

Phased re-opening of minor injuries units starts in April

A phased re-opening of minor injuries units (MIUs) in Dorset closed during the winter surge of COVID-19 will begin in April.

Sherborne's MIU, based at the Yeatman Hospital, will re-open five days a week from Friday, 1 April.

And while Blandford and Portland MIUs will remain closed for the time being, they will be reviewed regularly with a view to phasing them back into operation as soon as possible.

The county's other four MIUs and Weymouth's Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) will continue as normal, with extended daily opening hours of 8am-8pm remaining in place at Wimborne's Victoria Hospital to help deal with demand until all units can be restored.

People are urged to call 111 first, rather than turn up unannounced.

Sherborne, Blandford and Portland MIUs were closed by Dorset HealthCare in January after staffing difficulties were made considerably more challenging by COVID-19 related absences.

With COVID cases again on the rise, this remains a factor. However, staffing of the units has also been affected by a number of retirements, plus on-going recruitment challenges. This means it could take a while before all units are back to full strength.

Jane Elson, Dorset HealthCare's Service Director for Integrated Community Services, said:

"Our aspiration is definitely to have all MIUs working to pre-pandemic hours and locations. However, it has been exceptionally difficult to recruit the staff we need to fill vacancies, and there remains a significant degree of COVID-related staff absences.

"We need to ensure we can provide a safe, reliable and robust service for people who need urgent care and treatment, and cannot do so across all our units if we don't have the necessary staffing levels in place.

“However, we are able to re-open the Sherborne MIU from Sunday-Thursday and will continue to review the situation there, and at Blandford and Portland, while we strive to fill the staff vacancies.

“We are grateful for the support of our patients and partners as we seek to open all our units and encourage the public to use 111 who will often be able to provide advice over the phone or remote prescribe. If necessary, they can also book an appointment time at the nearest suitable location”

As of Friday, 1 April, Dorset’s MIUs and UTC will be open as below:

- Weymouth Hospital Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) – 8am-8pm, Monday-Sunday
- Bridport Hospital – 9am-6pm, Monday-Sunday
- Swanage Hospital - 8am-8pm, Monday-Sunday
- Westminster Memorial Hospital (Shaftesbury) – 9am-6pm, Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm, Saturday-Sunday
- Victoria Hospital (Wimborne) – 8am-8pm, Monday-Sunday
- Yeatman Hospital (Sherborne) – 9am-6pm, Monday-Thursday, 10am-4pm, Sunday
- Blandford and Portland hospitals – closed, with patients being accommodated at Weymouth and extended hours at Wimborne where a face-to-face appointment is needed.

If you have an ailment or injury that requires urgent care, please call 111 or visit www.111.nhs.uk in the first instance. 111 staff will assess your needs and make sure you get the best treatment at the right time, which might include booking an appointment at an MIU.

All of the MIUs and the UTC are now bookable services. If you turn up unannounced at an MIU/UTC, you will be assessed but could be directed elsewhere or given an appointment later that day or the next.

For anything life-threatening, always call 999 for immediate assistance.

Further details about the MIUs and Weymouth’s UTC, plus the county’s Emergency Departments, are available at www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk/miu

Ends

Notes to editors

1. Dorset HealthCare provides community health services covering physical and mental health across Dorset, Bournemouth, Poole and Southampton. Community health services include district nurses, health visitors, school nursing, end of life care, brain injury, sexual health promotion, safeguarding children, diabetes education, audiology, speech and language therapy, orthopaedic care and Dorset's 12 community hospitals.