

Special Edition

May 2025

The Leat is distributed for the patients of Leatside Surgery by the patient group to provide information and news about what is happening at Leatside and also in the wider NHS.

The Leat is edited by Mike Mintrum, Graphics by Jill Lawrence.

From the Leatside Patient Group

We apologise to all of you who find this edition of the Leat clogging up your Inbox so soon after the last one. However, the LPG committee felt that it was important to update you on the in-house pharmacy issue, because we need your help again.

Many of you will by now be familiar with the problems that the closure of Boots pharmacy at Leatside surgery has caused for patients in the Totnes area. From the beginning, the Leatside Patient Group has been involved in the campaign to have a replacement pharmacy installed in the vacant premises

The process to obtain the licence to operate a pharmacy at Leatside took some time. While the applications were being considered by the Devon Integrated Care Board (ICB), who were charged with making this decision, many of you contacted us and the surgery to complain about the difficulties you were having accessing either of the remaining two pharmacies, Morrisons and Well. Some of you were spending considerable time spent queuing; whereas others were having difficulty actually obtaining the medication you needed. For many of you with disabilities or other mobility problems, physically getting to either of the two pharmacies presented considerable difficulties.

At the time the applications were being considered, the parent of Well pharmacy, Bestway National Chemist Ltd., objected to the issue of the licence on the grounds that two pharmacies were adequate to meet the needs of patients in Totnes and its surrounds.

Despite this objection the ICB accepted that there was a need for three pharmacies and that PharmaDerma should be awarded the licence. This news was gratefully received by the Patient Group and all patients who had been having trouble obtaining their medication.

Our hopes for progress were dashed when we received the news that Bestway National Chemist Ltd. had lodged a further objection, as they were entitled to do, their grounds were that:

- two pharmacies were sufficient and
- any initial difficulties experienced by patients following the Boots departure, had been resolved.

The new objection was handled by NHS Resolution, part of the NHS based in London and Leeds. Bestway hired professional consultants to put forward their objection/appeal. We must stress that this action was taken by Bestway as the parent company and **not** by the local staff of Well. They have operated the pharmacy as best they could in challenging circumstances. It is interesting to note that NHS Resolution quotes its purpose as “to provide expertise to the NHS to resolve concerns fairly, share learning for improvement and preserve resources for patient care”. The Patient Group does not believe NHS Resolution has achieved this purpose, having a different perspective to the Devon based ICB.

We believe also that the case presented by the Bestway consultants does not reflect the true situation for patients of the Totnes area and contains many assertions that are not evidence based and are open to question. The views and opinions of 15,000 Leatside patients have not

been fully taken into account and the on-going difficulties being experienced by those who are elderly or frail, and patients with mobility difficulties, were undervalued.

Other problems not fully evaluated are:

- the opening hours of the two pharmacies in Totnes - Well does not open at weekends and Morrisons closes at lunchtime.
- As well as that, Well is not easily accessible by patients with mobility difficulties.

So, what can we do? We are told there is no appeal of the NHS Resolution decision, and we consider this to be an affront to natural justice, especially when the Bestway appeal has been upheld on “Facts” that we believe are incorrect and without a full assessment of patient needs.

We have, therefore, started a petition to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care for a full review of the NHS Resolution decision with a view to its being overturned. Over 1,000 of you have already signed the on-line version, accessed via change.org, and we are very grateful for that, but if we are going to make an impact, we need more of you to sign.

Additionally, we are planning for paper copies to be available at several locations for those of you that are unable to access the on-line petition. Our local MP, Caroline Voaden, is supporting our campaign, and the Patient Group is issuing a press release to all national and local communication media.

What we need from you are real life examples of how the lack of a Leatside based pharmacy has affected you or your loved ones. It may have caused real pain or difficulties in obtaining your medication. We will use these examples, anonymously, to demonstrate that NHS Resolution have got it wrong and need to have their decision overturned. So please send in any examples that you think will help convince Wes Streeting to take another look.

Please send the examples to chairlpgleatside@gmail.com. Also, if you have not signed the petition please do so. It is at <https://chng.it/d7JCK6t4pS>

Thank you.

Mike Mintrum, Chair
Leatside Surgery Patient Group

Katie Porkess, Vice Chair