

Herald = 15.5.87

'Save our surgery'

RESIDENTS in Sandgate are angered by the possibility of the closure of their doctor's practice and have started up a petition to try and save it.

The present doctor, Dr Courtney Lendon, is to retire at the end of June and the Family Practitioner Committee says that there are not enough patients to warrant their own practice any more.

Instead, the committee is hoping that an existing practice in Folkestone, Cheriton or Hythe will open up a branch surgery in the seaside community.

If there are less than 1,500 patients on a doctor's list, there have to be exceptional circumstances for a practice to remain.

"There isn't the need for a doctor full-time in Sandgate," said David Homeshaw, Chief Executive of the Family Practitioner Committee. "The cost of Sandgate having a doctor to itself is considerably greater than the average in Kent.

"If there isn't a surgery by the time Dr Lendon retires, the chances of ever

**By Rona
Reimann**

getting one opening in Sandgate are that much less."

This is bad news to the patients who believe that there are exceptional circumstances in their favour to keep the practice.

There are a lot of elderly people living in the area and, apart from Dr Lendon's surgery, the nearest doctor in either in Hythe or in Sandgate Road, Folkestone, which necessitates climbing a steep hill to reach.

"We got involved for the sake of the elderly people," said one of the patients involved with the petition. "We've never been without a doctor — even during the war."

Dr Lendon, who has been in Sandgate 17 years, echoed this.

"There's been a doctor in Sandgate since time immemorial," he said. "I came here when there were about 970 patients

on the list and I've been very happy looking after them ever since."

David Pratt, also from the Family Practitioner Committee, was very disappointed with the news.

"I was quite horrified when I heard about it," he remarked. "We think it's essential there should be a surgery in Sandgate."

But he added: "If someone wanted to buy out Dr Lendon it wouldn't be a viable proposition."

However, Dr Lendon doesn't agree. "When I came here I had to afford it and did," he said.

He believes that the practice would suit someone like himself who bought the practice when he semi-retired.

However, time is getting short, with a new doctor and premises to be available from July 1.

Councillor Eric Hamer for Sandgate is also concerned about the closure: "It really is alarming to think that we're getting more and more elderly people in the Sandgate area. There is a great demand for a surgery."

22 Chalcroft Road,
Folkestone,
Kent CT20 3NG

20th May 1987

Kent Family Practitioner Committee,
11 Station Road,
Maidstone ME14 1QH

For the attention of the Committee

Dear Sirs,

Re: Sandgate Medical Practice

I am deeply concerned about your proposal to close the Sandgate practice upon the retirement of Dr Lendon at the end of June. Many elderly people in the area have contacted me in the hope that you can be persuaded to change your minds.

I understand that the surgery has fewer patients than the required number on its lists but I genuinely believe that there are exceptional circumstances which justify its remaining open.

Of the thousand or so patients who depend on the surgery, a large percentage are elderly. If, as I believe, they are to be transferred to Dr Whittaker in Sandgate Road or to Dr Mallet in Manor Road, they will suffer considerable inconvenience and unnecessary stress travelling to and from the various surgeries.

For the majority of the elderly, the half mile climb up Sandgate Hill would be daunting if nigh impossible. There is a bus service which could get them up the hill, but this would involve the inconvenience of waiting at either end perhaps in bad weather or winter, adding to the distress from their ailments.

There is another circumstance which may not yet have been mentioned to your committee. Sandgate is an unpleasant place to be when the weather turns really foul and the road through Sandgate is quite often blocked as the result of a gale, through the action of pebbles or flooding. Traffic has to be diverted from the junction of Military Road, bypassing Sandgate completely and joining the main road again in the west at Seabrook. In such conditions it would be totally unreasonable to expect the infirm and elderly to make the trip up the hill to another surgery, when their present doctor is situated conveniently in the centre of the area it serves.

I beg you therefore to explore every possible option open to you before proceeding with the closure.

Yours faithfully,

PJC Ovenden

Councillor Peter Ovenden
(Sandgate Ward)

From: MICHAEL HOWARD, Q.C., M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mrs. Linda Rene-Martin,
Coast Cottage,
149 Sandgate High Street,
Nr. Folkestone,
Kent CT20 3DA

16th May, 1987

Dear Mrs. Rene-Martin,

Thank you for your letter of the 10th May about the possibility that Sandgate will be without a local surgery from the end of June. I was not in fact aware of this and am very grateful to you for drawing it to my attention.

I have taken the matter up with both the District Health Authority and the Family Practitioners Committee. When I hear from them I shall be in touch with you again.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Michael Howard

MICHAEL HOWARD

I have since read the report in the local press.

Constituency Advice Centres

Second Saturday in every month
Guild Hall, Lydd 9-30 a.m.
Town Hall, New Romney 10-30 a.m.
Jubilee Hall, St. Mary's Bay 11-30 a.m.
Parish Council Office, Dymchurch 12 noon

Fourth Saturday in every month
Council Office, Oaklands, Hythe 9-00 a.m.
6 West Cliff Gardens, Folkestone 10-15 a.m.

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE
KENT FAMILY PRACTITIONER COMMITTEE

David Homeshaw, B.Sc.(Econ.) LHSM
Chief Executive
Tel. Maidstone 57351
Ext. 202
CE/DFRH/IPF.

11 STATION ROAD
MAIDSTONE
ME14 1QH

21st May, 1987.

Dear Mr. Howard,

Family doctor practice in Sandgate.

Thank you for your recent letter to Joan de Smith enclosing a copy of Mrs. Rene-Martin's letter to you on this subject.

The decision not to advertise Dr. Lendon's practice was made by the Medical Practices Committee upon the recommendation of both the Kent Family Practitioner Committee and the Local Medical Committee. The main reasons were:

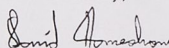
- this practice list is only half the national average.
- 70% of Sandgate residents are registered with practices in Cheriton, Folkestone and Hythe.
- several local practices have the capacity and willingness to accept additional Sandgate patients.
- there are still many areas in Kent with practices with above national average lists.
- small practices cost the FPC and the taxpayer up to 50% more than average sized practices.

In making its recommendation the FPC was mindful of the steep hills on the northern and eastern sides of Sandgate, but considered that these did not warrant the appointment of an additional doctor. Nevertheless the advantages of an NHS family doctor surgery in Sandgate were clear. In consequence I have promoted this course with local practices, and am now in active negotiations with one local practice to open a surgery in Sandgate next month before Dr. Lendon's retirement.

I trust that this arrangement will meet the main thrust of some residents' concern by maintaining at least the same degree of choice to which they have been accustomed.

Finally, I have copied this letter to Mrs. L. Rene-Martin, Mrs. C. Noy (the Secretary of the Sandgate Branch of the Royal British Legion), Mr. David Pratt (the local lay member of the FPC), and Dr. Lendon.

Yours sincerely,



Chief Executive.

Mr. M. Howard, Q.C., M.P.,
The House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA.