriageway with limited crossing points. It was thought that this would present a psychological barrier especially for elderly or vulnerable patients.

It should also be noted that plans for the stadium development appear to be in a very fluid state, with what will be included still up for discussion and dependent on the money available. Any setbacks in construction would result in further delays in securing a permanent venue for St. Luke’s Health Centre.

This option would have the effect of distancing the health centre from the residential part of St Luke’s Ward and relocating it in the undeveloped northern area which is currently occupied by retail parks and leisure facilities.

## Support for keeping the walk-in centre at St Luke’s

On paper the registered GP practice at St Luke’s and the walk-in centre exist as separate services, despite some overlap between the pair. At present the GP service is commissioned by NHS England while responsibility for the walk-in centre falls to NHS Southend CCG. There remains a possibility that in the future the two services may be separated and the walk-in centre relocated elsewhere in Southend.

At the Healthwatch Southend public meeting there was strong support for keeping the walk-in centre at St Luke’s:

One person said: “It’s a fantastic service. I wouldn’t throw the walk-in centre out. You have an absolutely great service here.”

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<sup>49</sup> The Bromley By Bow Centre: [Link](#)

Another remarked: “St Luke’s deserves to keep the walk in centre after putting up with rubbish all these years.”

The practice manager at St Luke’s Health Centre explained that if St Luke’s were a normal registered GP practice it would no longer be open from 8am to 8pm, 365 days a year. Weekday opening hours would probably be between 8am and 6pm with an additional surgery on Saturday morning and two late evening surgeries during the week.

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## Conclusions

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The service provided by St Luke’s Health Centre is well thought of and has performed well in inspections by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The walk-in service has been recognised by NHS Southend Clinical Commissioning Group as playing a role in taking pressure off the accident and emergency department at Southend Hospital. During inspections the CQC has observed that the walk-in centre is busy and well-attended <sup>50</sup>.

At the Healthwatch Southend public meeting there was strong opinion that the walk-in centre should not be separated from the GP practice and should remain in St Luke’s ward, with many citing the short waits for appointments and the ease of access to GPs as reasons why they like the service.<sup>51</sup> These comments should be considered alongside the positive feedback on the walk-in centre given by members of the public in CQC reports <sup>52</sup>, on the NHS Choices website <sup>53</sup> and in the local press <sup>54</sup>. These snapshots, which represent the opinions of people who use the walk-in service, have been gathered by a variety of organisations over a period of several years.

Were a public consultation on the future of St Luke’s Health Centre, or the walk-in centre, to be carried out, with the intention of engaging a broader section of the public, Healthwatch Southend would work in raising awareness and encouraging residents to air their views.

While the reach of the walk-in centre undoubtedly extends beyond Southend, according to the statistics provided for this report by the practice manager of St Luke’s, people living within the borough still represent the largest single group

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<sup>50</sup> See page 16 of this report

<sup>51</sup> See pages 28 and 29 of this report

<sup>52</sup> See pages 18 and 19 of this report.

<sup>53</sup> See page 19 of this report

<sup>54</sup> See page 16 of this report

using the service <sup>55</sup>. The present location of the walk-in centre in St Luke's ward is fairly central within the Southend area.

The main issue affecting St Luke's Health Centre is the temporary premises which have hampered the growth of the practice and its ability to serve the area. The poor provision of parking is also a problem.

At present the primary care needs of residents in St Luke's ward are being met by a GP practice that, through no fault of the current care providers, is unable to administer the full contracted service due to the limitations of the building that it occupies.

The capping of the patient register has forced residents who live in the area to register with other GP practices located outside the ward. This must be a concern to those who do not have easy access to transport, who are elderly, or who have other issues that make long journeys problematic.

Over the years thousands of pounds has been spent renting temporary premises. As was pointed out at the Healthwatch Southend public meeting, had decisions on the future of the health centre been made more promptly, this money could have instead been invested in a permanent venue.

To avoid a similar situation in the future, a permanent venue for St Luke's GP practice and walk-in centre should be able to not only meet the present day requirements of the ward but also be able to accommodate a potential growth in the local population.

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<sup>55</sup> See page 15 of this report

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## Follow-up work by Healthwatch

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Healthwatch Southend will forward copies of this report to

- NHS England
- NHS Southend Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Southend Health and Wellbeing Board
- The Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Councillors in Southend - particularly those representing St Luke's Ward
- The practice manager and the head of the patient participation group for St Luke's Health Centre
- Healthwatch England
- Community leaders working in St Luke's Ward

A digital copy of this report will be published on the Healthwatch Southend website and will be updated to include any corrections. In the interests of transparency a record of any amendments made will be listed at the end of the report.

Healthwatch Southend will closely monitor the developments at St Luke's Health Centre and will take further action as appropriate.

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## Thank You

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Healthwatch Southend would like to thank everyone who attended our public meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> October and added their voice to the discussion. We would also like to extend our gratitude to those individuals who responded to our enquiries and helped to broaden our understanding of what is a complicated situation.

**25<sup>th</sup> November, 2014.**