

04 June 2020

For general practice in Kent and Medway

COVID-19 Update 24

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 kmccg.gpscovid19@nhs.net

Highlight:

119 is the new phone number for people to call to help book a test, to ask questions about a test they've booked or chase results. The phone lines are open from 7am to 11pm.

Clinical Advice & Support

Quit For Covid

Evidence shows that COVID-19 is increasing smokers' desire to quit.

- to improve their health and wellbeing and help them stay out of hospital
- to reduce the risks of developing severe symptoms
- to potentially reduce the risk of poor outcomes if they are treated in hospital for COVID-19, and
- to protect others from second-hand smoke exposure in the home.

The #QuitForCovid campaign is aimed at supporting smokers who want to be smoke-free, now maybe more than ever.

Further information for health professionals is available here:
<https://smokefreeaction.org.uk/quitforcovid/>

Please consider adding the attached banner image to your website.

One You Kent continues to support clients with Smoke-free support at this time. You or your patients can phone 0300 123 1220 for further information about the service. You can also direct your patients to self-refer through the website:
www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/one-you-kent/one-you-smoke-free/

Kooth – online mental health support for children and young people.

Kooth is a free, safe and anonymous website where children and young people can speak (via text-based chat) to British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) accredited team members and access a variety of self-help resources. Children and young people aged 10-16 in Kent and from 11-25 in Medway can now access the service 365 days a year. Over 4000 young people in Kent have logged on to Kooth.com with over 6000 hours of counselling provided by their team.

Kooth are currently hosting webinars to Kent based professionals to learn more about their service and how they provide support to young people in Kent. GP's, Practice Managers, Mental Health Nurses can sign up to a webinar by following this link -<https://forms.gle/1xvxPtyUc8a2TifPA>. There is a choice of four dates over the next two weeks. If you wish to find out more please contact Matthew Cowlam, the organiser: mcowlam@xenzone.com

Safeguarding

Patients with Learning Disabilities

We would like to remind practices of the importance of proactive health checks for people with a learning disability particularly during this critical time. On average men with learning disabilities die 23 years earlier than men without a learning disability and for women it's 27 years earlier. Practices are reminded that the DES has not been suspended and that they should continue to offer this proactive service to their patients.

Healthcare Professionals should discuss with the patient (if considered to have mental capacity), their carer or their advocate the most suitable and safe way to conduct a health check. Where this can be delivered safely on a face to face basis this should continue. Where this care cannot be delivered safely face to face or where the patient has other medical conditions which require them to shield or socially isolate the review could be conducted remotely, with as much of the physical review completed as is practicable in these circumstances.

Practices should use their clinical judgement and knowledge of the patient, together with the advice of family or other carers, in determining whether they would be able to participate in a remote review. Reasonable adjustments should be made to accommodate the needs of patients and carers as well as considering the capacity and capability of the GP practice whilst working in different ways due to COVID-19.

There is also a range of information that patients with learning disabilities may find useful.

- Public Health England has produced [an easy-read document](#) explaining why it's so important for people to keep their distance from others during the coronavirus crisis.
- Beyond Words has produced this 'Beating the Virus' book <https://booksbeyondwords.co.uk/downloads-shop/beating-the-virus> to help people to understand what to do if they have Coronavirus and how to keep themselves, and those who they care about, safe. It's available to download for free.
- Photosymbols has produced this poster <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0606/1553/files/Coronavirus-Poster-Photosymbols.pdf> which explains how people can stay safe during COVID-19. It's available to print out so it can be displayed, as needed.
- Learning Disability England has produced a series of information on its website <https://www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk/what-we-do/keeping-informed-and-in-touch-during-coronavirus/> designed to explain, provide essential information, and keep people in touch with each other.

- A list of UK-wide Mutual Aid groups, who can assist with shopping and collecting prescriptions, is available here. <https://freedomnews.org.uk/covid-19-uk-mutual-aid-groups-a-list/>

As COVID-19 develops, links to more relevant information for people with learning disabilities will be found by following @leder-team twitter account https://twitter.com/leder_team?s=20

Source: Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR) programme April 2020 Bulletin

Infection Protection & Control

Social Distancing in Primary Care

Social distancing is the practice of purposefully reducing close contact between people to prevent transmission of COVID-19. Some general guidance on how to maintain social distancing in the work environment can be found on the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/5-steps-to-working-safely>

Some reminders of other guidance to assist with maintenance of social distancing in Primary Care follow:

- All patients should be triaged so symptomatic and asymptomatic patients can be seen separately and safely
- By discussing the clinical history of patients during the triage process it should be possible to minimise the time a patient has to be present in the surgery (if a face to face appointment is necessary)
- Appointment only system to reduce footfall in buildings and patients ring front door for entry to ensure no walk-ins
- Use of screens to shield reception areas
- Separate chairs 2 metres apart in waiting rooms
- Signage to direct patients where to walk and wait
- Where possible mark out a distance of 2 metres from reception for guidance for patients
- All staff to sit 2 metres apart including in staff break areas
- Staggered breaks for staff using small staff rooms
- Where possible, encourage patients to attend on their own and if another accompanies then ask to wait outside building if possible
- Re-positioning of consultation chairs to create distance between GP/PN and patient

Legionella and Pseudomonas Risk

There is the risk of legionella and pseudomonas proliferation in little used water systems, that can lead to disease transmission through aerosol from taps and showers.

This is particularly likely where rooms or buildings have remained dormant. This is especially the case when ambient temperatures are above 20 degrees, as has been the case in the UK over recent months.

Please make yourself aware of HSE Guidance on this issue <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/legionella-risks-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm> and HTM 04-01 Safe Water Management in Healthcare Premises – Part B Operational Management <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hot-and-cold-water-supply-storage-and-distribution-systems-for-healthcare-premises>. These links provide information on your duties and how to manage legionella and pseudomonas proliferation through: temperature controls; flushing outlets; and chlorination of systems. Please pay particular attention to how to bring little used outlets back into use without causing harm to yourself or others.

Testing of People with COVID-19 Symptoms – New Phone Number

Everyone with symptoms should still be encouraged to [ask for a test online](#) but there is also now a new number, 119, to call so people who cannot go online can arrange a test. By calling 119 people can also ask questions about a test they've booked or chase results. The phone lines are open from 7am to 11pm.

You may wish to encourage patients to ring 119 who contact practices about their tests.

IT

IT Security

There have been a few breaches of IT security in Kent and Medway surgeries recently. There are some unscrupulous people taking advantage of the extra pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to try and breach the NHS' IT security systems. The local breaches have resulted in unsolicited and spam emails being sent from practice email address to patients which is obviously very worrying and time consuming for all concerned so we all need to be extra vigilant at this time. If you would like to improve your IT security, find out what phishing, vishing and smishing mean, and know how to protect yourself, the attached document entitled "Cyber Awareness" will help.

If you have clicked on any links in a spam email or become aware of any breaches of IT security, there are three simple steps to take:

1. Stop using your computer/device – turn it off immediately
2. Alert the NEL IT team by calling 03000 424242
3. If instructed - forward any suspicious content as an email attachment to the NEL IT team and to spamreports@nhs.net

Information

Disparities in the Risk and Outcomes of COVID-19

The government has published a descriptive review by Public Health England of surveillance data on disparities in the risk and outcomes from COVID-19. The review looked at different factors including:

- age and sex
- where people live
- deprivation
- ethnicity
- people's occupation
- care home residence

The review's findings are based on the latest surveillance data available to PHE and from links to wider health data sets. It is [here with data sets](#)

The largest disparity found was by age. Among people already diagnosed with COVID-19, people who were 80 or older were 70 times more likely to die than those under 40.

Risk of dying among those diagnosed with COVID-19 was also higher in males than females; higher in those living in the more deprived areas than those living in the least deprived; and higher in those in BAME groups than in white ethnic groups.

These inequalities largely replicate existing inequalities in mortality rates in previous years, except for BAME groups, as mortality was previously higher in white ethnic groups.

NHS guidance about addressing the impact of COVID-19 on BAME staff can be found [here](#).

Communications

NHS Health at Home campaign

NHS colleagues have created the Health at Home campaign www.nhs.uk/health-at-home that signposts the public to the information they need to contact their GP, order repeat prescriptions, manage their wellbeing and existing conditions – without having to leave home.

Resources to publicise the campaign can be [downloaded here](#) and include:

- Newsletter and website copy.
- Social media posts
- E-mail signatures