

---

## BRIEFING NOTE

---

### Briefing Note for Greater Manchester Primary Care COVID-19 Response – 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020

In light of the escalation of COVID-19, this briefing note has been produced by both commissioner and provider leads to share current information for primary care which may also be able to support some local considerations. Although communications are starting to flow nationally, the aim of this brief is to try to supplement this.

We support local CCGs who are providing you with guidance that is tailored to your local circumstances. This note is designed to be complementary to and supportive of, these local messages. We recognise that some of the material contained within and attached will already be familiar to you but felt it was important to include for completeness.

We recognise that General Practice have been seeking to manage their local arrangements to maintain services and safeguard patients and staff. Today, communications have been received from Nikita Kanani, Medical Director for Primary Care and Ed Waller Director of Primary Care Strategy and NHS Contracts, describing the service delivery consequences for general practice and further steps being taken nationally to manage the workload consequences and ensure that income can be protected if other routine work has to be substituted (See attached).

You will also have received this week communications from GM GP Board and a letter from GM Association of LMC with GM LPC/Bolton LPC to offer some practical advice to practices and pharmacies. A copy of this letter is also attached for your information. This communication is consistent with relevant national statements and guidance and represents a useful reference point.

Across Greater Manchester we are looking to co-ordinate a response, utilising our established integrated neighbourhood working approach, that supports patients outside of an acute setting. The proposed model which will be coming out to localities over the next 24-48 hours also includes how we support our more vulnerable populations including rough sleepers, people in temporary shared accommodation and those with multiple complex needs.

You may already be aware that Nationally the delivery of the PCN DES will continue, as will the funding for additional roles. However, it has been agreed that the implementation of the service specifications will be delayed until October. Delivery of extended hours is to continue where possible, though this can be delivered via other means e.g. digital or telephone.

Members of the workforce that have retired in recent years will be invited back to work. They will be able to re-register and be added to the performers list. It is likely that this workforce will be enabled to work remotely. Work is ongoing to support our locum

workforce to be able to work remotely, providing additional capacity. Trainees in practice will also be engaged, ensuring we are able to utilise their skills and experience to best effect.

With respect to the digital first primary care agenda, you will have seen the national guidance regarding considerations around online booking:

[https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/Commissioner-guidance-local-requests-to-suspend-online-booking\\_050320.pdf](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/Commissioner-guidance-local-requests-to-suspend-online-booking_050320.pdf)

It is understood that most, if not all, of our GM GP Practices are now using some form of on-line consultations, triage, etc to manage access to care for patients. This approach has significantly increased over these recent weeks in response to the COVID-19 position. If you are aware of issues where we can help to support, please raise these through the email address at the end of this briefing.

Current advice is to:

- Move to a total triage system (either by telephone or online). This does not mean not advising/treating patients for other health issues, where there is a clinical need, or unilateral closing of practice doors, rather ensuring that patients are appropriately triaged to the right health professional setting. The upsurge in telephone calls to general practice means that providing a reliable and timely response for patients has already become a vital operational priority.
- Agree locally with your CCG which practices/premises and teams should be used to manage face to face services. You may want to utilise one practice per network. Do not have close contact with symptomatic patients without wearing PPE
- Undertake all care that can be done remotely via appropriate channels, guided by your clinical judgement. If at risk staff are sent home to isolate or due to potential COVID infection, make sure they can do some remote consulting if they are well
- Prepare for the significant increase in home visiting as a result of social distancing, home isolation and the need to discharge all patients who do not need to be in hospital. Either prepare a visiting team with PPE per network and/or a cold practice room where people can safely be seen with a process to call them with no waiting room congregation.
- Prioritise support for particular groups of patients at risk. The NHS will shortly be writing to all patients in this category, and you will receive further advice soon. Consider how you might manage these patients if you are required to telephone, see or test
- Help staff to stay safe at work, building cross practice resilience across primary care networks, and adopting business continuity plans. Prepare what could happen if a practice closes temporarily – can phones be diverted can notes be accessed?
- Please make patients aware of how your service is changing by text message (e.g. by ACCURx) or via your website.

A key issue has been response for members of the public who have to stay at home because of coronavirus and require a note for their employer. NHS111 has now developed a service to provide sick notes for employers. Please direct all enquiries to: <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>

Work is ongoing to facilitate remote working either through peoples' own devices (using a VPN token) or through the provision of work equipment. As an initial response, we are pleased to let you know that across Greater Manchester the GMSS team have been able to source an initial quantity of 800 laptops and are looking to secure further supplies as quickly as possible. These are currently in the process of being deployed to all CCGs across GM to support remote working for GP Practice colleagues. Further work is taking place between GMSS and NHS E/I to identify if there are any further gaps for primary care in the provision of digital hardware/software and CCGs are supporting this work.

There have been significant enquiries in respect to PPE and cleaning advice for premises attended by symptomatic patients. The national letter received today provides information regarding National Supply Disruption details (page 1). There is PHE guidance available in respect to this at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/872745/Infection\\_prevention\\_and\\_control\\_guidance\\_for\\_pandemic\\_coronavirus.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/872745/Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_for_pandemic_coronavirus.pdf)

The national team have advised that they will be responding to urgent PPE queries over the next 24 hours and will be putting processes in place to ensure a more standardised approach to delivery. Further details of this will emerge over the next week. The NSDR phone number is now staffed 24 hours a day.

Although GM has now established its COVID-19 Emergency Committee which is being chaired by the Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham, there still needs to be consideration of establishing a single point of co-ordination to respond to urgent queries on behalf of Greater Manchester. Work is ongoing with respect to this and further details will follow shortly.

NHS England North West, including Greater Manchester, have established COVID-19 meetings which meets on Tuesdays and Fridays each week which is chaired by Graham Urwin. A clinical cell has also been established for primary and secondary care which is chaired by Dr David Levy, Medical Director. In addition, there is now a NW Primary Care and Public Health Sub-Group which is currently meeting daily to ensure a good flow of information and to identify and escalate issues. Any issues raised will be escalated to this group.

GMHSCP has established the following email address as a single point of communication for primary care COVID-19 management:

[\*\*england.primarycarecomms@nhs.net\*\*](mailto:england.primarycarecomms@nhs.net)

Please use this email address to raise any issues.

**20<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

---