

90 Saturday GPs appointments now available



ANOTHER OPTION: Dr Richard Cullen

NINETY appointments a week are now available with GPs on Saturday mornings as part of a pilot project to improve access.

The extra sessions are designed to give better access to doctors for people who struggle to attend during the working week.

Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group is funding the pilot until April and hopes to continue offering the Saturday option in the long term.

Dr Richard Cullen said: "The whole idea is offering another option for people who cannot get to their doctor during the

normal working week.

"They have the options of the walk-in centre and the out-of-hours service, but those are for urgent care. This is for routine primary care of people who are generally well.

"There is always extra demand for healthcare. There are certain pressures that people feel, in terms of working and looking after other family members such as children or older relatives.

"We want to get the message out there so that people know that these appointments are available."

The pilot is based in three "hub" surgeries, which each

have two doctors working from 8am to 11am.

Every practice across the borough has access to a number of the available slots, based on population.

Dr Cullen said attendance had been quite low on the first two weekends but improved last Saturday as word of the sessions spread.

He added: "The feedback we've had from our receptionists has been that people have been very complimentary and happy about being able to have an appointment on a Saturday.

"This will carry on until April and we hope to keep it going after that if people con-

tinue to show that there is the demand.

"It's all about providing the best care to the patients as locally as possible. That's the reason we have gone for this model, as we think it's sustainable.

"If we could have every practice open, we would, but that's not sustainable in terms of the number of GPs.

"It would need a reduction in access during the week. This way, we are building on what is already available."

Saturday appointments at the three hubs must be pre-booked through patients' own surgeries.