

24 March 2020

For general practice in Kent and Medway: COVID-19 update 3.

COVID-19 updates and your questions

This is the third update provided by the Kent and Medway CCGs to give you information that can help practices cope with the unprecedented situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of course we are aware that there is an increasing amount of information being sent out to you – this update is designed to provide you with local information. The LMC are also working with us and we are agreeing when it is appropriate for them to send out information. You should also be getting updates from NHS England and Improvement. We are constantly looking at how we can streamline this flow.

NB The information in these updates is up to date when sent out but it is always important to check that this reflects the most recent guidance by following links.

New Kent and Medway CCG COVID-19 GP email address

A central COVID-19 inbox has been set up so GPs and practice staff in Kent and Medway can raise COVID-19 related questions and issues:

Wkccg.gpsCovid19@nhs.net

We will aim to channel all COVID-19 local communication from Kent and Medway CCGs to GPs and practices through this email. This will lessen the amount of email traffic and provide more co-ordination, clarity and consistency of communications. Any COVID-19 related questions from GPs and Practices received via other channels will be increasingly re-directed to this inbox to be answered either through this update (if of a general nature) or a direct response (if a locally specific matter).

Please do not share confidential patient information through this email. It is also not for clinical advice.

New NHS England and Improvement Daily Primary Care Bulletin

A new daily bulletin for primary care from has been developed by the NHS . This is a [link](#) to the one that was issued yesterday for your information. Those interested in receiving it should sign up [here](#). Please note it currently states on this page that this is a monthly bulletin – ignore that. We have alerted them that they need to update the page.

Primary care information for vulnerable patients

NHS England have written directly to all GP practices; locum GPs; primary care networks; GP federations with details of the national process of contacting

vulnerable patients. If you have not received this letter please Find it here
https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/200321_GP-letter_Annex-2_FINAL_2.pdf

Hospital discharge guidance and leaflets

NHS England have written directly to all GP practices; locum GPs; primary care networks; GP federations about the hospital discharge process. If you have not received this information find it here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-hospital-discharge-service-requirements>

Reminder: communications to patients

As above it is more important than ever to make sure patients are receiving clear and consistent information. We are grateful to everyone who is sharing NHSE and PHE messaging relating to COVID-19 and would encourage you to continue – it means patients are getting reliable advice from trustworthy sources. If you use links then you can be confident that the information will remain current if updated.

This is also a good time to review your content on your website – and although it may take some of your precious time accurate and helpful information will reduce the level of calls from patients. A good example of this is the new self-service process for sick notes – see below for further information.

If you have more specific messages to share that relate to your practice or PCN, please make sure they are completely accurate before posting them on your website or on social media channels. Please can we ask practices to check public messaging by sending it to Wkccg.gpsCovid19@nhs.net before publishing. You can also ask for support from the CCG communications team to help manage media queries through the same route.

Personal Protective Equipment Supply

We know that the lack of availability of PPE is not acceptable – we are doing what we can to escalate our concerns.

As of this week, supply of PPE will become coordinated locally with the setting up of a local distribution centre. Operating procedures for how this will be accessed and distributed will be circulated as soon as they are finalised.

Please note that PPE being shared with expiry dates has been revalidated and is safe to use-even if the original date may have expired.

Finance

A letter was sent earlier today jointly agreed by the CCG and the LMC with the aim of providing further clarity on financial arrangements.

QOF Payments

As previously stated QOF payments for 2019/20 will be protected, the attached email entitled QOF FY2019/20 COVID-19 provides the detail from NHS England. However, to ensure that CQRS calculates the 19/20 payments at year and the aspiration for 2020/21 then all practices must complete the CQRS year-end actions. The attached email entitled “CQRS – QOF year-end 19/20 updates and action required” provides you with the details on how you complete your year-end actions on CQRS.

Medicine Management and Pharmacies

Illicit Drugs

In recent days, the National Crime Agency (NCA) has reported that they have started to receive anecdotal reports of soaring wholesale illicit drug prices and global supply/demand problems. For addicts it will be crisis time, and they may feel that any form of pharmaceutical or illicit drug is worth a try. As a result, it may be that any business, hospital, GP surgery, pharmacy or health worker, where ‘drugs’ are thought to be available could also be at significant risk due to user desperation and/or dealer greed.

From your perspective we would ask that you continue to ensure the safety of your Controlled Drugs cabinets and all pharmaceutical products stocks are monitored very closely.

If you become aware of anything new, unusual or different in relation to this issue please report it directly to adrian.parsons@kent.police.uk so the police can use the intelligence provided to develop a response to this situation. Obviously use normal procedures to report criminal activity.

New ways of working for community pharmacies

If under significant pressure, at the discretion of the responsible pharmacist, pharmacies may now close their doors to the public for up to two and a half hours a day. This includes a lunch break. This provision will apply until further notice from NHS England and NHS Improvement.

All pharmacies will be expected, on every day they have contracted opening hours, to be open to the public between:

10am and 12 noon and 2pm and 4pm as a minimum (if these are contracted hours)

100 hours pharmacies should be open from 10am–12pm and 2pm–6pm as a minimum.

Administration

Sick notes

This is process for sick note that patients can now generate themselves. Patients should click onto following website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice>

Then click on “Get Isolation Note” – which is half way down page highlighted in green. This will take you to the NHS111 page where patients will be asked to answer a few questions. On completion a reference number will be emailed to the patient which is the sick note.

Sharing personal information during COVID 19 - COPI notice

Yesterday, the Government confirmed that are invoking Regulation 3(4) of the Health Service Control of Patient Information Regulations (COPI) 2002. This will allow information to be shared without consent for the purposes of containing the disease. This covers sharing information with the following providers and will be in place until 30 September 2020:

- all providers of healthcare
- all GP practices
- all Department of Health and Social Care arm's length bodies
- local authorities

The purposes of sharing include:

- understanding Covid-19 and risks to public health, trends in Covid-19 and such risks, and controlling and preventing the spread of Covid-19 and such risks;
- identifying and understanding information about patients or potential patients with or at risk of Covid-19, information about incidents of patient exposure to Covid-19 and the management of patients with or at risk of Covid-19 including: locating, contacting, screening, flagging and monitoring such patients and collecting information about and providing services in relation to testing, diagnosis, self-isolation, fitness to work, treatment, medical and social interventions and recovery from Covid-19;
- understanding information about patient access to health services and adult social care services and the need for wider care of patients and vulnerable groups as a direct or indirect result of Covid-19 and the availability and capacity of those services or that care;
- monitoring and managing the response to Covid-19 by health and social care bodies and the Government including providing information to the public about Covid-19 and its effectiveness and information about capacity, medicines, equipment, supplies, services and the workforce within the health services and adult social care services

- delivering services to patients, clinicians, the health services and adult social care services workforce and the public about and in connection with Covid-19, including the provision of information, fit notes and the provision of health care and adult social care services; and
- research and planning in relation to Covid-19.

If you have any questions please contact the Kent and Medway Information Governance team on mccg.northkentgpdataprotection@nhs.net

Patient Participation Groups (PPG) –

Practices can suspend engaging with and / or reviewing feedback from their PPG, and may pause implementing any improvements previously agreed between the practice and the PPG unless, in the contractor's opinion, those are clinically necessary. Consideration should also be given to stopping any similar local activity that might involve gatherings of potentially vulnerable patients.

Property

A number of practices operate from NHS Property Services managed locations. They are sending out a regular newsletter. The most recent issue we have is available [here](#). You can subscribe to this through a link at the bottom of the newsletter

GP IT

Please ensure your IT lead in practice reviews the information below so that you are using all support available. If you don't have a lead, ask a member of your PCN, or the CCG for support.

We are doing everything possible to mobilise IT solutions and test out remote working options for rapid deployment. We are doing this with NEL and using the learning from other areas.

We understand that practices may wish to test out their own solutions as they are data controllers of their own data but please check the latest Information Governance guidance first before you do this. You may also check what we are doing to support practices which may provide you with a better, faster and safer solution.

Remote working

VPN tokens for 'provided devices'

The CCGs have purchased VPN tokens from Red Centric to allow secure access to networks and support remote working of GPs and practice staff. These tokens are for work provided devices such as laptops.

We are hopeful that NEL will be ready to contact practices directly by the end of this week to arrange activation with a simple user guide. Priority will be given to those people with expired (or about to expire) BT tokens.

The tokens have to be activated by NEL as they manage the permission rights of the network to protect it for all.

VPN tokens for personal devices

We know that in the absence of laptops many of GPs and practice staff who are self-isolating need VPN tokens to use your own devices effectively and give you full access to your desktop and clinical records in surgeries.

We are putting a lot of effort into testing the VPNs on personal devices and the support you will need to activate these at home. We are testing this week to find a secure solution.

1800 tokens have been reserved with Red Centric to support roll out when tests are completed. This is because we can currently support 2000 users on our network before needing to scale up the platform.

Laptops

We know many practices are desperate for remote working due to staff having to self-isolate. Many of you are contacting the NEL ICT Service desk or GPIT team for the laptops mentioned in a previous communication regarding '1 device per 2,000 patient population'. We have received an update this afternoon that NHS Digital has sourced **600 laptops** for us in Kent and Medway. The CCG and NHS Digital have asked for full deployment within two to four weeks of delivery.

As this is hot off the press we will update you as soon as a deployment timeframe is confirmed with NEL. This will be a very challenging timeline and will depend on practice availability as well as prioritisation of other works. Any requests for these devices via NEL Service Desk will be collected and the CCG will work with partners to make decisions on prioritisation and deployment.

Online triage

Practices are being advised to encourage patients to use online triage (which is **not** the same as video consultation), to take the pressure off phone lines.

eConsult (East Kent) and Doctorlink (West Kent, DGS, Swale and Medway) are being deployed to provide this service.

Practices are rapidly taking up this offer – there are 21 sites now live in East Kent CCGs (using eConsult) and 7 sites across Medway, Swale, DGS and West Kent CCGs (using Doctorlink). 17 sites have come on line in one week.

Please be one of the next wave and take up the rapid deployment programmes. For more information on Doctorlink please email: sean.key1@nhs.net and eConsult andrew.gove@nhs.net.

If you are a Practice Manager who has gone live, please contact Sean or Andrew to volunteer to help other practices to go live and we will remunerate your practice.

iPlato text messaging

CCGs have renegotiated and expanded the contract threefold with iPlato. Extra credits for texts will be available this week.

Kent and Medway now has 29 million credits – on average about 15 texts per patient.

We appreciate that practices will know to use these wisely but will also want to send bulk messages for critical and targeted information for vulnerable groups.

We will review usage regularly to ensure there are enough texts to keep vital communication routes to patients open.

Video consultation

Video consultation is also recommended nationally and AccuRx video consultation has now been installed on all devices with EMIS.

AccuRx Flemming has deployed to all Vision sites.

More information: <https://support accurx.com/en/articles/3776579-coming-soon-accurx-video-consultation>

It is important to note that if any patients are not yet signed up for Patient Access through EMIS, they do not need to visit the surgery as previously advised. Ensure Online Registrations is enabled in EMIS Manager and they will be able to setup their account online and book and join one call. Find out more here about Video Consult.

Tele-conference call facilities

We have received queries around tele-conferencing suitable for practices to use. The CCGs use WhyPay who provide a free system. <https://whypay.net>. However call charges may apply on mobiles - you will need to check

From a data protection perspective this is suitable for practices to use as Why Pay has PIN access and calls are not recorded.

We acknowledge this is a difficult time for all those staff working in primary care and we would like to thank you for all of your hard work and dedication in this challenging time.

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