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Our hospital can do even more, says MP

Buckland Hospital is now operating almost twice as many clinics as when it first opened, an MP reports.

But Charlie Elphicke says 30% of the hospital is under-used, so he wants more services.

A total of 32 outpatient specialities are based at the Dover site, delivering 9,895 clinics each year. It compares to 25 departments delivering 5,020 clinics at the end of 2015. That was six months after the new hospital at Coombe Valley Road opened.

Seven new ophthalmic consultants have been recruited to work at the hospital, including in its new cataract surgery theatre.

And health chiefs said "good progress" was being made on getting GP services co-located at Buckland and creating a primary care hub.

The latest figures come as Mr Elphicke held more crunch talks with local health bosses.

Representatives from East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust and the South Kent Coast Clinical Commissioning group attended a meeting with Kent MPs organised by Mr Elphicke.

They discussed improvements being made to A&E waiting times and plans for a medical school in Kent.

Mr Elphicke, MP for Dover and Deal, said: "I'm delighted there are more services at Buckland. It's something I am constantly pushing for.

"The old hospital had been



Charlie Elphicke wants more services at Buckland Hospital



decimated over a decade, yet the opposite is happening in the new one.

"But I still want to see even more services. Around 30% of the new hospital remains unused.

"I also want to see beds commissioned at the new residential facility next door. Patients should be recovering as close to home as possible."

The news follows healthcare progress elsewhere in east Kent.

A&E performance, recently rated as one of the worst in the country, improved by 5% to 78.7% in a fortnight at the end of last month, in terms of patients treated within four hours of arrival.

With an extra £800,000 of central government investment, East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust has recruited 10 specialist emergency doctors, installed three new treatment areas and a new ambulatory care unit at the William Harvey.

It has also expanded ambulatory care and provided a combined surgical assessment unit at the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate.

Meanwhile at Deal Hospital, staff numbers have increased by 17% since last year, from 126 to 147.

And in Canterbury, an application for a medical school run by the city's two universities will be submitted by the end of the year.

Mr Elphicke said: "An extra £10 billion in real terms is going into the NHS system, bringing the budget to more than £120 billion – three times what we spend on schools.

"I have been really encouraged by the new leadership team.

"The recent good work must continue because patients in Dover and Deal deserve better."

■ **What do you think? Write to: Letters to the Editor, The Mercury, 13 Queen Street, Deal, CT14 6EX.**



Back row, Ella Coleman, Chloe Knowler, Alec Hall, Skye Hodgeson and Beth Gossip; front row, Ella Thompson, Lara Erkul, Katherine Bushell, Becca Wheeler and Sydney Humphreys

Students here to help with health

These are the health guardians of their school.

The 10 sixth formers at Dover Grammar School for Girls have become Youth Health Champions and they have raised £1,000 for the mental health charity Young Minds.

The group cover mental and physical health and while they are not counsellors they are there to listen to pupils' problems and signpost them to

staff and organisations that can help.

The team has had specialist training and guidance in areas such as safeguarding and wellbeing.

It consists of Ella Coleman, Chloe Knowler, Alec Hall, Skye Hodgeson, Beth Gossip, Ella Thompson, Lara Erkul, Katherine Bushell, Becca Wheeler and Sydney Humphreys.

The members hold sessions

to help pupils every Friday lunchtime in a section of the school called The Wellbeing Hub.

Ella says: "We are here to listen and hope that students feel comfortable talking to someone closer to their own age."

The money for Young Minds came from a week of fundraising activities such as a cake and games stall, nail and face painting and musical entertainment.