

# Patient Update

Newsletter for Patient Participation Groups

July 2020



## Digital Workshop for patients:

The Covid crisis has transformed the way many healthcare services are being provided with virtual clinics, telephone triage and patient initiated follow up appointments. For some people the digital agenda is a bit of a minefield which is why a special workshop is being held to guide people through the whole IT set up. It's aimed at those who are already digitally savvy and those who need a helping hand to become more confident using the technology.

The event is on Tuesday 21 July from 9am-10.30am. it will cover:

- Connected care and patients on data opt outs
- The changing face of primary care including digital online consultations, website forms, text and video consultations.
- Digital inclusion and how to help those who are not able to access a computer or don't have a mobile phone.

If you'd like to join the workshop, which is being done via Microsoft Teams, please email Karen Hodgson - [karen.hodgson5@nhs.net](mailto:karen.hodgson5@nhs.net)

## Please keep your hospital appointments

The Chief Executive of the Royal Berkshire Hospital has taken to the airwaves to reassure people it's safe to attend for appointments and vital to keep the dates set for any planned surgery.

Steve McManus used BBC Radio Berkshire, and local newspapers to spread the word after clinicians at the hospital reported low numbers of people turning up for allotted clinic slots or operations that were put on hold during Covid.



In one recent case, 200 people waiting for cataract surgery were contacted and told there were slots free, but just three took up the offer.

And doctors are worried people with potentially life threatening illnesses like cancer, heart disease and stroke symptoms, are also staying away amid fears of catching Covid.

“We are now almost a Covid free hospital and have implemented major safety procedures to make sure our patients and staff are as protected as possible and we are very anxious that people who do need to come here for treatment do so,” said Steve.

“Our staff have been tested for Covid, we have strict social distancing rules in place, clinical rooms are thoroughly cleaned after each patient has been seen, everyone is wearing a mask or face covering, hand sanitisers are in place around the site, new rules on using the lifts are in place – everything possible has been done and I can reassure people they are in very safe hands when they come here,” he added.

Another issue which doctors think might be putting people off is confusion around self-isolating. People booked in for an operation must isolate for 14 days along with the rest of their household. And when they are called in for a swab before their surgery, they are advised to avoid public transport as this effectively takes them out of the 14-day isolation period.

There are full details of the current guidelines on the Trust website:

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

Our picture shows Steve with Gastro Consultant Dr Kate Evans and Chief Medical Officer Dr Janet Lippett.

## **Women urged to attend cervical screening tests**

GPs across Berkshire West are now starting to contact patients who were due a routine cervical test and had this postponed in the wake of the Covid outbreak. They will be inviting them to the surgery for an appointment and stressing the importance of having the test which can stop cancer before it starts.

Two women die every day from cervical cancer in England. And while it's estimated that cervical screening saves around 5,000 lives each year, screening uptake has been low over the last year or so, with one in four women in the UK not attending their test

Cervical screening is offered to everyone with a cervix, between the ages of 25 and 64, every three or five years depending on their age.

The screening test lasts just a few minutes and regular screening can help stop cervical cancer before it starts by preventing potentially harmful cells from developing.

Health officials have drawn up advice to help make the screening test more comfortable. This includes:

- Talking to your nurse – they are trained and experienced in how to make your test comfortable.

- Wearing a loose skirt or dress – you may feel more covered during your appointment.

Dr Kajal Patel, Berkshire West CCG Cancer Lead, said: “It was unfortunate that during the Covid outbreak the NHS had to pause some services to dedicate itself to caring for patients with the virus. However, now the numbers are falling we can turn our attention back to other really important work like cancer screening and I’d urge everyone who is eligible for a test, or had theirs postponed during Covid, to please make an appointment.



“I know some women are reluctant to go for a test. It could be that they are nervous about what happens, worried in case the test shows up some abnormalities, or it could be for cultural reasons.

We want to reassure them that the tests are generally straightforward, they’re carried out by very understanding and professional healthcare staff, and they really can be a matter of life and death,” she added.

## Flu jabs – more important than ever this winter

The impact of Covid on the NHS will be felt for a long time which is why health officials are urging people to do as much as they can to look after themselves.

One priority is to have a flu jab before winter takes hold, because in severe cases flu can put people in hospital placing extra pressures on staff and resources at a time when they may be dealing with a second surge of Covid.



There will be a lot of publicity around the flu vaccinations over the coming months so please keep an eye out and make sure, if you’re eligible for a free flu vaccine that you take up the offer.

Groups who qualify for the flu vaccine are:

- children aged two and three through their GP (via a painless nasal spray flu vaccine)
- children in reception and school years 1 to 6 (via schools)
- those aged six months to under 65 years in clinical risk groups – for example chronic (long term) respiratory, heart or liver disease, neurological diseases like Parkinson’s or motor neurone, or with a learning disability or diabetes
- pregnant women
- those aged 65 years and over
- those in long-stay residential care homes
- carers

- those with close contacts to people with compromised immune systems.

Frontline health and social care workers, particularly those directly involved in the care of vulnerable patients/clients, are also being advised to have the vaccination. And other people who want to take action to protect themselves can pay to have the jab at their local pharmacy.

Dr Abid Irfan, Chair of the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) said: “some routine screenings and immunisation programmes were somewhat disrupted during Covid as the NHS dedicated itself to treating the virus.

“However, now we are coming out of the Covid phase we’re reminding people just how important it is to keep have things like the flu jab, not just to protect their own health, but also to prevent the NHS becoming overwhelmed this winter,” he added.

## Have your say on Healthwatch Covid survey

Our colleagues at Healthwatch have launched a survey to give them a clearer idea of what people thought of the service offered to them during covid. They want people’s views on how the NHS adapted to deal with the virus and what they felt about changes brought in like virtual clinics and telephone triage services at GP surgeries.

There are links to the surveys below for West Berkshire, Wokingham and Reading. We’ll bring you the key findings of the survey in an upcoming edition of this newsletter.

- Reading Healthwatch: <https://healthwatchreading.co.uk/news/2020-05-22/reading-people-start-sharing-stories-about-care-under-coronavirus-lockdown>
- West Berkshire Healthwatch: <https://survey.zohopublic.eu/zs/3gB80m>
- Wokingham Healthwatch: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/F6UF5R/>



A new campaign run by Healthwatch and the CQC launched last Wednesday which is all about the importance of people giving feedback. It’s called #BecauseWeAllCare and will be linked back into the Healthwatch covid survey.

## Car Parking Changes at RBH

As the Royal Berkshire Hospital steps up its work to re-introduce services put on hold during Covid, it will be re-starting the barrier system at the multi storey car park next week. (13 July).

During the pandemic the barriers were lifted to provide parking for staff to make it easier and quicker for them to get to hospital for their long and stressful shifts caring for Covid patients.

Now the hospital is almost Covid free, a wide range of clinics and operations are starting to take place again which means more people using the car park. Staff have reverted back to their normal travel to work arrangements to free up parking space for patients.

People are being reminded they will need to wear masks or face coverings during their visits and must abide by the social distancing rules. There are now helpful posters and floor markings to make it easier and safer for people to get around the RBH site.

Steve McManus, Chief Executive of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, said: "it's great that now we're almost Covid free we can resume many of our services on site, and I'd like to thank everyone for their patience and understanding when we had to pause a lot of this work to concentrate on Covid.

"It's very important as we resume services that people attend for their treatments. I can assure them we have done everything possible to make the hospital a safe and welcoming place. Of course, this will mean extra footfall on the site and more need for the car parking facility. We just want to make people aware that from 13 July the barrier will be back in place.

"I know some people allow a lot of extra time to get to their appointment because of problems with finding a parking space, but we're asking them not to do this because, under the new social distancing rules, they will not be able to come on site until their allotted appointment time," he added.

## Thinking about going to A&E but unsure?

The Royal Berkshire Hospital, in partnership with Babylon, has launched an online symptom checker - here on their website: <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/ask>.

Register and answer a few questions about your concerns and the symptom checker will sign post to the most appropriate service for your health care need. This will also support patients affected by COVID19 and those reluctant to attend the hospital, but who could benefit from other care services.



All data is anonymised and encrypted in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

## Berkshire West CCG Annual report

The CCG's Annual Report has just been published, you can [read it here](#).

It's also on the CCG website – [www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk](http://www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk)

## Where to get help if you're feeling unwell

GPs, pharmacists & other health professionals may be working differently in light of Covid-19, but please be reassured that your local NHS is here for you. Please don't delay in seeking help if you need it This [useful poster](#) shows all the options available.

# Feeling unwell?

Know where to go



 <p><b>Self care</b></p> <p>Be prepared to care for yourself with medicines at hand and plenty of rest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• cough or cold</li><li>• upset stomach</li><li>• pain or headache</li><li>• cuts and grazes</li><li>• sore throat</li></ul> <p>For health advice, visit <a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a></p>	 <p><b>Pharmacist</b></p> <p>Ask for advice on ailments, medicines and healthier living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• queries about medication dosage, type or suitability plus urgent requests or if related to hospital discharge</li><li>• repeat prescription</li><li>• sore eyes (but if persists go to optician)</li><li>• runny nose</li><li>• diarrhoea</li><li>• bite or sting</li></ul>	 <p><b>Call NHS 111 or go online at 111.nhs.uk</b></p> <p>When the situation is not life-threatening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• if you think you need to go to hospital</li><li>• if you don't know the most suitable place to go or call a GP to call or if your GP practice is closed</li><li>• if you need advice or reassurance about what to do</li></ul> <p>Available 24 hours a day, every day</p>	 <p><b>GP practice</b></p> <p>Use patient access online or make an appointment if an illness or injury won't go away</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• repeat prescription</li><li>• urgent skin problem such as a rash that is spreading</li><li>• ear pain</li><li>• back ache</li></ul> <p>Additional evenings and weekend appointments bookable through your GP practice.</p> <p>Due to coronavirus, most GP appointments are currently taking place by phone. Patients will be called in for a face-to-face consultation if necessary.</p>	 <p><b>Ask A&amp;E</b></p> <p>Thinking of going to Accident and Emergency but not sure if you need to?</p> <p>Before taking the time and having the stress of going to hospital, why not use our online symptom checker?</p> <p>Ask A&amp;E offers you rapid NHS answers you can trust to help you decide what to do next based on the seriousness of your symptoms and the urgency of your illness.</p> <p><a href="http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/ask.htm">www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/ask.htm</a></p>	 <p><b>Emergency department or call 999</b></p> <p>Only for very serious or life-threatening situations</p> <p>If you are unsure, call NHS 111 or go on-line at <a href="http://111.nhs.uk">111.nhs.uk</a></p>	 <p><b>Mental health</b></p> <p>Aged between 11 -19 years old?</p> <p>Visit <a href="http://KOOH.com">KOOH.com</a> for free, anonymous and confidential online counselling and emotional well-being support service.</p> <p>If you are over 18 and need urgent support call NHS 111 who will direct you accordingly.</p> <p>Call 0300 365 2000 to make a self-referral to Talking therapies.</p> <p>Call the Common Point of Entry on 0300 365 0300 if your concern is more urgent.</p> <p>If you need someone to talk to, call the Samaritans free on 116 123 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year).</p> <p>In an emergency, or if someone is in immediate danger, call 999 straight away.</p>
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Register your mobile for the 999 SMS service by texting 'Register' to 999.  
Visit [www.interpreternow.co.uk/nhs111](http://www.interpreternow.co.uk/nhs111) to access NHS 111 with a British Sign Language interpreter

take a photo and save on your phone 

## New face at Integrated Care System (ICS)

Matthew Tait has taken on the role of Deputy ICS Lead/Director of CCG Transformation (interim). He started the new job, on secondment from NHS England, earlier this month.

As part of his work he will help take forward proposals for a joint single management team and the development of a commissioning model in line with the ambitions of the NHS Long Term Plan. He will be working closely with Dr James Kent, the new BOB ICS Executive Lead and Accountable Officer for the BOB CCGs.

Matthew's previous roles have included time as Area Director for NHS England Thames Valley and the PCT Cluster CEO for Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.