



Review of Urgent Care Services provided at St Albans City Hospital

Public Engagement

Introduction

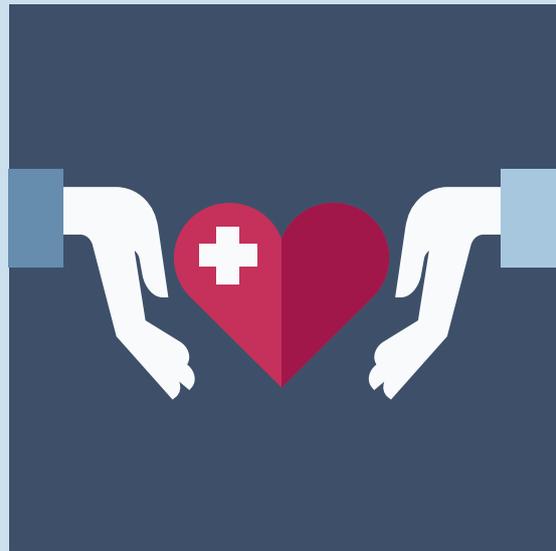
Between 17 June and 1 August 2021 we want people to give us their views on urgent care services provided at St Albans City Hospital.

We want to understand more about how people use urgent care services and what's important to you. We'll also be asking NHS staff for their views.

We'll use the information we gather to help us decide what sort of service to provide in the future.

We want you to know that we are not seeking to cut urgent care services available at St Albans City Hospital.

We want to improve what we have and provide a service that supports patients well into the future, sitting alongside other available services.



Why we are asking for your feedback now

NHS Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group is developing urgent care services across west Hertfordshire to improve local services for patients and to meet new national standards.

NHS England wants urgent care services to be more consistent across the country, delivered through urgent treatment centres or integrated urgent care hubs.

We have Urgent Treatment Centres based at Hemel Hempstead and Watford General Hospitals.

St Albans City Hospital currently has a Minor Injuries Unit (MIU). This temporarily closed in April 2020, when West Herts NHS Trust staff were redeployed to support the COVID-19 response.

It remains closed because the whole of St Albans City Hospital needs to stay a COVID free site (also known as a 'Green Site'), for the safety of all patients and so that planned (elective) surgery can safely take place there.

We now need to decide what sort of urgent care service to provide at St Albans City Hospital once we can reopen services there. We will make that decision based on information that we have gathered about how various services are used and also based on the feedback from this engagement about the needs and views of the people who use the St Albans service.

About us

Herts Valley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is the local NHS organisation that plans and pays for local health care and makes sure that residents across west Hertfordshire receive good care.

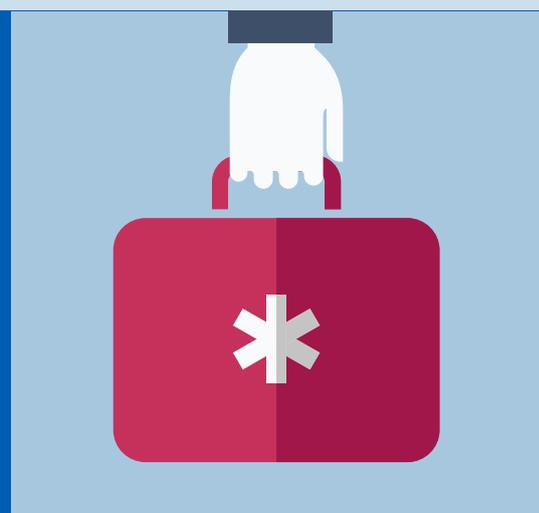
We are led by local doctors representing the needs of their patients and the views of their GP colleagues, as well as 'lay' members who represent local communities.

What is the difference between urgent and emergency care?

Urgent care services treat people who need to be seen promptly within a few hours or on the same day for an illness or injury that isn't life threatening.

Emergency care provides immediate help when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life could be at risk. In this situation you should call 999 for an ambulance.

Here are some of the different medical problems that need either urgent and emergency care.



EMERGENCY

Major health concerns needing immediate attention

- Severe chest or abdominal pain
- Suspected heart attack
- Breathing difficulties or choking
- Severe bleeding
- A serious head injury
- Suspected stroke including paralysis
- Mental health crisis

CALL 999

URGENT

Minor health concerns needing prompt attention

- Sprains, strains and muscle, back or joint pain
- Fractures or broken bones
- Cuts, wounds, bites and stings
- Minor burns and scalds
- Minor head and eye injuries
- Removal of foreign body
- Minor illnesses (eg. fever, cough, urinary tract infection, skin rash, diarrhoea and vomiting)
- Mental health concerns

Use one of the services on the following pages

Local services providing urgent care

A number of services combine to provide comprehensive, integrated urgent care for people across west Hertfordshire.

Services such as A&E and urgent treatment centres serve the whole of west Hertfordshire and neighbouring areas, not just the town they're based in. The future service at St Albans City Hospital will be open to people from this wider area too.

Services providing urgent care are shown below.

General Practice

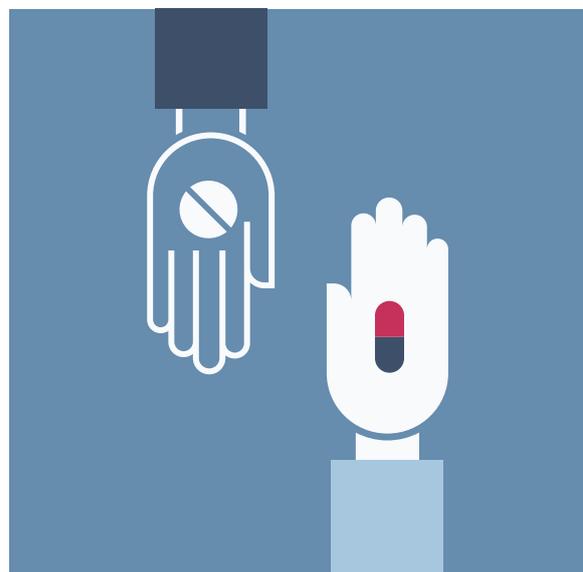
Your GP or other general practice staff such as nurses can help you with minor illnesses and some minor injuries too. Weekday appointments are available from 8am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday (not including bank holidays).

Evening and weekend appointments are available through the extended access service on Monday to Friday, from 6.30pm to 8pm, on Saturdays from 8am to 5pm and Sundays from 9am to 12 noon. These appointments can be booked through your usual GP practice or through 111 and may be at a different GP practice to the one you usually go to.

GP out of hours service is available from 6.30pm to 8am, weekdays and from 6.30pm on Friday all the way through to 8am Monday. On bank holidays the out of hours service runs throughout the day.

The out of hours GP may try to help you over the phone at first but they will arrange a face to face appointment or a home visit if you need one.

The NHS111 service can provide you with urgent health help or advice when your GP practice is closed.



Local Pharmacies

Your local pharmacist is qualified and trained to give you help and advice on common illnesses and health concerns.

Pharmacies are open throughout the week (with some longer opening hours) and are a good way of getting urgent help and advice from a qualified health professional.

NHS 111

By calling NHS 111 you can get emergency and non-emergency health advice 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

You will speak to a fully trained adviser, and if needed, they will arrange for you to speak to a nurse, emergency dentist or a GP.

If they think you need to see a health professional they will book you an urgent care, GP or A&E appointment or will arrange an ambulance in an emergency.

You can get the same help and support online at www.111.nhs.uk

A&E departments

Your local A&E department can help you with major health concerns that need immediate attention.

There are A&E departments at Watford General Hospital, Lister Hospital, Stevenage, Luton and Dunstable Hospital and Barnet General Hospital. At Watford Hospital you will be assessed on arrival to see if you need emergency treatment or if you should be seen in the urgent treatment centre.

Remember: If you use the 111 service you will be booked into an appointment at A&E if you need one.

With a booked A&E appointment you can arrive at your scheduled time and will be seen more quickly. If you go to A&E without an appointment you're likely to have a long wait.

Urgent treatment centres and other hospital-based urgent care services

The following centres are run by teams of GPs and nurses who can investigate and treat illnesses and injuries.

- **Hemel Hempstead Hospital urgent treatment centre** is open 8am to 10pm every day.
- **Watford General Hospital urgent treatment centre** is open 8am to 2am every day and is located within the A&E department.

When patients arrive at A&E they are assessed and directed to the UTC if their injury or illness doesn't need emergency attention.

- **Other urgent care services -** There are urgent treatment centres at the New QEII hospital in Welwyn Garden City (open 24 hours a day) and at the Town Centre Surgery, Luton.

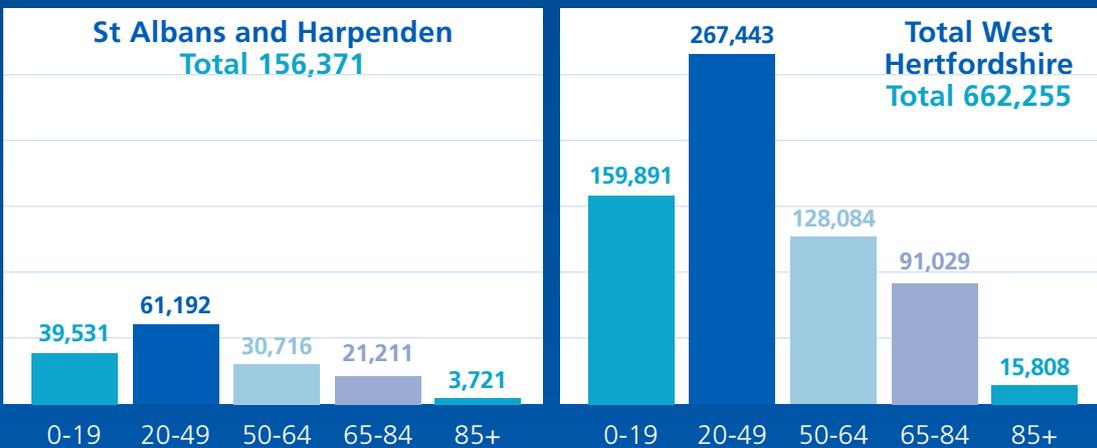
There are also urgent care centres at the Royal Free London Hospital sites in Barnet and Chase Farm, Enfield which are open from 8am to 10pm every day.



Facts and figures about urgent care services in West Hertfordshire



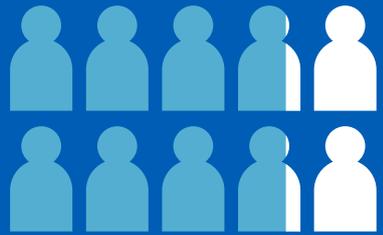
St Albans and Harpenden population



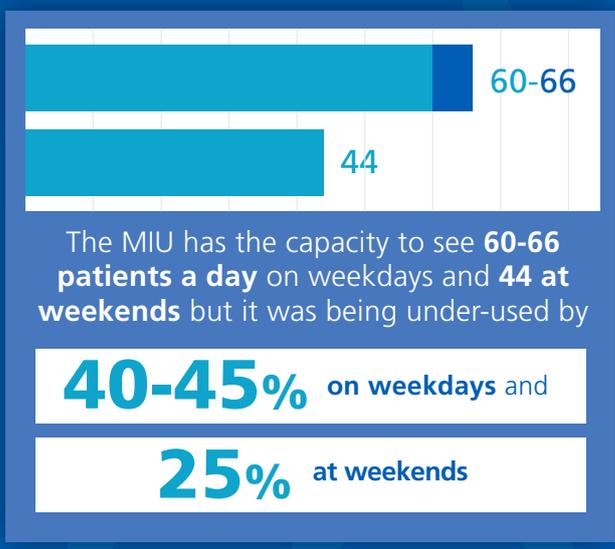
The overall population for St Albans and Harpenden is **156,371**. This is expected to grow to **175,420** by 2036.

St Albans MIU

Attendance at St Albans when it was open, approximately **13,500** patients a year from 2016 to 2020 - about **37** per day



The MIU was **mostly used** by patients from the St Albans and Harpenden area (including Redbourn) who accounted for **75%** of attendances.



The MIU has the capacity to see **60-66 patients a day** on weekdays and **44 at weekends** but it was being under-used by

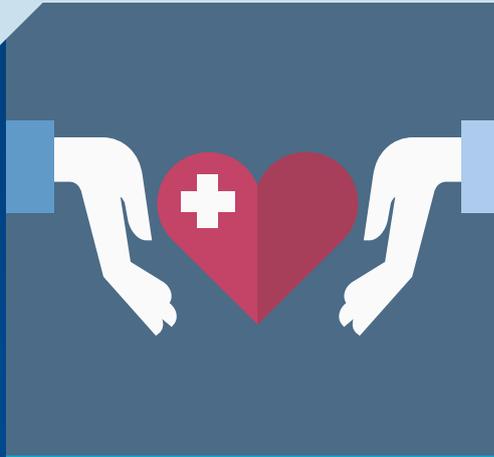
40-45% on weekdays and **25%** at weekends



The **busiest time** of day was **9am to 12noon**



During these times when attendance sometimes **exceeded capacity** and patients had **longer waits**.



Visits to local A&E departments

(average per day and/or number of visits across the year).

Between 2016 and 2021 an average of

50%

of patients attending A&E had a **non-emergency illness or injury** and probably could have been **treated elsewhere** such as urgent treatment centre or a GP.

NHS111

An average of

21,108

calls to NHS 111 from West Hertfordshire each month.



GP practices

West Hertfordshire GP surgeries offered

2,457,081

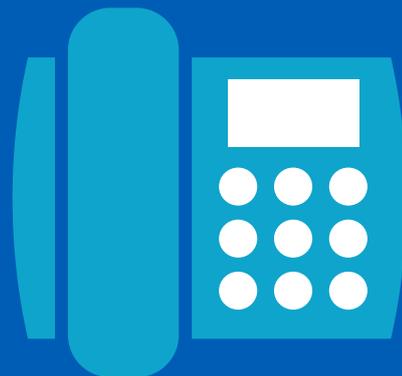
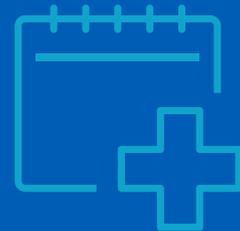
appointments

(including telephone consultations) between April 2019 and March 2020.

That's around

205,000

appointments a month.



Key factors in considering urgent care options for St Albans City Hospital

We will consider the following factors in reviewing options for urgent care services at St Albans City Hospital.

Overarching plans for urgent care

Our plans for developing urgent care services across west Hertfordshire reflect NHS England guidance and the Long Term Plans which are about improving services for patients and taking pressure off A&E. These plans say that the public should have access to:

- Urgent treatment centres that are open at least 12 hours a day, GP-led, staffed by GPs, nurses and other clinicians, with access to simple diagnostics such as tests and x-rays.
- Urgent appointments offered to patients within four hours and booked through NHS 111, general practice and ambulance (999) services.
- Routine and same-day appointments, and out-of-hours general practice, for both urgent and routine appointments, and at the same location where geographically appropriate.
- Locally integrated urgent and emergency care services that work alongside the ambulance service, NHS111, local GPs, hospital A&E services and other local healthcare providers.

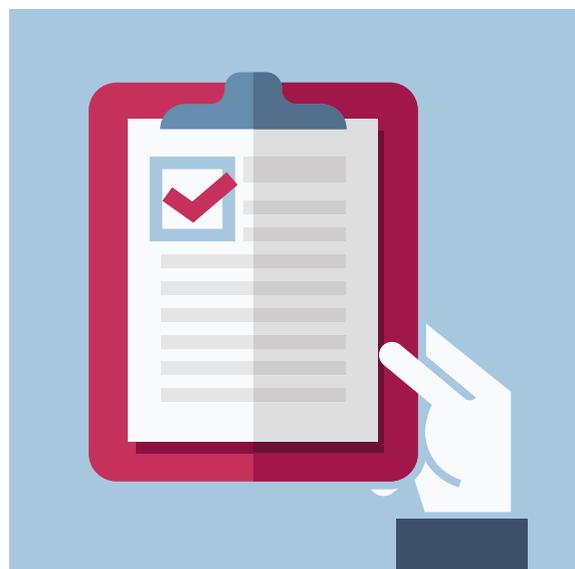
You can find out more on national guidance on the NHS England website:

www.england.nhs.uk/urgent-emergency-care/about-uec

Patient experience and access

We want to make sure that you can get help quickly and easily from the right healthcare professional for your need. The NHS is moving towards requiring **booked appointments** rather than allowing 'walk-ins' for urgent care for the following reasons:

- People who are booked into an urgent care or A&E appointment will have spoken to their GP or a trained advisor working for the NHS 111 service who will make sure they are in the right place for their needs.
- Booked appointments mean better spacing of patient attendance to avoid long waits (and pressure on facilities such as parking) and ensure better infection control.





Making the best use of staff and NHS resources

GPs, nurses and other health professionals are in high demand, and we need to organise NHS services to make the best use of people's skills and time. That means being able to use our local medical workforce in a flexible way so that we place them where they are most needed to support patients.

We need to spend NHS money wisely and so need to plan future services in St Albans in the context of other available services. Running lots of similar services close to each other means unnecessary duplication and risks overstressing our local health workforce.

Ensuring patient safety

Infection control is always a priority for the NHS but is particularly important during the current pandemic and we expect this to be a particular concern for some time. That's why we need to plan services in a way that avoids crowded waiting rooms where infection can spread.

Affordable, value for money, and sustainable in the long term

When we are planning services we need to make sure we have the money to pay for them and have the health workforce needed to keep them running - now and in the future.

We need to provide value for money and the best service possible to meet patients' needs with the money we have.

Potential for future integration with other services

When planning services we need to think about the potential to extend services in the future. For St Albans City Hospital and other local urgent care services we need to think about how we could increase the support available over time, for example by including mental health advice, community nursing and therapies, ambulance paramedics and social prescribing (connecting you to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support for non-medical issues).



Overview of options

We have taken all of the factors highlighted above into account in developing a number of options for urgent care services at St Albans City Hospital. We now want to hear your views on these options.

In developing the options, we have assessed existing urgent care services against the needs of the population. We set out here the full range of options - including those we have concerns about - so that we can be fully transparent with local people. The notes here make clear where we see advantages and limitations.

1

Option 1

No urgent care facility at St Albans City Hospital

We would not reopen an urgent care service at St Albans City Hospital and patients would continue to access nearby services such as the urgent treatment centres in Hemel Hempstead and Watford in the same way as they have been doing for the last year.

Comments

- There would be unequal provision for local patients compared to other areas and our analysis has shown that there is a need for an injury and illness service in St Albans.
- This would not relieve pressure on other services such as GPs, A&E and urgent treatment centres.
- This does not reflect our plans for urgent care.
- Nursing staff providing the MIU service would continue to serve patients who need care in other parts of the hospital.

There would need to be a formal public consultation in the unlikely event of the CCG wanting to take forward this option.

Costs:

Patients who would have gone to the MIU will go elsewhere and so the cost of treating them will move to other services. There is therefore no cost saving to the NHS from this option.

2

Option 2

Re-open previous Minor Injury Service

This would be the same minor injury service as before, led and delivered by senior experienced nurses (Advanced Nurse Practitioners) who are trained and skilled in this area. This is not a minor illness service.

Access: Open 7 days a week, 9am to 8pm. Walk-in appointments only, not bookable through 111, GPs or 999 services.

Comments

- There would be unequal provision for local patients compared to other areas and our analysis has shown that there is a need for an illness as well as an injury service. Patients can see a GP for minor illnesses at St Albans City Hospital site through the out of hours GP and extended access service but this is only from 6.30-8pm weekdays, 8am-5pm Saturdays and 9am-12 pm Sundays.
- Not having a minor illness service would mean ongoing pressure on other services such as GPs, UTCs and A&E and is not in line with national or local plans for urgent care.
- A walk-in service does not allow us to manage patients coming into the service. The service may need to change to offer booked appointments.
- We may need to review the MIU opening hours as our analysis shows that there are not enough people attending with minor injuries to justify it being open 11 hours a day.

Costs:

Delivery costs would be **exactly the same** as for the MIU previously and so this option would be 'cost neutral'.

3

Option 3 Integrated Urgent Care Hub

This would be a new minor illness and injury service providing same day access to urgent care. It would be led and delivered by senior experienced nurses (Advanced Nurse Practitioners) with the support of GPs and integrated with the existing GP extended access and out of hours services. It would also offer access to diagnostic services such as blood and urine testing, electrocardiogram (ECG) and x-ray.

Access: Open 7 days a week, up to 10 hours a day. All appointments would be bookable via NHS111 or through your GP practice. It would not offer a 'walk-in' service.

Comments

- It would bring urgent care provision in St Albans more in line with in other areas and is in line with the local urgent care strategy.
- It would reduce pressure on GPs, A&E and other urgent care services.
- Fully booked appointments mean that patients are seen quickly by the right person. Spacing of booked appointments ensures better infection control and better use of staff time.
- It is a flexible model that offers many of the features of an urgent treatment centre (UTC) without having to meet the national UTC specification in full.
- The service could also be extended in future to add other services that would benefit patients.

Costs:

We estimate that it would cost **an additional £350,000** to deliver each year compared to the current MIU. Note: these are initial costings only. Final costings would be completed at more detailed evaluation stage if the CCG was to pursue this option.

4

Option 4

Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC)

A comprehensive urgent illness and injury service providing access to diagnostic services such as blood and urine testing, electrocardiogram (ECG)²³ and x-ray. It would be led and delivered by GPs with the support of Emergency Nurse Practitioners/Emergency Care Practitioners, registered nurses and health care assistants.

Access: Open 7 days per week, at least 12 hours a day. Some appointments would be bookable. It would also offer a 'walk-in' service, which is a requirement for UTCs.

Comments

- This would reduce pressure on GPs, A&E and other urgent care services.
- Some booked appointments via NHS111 would mean most patients are directed correctly into the service. However, walk-ins would make it difficult to predict demand and some patients will turn up at the UTC who would be best seen elsewhere.
- Our analysis doesn't show the level of demand to warrant a third UTC in west Hertfordshire in addition to those in Hemel Hempstead and Watford.
- It would be challenging to fully staff a UTC given the ongoing pressures on GP (primary care) services and GP recruitment.

Costs:

We estimate that this would cost **an additional £1,500,000 to deliver each year** compared to the current MIU. Note: these are initial costings only. Final costings would be completed at more detailed evaluation stage if the CCG was to pursue this option.

Preferred option for an urgent care service at St Albans City Hospital

To identify a preferred option we have looked at what service we should appropriately provide for people in St Albans, taking into account all of the factors set out above. The following table show how the four options measure up against the criteria described on pages 5 – 7.

Key Factors for Future Service Options	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4
	<i>No service</i>	<i>Reopen MIU</i>	<i>Integrated Urgent Care Hub</i>	<i>Urgent Treatment Centre</i>
Fit with plans for urgent care	 Does not meet	 Does not meet	 Meets fully	 Meets fully
Patient experience and access	 Does not meet	 Meets partially	 Meets fully	 Meets fully
Making the best use of staff and NHS resources	 Meets partially	 Meets partially	 Meets fully	 Does not meet
Ensuring patient safety	 Does not meet	 Meets partially	 Meets fully	 Meets fully
Affordable, value for money and sustainable in the long term	 Meets partially	 Meets partially	 Meets fully	 Does not meet
Potential for future integration with other services	 Does not meet	 Does not meet	 Meets fully	 Meets fully

Taking all these things into account the CCG prefers Option 3 - Integrated Urgent Care Hub.

We believe that this option meets local needs and allows us to make the best use of staff resource, reduce waiting times and manage patient demand for urgent care services appropriately.

How to have your say

We would really welcome your views on these four options for urgent care services at St Albans City Hospital. You can have your say between **17 June and 1 August 2021** in the following ways:



1 Complete and return an online questionnaire

which you can find at <https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90355210/urgent-care-at-st-albans>

A paper copy of the questionnaire is also available on request using the contact details below.

2 Come along to a meeting or a drop-in session.

We will be holding some meetings during June and July to explain the options, answer your questions and hear your views.

You can find out about meetings on the *Get Involved* section of the Herts Valleys CCG website: www.hertsvalleysccg.nhs.uk/get-involved - You can also email **heather.aylward@nhs.net** to register your interest.

3 Please let us know if you have a meeting between now and 23 July

that you would like us to attend to discuss the urgent care options for St Albans. Please email the CCG at **communications.hvccg@nhs.net** before 9 July to request this.

4 If you're responding on behalf of an organisation and want to send your comments in writing you can email **communications.hvccg@nhs.net**

If you need this booklet in large print or in a different format, or a paper copy of the questionnaire, please email the address above or telephone 01442 898888

What will happen with your views and what happens next

Your views will help us make our decisions about future urgent care services based at St Albans City Hospital.

The Campaign Company, will receive and analyse all of the comments provided as part of this engagement and will compile all feedback into a report. This engagement report will be presented to the Herts Valleys CCG board meeting in public on 23 September 2021.

A decision will be made at that meeting on which of the four options to take forward. Depending on the chosen option, we would then need to go through a process to seek bids from both NHS and private sector providers to run a future urgent care service at St Albans City Hospital. Any new service would be likely to start by spring 2022.