

Sussex CCGs Public Involvement Weekly News Briefing on COVID-19 (24th April 2020)

This briefing will be produced weekly, and is aimed at **patient leads, public members, voluntary and community sector (VCS) leads and community group leads in Sussex**, to support the dissemination of information on coronavirus to our wider communities.

The NHS is committed to keeping our people informed during this crisis, ensuring that our communities have the information they need, in the right format, and at the right time. We know that our patient leaders, VCS and community organisations are all working exceptionally hard to support local people, and that they are key to working together to make sure that our communities have the support and information they need.

Local Focus

GP services continue to provide care in Sussex

As mentioned in last week's edition of the Public Involvement Weekly News Briefing, GP practices across Sussex have transformed the way they work to ensure local patients remain safe and get the care they need during the Covid-19 pandemic.

With the safety of patients and practice staff a priority, new measures have been introduced through the creation of dedicated sites and areas within some practices, for anyone with Covid-19 symptoms to be seen safely.

Those who feel they need GP appointments are being asked to contact their surgeries as normal, and not to arrive at the practice unless specifically being told to do so following an initial assessment by a suitably trained clinician.

Patients will be asked to give an accurate and detailed description of their symptoms and this will allow them to receive the most appropriate treatment.

Patients may not be seen at their usual surgery, and following their assessment will be directed to a specific site locally to best deal with their health needs in the safest way, with local GPs changing the way they provide care.

Any patient with Covid-19 symptoms will be given an appointment at a so called 'hot site' rather than their own practice. These are formed by a group of practices coming together and identifying a single dedicated site to offer patients from their practices face-to-face consultation following their assessment.

Some GPs will be seeing patients without symptoms and patients with Covid-19 symptoms who will be separated into special zones, so that they are kept isolated from other patients. This will be undertaken in a safe way for patients and staff, and includes the introduction of dedicated hot consultation rooms, with separate entrances and exits to maintain isolation.

Existing GP premises will also be dedicated for treatment of those without any Covid-19 symptoms or acute illness, to allow their management in a way that minimises risk of contact with any potentially ill patients. Patients will be screened for any fever or cough symptoms, so only those who are considered well can enter. The facility will be arranged to maintain social distancing measures and limit patient number on site at any one time.

Infection control measures set by government experts will be followed at all sites and residents can be reassured of their safety, even when they are close to any site seeing patients with Covid-19 symptoms. At a minimum a daily, a full deep clean will be completed at each hot site, including disinfection.

GP Practices are making alternative arrangements to ensure these patients from the deaf community, people with learning disabilities, those whose first language is not English, and anyone without access to a telephone can access appointments.

Urgent dental care in the South East

Since the Government announced social distancing measures to slow down the spread of COVID-19 all non-urgent dental activity has stopped. However, measures have been put in place so that people can get urgent dental treatment if needed.

To provide care for people with urgent and emergency dental problems thirty-six urgent dental care hubs have been put in place in the South East.

If you have a dental emergency, you should contact a dental practice for a telephone assessment to assess your dental needs. This could either be the dental practice you normally attend or you can search for an NHS practice nearest to your home address on the NHS website at www.nhs.uk. Out of usual surgery hours, you should call NHS111.

When calling the dental practice, you will be assessed so that you can be provided with the most appropriate care. This may include being prescribed medication for pain relief or to treat an infection or you may be referred to one of the urgent dental care hubs for treatment.

Easier access to telephone GP appointments for d/Deaf people

From this week, d/Deaf people in Brighton and Hove and East Sussex are set to benefit from a new Video Relay Service (VRS), which has gone live in all GP practices and offers telephone access and consultations to British Sign Language (BSL) users.

The new, improved service will see GP practices being able to offer the consultations with support from Signlive, a free to download App that connects the caller to a fully qualified BSL interpreter before connecting to the recipient.

It will mean d/Deaf patients across Brighton and Hove and East Sussex will now be able to call their registered practice for free, using the standard telephone number, speak with receptionists and book a telephone appointment with a GP, just as a hearing person can.

The service has been rolled out at speed in response to Covid-19 and the changes in how GP practices are offering healthcare during the pandemic.

The service will be introduced across West Sussex GP practices shortly.

Additional support for people needing urgent help with their mental health

People across Sussex struggling with their mental health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak are being offered additional telephone and crisis support to help them cope.

Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust has expanded the Sussex Mental Healthline - 0300 5000 101 - to provide a 24/7 service to people needing urgent help with their mental health.



As well as crisis support it will provide psychological support to people who have general concerns about their mental health.

Registered clinicians are at the other end of the freephone number to provide help, support and advice to anyone who needs it, at any time of the day or night, regardless of their age or where they live in the county.

The team at the Sussex Mental Healthline can offer advice and support to callers who are experiencing a crisis in their mental health, and if needed they can refer them to one of five newly created urgent help hubs for assessment and treatment.

General advice about how to manage your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak is available at www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/coronavirus as well as through @withoutstigma on Twitter and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SussexPartnership

Community Matters

The Covid-19 Community Connectors Team has been answering questions from our communities in Sussex about accessing health and care services at this time – you can read more about this in the attached Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). Each week, we will answer some of your questions – please see below this week's questions and answers on **hospital care**:

1. Will I still be referred to the hospital if my GP thinks I need it?

Yes, your GP will still refer you; however, many of the referrals will be held until the pressure on the NHS lessens. All referrals will be looked at by a clinician and reviewed for urgency. You should hear directly from the hospital about your appointment; you do not need to go back to your GP unless your condition deteriorates.

The exception to this our Musculoskeletal (bone and joint) services, who are not taking new referrals to the service, unless urgent; in this case patients may be offered a phone assessment as a first step.

2. If I am worried I might have cancer, would I still be referred to the hospital?

You should contact your GP immediately with any worrying symptoms; if your GP is concerned, you will be referred to hospital, and should be seen within two weeks.

Community Hubs

Local Authorities now have the names and contact details of people that are "**Shielded**"; this group of people will be contacted directly to ensure they are provided with the help they need.

Community Hubs are up and running in each Local Authority area across Sussex, and offer additional help in coping with coronavirus.

The Community Hubs will focus their help on people who do not have an extreme medical condition but may be vulnerable because they are isolated from help, too unwell to buy food or have other pressing difficulties because of coronavirus.

Community Hubs will also provide a place for people to find out about local volunteering opportunities.

Brighton and Hove Community Hubs

Contact details for the Community Support:

[Brighton and Hove Community Support Website](#)

Brighton and Hove Community Support Telephone: 01273 293117

East Sussex Community Hubs

Contact details for the Community Hubs in East Sussex are below:

[Eastbourne Community Hub Website](#)

Eastbourne Community Hub Telephone: 01323 679722

[Hastings Community Hub Website](#)

Hastings Community Hub Telephone: 01424 451019

[Lewes Community Hub Website](#)

Lewes Community Hub Telephone: 01273 099956

[Rother Community Hub Website](#)

Rother Community Hub Telephone: 01424 787000 (option 4)

[Wealden Community Hub Website](#)

Wealden Community Hub Telephone: 01323 443322

West Sussex Community Hubs

Contact the West Sussex Community Support Team:

[West Sussex Community Support Team Website](#)

West Sussex Support Team Telephone: 033 022 27980 (Lines are open 8.00am - 8.00pm)

NHS Updates

NHS urges public to stay safe ahead of Ramadan

Ramadan will be marked all over the world from Thursday 23 April with month-long fasting and observations of spiritual reflection set to end on Saturday 23 May. This is followed by Eid the festival of fast breaking where traditionally family and friends get together to attend special prayers and celebrate the end of the holy month.

As Ramadan and Eid occur during the projected peak of COVID-19, the NHS has issued additional guidance – which can be accessed [here](#). [Additional guidance and key advice](#) for all NHS people can be found here.

NHS Volunteer Responder Programme

People who have been advised to shield themselves from the coronavirus can now self-refer to the NHS Volunteer Responder Programme via telephone (0808 196 3646) or online by clicking on this [link](#).

NHS Volunteer Responders can be called on to do vital tasks such as:

- delivering medicines from pharmacies;
- driving patients to appointments;
- bringing them home from hospital;
- or making regular phone calls to check on people isolating at home.

The scheme has been expanded to provide Volunteer Responder support to people with cognitive impairments and significant vulnerabilities.

National Updates

The government has amended their guidance on **ending self-isolation and household isolation**, which can be found under the section 'Self-isolation' and 'Household isolation' available [here](#).

The government has produced guidance to support **victims of domestic abuse** during Covid-19 – [available here](#). It explains what domestic abuse is, the signs to look out for and lists support available. If you believe that you or someone else could be a victim of domestic abuse, there are signs that you can look out for including:

- being withdrawn
- having bruises
- controlling finances
- not being allowed to leave the house
- monitoring technology use such as social media platforms

Resources

[NHS Every Mind Matters](#) has introduced 10 tips to help if you are worried about coronavirus. The 10 tips you can help improve your mental health and wellbeing if you are worried or anxious about the coronavirus outbreak. For specific tips and advice while staying at home, read our advice on [maintaining your mental wellbeing while staying at home](#).

Please see attached our FAQs – gathered from comments and questions raised in the community. Section 10 of the FAQs includes a Resources Section which provides information on additional community support available.

You can find further information about support in the local area on the Sussex NHS Commissioners websites – please click below:

[NHS Brighton and Hove CCG](#)

[NHS East Sussex CCG](#)

[NHS West Sussex CCG](#)

Tell us about your experiences and let us know what you need!

The Covid-19 Community Connectors Team are here to help make sure you, and the people you help and support, get the information and support needed. Please do contact us using the contact details on page 6.

Healthwatch

You can also raise issues through Healthwatch, which is an independent body responsible for gathering people's views of health and social care services. Contact details are below:

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove:

Telephone: 01273 234 040

Email: info@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

Website: <https://www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk/contact-us/>

Healthwatch East Sussex

Telephone: 0333 101 4007

Email: enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

Website: <https://healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk/contact/>

Healthwatch West Sussex

Telephone: 0300 012 0122

Email: helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Website: <https://www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk/contact-us>

Contact Details

If you have any questions, or if you need this brief in an alternative format, please contact the Community Connectors Team:

Email: sxccg.involvement@nhs.net

Telephone: 0127 323 8725

Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users can use a Video Relay Service (VRS) called [SignLive](#) (a free app which connects deaf people to a qualified British Sign Language Interpreter before connecting you to one of the Community Connectors Team). This service is currently available every **Thursday from 14:00-16:00**. Please contact the Community Connectors using the details above if this is not convenient.

Let us know what you need to see in this briefing, give us feedback on services and support related to Covid-19 and let us know about issues you are picking up from your communities.

