

BUCKLAND HOSPITAL



Dover and Deal MP Charlie Elphicke has received a petition calling for accident and emergency services to return to Buckland Hospital

Campaigners plead for return of A&E services

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More than 900 people have demanded the return of accident and emergency services at Buckland Hospital.

A total of 922 had signed an online petition to Dover and Deal MP Charlie Elphicke by Monday.

It was set up by Sophia Maxx who says the service is badly needed in one of the world's busiest ports.

But the hospitals trust responsible for deciding whether Buckland gets an A&E department has confirmed there are no plans to site an emergency unit at Dover.

Despite this Ms Maxx says that there is too much strain on existing A&E departments throughout Kent. People living in the district have to go to the QEQM hospital at Margate or the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford if they require emergency assistance.

She added on her petition statement: "Our large elderly community have been the mainstay of this country over the decades, gave their time and their lives to serve this country and now, when they need help the most, it is embarrassingly unavailable."



Augusta Pearson signed the petition

"Not everyone can get to the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford, which is now our closest A&E department, and the waiting times have increased exponentially."

"As time goes on the infrastructure is constantly changing to meet the needs of an ever-increasing demand on traffic, which in itself adds to the increased need for A&E to be a permanent feature in the town as it is one of the busiest ports in the world."

The only other A&E department left in east Kent is the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate.

Kent and Canterbury Hospital has not had a full-blown A&E for several years and even its lower-scale urgent care centre closed this June.

The new Buckland Hospital replaced the one at a neighbouring site two years ago but it is a community hospital with a minor injuries unit just like K&C now. There has been no A&E at Buckland since the 1990s and none at K&C since 2005.

One signatory, Dover resident Augusta Pearson, placed the petition on her Facebook page and commented: "We are one of the busiest ports in the UK. Let's put ourselves in a place where we can get immediate help for us and let's make a hospital what it claims to be, rather than a medical centre, which we have for the moment."

Mr Elphicke told the Mercury: "For over a decade Buckland Hospital had been decimated. Services were withdrawn and wards axed one by one."

"We fought valiantly for a new hospital. Then two years ago the new Buckland Hospital opened to the public – a state-of-the-art facility."

"I am seeking a meeting with hospital chiefs to discuss bringing more outpatients and diagnostics services to the site. I'm working to see more services provided at Deal hospital too."

■ The petition can be viewed online at <https://tinyurl.com/y8uk72pj>

DESPERATE NEED

The woman behind the petition is a mother-of-two who has had to struggle to get to the A&Es at Margate and Ashford.

Sophia Maxx, who is self-employed and has lived in Dover since 1995, suffers regular migraines.

She told the Mercury: "The fact that we are not entitled to an A&E any more because we lack the resident numbers is beside the point."

"On the occasions when we have had to travel to Ashford or Margate without transport when ill, it is a trying experience in itself, let alone the hours we have been left waiting, along with many others of course."

She added: "My family and I have been/were heavily dependent on Buckland Hospital over the years, both my daughters were born there and we have been prolific migraine sufferers."

"There were many times over the years that my young girls had to carry and half drag me to the hospital because I was so ill, thankfully we live nearby."

"The staff were always kind, patient and understanding."

"Ours like many illnesses are little understood, but when you are ill, ie not knowing who you are, not being able to speak, see properly and so on, all you care about is feeling better."

"When I spoke to the staff nurse at Buckland she told me that people did not know the difference between a minor Injuries unit and an A&E and so they were dealing as best they could with the constant stream of injuries."

No plans for this in our strategy, says NHS trust

There are no plans to bring back A&E to Buckland, the hospitals trust has warned.

A spokesman for East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust said: "Buckland Hospital provides services for minor injuries and illnesses, but life-threatening and serious injuries are treated at the emergency departments at Ashford and Margate."

"The NHS is working with the public and health service staff to develop proposals for which hospitals in east Kent should provide which services, including A&E services, as part of a Kent and Medway-wide strategy to transform health services. This strategy is called the Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Plan."

"The proposals for east Kent will focus on the three main hospitals in Canterbury, Margate and Ashford. They will be consulted on as part of a public consultation led by the Clinical Commissioning Groups in east Kent, likely to be held early next year."

"There are no plans to provide full A&E services at Buckland Hospital."

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