

# Patient Update

Newsletter for Patient Participation Groups

April 2020



## Coronavirus update edition

The coronavirus outbreak is continuing to dominate healthcare activity across Berkshire West.

This newsletter gives a flavour of the work being done during this very fast moving situation. There's lots of information on the CCG website and posters are available in several languages:

[www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk](http://www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk)



## Primary Care Response Hubs to help ease pressure on health services

Two special Primary Care Hubs are now running in Berkshire West, they are for local people showing symptoms of Coronavirus but not needing immediate hospital treatment.

One is at the Walk in Centre in Reading's Broad Street Mall and the second in a specially adapted and contained space at Newbury Racecourse East entrance.

They will only be available to patients who have already gone through a structured medical assessment. So, anyone starting to show the Coronavirus symptoms of a constant cough and/or high temperature, will still initially be asked to self-isolate for seven days and seek advice from NHS 111 online if required <https://111.nhs.uk/>



Patients will then be referred on to their GP practice and/or one of the Hubs where appropriate.

The new Hubs have been set up by health officials from the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in partnership with local GPs. They will ease the burden on other healthcare facilities and free up hospital doctors to deal with more urgent Coronavirus cases.

The Reading and Wokingham Primary Care Hub at the Walk in Centre is open seven days a week from 8am to 8pm. In West Berkshire, the hub is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 4pm, initially.

Full details of the hubs and how they will operate will be on the CCG website

[www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk](http://www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk)

Cathy Winfield, Chief Officer for the CCG said: "this virus is placing huge, constant and ever changing demands on our healthcare services both within GP surgeries, and at our local hospitals.

"These Hubs will be specifically for patients who have, or are likely to have, Coronavirus and will not be able to cater for the public looking for general medical support.

“The advice to these people is very clear – if you have the constant cough and/or high temperature you must stay at home, keep your distance from other people in the house and contact the 111 online services if you want extra advice,” she added.

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## **Hospital action plan**

A Covid-19 action plan aimed at ensuring local patients, staff and communities are guaranteed first class health care and support during the outbreak is now up and running at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

The far reaching plan builds on work already in place at the Trust and is aimed at reassuring people that everything possible is being done to make sure they are kept safe and well during the current Covid-19 outbreak.

There are four main strands to the plan:

- To reduce the number of people – patients, visitors and staff – on hospital sites
- To increase and enhance the RBH’s capacity to treat patients
- To reduce demand so the focus is on the patients most in need of help
- To look after hard working staff and make sure they have the equipment and facilities they need

Measures have already been put in place to tackle these critically important areas.

- Many more people are being offered virtual outpatient clinic appointments to receive healthcare over the phone or via a laptop.
- Visiting has been suspended apart from a small exceptions
- The hospital layout has been revised to establish separate zones to deal with the differing needs of patients and keep everyone safe
- Intensive care capacity has increased
- Elective surgery has been suspended to free up time for key staff to be retrained in other more urgent areas of work
- Some services have been moved to alternative private hospital settings

Trust Chief Executive Steve McManus (pictured), said: “Whilst we’re all in very new territory with this virus we have a huge amount of tried and tested experience of planning for and dealing with major outbreaks like this. There are national and regional systems in place to support us and this, coupled with the work we’re doing at the Trust, is all aimed at keeping everyone safe and making sure we can sustain this level of care for the period of this outbreak.



**Steve McManus, Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, Chief Executive**

And he thanked the local community for their support. “We’ve had a really outstanding amount of support from our local communities and partners and we can’t thank them enough,” he said.

## Volunteers spring into action

Dozens of kind hearted volunteers have come forward to support the NHS locally during the Covid 19 outbreak.

They are playing a vital role in keeping services running smoothly at the Royal Berkshire Hospital – ferrying prescriptions around the building, making tea in ED, supporting the staff Wellbeing Centre and helping porters and cleaners.

Volunteers working from home are putting together wash packs for patients and staff who may need unexpected overnight accommodation.

Community drivers have started picking up CPAP breathing machines from people’s homes where they are no longer needed. And the hospital is now keen to hear from people who have syringe pumps and syringe drivers that could be collected and re-used.

Volunteer Adrian Barker (pictured) said: “I’m helping in the new staff wellbeing centre at the Royal Berks in my role as an existing volunteer at the hospital. Like hundreds of thousands of others, I felt I should at least try and do something to help.



What’s humbling, though, is that while I just spend a few hours adding hot water to instant coffee or tea bags, many staff are working 12 hour shifts in dangerous conditions. And I’m just seeing those who are able to get away for a few minutes: there are many more stuck on the wards for the whole time.

While it’s doctors and nurses on the front lines saving lives, a whole army of people are needed to keep the operation going, and I’ve seen radiologists, receptionists, cleaners, those who distribute the protective equipment and the people who keep everything organised. There’s an awful lot of people we need to be grateful for!”

The latest information for volunteers is available on the RBFT website here: [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/get-involved/volunteers.htm](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/get-involved/volunteers.htm)

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## New video highlights abuse during Covid lockdown.

The CCG’s Head of Safeguarding Children, Liz Stead, has fronted a new film to help support people and families facing domestic abuse, neglect and violence during the coronavirus lockdown.

The film, ‘Be Brave, Speak Up’, comes amid concerns that referrals into many services that support vulnerable families have dwindled since the lockdown, whilst others like Domestic Abuse services have seen a rise, as couples and families are forced together for very long periods of time either self-isolating or staying at home to stop the spread of the virus.

**Important  
safeguarding message**

**From Liz Stead,  
Head of Safeguarding Children  
NHS Berkshire West CCG**



This is exacerbated by the fact that many of the agencies and staff trained to spot cases of abuse are operating differently during the lock down, and are not having their usual close contact with vulnerable people. This includes schools, day care centres, and children's centres.

The video, which is available on Facebook, Twitter and You Tube, has been made in partnership with the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The key message is to urge neighbours, friends and other people within communities to keep an eye and an ear out for possible cases of abuse. And if they're not sure if what they've seen or heard is abuse, then to err on the side of caution and report it.

Speaking about the film, Liz said: "abuse and neglect are often hidden and subsequently identified when skilled workforces in day-to-day roles spot the signs.

"Now everyone is, quite rightly, obeying the Government's guidance on staying at home, we know it can bring things to a head in a lot of households. Crucial family support networks are somewhat cut off because of isolation and social distancing.

These are the links to the '**Be Brave, speak up**' film:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BWSafeguardingChildrenPartnership/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BWSCP1>

You Tube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwSD4pY-Cok&t=1s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwSD4pY-Cok&t=1s)

Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership website:  
[www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk](http://www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk)

## **Berkshire Cancer Centre**

Letters have been sent to all the people using the Centre offering advice on living with cancer during the coronavirus outbreak. The advice covers carers and support workers visiting people's homes, planned GP and hospital appointments, looking after mental health wellbeing and support with daily living.

A number of changes have been made at the Centre. Chemotherapy is now being provided for patients at the Bracknell Healthspace. Radiotherapy treatment is continuing at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, and cancer outpatient appointments are being carried out virtually where possible, either over the phone or video link.

The Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Centre at the RBH are continuing to provide a telephone advice and helpline. The number is 0118 322 8700 and is open Mon – Thurs 9am - 4pm and Friday 9am - 2pm (closed Bank Holidays). If callers leave a message these will be picked up and dealt with by staff throughout the day.

The teams are also able to advise on how to access benefits. People can make contact via [macmillan.information@royalberkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:macmillan.information@royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

The National Macmillan Support Line is also available on 0808 808 00 00, 7 days a week 9am to 5pm.

The Macmillan Berkshire Buddy Scheme is available on 07894 566606 or email [berksreferrals@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:berksreferrals@macmillan.org.uk). The team can provide advice or just someone to talk to and share worries.

## Mental Health Services

Most organisations are continuing to offer mental health services and support online and over the phone. Please check their websites for the local information.

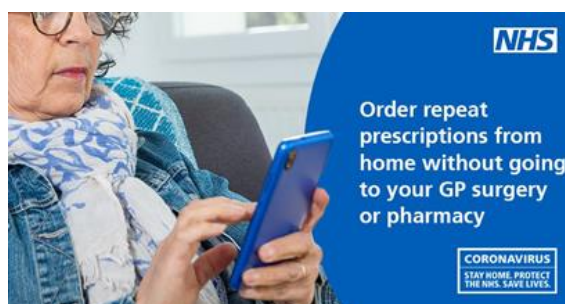
Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT) has updated [their website](#) with the latest information about their mental health services, including [Talking Therapies](#), Common Point of Entry and Mental Health Crisis Team and the Community Mental Health Team.

- [AnDY Clinic](#) Offer assessments and treatment for children and young people experiencing anxiety disorders and depression.
- [Emotional Health Academy](#) early intervention emotional health service for West Berkshire children and young people.
- [Time 2 Talk](#) in West Berkshire, an independent charity providing FREE confidential counselling services to young people in need, aged 11 to 25.
- [ARC Youth Counselling](#) in Wokingham - offers a confidential counselling service.
- [No5 Young People](#) in Reading. Confidential counselling and support to children and young people aged 11-25.
- [Brighter Futures for Children](#), Reading offer emotional health advice, assessment and interventions.
- [Autism Berkshire](#) Pre and post assessment support
- [Parenting Special Children](#) - Pre and post assessment support.

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## Information for ordering repeat prescriptions

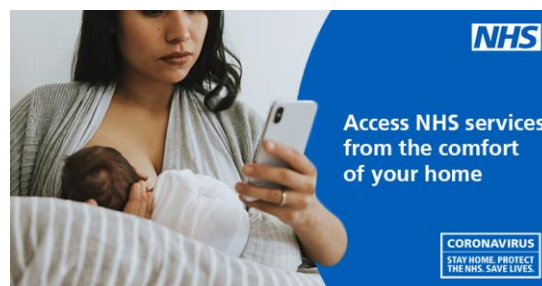
During the coronavirus pandemic patients are being encouraged to order their repeat prescriptions from home, without visiting their GP practice or pharmacy wherever possible. This can be done via the [practice online services](#), the [NHS App](#), or by checking the practice website to see if they accept telephone or email requests.



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## Manage your health and wellbeing at home

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak means you should only leave your home if it's essential, unless you feel very unwell or you are told to attend an existing appointment for ongoing treatment. While you are at home it's still easy to get NHS help using your smartphone, tablet or computer. There is a useful online



page which gives information on how to contact your GP, order repeat prescriptions, manage long-term condition and maintain your mental and physical wellbeing. Find out more at: [nhs.uk/health-at-home](https://www.nhs.uk/health-at-home)

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## **NHS dentists**

During the Covid-19 pandemic all routine NHS and private dentistry has stopped. Patients who have scheduled appointments in the coming weeks are being contacted by their dental practice.

The NHS is continuing to provide urgent and emergency dental care. This will be available to both NHS and private patients. If patients have a dental emergency they should call the dental practice they normally attend during their opening hours for further advice. If they do not have a regular NHS dentist they can search for a local dentist on the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk) and call them. In the evening and at weekends patients can contact [NHS 111](https://www.nhs.uk) who will provide advice and direct patients to an out of hours service if necessary.

When patients call a practice, a member of the team will carry out a telephone assessment with to assess their dental needs. They will be able to offer advice or prescribe medication to relieve any pain or to treat an infection.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with local dental networks to set up Urgent Dental Care hubs to provide urgent treatment when it is required.

The first Urgent Dental hub opened in Hampshire on 14th April and others are planned. These services are not bound by geography.

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