

# Transfer of services from Swillington Health Practice



## Engagement Report

Engagement dates: 6 January – 14 February 2025

Publication date: February 2025  
Oulton Medical Centre

## Executive Summary

Swillington Health Practice is a branch surgery of Oulton Medical Centre.

The partners at Oulton Medical Centre applied to NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), which organises the delivery of NHS services in the Leeds area (the ICB in Leeds), to transfer services currently provided at Swillington Health Practice to our two other sites, and to carry out an engagement with our registered patients about these plans to transfer services, which would result in the closure of the Swillington branch.

The ICB in Leeds agreed to the request to engage with our registered patients, and this report provides a background to the request to transfer services from Swillington Health Practice, and outlines how we engaged with patients and local people about these plans. The report details what people told us during the engagement and outlines how we are responding to their feedback.

The engagement ran from 6 January to 14 February 2025, and aimed to:

- Inform people about the proposed change, and
- Give people an opportunity to share their views on the change, voice any concerns, and tell us what was important to them about GP services.

We sent letters to 800 Swillington households and text messages to all people over the age of 18 years registered at Oulton Medical Centre informing them of the proposal and to advise of the engagement meetings. Over 80 people attending face-to-face events to find out more and to have their say.

This report gives a background to the change and outlines how people were involved in the engagement activity. It details what people told us, and outlines how we are responding to their feedback.

This report will be shared with those involved in the involvement and will be made available on the practice website and the Leeds Health and Care Partnership website. It will also support the general development of local health and care services in Leeds.

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Background	4
Involving patients and wider stakeholders	5
Who did we hear from?	6
The Survey	6
What did people tell us?	9
Section One – Swillington Health Practice	9
Section Two – General practice	13
Practice response to feedback received	15
Next steps	16

## Background

Oulton Medical Centre provides care to over 15,400 people in southwest Leeds and is made up of three surgeries – the main site at Oulton Medical Centre, and two branch surgeries: Marsh Street Surgery in Rothwell, and Swillington Health Practice.

Oulton Medical Centre, including the Marsh Street Surgery, took over Swillington Health Practice in November 2018. Since acquiring the premises, the costs associated with leasing the building have continued to increase significantly.

Numerous meetings and conversations with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) in Leeds (which organises the delivery of NHS services in the Leeds area) and with National Health Service Property Services (NHSPS), which owns the premises, have taken place since the start of the lease on the site, but these have failed to result in a solution.

The practice has been struggling to manage the rising costs associated with Swillington Health Practice, and these costs have now become financially unsustainable.

Due to financial uncertainty surrounding the site, and from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been no GP based at Swillington since early 2020. However, the practice has continued to offer nursing, physiotherapy, and midwifery sessions from the premises.

As a result, at the end of 2024, the practice applied to NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (the ICB in Leeds) to:

- transfer the services currently provided at Swillington Health Practice to the two other sites, which would result in the closure of the Swillington branch.
- engage with the practice's patients about the plans to transfer the services.

Patients living in the Swillington area have, since early 2020, been travelling to one of the other sites for GP appointments. Patients who are housebound have been receiving, and would continue to receive, home visits and would be unaffected by the change.

The main change would be to the services still running at Swillington Health Practice, nursing, midwifery and physiotherapy appointments. The intention is that, after the end of July 2025, Swillington Health Practice would close, and these sessions would relocate to Oulton Medical Centre and the branch site at Marsh Street Surgery.

## Involving patients and wider stakeholders

Following agreement from the ICB in Leeds to carry out an engagement, we identified a number of key stakeholders that we needed to hear from through this involvement and developed a range of ways to involve registered patients in conversations about this change. These are outlined in detail below:

- We have held meetings with the practice's Patient Participation Group and kept them informed about the engagement meetings and invited them to attend the engagement meetings. One member attended the Swillington parish Hall meeting and a further 3 attended the meeting held at Oulton Medical Centre.
- Staff engagement – We shared our concerns over the rising cost associated with operating services at our branch site Swillington Health Practice owned by NHS Property Services and our proposal to transfer services to our other two sites back in July 2024 at a whole practice meeting. We reassured staff there would not be any redundancies as a result of the closure and staff would continue to work across the 2 remaining sites.
- We shared our plans with local councillors and MPs and responded to their enquiries and offered to meet with them. One councillor attended a meeting with the senior partner and practice manager. The MP responded to say he was unable to attend but had arranged to meet with the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board at a later date.
- We have had discussions and exchanged emails with Swillington Pharmacist and agreed to look at ways we can work together to help mitigate against some of the concerns raised around obtaining prescriptions and the possibility of hiring a consultation room at the chemist premises if deemed suitable from a health & Safety as well as Infection Control perspective. An email was circulated to all the six practices in LS25/26 PCN advising them of our proposal to move services from Swillington Health Practice. We emailed the midwifery services to inform them about the plans and to reassure them their services would transfer to one of our other sites.
- We wrote to 798 registered patient households to outline our plans, and to invite them to take part in our engagement activities. We also sent text to all registered patients over the age of 16 years with a message informing of the proposal and to inform them about the public events and to fill out the survey.
- We ran an online survey and shared the survey link with registered patients, on our website and through our social media platforms. The engagement ran from 6 January to 14 February 2025.
- We provided people with paper copies of the survey at each of our three premises, with different formats / translated copies available on request.

- We held two face-to-face public meetings, one at Swillington Village Hall on 13 January, one at Oulton Medical Centre on 14 January and an online meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> January. Following feedback from patients, we also offered a further online session on Microsoft Teams at a time when working people would be more able to join 27<sup>th</sup> January.
- We developed a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to share and published it on our website.

## Who did we hear from?

Altogether, there were 4 engagements with our involvement activities. Some people may have been involved in more than one way:

- We met with 5 members of our Patient Participation Group on 3 occasions.
- We emailed all the local councillors and received correspondence from and met with one of the local councillors and we exchanged emails with the local MP.
- Approximately 60 people attended the face-to-face public meeting at Swillington Village Hall on 13 January.
- Four people attended the face-to-face public meeting at Oulton Medical Centre on 14 January.
- Nobody attended the lunch time online meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> January
- 3 people attended the evening online meeting held 14<sup>th</sup> February
- 79 people completed the survey, including 6 paper copies.

## The Survey

We asked the people completing the survey to tell us who they were:

Option	Total	%
I used to be a patient at Swillington Health Practice	9	11.39%
I am a relative, friend or carer or someone who used to be a patient at Swillington Health Practice	1	1.27%
I currently use one of the services at Swillington Health Practice	36	45.57%
I am a relative, friend or carer of someone who currently uses one of the services at Swillington Health Practice	6	7.59%
I am a patient at Oulton Medical Centre	39	49.37%
I am a relative, friend or carer of someone who is a patient at Oulton Medical Centre	3	3.8%

I am a patient at Marsh Street Surgery	16	20.25%
I am a relative, friend or carer of someone who is a patient at Marsh Street Surgery	1	1.52%
Other	1	1.27%
Answered	79	100%

As it has not been possible for patients to see a GP at Swillington Health Practice since early 2020, we asked people where they have been attending GP appointments since then:

Option	Total	%
Oulton Medical Centre	46	58.23%
Marsh Street Surgery	20	25.32%
I / they have not been to the GP since early 2020	1	1.27%
Not applicable	26	32.91%
Other	3	3.8%
Answered	73	92.41%
Not Answered	6	7.59%

We asked people who were still attending at Swillington Health Practice what sessions they were attending for:

Option	Total	%
Nursing sessions	37	46.84%
Physiotherapy sessions	12	15.19%
Midwifery sessions	2	2.53%
Answered	41	51.9%
Not Answered	38	48.1%

## **Equality monitoring data from the survey**

The survey included a standard section on equality monitoring, and those who completed this section provided the following detail:

### **Age range**

Four people were between 26 – 35 years old  
Seven people were between 36 – 45 years old  
Nine people were between 46 – 55 years old  
21 people were between 56 – 65 years old  
18 people were between 66 – 75 years old  
Five people were between 76 – 85 years old

### **Gender**

39 people stated they were Female  
20 people stated they were Male  
Two people preferred not to say  
One person stated they were Non-binary

### **Disability**

28 people answered Yes, they had a disability

### **Carers**

13 people stated that they provide unpaid care or support for someone who is older, disabled or has a long-term condition

### **Ethnicity**

All those who provided an answer (60 respondents) stated their ethnicity was White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British.

### **Employment**

18 people stated they were in full-time employment  
11 people stated they were employed part-time  
Two people stated they were in receipt of state benefits  
Two people stated they were not in employment  
27 people stated they were retired  
One person stated they were self-employed



## What did people tell us?

The survey was divided into two sections. The first section asked people to tell us their thoughts about the planned change to Swillington Health Practice. The second section asked them more general questions about their experiences of general practice.

### Section One

We asked people who were still using services provided at Swillington Health Practice how the sessions moving to Oulton Medical Centre or to Marsh Street Surgery might affect them:

Option	Total	%
It wouldn't really affect me / them	22	27.85%
It would affect me / them	29	36.71%
Other	7	8.86%
Answered	56	70.89%
Not Answered	23	29.11%

## What do we need to consider when thinking about this change?

We asked people if there was anything they thought we should take into account as we are planning to make this change?

(Responses to this question have been analysed using ChatGPT – asked to summarise the responses and pull out the main themes).

There were 54 responses received for this question. A full transcript of all responses is available on request.

Responses primarily focus on concerns and objections related to the potential closure of the Swillington health centre. Here are the key themes and main points raised:

### 1. Impact on Access and Transport

**Inconvenience of Travel:** Many residents are concerned about the difficulty of accessing other surgeries (Oulton, Rothwell, and Marsh Street) due to long travel times, unreliable public transport, and the lack of personal transport options.

**Elderly and Vulnerable Groups:** A significant number of people in Swillington are elderly or have mobility issues. Many do not drive, and public transportation is seen as

inadequate or expensive. Losing the local health centre would force them to rely on others for transportation, impacting their independence and health.

**Financial Burden:** Some residents highlighted the cost of taxis for appointments, which can be prohibitive, especially for those on fixed or low incomes.

## **2. Quality of Life and Independence**

**Elderly and Independent Living:** Many individuals rely on the Swillington centre for basic healthcare services, such as blood tests, injections, vaccinations, and nurse appointments. Without a local centre, they would struggle to maintain independence, and family members would have to take time off work to assist with transport.

**Stress and Anxiety:** Some residents, particularly those with mental health issues, expressed concerns that traveling to a distant surgery would exacerbate anxiety and stress.

## **3. Local Demographics and Needs**

**Swillington's Growth:** Swillington's population has grown, and it is now home to both elderly individuals and young families with children. The lack of a local GP would significantly impact these groups, especially those without access to cars or reliable transport.

**Population Size and Demand:** Many residents feel the closure would disproportionately affect those who already face difficulties in accessing healthcare. There is a call for services to be made more accessible rather than reduced, given the size and demographic of the village.

## **4. Concerns About Service Availability**

**Impact on Other Surgeries:** People are concerned about whether Oulton and Rothwell surgeries can handle the increased patient load if Swillington closes. Many have experienced difficulty getting timely appointments, and there are fears that the situation will worsen with the closure.

**Staffing and Space:** There are questions about whether the remaining surgeries have the capacity to absorb additional patients and provide the same level of service (e.g., nurse appointments, blood tests).

## **5. Communication and Consultation Issues**

**Inadequate Engagement:** Many residents feel that the engagement process regarding the closure has been insufficient, with poor notice given and few opportunities for in-person consultation, especially for working-age people. There is also criticism of the timing of the consultations (during winter months).

Lack of Information: Some individuals were unaware that GP services had already been removed from Swillington in 2020 and feel misled by the lack of clear communication from the NHS about changes.

## 6. Alternative Solutions and Suggestions

Shuttle Services: Some residents propose a shuttle service to transport people between Swillington and the other surgeries, especially for those with mobility issues or no access to transport.

Maintaining Services at Swillington: There are calls for at least some level of GP services to remain in Swillington, with suggestions such as having a GP available one day a week.

Better Infrastructure: Some feel that, if the closure goes ahead, better parking and transport infrastructure at Oulton and Rothwell should be a priority to accommodate the influx of additional patients.

## 7. Overall Sentiment

Opposition to Closure: A significant portion of the text expresses strong opposition to the closure of Swillington's health centre. Many feel that local medical services should remain local, especially considering the challenges Swillington residents face in terms of transport and mobility.

Financial Concerns vs. Patient Care: Some residents questioned whether the closure was financially motivated and argued that patient health should take precedence over cost-saving measures. Many are worried about the long-term effects on their ability to access necessary healthcare services.

### In summary

The main concerns include the lack of transport, the impact on vulnerable groups (especially the elderly), the strain on other surgeries, and the inadequate communication and consultation process. There are also calls for more consideration of local needs and suggestions for alternative solutions like shuttle services or retaining some services at Swillington.

Finally, we asked if people had any further thoughts on the plans for the change.

(Responses to this question have been analysed using ChatGPT – asked to summarise the responses and pull out the main themes).

There were 58 responses received for this question. A full transcript of all responses is available on request.

The responses reflect several recurring themes related to the closure of the Swillington Health Practice:

**Access and Convenience:** Many residents express concerns about the difficulty of traveling to Oulton or Rothwell, especially for elderly, young, or vulnerable individuals who may struggle with public transport or mobility. The Swillington surgery is seen as essential due to its proximity.

**Impact on the Community:** Several comments highlight that Swillington has a large population, including elderly and young families, making access to a local medical centre crucial. The closure is seen as detrimental to the community's well-being, with some citing the inconvenience and potential harm to patients' health outcomes, particularly for those unable to drive.

**Financial and Operational Concerns:** Many respondents understand that financial sustainability is a factor in the closure decision, but some feel that cost-cutting is being prioritized over patient care. There are also questions about the high rent for the Swillington building and whether alternative funding solutions could be found.

**Quality of Services and Facilities:** The quality of facilities at alternative locations (e.g., Marsh Street) is criticized, especially the waiting room environment and overcrowding at other surgeries like Oulton. Concerns are raised that the remaining surgeries may become overwhelmed with the additional patient load.

**Support for Local Services:** There is a clear desire for local healthcare services to be maintained or expanded. Many feel that the Swillington surgery should be used more effectively, with suggestions for reinstating GP appointments or expanding nursing services.

**Frustration with Decision-Making:** Some respondents believe the closure decision is being pushed through without sufficient consultation or regard for public opinion, and that the elderly, in particular, are not being properly considered. There are accusations that patient care is being sacrificed in favour of financial considerations.

**Alternatives and Solutions:** A few responses propose solutions, such as providing limited GP services at the Swillington premises, offering transport for those unable to access other locations, or negotiating better contracts for the building.

Overall, the main concerns revolve around accessibility, patient care, and the potential negative impact of the closure on the local community, with many asking for more consideration of the needs of Swillington residents before making such a decision.

## Section Two

We asked people which three things are most important to them when making an appointment with their GP practice:

Option	Total	%
Getting an appointment quickly	67	84.08%
Same day appointments	19	24.05%
Seeing a specific person at the practice	15	18.99%
The quality of care I receive	57	72.15%
Feeling that it is a safe environment	4	5.06%
Good communication	21	26.58%
The opening times of the practice	13	16.46%
Being able to access a range of different services locally	31	39.24%
Other	3	3.8%
Answered	74	93.67%
Not Answered	5	6.33%

We asked if people knew that every GP practice has a Patient Participation Group (PPG):

Option	Total	%
Yes	34	43.04%
No	41	51.9%
Answered	74	93.67%
Not Answered	5	6.33%

Nine people said they would like to find out more about getting involved with the PPG at Oulton Medical Centre.

We asked if people had heard of, or are signed up to use, the NHS App:

Option	Total	%
I haven't heard of it	1	1.27%
I have heard of it, but I haven't signed up to it	8	10.13%
I have signed up to it but don't really use it	20	25.32%
I have signed up to it and find it helpful	39	49.37%
Other	5	6.33%
Answered	72	91.14%
Not Answered	7	8.86%

## Practice response to feedback received

We are grateful to everyone who has taken part in this engagement and provided us with their views and concerns about the transfer of services from Swillington Health Practice.

We understand that people may have concerns about the closure of the premises at Swillington, and how this may affect them, and we have listened to the feedback at the engagement meetings, and to the concerns raised in the survey responses.

We have been able to reassure patients that they will continue to be registered with Oulton Medical Centre, unless they choose to register with an alternative provider. Oulton Medical Centre remains the nearest practice to Swillington, and there are other surgeries in Garforth and Allerton Bywater.

The biggest concern we have heard from patients through the engagement is about accessing our other two sites, which would involve a car journey or a bus journey.

Buses operate through Swillington, linking with Oulton, and we have looked into the current provision of this service, requiring one bus ride to complete the journey between the sites.

Buses currently operating along this route (174 and 175) operate hourly. The 168 runs every 30 minutes and the 9C operates hourly. Bus number 22 operates approximately every 120 minutes.

During this engagement, patients have informed us that the buses, although frequent, can be unreliable, and patients were concerned this may make them late for appointments. The practice is happy to support raising this issue with local councillors and / or bus companies and will continue to review patient feedback to understand any impact this may cause.

For those travelling by car, both our other sites have a car park with off street parking available.

Comments were made during the meetings and in the surveys about maintaining some services at Swillington:

There are calls for at least some level of GP services to remain in Swillington, with suggestions such as having a GP available one day a week.

During COVID-19, five years ago, we moved all GP services to our Oulton site to comply with strict infection control procedures that were in place and, in the main, patients were dealt with remotely or in a designated room at our Oulton site.

As things started to open and social distancing measures were relaxed, we continued to see patients at our other two sites at Oulton Medical Centre and Marsh St Surgery in Rothwell. We used our Swillington site for planned care appointments such as nursing activities including blood tests, blood pressure checks and long-term condition reviews including diabetes and heart disease as well as respiratory conditions.

There has not been a GP based at Swillington for five years now and patients have been travelling to one of our 2 other sites for appointments with a doctor during this time. A recent audit of our planned care appointments demonstrated that only 30% of appointments at Swillington Health Practice were utilised by patients residing in Swillington area. Swillington has a population of 3,513, out of which only 1,434 people are registered with our practice. Due to the relatively small number of patients registered at Swillington we found that approximately 70% of our planned care clinics were filled with patients who had travelled from Oulton or Rothwell.

This alongside our on-going dispute with NHS Property Services was undermining our ability to form a long-term plan for the site.

We have reassured patients that there would be no reduction in appointments and that all services currently operating from Swillington would transfer to our other two sites.

The practice has had discussions with Swillington Pharmacy about potentially utilising a consultation room at the chemist for a couple of sessions a week for possible blood tests and health checks. The pharmacist has said he would like to extend his premises to include further consultation rooms in the future. We are also keen to utilise the Parish Hall for large vaccination campaigns if available.

## **Next steps**

The feedback received through the engagement has been brought together in this final report. The report will be posted on our practice website and the link shared with our patients by text.

We will also provide updates about the next steps, and decisions taken, on our website, to ensure everyone is kept fully informed about important information and timescales.

You can keep up to date with developments at our practice website:

<https://www.ouultonmedicalcentre.co.uk/>