

23 April 2020

For general practice in Kent and Medway

COVID-19 Update 12

This update is provided by Kent and Medway CCG to provide information to help practices deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you have any feedback or ideas to make the Updates more useful to you please email wkccg.gpscovid19@nhs.net.

Highlight:

If you need to access information from previous GP updates the LMC have kindly placed them on their website:

<https://www.kentlmc.org/kentmedwayccgcovid19updates>

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. The NHS guidance for primary care can be found [here](#).

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.



Caroline Selkirk



Navin Kumta

Clinical

Immunisations

We have been told that all GP practices were sent some important guidance yesterday directly by the NHS. It was regarding the maintenance of essential immunisation programmes. It stated:

“Routine immunisations remain a high priority and should continue to be provided. Only in exceptional circumstances, where demand and capacity issues may impact on the ability to provide a full service, should consideration be given to delaying any immunisations.”

It asked practices to contact the NHS immediately (by responding to the email that was sent by Debbie Richardson) if you have already ceased to provide any routine immunisation programmes (except shingles).

It also asked for practices to raise any concerns about their ability to maintain essential immunisation programmes with the CCG primary care team in the first instance.

Reducing the burden of fit notes during Covid-19

Individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 or those having to self-isolate due to residing with someone with COVID-19 symptoms can obtain an Isolation Note in line with [current guidance](#).

For non COVID-19 health conditions, employers may still insist on fit notes for payment of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) or Occupational Sick Pay (OSP). A fit note with a wet signature (defined as ‘other medical evidence’ required by Medical Evidence Regulations) can be scanned and emailed to a patient. GPs should give due consideration of GDPR with necessary consent in place, guidance to employers will be updated to reflect this.

If an employer insists on a paper copy fit note, this can be posted to the patient. GPs can issue fit notes for a clinically appropriate time, in line with [existing guidance](#).

Mental health support

Safe havens have opened in Canterbury, Folkestone, Medway, Maidstone, and Thanet for all residents over the age of 16 living in Kent and Medway. Funded by the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group, the safe havens were due to open to the public in April as places people could walk in and seek support with mental health issues in the evening when other services are closed. With current restrictions this has not been possible.

As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic grows, getting mental health support will be increasingly important so the providers have changed the service, so telephone advice is available to all residents of the county over the age of 16.

In Canterbury, Medway, Maidstone and Thanet the safe havens are run by Mental Health Matters. The Folkestone Safe Haven is run by Hestia and in addition to the CCG is funded by a consortium of Kent based trusts, including the Roger De Haan Charitable Trust.

In Canterbury, Medway, Maidstone and Thanet the phone lines are open from 6pm to 11pm, 365 days a year. Details of numbers are available here: <https://www.mhm.org.uk/kent-safe-havens>

In Folkestone people can call 0808 1963 569; Monday to Friday: 18:00 - 23:00, and on weekends and bank holidays between 12:00 - 23:00. More details available here: <https://www.hestia.org/folkestone-and-hythe-district>

There is no formal referral process to this service – it is important that they are open to all without a need for referral. However, GPs may wish to provide patients with the phone numbers so they can seek mental health support in the evenings when they have nowhere else to turn.

The safe havens will be open to the public for face to face support when restrictions are lifted, and it is safe to do so.

Important information from the Kent and Medway CCG Safeguarding Team

Safeguarding statutory functions remain during this time and you should still make referrals if you are concerned that a child or adult is at risk of harm. Due to social isolation, this is going to be a time when vulnerable children and adults may be even more vulnerable, for example children living in homes where there is abuse or adults with mental health issues or substance misuse and an increase in domestic abuse. Please be mindful of this when seeing adults and “Think Family” and consider whether there may be a child.

Initial child protection conferences are continuing and being held remotely so practices should still provide reports in the usual way if requested. Reports are to be submitted from practices via email. There is an option to Skype call in for case conferences and details will be sent out in the request for information.

When considering completing a Treatment Escalation Plan and a patient does not have capacity and there is no family member available or LPOA in place do not forget an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate can help. Contact Kent Advocacy on 0330 440 9000

Please contact your Safeguarding Designated Professionals or Named GP for safeguarding if advice or support is needed.

The team has also provided the useful links below to safeguarding updates and resources:

- National Domestic Violence Helpline - 0808 2000 247
- Domestic Abuse Support in Kent website - local resources for professionals and to give to families
<http://www.domesticabuseservices.org.uk/>
- Safe Lives - <https://safelives.org.uk/news-views/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19>
- Womens Aid has an online chat service open Monday to Friday 10-12
- Changes to health legislation during this time can be found under COVID Act 2020 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/7/contents/enacted>
- RCGP has produced a range of support tools and resources available <https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/view.php?id=373>
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and MCA remain in place and have been updated in the light of Covid-19.
<https://www.mentalcapacitylawandpolicy.org.uk/dols-dhsc-guidance-published/>
- Follow #CovidSafeguarding on Twitter @NHSsafeguarding for updated information and advice
- Download the [NHSE Safeguarding Guide App](#) for full advice and guidance
- Adult level 3 training is available from Health Education England: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/level-3-safeguarding-adults>
- [Silent Solution: https://fullfact.org/crime/dial-999-silent-call-hang-up/](https://fullfact.org/crime/dial-999-silent-call-hang-up/) A mobile caller to 999 who cannot speak due to risk to themselves can press 55 when prompted and the police will be alerted to their genuine emergency.

Treatment escalation plans

A treatment escalation plan (TEP) is used to record information discussed between a patient and healthcare professional about the types of care and treatment they would or would not want to be considered in an emergency if they were unwell.

As part of the Kent and Medway response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a TEP has been agreed through a process of clinical consensus with input from senior clinicians across primary, community, acute and end of life specialties. The TEP has been adopted across Kent and Medway for this period to support people who are frail and unwell to plan their care.

The document attached entitled “Treatment Escalation Plan in response to Covid 19 Resource Pack” explains this in detail. Further documentation is also available here: <http://ashford.referralsupport.co.uk/referral/ashford/>

To be able to decide the appropriate treatment plan in a timely manner for all our patients, we need to have all appropriate TEPs completed and uploaded centrally for all care agencies to be able to access them regardless of roles or settings 24 hours a day. We are utilising all existing networks of professionals to complete these TEPs – if you would like to help in this work, or have any other queries please email rosie.baur@nhs.net or clarethomas@nhs.net for east Kent or r.pullen@nhs.net for west Kent and Jo.Staddon@nhs.net for north Kent.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust referral process for pregnant women

On Monday 27 April the process will change to online self-referral that women can access directly.

After this date, women do not need to complete any forms that are currently in use, but must access the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust website in order to be allocated a booking appointment. When women present either in person or via telephone they will need to be directed to the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust Maternity website: www.mtw.nhs.uk/maternity

GP receptionists will no longer need to make initial booking appointments or give women any printed information. This brings us into line with neighbouring trusts and follows the Maternity Transformation recommendations.

We would appreciate if the website address above could be available to each receptionist/telephone so that it is given to women if they contact your surgery. We anticipate that, for most women, this will be a far more user-friendly way to book and may also help reduce unnecessary appointments with GPs.

Once women access and complete the online referral form, we will be able to arrange a booking appointment with their team midwife in the appropriate setting. We will also send them the latest pregnancy information electronically in order that they can read this prior to their first appointment.

If you have any comments or queries regarding the online self-referral system please email mtw-tr.maternityselfreferral@nhs.net or alternatively call 01892 632823.

Urgent Dental Care

Urgent Dental Care centres (also known as hubs) have been set up to meet the distinct needs of people with urgent dental care needs during the current COVID-19 pandemic: There are seven of these across Kent and Medway. The urgent dental care hubs allow appropriate separation and treatment of patients in the context of COVID-19.

All patients will need referral by a dentist. This may be a dentist they usually see or another local dental practice which should still be providing phone advice. Each patient will then be triaged by an urgent dental care hub depending on a number of factors and their care managed accordingly.

If you are contacted by a patient with an urgent or emergency dental condition you should ask them to contact a dental practice for a telephone assessment to assess their dental needs. This could either be the dental practice they normally attend or an NHS practice nearest to their home address, which can be located on <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhsservices/dentists/>

Out of usual surgery hours, they should call NHS111 who will be able to provide a suitable alternative contact.

For further information, please contact the south east NHS dental team: ENGLAND.southeastdental@nhs.net

Medicines & Prescribing Guidance

NHS England guidance on remote prescribing in health and justice sites

NHS England has published specific guidance on the remote prescribing of medication in health and justice sites as a result of virtual/remote consultations with patients. The guidance states that prescribers should be aware of the processes for prescribing responsibly remotely and also advises providers to have written procedures underpinning how remote prescribing is undertaken. Processes have been described separately for controlled drugs (CDs) and Non-CDs. Access the full guidance [here](#).

Community pharmacy update

Many pharmacies are currently operating within restricted hours to allow them time to recover, clean and make sure that they can process prescriptions in a safe and timely manner. Most pharmacies are following the amended hours below as requested by NHS England; however, these times may vary locally, and some pharmacies may be open different times to this.

10am-12pm and 2pm-4pm or 10am-12pm and 2pm-6pm

Community pharmacy closure notice

Boots Pharmacy, Bluewater Shopping Centre, DA9 9SJ closed from 14 April 2020.

Community pharmacy staff testing

Details of how community pharmacy staff can access testing has been sent in an email by the NHS Business Services Authority to the NHSmail shared mailbox of each community pharmacy in England. The email contained a link to an invitation template for employees needing testing.

IT

Regular primary care webinars

All webinars for primary care staff can be found here: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/other-resources/webinars/> It includes a list of past webinars with links to the recordings, where available, and future ones taking place. This will be regularly updated

The list includes webinars on practical steps that practices can take to establish a total triage model:

23 April, 4.30-5pm: [using accuRx throughout COVID19 for video consultations](#)

28 April, 12:30-1pm: [giving your patients access to online services remotely](#)

Workforce

Support to care homes

The CCG is starting to expand capacity to offer support to care homes in relation to COVID-19. This is work that can be undertaken remotely.

Where primary care practices have identified any clinical nursing staff who might be willing to support this work, please email: kmccg.qualitycovid19@nhs.net.

NHS workforce feedback hub

The NHS has opened [an online feedback hub](#) so that it can hear and respond to the needs and experiences of the NHS workforce at this unprecedented time. The hub is private and anonymous, and asks participants to share how they are feeling, what more can be done to support them, and how the NHS can adjust its communications as part of the COVID-19 response. It is being run by Ipsos MORI, an independent research organisation, and is open to anyone working in the NHS.

Administration

Updating NHS Directory of Services

If you receive the daily NHS Primary Care Bulletin, last night's edition stated that "CCGs had been asked to make sure they have an approach in place by the end of next week (30 April) for updating the NHS Directory of Services (DoS) with any ongoing changes in GP practices capacity status."

We are currently looking at the implications of this and how far we can integrate the new requirements with existing reporting to minimise the impact on practices. We will be discussing with the LMC before confirming any new arrangements, so it would be really helpful if you could wait to hear from us before making any enquiries.

NHS Volunteer Responders

As a reminder, you can still refer any patients who might need support while self-isolating to NHS Volunteer Responders for help with tasks such as collecting shopping and prescribed medicines or driving patients to medical appointments. The scheme is already helping thousands of people every day. You can make referrals through the [NHS Volunteer Responders referrers' portal](#) or by calling 0808 196 3382.

The scheme will soon be open for self-referrals. People who have been advised to shield can ask volunteers for short-term help by calling 0808 196 3646 between 8am and 8pm. Please pass this number on to your patients who could benefit from this support.

Communications

Using NHS website content

New guidance about how to use NHS website COVID-19 content on your websites has been published by the NHS. It has created a new resources page at developer.api.nhs.uk/coronavirus which includes:

- **a new widget** – so you can embed a content box using NHS website styles
- **a button** – with a link to the NHS website coronavirus content you can embed
- **a prominent banner** – with a link to NHS website coronavirus content
- **a new API** – that can be used to integrate NHS website coronavirus content into your service (requires technical expertise).

The page also includes guidance on syndicating NHS content, and general guidance on copying NHS.uk content and republishing it under the Open Government Licence. Please contact syndication.service@nhs.net if you have any queries or need more information.

New community health update

The NHS has published its [first weekly COVID-19 community health, hospital discharge and social care update](#). The new bulletin will bring together links to recent publications, updates from workstreams and guidance.